Evaluation of Children and the Media

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Introduction

In 2017, there was a total time of 64 minutes spent that children between the ages five to eight spent time with television. There is a total percentage of 34% of children in the United States who have smartphones. It has become more critical for parents to monitor their children's media and entertainment use and to establish a cutoff point to their uncovering of inappropriate materials that premiere in the press. (Watson, 2019) If you don't have kids, chances are you have seen a Buzzfeed list of the best viral videos for children. These "best" viral videos are meant to be taken as a good idea, but parents need to know what their kids are watching and asking about more than just "where is my toothbrush." Parents need to look for signs that indicate when something might be too much or inappropriate for their child. For example, many children love dinosaurs, and they can seem harmless in the media world. But in the toddler's mind, they could be scary and end up with an unnecessary fear of these creatures. This is an actual example of what can come from a child's watching a video that could be inappropriate for their developmental stage. The media plays a vital role in the lives of young people as they grow up. It can be a powerful educational tool, an avenue to explore new ideas and cultures, or a source of entertainment.

This specified research proposal will discover the relationship between children who are heavy media users and children who are fewer media users.

This literature review will first consider past research related to children that are heavy media users. Secondly, this literature review will consider past research about children that are fewer media users. Thirdly, a rationale will be accounted for, accompanied by two hypotheses.

Literature Review

Children who are heavy media users

In 2009, United States parents were surveyed to indicate that 29% of 8 to 18-year-olds had their laptop computer, 84% had home internet access, and youth spent 90 minutes a day on average using computers. In this same study, half of the population of 8 to 18-year-olds were reported watching content that would be on television, on a mobile device like a tablet or cell phone every day (Vaala et al., 2015). Mobile devices contain the same elements as television would but more graphics and opportunities for children to discover the media.

Past research indicates that children who involve themselves in media too much would cause physical and emotional harm and changes in children's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Thorn, 2008). Based on the specific age group of children, over the years, parent involvement of children who are into the media can manipulate variables such as the setting of the electronic devices, parent vs. video presentation, and computer interaction between the child and the device (Thorn, 2008). Past research has discovered that television shows such as *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Sesame Street* have a fast pace and special effects that can make children have not enough time to replay what they have seen mentally (McCollum Jr. & Bryant, 2003)

Children who use different media types can experience adverse effects when those early teens are online or active. Children’s limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, children and some adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media. In addition, there are frequent expressions of behaviors that individuals would do offline, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation, that have introduced problems such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, and “sexting” (O’Keefee & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). On behalf of television, violence on screen has been in discussion by children researchers

over the past four to five years about the way violence is portrayed on television and the creating of violent ratings (Wartella, 1999).

Parents who share their media devices with their children cause children to experience the activity of co-viewing. Co-viewing under particular circumstances may contribute to unfavorable outcomes. Among young children, in particular, co-viewing with a parent is associated with more time spent watching television and greater exposure to adult programming rather than children's programming. (Connell et al. 2015) Another parent sharing of media is parent mediation. Parent mediation is any parent's strategy to control, supervise, or interpret media their children may use. The predominant motivating factor in parental mediation has been a fear of potential adverse viewing effects (Warren et al. 2002).

Children who are fewer media users

The age range of children less into the media shows a new way of life. An experiment by Richard Thorn involving infants proves this statement. Mothers who read to their babies when they are still in the womb will actively seek their mother's voice reading the same story once they are newborns or infants (Thorn, 2008). Parent involvement with this issue of children being not as involved in the media has shown parents' practices regarding their children and teenagers' media use, including parental co-viewing and co-use, active or evaluative mediation in which parents discuss media content, and restriction of child access to media (Connell et al. 2015).

The child's center, which is the brain and the heart, makes them feel affected by their parents in a loving way when the child is not involved in media all the time. The rapid proliferation of brain cells in the first eight months is followed by significant cell pruning for efficient operation through age 2, a process that continues as the brain shapes itself through childhood (Thorn, 2008). Children's cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral orientations toward

physical affection are mainly derived from direct, personal experience. Thus, the family becomes a primary socializing agent for developing an understanding of affection (Callister & Robinson, 2010). This proves that there is more hugging than mugging (Callister & Robinson, 2010). Young children, for example, spend more time at home, so they demand more time from their parents (Warren et al., 2002).

When children have books read to them by mom or dad, children's imagination can come alive. The role of print media as a social proves begins within utero reading and extends through the newborn, toddler, and early childhood stages. When a parent or other adult holds a child and reads aloud, several powerful and separate sensory components in the developmental world of infants, toddlers, and young children, these ages can feel the warm touch being held by their parents, the scent of mom or dad or another familiar person, the familiar voice sound, and the sight of images, letters, or colors from the book (Thorn, 2008).

While children get to have some television time, past research has proved that children can have benefited from watching educational programs based upon the children's age. The educational content in educational children's television consists of physical well-being, motor skills, social skills, emotional development, creativity, language and literacy, positive attitudes about learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, numeracy, etc. Children who see and hear information simultaneously have a more excellent recall than when they see or hear information in isolation. Even children who view educational shows had higher academic grades in mathematics, science, and English language arts than infrequent viewers (Moore-Russo et al., 2013).

Rationale

The emergence and wide accessibility of internet-based technologies provide a challenge to parents navigating the ever-changing home media context (Vaala & Bleakley, 2015). In addition, research on children's use of the media, whether conducted for commercial or public television production, has emphasized an empowered child (Wartella, 1999). By these statements and previous research in the literature review, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Children who are heavy media users will negatively view life more than light media users. The benefits of reading or experiencing print-based materials seem to arise from the increased contact with the person reading: an interpersonal service from the communication process, nonverbally as much as verbally or visually (Thorn, 2008). It is hypothesized that:

H2: Children who are fewer media users will positively view life than heavy media users.

Method

To examine our first hypothesis, the independent variable was kids involved in the media, and the dependent variable was the negative influence the media has on children's lives. To examine our second hypothesis, the independent variable was kids involved in the media, and the dependent variable was the positive influence the media has on children's lives.

Participants

Participants were recruited from local childcare centers in Harrisonburg, Virginia, parents, and children aged 2 to 10. The study was offered to 250 participants for this study. To participate in this study, participants must be parents of children who are in a local childcare center and must be aware of their children's technology use featuring television, social media, computer use, etc. This device will select from a random sample of 2,500 parents and children who know their children's media use by a survey via email by an electronic number generator.

Procedures

Participants were informed of the survey that will be filling out about their children's interest in media. The selected participants of parents were sent an email by their local childcare center directors about this study. Those who chose to engage in this study are to click on the link for the survey. Informed consent will appear before they have agreed to share their results in the survey. The parents of children took the survey for about 15 minutes. The survey included questions about their children and their use of media devices. Once each parent completed the study, they were thanked for their time and input.

Manipulations and Measurements

The independent variable was measured to the children involved in the media. An existing measurement was used (Connel et al., 2015). The measure brought thought to the parents who involve their children in technology with six questions. This measure uses a 4 point Likert scale, where one is equivalent to Never, and four equals All or most of the time. Participants respond how much time their child or children spends on media types. (See Appendix B).

The dependent variable being measured is the positive or negative effect media can bring to children's lives. An existing measure was used (Warren et al. 2002). This measure got five questions. This measure uses a 4 point Likert scale, where one is equal to never, and four equals all or most of the time. First, participants respond to their instructive mediation on their children's media use. (See Appendix C).

The survey has five demographic questions requesting the participants' gender, relationship status, education, children's age, and children's gender.

Results

For hypothesis 1, the independent variable was children who are heavy media users, and the dependent variable was those children who will have a negative view of their lives. For hypothesis 2, the independent variable was children who are lighter media users, and the dependent variable was those children who will have a favorable view of their lives. For both of the hypotheses, we chose a t-Test because the independent variable was nominal with two levels and the dependent variable was interval/ratio.

Findings

For hypothesis 1, it was predicted that children who are heavy media users would have a negative view of their life. However, the results from the t-Test showed that children who are lighter media users (M = 2.9183) would have a positive outlook on their life more than children who are more heavily involved in the media (M = 3.7217), $t(3.917) = 78$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.018$. These findings revealed a significant difference between the levels of our independent variable groups on our dependent variable, with a large effect size. Thus, the results support our hypothesis.

For hypothesis 2, it was predicted that children who are lighter media users would have a positive view of their life. The results from the t-Test showed that children who are heavy media users (M = 4.0317) will have a negative view on their life (M = 4.08783), $t(3.917) = 65$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.02$. These findings revealed a significant difference between the levels of our independent variable groups on our dependent variable, with a small effect size. Thus, the results support our hypothesis.

Discussion

This study's goal was to experimentally examine the effect types of media such as books, television, audio, and video games have on children aged two to ten years of age.

Discussion of Results

After conducting a t-Test for all of the data, it was discovered that the independent variable had a significant difference for the two hypotheses. From these results, it was determined that the two hypotheses were confirmed.

Previous literature such as (Connell et al. 2015; Moore-Russo et al. 2013; Thorn, 2008; Warren et al. 2002) pointed to support our second hypothesis, which predicted that children who are fewer media users would have a positive view on life more than heavy media users. The literature specifically showed that children who see and hear information simultaneously have a more excellent recall than when they see or hear the news. In addition, children who view educational shows had higher academic grades in mathematics, science, and English language arts than infrequent viewers (Moore-Russo et al., 2013). Thus, this study proposed that because heavy media users will have a negative view of their life, it could be predicted that the children could get out of hand with the media once they become older. Although the hypothesis agrees with the literature, there is reason to believe the study design played a significant role in the supported theory.

As well as the second hypothesis, the first hypothesis was additionally supported by previous literature such as (Connell et al. 2015; McCollum Jr. & Bryant, 2003; O'Keefee & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Thorn, 2008; Vaala et al. 2015; Wartella, 1999) found that children who are heavy media users will have a negative view of life more than light media users. This

allowed researchers to hypothesize that children who are fewer media users will have a positive perspective on life more than heavy media users. However, once again, the research design limited the study to support this hypothesis.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Research Design

Since the two hypotheses were supported, even though they aligned with accurate previous research findings, it is clear the research design was complete, but it has its strengths. Among those strengths were the surveys that measured both the independent and dependent variables. In addition, each scale was very counted on, as previously noted in the results section. However, even with these strengths, there were not many limitations involved in the research design.

Implications of Findings

Based on the findings that support the hypotheses, there are not many substantial implications from this study's results. However, children involved more in media types can be influenced to view life-based on their viewing negatively. Findings in the study were found and matched up with the literature review because the hypotheses were supported fully. Based upon our results, there are tons of positive and negative ways children's lives can be affected by children who are online users of media types.

Suggestions for Future Research

Widening the topic on children and the media could benefit future research. As the press increases each day, children have a greater chance of being included in media increase due to parents and older siblings or adolescents. Children who are already spending too much time on an electronic device should not be forgotten or ignored. Future research is necessary to learn

more about how the media can affect children as they grow older into the adults they become with the future ahead of them.

Conclusion

Overall, while this research study was practical as expected, it doesn't ignore that children should not constantly be on their parent's or own devices. This study attempted to show the differences in the media's effects on children's future as they continue their education all through graduate school or wherever their life may take them. While the two hypotheses were supported, changes could be made to the study by the way parents could be more into being there for their children and the parents being involved in this study to show parenting styles and the media. The importance of this topic between children and the media should not be forgotten. Future research should be continued to understand better how the media can affect our future generations.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?

a. Male

b. Female

c. Other (Please specify)

2. What is your current relationship status?

a. Married

b. Divorced/Separated

c. Single

d. Widowed

3. What is your highest level of education?

a. High School

b. Some college

c. Trade/Tech school

d. Associates degree

e. Bachelor's degree

f. Masters or higher

4. How old is your child?

a. 2-4

b. 5-8

c. 8-10

5. What gender is your child?

a. Male

b. Female

Appendix B - Children's media use

Children use one media type than the other

Scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Once in a while; 3 = Some of the time; 4 = All or most of the time

1. My child reads books

1, 2, 3, 4

1. My child watches television

1, 2, 3, 4

3. My child uses a computer or laptop

1, 2, 3, 4

4. My child plays video games

1, 2, 3, 4

5. My child plays on a tablet

1, 2, 3, 4

6. My child has or plays on a smartphone

1, 2, 3, 4

Appendix C - The positive or negative effect on children using media types

Children using technology can bring a positive or negative effect on kids

Scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Once in a while; 3 = Some of the time; 4 = All or most of the time

1. As a parent, I try to help my child understand what they see on TV

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1. As a parent, I point out some things the characters do are good

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1. As a parent, I point out some things characters do are bad

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1. As a parent, I explain reasons why characters do what they do

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1. As a parent, I explain what something in the media really means

1, 2, 3, 4, 5