

Effects of Mass Media on the Academic Development of Children in Primary Schools in Kenya: A Case Study of St. Alloys Junior Academy

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Abstract: The general objective of carrying out this study was to establish the effects of access to mass-media on the academic development of children in primary schools in Kenya. This study was based at the St. Alloys Academy, Nairobi. The objective of the study was to establish the effect of the too much access to mass media, on children's development in academic performance and addiction. This study is beneficial to St. Alloys Academy, government, other school and other researchers who shall use it as a foundation for further studies. The researchers applied a descriptive research design. The target population was 35 members of staff from St. Alloys Academy, Nairobi. The study adopted census sampling where the whole population was used as a sample. The data collected was edited and analyzed using descriptive statistic and presented using tables, graphs, and charts. As per the findings, 85% acknowledged the effect of mass media and children and 67% acknowledged that mass media have some impact on a child's development. The study recommended that children should be limited too much access to mass media as parents and teachers should be their controllers and encourage them to watch and listen to programs that are educative. Parents should be aware of the positive and negative impact of access to mass media on children. Parents, teachers and guardians should ensure that children spend most of their time reading, playing with others and doing their homework in order to ensure high performances.

Keywords: Addiction, Academic improvement, Children, Mass media.

I. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Background of the Study:

Mass media are diversified media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. The technologies through which this communicating takes place varies because there are different from each other i.e. radio, music, film and television.

Decade's worth of research has shown several effects of mass media to children in primary schools. Mass media is not necessary have negative impact to children but also has a positive value to them. For example mass media plays a major role in enhancing positive children's development in various education programs aired in television that may serve to increase children's knowledge and understanding of various life aspects. Positive role models portrayed in the mass media can also serve a positive social development tool for children. Qualitative research studies have shown that one way in which television enhances development in children is portraying positive role models of collaboration and development as a responsible manner of acting (Press, 2007). It is therefore evident that TV can serve as a means of learning of positive reinforcement in children.

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Mass media has also played a major role in enhancing socialization among children. With the advance technology, children can easily access the internet which is a major socialization tool and can also be used as a research tool that can be utilized positively by students. (Mumi, 2010)

Despite the positive effects of mass media it has the negative value. For example many children instead of investing their time studying, reading good books, engaging in social activities and exercising, children choose to spend their evenings watching movies or glued to the TV sets. With the increasing technological advancement, the internet can be easily accessed by children. This exposes such children to things that they do not necessarily need to know and may not understand. The reading culture is gradually fading and substituted by mass media. This poses a negative impact on school performance as well as learning problems. Children are increasingly reporting low academic grades and problems in learning due to overindulgence in mass media (Matthew & Jesse, 2008).

Mass media intends to dictate various aspects including the ideal image or definition of beauty. Children start to imitate the characters portrayed in mass media without being careful enough to differentiate wrong and right which has led to several young girls develop self esteem issues due to failure to match up to the image and beauty standards dictated by the media (Pege & Extra, 2004). Children start behaving abnormally just to imitate to what they saw the actors do and this takes their time instead of doing constructive learning.

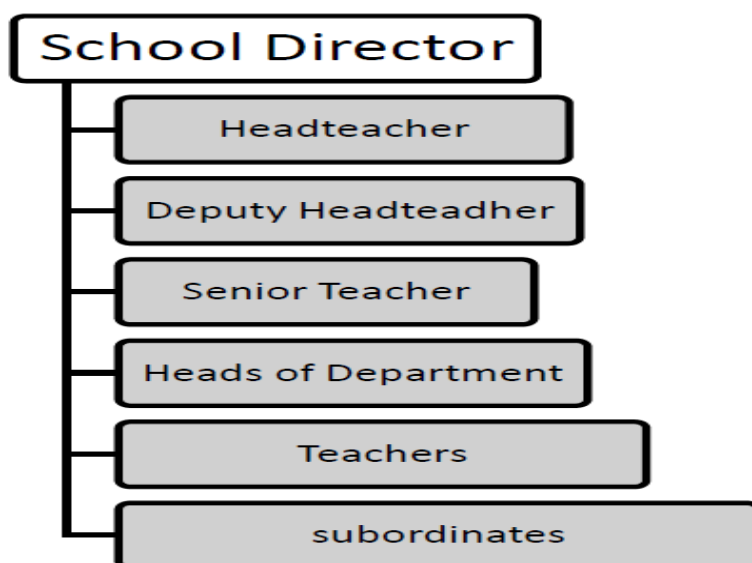
Mass media may prompt children to engage in sexual activities at an early age, research has indicated that children are exposed to approximately 14,000 sexual references annually in television. Out of this only 150 of them address issues of abstinence, sexual responsibility and contraception (Press, 2007). This implies that sex is portrayed as a fun activity, which prompts children to have an urge to try it out. Over exposure to sexual content in videos, game of television programming is strongly linked to increasing rate of teen pregnancies. This also applies to substance abuse highly depicted in movies that children watch out of curiosity leading to such children trying out different illegal drugs and substances seen in media sources.

Profile of St. Alloys Academy:

St. Alloys Academy is a private primary school located at the outskirts of Nairobi- Mombasa highway new cabanas. It was started in 1995 as kindergarten and has progressed from their standard one to standard eight. The school has an estimated 35 teachers trained from whom the researcher can bark on their psychological evaluation to gather data needed further to this study.

Due to high competition from other private schools, the school maintained high discipline levels, high learning methods and qualified staff in order to record high performances and also attract many students to cope with competition.

Structure of St. Alloys Academy:



International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Statement of the Problem:

According to the school's director, St. Alloys Academy has of late experienced poor performance in examinations both in internal and external. Many of the school teachers have always complained to the directors and the parents about children not completing their homework. Due to this, the management of the school has held many meetings with the parents and teachers to establish the real cause of problems in vain. However, many of the stakeholders are privy to the effects of mass media on children's performance. To cope with the high competition from other private schools, St. Alloys Academy has set time for revision to children after normal class hours before children leave for homes late. This study therefore aims to explore the effects of access to mass on the academic development of children in St. Alloys Academy.

The purpose of the study:

The main objective of the study was to establish the effects of access to mass media on the academic development of children in primary schools in Kenya.

Objectives of the study:

The specific objectives of this study include the following:

- i. To establish the effects of media addiction on children academic development in primary schools in Kenya.
- ii. To assess the effects of grades improvement on academic development in primary schools in Kenya.

Research Questions:

The research was guided by the following questions.

- i. How does media addiction affect children academic development in primary schools in Kenya?
- ii. To what extent does grades improvement affect academic development in primary schools in Kenya?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Grades Improvement:

Many children are taking most of their time in mass media. This has led to poor grades and school work because tension takes time away from reading and schoolwork. Studies show that even one or two hours of daily television viewing by school aged children has significant harmful effects on academic performance, especially reading" (Comedian Pediatric Society, (1999).

Most of the children instead of investing their time studying and reading good books, children choose to spend their evenings watching movies or glued to TV sets. The reading culture is gradually fading and substituted by mass media. This poses a negative effect on school performance as well as learning problems in learning problems. Children are increasing reporting low academic grades and problems in learning due to overindulgence in mass media (Marthaw & Jesses, 2008)

Although research clearly demonstrates that well designed aged appropriate educational television can be beneficial to children of pre-school age, studies on infants and toddlers suggest that these young children may better understand from real life experience than they do from video. Moreover, some research findings suggest that exposure to television during the first few years of life may be associated with poorer cognitive development. Early exposure to age appropriate programs designed around an educational curriculum is associated with cognitive and academic enhancement whereas exposure to pure entertainment and violent content is associated with poorer cognitive development and lower academic achievement. Children watching cartoons and entertainment television during pre-school years have poorer pre-reading skills at age 5(Macbeth, 1996). Also children who overindulge in entertainment TV are less likely to read books and other print media (Wright & Huston, 1995).

According to renowned American speech and language expert, Dr. Sally Word, 20 years of research shows that children who are bombarded by background TV noise in their homes have trouble paying attention to when there is a background noise. Kids who watch too much TV have trouble paying attention to teacher because they are accustomed to the first

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

paced video/ stimulation of TV. Columbia's college of Physicians and Surgeons concluded in 2007 that children below the age of 10 who watched one or more hours of TV daily are at an elevated risk of poor performance, poor homework completion, negative attitude toward school, poor grades and long term academic failure. The study further found that those who watched there or more hours a day were an even greater risk for subsequent attention and learning difficulties and were the least to go to the college.

In 2005, a study published by the American Archives of Pediatrics and adolescent medicine (AAPM) found the harm caused by TV shows up even after correcting the data to account for students intelligence, family conditions and prior behavior problems. The bottom line thus is increase time spent watching TV during childhood and adolescents was associated with a lower level of education attainment by early adulthood.

Despite the negative effects of mass media on performance there are a number of positive social effects of mass media on children. Mass media plays a major role in enhancing positive child development. For instance, various education programs are aired in television may serve to increase children's knowledge (Press, 2007). It is therefore evident that television can serve as a means of learning in children.

Also studies show that the significance of poor grades and school work. Because television take time away from reading and school work, it is important to control TV viewing during school week. Studies show that even two or on hour of daily television viewing by school aged children has a significant harmful effect on academic performance, especially reading (Canadian Pediatric Society, 1991).

As by the displacement theory which proposes that time spent like reading, it proposes that children who view television most heavily to seem to spend less time in activities that encourage cognitive development and in turn show the lowest achievement.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This is the outline, plan, or scheme that is used to generate answers to the research problems. It is basically the plan and the structure of investigation. Descriptive research design will be used in the study. Descriptive research design seeks to establish factors associate with certain occurrences, outcomes, conditions or types of behavior. Descriptive research design is a scientific method of investigation in which data is collected and analyzed in order to describe the current conditions, term or relationships concerning a problem (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999)

Target Population:

Target population is defined by (Ott, 2010) is a universal set of the study of all members of real or hypothetical set of people, events or objective to which an investigator wishes to generalize the result. The target population of the study was staff of St. Alloys Academy as in shown in the table 3.1 below.

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Table 3.1 Target Population

| Category | Target population | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Upper class teachers | 8 | 23 |
| Lower class teachers | 11 | 30 |
| Baby care & kindergarten | 16 | 47 |
| Totals | 35 | 100 |

Sampling Design:

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) sampling is the process by which a relatively small number of individual, object or event is selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which was selected. This study adopted census sampling. She points out that census is appropriate where the population under study is relatively small. The sample size was 100% of the target population. See table 3.2 below:

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

 Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com
Table 3.2 Sampling Design

| Category | Target population | Sample size | Percentage |
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Data Collection:

Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. Questionnaires were hand delivered and collected a few days. The types of questions used include both open and closed ended. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a questionnaire is a series of questions asked to individual to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic. Closed ended questions were used to ensure that the given answers are relevant. The researcher phrased the questions clearly in order to make clear dimensions along which response were analyzed and open ended questions, space was provided for relevant explanation by the respondents, thus given them freedom to express their views.

The method was considered effective to the study in that it creates confidentiality.

Validity of Research Instruments:

The researcher obtained authority from relevant departments of the school to circulate questionnaires. To ensure reliability and validity, questionnaires were pre- tested on respondents who researcher was in a position to ascertain various changes that had to be made in the final questionnaire. The questionnaires then went through correction before the final distribution.

Data Analysis:

According to (Milton, 2009) data analysis procedure includes the process of packaging the collected information, putting it in order and structuring its main components in a way that the findings can be easily communicated. After the field work, before analysis, all questionnaires were adequately checked for reliability and verification. Editing, coding and tabulation were then carried out. The data was then analyzed using qualitative techniques. Qualitative methods involve content analysis and evaluation to text material. Quantitative methods involve the use of diagrams such as tables and charts.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effect of Media Addiction on Academic Development:

The research sought to establish from the respondents if media addiction had any effect on children performance. The results were as follows:

Table 4.1 Effects of Mass- Media Addiction on Children Academic Development

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 28 | 85 |
| No | 5 | 15 |
| Total | 33 | 100 |

Effects of Mass Media Addiction on Children Behavior:
Table 4.2 Effects of Mass Media Addiction on Children Behavior

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 18 | 57 |
| No | 8 | 23 |
| Not sure | 7 | 20 |
| Total | 33 | 100 |

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

The above table 4.8 presents the level of participation whether media addiction affects children behavior. Respondents 57% were for yes, 25% for no and 20% respondents were for sure. Majority were for yes meaning that mass media addiction affects children behaviors.

Grades Improvement:

Table 4.3 Rating whether Access to mass media improves grades

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 8 | 24 |
| No | 15 | 46 |
| Not sure | 10 | 30 |
| Total | 33 | 100 |

The above table 4.9 illustrates the ratings of access to mass media and grades improvement. Respondents 24% were for yes, 46% for no and 30% respondents were for sure of the effects whether negative or positive. Majority were for no meaning that mass media access on children does not improve academic performance as many children may gain access to media but nor effectiveness of it. This takes their time not accessing educative sites but elderly sites and entertainment sites.

Grades Improvement:

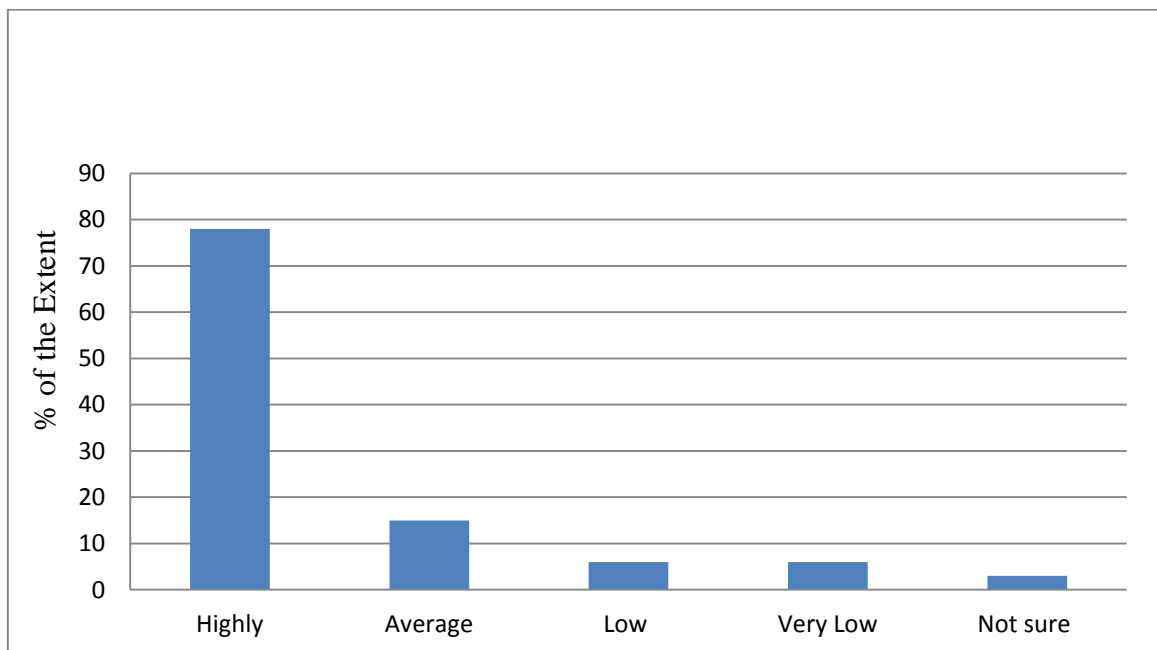


Figure 4.1 how do you rate mass media and Children grades Improvement?

Figure 4.10 illustrates the extent of Grade improvement on Children academic development. Respondents 72% rated the extent highly, 15% average, 6% respondents said it is low, 6% rated the extent very low while another 3% were unsure. Grades improvement has a very big effect on children academic development.

Whether access to mass media pose Negative impact Academic Grades:

Table 4.4 Whether access to mass media pose Negative impact Academic Grades

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 21 | 67 |
| No | 12 | 33 |
| Total | 33 | 100 |

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

The above table 4.4 shows the effect of access to mass media on children academic performance. Respondents (67%) acknowledged the effect of mass media on children academic performance while 33% disagreed saying some programs are educative. Therefore the majority acknowledged that access to mass media exposes to things they do not necessarily need to know and may not understand leading to fading of reading which poses a negative impact on school academic performance as well learning problems. The respondents also explained that many children most of their time on social media thus forgetting to read educational books and even forgetting to do their homework.

Media Addiction:

Respondents 85% acknowledged the effect of media addiction on children performance while 15% disagreed. Therefore mass media addiction affects children performance and behavior and also takes a lot of the children's time. Media addiction involves watching and being glued to the media despite having some school work to do children find themselves being addicted to some program and the action in the program which also lead to abuse of some drugs and other substance making the child to spend a lot of time watching programs that are not useful in their age and life. So one way of controlling this is for parents to ensure children watch educational programs and other Christian and gospel programs. Parents and teachers should ensure children spend their time reading and playing with others during their free time and also the media e.g. TV to air program that of some effects with caution e.g. parental guidance needed.

Grades Improvement:

Respondents 67% acknowledged the effect of mass media to children performance while 33% did not. This shows that access to mass media affects children performance. Respondents explained that most children spend their time on mass media e.g. TV, Face book, Twitter, etc watching programs and chatting with their friends in the social networks instead of using their free time revising and researching and this leads to many recording poor grades an problems in learning due to overindulgence in mass media. This if children control themselves and make good use of mass media it could be very important and useful to their studies and they will record impressive performances as media also has a lot of educational and research materials e.g. the internet Google.

and the characters to emulate in their lives because many children in schools develop behaviors which may have imitated from what they watch that mislead their lives and behavior.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Mass media addiction has led to many children spending a lot of their time in mass media. This exposes children to things they do not necessarily need to know and may not understand. Many children instead of investing time to their education they spend it on mass media and drug abuse imitating the actor on programs and movies. It is important for parents, guardians and teacher to take their time to educate the children the benefits of mass media to their academic performance if well utilized and educate them which sites to visit that they can find educational materials instead of using it viewing sites that are not of nay benefit. They should also control children from watching some programs on TV because there are some that are for elderly only. Also children should be motivated to work hard by rewarding the best student as this will challenge others to spend most of their time in reading and researching thus making them improve performance in order to also be rewarded.

Children should be encouraged to participate in social activities in school and also to take their time in group work and doing assignments as well as playing with others and also conversing with their family members about their day- day activities. Also parents should find a way to utilize technology in a manner that is more beneficial and less harmful to their children's well being.

The media should air programs that contain sexual content at late night when children are asleep to avoid the children being exposed to sexual content. This is because programs e.g. Soaps and movies that contain sexual content are nowadays aired during the day when children are supposed to watch TV.

Recommendations:

Parents working together with teachers in education children the importance of the use of mass media will be very important because children will understand the benefits of using mass media in their academic and research. Parents

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp: (11-18), Month: March - April 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

should also take their time controlling children on which sites of mass media are suitable for them and also encouraging them to spend their time in reading books and social activities. The parents and teachers should inform the children that the programs are only for acting and not real life and drug abuse is not the best way.

Grades Improvement:

Teachers should encourage students to spend their time learning and also reward the best students in order to encourage others to invest more time reading and revising for them to be rewarded also and this will improve performance as many will take their time away from mass media and invest in it education matters. Teachers should form groups for discussion before children go home in order not to give them a lot of time to spend at home which tempts them to indulge in social networks and watching things that are not important.

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