

## **Young Viewers' Attitude Toward Television Programs: Understanding the Role of TV Exposure, Socialization Agents and Social Structural Variables**

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### **Abstract**

*The authors adopt a socialization explanation for young viewers' attitude toward television programs. Attitude is theorized as an outcome of socialization process, involving two socialization agents: parents and mass media. In particular, it is hypothesized that family communication (socio-oriented communication and concept-oriented communication), parental television mediation (active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing), preference for watching television programs, extent of television viewing along with socio-structural variables (age, gender and pocket money) are related to attitude. The results suggest that the proposed socialization model of young viewers' attitude toward television programs is supported by data from a sample of school and college students except for two variables age and pocket money. Finally, implications for marketers are presented.*

**Keywords:** Television, Young viewers, parental mediation, family communication, socio-structural variables, India.

### **Introduction**

Understanding young viewers' attitude towards TV content is important for parents, researchers and marketers. Mass media, particularly television plays an important role in the socialization of youth (Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998). TV exposure strongly influences lives of youth and therefore tends to shape their attitude in a big way (Strasburger, 2004; Roberts and Foehr, 2004). Several researchers have also specified that children learn from depictions of TV content (Dietz and Strasburger, 1991) and such content affects their value systems too (Villani, 2001). Cultivation analysis as proposed by Gerbner et al. (1994) and confirmed by Strasburger (2004) suggests that children who spend more time watching television learn from its content and tend to imitate behavior they see on the screen in their

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*Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

*Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

own lives. Young viewers watch television as they believe that its content entertains as well as inform them. Moreover, they consider TV programs to help them escape from pressures of daily life and help avoid boredom.

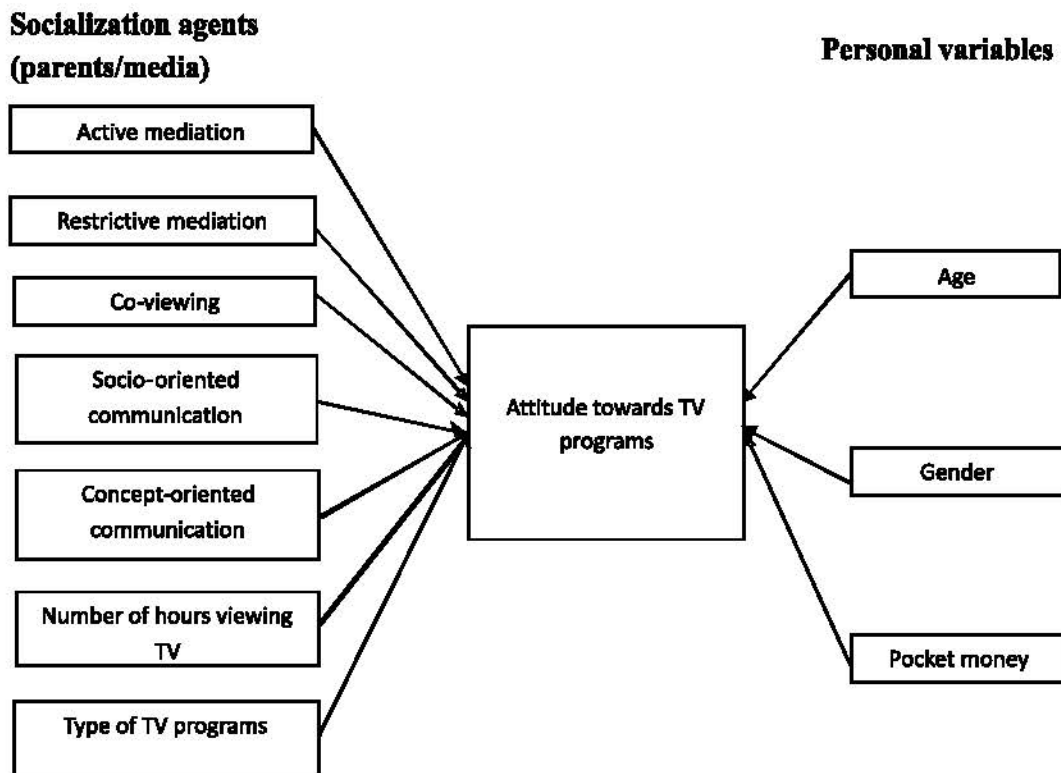
Besides, previous researchers have emphasized that children's learning and attitude towards television content can be shaped through parental mediation styles (Huston and Wright, 1996; Valkenburg et al., 1998; Nathanson, 1999). Desmond et al. (1985) reported that parents play an active role in mediating children's experience with television. At the same time they also encourage children to accept some desirable messages and guide them in counteracting undesirable ones. Several studies have depicted that parents' comments and interpretations of television content improve children's learning from educational programs (Ball and Bogatz, 1970), change children's attitudes toward television violence (Colder-Bolz and O'Briant, 1978), stimulate children's knowledge of art and culture (Valkenburg et al., 1998), help children in understanding TV characters and events in programs (Collins et al., 1981) and appease children who are frightened due to scary television scenes (Cantor and Wilson, 1984).

Three styles of parental mediation have been distinguished in literature viz., active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing (Valkenburg et al., 1999). In active style of mediation, parents discuss as well as explain certain aspects of TV programs with children, either during or after watching television. On the other hand, restrictive mediation signals certain rules for watching or prohibits children from watching certain TV content. In co-viewing style of mediation, both parents and children watch television together. A mix of these three styles of mediation have potential in helping children become critical viewers of programs they select to watch (Jordan, 2006).

General communication styles in families also have significant influence on media-specific discussions and their effects on children (Andreasen, 1990; Austin, 1993; Krcmar, 1996). Chaffee and colleagues (1971) developed a model of family communication and suggested that parent-child interactions vary according to style of communication. Two types of family communication patterns have been identified viz., concept-oriented style of communication and socio-oriented style of communication. In concept-oriented style of communication, parents promote open and two-sided communication with children that encourages them to discuss their ideas, and at the same time motivates them to develop an independent perspective (Carlson et al., 1990). On the other hand, in socio-oriented style of communication, parents indulge in fewer discussions with their wards and supervise TV viewing habits of children with a view to emphasize conformity and control (Chaffee et al., 1971).

Previous studies reveal relationships between parental television mediation behaviors, family communication patterns and advertising attitudes of parents (mothers) with children below 15 years of age (Wiman, 1983; Rose et al., 1998; Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2005; Mukherji, 2005). Also, few studies have investigated the effects of socialization agents on adolescents' skepticism toward TV advertising (Mangleburg and Bristol, 1998). However, there is dearth of research that has investigated the impact of TV exposure and child's perception of parental mediation styles and family communication patterns on their attitude towards TV content. It has also been suggested that children's own perspective about socialization agents (parents/mass media) would better give insight into their attitude towards TV content (An and Lee, 2010). Therefore, the present study explores as to how mass media exposure, parental mediation and family communication taken together, influence attitude of young viewers toward television content through primary responses of children. The conceptual model for the study is proposed in Figure 1 and the hypotheses to be tested in the study are subsequently proposed.

**Figure 1: Conceptual model**



**Source: Author's own**

## **Hypotheses for the study**

### **Parental mediation styles and attitude towards TV content**

Due to children's increased exposure to television content, it contributes to socialization of children through well designed TV content specially targeted at them. However, children are susceptible to undesirable content shown on TV which calls for parental mediation. Several studies report that children who receive active and restrictive parental mediation are likely to experience more positive outcomes as well as understanding of TV content (Collins et al., 1981; Desmond et al., 1985), develop skepticism toward TV content (Austin, 1993) and are less likely to experience cultivation-like attitudes (Rothschild and Morgan, 1987). According to Austin et al. (1999) two forms of active mediation have been used by parents viz., positive mediation and negative mediation. In positive mediation, parents endorse some television messages while, in negative mediation, they make counterarguments of TV messages. Moreover, it is argued that children who hear negative comments about TV content from their parents exhibit more negative attitude toward that content than those children who do not receive such kind of comments and vice-versa.

Co-viewing of TV content depicting aggression by parent and children together builds positive attitude about these depictions in children (Nathanson, 1997). Moreover, co-viewing without additional comments by parents is taken as an endorsement of program content by children and they perceive co-viewed content positively. Valkenburg et al. (1998) also found that co-viewing mediation coupled with additional comments by adults resulted in more positive attitude towards program watched by children, whereas co-viewing mediation without discussions led to formation of neutral attitude towards TV program.

Previous studies have sought parents' report on their attitude towards TV content directed at children and mediation styles they use to regulate children viewing habits. These studies specified that parents' own attitude towards television content predicts the style of mediation they follow with children (Wiman, 1983; Rose et al., 1998). It was reported that parents who are skeptical about TV content and hold negative attitude towards it use restrictive style of mediation with children (Austin et al., 1999). On the other hand, when they are less skeptic about TV content and hold positive attitude towards it, they use more of active as well as co-viewing style of mediation with children (Wiman, 1983; Mukherji, 2005). On the basis of this discussion, the following hypotheses emanate concerning influence of parental mediation styles (active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing) on attitude of young viewers toward TV content:

- H1a: Parental active positive mediation of TV content will be associated with positive attitude of young viewers toward mediated content.
- H1b: Parental active negative mediation of TV content will be associated with negative attitude of young viewers toward mediated content.
- H2: Parental restrictive mediation of TV content will be associated with negative attitude of young viewers toward mediated content.
- H3: Parental co-viewing of TV content will be associated with positive attitude of young viewers toward co-viewed content.

### **Family communication patterns and attitude toward TV content**

General family norms and behaviors are likely to reflect family norms and behaviors followed for regulating television use (Andreasen, 1990; Krcmar, 1996). For example, in families where more rules are imposed in general, there tend to be more rules about TV use also. According to Austin (1993) concept-oriented communication is correlated with active mediation, while he found no significant association between socio-oriented style of communication and mediation. It was further reported that socio-orientation is negatively related to concept-orientation (Fujioka and Austin, 2002). Hence, it implies that individuals who score high on socio-orientation would tend to do fewer discussions with respect to media messages. Therefore, family communication patterns viz., concept-oriented style and socio-oriented style resemble active and restrictive style of parental mediation and lead to similar outcomes.

In socio-oriented communication, parents lay emphasis on establishing harmonious relationships with children by using more explicit directives rather than indulging in open discussion with them (Carlson et al., 1990; Krcmar, 1996). Also these parents counter some messages without analytically discussing with children (Austin, 1993). This style of communication correlates positively with parental control and verbal punishments (Lull, 1990) and resembles restrictive style of parental mediation.

On the other hand, families where concept-oriented style of communication is the norm, parents and children express and exchange their ideas freely and frequently. Therefore, these parents unveil their reactions about TV messages (positive or negative) and at the same time invite opinions of children on such messages. Child opinion may express a feeling about a particular message which may further initiate active discussion lead to negative mediation. In fact, these parents are likely to provide more contextual information and follow nondirective statements about television content with children (Messaris and Kerr, 1983). So, this style of communication is similar to active (positive/negative) style of mediation.

*Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

*Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

While, concept-orientation style is a general norm for family communication (for all issues), active style of mediation is communication style used for mediating TV content. According to Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005, pp. 162) active mediation and concept-oriented communication are conceptually related while restrictive and socio-oriented are found to be the same conceptually. In light of this discussion, the following two hypotheses have been proposed:

- H4: Socio-oriented style of communication will be associated with negative attitude of young viewers toward TV content.
- H5a: Concept-oriented style of communication will be associated with positive attitude of young viewers toward TV content.
- H5b: Concept-oriented style of communication will be associated with negative attitude of young viewers toward TV content.

**Social-structural variables and attitude toward TV content**

Few studies have also focused on examining the effects of demographics and viewing patterns on cultivations of young viewers' attitude. Heavy viewers of TV programs (comedy shows and news) endorsed positive beliefs more strongly than light viewers. Children who watch TV more frequently are more likely to be influenced by TV programs than who watch TV less frequently. Attitudes of teenagers and older children were found to be more influenced by exposure to TV content than of younger ones (Cohen and Weimann, 2000). But Moschis (1987) also proposed that children in their adolescence are able to resist persuasive stimuli as well as reveal discontent about marketing practices as they grow older. As a result, skepticism about such content increases and these viewers exhibit greater negative attitude towards TV content. Furthermore, Morgan and Shanahan (1997) reported that female viewers tend to be more affected by TV exposure than their male counterparts as they watch TV programs for longer duration. Type of programs viewed also influence attitude of young viewers (Valkenburg et al., 1998). As regards family income, some researchers report that family income significantly influences viewership (Wright et al., 2001) and consequently affects positive as well as negative perceptions of young viewers toward TV content. However, pocket money (instead of family income) has been chosen to explore such relationship, as self reports of pocket money received by young viewers would better shed light in the present situation. Thus, the following hypotheses have been proposed in order to explore the relationship between demographic variables (age, gender and pocket money) and attitude of young viewers toward TV programs:

- H6: Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs will vary by age.
- H7: Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs will vary by gender.

- H8: Attitude of young TV viewers toward TV programs will vary by number of hours of TV viewing.
- H9: Attitude of young TV viewers toward TV programs will vary by pocket money.
- H10: Attitude of young TV viewers toward TV programs will vary by viewership of different types of TV programs (entertainment, informative and educational programs).

## **Research Methodology**

### **Data collection and participants**

A survey (N = 714) has been conducted using proportionate sampling by incorporating sample as per population proportion in age category 15 to 24 years with respect to three cities of Punjab (India)—Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana (Census, 2001). This age category has been selected as TV content influences attitude of older teenagers more as compared to younger teenagers (Cohen and Weimann, 2000). These young viewers have been approached through schools and colleges of Punjab. With the permission of Principal of each school and college, personal interviews were conducted with students in their respective classrooms who then filled in responses with respect to the issues addressed in the questionnaire.

Of the 800 questionnaires that were distributed to them, 714 (89.25%) usable questionnaires were returned. The sample comprised primarily of boys (51.3%), age category 15-19 years (51.4%) with weekly pocket money ranging from INR. 251—500 (46.8%) belonging to families with monthly family income less than INR. 50000 (59.8%). Moreover, (61.6%) respondents reported that mothers acted as primary caregiver to them.

### **Measures**

The self-report items used to measure constructs have been adapted from past research. Perceptions of young viewers about parental television mediation strategies have been measured as—active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing, adapted from Valkenburg et al. (1999). Family communication patterns viz., concept-oriented style and socio-oriented style have been measured through a scale adapted from Chafee et al. (1971). Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs has been measured on the basis of statements devised from review of previous literature such as Diet and Gortmaker (1985), Brown and Newcorner (1991), Singer et al. (1998); Wadkar (1998), Verma and Larson (2002), Paavonen et al. (2006), Anschutz et al. (2011). All these constructs along with their reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) are listed in the Appendix.

*Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

*Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

Number of hours on an average in a day I watch television has been recorded on four categories—less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-3 hours and more than 3 hours. A majority of respondents (45.9%) report to watch television for 1-2 hours in a day followed by nearly twenty one per cent respondents who watch television for 2-3 hours in a day. In addition to this, young viewers have been also asked about the type of TV programs they generally watch. They have been asked to specify amongst three types of TV programs—entertainment programs (serials, comedy shows, reality shows etc.), informative programs (news, cookery shows, sports etc.) and educational programs (social and development programs, culture and gender studies programs etc.) using 3-point scale ranging from 'mostly' to 'never'.

**Data analysis**

Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs has been summed up and recorded as binary variable using mean splits as viewers exhibit either positive or negative attitude towards TV programs. Here 1 represents those young viewers who hold positive attitude towards TV programs (N = 345) and 0 represents those respondents who hold negative attitude towards TV programs (N = 369). Thereafter, independent samples t-test has been applied to examine the differences between these two sets of respondents with regard to their attitude towards TV programs. Higher t-value (32.434,  $p < 0.001$ ) depicts significant differences between these two groups. Thereafter, binary logistic regression has been applied to develop a profile of these viewers.

Independent variables for the study include perceived parental television mediation strategies, family communication patterns, hours of TV viewing, age, gender, pocket money of young viewers, and preference for entertainment, informative and educational TV programs.

Table 1 presents the list of variables used in the logit model. The range, means, and standard deviations are depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1 Dependent and independent variables used in the model**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Labels</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>SD</b>
Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs	L <sub>i</sub>	0-1	0.48	0.50
Age of young viewers	X <sub>1</sub>	15-24	19.30	2.82
Gender of young viewers	X <sub>2</sub>	0-1	0.53	0.49



Weekly pocket money of young viewers	X <sub>3</sub>	0-1000	397.78	227.73
Active mediation	X <sub>4</sub>	1-4	2.56	0.67
Restrictive mediation	X <sub>5</sub>	1-4	2.57	0.52
Co-viewing	X <sub>6</sub>	1-4	2.73	0.54
Concept-oriented style of family communication	X <sub>7</sub>	1-4	2.53	0.34
Socio-oriented style of family communication	X <sub>8</sub>	1-4	2.58	0.31
Hours of TV viewing	X <sub>9</sub>	0-1	0.64	0.48
Entertainment programs	X <sub>10</sub>	1-3	2.67	0.51
Informative programs	X <sub>11</sub>	1-3	2.27	0.57
Educational programs	X <sub>12</sub>	1-3	1.95	0.65

Source: Author's own

Before conducting binary logistic regression analysis, bivariate correlations have been computed to explore associations between all the measures taken in the study. The correlations as depicted in Table 2 explicate that attitude of young viewers toward TV programs is significantly associated with parental mediation strategies as well as with family communication patterns. In addition to this, some social-structural variables also exhibit significant associations with attitude. Therefore, these variables have been included in the analysis.

High value of log likelihood was revealed upon conducting binary logistic regression (refer Table 3). It states that the model fits the data and is also suitable for the purpose of identifying the factors that influence attitude of young viewers toward TV programs. In addition to this, the insignificant value of Hosmer and Lemeshow test strengthens model fit (Meyers et al., 2006, p.239). Table 3 also exhibits that the model is able to sufficiently predict attitude of viewers toward TV programs as the correct classification rate is 61.3%. Table 3 provides the summary of the logistic regression predictors for attitude of young viewers toward TV programs.

Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:  
 Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables

**Table 2: Correlation coefficients for independent/dependent variable (s)**

Variable labels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. X <sub>1</sub>												
2. X <sub>2</sub>	-0.066											
3. X <sub>3</sub>	0.157**	0.139**										
4. X <sub>4</sub>	-0.142**	-0.011	-0.095*									
5. X <sub>5</sub>	-0.214**	-0.055	-0.130**	0.859**								
6. X <sub>6</sub>	-0.126**	-0.078*	-0.081*	0.916**	0.915**							
7. X <sub>7</sub>	0.056	0.138**	0.087*	0.069	0.115**	0.080*						
8. X <sub>8</sub>	0.042	0.121**	0.088*	0.110	0.166**	0.131**	0.971**					
9. X <sub>9</sub>	-0.086*	0.073	-0.015	0.127**	0.106**	0.076*	-0.029	-0.014				
10. X <sub>10</sub>	0.015	-0.222**	0.034	0.003	0.025	0.056	0.098**	0.112**	-0.143**			
11. X <sub>11</sub>	0.100**	0.138**	-0.041	0.024	0.021	0.021	-0.009	-0.007	0.007	-0.273**		
12. X <sub>12</sub>	0.009	0.90*	-0.023	0.125	0.093	0.087*	0.069	0.069	0.134**	-0.174**	0.222**	
10. L <sub>1</sub>	0.024	-0.091*	-0.029	-0.107**	-0.129**	-0.081*	-0.099**	-0.126**	0.036	0.064	0.006	0.004

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.  
 Source: Author's own

**The logistic model is written as:**

$$L_i = 2.12 - 0.01X_1 - 0.29X_2 + 0.00X_3 - 0.57X_4 - 1.23X_5 + 1.45X_6 + 2.53X_7 - 3.46X_8 + 0.34X_9 + 0.33X_{10} + 0.12X_{11} + 0.09X_{12}$$

The Table given below shows that gender, active, restrictive and co-viewing style of mediation, family communication styles, hours of TV viewing and viewership of entertainment programs are the significant predictors of young viewers' attitude toward TV programs. This is revealed through Wald statistic and its corresponding significance value.

**Influence of active mediation**

Table 3 exposes that perception of viewers toward active mediation followed by parents negatively influences their attitude towards TV programs. This may be attributed to the reason that discussions made either during or after TV viewing about certain aspects of TV programs by parents inform children (young viewers in present case) about TV programs. The discussions probably centre on undesirable aspects of these programs due to which children show high level of skepticism towards these programs and demonstrate negative attitude towards them. Thus, H1b is supported.

**Table 3: Logit regression coefficients of the variables influencing attitude of young viewers toward TV programs**

Predictors	X <sub>i</sub>	Coefficient (B)	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Constant		2.12	1.09	3.73	1	0.05	8.33
Age of young viewers	X <sub>1</sub>	-0.01	0.03	0.25	1	0.61	0.98
Gender of young viewers	X <sub>2</sub>	-0.29	0.17	3.05	1	<b>0.08</b>	0.74
Weekly pocket money of young viewers	X <sub>3</sub>	0.00	0.00	0.79	1	0.37	1.00
Active mediation	X <sub>4</sub>	-0.58	0.30	3.67	1	<b>0.05</b>	0.56
Restrictive mediation	X <sub>5</sub>	-1.23	0.39	9.81	1	<b>0.00</b>	0.29
Co-viewing	X <sub>6</sub>	1.45	0.48	9.16	1	<b>0.00</b>	4.26
Concept-oriented style of family communication	X <sub>7</sub>	2.53	0.97	6.78	1	<b>0.00</b>	12.60
Socio-oriented style of family communication	X <sub>8</sub>	-3.46	1.10	9.88	1	<b>0.00</b>	0.03

### *Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

#### *Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

TV viewing time	X <sub>9</sub>	0.34	0.17	4.23	1	<b>0.04</b>	1.41
Entertainment programs	X <sub>10</sub>	0.33	0.16	3.90	1	<b>0.04</b>	1.39
Informative programs	X <sub>11</sub>	0.12	0.14	0.73	1	0.39	1.13
Educational programs	X <sub>12</sub>	0.09	0.13	0.61	1	0.43	1.10

Notes: 2 Log-likelihood = -940.937; Cox and Snell R Square = 0.065; Nagelkerke R square = 0.087; Hosmer and Lemeshow test = 7.066, p = 0.530; Overall classification rate = 61.3%. Codes used: Attitude of young viewers toward TV programs (positive attitude = 1, negative attitude = 0), Gender of young viewers (male = 1, female = 0), Hours of TV viewing (up to 2 hours = 1, otherwise = more than 2 hours). Source: Author's own.

### **Influence of restrictive mediation**

Table 3 also explicates significant negative relationship between perception of viewers toward restrictive mediation followed by parents and their attitude toward TV programs. This means that more restrictions imposed by parents on TV viewing result in negative attitude of respondents toward TV programs. Restrictions are used generally in the form of limiting the amount of time spent on watching TV, forbidding children from watching specific programs or specifying in advance the type of programs they may watch. If parents impose restrictions about TV viewing, young viewers become more aware and concerned about its undesirable effects. Also, those parents (mothers) who use restrictive mediation seem to hold negative attitude towards TV content (Nathanson, 2001). This implies that children (young viewers) acquire similar attitudinal tendencies from their parents and demonstrate negative attitude towards TV programs. Hence, H2 is supported.

### **Influence of co-viewing style of mediation**

A positive relationship is revealed from Table 3 between perception of viewers toward co-viewing style of mediation followed by the parents and their attitude towards TV programs. In co-viewing style of mediation, parents and young viewers watch TV programs together without any open and critical discussions about TV programs between parents and children (Atkin et al., 1991; Chaffee et al., 1971; 1973; Desmond et al., 1985; Medrich, 1979). Moreover, co-viewing allows children to watch TV programs with their parents for a greater amount of time (Austin et al., 1999). All these attributes endorse young viewers to perceive TV programs more positively. This finding is in consonance with Nathanson (2002) that in co-viewing style of mediation, parents approve co-viewed content without saying anything to children. Such endorsements make positive orientations toward co-viewed content due to which they reveal positive attitude toward TV programs. Hence, H3 is supported.

### **Influence of socio-oriented style of communication**

Table 3 also exhibits that TV viewers reveal negative attitude towards TV programs if more socio-oriented communication is followed in the family. Parents following socio-oriented communication more frequently indulge in fewer discussions with their wards and supervise TV viewing habits of children with a view to emphasize conformity and control (Chaffee et al., 1971). Moreover, viewers from socio-oriented communication families believe that their parents use explicit directives about TV programs rather than indulging in open discussion with them (Carlson et al., 1990; Krcmar, 1996). At the same time, parents condemn some TV messages without discussing the reasons as to why they disagree with children are also less likely to encourage children to form an opinion. As a result, children learn about undesirable aspects of TV programs from parents and accept parental directives with respect to their attitude towards TV programs and perceive these programs negatively. Thus, H4 is supported.

### **Influence of concept-oriented style of communication**

It reveals that young viewers from families where concept-oriented communication is frequently used exhibit positive attitude towards TV programs. The results suggest that viewers from such families believe that they and their parents indulge in open communication regarding content of TV programs and their opinion is also accepted by parents. Open family communication about media affects socializes children (young viewers) more broadly and encourages development of valuable media literacy in them (Fujioka and Austin, 2002). Since open communication includes some endorsements of exemplary TV characters and behaviors, as a result, children (young viewers) understand the view points of parents and appreciate as well as replicate those desirable behaviors in their lives without any counteractions from parent's side. Consequently, they demonstrate positive attitude towards TV programs and give support to H5a.

### **Influence of gender**

The results further indicate statistically significant negative relationship between gender of young TV viewers and their attitude towards TV programs. This reveals that male viewers exhibit less positive attitude towards TV programs in comparison to female viewers. Hence, H7 is supported.

### **Influence of TV viewing hours**

Similarly, a positive relationship is exhibited between TV viewing hours and attitude of viewers toward TV programs. This depicts that those young viewers who watch TV for less than 2 hours daily, reveal positive attitude towards TV programs. These viewers seem to select the programs to be viewed on TV and in return think that TV programs provide good

*Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

*Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

content. Also, during their limited viewership, they pick life-style trends from the depictions in TV programs and perceive these programs positively. As a result, H8 is supported.

**Influence of type of TV program viewed**

The results suggest that young viewers report to hold significant positive attitude towards TV programs if they watch entertainment programs more frequently. Young viewers consider these programs (serials, comedy shows, musical programs, game shows, reality shows horror shows etc.) as a source of amusement and view these programs for relieving daily stress. Consequently, their attitude toward TV programs becomes positive. However, no significant differences are seen with respect to viewership of educational and informative programs and viewers' attitude toward TV programs. Hence, H10 is partially supported.

However, out of the three demographic variables explored—age, gender and pocket money, only gender is found to be a significant predictor of young viewers' attitude toward TV programs. So it is worthwhile to observe the interplay of other predictors with positive attitude of female viewers and negative attitude of male viewers. It is seen from Table 4 that male respondents perceive that active mediation style is followed with majority of them (82%) which contributes to formation of negative attitude towards TV programs. This implies that parents usually follow active negative mediation with them. On the other hand, sixty seven per cent female viewers perceive that parents use active mediation with them which results in positive attitude toward TV programs. As far as viewership of different type of TV programs is concerned, majority of female viewers (77.5%) report to watch entertainment programs whereas proportion of male viewers watching these programs is less. Moreover, female viewers watch informative and educational programs more frequently in contrast to male viewers. Hence, female viewers exhibit positive attitude towards TV programs.

**Table 4: Percentages of male/female young viewers with respect to attitude**

Predictors	Positive attitude of young female viewers (n = 178)	Negative attitude of young male viewers (n = 212)
Active mediation (High)	67.1	82.3
Restrictive mediation (High)	89.3	87.0
Co-viewing (High)	92.0	90.1
Concept-oriented communication (High)	85.0	93.5

Socio-oriented communication (High)	92.7	95.4
TV viewing hours (Low)	64.0	66.0
Entertainment programs (High)	77.5	57.1
Informative programs (High)	74.2	49.1
Educational programs (High)	69.1	47.2

Figures in the table are in percentage; Source: Author's own

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study provide strong support for influence of socialization agents on young viewers' attitude toward TV programs. Specific dimensions of socialization agents—parental mediation strategies—active, restrictive, co-viewing styles, family communication styles—socio-oriented and concept-oriented style, exposure to mass media, viewership of entertainment programs and gender influence young viewers' attitude toward TV programs (H1b, H2, H3, H4, H5a, H7, H8, H10).

The pattern of results suggest that young viewers' attitude toward TV programs is a learned predisposition through interaction with parents and television. In particular, concept-oriented family communication, co-viewing style of mediation, lesser TV exposure and viewership of entertainment programs enhance positive attitude toward TV programs whereas, active mediation, restrictive mediation and socio-oriented family communication enhance skepticism towards TV programs, largely because of their positive effects on young viewers' knowledge and understanding about TV content. Greater knowledge provides a base to young viewers to evaluate TV content and also at the same time provides an informational foundation for formation of positive/negative attitude towards TV programs.

**Parents:** Concept-oriented family communication is related positively to attitude of young viewers toward TV programs, as expected. By stressing the development of young viewers' learning about TV world, concept-oriented parents help them to learn positivity about TV content and at the same time make them ready to counter its negative issues by the means of discussion on various general matters with them. On the other side, socio-oriented family communication is related negatively to attitude of young viewers toward TV programs, as anticipated. These parents do not show discontent about subject matters, rather give directive statements on the same, which in turns enhances skepticism about these matters and leads to formation of negative attitude of young viewers toward TV programs. In co-viewing style of mediation, parents approve co-viewed content without saying anything about the content to children. Such endorsements make positive orientations toward co-

### *Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

#### *Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

viewed content which in turn persuades children to perceive such content positively. This finding goes in line with Nathanson (2002). However, when parents use restrictive style of mediation with children, children learn from parental disapproval of television and understand that restrictive content is undesirable. Hence, they exhibit negative attitude towards that content. In active mediation, parents use negative comments about TV programs which in turn help children in evaluating these programs. As a result, negative attitude becomes prominent in these young viewers.

**Mass Media:** Although, exposure to TV is often cast in a negative light (Goldberg, 1990), the results of the present study reveal that selective TV viewing has positive effects on young viewers' attitude toward TV programs. In particular, the study found that young viewers who do not watch lot of TV, perceive its content (TV programs) positively. One might suspect that young viewers who watch lot of TV would be at greater risk in terms of their academic performance and are more likely to be swayed by life styles trends depicted in TV programs. However, the viewers who limit TV viewership are expected to and strike balance studies and TV viewership. Also, these viewers are expected to gain much of the information about products/services from non-mass media and hence are under lesser risk of accepting subjective claims depicted in TV programs. In addition to this, the findings of the study suggest that children exhibit positive attitude towards TV programs if they watch entertainment programs more frequently.

**Gender:** Of the demographic variables, gender is found to be negatively associated with attitude of young viewers toward TV programs. It states that male viewers exhibit less positive attitude towards TV programs in comparison to female viewers as they report to watch TV programs less frequently. Thus, it is corroborating the findings of Morgan and Shanahan (1997). Male viewers experience more mediation as well as communication from parents as compared to their female counterparts which contributes to formation of negative attitude in them towards TV programs (refer Table 4). On the other hand, female viewers view TV programs for the purpose of entertainment, seeking information or education in a greater proportion as compared to male viewers. This suggests that they derive a lot of benefits from TV viewership which further contributes to their positive attitude towards TV programs.

### **Implications for marketers**

The findings of the study indicate that socialization agents are related systematically to young viewers' attitude toward TV programs. Such attitude (positive/negative) is key to the development and evaluation of public polices about nature of programs broadcasted on TV. Moreover, present research reveals that socialization provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding young viewers' attitude towards TV programs.



The study suggests that children (young viewers) acquire attitudinal tendencies from their parents and demonstrate positive/negative attitude towards TV programs accordingly. Thus, at this point, there is need for marketers to become more responsible in terms of broadcasting desirable TV programs aimed at young viewers keeping in view the parents' perspective about these programs. Therefore, programs should be designed in such a way that these programs meet expectations of parents in terms of imparting valuable information and messages to young viewers and at the same time, provide a source of entertainment in a useful manner.

The positive relationship between viewership of entertainment programs and attitude of young viewers toward TV programs may also have implications for marketers. Marketers should emphasize on entertainment value of TV programs which may help young viewers to get rid of daily life pressures and enhance their positive attitude towards TV programs.

Moreover, positive relationship between amount of TV viewing and attitude of young viewers toward TV programs is of relevance. Marketers should broadcast quality content in TV programs as majority of young viewers watch TV for up to 2 hours daily, so that young viewers can get maximum benefit from exposure to these programs during their limited viewership.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The present study has certain limitations which could be addressed in future research. The study examined only parents and mass media as socialization agents. It would be interesting to incorporate other socialization agents such as schools/colleges and peers who might influence young viewers' attitude toward TV content. Moreover, parenting styles may also be antecedents of family communication patterns (Carlson et al., 1992), and may provide fruitful explanation of young viewers' attitude toward TV content.

Finally, the study examined the effects of TV viewing, but exposure to other media such as print media and more importantly internet also may be related to formation of young viewers' attitude. Future research may perform a comparative analysis of these media. Only a single item has been used to tap the extent of television viewing. Better measures of television viewing can be used to replicate the present study.

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*Young viewers' attitude toward television programs:*

*Understanding the role of TV exposure, socialization agents and social structural variables*

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## Appendix

Measures of Constructs
<b>Active mediation<sup>1</sup>(Cronbach's Alpha = 0.755)</b> My parent(s) try to help me in understanding that what I see on TV. My parent(s) point out why some things TV characters do are good My parent(s) point out why some things TV characters do are bad. My parent(s) explain reasons why TV characters do what they do My parent(s) explain what something on TV really means.
<b>Co-viewing<sup>1</sup> (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.716)</b> My parent(s) watch TV with me because we both like a program. My parent(s) watch TV with me because of a common interest in a program. My parent(s) watch TV with me just for the fun of it. My parent(s) watch his/her favorite program with me. My parent(s) laugh with me about things he/she see on TV.
<b>Restrictive mediation<sup>1</sup> (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.746)</b> My parent(s) tell me to turn off the TV when I am watching an inappropriate program. My parent(s) set specific viewing hours for me. My parent(s) forbid me to watch certain shows. My parent(s) limit the amount of time that I may watch TV. My parent(s) specify in advance the shows that I may watch.
<b>Concept-oriented family communication<sup>1</sup> (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.781)</b> Every member of my family should have some say in family purchase decisions. My parent(s) takes my opinion when discussing family purchases. My parent(s) takes my opinion about products and brands. My parent(s) accepts my expertise on certain products and brands. My parent(s) considers my preference when making a purchase. My parent(s) considers the advantages and disadvantages of products and brands. I can co decide when I make purchases for my parent(s).
<b>Socio-oriented family communication<sup>1</sup> (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.689)</b> I know which products are best for my parent(s). Not to argue with my parent(s) when the parent(s) says no to my product requests. My parent(s) expects that I accept their decisions about product purchases. My parent(s) asks me that which products are or are not purchased for the family. My parent(s) asks me that which products I should or should not buy. I have strict and clear rules when it comes to product purchases. I am not allowed to ask for the products.

**Attitude of young viewers' toward TV programs<sup>2</sup> (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.735)**

**My**

TV programs act as a source of entertainment for me.

Television programs help me in my academic activities (e.g. Kaun banega crorepati, bournvita quiz contest etc.)

Television programs entertain me in a variety of ways (e.g. sports, comedy, religious etc.)

TV programs relieve me of daily stress.

TV programs inform me about latest life style trends.

Television programs' characters increase aggressive behavior in me.\*

Television programs' characters excite me to imitate violent behavior.\*

TV programs display sexual content that spoil innocence of youth.\*

Sexual content in the TV programs force the youth to indulge in such activity.\*

TV programs decrease reading habits in me.\*

TV programs decrease my physical activity as I spend most of the time watching television.\*

Television programs show people in exceptionally good images and create dissatisfaction in me about my own image.\*

Television programs break down social values among youth.\*

Television programs stimulate use of bad language or profanity in youth.\*

TV programs encourage illegal or risky behavior.\*

TV programs frighten as well as cause nightmares (e.g. horror shows).\*

TV programs lead to obesity in youth due to eating disorders.\*

TVs programs increase desire for immediate gratification in youth.\*

Watching excessive TV programs cause sleep disturbances and psychiatric symptoms.\*

<sup>1</sup>items were measured on four-point scales ranging from 'never' to 'often'.

\*Reverse coded

<sup>2</sup>items were measured on five-point scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.