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Parental Control of Pre-School Children's Viewing of Programmes in Electronic Media

Rodzicielska kontrola oglądania programów w mediach elektronicznych przez dzieci przedszkolne

Abstract

Electronic media comprise an integral part of family life and have therefore become the children's companions. The programmes that children watch from early childhood affect their psychological development and shape their moral norms, attitudes and opinions. One of the important tasks of parents is to define rules for watching programmes in the electronic media, to decide at what age children should start watching programmes, which programmes are appropriate for them, for how long and during which part of the day they can spend time in front of the screen. The research problem how parents control and manage TV viewing in their pre-school children has been studied using qualitative research methods – in-depth interviews as the main research method phenomenological analysis. This research offers findings on what the viewing habits of a child television view are in the families of our participants. It examines the environment and the context of the family activities as a part of which the children watched TV. For a more thorough understanding of the parenting techniques using which parents seek to control children's television viewing, part of the research interview is given to the view of parents on TV, the positive and negative effects, which, according to the parents, watching television can bring their children.

Keywords:

Abstrakt:

Media elektroniczne stanowią integralną część życia rodziny i dlatego stały się towarzyszami dzieci. Programy, które dzieci oglądają od wczesnego dzieciństwa, wpływają na ich rozwój psychiczny i kształtują ich normy moralne, postawy i opinie. Jednym z ważnych zadań rodziców jest określenie zasad oglądania programów w mediach elektronicznych, podjęcie decyzji, w jakim wieku ich dzieci powinny zacząć oglądanie programów, jakie programy są dla nich odpowiednie, jak długo i jaką porę dnia mogą spędzać przed ekranem. Problem badawczy, jak rodzice kontrolują i zarządzają oglądaniem telewizji u swoich przedszkolnych dzieci, został przeanalizowany przy zastosowaniu jakościowych metod badawczych – zastosowano dogłębne wywiady jako główną fenomenologiczną analizę metody badawczej. Badanie to podaje wyniki na temat zwyczajów oglądania telewizji przez dzieci w rodzinach uczestników badań. Badanie to analizuje środowisko i kontekst tych działań rodziny, w związku z którymi dzieci oglądają telewizję. W celu dokładniejszego zrozumienia technik rodzicielskich, których używając, rodzice chcą kontrolować oglądanie telewizji przez swoje dzieci, część badania stanowi pogląd rodziców na telewizję, pozytywne i negatywne skutki, które, według rodziców, oglądanie telewizji może przynieść ich dzieciom.

Słowa kluczowe:

dzieci przedszkolne; dzieciństwo; oglądanie telewizji; media elektroniczne; kontrola rodzicielska.

Introduction

To relieve a serious topic. When two Martians returned from an expedition to our planet, they brought a TV with an explanation – we did not manage to catch an earthling, but we captured one of their gods (Ferrero 1997, 72).

In the past, parents could easily shape their young children by talking and reading only about those things they wanted to shape, however, current parents have to compete with a number of competing images and ideas over which they have little direct control. Today's children are accompanied by TV all over the world, even before parents allow them to cross the road (Minson 2009, 138). Parents and teachers state that currently many children have problems with attention, reading, learning and spelling. Their ability to concentrate is lower than in children in the past, and the quality of reading and spelling has also deteriorated.

Educators and psychologists are questioning whether negative media oversaturation is behind this change. Today's children live in constant and close contact with the media, which of course was not true of children from before 30 or 40 years ago. There is a presumption that media saturation of children of the world leaves traces not only in values and consequently behaviour, but also in areas related to learning.

The original title of our article was: *Parental control of television viewing in preschool children.* In the research we wanted to deal only with the issue of television viewing in preschool children – up to six years. We assumed that children at this age do not yet have access to the Internet and other electronic media. Interviews with participants showed that our assumption was wrong and so we changed the title of the article: *Parental Control of Pre-School Children's Viewing of Programmes in Electronic Media.*

Electronic media use electric and magnetic fields to transmit information. This method is used to communicate information, 1. radio broadcasting, 2. television broadcasting, 3. internet, 4. phone connection, or if several media are together 5. multimedia (Mistrík 2004, 17). Communication through electronic media can be one-way (radio, television), two-way (telephone, internet) or Multidirectional (multimedia).

Electronic media are complicated organizational structures able to cope with technical, programmatic and economic processes associated with collecting and processing information, their coding, electronic sending and receiving. They are either radio and television stations, or similar organizations – telecommunications companies, production studios, engaged in the production or retransmission of programs for the general public. The most important electronic mass media are radio, television, and the internet is constantly expanding (Mistrík 2004, 18).

In our research, we examined parental control of preschool children using radio, television and electronic mobile communication equipment.

1. Negative consequences of watching television

A TV turned on as a background for households or as a means guaranteed to hold the attention of a small child for a few minutes until a parent manages to complete unfinished business or solve a problem is common in many families. It is not common for parents to be interested in how it affects their child. Whether positive or negative.

For the television and all new electronic conveniences we can state an old truth – a good servant but a bad master. In any case, we do not want this article and the research to question the benefits that electronic media can offer. But in certain situations they can cause a lot of evil, especially in children who have not yet developed the ability to recognize the negative aspects of watching programmes in these media.

Scientific studies involving the long-term monitoring of the effects of media entertainment show great influence of media on cognitive development and people's behaviour, especially children and young people. These groups are the largest consumers of the entertainment media produced. Statistical results of media consumption, published by the American Film Association, show that by the time a young person reaches the age of 17, they have spent 63 835 hours watching movies and TV shows, playing video games and listening to music. In contrast, the same age group has spent 11 000 hours in the school, 2000 hours with parents and 900 hours in church if they visit once a week. It follows that the average child can spend about 3755 hours annually watching TV and using other media, but only 52 hours in church (Baehr 2009, 166). According to research conducted in 2001 (Krajňák 2009, 250) every second child in Slovakia watches TV every day. In the summer months, the average is 3 hours with 4 hours a day in winter.

Small children are distracted from playing by a turned-on television, because it "steals" their attention, thus becoming an obstacle in developing their voluntary attention. Older children are distracted from learning. Leaving the TV turned on background for learning gives many strong incentives to divert attention from the child's learning. In this way, the child is disrupted in his inner speech, so that the child loses the opportunity to learn skills to pay concentrated attention to a particular activity (Minczyński 2013, 61). In the long term this type of learning can cause activity based on concentrating and thinking not to bring the child satisfaction and joy and so it will prefer to choose an easier path and activities full of strong stimuli. And this may be exactly television programmes or computer games containing elements of violence, action movies with eye-catching visual effects, animated fairy tales with a rapid alternation of images.

In 2000 the *Surgeon General* in cooperation with four of the most important health organizations in the USA: *American Health Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, made a declaration which stated that violence in the media contributes to increased violent behaviour among children and adolescents (Atkinson & Atkinson 1995, 425). A long-term study published in 2002 in the journal Science reaffirmed that children and adolescents who watch television for more

than an hour a day are more likely to commit violent crimes and show different forms of aggressive behaviour (Baehr 2009, 167). The studies from Rand Corp from the years 2001–2002, published by the Associated Press, found that children watching a lot of television programmes with sexual content are twice as susceptible to the initiation of premarital sexual life over the next few years than children exposed to such content (Baehr 2009, 168). Surprisingly , it really does not matter whether the programmes talked about sex or showed it. "Exposure to television programmes, which only speak about sex, is associated with the same risks as watching television programmes showing sexual behaviour".[1]

According to the UN's 2007 report, British children are the most unhappy and most unhealthy throughout the developed world. Psychologist Aric Sigman connects this with the excessive television watching of British children. The average British child sits through three to five times more television per day than recommended. (See table of recommended limits for watching TV) Britons, from all nations in Europe, read the least and watch the most television (Lee & Lee 2011, 393). And of course this begins at an early age.

The most common health risks for children who spend too much time watching TV include:
- obesity, caused by lack of exercise;
- sleep disorders – excessive stimulation of the senses causes insomnia;
- poor concentration – the development of brain cells controlling the interval of concentration is disturbed;
- problems with reading – a result of poor intellectual stimulation in infancy and youth;
- eye damage;
- behavioural problems – can be caused by a lack of social contacts;
- increased cholesterol;
- weakened immune systems – due to a lack of the important hormone, melatonin (Sigman 2007, 12–17).

All this information should be serious enough to make parents aware of their own responsibility in creating basic habits when watching media programmes that will also direct their children into adulthood.

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[1] Associated Press, Seattle Times, 09/08/2004.

2. Recommendations which can help parents direct TV viewing

Between opponents and supporters of television viewing in preschool children, there is a stormy debate, which can be summarized by a few questions. Is watching TV useful fun or meaningless leisure? Pleasant rest or harmful idleness? Bringing the family together or isolation of its members? Should we let kids watch everything they want and for as long as they like, or should the content and duration be censored? Most parents feel that they must set specific boundaries, but knowing what ones is not as simple as it might seem at first glance (Lee & Lee 2011, 392). This issue contains one big temptation. If we let children watch television for hours, usually they will be silent all the time, which is nice for parents because they can pay attention to something necessary. If we make children stop watching, they start protesting loudly and blackmail. What, then, preschoolers can watch on TV? And for how long?

Psychologist Aric Sigman is trying to persuade the UK Government to publish national guidelines to protect children from excessive viewing. He argues that spending long hours glued to the TV screen is the biggest unacknowledged health threat of our time (Clark 2007, 14). He also recommends the following limits:

Table 1 Recommended limits for watching TV (Lee & Lee 2009, 392)

Age of child	Recommended number of hours of viewing per day
Less than 3 years	No TV (very difficult with older siblings)
3 to 7 years	30 to 60 minutes
7 to 12 years	60 minutes
12 to 15 years	90 minutes
16 and more years	2 hours

On the basis of these facts, psychologists offer parents a number of recommendations related to children watching television:
- not to distract pre-schoolers with TV;
- lead children not to use television and other media as a soundtrack while playing and learning;
- restrict children from viewing TV programs with a lot of dynamic action, moving, powerful audio and video effects;
- promote active leisure in varied non-media activities, which also requires focused attention, such as reading, logical and creative games (Izrael 2014, 5).

Although it sometimes seems that the best protection against the negative aspects of electronic media is to remove them from our lives, in fact, such an attitude is neither possible nor effective. Their prevalence is on a mass scale, so whether one wants it or not, they have to be met with in life. A great importance may be attached to having occasional respite from the technologies that dominate our lives. But if we really want to help our children, we should teach them to live in today's world with all the temptations that modern technologies offer (Lee & Lee 2009, 385), so that they themselves can recognize and eliminate them, but also harness the benefits that they offer.

3. Methodology

The aim of our research is to explore how to try to control and manage television viewing for parents of children under school age. This age group was chosen for two reasons. During this period, habits are created in different areas, including watching electronic media. These habits may become permanent behaviours, not only at school age, but also throughout life. We consider it very important that the parents give this area due attention because good habits can help children in the future, while incorrect ones will cause problems for life (Kosturková 2009, 48). The second reason is our effort to make longitudinal research. We want to ask our participants the same questions about 4–5 years later when their children are in early adolescence – 11 to 12 years old, and again at the beginning of high school. We want to compare all three studies.

3.1. Selection of participants

There were 10 participants in the research – 5 couples. Our intention was to find participants who had received a Christian education and who in adolescence were active in church communities. Another important criterion was that they still now work on their spiritual formation and are active in their parishes. All participants meet at monthly intervals for spiritual formative meetings with their priest, but without the presence of their children. In addition, once a month, they meet with other families and children. The age of the couples is 30 to 40; together they have 12 children, including 10 pre-school children. In every married couple at least one partner has university education; in three couples both spouses are college educated.

Interviews took place at participants' residences with husbands and wives separate, so that subjects did not know how their spouses had answered.

3.2. Research methodology

In researching the chosen issue, we chose qualitative research design. From all branches of qualitative research, we decided on a phenomenological analysis, as this best suits our intention to describe the control and management of watching programmes for preschool children by their parents.[2] The essence of phenomenological analysis is that the researcher tries to enter the inner world of the individual to understand the importance that the subject attaches to the phenomenon (Hendl 2005, 128). It attempts to reveal how a selected group of people experience the world and consists of feelings, thoughts and the self-perception of a person (Gavora 2009, 32). From this world we choose a phenomenon that affects all participants, namely the ways in which parents try to control and influence the watching of electronic media by their children. The main research method is the phenomenological analysis of in-depth interviews, which are usually semi-structured.

Data collection methodology

To collect research material we used in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The basis of our interview consisted of questions focused on the views and behaviour of participants,[3] i.e. questions relating to the actual issue. Besides them, in this group there are additional questions (contact and branching), and control questions (Řezanková 2010, 13).

3.3. Basic research question

The basic research question we asked was: How do parents control and manage the watching of media programmes in electronic media for their preschool children? This basic research question is reflected in the specific research questions in which we examined the television viewing behaviour of the child-viewer, we further investigated the environment and context of family activities in which children watched TV. For a more thorough understanding of parental educational techniques that try to manage children's watching, we asked what, in

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[2] Phenomenological analysis has its roots in Kant's requirement for science to systematically search for and research phenomena – content and structures of the conscious experience of man. A significant impulse for methodological, qualitative research was Hussler's phenomenological philosophy, which attempted to understand the thinking and behaviour of man. Phenomenology is specifically applied in the approach known as phenomenological analysis (Gavora 2006, 31–32). The phenomenological branch has three functions: critical function which has the problem of dominant directions and basic methodological concepts; heuristic functions new ways to see the research reality; descriptive functions attempting a deeper view of important problem situations with the viewpoint of their subject (Hendl 2005, 75).

[3] The interview can include questions with which we find other data, such as demographics. This group includes analytical questions (classifying and identifying).

their opinion, were the positive and negative effects that watching electronic media could bring their children.

3.4. Processing data

All recorded interviews were transcribed from the moment the participant agreed with the recording until the end of the interview (Švaříček & Šeďová 2007, 181). In total, we recorded and transcribed 10 interviews. The length of interviews ranged from 50 to 70 minutes, but it was not directly related to the amount of transcribed text, as between the participants there were significant differences in para-linguistics.

Another step in processing the recorded material was coding. We used open coding, which was developed in the framework of analytical tools of grounded theory. This is an inductive technique. Concepts and categories are created based on the collected material. What emerges as new during open coding are ideas, categories and concepts, which are then grouped by similarity. This creates the basis for their future "networking", defining the relationships and dependencies between them (Švaříček & Šeďová 2007, 222).

First, we deconstructed the transcribed interview – divided it into units, not formally, based on paragraphs or lines, but according to meanings. The units in our case were the words, parts of sentences, whole sentences, compound sentences or paragraphs. In this way there emerged data extracts, which in the second part, the coding stage (conceptualization) (Strauss & Corbinová 1999, 43), we assigned some code. We gave them a name (a word or short phrase), that was an indication that somehow evokes a certain type and distinguishes it from the others. For each data item, we asked ourselves what it is. What does it represent?

The third step was to organize the codes into categories according to how they were related or unrelated to each other. This categorization could be described as a process of grouping together concepts that belong to the same phenomenon (Strauss & Corbinová 1999, 45).

3.5. Data analysis

At this stage of research we reflected on the kind of addition to the project to choose for processing the data which we got through open coding. Of the options that offered themselves to us at this stage of our research, we decided to use the technique of "showing cards" It adequately met our research objective and is the simplest addition to open coding that we can imagine (Švaříček & Šeďová 2007, 226).

Categories contained in the list of categorized codes were organized into a pattern that indicated relationships between them, and on this basis we compiled text that explained the content of individual categories. When creating text for publication, the technique of "showing cards" led to the fact that the names of the categories became the names of the individual sub-chapters. In them there is a detailed description and interpretation of codes falling under the particular category (Švaříček & Šeďová 2007, 227).

Citations from interviews are distinguished from the rest of the work in italics and placed in quotation marks. Three dots at the beginning of a sentence means that the citation begins in the middle of a sentence. Three dots at the end of the sentence means that the participant did not finish the sentence or suddenly switched to another idea. A pair of parentheses in italics, between which there is text, means that we have omitted part of the original citation, which in no way interferes with or changes the meaning of the citation. It is either repeating what has already been cited, or is a thought-branch to another topic. In the event that we needed to add textual information, which would explain some of the quotes, for example, an unmentioned fundamental fact without which it would be meaningless, the text is in brackets, but not in italics. In the same way we have marked the text which the reader could use to identify the participants. The first names of spouses in the text have been replaced by husband, wife or in the case of names of children – son, daughter. The cited text has not undergone language editing and it is also given with drafting errors and non-standard terms, as transcribed from an audio recording. For each citation in brackets, there is an identification code that we have created for the purpose of this Article. For example "CO3W", where "CO" means a married couple, numeral "3" indicates the serial number of a married couple, "W" denotes the wife or in the case of the husband, the last letter identification code is "M" We decided not to use even fictitious names of participants, so that there is no association between the quotations and actual persons from our research.

4. Results research

Our original intention was to conduct research on parental control of television viewing in preschool children. We assumed that children at this age do not have access to other facilities that allow viewing of programmes. Our first interviews with participants convinced us of the error. Two and a half year old children are able to watch programs via the Internet, tablets and on mobile devices

used primarily for making phone calls. "Our children can use the application on the tablet to run Youtube, and they only have cartoons. Because none of them can write, they have active subscriptions to children's programmes, which they put on. And on the mobiles, and this is a good distraction when we are somewhere outside the house, they have are some games there" (CO3M). The wife says: "(Children) watch cartoons on the internet. They watch *Masha* on Youtube, alone, they have a Youtube tab and they have selected cartoons they watch. But for them to have free access to the internet and watch what they want, no. They of course know how to turn it on too. Even the younger son, is a month away from two and a half years old, he can turn on everything on the tablet" (CO3W). This has led us to update the original article title.

4.1. Viewing habits of the child television viewer

In the first part of the research interview, we tried to find out about the viewing behaviour of our participants' children. Although psychologists recommend that children in the first three years of life do not watch programmes at all via electronic media, research interviews suggest that parents-participants do not respect this age limit. Their children began to watch TV much earlier. In this sub-chapter we describe also how much time they spend watching programmes, what programmes and in what part of the day they watch.

4.1.1. At what age do children start to watch TV and use electronic media

From what age did the children of our participants begin to watch TV? The answers range from "since birth" (CO1W), in turn the interviewee corrected to "Since a year, year and a half. Cartoons" (CO1W) to "the older son from 3–4 years, but younger since about two years watching cartoons with him" (CO1M). The interesting thing about these responses is that the answers come from the same couple. Incidentally, we used separate recording of interviews to monitor whether and to what extent the spouses agree in their answers. We also wanted to avoid mutual influence of spouses in answering.

In no interview did we identify a deliberate effort on the part of the parents to determine which age would be most appropriate for their children to start watching programmes on television or through electronic media. We also did not record an intention on their part to learn from professional literature, at what age and what programmes their children should start watching. The start of watching TV the "children determined themselves", meaning that watching began, when they were interested. So the children began to watch TV "From the

time they were able to watch it, or from about one year of age" (CO3M). to this response we can add the response of the subject's wife: " when we they saw that they were interested, that already perceived the cartoon, the plot. He (the son) was two years old" (CO3W).

The children of our participants spontaneously started watching television. Either the parents accepted it or it started to suit them to offer watching mostly cartoons when they needed to interest, calm down, or perform some necessary action – cooking, cleaning, dealing with a phone call or visit. "The husband's cellphone, smartphone, my husband has songs there from *Masha*, so my daughter puts them on or dresses dolls on there. We started to use it when travelling, when the journey was long, so my husband gave it to them she played with it" (CO4W).

We were surprised by the finding that parents just accepted the fact that their children are beginning to watch TV and use other electronic devices that allow one to watch a variety of media programmes. In research interviews, we identified no intention of parents to know exactly when it is appropriate that their children began viewing media programmes. They also did not consider what types of programmes are suitable for the youngest children. They rely on the categorizations of producers, their own experiences from childhood or their own intuition. Similarly, we were surprised that the parents had no justification as to why it is good to watch TV from such a young age. Once their children expressed an interest in watching, parents used this interest for the better organization of running a household. So the children themselves "set" interest in entering into the world of virtual experiences.

4.1.2. How much time daily do your children spend watching different programmes?

The length of television viewing for the children of our participants varied. Some fathers admitted that they could not answer the question of how much time their children spend watching television, because they are at work. But they had no problem explaining what rules should apply in this area in the family. "Watching television (the children can spend daily) the length of one cartoon, so an hour and a few minutes. On the internet once in a very long time, such as once a month, half an hour" (CO2M). Other parents reluctantly and guardedly spoke about this issue, explaining that " it is difficult to average, maybe an hour, maximum of two per day" (CO5M). well on average, it's hard to say, I do not know ... one day not at all, maybe the next day an hour. I do not know, so half an hour – an hour?" (CO4W).

Common among all participants was the belief that their children can watch television daily half an hour to a maximum of two hours. They did not justify this with professionally based arguments. They used solely their intuition and memories of how much TV they could watch in childhood. For comparison, the results of a study prepared by the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation (Wilkins 2009, 366). According to it, children aged 2–7 used a computer average of 34 minutes a day.

4.1.3. What programmes do the children watch?

It appears that we can answer this question without the use of research. What other than cartoons could children in this developmental period watch? Research results have shown that it's not quite like that. Watching video programmes was preceded by listening to songs. "It developed. In the beginning my son started with songs – Spievankovo. Then the songs on CDs and now he watches the cartoon Masha and the Bear. He is able to watch it continuously, every day" (CO3M). It is interesting that in this developmental stage, other cartoons are uninteresting to the child. A child can watch one programme for several months until they find the way to other types of programs. "They watch creative programmes on Sunday morning, my daughter (5 years old) is interested. My son (2.5 years), does not care about these programs, he is now fixated on one type of fairy tale" (CO3W).

Fairy tales are not the only type of programmes that the children of our participants watch. While these constitute the most watched category, other than that children at this age also watched "family films, which children and adults can watch" (CO5W). Parents allow children to watch movies that are aimed at higher ages. While they watch with their parents, they are movies with a content and treatment of mental maturity well beyond preschool children. "... these are 12 certificate programmes, but we watch together. These are programs-shows" (CO4W).

Among the children of our participants, we identified a sequence in watching certain programmes in relation to age. Interestingly, it is not only about a certain type of programme, but also about specific titles. Around the second year of age they listen to children's songs. Around the second year of the famous cartoon *Macko uško* and afterwards the kids go through to the next title *Masha and the Bear*. Around the fifth year of age children can also watch " creative programmes on Sunday morning, my daughter is interested" (CO3W). It seems that these tales have in them something that attracts children of a particular age, but after saturation they move on to other type programmes.

Children did not want to watch all programmes. As we mentioned above, when saturated with a specific programme, children will cease to watch it and reject it, even though parents offer it to them. "But she does not want *Macko uško*, she wants *Masha*, because it's more action, there's better graphics" (CO3W). "Before *Masha* he watched *Macko uško*, but now he does not want it" (CO5M). Another type of rejected programmes are those that parents choose for their children in the belief that they will be beneficial for children. "And something that brings some benefits, so ..., we think that it brings benefits, so they do not want it" (CO2M). The following statement from a mother looks very optimistic: "They choose and also have it coded that when they see something that is not for them, they see at first glance that it is for adults, and they put it off themselves" (CO2W). It is questionable whether the child would behave the same if they room where they watch the programme was free of adult control.

4.1.4. When during the day do children watch programmes?

It was the same for all participants that there are different television viewing habits in their families during working days and weekends. The mode on working days is determined by the work responsibilities of parents, and also attending kindergarten. So watching TV came into consideration after the return home and parents accepted it as part of mental hygiene. "When you go to kindergarten and to work, so until the afternoon, when they come home and want to relax a little. So they can either play around or watch something. Between two and four in the afternoon. In the evening no" (CO1W). "It's different during the week and the weekend. During the week, when the oldest comes home and he plays, he turns on the computer himself" (CO2W). This mother continues to explain how the afternoon watching programmes or playing games progresses: "For us it is so that our children are not in any way time-constrained, nor have we defined it for them. It's as if they know themselves when to turn off. Although he starts on the computer, I see that he knows that after some time, 20 minutes, half an hour, the hour, he turns it off. He does not sit there all afternoon" (CO2W). Of course, children have not found such a habit themselves. A combination of explanation and the presence of a parent when the child is playing is enough, even though it is not necessary for the parent to directly watch the child's play.

The children in our families had other habits during weekends. Then, they began watching programmes already early in the morning. "Over the weekend it's different, then again in the morning my husband and I like to sleep in and they get up and go to the TV. But I know that when they go, they will get mostly all sorts of children's programmes, whether live-action or animated. They watch that, then they can" (CO1W). This weekend ritual is practised not only by our par-

ticipants' older children aged 5–6 years, but also two and a half years. "Because I sleep and I come down and they are watching cartoons on the tablet" (CO3W). It also means that children are with the devices on which they can watch a programme or play a game, completely alone. We perceive this negatively not only in relation to the topic of our work, but also because children at this age should not be unattended. Even when parents say their children are either watching morning television programmes for children or downloaded cartoons and games that parents have seen and approved, we consider it inappropriate. When children have access to devices which can also show programmes for adults, it is only a matter of time before they watch one of these programmes without the knowledge and presence of parents. It is also not insignificant that they can be injured or cause some damage to electronic equipment or household items.

4.2. Environment and context of family activities in which the child is exposed to electronic media

In the previous section we dealt with the question at what age children of our participants began to watch programmes; what programmes they watched and what programmes they refused; how much time they spent watching daily. In this section, we will cover the environment in which children are exposed to media.

4.2.1. Possibilities for watching programmes in the home environment

In the literature we can find recommendations that say that devices which can be used to programmes – the television, the computer, should be placed in rooms where there are the adult members of the household. They should be supervision for children. This is to prevent children watching unsuitable programmes. This advice was good at a time when there were no portable devices – mobile phones, tablets and more, which allows watching programmes and surfing the Internet from any place. Even where parents do not reach. At present, the validity of this advice is only for pre-school children, and to a limited extent. Therefore, we asked our participants what facilities there are for viewing programmes at home and where they are located. "We have a TV, tablet, computer and a smartphone" (CO3M). This answer is not absolutely valid for all of our participants, but adequately describes the situation of these families. They have several devices which can be used to watch programmes. The same can be said of the second answer to the question of where these devices are located. "The TV is in the living room, the computer in the office, the tablet varies, but it is most often in the living room" (CO4M). Children of our participants have several devices on which they can watch programmes or to get on the internet. Because

they are located in different places and in some households are mobile, parents have a more difficult control job and there are more opportunities for children to access inappropriate programmes in the absence of parents.

4.2.2. Context of viewing programmes

All the children of our participants – the youngest is two years old, the oldest is six – had the opportunity to watch programmes even without the presence of parents. It is not an exception, it happens in most cases. "Yes, in several cases is they watch alone" (CO2W). This happens in two cases. The ideal time for viewing programmes in the absence of parental control is weekend mornings. "Especially in the morning, we are up and the kids come down and turn on the TV looking for cartoons, until they find them. And if there is not a cartoon they sometimes turn off and sometimes watch trash" (CO2M). "Because I'm sleeping, and I come down and they are already watching cartoons on the tablet" (CO3W).

In the latter case, it is the intention of the parents. The programme which the child watches the parents have seen and considered as appropriate. The child can turn it on with the permission of the parents or the parents put it on and children watch in the next room. "My husband downloaded *Masha* and first watched it with my colleagues at work [laughs]. So he has watched everything in those stories. So now they watch alone" (CO3W). A minor modification of this situation lies in the fact that parents are in the same room with children, but the children still watch the programme alone, because parents are dedicated to other activities. "We are there with them, we do not watch it, but we're there" (CO4M). or parents use the TV as a babysitter. "Sometimes my son asks that wants to look and I will use the time when I'm alone, my daughter is in kindergarten, so I try to cook quickly. To do something like that, I need to do some and I can not give him my attention him, because I need to cook, so I turn on, so he doesn't have to wait, that he wants to play with me and now I do not have time, because I am doing something else" (CO3W).

Whatever the reason for watching programmes without the presence of parents we can state that it is a negative phenomenon affecting not only the children of our participants. According to the study Kids and media (Wilkins 2009, 366) 81 percent of children aged 2–7 watch TV when their parents are doing something else.

4.3. Techniques with which parents try to regulate children's viewing

In this section we planned research intended to write about the explicit effort of our participants to guide their children in the use of electronic devices, with the intent to control and manage the effects of media on children. We assumed that they would identify intentional and deliberate influence of the creation of viewing behaviour. In research interviews, we caught only hints of such activity.

4.3.1. Commenting, explaining, putting the record straight

Above, we observed that the children of our participants in most cases watch programmes by themselves. Why is it important if a child watches the programme alone or with someone? For our participants, it was important whether they had seen a particular programme and see whether it is, in their judgement, suitable for the child. This is important, but watching programmes together is of great importance for other reasons. Do children watch the programme chosen by parents for him? Don't they in the absence of parents choose another programme? Can't a child, for example, when using an applications click through to another site, even though he still can not write? By trial and error we can make important discoveries, but also cause a big problem. The presence of parents is also important because the child may opt for a completely different activity than watching programmes and parents should be sure to know. Although all of these reasons are very serious, involving only control the activities of children. Parents should have much higher ambitions in relation to their own descendants – they should be purposefully shaped (Geusau 2009, 400), that is educated in the media means that it should be intentional to create the appropriate screening habits for their children.

We consider it essential that a parent watches a programme with children of this age in order to respond to what is in the programme. This is a clear naming of good and bad. For a child it is important that from the earliest age they receive guidance as to what is good and what is bad (Vancáková 2014, 19–20). Even in programmes for children there may be situations in which the child has not yet been and therefore it should be explained. A very important task of parents to explain to children the difference between fiction, which is normal in programmes for children, and the reality. All these tasks can be naturally performed when parents watch programmes with their children.

We observed this goal-oriented approach in our participants-parents towards their own children in interviews only minimally. We consider this an extremely

negative finding of our research as well as unfavourable condition/prerequisite for healthy child development.

Guiding communication by the parent during or after viewing the programme is an exception. "It happens little, at least for me, that I was watching with them, here and there some cartoon. Then sometimes talking about it. But mostly we talk only a little" (CO1W). The same mother responded to a direct question whether she comments on, explains or corrects what the child is watching, she replied: "Only when children ask" (CO1W). This finding is very serious, because the parental formation of the child can not be dependent on the initiative of the child. The parents should take the initiative. Other mothers seem more optimistic: "When we watch together, and something catches her eye, we definitely still [explain, says the record straight]." (CO2W) The optimism ends at the moment when mum elsewhere in the interview admits that her children in most cases, watch television themselves.

It is not that the parents do not communicate at all with the children when they watch programmes. Communication exists, but the problem is that it is largely at the initiative of the child, and only in cases where children and parents watch programmes together. "When watching fairy tales and there is something positive or negative and need to be addressed, so says mother, for example an ugly witch. Or we listened to fairy tale and there was something that she didn't understand, what is it and why is it so when I explain. But I don't I sit there and explain, it's not"(CO3W). For a more plastic view, we complete the picture and add the expressions of the husband on the subject: "Not really, I do not explain, I don't comment. My daughter asks if she wants an explanation and my son watches simple things that do not need a comment" (CO3M). The question is whether the son does not really need explanation and comment or just the father thinks so.

4.3.2. Explanations and family rituals

We have found confirmation of the previous statement about the importance of explaining, commenting, and putting the record straight in our research interviews. Interviewees in response to the question, how much time their children spend a day watching television, for example: "For us it is so that our children are not in any way time-constrained, nor have we defined it for them. It's as if they know themselves when to turn off. Although he starts on the computer, I see that he knows that after some time, 20 minutes, half an hour, the hour, he turns it off. He does not sit there all afternoon" (CO2W). But does it happen that the child, for which the TV is enormously attractive, turns off by itself and does not need instruction from parents? Interpretation of the interviewees provides clarification and also shows how the transmission of standards or habits of the older child (in

this case six years) to the younger siblings (four and two and a half years) can operate. "It is true that initially, when it began, with the oldest and the computer, we actually explained to him and this was heard also by the younger ones. So the younger son took it on board automatically, even today it happens the he turns on the computer, is there ten minutes and then shuts it off by himself. I see that he is playing a game, but specifically I don't follow what these games are ... they are simple games, I know they're not shooting, as they also automatically have the education encoded in them that do not need shooting" (CO2W).

A significant aspect, in terms of controlling the viewing of electronic media in the families of our participants has proven to be the combination of the above explanation of the practice with regular daily rituals – dining, prayer, hygiene and preparation for sleep. "During the week they only watch in the afternoon, when they come from the nursery. Of course later in the evening or late at night no. I mean after six. Then we have our rituals, when we have dinner, prepare for sleeping and there is a fixed bedtime. We try to keep to that, so then certainly not." (CO1W) For children it is important that from the earliest age getting used to the fact that the above-mentioned rituals – common prayer, dining, preparing for sleep, hygiene – take absolute precedence over watching programmes. To these can be added the ritual of receiving visitors. "Yes, when we come to the table, so it goes off or when to pray or when a visit come, I hate when the TV is on, then it is turned off" (CO4W).

Even though the combination of explaining and practising family rituals is effective in creating positive viewing habits in pre-school children, it is not painless. Especially our younger participants only reluctantly gave up watching programmes, even if it is past the time for dining, prayer or the arrival of a visit. "Yes, of course, conflicts arise commonly in children. I deal with it by explaining that there has been enough, there has came a period of time, we're going to play or go outside or something. So she cries a moment and then everything is fine" (CO3W). Mainly initially, it is a problem for children, but if parents are able to persevere patiently and sensitive enforcement of these rules, their children will eventually accept and respect them without having conflict situations arise.

4.3.3. Repressive techniques of controlling viewership

All participants stated that a ban from watching programmes or playing games was used as punishment. "We punished them when they did not obey. Mostly it was for two–three days, maybe a week, but I think I made up to three months. We also followed it. It was such a serious matter, which was unacceptable in our family that I followed it" (CO1W). Repressive educational methods have their place in the family upbringing and can work. "He has got used to the

idea that I give him a punishment. Maybe it's not so often, it was more often, but I saw that I tell him a month and it's not so common" (CO2M). The child has realized that the punishment takes away something that is important to him, so will behave so as not to be punished. Banning the use of watching programmes may well turn out differently. Children get used to not being able to watch programmes, but continued the behaviour for which they were punished, so parents end of this kind of punishment subsided. "We punished them when they did not obey. There were times when it was often, but to me it seemed unreasonable and it does not have that effect" (CO1W).

Among the repressive techniques of viewing control, we include three more situations. The first is to limit monitoring programmes for preschoolers that include scenes with a high level of dynamic action, movement, strong images and sound effects. "I'm terribly sensitive to it. I am therefore angry with my husband because he bought a pair of those DVDs that I banned, for example Madagascar. It has a lot of action, and grandfather told us that it is not normal to watch. I said that I do not want our children to watch this, including my daughter, even at five and a half years. She is a little young" (CO3W). The second is the prohibition of watching programmes in which there are negative messages. This includes, for example, the news which parents do not watch with their children. "I would really like to watch the news, but because of that I don't turn on, because there are children and do not want them to listen to the messages that are negative, even though I really want to watch, I do not turn it on" (CO2W). Another reason for the repressive attitude of the parents are elements in cartoons for children that caused them some psychological problems. "When you see this made-up trash it is something terrible. Then in the night screaming, screaming, anger. You could see the difference when watching normal programme, what we perceive as normal, as good, as ok, but when they saw those monsters, trash, now it can be seen that this is not good for them. This can not cope emotionally" (CO2M).

Forbidding to watch programmes as a repressive method can be effective when unwanted watching is replaced by another activity to which children are appropriately motivated. It is a matter of creativity, intelligence and willingness of parents to prepare their children a varied menu of non-media activities that require from children active movement, creative approach, logical reasoning, for the comprehensive development of their physical and mental possibilities. Our participants prepare their children a varied programme, but not with the intention that it distracts from watching programmes. "I'm trying to do this, but whether with the intent of not spending time in front of the TV, not really" (CO3M). The position of parents in this area is best described by the expression

of mothers: "I would not be creating a situation, but simply to motivate or send them away from TV is enough, you will not be here all day. Go into the room to play or go outside it's nice, go ride your bike, we are going to stack timber etc. We're going to clean something up when needed. We try to make it so there is not only TV" (CO1W).

4.3.4. Conformity or disagreement of spouses in educational practices

We performed research with each participants alone. Subsequently, we compared the expressions of both spouses, so that we could compare their answers. We found disagreement between spouses in several areas.

Spouses were divided as to which electronic equipment their preschoolers can use. "As for the television, then yes, we agree in part. But with regard to the Internet or a tablet, so we are not in full agreement. My husband is more tolerant. I have a theory that we grew up without it so they do not need it. My husband is freer" (CO1W).

Men were significantly more liberal than women in considering what their children can watch. "As regards the limitation of watching TV programmes with a high level dynamic action, movement, strong images and sound effects the specialist is my wife. That was the activity that we limited cartoons, because they had too much action." (CO3M) An even better illustration of this idea is: "Sometimes I am angry with my husband, that he watches things with them, to which I'm allergic. Even when the news is on when I return to the subject, so he has no problem watching the news, even though there are things that I do not want them to hear, especially with regard to murder and so on. And I do not like that he has no problem with it, that after all this is the reality, he says. But I have a principle of why expose children to that when you do not have to." (CO2W) The men themselves realize that their wives have less tolerance for violent action scenes and programmes, but live in the belief that their attitude is not dangerous for children. However, they adapt the attitude of wives in this area.

Conclusion

A positive findings of our research is that all our participants are aware of the positive and negative influences of media on child viewers. On the positive side they especially list recreation, education and the opportunity to learn to recognize good and evil. They consider as a negative risk that their children will develop a dependency on watching programmes or computer games. They also indicate a negative influence on the psyche, building the wrong moral norms,

beliefs and attitudes that may be caused by the inability of the child to under-stand video and differentiate fiction from reality. On this premise is built their attempt to control their children, and guide and create proper habits while watching electronic media. This effort is evidence of spontaneous and intuitive educational activity, lacking professional basis. So parents create rules not only from the experience of their own childhood, and according to what they think is good. This was most clearly seen when examining when the kids started to watch programmes. We did not identify in their submissions that they decided that the children will be good when they start viewing programmes at any particular age. We recorded the finding that the children began to watch TV when, for example, they are one and a half or two years old.

The negative findings include the fact that parents use the media as a "babysitter" for their children. Logically, there is missing the parents com-ments of what is seen, putting the record straight and explanation. If this hap-pens, it is usually at the instigation of children who are asking. Or the parents tried to save the situation only when children exhibit negative behaviour after watching an unsuitable programme. Parents through their upbringing practices should avoid such situations. This also does not happen because the tolerance of violence and action between men and women participating in our study was dif-ferent. Men were more tolerant of violence and action in programmes designed for child viewers.

All our participants had the intention to protect their children from the neg-ative effects of watching programmes in the electronic media. Their effort was based on spontaneity, intuition and their own experiences from childhood. Their decisions lacked technical justification and practising techniques with more con-sistency.

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