

Parental Intervention and Frequency of Mediation Styles towards Children Watching Television in India

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Most of the research on the uses and effects of media focused on individuals rather than family systems. This shift in the approach to the study of children television viewing and parental mediation is considered as a meaningful approach and such a study on an empirical ground becomes a need of the hour in a country like India. The objective of the present study is to identify the typical parental mediation style practiced among parents towards children's television viewing. The result shows that parents most frequently use restrictive mediation style to control their children's television viewing and active mediation least often and co-viewing fell in between.

Keywords: Parental mediation, active mediation, restrictive mediation, co-viewing, children and television

Technology is the force of today's ever-evolving world and television is at the heart of it. While experiencing its own evolution and advancement, television has maintained a constant presence. Television can be of immense benefit to children. It can bring them into contact with aspects of life they would not otherwise have become aware of. It can provide a valuable tool at home and school to keep the children occupied and if used appropriately, it can be a constructive tool to use their time. Television intensifies the concern when it comes to child audiences and programming. These concerns revolve around the possible effects of television programming on children, due to the potential of the medium to influence the perception of reality and adoption of attitudes or values. Television watching is part of everyday lives and its impact on children's school performance; their family communication and the impact of certain violent content are some of the major subjects of study in the world. This is to understand the effects of television. However, most of these studies have ignored important issues such as the role of the family as a reception context for children's television viewing. Television has become such an integral part of homes in the modern world that it is hard to imagine life without television. In the process, the current research is greatly focused on understanding the reciprocal relationship between television viewing and the family environment.

Comparable to other media, television is the most accessible media to most people including young children, where television is their most favourite form of media (Burton, 2005). The use of television by young children particularly has raised debates and concerns

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to many organization and researchers (e.g. Anderson & Pempek, 2005; Griffiths & Machin, 2003) due to boundless access to various types of information which could affect their development, behavior, health and learning.

Families use to follow different kinds of rules for using media. Some families will follow restricted rules, while some other families use to give little concentration to what or how much media kids consume. Young people between the age group of 8 to 18 report that they use to spend 120 to 150 minutes per day with television just to be along with their parents (Roberts et al., 2005) and they also share information among themselves. Children use to spend most of the time in media at home; in this case it is important for parents to guide their children in using the media. Browne (1999) points out the significance of parents involvement with their children while using the media. Research on media and family has a long tradition and there were more number of researches on how media entered into the family life which in turn placed the focus more on the parental mediation research, which has become one of the important areas of media research.

Abdul Sattar Almani (2012), in his study observed that the supervision and monitoring of children of the employed mothers suffer badly. According to the research, the idea was supported by 99 per cent of women, 89 per cent of students and 95 per cent of teachers. Mothers expressed that the responsibility of supervision and monitoring of children is associated with mothers. They argued that when children are unmonitored and unsupervised they are most likely to show negative effects in conduct and behavior. Students argued that the children habits deficiency comes in the absence of proper check and balance. In that case, children mostly fail to develop the desired habits. Such children become naughty and mischievous. Teachers argued that check and balance is a compulsory part of child development. In the absence of supervision the character building in children will be inadequate. The most comprehensive body of research on parenting strategies for children's media use is the literature of parental mediation.

Parental mediation theory posits that parents utilize different interpersonal communication strategies in their attempts to mediate and mitigate the negative effects of the media in their children's lives. It also assumes that interpersonal interactions about media that take place between parents and their children play a role in socializing children into society.

Valkenburg et al. and Nathanson developed a scale to measure three different strategies of mediation and the outcomes that resulted from those parental practices: Active mediation, or talking with young people about the content they saw on television; restrictive mediation, or setting rules and regulations about children's television viewing; and co-viewing, simply watching television with children (Nathanson, 1998, 1999; Valkenburg et al., 1999; see also Eastin et al., 2006). Although active mediation assigns an importance to dialogue between parents and their children and co-viewing involves primarily non-verbal communication and co-presence, restrictive mediation tends to involve parent-to-child communication in the form of rule making, rule-stating and following through with consequences when rules are not followed.

Mediation has not been defined consistently. As a result, many different definitions of this term exist. However, researchers endorsing the various conceptualisations agree that mediation refers to interactions with children about television. Although a number of individuals can provide mediation, such as siblings, peers, and adults, the term is commonly used to signal parent-child interaction. The focus of this study, therefore, is on parental mediation. Parental mediation can take several different forms. Amy Nathanson (1999) has distinguished these forms as active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing.

The research on television mediation is relatively new and its effectiveness in mitigating the effects of television has been very encouraging, observed Nathanson (1999). However, he went on to observe that most of the research on mediation was conducted in lab-based experiments with confederates and that there was therefore, a need for research directly examining parents mediation in social conditions. From this line of research, it was argued that television as a socialization agent with an indisputable protagonist in the routines of children, does not act in a vacuum and cannot be studied in isolation. The fundamental concept in the field of television reception is mediation, which is understood as a “cultural instance in which media audiences produce and appropriate the meaning and sense of the communicative process”, notes Martin-Barbero (1987).

Review of Literature

Among various types of research on this subject, the earlier studies assessed the occurrence of television mediation at home and identified different types of parental mediation styles and their frequencies (Austin, 1993; Bybee, Robinson & Turow, 1982; Dorr, Kovacic & Doubleday, 1989; Huston & Wright, 1996; Mohr, 1979; St. Peters, Fitch, Huston, Wright, & Eakins, 1991; Weaver & Barbour, 1992). In that, the three dimensions of parental mediation of television viewing: instructive mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing (e.g. Valkenburg et al., 1999; Borzekowski & Robinson, 2007) have been widely acknowledged. When “Occurrence” is taken into concern, several investigations documented on how often, parents monitor their children’s viewing: the duration of parents concerns over their childrens TV viewing (Bybee et al., 1982).

In their study, Austin in 1993, and St. Peters et al., (1991) indicated how often parents discuss television shows with their children or how often they watch television shows with them. Several researchers have argued that the most effective parental mediation approach is to use a mix of three styles of television mediation: to control, supervise, or interpret television content (Austin, Bolls, Fujioka & Engelbertson, 1999; Bybee et al., 1982; Nathanson, 2001; Nathanson & Botta, 2003; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999). Unlike the other two dimensions of mediations, co-viewing is a lot more coincidental and less intentional. (e.g. Bybee et al., 1982; Dorr et al., 1989 & Warren, 2003).

Restrictive mediation comes with less TV viewing by their children (van den Bulck & Van den Bergh, 2000; Borzekowski & Robinson, 2007) and it occurred more often than instructive mediation (e.g. Gross & Walsh, 1980; Warren, 2003) suggesting that instructive mediation happened more regularly than restrictive mediation (Bybee et al., 1982; Valkenburg et al., 1999). A study of US parents having children of 1-5 years olds found restrictive mediation the most frequently used method, followed by instructive mediation and then co-viewing (Warren, 2003). Another study, based on a group of Dutch parents of five to twelve years children, showed that social co-viewing occurred most often, instructive mediation less often and restrictive mediation the least often (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Andrita Krumiða (2012) point out that, children in a society of information, grow up in the environment full of information and media. As the development of media competence must be started in early childhood, responsibility about such relevant questions as media education and upbringing becomes imperative in a family. The three main parental mediation strategies or methods of media upbringing that are used in families are active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing.

This work delineates the concept of parental mediation and the objective was to determine tendencies that dominated the parental mediation of the families of Latvia.

Teresa Torrecillas-Lacave (2013) explained that many modern studies on child viewership prioritise parental concern on the impact of television content may have on development of their children. The researcher conducted an interview based data collection in which forty eight in-depth interviews were applied to parents from the Community of Madrid, who has children aged from four to twelve years. Based on extensive literature review and results of the study, the researcher concluded that mediation such as TV viewing control measures, co-viewing and perceptions about television have allowed identifying four parental mediation styles and that parental mediation is simplified and reduced to its normative dimension.

Peter Nikken embarked an Internet-survey among five hundred and thirty six parent-child combinations, investigated mediation strategies of parents and their children's video gaming between the age group of 8 to 18 years. As in earlier studies on television mediation, principle factor analyses show that the same types of strategies are used: "restrictive mediation", "evaluative mediation", and "conscious co-playing". Mediation is most strongly predicted by the age of the child and by parents' gaming. Furthermore, parents are more restrictive and evaluative when they fear negative media effects on behaviors and attitudes. They more often play together with the child when they presume positive social-emotional effects of gaming. Syed H. Rahman and Md. Ridhwan-ul-Haq (2013), conducted a study on Parental Control and teenagers television involvement in Bangladesh to determine how parents in a developing country control their teenaged children's TV involvement and whether they have any discrimination between their male and female children in applying such controls. The results of the study using data collected from four hundred Bangladeshi teenagers show that Bangladeshi parents maintain a close supervision and control on their teenaged children's TV involvement. They do that through co-viewing and different kinds of instructive and restrictive mediations. However, this is more common in case of teenaged female children than their male counter parts.

According to Warren (2005), restrictive mediation refers to parents' rules of mediating children's television viewing, such as the amount of television viewing time and the specific type of program content, sometimes called rule-making mediation. Instructive mediation refers to parents talking with children about television, such as discussing television programs, content, and commercial messages, often called active, evaluative, or strategic mediation. Co-viewing mediation refers to parent's act of watching television with children without discussing television use and content, often referred to as parents' passive mediation intervention.

Overall, the instructive mediation style has been found to be used less than the other two types (Valkenburg et al., 1999; Warren, 2002) whereas, restrictive and co-viewing mediation styles have been found to be relatively popular. According to parent reports in the United States, active mediation is the most common, followed by co-viewing (Austin et al., 1999), whereas in the Netherlands parents prefer co-viewing (Valkenburg et al., 1999). On those occasions, children and their parents may view together at least two third of the time, while with programmes aimed especially at children, co-viewing may fall to no more than a quarter of the time (St Peters et al., 1991). Idiosyncratic family viewing patterns and rule-based controls over the use of the television set do exist and can be important mediators of the impact of television on children (Gunter, B. & Svennevig, M., 1987). This early evidence also shows that children were more likely than their parents to be happy with programmes selected by the family (Niven, H., 1960).

E. Tidhar and Hanna Levinsohn (1997) observed that for 25 years, Israeli television operated as a virtual monopoly, with one single channel shared by educational TV and the

public broadcasting authority. Young viewers were exposed to non-commercial quality programs primarily geared for children. The emergence of cable television gave a big task to the parents on how to control their children's viewing and fills the role of mediators between television and the child. In this study, the researchers conducted two surveys among parents of Israeli children who were aged between 2 to 8 years old. 537 parents were participated in the first survey on 1989 that was before the emergence of cable TV and the second survey was conducted among 552 parents after the emergence of cable TV in 1993, when cable TV penetrated half of all Israeli homes. The results of the study indicated that the development of cable TV changed approaches of parental control and mediation and parents' assessment of television's influence on children. Active parental mediation was closely related to the attribution of learning values to children's viewing and to gratifications attributed to educational television broadcasts. Relaxing the control and allowance for independent children viewing was closely related to the attribution of entertainment value to children's viewing and to viewing of cable television.

Patti M. Valkenburg, Marina Krcmar, Allerd L. Peeters, and Nies M. Marseille (1999) made a research study on Dutch parents through telephone interviews by random sample technique in which they took 123 samples for pilot study initially then further it was extended to 519 samples for the main research. From principal components analysis, three consistent styles of television mediation emerged, restrictive mediation, instructive mediation, and social co-viewing. In addition to a number of demographic variables, parental concerns about the negative effects of television were significant predictors of style of television mediation.

Ron Warren (2009) ascertain that for the past four decades there have been more studies done on parental control of children's television viewing. Cultural analysts have advocated studying media use as part of a broader family system. Framing media use as a process of domestic consumption raises interesting questions about media institution's influence on parental mediation of viewing content. This particular study analyzes two structures present in video stores. The researcher concludes that stores introduce structural constraints on parent-child discussion of content. Although many parents readily adopt these constraints in their video use, social class is a strong influence over their access to and negotiation of these control structures.

The study discusses the prospects for effective parent-child engagement over media content, given this set of institutional constraints. Pavleen Soni and Manisha Behal (2014) observed that young persons in India occupy enormous time in watching television. They spend themselves in front of TV during day and night in order to escape from their daily stressful life. Such exposure to TV raises concerns about its undesirable outcomes and entails the need for mediation of TV viewing habits. In order to explore the mediation strategies of TV content i.e., programs and ads followed by parents in present investigation, a structured questionnaire was formed and distributed among 714 young viewers in the age category of 15 to 24 years to examine their perceptions about the type of mediation followed by Indian families. The samples were selected from schools and colleges in three cities of Punjab in India. The study also tries to investigate the differences between constructs of perceived mediation strategies for TV content across age. Data were been analyzed through descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviations, Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings of the study revealed three mediation styles used for TV programs manifest as "active mediation" "co viewing" and "restrictive mediation" and two styles for TV ads viz. "restrictive mediation" and "active mediation". More so, younger viewers perceived greater use of mediation for TV

programs than their older counter parts. Weaver and Barbour (1992), Gross and Walsh (1980), Mohr (1979) all indicate that restrictive mediation occurs more frequently than instructive mediation.

On the basis of available literature and to address the issue that is in need of resolution, in this present investigation, the following research question seeks to determine which of the mediation styles are most predominant among parents and what style of television mediation is most frequently used by parents? The study explores the role of parental mediation as a research problem with the objective to identify the typical Parental mediation style practiced among parents towards children's television viewing.

Methodology

The research question asked the frequency with which parents engage in different styles of television mediation. To investigate variations in frequency with which parents engage in different mediation styles, multivariate analysis of variance with television mediation style (restrictive mediation vs. active mediation vs. co-viewing) as a within-subjects factor, and with gender of the parent, age, family type, educational level, occupation, child's age, child's gender as between-subjects variables was performed.

Hypothesis: Parents use restrictive mediation most often and active mediation least often to mediate their children's television viewing.

Results

Table 1. Frequency with which parents engage in three different styles of television mediation

	Restrictive mediation M (sd)	Active mediation M (sd)	Co-viewing M (sd)
Fathers	19.85 (4.7)	17.22 (5.7)	18.09 (5.3)
Mothers	19.97 (4.8)	16.77 (5.7)	17.94 (5.2)
Parents age			
Below 30 years	19.64 (4.5)	16.53 (5.7)	18.43 (5.4)
31-40 years	20.46 (4.7)	17.01 (5.5)	18.00 (5.1)
41 years and above	19.53 (4.9)	17.40 (6)	17.62 (5.3)
Family type			
Joint family	19.14 (4.8)	17.62 (5.6)	18.82 (5.4)
Nuclear family	20.10 (4.7)	16.83 (5.7)	17.81 (5.2)
Education Level of parents			
Up to HSc	23.59 (2.4)	12.40 (3)	14.98 (3.4)
Diploma	21.82 (2.8)	18.26 (4.5)	19.09 (4.9)
Under graduate	16.03 (3.3)	20.64 (4.6)	22.01 (3.2)
Post graduate and above	14.20 (1.3)	22.91 (3.6)	19.41 (7.1)
Occupation			
Employed	18.84 (4.9)	17.80 (5.7)	17.82 (5.6)
Business	20.31 (4.6)	18.01 (5.9)	18.62 (5.1)
Housewife	20.47 (4.6)	15.80 (5.5)	17.68 (5.2)
Others	20.81 (4.2)	15.89 (5.4)	18.31 (4.7)
Child's Age			
5 to 8 years	17.69 (4.7)	18.97 (5.7)	19.06 (6)
9 to 11 years	19.51 (4.6)	17.29 (5.6)	18.37 (5.2)
12 to 14 years	20.66 (4.6)	16.34 (5.6)	17.56 (5.1)
Child's gender			
Male Child	19.08 (4.7)	17.26 (5.9)	17.87 (5.5)
Female Child	19.65 (4.7)	17.99 (5.8)	19.04 (5.4)
Male and female child	20.75 (4.7)	16.37 (5.5)	17.75 (5.1)
All parents	19.91 (5.7)	16.99 (4.7)	18.01 (5.3)

The hypothesis predicted that parents would most frequently use restrictive mediation style to control their children's television viewing and active mediation least often to mediate their children's television viewing. The mean scores for each mediation styles showed that parents used restrictive mediation most often (M-19.91, SD-5.7) followed by co-viewing (M-18.01, SD-5.3) and active mediation (M-16.99, SD-4.7). Hence hypothesis was supported with the result of mean scores.

Table 2. Summary table showing the main effect and interaction effect between demographic variables of the respondents and parental mediation styles

Demographic variables	Parental mediation styles	
	Main effect	Interaction effect
Gender	Yes	No
Age	Yes	No
Family type	Yes	No
Educational level	No	Yes
Occupation	No	No
Children age	Yes	Yes
Children gender	Yes	Yes

The multivariate analysis of variance yielded significant main effect for parents gender ($F(1, 502) = 33.19, p < .05$), age ($F(2, 501) = 32.65, p < .01$), family type ($F(1, 502) = 13.96, p < .01$), children's age ($F(2, 501) = 8.64, p < .01$), children's gender ($F(2, 501) = 22.21, p < .01$) with mediation styles and did not showed main effect between educational level ($F(3, 500) = 1.16, p > .01$), occupation ($F(3, 500) = 35.36, p > .01$) and mediation styles.

In the terms of interaction effect multivariate analysis of variance showed a significant effect towards parents educational level ($F(3, 500) = 236.78, p < .01$), children's age ($F(2, 501) = 8, p < .01$), children's gender ($F(2, 501) = 3.5, p < .01$) and did not showed any significance towards the gender ($F(1, 502) = .298, p > .01$), age ($F(1, 501) = 1.30, p > .01$), family type ($F(1, 502) = 2.82, p > .01$), occupation ($F(3, 500) = 3.61, p < .01$) towards parental mediation styles.

Thus it can be inferred that there is main effect between the demographic variables (gender, age, family type, educational level, occupation, children age, children gender) of the respondents and parental mediation styles and interaction effect between parents educational level, children age, children gender and parental mediation styles.

According to the estimated marginal mean values from the Figure A represents the parents gender and mediation styles, mothers do more restrictive mediation (M-19.97) when compared to fathers (M-19.85). In the case of active mediation fathers (M-17.22) involvement is comparatively higher than mothers (M-16.77). Similarly the mean value shows that fathers co-viewing with their children are higher than mothers. With respect to parents age group represented in Figure B, parents below 30 years (M-19.64) and above 41 years (M-19.53) practice less restrictive mediation than the parents falling in-between the age group of 31 to 40 years (M-20.46). In the case of co-viewing parents above 41 years (M-17.62) practice less compared to the parents who are below 30 years (M-18.43) and 31 to 40 years (M-18). In the case of active mediation parents below 30 years (M-16.53) practice least often when compared to those in the age group of 31 to 40 years (M-17.01) and 41 years and above (M-17.40). In the case of family type, restrictive mediation is practiced mostly in nuclear families (M-20.10) than joint families (M-19.14).

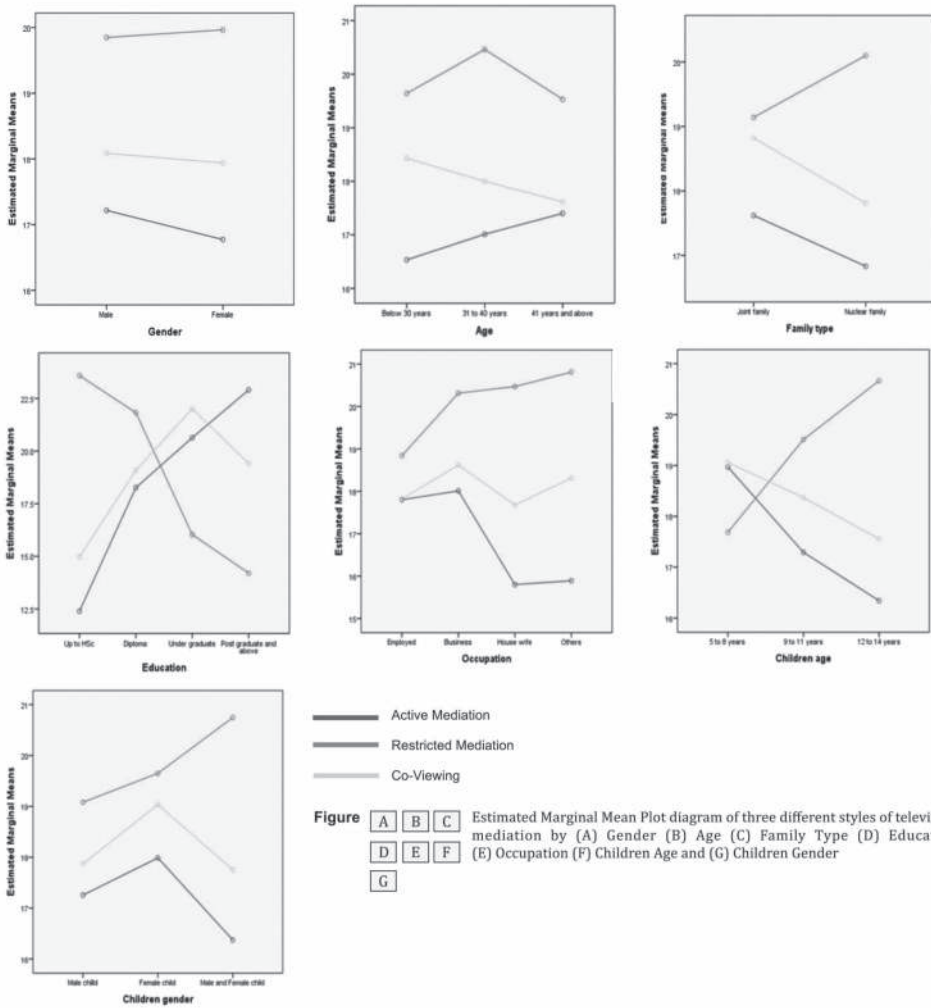


Figure 3 A B C Estimated Marginal Mean Plot diagram of three different styles of television mediation by (A) Gender (B) Age (C) Family Type (D) Education (E) Occupation (F) Children Age and (G) Children Gender

Figure C represents the family type and practice of parental mediation. In the case of co-viewing it is practiced more in joint families (M-18.82) than in nuclear families (M-17.81). Active mediation is also practiced mostly in joint families (M-17.62) than in nuclear families (M-16.83). In the case of parents education level represented in Figure D, restrictive mediation is most often used by the parents representing the educational level of up to higher secondary (M-23.59) than other educational levels diploma (M-21.82), under graduates (M-16.83) and postgraduates and above (M-14.20) respectively. In the case of co-viewing, parents representing the educational level of under graduates practice most often than other educational levels postgraduates and above (M-19.41), diploma (M-19.09) and up to higher secondary (M-14.98) respectively. In the case of active mediation parents representing the educational level of post graduates and above (M-22.91) practice most often than other educational levels of under graduates (M-20.64), diploma (M-18.26) and up to higher secondary (M-12.40) respectively.

Figure E represents the parents occupational status and mediation style practice, In that case, restrictive mediation is practiced least often among the parents belongs to occupational status of employed (M-18.84) than other occupation business (M- 20.31), housewives (M-20.47) and others (M- 20.81) respectively. In the case of co-viewing the

parents belongs to occupational status of business (M-18.62) practice most often and least often practiced by housewives (M-17.68).

In the case of active mediation the parents belongs to occupational status of business (M-18.01) practice most often and least often practiced by housewives (M-15.80). Figure (F) representing the children age groups and their parental mediation practice, restrictive mediation is least practiced by their parents among the children belongs to 5 to 8 years (M-17.69) and is mostly practiced among the children belongs to 12 to 14 years (M-20.66) of age. In the case of co-viewing, it is least practiced among the children belongs to the age group 12 to 14 years (M-17.56) and it is mostly practiced among the children age group of 5 to 8 years (M-19.06).

In the case of active mediation, parents involvement is more for the children age group of 5 to 8 years (M-18.97) and less for 12 to 14 years (M-16.34). In the case of children gender represented in the Figure G, restrictive mediation is comparatively practiced most often among the parents who have male and female child (M-20.75) followed by female child (M-19.65) and male child (M-19.08). In the case of co-viewing, parents practice more among female child (M-19.04) than male child (M-17.87) and male and female child (M-17.75). In the case of active mediation, parents practice more among female child (M-17.99) than male child (M-17.26) and male and female child (M-16.37).

From the above Figure it is observed that fathers engages more and play a major role in active mediation and co-viewing mediation styles more than mothers. Co-viewing and restrictive mediation is mainly practiced by mothers. In the case of restrictive mediation mothers engage more than fathers.

Restrictive mediation is practiced most often and co-viewing least often among all age groups and active mediation fell in between. It is observed that all the respondents of the age group represented practice restrictive mediation most often when compared to co-viewing and active mediation. Restrictive mediation is practiced most often in joint families than nuclear families. Active mediation and co-viewing is practiced least often in nuclear families when compared to joint families. It is inferred that active mediation and co-viewing is practiced least often by the parents belonging to the educational level of up to higher secondary when compared to other educational levels. Similarly restrictive mediation is practiced least often by the parents belonging to the educational level of post graduates and above when compared to other educational levels of the respondents. Among all occupation group restrictive mediation is practiced most often and active mediation least often, co-viewing fell in between. Active mediation is least often practiced by housewives when compared to other occupational groups.

Children at the age group of 5 to 8 years parents engage most often co-viewing and restrictive mediation least often. In the case of 9 to 11 years and 12 to 14 years children's age, restrictive mediation is practiced most often than other mediation styles. It is inferred that restrictive mediation is practiced more by the parents those who have male and female child whereas, co-viewing and active mediation is practiced more among female child. For all children gender parents engage in restrictive mediation most often and active mediation least often, co-viewing fell in between.

Conclusion

Television viewing is the most common media that families share together and children consume more of TV media than others at home. It is important to consider the role of parents in guiding their children's TV use. In the context of television viewing, parents are potentially the socialization agents, who are closest and more direct to children. It is important to study the relationship between television, family and children, for the results of such studies go a long way in helping the parents of rightful mediation of Television

viewing of their children. Thus, it is essential for any research on television and children should focus on parents as potential mediators in the children-television relation and the mediation may be of any style depending on the context of the family and individual.

Parents, it is believed, sometimes engage their children in interactions designed to guide or control the children's use of television, along with siblings, other family members and peers who sometimes use television content as something to talk about or to guide play. Whether with family or with peers, television operates as a potential social event for children irrespective of its content. Considering television as an opportunity for family interaction, one needs to recognize that television viewing provides a setting in which family members can interact or not as they choose, operate as an activity over which parents may wish to exert some control and offers topics for conversation among family members. At home, children view with other family members, slightly less than half of all their viewing hours. While viewing, they may engage in many other social interactions.

There are also interactions during television viewing that are essentially unrelated either to the act of viewing or to the content viewed. Television viewing is one of the children's activity over which parents and other family members want to exercise some control. Family members care about how much television children view, when they view, what must be done before viewing, where they view, with whom they view and what they view. Most children and parents report that only a modicum of control is exercised over children's viewing. However, the areas that provoke the greatest parental efforts at control are those of what is watched, what must be done before viewing, and during and after viewing. In addition, many parents take away television viewing privileges as a means of punishing children's interactions in other areas of their lives. Thus, television viewing is an occasion for a social event not only because people view together but also because people want to regulate children's television viewing behaviours.

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