Parental Mediation on Children’s Television Viewing Habits in Malaysia

Diyana Kamarudin
Western Michigan University
Dr. Kathleen Wong

Abstract
This study will discuss the social uses of television within the family, children and media, family conflict with a specific focus on the use of television. It will examine how important parental mediation is in monitoring children viewing habits. The study will look at four types of mediation which are instructive mediation, restrictive mediation, social co-viewing and unstructured mediation. Research would be conducted on twelve Malay parents, all of whom are from Malaysia. They will be asked to answer questions about watching television in their home. Data collection will include participants completing a daily diary (solicited diary) over a one week period on how they mediate their children’s television viewing. Upon completion of the solicited diary, a one-on-one semi-structured interview will be conducted through webcam. The themes that were found are religion, television is educational, parents advise children through television and television is used for families to get together.

Introduction
The purpose of this study is to examine how parents monitor or mediate their children’s viewing habits in Malaysian families. It is to determine how television is used within the family in Malaysia and how parents mediate their children’s viewing habits. This is because television is an information technology that is not easily controlled or censored by parents compared to methods such as books and storytelling. Because of this, many worry that parents have largely lost the ability to shape their children’s values (Erica Austin, 1993).

Methodology
This research study utilizes qualitative research methods to investigate the following:
RQ1: How do Malaysian mothers and fathers engage in parental mediation of children’s television viewing?
RQ2: How do these mediation styles compare to the mediation types established in the research literature?
RQ3: What are the self-described motivations for parental television viewing mediation given by parents?

Component of Data Analysis
Diaries as well as interviews were conducted in Malay. Interviews were translated from Malay language into English. To increase reliability and validity, all of the diaries and one-fourth of the interviews were translated a repeated time by a native Malay speaker and the English translations were checked for accuracy. One diary and one interview was also back-translated where the English transcript was be given to a native Malay speaker who then recreated the transcript in Malay by translating from the English version. The two Malay transcripts (the translated and the back-translated) were compared for accuracy. Diaries as well as interviews were coded for themes.

Results
In descending order, the themes that were found to be the most important are religion, television is educational, parents advise children through television and television is used for families to get together. Under the religion theme itself, there are religion permeates everyday life, religion used to advise children, religion used to educate children, parents’ thoughts in regards to television programs, limit children’s television viewing, and avoidance.

Religion - From the interviews, participants have said that the reason they use religion in their everyday teaching is so that so their children will not forget the Islamic teachings as they live their daily lives. They teach their children through television so that it is easier for the children to implement the teachings themselves.

Television as an Educational Tool - Parents view television as a medium to teach children new things such as language, manners, family values, art, and many more. The research participants in this study consisted of twelve ethnically Malay parents. Inclusionary criteria are parents between the ages of 30 and 50 years old, with children who ranged from 18 months to 12 year olds. Parents were asked to participate by writing in a diary, as well as attending a semi structure online interview with the researcher.

RQ1: How do Malaysian mothers and fathers engage in parental mediation of children’s television viewing?
RQ2: How do these mediation styles compare to the mediation types established in the research literature?
RQ3: What are the self-described motivations for parental television viewing mediation given by parents?

Parents have been concerned about negative effects of media on children.

Parents could influence child’s response to media messages through parental mediation on children’s television viewing, using four types of mediation: restrictive mediation, instructive mediation, social co-viewing and unstructured mediation.

Television is not easily controlled or censored by parents such as books. Because of this, many parents worry that they have lost the ability to shape their children’s values.

To avoid negative media effect on children.

Children use television as reference to real life experience and that parents help mediate explaining or parents help mediate their children’s television viewing. He/she can also reenact scenes easily.

Parents are quicker than my sons in learning the language because the boys are not really interested. My daughters will learn through television, they will be reading the subtitles at the bottom. So when they watch television, they will be reading the subtitles intently. So when I try to play with them and say the characters are saying this and this, my girls will say, “dad you’re lying... they know this because they are reading the subtitles.”

“**Television as an Educational Tool**

- **Parents view television as a medium to teach children new things such as language, manners, family values, art, and many more.**
- **"My wife encourages the children to use and learn English, though sometimes it is hard for my kids to understand it. We will ask them to try and understand anyway. My daughters are quicker than my sons in learning the language because the boys are not really interested. My daughters will learn through reading the subtitles at the bottom. So when they watch television, they will be reading the subtitles intently. So when I try to play with them and say the characters are saying this and this, my girls will say, ‘dad you’re lying... they know this because they are reading the subtitles.’**

""The other thing than I am concerned about is that there are a lot of ghost stories that are not good. Those kinds of stories are wrong in the sense of our Islamic beliefs. This is because our kids can get too scared and believe in it too much.""

""I only disapprove of my children watching television when it is prayer time or Maghreb (prayer time in the evening) or late at night because it would be hard for them to wake up in the morning.""

""**Yes, while watching television is the time for me to advise my kids. That is because the other times, we are all busy doing other things. So this is the time for us to advise the kids. I always refer to religion because I want my kids to be a good Muslim. I want my kids to be better than me.**""

""**I think television brings a lot of educational values. I can teach a lot of educational values. I can teach a lot of things to my children through television. My child could also learn a lot from television that we as parents sometimes forget to teach them. They could also ask a lot of questions and be creative. When there are art programs, the whole house will be filled with papers and glue because they are trying to do the art project.**""