

THE MEDIA AND CHILDREN

Media has an influence on the psychological development of children. It is important for parents to understand the impact it has on their children and also important for parents to be guided on age appropriate use of all media, including television, radio, music, video, games and the internet.

TELEVISION

Television has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects. Not all TV programs are bad but data shows the negative effects of exposure to violence, inappropriate sexuality and offensive language. Research shows that there is increase between watching violent television programmes and increase in violent behavior by children.

Excessive television watching contributes to the increased incidence of childhood obesity.

Excessive TV has an effect on the child's learning and academic performance.

Watching certain programmes may encourage irresponsible sexual behaviour.

Television viewing also limits the time for important activities such as playing, reading, learning to talk, spending time with peers and family, storytelling, participating in regular exercise and developing other necessary physical, mental and social skills.

The amount of time spent in front of the TV also affects the child's development level.

Television as a tool of learning can be a powerful teacher. Watching educative TV can help children learn valuable lessons, co-operation, kindness, simple arithmetic and alphabets. Some public TV programs also show visits to the zoo, libraries, museums, and other active recreational places.

Watching TV takes time away from reading and school work. Studies have shown that daily unsupervised TV viewing by school aged children has an effect on their academic performance especially reading.

VIOLENCE

Research shows that the average child sees 12,000 violent acts on TV annually including many depictions of murder and rape. This shows that the amount of violence on TV is on the rise.

NUTRITION

TV takes the time of children from play and exercise. Children who watch a lot of TV are less likely to be physically fit and tend to snack more regularly. Television can also contribute to eating disorders in teenage girls such as anorexia or bulimia. Most times girls want to look as thin as models they see on television. Eating meals whilst watching television should be discouraged because it may lead to less meaningful communication and poor eating habits.

SEXUALITY

Television has become a leading sex educator. TV exposes children to adult sexual behaviors in ways that portray these actions as normal and risk free. It makes children think “everybody does it”. Sex between unmarried partners is shown 24 times more often than sex between spouses whilst STD’s and unwanted pregnancies are rarely mentioned.

MUSIC/VIDEOS

Have a significant effect, impact on a child by making violence less sensitive to children. It also makes them more likely to approve pre-marital sex. About 75% of videos contain sexually explicit materials and frequently portray in a condescending manner of which affects children’s attitudes about sex roles.

VIDEO GAMES

Video games may also help the child in co-ordination but it also has it’s negative effects such as inactivity, anti-social behavior and violence. It also applies to excessive exposure to video games. Violent video games should be discouraged because it can affect the child’s mental development. Parents should endeavor to rate the video games being played by their children.

INTERNET

The internet is a means of providing children with information especially where it has to do with educational information and can be compared with a huge library. The amount of time spent watching TV and sitting in front of computer can affect a child’s postural development. When children spend alot of time on the computer it can contribute to obesity, it can affect their socialskills and a form of addictive behavior. There are also instances where the internet is being used to lure young people into relationships by pedophiles .Children also have the potential to be exposed to pornographic materials whilst surfing the internet. Parents should be encouraged to use technology aid as that can curb access to pornography and sexting or other forms of sexual grooming in children.

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