

An Investigation of Supervision of Television Viewing As A Factor in Pre-Schoolers' Sociability in Play

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Abstract

In the modern culture, media is unavoidable. Today, it is a well accepted and experienced reality that all over the world, children come into daily contact with different forms of media. Out of the many channels of media T.V is the most common and plays a monumental role in the lives of children. This study investigated the supervision of T.V viewing as a factor in pre-schoolers' sociability in play. The result should assist the media, parents, pre-school teachers and regulatory organs in protecting the pre-schoolers from negative influence of T.V viewing. For collection and presentation of the data, this study adopted a mixed methodology approach and descriptive survey design. The mixed methodology approach helped in broadening the understanding by incorporating qualitative and quantitative research. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently. Stratified and random sampling techniques were used in selecting pre-schools, parents with pre-schoolers, pre-schoolers and pre-school teachers. Questionnaires, Interview guides and observation schedules were employed in data collection. To test the validity and reliability of the instruments, pilot study was carried out on three pre-schools from each zone. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively based on tables, frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study found that due to economic demands, parents have limited time to view T.V with their children and therefore pre-school children enter into the world of fantasy inadequately guided by their parents

Key words: Social incompetence, unsupervised T.V watching, sociability in play, aggression behavior, pro-social behavior.

1.0. Introduction

It is undoubtable that technology has rapidly advanced in most parts of the world and especially media. Media includes news papers, books, radio, films, T.V and other forms of communication. Of all the media channels, Bell, (1998), T.V is spreading at a rapid rate and plays a major role in the lives of children. Despite the fact that various scholars and experts have intensively and critically analyzed the impact the T.V viewing has on children's lives, much less has been done to find out the effect it has on children's sociability in play specifically when watched without supervision of parents or guardian. The continuing display of incompetent behavior by the pre-school children during their play with their peers conveys the need for research beyond the impact of T.V viewing on only some child's aspect of behavior but much more should be done on how it does on their sociability in play.

In the tradition societies care giving of children was a collective responsibility of the nuclear and the extended family as well as the larger community with the mother playing the major role. However in modern society due to economic demand, the stay-at-home mothers have joined the work forces, Kabiru and Njenga (2007). As a result they look for alternative way to take care of their children, hiring of 'ayahs' being one of the alternatives. It has been voiced that some of these ayahs have no experience which lead to the provision of inadequate care. This coupled with a lot of responsibilities, these ayahs make children sit in front of the T.V to avoid them being nuisance. Additionally due to ignorance and insecurity these children are not given an opportunity to participate in outdoor activities like play.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that play is very essential in the lives of children and it is the beginning of development of different life skills, Piaget, Sigmund, Erikson (1962), Hughes (1999) Kabiru and Njenga (2007). This is a clear indication that children need opportunity and experience to enable them to acquire values and virtues such as negotiation, boundaries, taking turns, team work, sharing, waiting, and patience among others. They also learn problem solving skills that will enable them to cope with their peers. Additionally they learn that some behaviors are acceptable while others are unacceptable.

Unfortunately, T.V has taken hostage of the young ones especially the pre-schoolers in such a way that it reduces their opportunity of knowing how to interact with their peers especially during play. These pre-schoolers miss on important learning experience and are at a considerably risk of becoming socially incompetent.

Today, children have been bombard with violent programmes which many studies have claimed to have negative effects on children, Bandura, (1963), Villani, (1999), Anderson and Bushman, (2002), Association for psychological science Journal, (2004). They also noted that it causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adult years later. This alone should be a major cause of concern for parents and guardians who

without hesitating send their children to view whatever they want whenever they are busy with their jobs and chores.

Surveyed children age 8-18 revealed that their parents do not enforce any roles or regulation on viewing T.V. 95% of the older children view T.V without their parents and 81% of children aged 2-7 view T.V unsupervised, Rideout and Broddie (1999), Foehr,(2008).

This is a clear indication that some of pre-schoolers enter a world of fantasy without enough guidance and oversight of parents or adults. However according to Flavell et al (1990), Huston, Donnerstein (1999) little is known by parents about the impact the T.V has on their children. T.V is taking over, shaping the characters of pre-school children, Cantor and Wilson (1984). Children are the future of the country and their early years experience are known to play a monumental role throughout life. Therefore this study sought to investigate the supervision of T.V viewing as a factor in pre-schoolers' sociability in play in Juja Division in Kiambu County.

2.0. Statement of the problem

It is undoubtedly recognizable that children are the future of the country. A world conference on Education for All (EFA) that took place in Jomtien in Thailand, (1990), demonstrated the importance of the early years as the life's foundation of an individual. This is in agreement with a study carried out by Rima, (1997) Mustard, (1998), O'Donnell and Stephens, (1999) which stresses the importance of the first six years of life .Kenya took part and approved the deliberations of Jomtien (1990), Therefore it is important that every person who cares for children (parents, teachers, other care givers and government) should help them realize their full potential in life. Article 17 of CRC acknowledges the important function carried out by media and should make sure that children have access to information which is intended to promote children's physical, mental health, spiritual, moral well being and also social development, (1989) United Nation Conventions on the Rights of the child (CRC).

However, it has been established by numerous studies that, T.V has double edged sword characteristics for children, Cantor and Wilson, (1984), Strasburger, (1989), Krasner and Ullman, (1993), Anderson and Evans (2001). T.V can be entertaining and educational and on the other hand it leaves little time for children for other crucial activities such as play which is important for child's holistic development. Additionally, in modern society, socio-economic changes have brought about many challenges that negatively affect children in their growth and development. Parents, due to economic demands have limited time to view T.V with their children and help them interpret the meaning of the content, particularly pre-school children who are very good at imitating and often try to demonstrate the behavior they observe from the T.V either good or bad, Bandura (1977). When children display unacceptable behavior, they are often rejected by their peers and this in most cases leads to low self esteem, however, little is known by parents about the impact the unsupervised T.V has on their young ones. Therefore this study sought to investigate the supervision of T.V viewing as a factor in pre-schoolers' sociability in play.

3.0. Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the supervision of T.V viewing as a factor in pre-schoolers' sociability in play in Juja division in Kiambu county Kenya

4.0. Objectives of the study

- (a) To identify the number of pre-schoolers who view T.V and their sociability in play in Juja division in Kiambu County
- (b) To establish whether pre-schoolers view T.V accompanied by their parents and their sociability in play in Juja Division in Kiambu County
- (c) To establish the implications for pre-schoolers' T.V viewing in their sociability in play in Juja Division in Kiambu County

5.0. Research questions

- (a) What is the number of pre-schoolers who view T.V and their sociability in play in Juja division in Kiambu County?
- (b) To what extent do pre-schoolers view television accompanied by their parents and their sociability in play in Juja Division in Kiambu County?
- (c) What are the implications for pre-schoolers T.V viewing in their sociability in play in Juja Division in Kiambu County?

6.0. Significance of the study

The findings of this study are expected to help parents, guardians, adults and other care takers to make informed decisions on proper use of T.V and the importance of watching T.V.

Pre-school teachers will be expected to create opportunities and an environment which is conducive to enable preschool children play with their peers while the media and other regulatory organs should take the responsibility of protecting the pre-schoolers from watching programs that would influence them negatively.

7.0. Literature review

7.1. An overview of T.V viewing and play

It is undisputable that the mass media influence has been on the rise. Computers, audio tapes, compact discs and especially television are part of mass media which is particularly meant to reach a wide audience. It is undeniable that in the contemporary way of life, mass media and especially the television is too important to live without.

In the mass media, TV is the most common in the lives of children in the world and plays a major role in their lives.

In Kenya particularly there is irrefutable massive explosion in the industry of communication. Unlike 1980s with only one television channel (VOK), influx of television stations have emerged and many more are still coming up. At present, in Kenya there are sixteen T.V stations functioning. The vast and rapid increase of the T.V viewing has been accelerated by the expansion of electrification and also Chinese made T.V sets that can be easily powered by car batteries.

This is a clear indication that T.V is present in virtually many households in Kenya. Bearing in mind that today's families are too busy due to economic demand hence less free time to view T.V together with their children and especially the pre schoolers. Consequently when parents are not available for their children, they make an alternative arrangement that is they hire children minders. Mostly those "ayahs" double as child minders and housekeepers. Due to many responsibilities, these ayahs do not engage or interact with children. Instead most of the times they sit or plant these children in front of the T.V so as to stop them from being a nuisance. The innocent children and especially the pre schoolers are left squarely under the mercy of T.V which many studies suggest that it undoubtable a highly effective teacher, Keiser (2008). This then demonstrate that the child is in many times oriented to his or her immediate world by the T.V without a parent to help him/her interpret the underlying meaning of the content. Additionally, young children and especially the pre-schoolers are always ready to learn mostly unfamiliar and gives the T.V an upper hand. Ideally parents should be the first teachers. From them children learn among other things basic skills and also helps in the preparation of the child for events outside the family.

Play is an enjoyable, not planned but happens naturally without being forced. It is an activity that is an end in itself and with instinct goal, Garey (1977).As demonstrated by Hughes (1991) play has many vital characteristics. Play stipulates children with a special opportunity for the growth of physical, emotional, cognitive, language, moral and particularly social competence. Play is the most intrinsic way in which children learn. It is an important business and Piaget (1962), demonstrate it as life and work for the young ones. Play is also obvious language of young ones where one clearly sees and hears the whole child operating, disclosing his/her feelings of worry, hopes, dreams, fear, desire, wishes ,likes ,dislikes ,innermost thoughts among others. Play is the starting of the growth and the development of the different kinds of life skills like negotiations skills which will help them to reach to an agreement, problem solving skills which enable the children to easily cope with others. Consequently, according to Bandura (1973) this will finally encourage national cohesion. The overwhelming sense of satisfaction that children develop from their ability to be successful can be considered as being able to manage their failures , and therefore, their lack of success in doing something do not discourage the child in activity.

During the preschool years, play is believed to go up dramatically and it improves the children's world and guides to the development of children holistically, Kabiru and Njenga (2007).

It is undeniable that children learn on their own without lectures, how to go about meeting their needs and on the other hand fulfilling the needs of others. There are rules and regulations that should be observed and respected in a play. There are behaviors that are accepted while others are rejected when children engage in play with their peers. Through play, children are able to increase discovery, exploration, socialization with peers and aids a child to practice the vital role they will take later in life. There are different categories of play which include creative, social, physical, manipulative, discovery and imaginative play.

It is of great value to put in mind that researchers have demonstrated that opportunity to play and spend time with age mates is vital for normal social development. A child unfortunately who does not interact with his/her age mates miss out an important social learning experiences and are at high risk of being incompetent socially. Additionally, this child tends to display uncertain of him/herself in relationship between others in situation later in life, Ivory (2000).

Unfortunately, T.V watching is in most cases replacing activities in children's life and particularly play. According to researchers most of the programmes that children watch on T.V do not promote pro-social behaviors and especially in play.

7.2. Changes in parenting style

Due to the increasingly competitive economy, it is rather elusive particularly for parents to make it on a single income. Hence the stay-at-home mothers are enforced to take part in the work force. This is a clear indication that at the end of the day both parents are completely worn out and with little time to monitor what their children are viewing in the T.V. Surprisingly, some parents on the contrary take the T.V to be the baby sitter.

Single parent families have been noted to be on the rise due to death of spouses, divorce, choice, separation along with demographic structure. These trends have brought about grave implications on children. This means that individual parents and especially mothers have to take responsibility of their children. Moreover, the combination of child care responsibility with a job mostly proves to be difficult. In the traditional society, care giving of young ones was the responsibility of the nuclear family and also the extended family along with the larger community. However in modern society most of these women hardly live with their parents hence support from the extended family is unavailable. As a result they are not only the sole bread winners but also responsible for caring and socializing their children.

In order to manage the job and childcare responsibility, some parents hire 'ayahs' to take the role of childcare during their absence. Most of these 'ayahs' are young and without experience and often immature emotionally and hence giving no quality care to the children. Also these child minders are inadequately motivated to take care of the children especially because of the meager salary they earn out of double work as a child minder and a house keeper.

The social-economic status of the employer dictates the quality of the child minders. Therefore the upper class families have child minders whose work is to care and stimulate the children. On the other hand, middle class families employ maids who take all the responsibilities in the house including child care. Others surprisingly leave the young ones at home alone while they go out for job.

Consequently, solemn concerns are often voiced about the future of the young ones. It is noted with a lot of concern that children of working especially mothers lack adequate supervision, love, cognitive enrichment, and social skills among others. As stated earlier, parents spend most of their time away from home hence looking for alternative child care that is 'ayahs', Kabiru and Njenga (2007). Due to these minders shouldering a lot of responsibilities, they tend to sit these children in front of T.V watching unmonitored programmes and also their favorite programmes which include cartoons which according to Bandura (1963), Hancox (2004) contain themes of violence which is linked to increased aggressive behavior displayed by children especially in their play.

7.3. Implications for Pre-Schoolers T.V Viewing in Their Sociability in Play

There is no doubt that T.V viewing helps children and especially pre-schoolers gain information about the world around them and beyond their immediate environment. Through T.V, children are also exposed to a variety of different viewpoints that they could only get from parents, teachers and peers only.

Additionally, some of the T.V shows have been pointed out to have educational and development benefits. A good example is the sesame street educational programmes that teach children social and cognitive skills among others. Through this programme children experience a world of discovering that is entertaining as well as exciting. According to numerous studies, television viewing affects children negatively especially those younger than eight years. A study that was done in Canada shows that children are impressionable to influence from exposure to T.V violence, Gabbard, (1994). The influence is much on younger children mostly because it is illusive for them to distinguish reality from fantasy. Additionally, pre-school children are not capable enough to think abstractly and hence assess what they see, analyze and judge it against reality. Most behaviors, Bandura (1977) indicated that are learnt through the act of watching carefully for a period of time and imitating. As demonstrated earlier, pre-school children have gained great access to T.V and they spend most of their time immersed in front of it without an adult to monitor the types of programmes and help the children comprehend the underlying meaning of the content.

Entering into pre-school provide children with an opportunity to come into contact with adults away from home and with peers who join the family and become vital socializing agents. Mostly children learn about their world from their peer groups and much more what they learn from other sources especially the T.V is practiced and rehearsed within the peer group, Bandura (1977). Pre-school children having entered into the world of fantasy without adequate guidance from the parents, they often display either acceptable or unacceptable behavior observed from the T.V, Cantor & Wilson (1984). As observed by Vessey (1998) pre-school children who are often in front of the T.V, have difficulties especially in the performance of fine along with gross motor task. They are also said to have erratic accompanied by uncoordinated impulsive movements. They are also said to lack adequate imaginative input in their play. Moreover, these children display behavioral difficulties especially when playing with their peers. Due to this social incompetence, many are the times they are not accommodated by their peers especially in their play. There is an emphasis that cooperation and social interactions are enhanced during play. However, those children who spend a lot of time viewing T.V are not aware of how it is to interact

with their age-mates in their play. Then in return they have fewer friends leading to low self esteem as observed by Kabiru and Njenga (2007).The content the children are exposed to, are characterized by themes of violence. Unfortunately children exposed to violent content have a tendency of displaying aggressive behavior verbally and physically especially when they are playing with their peers.

8.0. Research Methodology

Mixed methodology approach was adopted for data collection and analysis. This approach was mainly used because it involves both qualitative and quantitative data which helped researchers to gain perspective from the different types of data. Both the qualitative and quantitative data was gathered at the same time. This involved the use of questionnaires, interviews and observation schedules. The study adopted the descriptive survey design which helped the researcher to collect the data systematically and reported the state of affairs as it existed without manipulation of the variables, Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), Kothari (2004).

The study population, Borg & Gall (1989) involved parents with pre-school children, pre-school teachers and pre-school children in Juja Division in Kiambu County. Stratified sampling was used to sample pre-schools, pre-school children, and parents with pre-school children and pre-school teachers. Then the samples from each group were then randomly selected. This helped the researchers to ensure that all identified sub-groups in the population were represented in the sample in the same population that they existed in, Cohen and Morrison (1994), Gay (1981) the minimum number of subjects for descriptive research is 10% of the population.

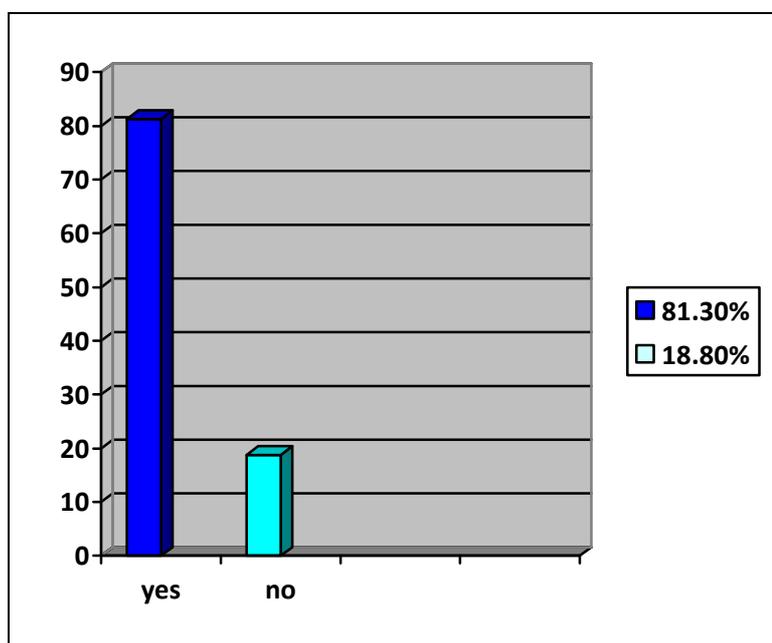
The quantitative data collected were analyzed descriptively based on tables, frequency and also percentages. On the other hand qualitative data was organized and then presented in form of themes. To test validity and reliability of the instruments, Kerlinger (1967) & Kothari (2004), pilot study was carried out on three pre-schools from each zone.

9.0. Results findings

This section is organized and guided by the following research questions.

9.1. What is the number of pre schoolers who view T.V in Juja Division in Kiambu County?

Figure1: Television availability

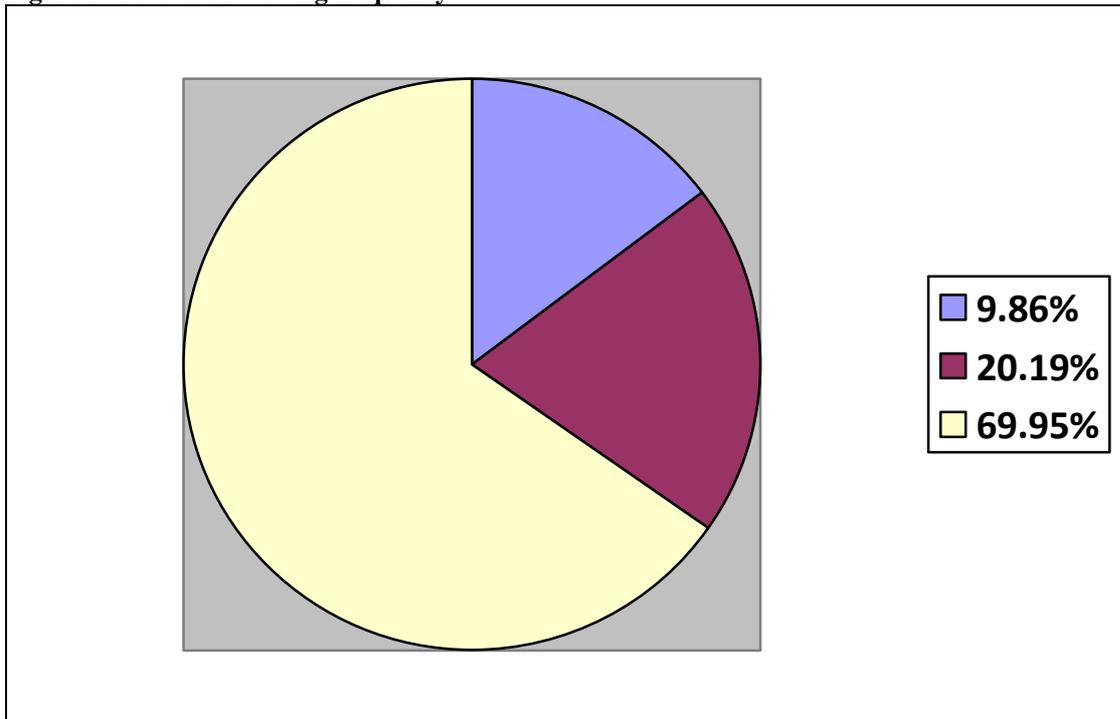


After having interviewed four hundred pre-school children on whether they have T.V in their homes, 81.3% of them said they do. On the other hand, 18.8% said that there was no television in their homes as shown in figure 1. This is a clear indication that television is present in most of the preschoolers' lives.

9.2. How frequent do pre-schoolers watch television?

As shown by figure 2 there is a clear indication that pre-schoolers spend more time seated in front of T.V than in any other crucial activities including play besides school, 69.95% of them watch T.V on daily basis 20.19% view T.V only during weekends while only 9.86% watch once in a week.

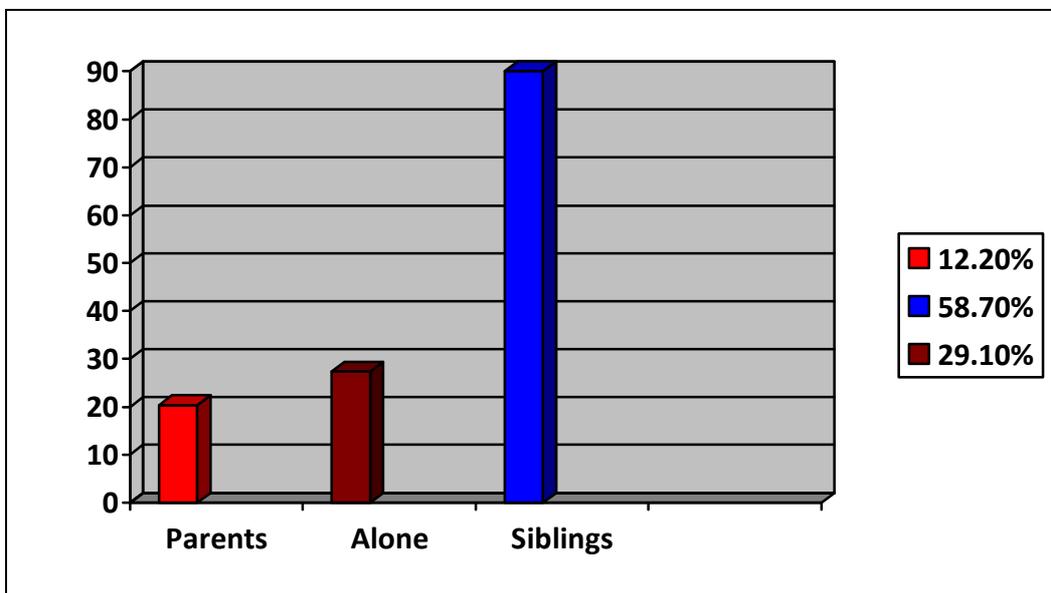
Figure 2: Television viewing frequency



Since children have problems of telling time accurately, this time was indirectly determined by enquiring which programs they watched and adding the total time to get a clear indication of the time spent viewing television.

9.3. To what extent do pre-schoolers' view television accompanied by their parents?

Figure 3: Television accompaniment by parents



Regarding whether pre-schoolers view T.V accompanied by their parents, siblings or alone figure 3 shows that most of them 58.7% view T.V alone, 21.1% view T.V accompanied by their parents or house help. This clearly shows that pre-school children enter into a world of fantasy without adequate guidance and oversights of parents.

9.4. To what extent do parents avail themselves to view T.V with their pre-school children?

Table 1: Company of child watching T.V

Company	Frequency	(%)
Alone	84	60
Siblings	38	27.1
Together	18	12.9
Total	140	100

Regarding whether parents view T.V programmes with their pre-school children, most parents 84(60%) admitted that their pre-schoolers watch T.V alone and 38(27.1%) said that their pre-schoolers view T.V with other siblings while only 18(12.9%) watch together with their parents as summarized in table 2. This clearly indicates that most of the pre-schoolers are mostly parented by network producers rather than their own parents. The researchers further observed that most of the parents are rather too busy due to economic demand hence little time to spend with their children. Regarding the observation schedule, the researchers observed that in their play, some of the pre-schoolers portrayed unacceptable behaviors. For example some would command their peers on how to go about a given play, others would use abuse language, and other could not wait for their turns, while others displayed verbal aggression and hitting others.

10.0 Discussion and recommendations

T.V is now available in lives of pre-school children. As it is a very strong vehicle of socialization, it can affect pre-school children positively or negatively. Among other things it affects them particularly when it denies them opportunity to play with their peers and when they do it they have a tendency of imitating what they observe in the television whether good or bad.

Play is a necessary condition and it plays a very crucial role in the growth and development of the child. During play children are able to learn negotiation skills, sharing skills, taking turns, honesty, obedience, respect, co-operation, team work, boundaries and also problem solving skills.

It is recommended that parents despite competitive economic demands should create more time to accompany their pre-school children while viewing T.V. They should further enforce rules and regulations in pre-schoolers T.V viewing. Additionally they should create time and opportunity for pre schoolers to play. The media, government and the regulatory organs should take the responsibility of protecting pre-schoolers from viewing programme that would influence them negatively.

11.0. Conclusions

From the study, it can be concluded that pre-schoolers sociability in play can be influenced by television viewing. This is specifically when it consumes children's time for other activities like play, when children view T.V alone without parents to help them interpret the content underlying the programs, and also when they watch violent programs. It can also be concluded that the pre-schoolers who are denied opportunities of playing with their peers do not know how it is to interact with them. They are socially incompetent and are generally disliked, aggressive and disruptive and also unable to sustain close relationships with their peers and fail to establish a place for themselves in the peer culture and are at a risk of having trouble with relationships when they are adults. Finally, due to increasingly competitive economy, parents are finding it rather difficult to make on a single income. Consequently, with both parents exhausted, few have the time to view T.V with their pre-school children.

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