

Research Paper :

Televiwing and academic activities of children

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ABSTRACT

This study was taken up to find out the duration of televiwing and study hours of children in relation to their academic activities. A sample of 500 children between the age groups of 9-12 years (termed as younger age group) and 12-15 years (termed as older age group) was selected for the study using a questionnaire and a diary as a tool for collecting the data. The data were analysed using frequency and percentage, mean, t-test and correlation coefficient. The study revealed that most of the variables of academic activities considered under the study were highly significant and positively correlated with duration of T.V. viewing. When the duration of T.V. viewing and study hours were evaluated, it revealed that frequency of T.V. viewing and study were more on weekdays than weekends. There was significant difference at the beginning and end of the academic session, between duration of T.V. viewing and study hours of children, on weekdays and weekends.

Key words : Televiwing pattern, Academic activities. Gender difference 9-15 yearsm, Academic sessions.

Television viewing is very common in all age groups *i.e.* children, adolescents, adults and aged people, but there are children who spend much of their time in India, many Indian homes have their television sets either linked with National Television Network or cable Network which decide the degree of TV watching by children which has also been rapidly increasing. The number of hours a child or youngster spends daily before TV is increasing and television environment is becoming the ruling environment in their lives.

Television has a number of beneficial influences upon children. Shukla and Kumar (1997) concluded that as a result of TV viewing, school children particularly younger ones, showed more inquisitiveness especially during classes related to general science. As a result of TV viewing, the general understanding and information seeking behaviour of the children did change, other effects include gains in cognitive development. Television presents child with a world that is often different from one he or she lives in. This means that though television, the child is exposed to a wider variety of viewing and knowledge which may differ from those provided by parents, teachers and peers.

Another study from the school of Public Health revealed that access to television has a direct association with children's hours of viewing and school-related activity. Children who do not have a television set in their bedroom spend about 40 minutes less per day watching TV or playing video and computer games than children who do and they read or do homework about 20 minutes more per day if their parents also set limits on television

viewing. The study, which was analysed data from nearly 1,200 sixth and seventh graders from 10 Boston- area middle schools, found that the students averaged approximately three hours and 20 minutes per day of viewing time, including playing computer/video games and spent an average of one hour and 36 minutes per day reading or doing homework (Harvard Gazette, 2001).

Television has radically altered the way we live exerting both positive and negative influence in our lives. Excessive television viewing has reduced one's attention span *i.e.* people cannot concentrate or hold attention for a long span of time. Channel surfing and shifting the focus of attention with a click on the remote control, affect the young and old alike. Children cannot sit long to study or to read serious matter, they read less, they play less and they socialize less, they cannot concentrate on any activity for too long. People prefer fast foods, want instant gratification and are becoming increasingly impatient and rest less (Plathottam in Assam Tribune, Media and Family, 2000). The present study is an attempt to study the televiwing pattern in relation academic activities of children.

METHODOLOGY

Study was conducted in Jorhat town of the state of Assam. Five hundred samples from five Assamese medium co-educational schools were selected including boys and girls between 9 to 12 years termed as younger age group and 12-15 years termed as older age group ever. For data collection, survey was conducted with the help of questionnaire. A diary was also prepared to collect

reliable information. Data were collected in the calendar year 2002 and the diary was given for two months at the beginning of the academic session (February-March, 2002) and for two months at the end of the academic session (August-September, 2002). The collected data were tabulated and analyzed statistically by calculating the frequency and percentage, mean and by applying t-test to find significant differences between both the gender and correlation coefficient to see correlation between televiewing pattern and variable of academic activities.

Analysis was done to study the correlation between the aspects of academic activities and duration of TV viewing. It has been observed (Table 1) that almost all the variables of academic activities, considered under the study were highly significant and positively correlated with duration of TV viewing especially doing home while viewing TV ($r = 0.651^{**}$), restriction of TV viewing during school examinations ($r = 0.395^{**}$) were all positively correlated with duration of TV viewing. Preference of reading newspapers ($r = -0.684^{**}$), magazines ($r = -0.568^{**}$), comics ($r = -0.532^{**}$) and story books ($r = -0.567^{**}$) to TV viewing were negatively correlated.

A non-significant negative correlation between studying while TV viewing and duration of TV ($r = -0.025^{NS}$) was also observed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Out of higher percentage of children of both younger and older age groups, majority of boys in comparison to girls, neither studied nor did homework while viewing TV. It may be due to the fact that for fear of making blunders while during homework, or disruption and inability to concentrate fully, the children cannot afford to study or do homework while viewing T.V. Moreover, as majority of the children had cable connections, they may not be able to give full concentration neither in their studies or homework nor in the TV programmes.

The present study revealed that a low per cent of children daily adjusted study hours, whereas, a majority of older age group children sometimes adjusted study hours to view their favourite TV programmes. This study is supported by the findings of Narayanan (1983) who reported that children adjusted their study hours in such a way so that they would complete their homework as well as enjoyed their favourite programmes. Another observation by Sangwan and Chhikara (2003) revealed that sometimes when respondents were interested in watching their favourite programmes other than their prescribed time, either they finished their homework and studies before that or they promised to their parents to

Table 1 : Relationship between variables of academic activities and duration of T.V. viewing

Variable	Correlation coefficient (r)
Studying while TV viewing	-0.025 ^{NS}
Doing home work while TV viewing	0.651 ^{**}
Adjusting study hours to view favourite TV programmes	0.779 ^{**}
Parents restricting TV viewing due to studies	0.597 ^{**}
Totally avoiding TV viewing during school examination	0.616 ^{**}
Restricting TV viewing during school examination	0.395 ^{**}
Discussion of TV programme with parents/peers	
– To understand it better	0.672 ^{**}
– For enjoyment	0.716 ^{**}
– To take part in conversation	0.765 ^{**}
Studying more on Saturdays to compensate TV viewing on Sunday	0.778 ^{**}
Keep on thinking about TV programmes in the school	0.798 ^{**}
TV programmes are informative and educative TV viewing helps in learning about	0.552 ^{**}
– New things	0.703 ^{**}
– Different types of people	0.713 ^{**}
– Different places	0.712 ^{**}
Prefer reading to TV viewing	
– Newspapers	-0.684 ^{**}
– Magazines	-0.568 ^{**}
– Comics	-0.532 ^{**}
– Story books	-0.567 ^{**}
TV viewing taught in avoiding doing many things	0.728 ^{**}
Keeping away from TV viewing helps in more concentration in studies	0.612 ^{**}
Keep waiting from morning to view favourite TV serials in the evening	0.764 ^{**}
Discuss with friends what may happen in the next episode	0.788 ^{**}
Bet with friends what will happen in the next episode	0.509 ^{**}

** indicates significance of value at $p = 0.01$,

NS : Non-significant

finish that work after the programme.

The frequency of TV viewing of children was not the same on each day of the week. Viewing was more on weekdays *i.e.* Monday to Friday, than weekends (Saturday and Sunday). On weekdays (Table 2) at the beginning of the academic session, children spent 5 hours and 36 minutes on TV viewing, on Saturday 1 hour and 32 minutes

Table 2 : Age and genderwise distribution of respondents in relation to approximate time devoted to T.V. viewing (in hours:min)

Particulars	Boys			Girls			Total		
	Academic session						Beginning	End	t-value
	Beginning	End	t-value	Beginning	End	t-value			
Younger age group (9-12 yrs)									
Weekdays	5:33	3:13	4.81**	6:19	3:30	4.38**	5:56	3:21	6.80**
Saturdays	1:57	1:28	4.34**	1:38	1:05	3.79**	1:47	1:16	6.14**
Sundays	3:23	2:23	5.57**	2:24	1:00	2.91**	2:53	1:41	5.67**
Weekly total	10:53	7:04	6.08**	10:21	5:35	4.39**	10:37	6:19	7.22**
Older age group (12-15 yrs)									
Weekdays	4:13	2:37	2.96**	6:22	3:09	5.75**	5:17	2:53	6.11**
Saturdays	1:05	1:09	1.82 ^{NS}	1:29	1:06	4.94**	1:17	1:07	4.74**
Sundays	2:18	2:21	2.68**	2:02	1:27	4.41**	2:10	1:54	5.05**
Weekly total	7:36	6:07	3.04**	9:53	5:42	5.86**	8:44	5:54	6.28**
Total									
Weekdays	4:53	2:55	5.83**	6:20	3:19	7.07**	5:36	3:07	9.14**
Saturdays	1:31	1:18	4.79**	1:33	1:05	6.10**	1:32	1:11	7.72**
Sundays	2:50	2:22	5.78**	2:13	1:13	5.08**	2:31	1:47	7.59**
Weekly total	9:14	6:35	4.35**	10:07	5:38	7.16**	9:40	6:06	9.56**

* and ** indicate significance of values at $p = 0.05$ and 0.01 respectively, NS : Non-significant

and on Sunday 2 hours and 31 minutes were spent on TV viewing. Compared to weekdays, the duration of TV viewing on Saturdays and Sundays may be less due to children being overloaded with homework, tuitions, projects, assignments, etc. on the academic side. Further, weekends were also kept for extra-curricular activities like sports, music, art and craft activities, which are mostly organized during weekends.

It was also observed that the frequency of televiewing was higher at the beginning of the academic session as compared to the end of the session. The decrease in duration of TV viewing may be due to the approaching annual examination and workload being at its peak as the child is unable to spare more time in TV viewing. Moreover, parents may impose restrictions on TV viewing during this time.

It is evident from the present study that at both the academic sessions, there was no significant difference between boys and girls of both the age groups in televiewing as 't' value obtained was non-significant. This finding is supported by the findings of Mayuri and Mohite (1992) who found that there were no significant differences between both the genders and the family type of the children in regards to mean television viewing time. However, the means indicated that girls viewed television for longer duration than boys.

On weekdays and Saturdays at the beginning of the session compared to boys, the duration of TV viewing of girls of both the age groups were more. It may be due to the fact that as girls enter into adolescent stage, there may be decline in socialization. This may be attributed to

identity crisis, as they may feel awkward due to the various physical changes, as such they fill in most of the time watching TV.

Results also revealed that compared to respondents of older age groups, the weekly total duration of TV viewing by respondents of the younger age group was more, at both beginning and end of the session. This finding is in agreement with that of Abrol *et al.* (1991) who revealed that younger children (8-10 years) watched more TV than the older ones (10-12 years). Another study by Sultana (1997) revealed that children from the lower age group (10-11 years) comparatively viewed more TV, than the upper age group (14-15 years), which may be in order to fulfill their curiosity. And because their study load is less in comparison to older age group, they can devote more time in television viewing.

Results (Table 3) revealed that, higher percentages of older age group respondent children were low viewers, both at the beginning and at the end of the academic session. Whereas among least percentage of high viewers and less percentage of moderate viewers, majority of the children were of the younger age group.

Children did not study with equal frequency on each day of the week. Duration of study was more on weekdays (Monday to Friday) than on weekends (Saturday and Sunday). There was significant difference between mean hours of study between male and female respondents of both the age groups at both beginning and end of the academic session. It may be because parents treat both the genders equally. Moreover, parents are aware about the importance of studies, so, priority is given to both male

Table 3 : Age and genderwise distribution of respondents according to viewership pattern

Viewership pattern	No. of respondents						Grand total (N = 500)
	Age group						
	9-12 yrs (n = 310)			12-15 yrs (n = 190)			
	Boys (n ₁ = 150)	Girls (n ₂ = 160)	Total	Boys (n ₁ = 98)	Girls (n ₂ = 92)	Total	
Beginning							
High viewers (>15 hrs)	24 (16.00)	21 (13.13)	45 (14.52)	5 (5.10)	11 (11.96)	16 (8.42)	61 (12.20)
Moderate viewers (7.5 to 15 hrs)	55 (36.67)	43 (26.88)	98 (31.61)	24 (24.49)	27 (29.35)	51 (26.84)	149 (29.80)
Low viewers (<7.5 hrs)	71 (47.33)	96 (60.00)	167 (53.87)	69 (70.41)	54 (58.70)	123 (64.74)	290 (58.00)
End							
High viewers (>15 hrs)	9 (6.00)	5 (3.13)	14 (4.52)	3 (3.06)	3 (3.26)	6 (3.16)	20 (4.00)
Moderate viewers (7.5 to 15 hrs)	22 (14.67)	17 (10.63)	39 (12.58)	11 (11.22)	9 (9.78)	20 (10.53)	59 (11.80)
Low viewers (<7.5 hrs)	119 (79.33)	138 (86.25)	257 (82.90)	84 (85.71)	80 (86.96)	164 (86.32)	421 (84.20)

Table 4 : Mean study hours of respondents in relation to viewership pattern (in hrs:min)

Viewership pattern	No. of respondents						Grand total (N = 500)
	Age group						
	9-12 yrs (n = 310)			12-15 yrs (n = 190)			
	Boys (n ₁ = 150)	Girls (n ₂ = 160)	Total	Boys (n ₁ = 98)	Girls (n ₂ = 92)	Total	
Beginning							
High viewers (>15 hrs)	17:14	19:14	18:14	26:06	27:14	26:40	22:27
Moderate viewers (7.5 to 15 hrs)	18:02	20:42	19:22	27:33	27:20	27:26	23:24
Low viewers (<7.5 hrs)	17:15	21:06	19:10	27:02	27:35	27:18	23:14
End							
High viewers (>15 hrs)	22:03	22:06	22:34	29:31	28:08	28:49	35:27
Moderate viewers (7.5 to 15 hrs)	23:25	21:45	22:35	31:03	30:07	30:35	26:35
Low viewers (<7.5 hrs)	22:16	23:32	22:54	29:24	30:04	29:44	26:19

and female respondents.

The mean study hours of respondents in relation to viewership pattern revealed (Table 4) that, the mean hours of study of respondents of older age group, regardless of being high, moderate or low viewers were more at the beginning and end of the academic session. Genderwise distribution revealed that at the beginning the mean scores obtained by high viewer female respondents were more (27 hours and 14 minutes per week) than males (26 hours and 6 minutes per week). It is a general observation that girls are more serious in their studies. So, they tried to maintain a balance between viewing TV programmes and duration of study hours. Whereas the mean scores for moderate and low viewers of both male and female respondents were more or less same.

A comparison of time spent in television viewing and study revealed (Table 5) that boys and girls of both the age groups, at both the sessions (beginning and end) spent more or less same duration in TV viewing and study. The duration of TV viewing and study of boys and girls were 7 hours and 54 minutes and 25 hours and 11 minutes; and 7 hours and 52 minutes and 25 hours and 47 minutes, respectively. There were significant differences between TV viewing and study.

The results of the present study also revealed that the children did not view TV and study with equal frequency on each day of the week. Duration of TV viewing and study of both the age groups boys and girls at both beginning and end of the sessions were more on weekdays, compared to weekends.

Table 5 : Age and genderwise comparison of duration of T.V. viewing and study hours (in hours:min) weekly total

Particulars	Academic session						Total		
	Beginning			End			TV viewing	Study	t-value
	TV viewing	Study	t-value	TV viewing	Study	t-value			
Younger age group (9-12 yrs)									
Boys	10:53	18:40	-12.67**	7:04	23:40	-41.34**	8:58	21:10	-26.51**
Girls	10:21	20:43	-13.00**	5:35	23:21	-42.77**	7:58	22:02	-27.12**
Total	10:37	19:41	-18.20**	6:19	23:30	-59.44**	8:28	21:35	-37.95**
Older age group (12-15 yrs)									
Boys	7:36	27:51	-27.65**	6:07	30:54	-32.78**	6:51	29:22	-40.87**
Girls	9:53	27:47	-13.08**	5:42	31:17	-25.41**	7:47	29:32	-24.18**
Total	8:44	27:49	-24.95**	5:54	30:55	-40.33**	7:19	29:22	-42.53**
Total									
Boys	9:14	23:15	-23.99**	6:35	27:07	-51.54**	7:54	25:11	-44.61**
Girls	10:07	24:15	-18.24**	5:38	27:19	-43.64**	7:52	25:47	-35.76**
Total	9:40	23:45	-29.38**	6:06	27:13	-66.77**	7:53	25:29	-56.08**

* and ** indicate significance of values at P = 0.05 and 0.01, respectively, NS : Non-significant

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