

# Television viewing and its effects on the reading habits of children essay sample...

[Media](#), [Television](#)



### *Abstract*

*Television viewing and its effects on the reading habits of children* (Name), 2007, studies the recent volumes of literature on the development of the reading attitudes and routines of children as influenced by their time spent in front of a television set. It takes the view that the longer a child spends time in television viewing, an increase in detrimental effects of learning, such as the developing of good reading habits, takes place. Reading is a different brain activity that makes use of slow time for absorption and comprehension, an endeavour that is quite contrary as to what the brain is engaged with during television watching.

### *Introduction*

It is rare these days that a household does not have a television set. The advent of this modern equipment for entertainment and information dissemination garnered a lot of criticisms from educators and advocates specifically on the fundamentals of learning. These criticisms ran unabated because the medium remains very much popular since its inception. Observations point to the commonality that the viewing of this appliance has become a centerpiece of family life for quite some time. Conflicting evidences as to its benefits and destructive effects contribute to the television's ever-increasing popularity, especially among the children and the youth.

Many say that the destructive effects of such frequent viewing outweigh the positive outcomes that may eventually produce for any member of the

family. However, many more studies are usually recommended to be done in order to fully prove the positive correlation of television viewing and decreased reading habits of children in the elementary grades. It is in this milieu that this paper is conceptualized. It describes and explains the advantages and disadvantages that television viewing may have on learning in general. Specifically, it focuses on the harm that this may afford on the good reading habits that children ought to develop as part of their educational and communication capabilities.

### *Statement of the problem*

Central to the study of the issue is to identify the statements of the problem and tackle these in the light of the resources available to the researcher. The paper seeks to ascertain whether researches do provide proofs that there are problems tied up with the activity of television watching and reading habits of schoolchildren.

1. How prevalent and persistent is the concern over the time children spent on television viewing? This problem is addressed in the demographics summary of the paper.
2. What is meant by reading habits and its impact on academic achievements of schoolchildren? This is answered in part in the operational definition of the terminologies.
3. What theoretical viewpoints help explain the phenomenon? Perspective according to Piaget as identified in the next section, helps elucidate on the issue of the paper's treatise.

4. What do researches provide in terms of the viewing's advantages and disadvantages on the reading habits of children?

### *Theoretical Framework*

Childhood is the period for the fundamentals to be established.

Developmental tasks from early to middle childhood include forming simple concepts of and social and physical reality, the developing of fundamental skills in reading, writing and calculating, and developing concepts necessary for everyday living, among several others. Foremost in the understanding of this stage is the contribution of Jean Piaget, whose work centers on the cognitive development of children. He conceptualized that a person perceives, thinks and gains an understanding of his/her world through the interaction and influence of genetic and learning factors. His work led to the current view that children are actively involved in their own cognitive development. However, this is only as far as the environment that is provided them which primarily as established by their carers or significant others like their parents (Atkinson et al, 2000).

### *Integration*

It is in this context that the author believes children are guided in the amount of time they spend in activities within the home, specifically on television viewing. Literature is rich on the evidence that children's attitude and conduct on such essentials as reading are greatly affected or influenced by their viewing habits. When children apprehend their world as provided by facilities and/or conveniences which parents make available for their use,

their attitude as they interact with various stimuli around them will be positively or negatively affected. Reading then, is adversely affected when children spend more time around the television set.

### *Methodology*

This paper utilizes and integrates the researches or studies done on the subject matter. Findings are then incorporated for analysis to express the possible conclusions and recommendations.

### *Definition*

Pertinent to the understanding of the matter of concern is the operational definition of the terminologies used.

*Television viewing.* This has reference to the activity of gathering and spending certain amount of time in hours in front of a television set. “

Television habits consist of patterns of behavior determined by the amount of time and importance individuals give to watching television broadcasts and recorded videos and DVD” ([http://www. answers. com/topic/television-habits? cat= health](http://www.answers.com/topic/television-habits?cat=health)).

*Reading.* This means the development of cognitive skills such as the “ process of identifying and understanding the meaning of the characters and words in written or printed materials” (Microsoft Encarta, 2006). The reading habit is the level of a child’s desire to spend a certain amount of time in the pursuit of learning or acquiring information.

### *Demographics*

In a study on *Television*, the time spent by youths of today in front of the set exceeded any form of pastime or interest, surpassed only by the amount of time they spend in sleeping. They spend around 28 hours per week watching television programming, six times more than the time they spend for homework. Children in their pre-toddler years are said to be “baby-sit” by this electronic device. Pre-schoolers approximately devote as much as 28 hours a week while school age children run an average of 25 hours in a given week. It has been an observation that the whole family even eat while watching their favourite program, all glued and family dialogues reduced to a minimum ( *Television*, [http: library. thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

### *Discussion on the results of findings*

A majority of Americans increasingly spend more time watching television programming. Its prevalence prompted specialists in human behavior to conduct studies to determine its impact on a variety of children’s behavior ranging from aggression to intellectual development. This technological breakthrough (television) has brought many into a state of mind that seems to see that the possession of this appliance set is one of the necessities of life of which every family should be able to acquire; that if otherwise is true, life for that family is incomplete ( *Television*, [http: library. thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

These studies also point out several of the ramifications on the intellectual activity of students, among them advantages toward scholastic acquisition and training. The more that televisions are enhanced today, with regards its

physical look, sound and delivery, in addition to increasingly excellent prepared programs, children have access to many information and/or knowledge children of their age in previous years never get to see. But in spite of this, literature says that children do not get any smarter ( *Television*, [http: library. thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

Specifically, some of the dire consequences of too much TV include

~ substitutes the place of reading for pleasure, thereby reducing the enhancement of reading proficiency given that the TV time involves a lesser exertion on mental processing than that of reading (Lehr, 1986.).

~usually reduces attention spans of children due to TV's generating "neural passivity" implying that as learners in school they may find difficulty on focusing the less animated and entertaining, much slower discussion that transpires in a typical American classroom ( *Television*, [http: library. thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

~Research further suggests that TV does not promote better communication skills because its design is not for the encouragement of conversation or interaction (Lehr, 1986).

~ " Effective reading skills rely on auditory language ability (left brain hemisphere), while children who rely on visual skills (right hemisphere) often learn to guess what a word says by the way it ' looks'" ( *Television*, [http: library. thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

~ Known as having a “hypnotic” and even addictive effect on the central nervous system by modifying the “frequency of its electrical impulses in ways that block active mental processing” ( *Television*, [http: library.thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

~Other behavioral impact on viewers includes “over stimulation, resulting in hyperactivity, frustration, short attention span, or irritability” ( *Television*, [http: library.thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

According to studies, television viewing has not amply provided to its viewers the advancement in intellectual domains it promises. Instead of being active participants in a learning process, it sets the pace for passivity and the resulting weakened cognitive processes. C. M. Koolstra, a researcher whose study involved thousands of school children in a period of three years, revealed findings to the fact the children’s enjoyment for reading is lessened while their capacity for focus is immensely hindered in his evaluative study on the bearing of television viewing on the underdeveloped intellect of children ( *Television*, [http: library.thinkquest. org](http://library.thinkquest.org)).

Another study in the Netherlands illustrates the fact that children’s interest in doing their required homework becomes difficult and are more tempted to a time in front of the set. What is of significance is the fact that children’s responses reveal consistencies regardless of the types of programmes they watch. Children by the millions develop the same habits today.

Repercussions on the massive weakened reading appetite are predictable. Inabilities in comprehension and interpretation of many of adult



responsibilities as encountered in later life, such as errors in entries of pertinent documents and requirements are committed. These may imply accidents, lost of man-hours, additional expenditures and even incomes. This is from a separate study on Canadians, with 16 percent of its citizens' reading abilities registering pronounced impediments. The latter study emphasizes that such inability hampers a person to tackle with enormous reading materials typically faced by an average Canadian individual (Vallabh, *The impact of the electronic media on reading habits of children*).

### *Conclusion and recommendation*

When television watching and the increasingly prevailing trend of the American public's obsession in it have negative effects on reading as a specific, fundamental learning ability, then stricter and more stringent guidelines must be imposed by parents on its use. What happens in reality though is that the parents and guardians themselves find it difficult to be weaned away from the medium.

This is no good news for the very busy but concerned and responsible parents who are held tight by the pull of supporting a family and so must work and leave supervision of their children to the care of others who are not so strict on TV viewing. Television viewing is conveniently accessible and affordable form of entertainment. The consequences of the too much viewing are costly, however. Despite the claims to the contrary - that TV watching especially educational programming produced more informed public - majority of society succumb to the lure of being couch potatoes.

Recommendations for the prevailing problem include consistent and massive campaign for public dissemination on the detrimental impact of television on reading and other cognitive abilities of children. More studies should be conducted specifically gearing on longitudinal research and case studies on adult populations' performance at work correlated with television influence during school age years.

*Reference:*

1. Atkinson, R. L., R. C. Atkinson, E. E. Smith, D. J. Bem, and S. Nolen-Hoeksema. 2000. *Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology*. 13<sup>th</sup> New York: Harcourt College Publishers.
2. Microsoft Encarta, 2006.
3. Lehr, Fran. 1986. *Television Viewing and reading*. Eric Digest. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills Urbana IL. Accessed June 19, 2007 <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-924/reading.htm> >
4. Vallabh, Navneeth. *The impact of the electronic media on reading habits of children*. Accessed June 19, 2007.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Accessed June 20, 2007.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Television Habits. Accessed June 21, 2007 <(http://www.answers.com/topic/television-habits?cat=health).>