

Television Addiction Among Children

Abstract

In today's world television watching can't be avoided. It is increasingly become pastime for children and adults alike. Addiction may include behaviours that may be intrinsically life fulfilling but have appeared out of control for example exercise, relationships or work. Addictions may also include behaviours that are often intrinsically not associated with excess, but are often considered a waste of productive time (e.g. television viewing). Excessive television watching among children is resulting in many problems. This paper discusses about the predictors of television addiction, symptoms of television addiction and effects of excessive television watching.

Keywords: Addiction, Heavy Viewers

Introduction

Television is the magical invention and it is a good source of entertainment and passing time.

There are many different types of programs available on Television. The viewers can watch news, weather reports, current events of the world, movies, reality shows, cartoons, provide fun and gives relaxation. Sports programs, documentaries, informational programs, provides the latest information of the world. Even advertisement on Television has an impact on a person's views, choices of commercial products. Television viewing is the most preferred leisure time activity. The glamour of television has attracted persons of all age groups and all sectors of society. The television is such a powerful medium that changes the attitudes of children and adolescents in particular and forms habit that reflects those represented in various television programmes. Some people see the television as something that waste people's time and corrupt while others see it as an effective teaching aid. There is no doubt that Television viewing lays influence on viewer's mental, psychological, behavioural and living status of viewers and consequently may bring the social change (Puhazheuthi, 1983).

Of the several varying form of electronic media that affect play and development of children the most influential is Television (Gentile, D. and Walsh, D.,2002),. Consequently, over recent decades that hypotonic, marvellous, "magic box" called television has become the prime media component that is affecting children's cognitive growth and development in substantial ways (Mander,J.,1978).Through the changes television has made in family life , television is not merely one of a number of important influences upon today's child .It is instead now emerging as the important influence in child's life. Television can affect human relationships through influencing our feelings about ourselves and our expectations to others. Expectations in turn influence behaviour. (Moody, 1980).

Today, problem of watching too much television is growing among children. Usually cartoons are their favorite program. Heavy TV viewers tend to be people who feel anxious or lonely and thought that watching TV provides a break from negative thoughts. They think that it provides a pseudo social media experience. Kids today face immense pressure to succeed at school and in other activities as well. This pressure is further intensified by the fact that their minds and bodies are ruined due to excessive television viewing.

Aim of the Study

In the present times of life is very fast paced. Inspite of introduction of computer, internet and other media of social interaction, television is the most popular type of communication and entertainment. One reason may be that the Secondary school children are under the guidance of parents. They have a keen watch on each and every activity of their children. Television is the best leisure time activity for children of this age group. Informational Television programs provide a lot of knowledge and information to the students for their personality development and future planning. Students as well as their parents are under the tremendous



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pressure about his future on the other hand, often parents complaint that habit of excessive television watching sometimes hamper their normal physical and social activities like playing with friends, spending time with relatives and family members, reading ability, studies, behaviour and different characteristics of personality.

Devoting more time towards television viewing discourages the habit of studying. It is quite obvious that more television one watches, less time they have in a day, means less time for study and other routine activities. This can sometimes cause many physical and behavioral problems. This study discusses about the predictors of television addiction, symptoms of television addiction and effects of excessive television watching.

What is Television Addiction

Addiction may include behaviours that may be intrinsically life fulfilling but have appeared out of control for example exercise, relationships or work. Addictions may also include behaviours that are often intrinsically not associated with excess, but are often considered a waste of productive time (e.g. television viewing).

According to Oxford dictionary, an addiction is designed habit or a person physically dependent on something like drugs etc. It is noted that the average person spends about three hours a day sitting in front of TV set, which is half of their leisure time, but heavy viewers report watching eight hours a day. Now question arises, "Are these people addicted to the television."

The Television is often signed out as an object which is responsible for numerous negative effects on public and the reason behind many problems which afflict today's society. However, we can't forget about its merits and educational capabilities and without a doubt, it cannot take all the blame for the increase in the phenomenon of television addiction in the last few years. Likewise any other medium of communication television also has good or bad aspects. Television addiction, like many other types of modern addiction is the product of meeting between some modern psycho-social factors and certain behavioural factors.

When people suffer from modern addictions, such as television addiction other addictions, which are related, can often be seen, such as shopping addiction caused by advertisements on television. Television viewing remains the most popular form of leisure time activity in the US (Average 2-8 hours per day in general population's U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, 2012). Regarding Social consequences, heavy TV viewers are less likely to participate in community activities and sports (Kubey & csikszentihaly, 2002) or focus on relationship maintenance communications such as conflict management, positivity or providing helpful advice (Chory & Banfield, 2009).

The television as a means of mass communication has transformed the daily habits of many people. At first it was a pass time, then became a luxury item which few people possessed and finally it became a product of mass consumption available to

everybody watching Television is one of the most common daily activities but this use can often turn into addiction for those who watch it for days by paying no attention to what they are watching. TV is a Television journalism gave the first word 'TV addiction (winn, 1977). This word, TV addiction is accepted by parents, teachers, instructors, reporters and press officers (Milkman and Sunderwirth, 1987, Winn, 1987). According to Smith (1986) 65% people consider that TV is addictive. Similarly Mc wraith (1990) reported that 70% students believed that TV was addictive. The majority of well educated people also believe in this concept. (Winn, 1987).

For some people, watching television consumes their entire day. This is especially true for older people, who watch more TV (97%) than any other age groups. Those living alone often shut in often find this activity the only way to endure long lonely days for some life without television is truly unbearable. However television addiction is very real. While TV addiction is not life threatening it is as dangerous as other forms of addiction. Television viewing has 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 to read serious matter, they read less, they play less and they socialize less, they cannot concentrate on any activity they socialize less, they cannot concentrate on any activity for too long. Children prefer fast foods, want instant gratification and are becoming increasingly aggressive.

Symptoms of Television Addiction

1. Never turn off television on decided time.
2. Wish to watch less television but can't.
3. Feeling uncomfortable after missing favorite show.
4. Television begins replacing other activities.
5. Health problems.

Predictors of Television Addiction Among Children

It is found in a study that nearly 70 % of a sample of 8 to 20 year olds reported that watched television in order to prevent or cope with feeling of loneliness (Woodward & Frank, 1988). Another Study found that heavier viewers (watch more than 4 hours) scored high on measures of loneliness and lower on perceived attractiveness (Page, Hammermeister, Scanlan & Ola, 1966). People who believe that watching television will satisfy an important personal need watch more television than people who lack either the belief or the need (Lin, 1993).

Some parents spend more time with their children than do others, and children whose parents spend relatively less time with them may experience anxiety and feel a need for social contact (Yarrow, 1964). Lack of parent contact may be associated with heavy viewing among the pre adolescents.

Some studies have found that children in homes with working mothers or absent fathers

watched more TV than did children in homes with stay at home mothers and fathers present (Brown et al., 1990, Medrich et al., 1982). But Lawrence and Wozniak (1989) found no relation between time spent with family and television viewing. This may result in television addiction.

Less intelligent children may experience a great deal of frustration in school as a result of poor performance. The fantasy world that television offers may provide a means for them to escape from these unpleasant emotions. For this reason, less intelligent children may be especially attracted to television.

Consistent with this logic, people of all ages, report that among common everyday activities done at home, television offers the least challenge and requires the least level of skill and concentration (Kubey R., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

One resource necessary for television viewing is time, especially time at home (Pearl, Bouethilet & Lazar, 1982). More time a person spends performing activities that are mutually exclusive with television viewing the less time he or she has available to watch television. Activities such as eating and doing household could easily be accomplished while watching television (Bechtel, Achelpohl & Akers, 1972). This may gradually leads to television addiction.

Effects of Television addiction

Hardly any disagreement exists over the fact that TV viewing has changed the values of human beings, their thinking ways, time schedules and living style. Thomas and Tiwari (1986), Narayana (1987), Joshi and Laharia (1992), Rao (1992), Tiwari, Singh and Rath (1997) found that viewing TV programmes influenced the social life and adjustment of both urban and rural. Similarly, Chopra (1990), Ananthasayanam, Prama and Vidhya (1992) reported the impact of TV viewing on their knowledge, attitude and awareness of rural and urban people. Anuradha and Bharathi (2001) found that television is often blamed by the parents for children's poor academic performance. Several researches have opined that in order to reduce negative effects of television viewing on children, parents should control their children's excessive TV watching (Rajani, 1987; Singer, 1989 and Prawd, 1995). Promila and Dilsheed (2000) found that those parents who punish their children physically and express dissatisfaction with their children's accomplishments and characteristics are responsible for their children's preference to TV watching. Since their relations with parents are unsatisfactory, they spend more time in watching TV (Eron, 1982). Researchers have reported that the modern families have become less able to socialize children effectively because of reduced parental authority, and less able to provide care, affection and companionship. Dorr and Rabin (1995) found that those children who spend several hours watching television no matter what the content being telecast are less social. There were fairly good evidences that greater amounts of viewing were associated with less satisfactory social relationship, fewer inter personal interactions, lower reading skills, lower schools achievement and fatter bodies. According to one study conducted in a group

of 7 year olds it was discovered that a child cannot focus on studying for a minimum of 1 ½ to 3 hours after watching television. Television replaces activities like reading, homework, hobbies, sports, and causes sleep problems. Many researches have proved that Television has a long term effect on academic achievement. According to one study the individual will be hampered up to the age of 26 after uncontrolled childhood television viewing. Poor academic performance in school is directly linked to television viewing.

Television also affects a child's perspective and beliefs about race and gender.

Television addiction can affect the children by different ways.

1. TV addiction can change the thoughts subconsciously by words featured in commercials or other programs. Effect can't be realized immediately.
2. After watching TV for long hours a person can feel depressed about the dullness of life as compared to television actors.
3. After watching news about death and disasters a person may start thinking negatively about life.
4. Excessive Television watching wastes our time.

Physical Effects

1. Obesity epidemic in children and house wives.
2. Increased risk of Heart disease.
3. Disturbance in sleep patterns and memory problems.
4. Risk of developing Attention deficit disorder (ADHD)
5. Aggressive behaviour of children.
6. Strain on eyes.

Suggestions to Parents

1. Generally parents permit their children to watch the TV programmes for the every type of development. This practice should be well analysed.
2. The parents should care their children to watch television normally one on cartoons and children's programmes blossoming their smooth personality.
3. The parents should care sitting style of their children for the time of T.V. watching as they may adopt the bad posture of sitting and viewing.
4. The parents should encourage their children to watch those TV programmes which enhance the children's general awareness, improve language, help in understanding the events related to one's country and the abroad, increasing knowledge in game and sports, betterment to environment, improve children's behaviour, motivate to do new raising up to moral level.
5. TV has a positive and negative effect. The results of study have revealed that exposure to TV increasing many positive aspects. So the parents should not turn off the TV sets out of fear but should decide the amount viewed by their children. The parents should warn their children for excessive TV viewing. Parents must be educated regarding the effective use TV for their children. The parents should monitor TV for their

children as when monitored by parents it could be a solution to the problems.

6. Parents be motivated to allow their children to view the news especially. So that they may learn about what is happening in and around the world.
7. The parents should view TV with their children. They should comment on the content. They should explain the theme of TV programmes before their children. Because parental guidance can reduce the adverse effect of the behaviour of children.

Suggestion for the Teachers

The teachers in the school should encourage the pupils to watch the television at home for a limited time and according to schedule. Teacher should advise the parents towards it whenever they come into contact with guardians particularly in the teacher-parents meeting in the schools. The teacher should ask the pupils to write down the advantages they (children) perceive by TV viewing and TV viewing helps them in achieving success in life.

Conclusion

We all agree that TV programmes play an important role in human resource development. It is undoubtedly, a powerful tool in transforming one's personality. For creating a society of equality, secularity, social-justice, democratic values, the TV viewing can be used effectively. It is hoped the findings of the present study will motivate the teachers at the schools and parents at the home to educate the children with more self awareness on the current prevailing various social, political and cultural issues in the society. Through TV viewing under careful supervision, the children may be educated for more self-learning. Their skills of many creative crafts can be nurtured. They may be prepared for inter-cultural understanding and felling of unity within diversities in the context ours society. The guardians may even use TV viewing as a suitable means of making them learn to strengthening family relationship. The teachers/guardians can use TV viewing in inculcating the human values among the children. The pupils be more awarded towards in and around of the world. Their interest in tourism and various religious centers can be enhanced. In short, the children can be better prepared with the learning from TV programs viewing though some measures are to be adopted to save them from the evils of TV Viewing.

Television watching is not an "experience" but instead it replaces experiences. So TV watchers exchange the real world for the virtual one behind the screen. The cultural pressure and acceptance of heavy TV watching combined with the habitual nature of the medium can produce an unholy marriage between one's inactivity and boredom. It is up to parents to control television viewing and act as sensors and guides. Children must never be allowed to choose what they watch and they certainly should not have independent television sets. Aggression can also be reduced by watching television together and commenting on the content, comforting the child during moments of fright, and providing the right encouragement or discouragement, when television behavior imitated.

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