



## **PARENTAL CONTROL OF TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS AMONG CHILDREN: A STUDY OF HOUSEHOLDS IN JOS SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study focus on Parental Control of Television Viewing Habits Among Children: A Study of Households in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. Methodology adopted in this study is the survey design in which questionnaires was used for obtaining data. The target population of this study was households of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. Result showed that Parents prefer their children to watch programmes that promote educational goals and positive social values and provide cultural richness to young children and also prefer their children to watch locally made products on TV that would encourage children to develop as individuals and as social beings in their particular culture. The research recommends that, the "v-chip" technology is a very good method of blocking violent programs on Television as such, Parents in Jos South Local Government area of Plateau State are encouraged to install it on their Children's Television sets so as to block channels they do not want their children to be exposed to.*

**Keywords:** *Parents, Control, Viewing habits, Children and House holds*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Like many forms of technology, television's evolution created uncertainty and problems. According to Rossiter (2018) the average child, even in under developed countries where electricity supply is not edquate, spends more than five hours per day with television and other media linked to the Television. Television consumption climbed steadily from 1.8 hours to more than 5hours per day in the late 70's (Dorey, Roberts, Maddison, Meagher-Lundberg, Dixon & Ni-Mhurchu, 2009). A separate study found that by 2004, children as young as one-year-old watched 2.2 hours of television per day, with an increase to 3.6 hours per day by the time the child reaches three-years-old (Christakis, Zimmerman, & DiGiuseppe, 2004). Several contributing factors can be attributed to this increase, including an increase of total televisions in the

households with televisions placed in the child's bedrooms (Christakis, Zimmerman, & DiGiuseppe, 2004).

Jos South Local Government Area is a Local Government in Plateau state, Nigeria. It houses the Governor's Office in Ray field and can thus be described as the de facto capital of Plateau State. Its headquarters is located in Bukuru town and covers a land area of 510 km<sup>2</sup>. With the increased popularity of video games, YouTube, and social networking sites such as Face book, along with their rapid increase in linking with television, residents in Jos South have developed the habit of staying online watching Television or another/staying long hours online and exposure will continue to increase (Cheng, Brenner, Wright, Sachs, Moyer & Mengg, 2004).

Due to the large role that television plays in a child's life special consideration needs to be given to the influences from television, and what a parent's role in television viewing with children is.

Despite the availability of new forms of media, many young children spend more time with television than with other media. (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2005, Royal Children's Hospital 2009 and ACMA 2007). This is why the quality of TV programs young children are viewing is regularly under public scrutiny both in Australia and internationally. TV has the potential to deliver benefits for children. Quality TV programs can stimulate a child's imagination, open up a window to the world and provide positive enjoyment (Edgar & Edgar 2008). Many commentators are concerned that quality, pro-social content is not being delivered to children, which it is being lost in the ongoing search for commercial profits to be made from marketing to the child audience (Crossfield, 2008; and Edgar, 2006).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

This research is concerned with the influence of parents on their children's television-viewing habits. For many years, different aspects of the extensive use of television have been subjects of much concern and investigation; nevertheless, many important questions have not yet been explored. The responsibility for selection of suitable television viewing material is left primarily to the parents, but it is not known how extensive such control may be. The present research was designed to provide information that could be useful in answering the questions: How extensive is parental control of children's television-viewing practices? What do parents approve for children's viewing, and do parents control their children's use of television?

There has been much concern over the effects on children not only of violent and unsuitable adult programs (United States Public Health Service, 1972), but also of such well-intentioned programs as Sesame Street (Ratliff, 1972). Despite all the concern, little effort has been made to relieve parents of the

responsibility of controlling selection by reforming what is offered for children's viewing.

Another indication of the importance of the parents' example comes from Schramm (1963), who found that school-age children were much more likely to watch programs on the public television stations if their parents did so. In New England, Maccoby (1954) found that children's use of television to handle frustration depended on social class; she felt that this might ultimately be traced to differences in their parents' viewing habits. All of these findings indicate that parents' habits may be important factors in shaping children's television-viewing habits. In discussing deliberate controls, rather than influence of children's television use, such control as exists is left primarily to the parents (Shayon (1951, p. 45).

Since more television will be offered than the child can use, the influences and controls that shape his use of what is offered depend on the parents. There were studies done by Usher (1955), Himmelweit (1958), Blood (1961), Bilski (1955) and Steiner (1963) to explore parental control, but all of these researchers obtained data for their studies more than 15 years ago. It seems possible that a generation of parents, who, themselves, grew up watching television, may have quite different attitudes toward controlling children's use of television than did the parents questioned by earlier researchers. Most of the respondents in the earlier studies were parents of school-age children; it is also possible that different controls would be considered suitable for children of different ages. The present study will be concerned with determining the extent of such controls for children aged three to five. The information will be useful not only to parents, but to all persons concerned with the problems of effective child guidance and the use of television in our society.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

Generally, the aim of this study is to assess parental control on television viewing habit among Children. The specific Objectives of this are:

1. To determine what parents prefer their children to watch in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State;
2. To find out what controls or guidance parents use to influence children's viewing of Television in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the Objectives of this study, the following Research Questions are formulated to guide the researcher:

1. What do parents prefer their Children to watch in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State?
2. What are the control or guidance measures parents put in place to influence children's viewing habits of Television in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State?

## **Literature Review**

Like many forms of technology, television is evolving, and with evolution comes unforeseen problems. By the time children graduate from high school they have spent about 18,000 hours in front of the television, and only 13,000 hours in a classroom (Milton, 2016). A study conducted by the Kaiser Family foundation revealed that 26% of American children aged two to four years old have a television in their bedrooms. By the time they get to middle school that number has increased to 70% (Roberts & Foyer, 2004). Children with televisions in their bedrooms watch significantly more television than those without private access to television. Parents of children with unlimited access to television reported fewer rules, less co-viewing, and less restrictive mediation (Vittrup, 2009).

## **Television and the Concept of Parent Control**

The invention of the [television](#) was the work of many individuals in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Individuals and corporations competed in various parts of the world to deliver a device that superseded previous technology. Many were compelled to capitalize on the invention and make profit, while some wanted to change the world through visual and audio communication technology (Vittrup, 2009).

According to Cheng et al (2004), a significant landmark in the development of TV was seen After the [World War II](#). An improved form of black-and-white TV broadcasting became popular in the United States and Britain, and television sets became commonplace in homes, businesses, and institutions. During the 1950s, television was the primary medium for influencing [public opinion](#). In the mid-1960s, color broadcasting was introduced in the US and most other developed countries. The availability of multiple types of archival storage media such as [Betamax](#), [VHS](#) tape, [local disks](#), DVDs, [flash drives](#), high-definition [Blu-ray Discs](#), and cloud [digital video recorders](#) has enabled viewers to watch pre-recorded material, such as movies, at home on their own time schedule.

At the end of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, [digital television](#) transmissions greatly increased in popularity. Another development was the move from standard-definition television (SDTV) to [high-definition television](#) (HDTV), which provides a [resolution](#) that is substantially higher (Einspahr, 2010).

Griffin (2009), stressed that this remarkable change has come along with it a change in style, manner and format of TV programming. This has produced a considerable change in the viewing habits of the children in general. In underdeveloped countries such as Nigeria, this shift of viewing pattern of the

children has become a source of worry to most parents, especially when looking at the deteriorating rate of the behaviors of the children which many attributed to the influence of programmes they use to view on TV. He further indicated to the application of the parental control in order to arrest the situation as essential. Parental controls are features which may be included in [digital television services](#), [computer and video games](#), [mobile devices](#) and [software](#) that allow parents to restrict the access of content to their children (Griffin, 2009). These controls were created to assist parents in their ability to restrict certain content viewable by their children. This may be content they deem inappropriate for their age, maturity level or feel is aimed more at an adult audience. Parental controls fall into roughly four categories: [content filters](#), which limit access to [age inappropriate](#) content; usage controls, which constrain the usage of these devices such as placing time-limits on usage or forbidding certain types of usage; computer usage management tools, which enforces the use of certain software; and [monitoring](#), which can track location and activity when using the devices (Lund by, 2005).

Content filters were the first popular type of parental controls to limit access to [Internet](#) content. [Television stations](#) also began to introduce [V-Chip](#) technology to limit access to television content. Modern usage controls are able to restrict a range of explicit content such as explicit songs and movies. They are also able to turn devices off during specific times of the day, limiting the volume output of devices, and with [GPS](#) technology becoming affordable, it is now possible to easily locate devices such as mobile phones.

The demand for parental control methods that restrict content has increased over the decades due to the rising availability of the Internet. A recent [[when?](#)] ICM survey showed that almost a quarter of people under the age of 12 had been exposed to online pornography. Restricting especially helps in cases when children are exposed to inappropriate content by accident. Lund by (2005), argued that monitoring may be effective for lessening acts of [cyber bullying](#) within the internet. It is unclear whether parental controls will affect online harassment in children, as little is known about the role the family plays in protecting children from undesirable experiences online.

Many studies have shown a correlation between television viewing and negative behaviors, including obesity, anxiety, depression, violence, and attention disorders such as ADHD (Cheng, et al., 2004). Two possible ways to combat the effects of television on children is through the process of co-viewing, and mediation. The word “mediate” derives from the Latin word medium, meaning an intervening substance or something that is in the middle (Einspahr, 2010).

According to Rousseau, modes of mediation arise out of humanity's innate perfectibility; the capacity to develop that distinguishes humans from animals in his state of nature stories, and represents various ways in which complex relationships of domination, submission, influence, and freedom are created within selves and between selves, and others.

Einspahr (2010), stressed that the best way to approach the study of mediation, and television is to delve into the socio-cultural framework. Socio-cultural is based on the premise that as people talk, they produce and reproduce culture (Griffin, 2009) It can be argued that all communication is mediated, and mediation makes dialogue possible (Lund by, 2005). This dialogue between self and others helps builds morality and sense of self (Einspahr, 2010) which helps with children's observation and modeling in settings between children and parent.

Witty (2019), argued that Children's television programming has not remained constant over the years any more than has programming for adults. The most popular children's programs of the day, currently, includes Disneyland, Captain Kangaroo, Lassie, and The Mickey Mouse which were proved to be culture and moral value oriented children programmes especially here in Nigeria. There is also prevalence of some notable religious children programmes which many scholars attested to their capacity to promote culture and morality in our settings (Settle, 2019).

Garry (2019), lamented that there are innumerable locally produced children's programs today, many of which are excellent for children viewing in relation to how well they can create greater moral conscious and awareness. This is out of the consideration that Television, like any other mass media, influences children's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in both intended and unintended ways {Gunter & McAllen (1999); Harris (1999); Singer & Singer (2001)}. He emphasize further that parents must be selective in what type of TV programme their children shall view, the application of the parental control kits becomes inevitable.

### **Social Demand and Media Consumption**

Marc Raboy et al (2001) expresses an idea of social demand which is centrally concerned with the significance of media and communications for citizenship and public life. It is an approach that has strong emphasis on media philosophies and practices that are in line with the public interest and with the principles of democratic culture.

In this regard it means making an active contribution to the elaboration of new social perspectives on media policy and regulations so as to generate an

understanding of the social context as opposed to commercial and consumer considerations that need to be taken into account by policy - makers and regulators. In this context the idea of social demand should be seen as a contribution to the necessary task of establishing an alternative basis for policy legitimization for parental guidance in children TV programming. It is a response to the fundamental policy challenge of incorporating a fuller conceptualization of the public interest and its ties to the exercise of citizenship. Rabong et al (2001), argued that it has become necessary, because of prevailing circumstances, for policy makers to formulate new media regulations on the basis of people's real experiences, aspirations and expectations with regard to what children will view. It is necessary also to take time to find out what people actually say about their use of media, specifically TV in this context. Here it is imperative to measure how well the parents applied the parental control appliances in controlling the viewing mechanism of children in different societies especially in Africa where culture, religion and custom accounts for major part of societal values in life.

But what of children viewing behavior, to come to the point of our study; what are the children's motivation for watching television? On what basis do their parents choose from expanded range of channels and programmes that are now available to them? And how might we begin to think about parental guidance in children TV programming when it comes to the child audiences? These are the major concerns of this study.

There is some evidence that parents have a considerable influence on children's viewing patterns in ways more subtle than their direct efforts at control. The findings reflect the fact that parents are the primary determiners of the child's environment. They set the style of living as well as their own style of interacting with their child. Maccoby (1954) indicated that differences in the social class of the parents determined the differences in television-viewing behavior that she found among the children in her sample. Blood (1961) found that parental practices for controlling children watching television varied significantly according to the parents' social class. Schramm (1961) found that children were much more likely to watch adult crime and western programs if their parents watched them. It is not clear whether this effect is due to family viewing being preferred or to the children's desire to imitate their parents.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura believed that we learn by observing others. Bandura used the word modeling for the process of response acquisition (Griffin, 2012.). Bandura

called this theory the Social Learning Theory. He believed children and adults acquire attitudes, and emotional responses through televised modeling (Griffin, 2012). With the increase in children's television exposure, attitudes such as talking back to parents that are learned from watching compared to real life may steadily increase. Children model parent's involvement with the television, and mimic their behaviors, including types of programs viewed and hours spent. Lack of parental involvement in television viewing may continue to increase these effects.

Bandura believes that television programmers are so successful at grabbing and holding attention due to five factors, thus; keep it simple, distinctive, prevalent, useful and positive (Griffin, 2012).

According to Young Yun Kim (1977), as foreign immigrants move from one culture to another, behavioral modes and values in the old setting may prove maladaptive in the new. This creates high levels of uncertainty among foreigners; they must learn to understand the norms and values in their new society, called acculturation (Woo & Dominick, 2003). While this process is most familiar with foreign immigrants, the same process is brought forth in toddlers being assimilated into society. "Through prolonged and varied experiences in communication, children gradually learn and internalize the symbols and practices of the communication system (Woo & Dominick, 2003)". With a high exposure to television, an immigrant or child may become accustomed to the language, actions, and symbols that the television provides both in television content, as well as the symbolization of the advertisements. George Gerbner believed that broadcasting is the most concentrated, homogenized, and globalized medium (Gerbner, 1998). In the United States the top 100 advertisers pay for two thirds of all network television, and six global businesses own all major network television stations, as well as a major portion of all other stations (Ownership Chart, 2011). When advertising and television content are combined, the cultural effects create, or reflect images that may or may not reflect parental beliefs.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the research design, the population of the study, sampling technique and sampling size. In addition, instrument of data collection, data presentation and analysis procedures are described in this section.

Black and Champion (1975), postulate that, methodology explicit the study design and constitutes the "how to do it" phase. Their assertion includes the population to be studied; the types of sampling plan to be followed, the size of the sample to be drawn and the type of instrument used.



This study adopts the survey research method. This is to give room for obtaining detailed information needed to make this study worthwhile. The survey research method was used because it is the most appropriate research method in measuring public opinion, attitudes and orientations, which are dominant among a large population at a particular period. Ohaja (2003:11) confirms that, survey is appropriate when studying the characteristics of a sample through administration of questionnaire which is intended for generalizations concerning the population of interest. This method allows for examining the demographic characteristics of the respondents, their attitudes, intentions and views as well as the psychographic questions concerning the effectiveness of the media in resolving issues of controlling children viewing habit. The research uses questionnaire and in-depth interview containing structured questions to elicit relevant information from the respondents.

One important goal of scientific research is to describe the nature of the population – a group or class of subject, concept or phenomena. Identifying characteristics which members of the universe have in common and which will identify each unit as being a member of a particular group, (Walizer & Wiener, 2000; Osuala, 1999). Accordingly, the population of this study was the Households in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State which according to Census 2006 is 306,716.

Sampling is a process of selecting a given number or any portion of that population for the purpose of obtaining information for generalization about the large population (Nwabukei 1986:47). In selecting the sample for this study, purposive sampling technique was adopted. According to this method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject (Freedman *et al.*, 2007). In this study, the sample members were selected based on whether the family possesses TV set as well as the number of children available in the households.

The sample size of this study was determined using T. Yamane proposition. Yamane (1967:886) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample size with 95% confidence level and 0.05 precision. The formula is thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Level of significance

1 = Constant

Take into consideration the following:

$$n = ?$$

$$N = 306,716$$

$$e = 0.05^2$$

By substitution in the formula

$$n = \frac{306,716}{1 + 306,716 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{306,716}{1 + 306,716 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{306,716}{1 + 766.79} = \frac{306,716}{766.79}$$

n = 400 Sample size

In line with the above calculation, a total of 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the target sample in order to elicit response with regards to the study. Questionnaire was the primary instrument of data collection. This questionnaire comprises of two distinct sections. Section 'A' contains demographic characteristics of the respondents like age, gender, marital status, educational qualification etc while section 'B' contains psychographic questions structured to provide answers to the research questions. The questions were close-ended designed to provide a frame of reference in order to improve response specificity as postulated by Clason & Dormody (1994, p.31).

The data was finally analyzed quantitatively. Simple percentage was used to present the data which was obtained from the respondents. The data was presented in a tabular form with each table taking particular information to ensure accurate presentation and explanation of the relevant data that will aid the study.

### **DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS**

The presentation of data collected means the ways of presenting and arranging the different forms of data obtained through various data collecting techniques to enable the researcher performed analysis and extract conclusion from it. The data collected was presented in simple table. The data analysis was based on the answers to the questions received from the residence of Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, retrieved and analyzed, the outcome was used to address the

Research Questions earlier formulated and thus forms the general findings of the research.

**Research Question One:** What do parents prefer their Children to watch in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State?

On the bases of this question, majority of the respondents (95%) strongly agree that Parents prefer their children to watch programs that value gentleness and caring in interpersonal relationships, place a positive value on education and on knowledge of science and nature, and are simultaneously fun and active, engaging children in dance, music, art and craft. They prepare formats such as dramatization in programming and making media content aimed at children's consumption for the simple believe that such can induce their children for complete retention to the programmes.

The Parents also prefer their children to watch programs that respect children and support their total development, encourage good social relationships, and promote physical activity, inquiry, problem solving, artistic pursuits, and positive moral qualities. Similarly Parents indicate their preference for their children to watch programmes that promote educational goals and positive social values and provide cultural richness to young ones. Parents indicate their desire for their children to watch locally made products on TV that would encourage children to develop as individuals and as social beings in their particular culture.

**Research Question Two:** What are the control or guidance measures parents put in place to influence children's viewing of Television in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State?

On bases of this question majority of the respondents indicates that Parents use the "v-chip" technology to block violent programs on Television they do not want their children to be exposed to. The result therefore means that Parents use the "v-chip" technology to block violent programs on Television they do not want their children to be exposed to. Similarly the result shows that Parents keep an eye on the tube by locating the family TV in a central location where they can monitor who is watching what and also not allowing Children to have TV sets in their bedrooms. Parents also watch and evaluate new programs--even cartoons--before letting their children to tune in so as to influence the children's viewing habits. The study also shows that Parents in Jos South Local Government Area do not watch "adult" programs when children are present as a means to control what the children would be exposed to.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that Parents in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State like their children to see programs that value gentleness and caring in interpersonal relationships, place a positive value on education and on

knowledge of science and nature, and are simultaneously fun and active, engaging children in dance, music, art and craft. In addition, Parents want their children to watch programs that respect children and support their total development, encourage good social relationships, and promote physical activity, inquiry, problem solving, artistic pursuits, and positive moral qualities in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Still more, the research safely concludes that Parents prefer their children to watch programmes that promote educational goals and positive social values and provide cultural richness to young children and also prefer their children to watch locally made products on TV that would encourage children to develop as individuals and as social beings in their particular culture.

The research work does not guarantee that all households in Jos North Local Government Area have control measures for their children but, but it will guarantee this probability, at least one out of every ten household in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State employ one form of control measures for children television viewing habits or other. More so, Parents watch and evaluate new programs--even cartoons--before letting their children to tune in so as to influence the children's viewing habits and control what they children gain access to.

Finally, Parents use the "v-chip" technology to block violent programs on Television they do not want their children to be exposed to plus Parents in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State keeps an eye on the tube by locating the family TV in a central location where they can monitor who is watching what and also not allowing Children to have TV sets in their bedrooms.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher recommends that since Parents in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State want their children to watch programs that respect children and support their total development, encourage good social relationships, and promote physical activity, inquiry, problem solving, artistic pursuits, and positive moral qualities, media programme planners should gear their efforts towards airing programs that would help in encouraging good social relationships among Children and promote positive moral qualities in the lives of Children in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Also, the research recommends that the "v-chip" technology is a very good method of blocking violent programs on Television as such; Parents in Jos South Local Government area of Plateau State are encouraged to install it on

their Children's Television sets so as to block channels they do not want their children to be exposed to.

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