METHOD

Research Design

The aim of the study was to explore the home television environment of preschool children Preschool children view television within the home setup Therefore a descriptive research in natural settings was undertaken Multiple methods consisting of — observation, interview of parents and children, and focus group interview with teachers of these children were used To gain information about viewing patterns of children questionnaires were distributed to a larger group of parents. This yielded quantitative data.

Clarification of Terms

Television Viewing Pattern

This refers to the duration of television viewing and content of the programs viewed. Duration is number of hours viewed by preschool children per week. Content are the actual programs i e serials, song programs, educational programs, news. etc that are telecast and viewed by children.

Home Television Environment

This refers to all the people viewing television with the child i e. the coviewers It also includes placement of the television set, parallel activities of family members, interaction between the child and the coviewers, and among the coviewers themselves, while television viewing is going on

Parental Mediation

This refers to conversation/interaction between parents and children with reference to television programs, with the purpose of sharing or explaining about the television programs, while the child is viewing television

Parental Regulation of Television

This refers to strategies, rules and regulations, or any action on part of parents to monitor duration and content of viewing of children.

Sample

Three groups formed the sample—children, parents, and teachers. The children were 388 preschoolers studying in the preschool sections of Baroda High School, Alkapuri (BHSA) and Utkersh Vidyalaya (Utk) Two classes each of Nursery, Junior K G

and Senior K.G from BHSA and one class each of Utk were selected Questionnaires were sent to parents of all the children belonging to these classes Of these, 207 parents of BHSA and 181 parents of Utk responded

The questionnaire elicited information on television viewing pattern of these 388 children Based on the information about duration of viewing 13 light viewers, 14 moderate viewers, and 13 heavy viewers were selected These sample of 40 children were boys and girls from Nursery, Junior and Senior K G classes of BHSA and Utk The heavy and light viewers were selected from the end of the continuum i e. heavy viewers were selected beginning with the child viewing maximum hours of television i e 60 hours per week and thus total 13 viewers were selected in decreasing order Similarly light viewers were selected beginning with children not viewing at all and then 13 viewers were selected in increasing order of viewing. The moderate viewers were concentrated along the mean hours of viewing per week

Parents of these 40 children, and 12 preschool teachers of BHSA, and five preschool teachers of Utk were part of the sample
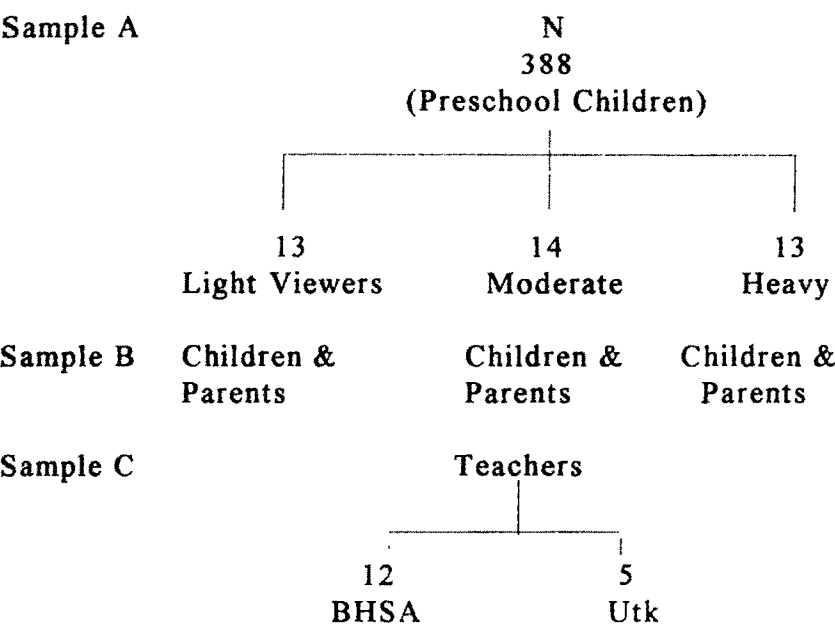
Sample A
N
388
(Preschool Children)

13   14   13
Light Viewers Moderate Heavy

Sample B Children & Children & Children &
    Parents   Parents   Parents

Sample C   Teachers

12   5
BHSA   Utk

Figure 3. Sample distribution.

Tools for Data Collection

The following tools were used to collect the data :

♦ Questionnaire

♦ Observations

♦ Interview guidelines for parents

♦ Semi-structured interviews and pictorial cards

♦ Focus-group interviews

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to elicit information from parents on family background, television viewing pattern of the child and family, and the home television environment (Appendix B)

This questionnaire was originally developed by Shastri (1992) in english. It was also translated into Gujarati-the local language Both the forms had been pilot tested with parents for the content and language and found reliable. Both these forms have since been used in subsequent researches with preschool children by Shah (1996), and Mushtaq (1997)

Observations

Naturalistic observations were made in homes of children The purpose of the study was to gain insight into home-television environment of children. Children therefore were observed in their homes while they were actually viewing television. This is temporal dimension of sampling. When sampling is viewed in a multi-dimensional way, one of the key dimensions is temporal dimension Whatever sampling units are chosen one needs to see how they are time bound i.e. asking not just "what" you wish to sample, but

"when". One might be interested in experiences or practices of people at particular times (Mason, 1996)

Ongoing observations and verbatim conversations were recorded. The observations included presence/absence of coviewers, interaction between child, parents and other family members, and activities taking place while viewing television.

Interview Guidelines for Parents

Parents were interviewed in their homes (Appendix D) The questions focussed on :

♠ opinion of parents about television as a medium with specific reference to children's viewing, and

♠ strategies parents used to regulate television viewing of children.

These interviews were conducted after the observations were over with either one or both the parents present Informal discussions with parents during the visits also yielded some relevant information. The time period for each interview was atleast an hour and more.

Semi-structured Interviews and Pictorial Cards

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix E) were conducted with children, during the final visit. By this time good rapport had been established between the researcher and the child Initially a set of six picture cards were shown to children. Each card had both a boy and a girl present in it. These cards depicted situations of

♥ children viewing television

♥ children playing with friends

♥ children playing in the garden

♥ children playing with toys at home

♥ children interacting with parents

♥ children in school.

The children were asked to identify each situation depicted in the picture. The researcher helped the Nursery group in doing so. All the older children (Junior K.G. and Senior K G.) could identify each of the situation on their own. The children were then asked to rate their favorite activity from among those presented They arranged the cards in order of preference, from the most favorite to the least favorite. The pictorial cards were pilot tested on a set of five children of 3-6 years of age and found appropriate. It was found at this stage that younger children needed explanation for each card.

Following these, children were interviewed about their favorite serial, character. They were also asked to relate about an episode or story of a serial, which they liked most

Focus-group Interviews

Set of relevant topics were identified for focus-group interviews with teachers (Appendix F) They were on

♣ opinion of teachers about television programs and the viewing activity with reference to children of their class.

♣ whether teachers do anything in school to encourage/ discourage television viewing of children

The focus groups were separately conducted for teachers of BHSA and Utk

Procedure for Data Collection

Permission was obtained prior to data collection from the principals and supervisors of preschool sections of BHSA and Utk The data was collected in phases.

Phase I   Television Viewing Pattern

- Questionnaires were sent through the teachers to parents of all chilaren of two classes each of BHSA, and one class each of Utk for Nursery, Junior K.G. and Senior K.G. grades

- The questionnaires were received with approximately 20% attrition.

- The questionnaire data elicited information on television viewing pattern of the preschool children

Phase II   Home Television Environment

- Based on duration of viewing per week a total of 40 children (13 light, 14 moderate, and 13 heavy viewers) were selected

- Parents of these 40 children were contacted at home with prior appointments.

- An initial introductory visit was made to explain the purpose of the study and rapport building

- Each child was observed 3 to 4 times for 25-30 minutes per visit. Thus each child was observed for a total time period of one and a half to two hours approximately

- The time was decided based on mutual convenience and probable chance of child viewing television.

♥ Ongoing activities observed were recorded Immediately after the visit these observations were transcribed The details were added.

♥ After completion of all the observations the child was interviewed using the pictorial cards.

♥ Finally during the last visit parents of these children were interviewed

Phase III   Opinion of Teachers

♠ Focus group interviews were conducted separately with the teachers of preschool section of BHSA and Utk

♠ The BHSA group consisted of 12 members and the Utk group consisted of 5 members.

♠ The responses were noted by two people simultaneously including the researcher who acted as a facilitator

Analyses

The data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The data was processed as follows .

♠ As mentioned earlier, data from observations and interviews were expanded and transcribed immediately following each

visit. They were then translated into English. Wherever relevant verbatims in Gujarati were retained.

♠ The data was grouped under specific sub-heads for e g for regulating television viewing of children, the data that emerged could be classified as whether parents felt it necessary to regulate television viewing of children, which strategies did they use, for which programs, why, etc

♠ Numeric codes were evolved for various categories for quantitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

The data was categorized, coded and tabulated and analysed through SPSS package

♣ Frequency and percentages were calculated for information on family background, possession of television set, coviewers of child while viewing television, programs viewed by the child and the family etc.

♣ The data was not normally distributed and therefore Mann-Whitney μ test and Kruskal Wallis test were computed to see the difference (if any) in duration of viewing for different variables. The child related variables are age, gender, ordinal position, grade, and school to which the child belongs.

The family related variables are type of family, education, occupation and income of parents.

Qualitative Analysis

Taxonomic analysis was done wherever it was necessary. This step involves a search for the relationships among the smaller units within each unit e.g. Opinions of parents about television viewing.

Opinions of Parents (Domain)

Sub Domain — Advantage / Both Advantage and Disadvantage / Disadvantage

Disadvantage — Age / Comprehension / Content / Time