

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE ON
CHILDREN'S TELEVISION VIEWING IN THE MAFIKENG AREA OF THE
NORTH WEST PROVINCE**



PURITY ZAMAGUGU ZWANE

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NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

**by
PURITY ZAMAGUGU ZWANE**

**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF COMMUNICATION, IN THE FACULTY OF HUMAN &
SOCIAL SCIENCES AT NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**



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DECEMBER 2006

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my nephew Tshepo Owethu Mohlala. You might not understand what this means but when you grow older you'll understand why you were not allowed to watch television on your own. I know that *Simba King* and *There's a Zulu on my stoep* are your favourite movies for now. You were the passion behind this project. Hope now we will spend more time together.

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DECLARATION

"I declare that the dissertation on **Influence of Parental Guidance on Children's Television Viewing in the Mafikeng Area of The North West Province**, hereby submitted, has not previously been submitted by me or by any other person for any degree at this or any other University; and that is my own work in design and execution and all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged."



Purity Zamagugu Zwane

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that children spend more time watching TV than on any other activity except sleeping, and by the age of 18 years a child has spent more time in front of a TV than at school. While watching TV, children are not using their imagination, they are basically looking at what someone else has created. Though children are consumers of television, they are not pawns of this industry because they make sense of what they see on TV comparing it to what goes on in their homes and society. In other words, children do create meaning of what they see on TV. In this process of development, children are intensely active. The development of cognitive structures is universal and proceeds through the process of an active child both accommodating to and assimilating new cognitive events into his or her level of cognitive abilities. Left alone, children make their own assessment about reality of TV programmes.

The question then arises: to what extent would the presence of a parent guide the children in understanding and appreciating the reality and fantasy in TV? This study has set out to find this relationship. A quantitative approach was used in attempting to answer this question. Questionnaires were used for both parents and children. The results have shown that a majority of children and parents spend more than three hours watching TV a day and over 20 hours a week. The study also found that more participation of parents in controlling their children's viewing habits is needed. Parents need to be given more information or be taught about the importance of parental guidance. It is not that there are no rules in these homes; the problem is that the parents are not firm in sticking to the

rules. Parents do watch TV with their children, there is also discussions about the programmes or the content. One wonders to what extent and when do they really happen if children are up till late. In other words, parents do not play a positive role in mediating the effects of television on their children because some of the parents are heavy viewers.

Finally, the study recommends that a policy should be developed that would inform parents on how they can monitor their children when watching television and using other media. If more support could be given to parents on the importance of parental guidance, they would be able to teach their children to be critical of the messages that the media sends through.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa television (TV) service was introduced on 5 January 1976. According to Mersham (1998) the Nationalist government at that time regarded television as a negative influence on society in the whole world and was mindful of television's reputation for undermining "traditional values". This was after the government had constituted the Meyer Commission to investigate the introduction of a TV service in 1971. He further explains that the Commission proposed that the South African Broadcasting Corporation be under the government's control. The aim of the government control was to "advance the self- development of all its people and to foster pride in their own identity and culture" (Mersham 1998: 212).

The introduction of a TV service opened more doors to the development of TV in South Africa, even during the apartheid era. South Africa was then exposed to new channels and a brief view of these channels is given. Media Networks (Mnet) was the first subscription television station which began its operation on 1 October 1986. The second subscription service, Digital Satellite Television (DStv) began in 1996. Bop TV (which was based in the former homeland of Bophuthatswana), was the first television station to compete with SABC and was launched on 31 December 1983. The second station to compete with SABC was e.tv which was launched on 1 October 1998.

In Western countries television has been in existence for the past 80 years. According to Singer and Singer (2001) in America, television was introduced in 1939. In 1950, ten percent (10%) of American households owned a television set (TV). In 1951 children were already watching TV throughout the day; their choices were not limited to children's programmes only (Singer and Singer, 2001: 14). By 1954, it had increased to 50%, and by 1960, 80% of American households owned a television set. Since 1970, more than 95% of American household owned a TV and currently 66% of households own three or more TV sets. Television is on for almost seven hours per day in an average American home. Children of all ages, from preschool through adolescence, watch an average of four hours per day. This excludes time spent watching videos or playing computer games. A child spends more time watching TV than on any other activity, except sleeping: by the age of 18, a child has spent more time in front of a TV than at school (Johnson, 1999). TV is known to have an impact on children, according Leung *et al* (1994) and Van der Voort and Valkenburg (1994); in their studies found that TV reduces contact and interaction with peers and other activities such as playing outside. It also impacts on mental creativity, increases aggression and has a great effect on their school performance if not managed properly.

The political change in South Africa since the early 1990s brought more changes in television services. In a study conducted by UNESCO in 1998 only 62.3% of households had access to a TV set in South Africa. Daily average percentage of children between the ages of eight to twelve that watched TV was 51.1% (Groebel, 1999: 66). Currently more households have access to TV and more families have more than one TV set because of

the choice of programmes available. Currently the South African audience is bombarded by a wide variety of programmes.

Television is an audiovisual medium, which stimulate children's minds. Children learn faster and more efficiently through a medium that stimulates them (Wartella 1980). According to Valkenburg, (2001) Most children do not know the difference between what is real and what is not (Valkenburg, 2001: 122) is. It would be fair to say that since children spend more time in front of the television than at school, they learn more from television. According to Anderson and Pempek (2005) only ten percent of a child's viewing time is spent watching programmes specifically intended for children. They learn only one percent of educational programming out of all the television they watch. But they learn nine percent of non-child intended programming (Anderson and Pempek, 2005: 505). While watching television, children are not using their imagination; they are basically looking at what someone else has created. Entertainers and corporations sell to children what they have designed thus cultivating and motivating them as consumers.

These corporations use their knowledge of children's emotions to create programmes that touch children's heart. As a result, these programmes satisfy the eternal needs held within. According to Adorno and Horkheimer the 'culture industry' standardises culture, debases artistic creativity and undermines humanity through the production and circulation of commodified culture (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1972 as cited in Cottle, 2003: 9). Though children are consumers of television, they are not pawns of this industry because they make sense of what they see on TV comparing it to what goes on

in their homes and society. In other words, children do create meaning of what they see on TV. In this process of development, children are intensely active. The development of cognitive structures is universal and proceeds through the process of an active child both accommodating to and assimilating new cognitive events into his or her level of cognitive abilities (Piaget, 1967, Berk, 2003, Papalia & Olds, 1995).

Most children do not know the difference between what is real and what is not (Valkenburg, 2001) is. It would be fair to say that since children spend more time in front of the television than at school, they learn more from television. According to Anderson and Pempek (2005) only ten percent of a child's viewing time is spent watching programmes specifically intended for children. They learn only one percent of educational programming out of all the television they watch. But they learn nine percent of non-child intended programming (Anderson and Pempek, 2005: 505).

Dorr (1980) argues that children make their own assessment about the reality of television programmes. One reason children are so vulnerable to the messages of television is that they take what they see on television to be 'real' or at face value. Within the changing limits of their information- processing capacity, they construct models of the world as they experience it (Dorr, 1980:191).

A child's potential is like a seed that needs to be nurtured and nourished in order to grow properly. If the environment does not provide the necessary nurturing, then potentials and abilities cannot be realised. Television to children seems to be "true to life" or likely to

happen in the real world in a similar manner, on the basis of their own experience or knowledge or that of personal acquaintances (Dorr, 1980: 191).

Parents, therefore, must be involved and monitor the programmes their children view. Parent- child coviewing should be encouraged. Coviewing allows parents to discuss the programmes and commercial content with the child, help the child distinguish between reality and fantasy, classify misconceptions and reinforce positive TV experiences with a family discussion.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past three decades, parents in South Africa have faced an onslaught of new media in the home, including VCRs, DSTV, CDs, DVDs, computers, internet and mobile phones. These new technologies have provided parents with added challenges in controlling the amount and the type of media content allowed into the homes.

Parents all over the world, including South Africa, are concerned over the amount of time children spend on TV. Part of this concern stems from the fact that a considerable amount of violence and sex is regularly portrayed on TV. In addition, these children who watch an excessive amount of TV have little time for developing other interests and hobbies. Parents need help in dealing with this problem.

Research to date in the first world countries has focused almost exclusively on media effects on children. Many studies have focused on children and television in relation to violence, aggressive behaviour, sex, obesity just to mention a few (Bushman and

Huesmann 2001, Doubleday and Droege 1993, Fitch *et al* 1993). The major issue or gap that has been identified in literature is the lack of research on parental mediation or guidance (Education Consumer Guide 2000).

The basic premise of this study is that to date research on parental mediation or guidance on television viewing is relatively scarce in South Africa. There is also lack of policy and structures in place to educate parents about the negative effects of TV. To fill the gaps in our current knowledge, there is therefore a need to study parental guidance on TV viewing in terms of distinguishing reality from fantasy. TV programmes are always seen as important factors in assessing such issues as children's understanding of TV and the influence which TV may have on them (Gunter and McAleer 1990).

This study will therefore establish information on the importance of educating parents and children about media effects, importance of parental mediation and programme selection and programme ratings.

1.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will contribute to policy development in the enforcement of media institutions to educate both parents and children about the importance of covieing and use of programme ratings for the programmes that their children watch. Once parents are empowered, they can take charge of their children's consumption of TV. They will also have sense of control and be constant because the entire family will be able to discuss and agree on viewing expectations.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims and objectives of the study are as follows:

- To establish the extent of parents' involvement in guiding children's TV viewing.
- To identify mediation strategies that parents use in guiding children's TV viewing.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The specific research questions to be addressed are as follows:

1. How much are parents involved in their children's TV viewing?
2. Do parents discuss with their children about programmes to be seen or have been seen regarding reality and fantasy?

1.6 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The media environment encountered by parents and children has changed dramatically throughout the twentieth century. More recently, the significant increase in channel capacity brought by DSTV, SABC and e.tv have created a revolution in children's access to TV content.

Television currently offers more choices of programming than at any point in the past. Children below the age of twelve spend an average of three hours or more per day watching TV (Roberts *et al*, 1999, Anderson and Pempek 2005, Vandewater and Wartella, 2005). Age- related differences in children's information- processing skills

govern all children's ability to make sense of any TV content. Younger children have shown to perform less than older children in terms of understanding the relationship among scenes or comprehending motives and intentions of character in entertainment programmes (Collins, 1983, Doubleday and Droege, 1993).

Children learn from watching the world around them and from the behaviour of parents, siblings, other adults, and appealing characters on TV (Hogan, 2001). Thus Holman and Braithwaite (1982) found parental habits, control of, and attitudes to TV usage related strongly to their children's habits of viewing and their preferences for certain programmes (Holman and Braithwaite, 1982: 376). So without proper parental guidance, it is difficult for them to children that distinction.

This study will investigate the extent at which parents are involved in their children's TV viewing, in terms of programme selection, discussion about programmes to be watched or that have been viewed. Do parents help their children to distinguish fantasy from reality on TV programmes? There seems to be a dearth of studies on parental mediation on children's TV viewing.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

- Children are active viewers of television.
- Children spend more time on television than they spend at school because of the lack of supervision by an adult or parent(s).
- Children make comparisons between television and real life based on what they know of the real world.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Media oriented parents were reluctant to be interviewed, because they were suspicious that the researcher was a representative from SABC to check on TV licence defaulters. The researcher had to make several visits to those parents whose children have been interviewed to assure them that their responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and they will remain anonymous.

Other parents did not want to be interviewed in English, though they understood the language but would respond in Setswana. The researcher had to use an interpreter which was time consuming because all the responses had to be recorded in English.

Limited funding impeded the selection of choosing more schools within the Mmabatho and Mafikeng areas. Thus, it had an impact on the size of the target population. For cost effectiveness the researcher carried out the enumeration of schools that were easily accessible because the researcher could not afford to hire research assistants. Apart from the lack of funds, the researcher found that in certain schools the children between the age of six and eight could not read and write. The questions had to be explained in simple terms for the level of their understanding and the filling in the questionnaire for them was also time consuming.

1.9 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on parental guidance on children's TV viewing with emphasis on distinguishing reality from fantasy.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Terms and concepts in this study are clarified in order to prevent misconceptions arising from their usage in this context.

The following terms are defined: calibrate, children, fantasy, modality, parental guidance, and reality.

1.10.1 Calibrate:

The term calibrate refers to the varying degrees that children use to measure the TV content against what happens in the real world (Hodge & Tripp, 1986: 126).

1.10.2 Children:

Children refer to school age young persons that are between the ages of six and twelve.

1.10.3 Fantasy:

Fantasy deals with a (re-) presentation of a reality that does not exist in real life. In other words, fantasy is something that has been made-up for entertainment purposes, or rather something that is not immediately present. In short, it is imaginary content (du Plooy, 2001: 65).

1.10.4 Modality:

The term modality refers to perceived reality of the message as the product of a series of *judgment* by the viewer. It depends upon one's recognition of formal or stylistic

properties that are *internal* to the message. For instance cartoons use graphic conventions forms of simplification and exaggeration which are different from photographic conventions of live action film. On the other hand one's judgement could depend upon criteria that are *external* to the message. This is one's experience of, or beliefs about, the real world (Buckingham, 1996: 214).

1.10.5 Parental guidance:

It is an act of control exerted by an adult when children watch television, or the restrictive measures placed by adults on children's television viewing. There are two parental guidance styles that dominate media literature:

Restrictive guidance or mediation refers to the implementation and enforcement of parental rules regarding children's TV use. *Evaluative mediation* refers discussion between parents and children to interpret TV content, explain its meaning, evaluate it motivations, make value judgements, and distinguish between fantasy and reality (Weaver and Barbour, 1992: 236).

1.10.6 Reality:

The concept of reality can be defined as presentation of content as it exists in the real world with the aim of creating understanding (e.g. by means of comparison) and clarifying issues (e.g. by showing cause- and -effect relationships) (du Plooy, 2001: 65). On the other hand, reality also refers to the representation of something. This representation creates the impression of reality and / or imitates reality or as an aspect

therof (e.g. feature films). This imitation can be of a realistic or expressionistic nature (Fourie, 2001: 185).

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, an attempt was made to give a general overview of the study. Terms that are used in the study have been defined and clarified. The remainder of the study is arranged as follows:

Chapter two will comprise of related literature and theoretical framework which deals with children and their interpretation of TV and parental mediation.

Chapter three will concentrate on research methodology. This will include research design, sample selection, procedure of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter four will present the findings of this study.

Chapter five will focus on discussion of the findings of the study and the implications of these findings. Conclusions will be drawn and recommendations will be outlined.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the literature used in the study. It will include modality judgements of children, formal features of TV and criteria used by children on how they interpret what they see on TV. Parental mediation will also be critically discussed and its importance to the discussion of reality and fantasy. Piaget's cognitive development theory and information processing theory will be discussed.

2.2 MODALITY JUDGEMENTS OF CHILDREN

Children make their own assessment of reality of television, without being taught to do so. They base their assessments on their growing knowledge of both the medium their everyday experiences of the world, they make judgments about what is 'real' on television using a multiple criteria. In other words, they make use of the internal and external criteria. 'Reality' is what children ought to think, know how things are, because they will act on the basis of what they believe things to be (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 101). This means that children learn from their surroundings and make comparisons of what they see on TV with their real life situations, in turn act on what they believe to be true (in their own terms).

Howard (1993) states that the term 'modality' is drawn from the fields of semiotics and linguistics and it refers to the reality that is attributed to a message. Semiotics theory suggests that there is a link between the reality attributed to a message (a modality

judgment) and the extent to which one will act upon it. In other words, the more reality you attribute to a message, the more likely you will be affected by it in some way (Howard, 1993: 43).

Hodge and Tripp (1986) in their study of children, whose ages ranged from six to twelve years old, reported that calibrating television against reality is a major concern for children throughout this age group. This is typical of young viewers' thinking, refers to the concreteness of the TV image. "One may say that something on TV is real and mean it is exactly as it is outside of the TV" (Dorr, 1983: 202). The simple binary paratactic (from non- differentiation to sharp differentiation and then to re- integration) opposition between television and reality drops importance as more complex bases of judgement evolve. At this stage children know that what they see on TV is true or not true, or if it is half true or not because it has been manipulated to some degree (Luhmann, 2001: 5).

Methods of media production emerge as the most salient criterion of reality for eight to nine years olds. This is also the period of greatest preoccupation with media – internal criteria. Older children use more features to specify reality than do younger children, including a range of transforms of the basic categories (e.g. being able to distinguish cartoons from films, and films from news). Media –external criteria have become more important to older children. That is, they are using their developing knowledge of reality generally as the basis for modality judgements. Development is accompanied by a greater tendency to make 'errors' (by adult standards) in judgement of reality. This is because during this period judgements are made in terms of a complexive concept. This

greater capacity for errors is, however, indispensable for adequate cognitive growth in this dimension. The process of development of this concept involves important general learning of the nature and role of media-processes as constructor of reality, the development of differential spheres of knowledge (first-hand or second-hand, and mediated knowledge and modality cues in speech and action (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 126).

Hodge and Tripp (1986) again suggest that cartoons may have a special function for young viewers. This was the favourite genre of the six to eight year old children they studied in Australia. The popularity of programmes for young children is directly the opposite of the order of reality, ranging from the most unrealistic (cartoons) to the most realistic (real-life characters). This means that children between the ages of six and eight like cartoons as their first priority, then the more realistic programmes come last. There is a shift between younger and older children, who use many more characters from drama, and fewer cartoon characters, and more real-life characters, though the characters are still fictional (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 126).

2.3 FORMAL FEATURES OF TELEVISION

Children's judgement of reality of television programmes is not based solely on comparing specific programme content with their knowledge of the world. They also need to draw on their own judgement of the medium of television. Progressive sophistication with age and experience is evident in the children's use of what are normally referred to as 'formal features' of television as cues to the reality status of programmes. These range from production and editing techniques and conventions to

TV genres. Hodge and Tripp (1986) refer to such medium-specific cues to reality status as 'internal' criteria in contrast to 'external' criteria, which involve comparison with the viewer's knowledge and experience of the world (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 111-112).

A child making a real-life comparison is comparing the content of the medium to what he or she knows of the real world. Kelly (1981) is of the view that reality is assessed in terms of real world standards as the child brings to bear knowledge and expectations derived from the world (Kelly, 1981: 63). Gunter and McAleer (1990) in their study found that up to the age of seven to eight, the distinction between fantasy and reality is often not very clear. By middle childhood (six to eight years), however, judgments about television's realism became much more refined. They further state that news is perceived differently from drama, commercials are distinguished from programmes. The news is categorised as depicting real-life events. As cognitive sophistication improves, certain other perceptions develop too (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 47).

Kelly (1981) asserts that the way in which children compare television's content to real life experiences is expected to change with age. As their thoughts become more hypothetical and less bound to their own experience, they will increasingly be able to evaluate material with which they have no direct experience. As they grow older, assessment of social and psychological reality can be expected to influence their decisions more (Kelly, 1981: 64).

In Kelly's study, second grade children (seven to eight year old), unanimously chose 'Superman' as more real than 'Charlie Brown' on the basis of the former's superficial

verisimilitude to life. Thus, even though these youngsters can chronicle the many tricks underlying superman's feats, format overrides content when children are forced to make a comparison. At this age, the answer to the question, 'which is more real?' is quite simple. Whichever looks more real (Kelly, 1981: 64).

Howard (1993) found that nine to ten year olds were much less likely to mention formal features as cues to reality; they were more concerned with content. She refers to nine to ten year olds often classifying the animated cartoon 'The Simpsons' and situations that were representative of those in real life. These children were able to judge this programme beyond its cartoon quality and based their judgement on the perception that even cartoons can represent events that are likely to happen in real life. This suggests that the children were making a quite clear distinction between format and thematic content of TV material (Howard, 1993: 45-51).

2.4 GENRE

Genre is an important framework within which viewers make sense of particular programmes. Jaglom and Gardner (1981a and 1981b) studied 12 children for three years from the age of two to five and noted the development of genre distinctions. They found that two year olds did not recognize the beginnings and endings of programmes. The youngsters believed that shows are continuously available all day. They requested shows at the wrong time and ask their parents to replay shows they enjoy. Children of this age do begin to master the sequence in which their favourite shows appear, but this knowledge is extremely limited. Television characters play a major role in the two year

olds. The disappearance of characters from the screen causes great consternation and children reassure themselves with phrases like "they'll be right back" (Jaglom and Gardner, 1981b: 18).

Jaglom and Gardner, (1981a) are of the view that advertisements may then be identified easily by children as the descriptive part of television which causes shows and their favourite personalities to vanish. Any one of these explanations or a combination of them may explain the fact that the boundary separating advertisements from other television shows is the first boundary to be established and perceived by children in their attempt to organise the world of television (Jaglom and Gardner 1981a: 42).

Dorr (1983) noted that children spontaneously referred to particular television genres and to specific programmes within them as a way of judging reality status of programmes. All kindergartens find cartoons to be fantasy, and a few witches and genies to be not real and news and crime-drama programmes to be real. Television genre clearly serves as a useful cue to reality for the children (Dorr, 1983: 210).

Gunter and McAleer (1990) state that because children have less experience of life than adults, they may be more easily taken in by the things they see on television. However, the extent to which people - adults or children- are deceived by television depends to some degree on how specific are the aspects of programmes we are looking at. At a superficial level, the ability to distinguish between types of programmes and their settings is something that develops early on. Even quite young children are able to make crude

distinctions between programmes featuring animated and human characters, and quickly come to understand that many of the fantastic heroes they see on television are not real people (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 47).

When looking at the schematic outline of the development of children's understanding of what is real on television, Fitch, Houston and Wright (1993) suggest that initially, children probably believe all TV is real (Fitch *et al*, 1993: 48). At this point, their understanding of reality is primarily concerned with factuality – the relation of mediated TV content to the real world. This learning occurs as part of more general cognitive developmental changes involving representation and differentiating appearances from reality. It is therefore assumed that the reality of TV shifts around the age of three or four when children learn that form cues, like animation, indicate that a programme is not real. By the age of five or six, they begin to identify co-occurring features of form and content that distinguish grouping a genre, or sometimes programme. Through middle childhood children gradually develop concepts of programme types based on more subtle form and content cues until more coherent genre schemata emerge. These genre schemata in turn establish expectations about the processing demands required, the informative or entertainment value, and the reality status of programmes (Fitch *et al*, 1993: 48).

Collins (1981) suggests that in a vast audience of children representation of programmes vary considerably. In general, children as old as eight years retain a relatively small proportion of depicted action, events, and settings in typical programmes. Memory for information, particularly important plots and other primary messages improves

dramatically across the grade school to high school age range (Collins, 1981: 33). Hodge and Tripp (1986) found that in six to twelve year olds external features of media were more important to older children, who were not reliant on applying their knowledge of everyday reality in making modality judgments about television programmes. They also identified as a key developmental feature that older children used more features in judging programme reality than younger children did (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 126). Kelly (1981) noted that sixth grade children's (11-12 year olds) reasoning about reality and fantasy is at a higher level than when they were younger (six to ten years). They have begun to appreciate the complexity of the question regarding reality and fantasy. Given a comparison, they will reply "what do you mean, 'real'? Real in what way?" indicating their awareness that the question can be answered in a number of ways. Multiple criteria are now available to them (Kelly, 1981: 68).

2.5 DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORKS

Children's understanding of what is 'real' on television clearly needs to be related more generally to the development of their understanding of what is real in the everyday world. Television is certainly not the major influence on a child's development per se, but some of its content is. Consider some of the facts about television as a medium that children must reconstruct from their experience with the world, with television, and with what people tell them about both (Dorr, 1980: 192).

Taylor and Flavell (1984) noted that a variety of studies (Howard 1993, Buckingham 1991, Dorr *et al* 1990, Flavell 1986 and Sawin 1981) indicated that young children do not clearly understand the conceptual distinction between what something really is and what

it appears to be. The development of knowledge about this distinction is an interesting topic for developmental research because the distinction between appearance and reality is an abstract metaconceptual notion that is pervasive in adult thinking about the world, and is probably a universal development in human beings. Children's confusion about appearance and reality may contribute to difficulties with various types of cognitive tasks such as conservation, reality monitoring, and perspective taking (Taylor and Flavell, 1984: 1711).

Flavell (1986) in his study of children between two and twelve years, found that by the age of three, children became quite proficient at creating discrepancies between real and pretend identities. They can pretend that a toy block is a car or make believe that they themselves are animals (Flavell, 1986: 422). In contrast although six to seven year olds can more easily distinguish between appearance and reality than three year olds, their ability to reflect on and talk about appearances, realities and appearance remains very limited. By the age of 11 to 12 the skill in making rich distinctions between appearance and reality is both richly structured and highly accessible (Flavell, 1986: 424).

Young children's judgment about the reality status of television is the viewers understanding of the independent, uncontrollable nature of objects and events depicted on television (Buckingham, 1996: 213). Jaglom and Gardner (1981b, 1981a) in their study noted that by the age of three years the children realised that they could not influence events on television and had generally realised that events on television could not directly involve them (Jaglom and Gardner, 1981a: 39). Between the ages of three and four years, children recognised the fact that the television world is in fact separated from their

own. Its events do not actually exist in reality; they cannot be acted upon directly. Rather, they have communicational significance. To children, television presents a separate world with its own rules and organisation. But this world does at times relate to experiences children have encountered in real life, and its organisational system parallels certain systems of organisation they have encountered previously (Jaglom and Gardner, 1981a: 45). However, even at three to four years old, children still appear quite confused as to the timing and beginnings and endings or boundaries of television shows. Children still have difficulty accepting the fact they cannot control this medium, as the timing and availability of their favourite fare is completely out of their hands and even out of the hands of their parents (Jaglom and Gardner, 1981a: 44).

2.6 MAGIC WINDOW / FABRICATION

An important criterion used by viewers in assessment of reality status of specific programme content is referred to variously as 'magic window' (Potter, 1992), 'fabrication' (Dorr, 1983) and factuality (Fitch *et al*, 1993). Most of the research that has been conducted on children under the age of 12 years indicate that younger viewers display a stronger belief in the reality of television than older viewers (Potter, 1992, Dorr, 1983, Fitch *et al* 1993). The inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy has been referred to as a 'magic window' perception of reality, that is, young children are said to believe that the images on television are the same as the images in real life (Potter, 1992: 396).



Assessing the reality of television content is a complex task. Young children do not distinguish fantasy from reality by a single criterion. The criterion of fabrication as framed by Dorr (1983), relates to whether a television programme is perceived by the viewer as 'made up' or alternatively as depicting events as they actually happen in real life. Firstly, younger children have little knowledge to guide their judgements. Secondly, sometimes around the age of eight, the majority of children have some understanding that entertainment programming is fabricated. Thirdly, by the beginning of adolescence virtually all viewers understand the fabricated nature of entertainment programming and have understood it for some time (Dorr, 1983: 208).

According to Fitch *et al* (1993) by around the age of ten, children's factuality judgements are about as accurate as adults. Thus, children's learning about factuality appears to have a cognitive basis and does not seem to be dependent on socialisation or experience with television (Fitch *et al*, 1993: 43 citing Morison *et al*, 1981). They also noted that this particular criterion appears to be primarily dependent on a child's stage of cognitive development rather than on such factors as experience with television. They also argue that a concern with factuality and in particular a reliance on formal cues is developmentally prior to a reliance on other criteria (Morison *et al*, 1981: 48).

Kelly (1981) in a study of fifty-four children from seven to twelve years old found that young children's use of specific criteria of media varies from television to print. For both media, they rely almost exclusively on observable features. TV contradicts realism and children go to great length explaining TV's techniques of manipulation: stunts, camera

tricks, and the like (Kelly, 1991: 66). By the age of nine to ten years when discussing television, children refer repeatedly to the fact that shows are acted, scripted, costumed, and rehearsed; this indicates their newly acquired awareness of television's representational nature. Children now possess the concept of 'fiction based on facts' (Kelly, 1991: 67).

Fernie (1981) found age related changes in children's knowledge that television characters were played by actors. In order to determine whether children of various ages develop this reference about TV characters, he asked questions related to actors and acting at the end of the interview. Across these questions, the majority of younger boys' response showed either an actor knowledge or misconception (58%), middle groups' response generally showed either partial understanding (26%) or full understanding (45%), while the majority of older boys' response expresses full understanding of actors (65%) (Fernie, 1981: 54). Fitch *et al* (1993) noted that most 11 year olds knew that an actor who plays a police officer on TV is not a police officer in real life (Fitch *et al*, 1993: 43).

Dorr (1983) noted that for the children five years and older whom she studied, criteria other than fabrication were more important in judging the reality status of television programmes. Older children are likely to talk about more different types of content, use more mixed reality judgements, and to use genre more often as a guide to television reality. They talk about more crime drama, news, sports programmes and about fewer cartoons. Their changing viewing preferences are reflected in the programmes and genre

they choose to talk about. This approach to judgement and variety of reality judgements made indicated that more often than not children adopt complex strategies for judging the reality of television programming (Dorr, 1983: 216-17).

Dorr, Korovaric and Doubleday (1990), in their study on children about parental guidance, when measuring realism on television families (e.g. families on sitcoms), found that there are several alternatives to the criterion realism. Mediated reality, television conveys things as they actually happen or happened in real life and possibility, television portrays things that capture the essence of what happens in real life. This criterion is most often used by older adolescents and adults that is why it is most informed by experience (Dorr *et al*, 1990: 393).

2.7 THE CRITERION OF PHYSICAL ACTUALITY

The criterion of physical actuality involves assessing in terms of whether a person or event shown on television is known to exist or to happen in the real world. Kelly (1981) found that children in second grade (seven to eight year olds) seem to assess television reality initially in terms of this criterion: if they consider that a person or event on TV existed or happened in the real world, then it was regarded as real. In contrast to the focus on the seven to eight year olds on the criterion of physical actuality, Kelly found that the fourth grade (nine to ten year olds) were often asking themselves 'does something like this exist or is it about something that did or does exist?' With this reformation in mind, the child is able to take a more relative approach to the problem,

acknowledging that something can be simultaneously real or unreal because after all, it is not real because it is modelled after reality (Kelly, 1981: 67).

Reality and fantasy discrimination are made frequently by reference to whether or not the television content exist in the real world, with little apparent regard for its fictional status. For instance, the child's attention centres repeatedly on specific surface features of programming, such as the means by which program portrayals violate physical reality. In the absence of such blatant features, the reality of television is often accepted (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 49).

2.8 THE CRITERION OF POSSIBILITY

Kelly (1981) in her study found that in addition to actuality, most second grade children (seven and eight year olds) assessed possibility or impossibility of the programme 'Wonder Woman'. These children all concluded that 'Wonder Woman' cannot be real. "Because people can't fly unless they take an airplane. Nor is 'The Wizard of Oz' real, because a tin man cannot walk, a lion cannot talk, and a house cannot blow to Munchkinland'. Physical impossibilities rank high on children's checklist of cues that signal fantasy, thus they readily dismiss media portrayals that contradict the world they know (Kelly, 1981: 65). In regard to applying real life knowledge, fourth-graders (nine to ten year olds) continue to consider issues of possibility. However, in contrast to the second graders, the fourth-graders frequently use the criterion to judge possibility and begin to relate it to social and behavioural phenomena. Their reasoning process at this

stage still remain tied to a very literal application of what is possible and not possible (Kelly, 1981: 67).

Dorr (1983) found that as children from five to twelve years old grow older, based on their direct or indirect knowledge of the world they become increasingly concerned with whether a phenomenon on television seemed possible in real life. Something is judged real if it is deemed probable or representative. The former is likely to extend considerably the range of characters, events, messages and themes that could be judged real (Dorr, 1983: 202).

2.9 THE CRITERION OF PLAUSIBILITY

The criterion of plausibility refers to whether the phenomenon on television seems to the viewer to be 'true to life' or likely to happen in the real world in a similar manner. This could be on the basis of their own experiences or knowledge or that of personal acquaintances. One significant aspect of these judgements by children is that perceived reality of television may mediate their emotional response to the things they see on screen (Buckingham, 1996: 216). The nature and strength of children's emotional reactions to a programme may depend upon what perspective they take while watching it. If a programme is perceived factual, rather than fictional, children may be more likely to imagine themselves in the roles of people involved (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 51).

Kelly (1981) noted that children in sixth grade (11 to 12 year olds) use plausibility as their most preferred mode of evaluation, replacing almost entirely the previous

consideration of actuality and possibility. Whereas the child using possibility is on the look-out for ways in which the medium violates physical reality, the child using plausibility is attuned to violations of social and psychological reality (Kelly, 1981: 68).

Howard (1993) uses the term 'representative' because most children's justification for their modality judgement made reference to the fact that although the event (situation) character was fictional, 'things like that do happen' or 'people like that do exist'. In other words, they are representatives of events or characters in real life. In her study she found that children's direct personal experiences were used to judge whether the elements in television programmes were true to life or realistic. In other instances the children's model of the world, based not only on what they knew but also on what they believed to be true, acted as the basis for comparison (Howard, 1993: 44). She also underlines the importance of the negative form of this criterion of implausibility. In her study of nine to ten year old children in Australia and England, she noted two different ways in which implausibility was judged. Firstly, some soap operas were judged more unrealistic than others because of the sheer weight of significant events they tried to pack into an episode. Secondly, implausibility also occurs when the model of life presented on the TV programme is extremely different from the model of life which the child has developed (Howard, 1993: 46).

2.10 SOCIAL REALISM AND GENDER ROLES

Fitch *et al* (1993) argue that judgement about social realism appears to be more a function of motives for viewing and television experience than of cognitive development.

For instance, beliefs that television is socially realistic are related to heavy viewing of entertainment programmes such as cartoons, situation comedies, and violent action adventure programmes (Fitch *et al*, 1993: 43). Most experimental investigation using children shows that factual or real television has more pronounced effects on behaviour than fictional television, especially in terms of the imitation of violence (Condry, 1989: 66). Correlation studies have focused more on the 'realism' of television than the 'factuality' of it. They find that the perceived social realism of television violence is correlated with both aggressive behaviour and with the amount of television viewed (Condry, 1989: 167-8).

Television violence can be ordered along the fantasy-reality dimension based on the viewer's conception of the fictitious versus authenticity of the presentation. The end-points of this continuum can be represented by factual news reports of 'real world' events on the reality end and by dramatic portrayals of imaginary, created events on the fictional end. The degree of perceived similarity between media content and 'real life' has been proposed as a determinant of impact the observed events will have on the viewer's behaviour (Sawin, 1981: 323). Sawin (1981) in his study of fifth grade and kindergarten boys and girls on television violence as fiction or as a news broadcast, found that there is no evidence for activation or instigation effects of televised violence in his findings. Secondly, the sex of children proved to be a significant factor in the differential influence of fantasy and the real violence. Thirdly, the age of the children did not prove to be significant factor in the differential effects of fantasy and real violence (Sawin, 1981: 327). One disagrees with the third statement as it seems not to be true since other studies

have found that age is a contributing factor to in differential effect of fantasy and real violence. According to Lander (1997) in her study, she found that as boys grow older they watch more action adventure and sports programmes. Drama programmes and soap operas were more popular with girls and as they grow such programmes become their favourites. This then leads to the conclusion that a child's ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy improves with chronological age (Lander 1997).

The judgement of social realism is whether a television representation is true to life, even though it may be known to be fictional. One significant aspect of these judgements by children is that the perceived reality of television may mediate their emotional responses to the things they see on the screen. If the programme is perceived as factual, rather than fictional, children may be more likely to imagine themselves in the roles of the people involved (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 51). Dorr *et al* (1990) also states that perceived realism of television often plays a mediated role between exposure to television content and its social effects. Since children (in all age groups) can decide about the realism of television content by comparing it to their factual knowledge of, or to their beliefs about, families in everyday life, those depictions that are closer to facts or beliefs should be perceived as more realistic by children of all ages (Dorr *et al*, 1990: 378).

Television has the potential to teach children about how men and women act in society, and mould their views of what is expected of them in society as either a man or woman. During their early lives, children learn an enormous amount about living in the world with other people (Lull, 1990: 45). Characters on television can provide role models

whom children may strive to emulate. Even if they do not copy their favourite characters, they may acquire certain values, attitude or rules from them (Gunter and McAleer, 1990:72). Results of studies on television and sex stereotypes done by Morgan (1982) on adolescents supported the view that television cultivates certain sex-role views, although the effects are limited to girls. Heavier viewers among girls became more likely over time to think that women are less ambitious than men and are happiest among children (Morgan, 1982: 950). These stereotypes still reinforced by the medium even though time have changed and more women in the society are playing meaning roles as leaders in their communities. This is a challenge to parents to lead children beyond the shallow poses created by TV to the process of a truly engaged life.

Cultivation theory looks at the mass media as a socialising agent and investigates whether television viewers come to believe the television version of reality the more they watch it. Gerbner and his colleagues (1967) contend that television drama has small but significant influence on the attitude, beliefs and judgement of viewers concerning the social world. In other words, television has long term effects which are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant across all ages. Heavy viewers are likely to be more influenced by the ways in which the world is framed by television programmes than are individuals who watch less (cited by Chandler, 1995).

Rothschild (1983) found that school children who watched more television had more stereotypical views of gender roles in terms of the activities they participated in and values and attitude they held. The evidence from this study supports the 'cultivation

theory' which argues that heavy viewers of television perceive the world they see on the screen to be the world in real life. In this way, children will be observing the biased representations on television and assimilating them as the norm, thereby developing a stereotypic attitude and outlook to life and the society in which they live (as cited in Beasley, 1997).

2.11 TELEVISION VIEWING AND PARENTAL GUIDANCE

According to Palmer (1986) children define television in terms of regularly appearing programmes that they enjoy the most. Viewing for children is associated with fun, excitement and finding out about the world. Children's favourite programmes depend on their physical and social maturity, as defined by their age and sex (Palmer, 1986:132). Gunter and McAleer (1990) noted that children's programmes disappear after the age of thirteen to be replaced by more adult alternatives such as 'X-Files'. With increased age, viewing of programmes made especially for children drops significantly, while viewing of general programming increases substantially (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 8). Television is an important part of most children's lives. Most children still watch television in a public and shared space in the family home. Access to the television also conveys to children a sense of their significance within family (Palmer, 1986:133).

Livingstone (1986) is of the view that television viewing is a process, which starts before the TV is switched on and does not finish when it is turned off. In surveys carried out in London and in the United States Greenberg (1976) found that children and adolescents watch television to pass time, learn about themselves and other things, as a habit,

companionship, escape, arousal and relaxation (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 19) . During the viewing process, the viewer is subjected to different influences and mediations. Age and gender give some structural identities to each viewer, making him or her member of a specific TV audience (Livingstone, 1986 as cited in Guillermo Gómez, 1988).

Parental monitoring is a key factor in television viewing, since research studies show that increasing guidance from parents is at least as important as simply reducing media violence (Bushman and Huesmann, 2001: 243). They further argue that if parents can limit the number of hours their children spend watching TV and also restrict the types of programmes the child can watch, especially those with violent content, the effects will be reduced. Children may learn negative behaviour patterns and values from many other experience as well as TV programmes, and parental guidance is needed to sort out these influences and develop the children's ability to make sound decisions on their own. Cantor (2001) noted coviewing allows parents to discuss with their children how unrealistic the scene really was. They have to point out what motivated the character to use violence and what better options might have been used by the character to solve the problem without resorting to violence (Cantor, 2001: 218).

In many households, the children come home before their parents and are left without adult supervision for a part of the day or evening (Education Consumer Guide 2000). There are also those parents who use television as a babysitter. A study conducted by Gantz and Masland (1986) documented the frequency of television's use as a babysitter and raised some interesting questions about the impact of television on parent- child

relationships. The consequences stemming from the use of television as a surrogate parent may be determined by how parents follow up on those activities (Gantz and Masland, 1986: 530).

2.11.1 A FAMILY AS THE CHILDREN'S VIEWING COMMUNITY

The family is the most common children's television viewing community. As a viewer community, family members might or might not be physically present while children are viewing television (Gómez 1988). In other words the other family members could be somewhere around the house, but not in the TV room with the children. Viewing TV as a family has to be understood in a broader sense, for it has different manifestations. Korzeny *et al* (1988) stated that parents might determine in advance the amount of time children can watch television, or the type of programmes they are allowed to watch. Parents also use television as reward or punishment for children's behaviour (as cited in Gómez, 1988). Children's viewing is influenced significantly by what and when their parents watch, especially where the main television set is concerned. As they get older, they spend less time viewing with their parents. Coviewing depends on the nature of the programme being watched, though there may be more co-viewing by parents and children for programmes aimed at the general audience (Gunter and McAleer, 1990:182-3).

Parents can play an important role in mediating the effects of television on their children. When parents mediate their children's viewing, they take part in a process whereby the family filters television fare. Mediational practices range from interpretation of

programming, for the purpose of learning, to outright content censorship (Atkin *et al*, 1989: 557). Early research in the area of children and television focused on children modelling on their parent's viewing behaviour (Vandewater and Wartella, 2005, Palmer, 1986). When parents seek to control those choices, they exercise a restrictive form of mediation. According to Atkin *et al* (1989) family viewing studies have noted that parental actions to control their children's viewing behaviour decline after early adolescence (12-13 years). While parents do little to limit viewing time as the child matures, direct mediation may continue in different forms (Atkin *et al*, 1989: 558).

Parents can effect the social knowledge children take from a television show by highlighting important information and by interpreting what is going on in the show. Television seems to be influential in forming attitudes and knowledge on topics with which the child lacks experience. For example, children with first-hand knowledge of a topic make a clearer separation between the real world and the television world. Thus, parents can counteract television by giving their children first-hand experience in areas they consider to be important (Greenfield, 1984: 51-2). Parental mediation can aid the child's understanding of television and discourage the acquisition of antisocial behaviour (Atkin *et al*, 1981: 559). Children as young as five years can be taught to make critical judgements about the reality of what they watch on television.

Research regarding the application of parenting styles to TV uses different classification schemes. Two parental mediation styles can be distinguished, that is restrictive and evaluative guidance (Van der Voort *et al* 1992, Weaver and Barbour, 1992). Using

restrictive guidance, parents have restrictions on the child's amount of TV viewing. For example, they can set specific hours during which a child is allowed to watch TV and what programmes to be watched (van der Voort *et al*, 1992 and Weaver and Barbour, 1992). Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005) in their study on parental mediation of undesired effects of advertising on children in the eight to twelve year age range found that restrictive mediation sheltered children from advertising by reducing their exposure to it. There are family rules that restrict the children's viewing of commercial TV channels. Reducing their exposure to TV may sometimes be the only effective way to counteract negative effects (Valkenburg and Buijzen, 2005: 154). Warren (2003) is of the view that restrictive guidance has been found to be moderately successful and children under this parenting style have been found to watch less TV (Warren, 2003: 396).

Van der Voort *et al* (1992) is of the view that in evaluative guidance parents discuss the programme content with the child for the deliberate purpose of helping the child to evaluate the meaning. For example, the parent will explain the meaning of TV advertisements and instil moral values, by pointing out things that are not morally acceptable and help the child to distinguish reality from fantasy (van der Voort *et al*, 1992: 62). Warren (2003) found that in evaluative guidance parents spent considerable time helping their children to distinguish reality from fantasy, especially acts that were more or less probable in real life (Warren, 2003: 396).

2.11.2 THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Parent-child communication patterns are among the most persuasive influence in child socialisation and development. According to Gunter and McAleer (1990), parental values and norms need not be transmitted directly in order to have an impact. It is not simply the existence of certain rules within the home that matters, the most important thing is the way in which they are applied (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 186). Family Communication Patterns (FCP) index is useful in locating difference among families in media use, political knowledge and participation, academic achievements, conformity, and other information seeking behaviour (Austin, 1993: 558). The FCP model was conceived to identify families on the basis of two dimensions of communication styles, which are "Socio-orientation" and "concept-orientation" (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 558).



2.11.3 SOCIO-ORIENTATION FAMILY

Messaris and Kerr (1983) define "socio-orientation" as an emphasis on family harmony and obedience to parental (and other) authority, at the expense, if necessary, of individual expression (Messaris and Kerr, 1983: 77). Gunter and McAleer (1990) stated that in a socio-oriented family setting, parents encourage their children to maintain a harmonious climate of personal relationship, to avoid arguments, anger and any form of controversial expression or behaviour (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 559). Socio-orientation is associated with higher exposure to television in general, higher exposure by young viewers to programmes containing violence, and low exposure to informational

programmes or media by all viewers. In this family TV is also used as a resource for the accomplishment of interpersonal objectives in the home. In other words TV can be used to create occasions when the family comes together as a unit; it can act as a source of mutual interest and conversation. Socio-orientation is also positively associated with congruence between children's TV viewing choices and mother's preference (both actual and as perceived by the child) regarding those choices (Messaris and Kerr, 1983:177-8).

2.11.4 CONCEPT-ORIENTATION FAMILY

Concept-orientation is defined as an emphasis on free inquiry and expression for all members of a family (Messaris and Kerr, 1983: 77). In a concept-oriented family, children are invited to express their ideas and feelings, even if they are controversial, and to challenge the beliefs of others (Gunter and McAleer, 1990:186). If a parent frequently engages in open discussion about issues with a child, the child may be impressed by the warmth of communication as much as by the content (Austin, 1993: 559). Concept-orientation is associated with relatively low exposure to television, more of an information oriented and less of an escapist approach to television and other mass media, more parental control over television, and children have higher degree of critical awareness of the medium. Concept orientation is also positively associated with accuracy in the children's perception of what kinds of TV programmes their mothers would like them to watch. In this type of family TV is not a useful tool for social resource, it is used for transmission of values and information. In other words, TV is not a form of family entertainment. Also programme choice is stronger, only tunes in to

specific programmes and when selecting what to watch they are sensitive to other family members' choices (Messaris and Kerr, 1983:177-8).

According to Austin (1993) involvement may be conceptualised as supportive behaviour among family members, which is characterised by cohesion –a feeling of belonging. Involvement in a child's life first starts around oneself, then one's family and later expands to schoolmates and others. He further argues that this involvement has been shown to correlate positively with a child's internal locus of control, social competence, cognitive development, conformity and creativity. So active mediation of television by parents reflects a higher level of parental involvement than those mere coviewing (just there and not engaging in discussion about the programme or the content), and can affect children's perception of television content in a variety of ways (Austin, 1993: 559).

Parent-child coviewing and discussion about programmes may occur primarily because parents and children enjoy the same programmes rather than because parents are concerned that their children get the most good and the least bad from their viewing experience (Van der Voort *et al*, 1992: 62). This is not quite true, since there is no clear cut-off point on how and when parents should mediate, even though in other surveys some children and parents have stated that they have no rules on what and when to watch TV but then children have a specific time when to go to bed (Kytomaki, 1996). Then this implies that children are normally not around the TV set during the watershed period. Research on children and TV seem to be more or less unanimous in its conclusion that most parents have no rules concerning their children's TV viewing. In order to

understand the nature of parental mediation of viewing, more research has to be done especially with a new frame of reference for studying child development. This type of study would enable South Africa and Africa as a whole to know where it stands in terms of parental mediation and TV viewing in general.

Messaris and Kerr (1983) in their study of mothers' comments about TV found that the family's concept-orientation may be related to greater awareness, on the child's part, of television's potential as a window on the novel and the unfamiliar (other people, places, points of view and moral consideration). Concept-orientation was positively associated with denials of TV reality in general, while socio-orientation was positively associated with affirmation of TV reality. These results raises the expectation that the concept-oriented family should be associated with a more critical attitude on the child's part toward the relationship between TV and reality. On the other hand a socio- oriented family should be associated with greater acceptance on the child's part of TV as an accurate rendition of reality. The results also revealed a positive association between both concept-orientation and socio-orientation. These findings indicate that active parental concept with a child's behaviour leads to a heightened emphasis on the reality of the dangers portrayed on TV (Messaris and Kerr, 1983: 195-9).

Parental disciplinary styles can affect how children respond to television, but it works differently in boys and girls (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 188). Parents may use two types of control or discipline: some use power assertion while others use love-withdrawal. Power assertion emphasises physical punishment and coercion, while love-withdrawal

has been found to be connected with a general lack of parental control or involvement in their children's viewing, and children in such households tend to be heavy viewers. In power assertive families, children are able to distinguish reality from fantasy on television, and have better knowledge of production techniques and how television works (Gunter and McAleer, 1990: 188).

2.12 CHILDREN'S AMOUNT OF TV VIEWING

The largest survey into children's use of modern media was carried out in 1997 by researchers at the London School of Economics (LSE) (Groebel, 1999). They interviewed 1300 six to seventeen year olds and found that, on average, they spent 22 hours playing computer games and watching TV each week. British children are more likely to have their own TV in their bedrooms than other youngsters across the rest of Europe. Half of six and seven year olds in Britain have a TV in their bedroom (Living & Loving February 2001). In other countries the statistics of children with a TV set in the bedroom are as follows:

- 25% in Sweden
- 21% in Spain
- 17% in France
- 12% in the Netherlands

This is an indication that there is a growing number of parents who are allowing their children to have TV set in their bedrooms.

In an interview with *Living & Loving Magazine* (2001) David Buckingham stated that children have changed the way they watch TV. TV no longer provides a focus for family life. Children are increasingly watching programmes on their own and a growing number of British and American children watch TV in their bedrooms. This individualistic culture is reinforced when other media are taken into account. In South Africa a rapidly growing number of children are using computers for games or to browse the Internet – these activities are generally carried out alone. This is the start of the ‘TV in the bedroom’ culture in South Africa (Living & Loving, February 2001: 14-16). This area needs to be researched in South Africa so that we can have valid statistics that we can quote on this trend.

UNESCO in 1996 and 1997 conducted a global study on media violence. The focus of the study was the role of media violence for children, children’s media access and media use (Groebel, 1999). The study included 5 324 twelve-year-old schoolchildren, living in 23 countries all over the world: Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, India, Japan, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, South Africa, Spain, Tajikistan, Trinidad & Tobago and Ukraine. The data were collected from boys and girls (12 years old), in metropolitan and rural areas from different types of schools and in the war zones and high crime areas (Groebel, 1999: 61). Findings of the study are as follows:

- 93% of the children had access to a TV set at home, in all 23 countries.
- In Africa 82% of the children had access to a TV set

- In Asia 94% had access to a TV set
- In Canada 99% had access to a TV set
- In Latin America 97% had access to a TV set

In all countries taken together, the 12 year olds spent on average of three hours daily in front of TV. For this age group around the globe watching TV is the most dominant leisure activity. Two hours is spent on home work, one and a half hours on house chores, one and a half hours playing outside, one hour reading and listening to radio and half an hour is spent on the computer (Groebel, 1999: 62-6).

Groebel (1999) further gives results of another study by Eurodata TV (an international data bank for TV programme logs and ratings) which in 1997 and 1998 also conducted research on the amount of children's TV viewing during an average day in ten countries in the world. The data is generated by meter systems placed in panels of TV households, and the panels in the selected countries differ greatly with respect to size, since these people meter panels are not randomly sampled but composed of quotas of the population according to a limited number of variables (convenience sampling). The panels differ between countries also with regard to composition of characteristics. Findings are as follows:

- Argentina: 98% of households had access to a TV set (1997)

Children's TV viewing

	4 – 8 years	9 – 12 years	13 – 19 years
1998 average daily reach	73.2%	75.3%	69.7%
1998 average daily viewing time	185 minutes	200 minutes	180 minutes

- Chile: 85.4% of households had access to a TV set (estimation for 1999)

Children's TV viewing

	4 – 8 years	9 – 12 years	13 – 19 years
1998 average daily reach	73.2%	75.3%	69.7%
1998 average daily viewing time	185 minutes	209 minutes	180 minutes

- USA: 99.4% of households had access to a TV set (estimation for 1999)

Children's TV viewing

	2 – 11 years	12 – 17 years
1997-98 average daily reach	-	-
1997-98 average weekly reach viewing time	1,260 minutes	1,290 minutes
1997-98 estimated average daily viewing time	180 minutes	184 minutes

The viewing times were calculated on weekly basis not on daily basis as in the other countries.

- Spain: 99.5% of households had access to a TV set (1998)

Children's TV viewing

	4 – 7 years	8 – 12 years	13 – 17 years
1998 average daily reach	74.3%	77.7%	77.4%
1998 average daily viewing time	144 minutes	159 minutes	165 minutes

- Czech Republic: 98.7% of households had access to a TV set (1998)

Children's TV viewing

	3 – 7 years	8 – 12 years	13 – 17 years
1998 average daily reach	76.32%	76.30%	77.52%
1998 average daily viewing time	99 minutes	128 minutes	140 minutes

- South Africa: 62.3% of households had access to a TV set (1998)

Children's TV viewing

	8 – 12 years	13 – 17 years
1998 average daily reach	55.1%	54.6%
1998 average daily viewing time	115 minutes	121 minutes

For the purpose of this research these statistics on South Africa would be used to compare this age group and the one that the researcher had interviewed in terms of daily viewing.

- Lebanon: 98% of households had access to a TV set (1998)

Children's TV viewing

	4 – 9 years	10 – 14 years	15 – 19 years
1998 average daily reach	80.6%	83.3%	83.9%
1998 average daily viewing time	165 minutes	187 minutes	200 minutes

- Philippines: 91.2% households had access to a TV set (1996)

Children's TV viewing

	2 – 6 years	7 – 12 years	13 – 15 years
1998 average daily reach	53%	63%	62%
1998 average daily viewing time	134 minutes	156 minutes	156 minutes

- South Korea: 100% of households had access to a TV set (1998)

Children's TV viewing

	4 – 9 years	10 – 14 years	15 – 19 years
1998 average daily reach	-	-	-
1998 average daily viewing time	112 minutes	117 minutes	82 minutes

The figures above are only from one city – Seoul City. TV broadcasts are only during these time slots: weekdays 6 – 11 a.m. and 17.00 – 24.00; weekends 6.00 – 24.00.

Australia: 99% of households had access to a TV set (1998).

The term “reach” indicates the percentage of children in the panels who watched TV during an average day. Average “viewing time” during a day is according to Eurodata TV, calculated for all children in the panels not only children who watched during the day (Feilitzen von 1999).

The above results give a clear indication that children spend more time in front of the TV than in any other activity. In a day children between the ages of six and 12 years old spend an average of three hours, which means that in a week they spend about 21 hours watching TV.

When observing the above statistics from the UNESCO study the results indicated that in 1998 in South Africa, 62.3% of households had access to a TV set. According to the records of South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) that is conducted weekly, the Audience Reach (AR) finding for the month of October 2006 indicates that 64% of the TV audience are children between the ages of seven to 12 years. This shows that many households in South Africa have more access to Television and many youngsters are tuning in (SAARF AMPS and RAMS 2006).

These results also indicate that currently, per household a child spends an average of three hours more compared to 1998 where the average hours spent watching TV were between one and a half hours to two hours. Therefore, the number of children watching TV in 2006 exceeds the number of households that had access to TV in 1998.

2.13 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.13.1 INTRODUCTION

The cognitive developmental theory and the information processing theory provide the framework of this study, thus allowing us to have a better understanding on how children's developing cognitive abilities, memory and social experiences lead to better understanding of television.

2.13.2 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The work of Jean Piaget (1967) and cognitive developmental theory provides the general orientation to research examining children's understanding of television.

Cognitive development theory is a “theory of knowing”. It attempts to describe how children think or process information. Piaget’s theory states that children undergo qualitative changes in the way they organise and use information (Berk, 2003, Papalia and Olds, 1995). Piaget further states that there is a set of cognitive structures to characterise children’s thought process at distinct, age-related stages of intellectual development. In this process of development, children are intensely active. The development of cognitive structures is universal and proceeds through the process of an active child both accommodating to and assimilating new cognitive events into his or her level of cognitive abilities.

Piaget’s theory states that there are four major stages in the course of cognitive development: the sensory-motor stage (birth to two years); the preoperational stage (two to seven years); the concrete operational stage (seven to 11 years); the formal operational stage (11 years and older). The descriptions of the four stages of development are a useful way of elaborating the differences in children’s thinking. For the purpose of this study only the concrete operational and the formal operational stages will be discussed.

In the concrete operational stage (seven to 11 years) the child acquires the ability to separate perceptions from other forms of thought and knowledge. In other words, a child can separate appearances from reality. This stage is characterised by the growth of certain basic logical operations: elaborated cognitive abilities. For instance, during the stage of concrete operation, while the child has available all of the necessary cognitive abilities, he or she is limited to applying these abilities to images of concrete objects and

events (Berk, 2003 and Wartella, 1980). Abstract thought does not develop until the next stage of cognitive development.

Formal operational stage (which develops at the age of 11) is characterised as the beginning of true adult- like thought patterns. In that stage the child develops abstract thought, hypothetical reasoning, and prepositional thinking (Wartella, 1980). When faced with a problem, they start with a general theory of all possible factors that might affect an outcome and deduce from it specific hypotheses (predictions) about what might happen. Then they would test these hypotheses in an orderly fashion to see which ones work in the real world (Berk, 2003: 245).

Piagetian stages of development point out how children become increasingly more “thoughtful” in their behaviour as they grow older. A major dimension of development is increasingly less reliance on the apparent perceptual characteristics of objects and events. Two major dimensions of this thoughtfulness operate in tandem. First, children become less perceptually bound; they become less tied to the immediate surface or perceptual characteristics of objects and events and they are able to take into consideration other dimensions, such as the functional differences among objects. A second dimension of “thoughtfulness” is that as children grow older they become better able to coordinate multiple dimensions of phenomena, which is known as decentration. Decentration can be illustrated with reference to Hodge and Tripp’s (1986) research. In their study they found that as a key development feature, older children used more features in judging programme reality than younger children did (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 126).

According to Leung *et al* (1994) they are of the view that inappropriate TV viewing may have an adverse effect on learning and cognitive development (Leung *et al*, 1994: 909). This view is also supported by a number of researchers (Cantor 2001, Van der Voort *et al*, 1992) who agree that the time children spend on TV limits the amount of time a child has in contact and interaction with other children and they miss out on opportunities to use their imagination in creative play, reading and other skills. There is also a positive side to this view. Leung *et al* (1994), asserts that appropriate TV viewing may have a positive influence on cognitive development and school performance. TV introduces children to information regarding current affairs, politics, science, music, art and many more (Leung *et al*, 1994: 909).

2.13.3 INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

According Papalia and Olds (1995) information processing theory pays particular attention to memory when compared to cognitive theory. As cognitive development increases, so does memory. The ability to remember improves greatly in children between the ages of seven to ten years old. They further state that in information processing theory, memory is like a filing system (Papalia and Olds (1995: 284).

Doubleday and Droege (1993) found that at the age of six to seven years, attention is better with narration (audio and visual) when children interpret TV. Audio helps with monitoring of attention, that is, they pay more attention to worthy content. There is also an improvement in comprehension skills but comprehension and retention is still not great, though the recall of incidental content increases. They further argue that children at this stage have a better recall of plot than preschoolers. They also found that in the age

group of eight to 12 years, their (children) comprehension has improved and they can easily recall central content, and story schemata are better developed. This age group (eight to 12) has an increased ability to infer missing content. These children can better recall and understand advertisements (Doubleday and Droege, 1993: 23- 27).

Recent research regarding children's understanding of television messages is that children of different ages bring different information processing skills to the television viewing situation. During childhood, children are growing and changing both in the available cognitive abilities and in their understanding of their social world. These developing abilities are then reflected in the ways in which children of different ages understand television messages (Wartella, 1980). Rydin (1983) argues that school-aged children have the ability to draw conclusions from the material presented to them. Their thinking is more flexible and not closely bound up with the situation in which they find themselves at that moment. They freely relate their experiences to others. When recalling a story, they frequently introduce their own interpretations, which are not part of the original version (Rydin, 1983: 173).

In conclusion, literature regarding modality judgments in television viewing, the importance parental mediation and aspects in relation to children's ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy has been reviewed. A critical view of Piaget's cognitive development theory and also the information processing theory was also given. The study will now proceed to outline the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter proceeds to deal mainly with the research methodology that was used to carry out the study. The main focus of this chapter is the following, namely the methodology, population, sample techniques, procedure, questionnaire administration and data analysis.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was used for this study. According to Mouton (2001) survey research is probably the best method available to the social scientists interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly. Surveys are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population (Mouton 2001: 232).

Frey *et al* (1991) state that survey research is particularly useful for gathering descriptive information about populations too large for every member to be studied. Surveys provide researchers with convenient methods for gathering descriptive information from representatives of population. Another reason for the use of survey method in communication research is that it involves a relatively straightforward research strategy, where the researcher asks people questions and analyses their answers (Frey *et al* 1991: 179-80). Communication scholars and practitioners frequently use the survey method to study people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

This study used a quantitative approach. Gibson *et al* (1994) are of the view that quantitative approach to research is formalised, even explicitly controlled, with the exact determined reach. This maximises validity by avoiding inaccuracy and errors. A possible threat to validity is the possibility of respondents completing questionnaires in a way that would please the researcher or portray an overly positive view of their views. This must be taken into consideration when results of the questionnaires are examined (Gibson *et al*, 1994: 728).

3.3 POPULATION

This study focused on two target populations. It was parents and children in the Mmabatho and Mafikeng areas of the North West Province. It comprised primary school children between the ages of six and twelve years, who had access to TV on daily basis and a parent of each child.

According to Neuman (2003), a researcher specifies the unit being sampled, the geographical location and the temporal boundaries of populations. He further explains that within the population a researcher has a target population. He defines target population as a specific pool of cases that the researcher wants to study (Neuman, 2003: 216).

3.4 SAMPLE TECHNIQUES

The sample was comprised of 200 subjects. It was 100 children and their parents. The children who took part in this study were drawn from five English Medium schools in Mmabatho and Mafikeng areas. A list of these schools was obtained from the Regional Office of the Department of Education. The schools were Mafikeng Lower and Higher Primary School, Sol Platjie Primary School, Danville Primary School, Connie Minchin Primary School and D.P. Kgotleng Primary School.

The researcher then chose five schools from the list which were most convenient. This option was taken by the researcher due to cost and time constraints. The schools were easily accessible by public transport and others were within walking distance.

Purposive sampling method was applied to select the children who participated in the study. Neuman (2003) asserts this sampling method is acceptable to be used for special situations. The researcher can use his or her judgment in selecting cases or selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. He further states that this method is appropriate if a researcher uses it to select unique cases that are informative. Another reason it is when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation (Neuman, 2003: 213). Sometimes it is appropriate for the researcher to select his or her sample on the basis of his or her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of his or her research aims. In short, it is based on the researcher's judgment and the purpose of the study (Mouton, 2000: 166).

3.5 PROCEDURE

Two types of questionnaires were used to collect data. One was for the parents and the other for the children. The questionnaire had close-ended and only two open-ended questions. Most of the questions, especially on parental guidance, were in the matrix format. Questions on the parental guidance section were derived from Bybee, Robinson and Turow's study in 1982, where they attempted to establish empirically the types of parental guidance that can be distinguished.

Bybee *et al* (1982) carried out their investigation with a special subgroup of parents, a sample of predominately male American mass media scholars with children aged 3 to 18 years. This study was later replicated by Van der Voort *et al* (1995) with a representative sample of parents from the general Dutch population in the Netherlands.

It is important to note that this study was not a replica of the two studies mentioned. The two studies had also investigated the perceived effects. This study's main focus was on parental guidance with reference to reality and fantasy.

3.6 QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION

All questionnaires were researcher administered. The children would assemble in a classroom or staff room as a group in each school. The researcher was available to provide them with help where they did not understand. For those children who could not read and write the researcher would fill in the answer for each child, after explaining each question to the satisfaction of the child's understanding. For the parents the

questionnaires were hand delivered at home or place of work (whichever way the parent had agreed with the researcher over the phone when making an appointment).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 14.0.1 at the North-West University at the Mafikeng campus. The data was first coded, each variable was given a number. The purpose of the coding was to systematically reorganise the raw data into a format which is easy to analyse using a computer. The data was then captured; after this process was completed the data was cleaned using the *possible code cleaning* method.

In this chapter the methodology was discussed in detail and the procedure that was used for the study. The following chapter will discuss the results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented. Two hundred respondents took part in this study. The groups are divided into two, parents and their children. Firstly, to be presented will be the findings of the parents that took part in the study. Secondly, it will be findings of the children.

4.2 PARENTS DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Male	40	40.0
Female	60	60.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1

A hundred respondents were parents, 40% were males and 60% were females.

4.2.2 Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
25 - 29	25	25.0
30 - 34	25	25.0
35 - 39	35	35.0
40 - 44	12	12.0
45+	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 2

Twenty five percent of the respondents were between the ages of 25 to 29 years. The highest number of the respondents was between the ages of 35 to 39 years, which were 35%. Twelve percent were between the age range of 40 to 44 years and they made up 12%. The least number of respondents were the age of 45 and above and they were three percent.

4.2.1 AGE MEAN

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum f x}{n}$$

$$= \frac{3377}{100}$$

$$= 33.77$$

$$= 34$$

The range mean of the respondents was 34 years old.

4.2.3 Educational level of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
University	38	38.0
Technikon	19	19.0
College	23	23.0
High school	14	14.0
Other	3	3.0
Total	97	97.0
No answer	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3

Thirty eight percent of the respondents were university graduates, 19% were technikon graduates. Twenty three percent were college graduates and 14% of the respondents had high school education. Three percent did not complete their high school education and three percent did not answer this question.

4.2.4 Occupation of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Professional	25	25.0
Service	43	43.0
Elementary	4	4.0
Self employed	4	4.0
Student	8	8.0
Unemployed	6	6.0
Total	90	90.0
No answer	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4

Twenty five percent of the respondents were professionals and 43% were in service. Four percent were in elementary, and the other four percent were self-employed. Eight percent were students and ten percent of the respondents did not answer this question.

4.2.5 Number of family members staying with you

	Frequency	Percent
2 - 3	36	36.0
4 - 5	35	35.0
6 -7	19	19.0
8+	3	3.0
Total	93	93.0
No answer	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 5

Thirty six percent of the respondents were staying with two to three family members. Thirty five percent were staying with four to five family members. Nineteen percent were staying with six to seven family members and three percent were staying with eight or more members of their family. Seven percent of the respondents did not want to answer this question.

4.2.6 Gender of your child / children between 6 and 12

	Frequency	Percent
Male 6 - 8	30	30.0
Male 9 - 12	26	26.0
None	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 6

Thirty percent of the respondents had male children between the ages of six and 12. Twenty percent had male children between the ages of nine and 12. Respondents who had no male children were 44%.

4.2.7 Gender of your child / children between 6 and 12

	Frequency	Percent
Female 6 - 8	32	32.0
Female 9 - 12	38	38.0
None	30	30.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 7

Thirty two of the respondents had female children between the ages of six and eight. Thirty eight percent of them had had female children between the ages of nine and 12. Thirty percent had no female children.

4.3 TV VIEWING PATTERNS

4.3.1 Number of TV sets in the house

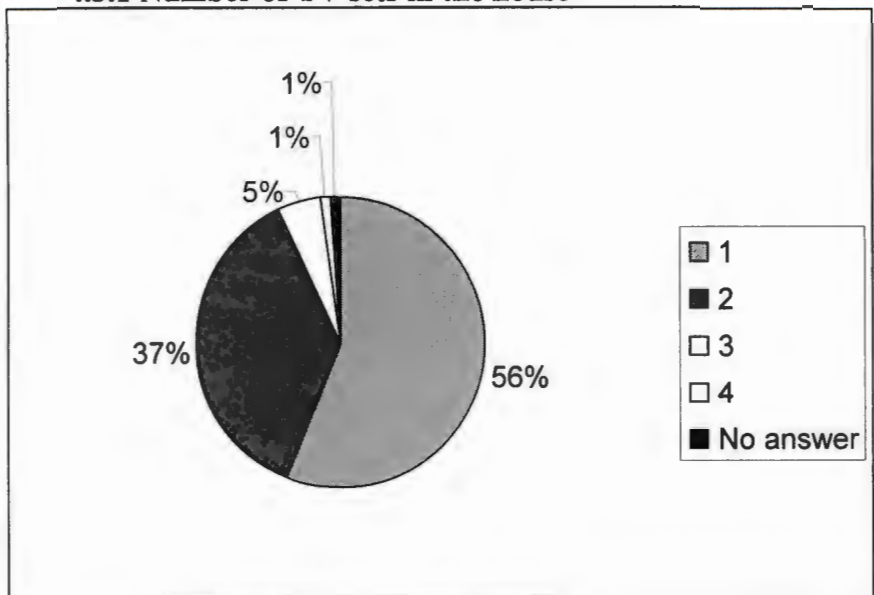


Figure 1

The respondents who indicated that they have one TV set in the house were 56%, and 37% of the respondents said they have two TV sets. Five percent of the respondents have three TV sets and one percent indicated that there are four TV sets in the house and the other one percent did not answer the question.

4.3.2 Hours spent on TV with child / children during the week

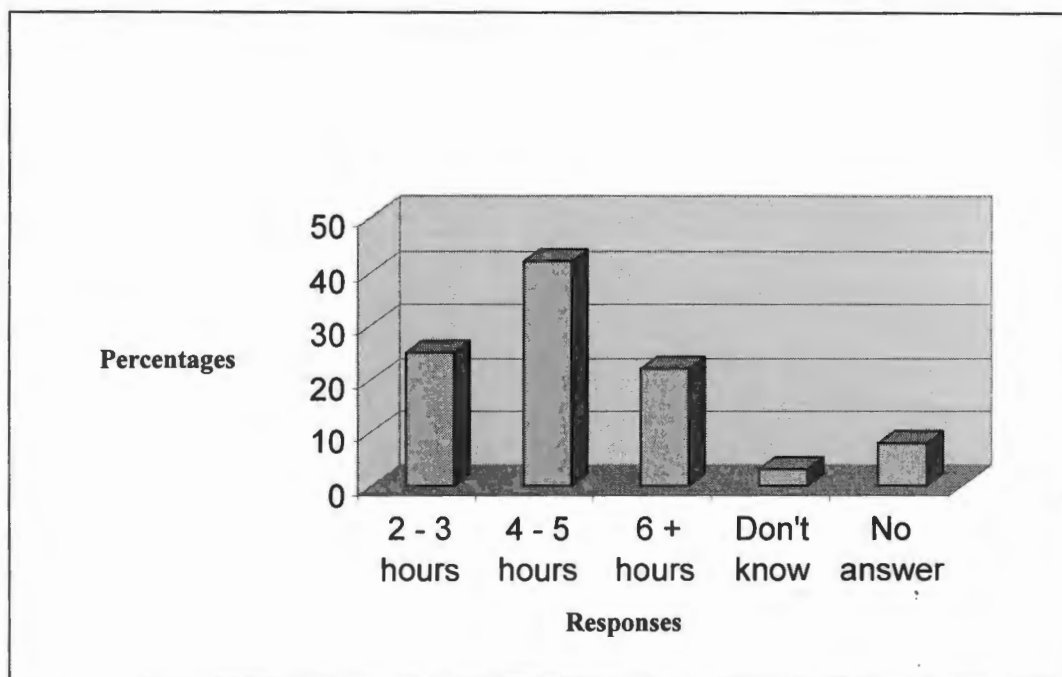


Figure 2

Twenty five percent of the respondents indicated that they watch TV with their children for two to three hours during the week. Forty two percent spend four to five hours with their children watching TV. Twenty two percent spend six hours and more on TV during the week with their children. Three percent of the respondents indicated that they do not know as to how many hours they spend on TV with their children. The eight percent that gave no answer had verbally indicated that they watch it for too many hours but it was not easy for them to specify or roughly estimate the hours.

4.3.3 Hours spent on TV with child / children on weekends

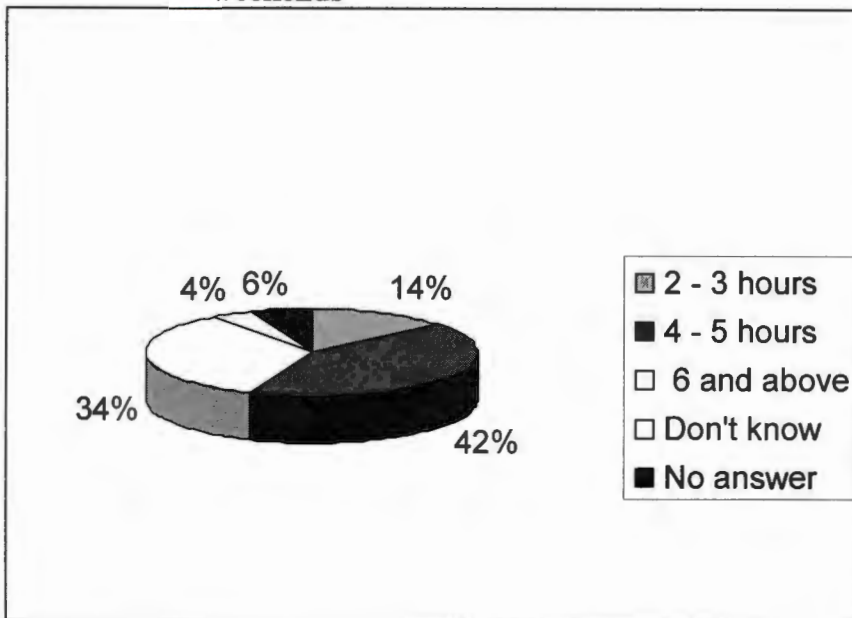


Figure 3

Fourteen percent of the respondents spend two to three hours watching TV with their children on weekends. Forty two percent indicated that on weekends they spend between four to five hours with their children on TV. Thirty four percent of the respondents spend six hour and above on TV with their children on weekends. Four percent said that they don't know how many hours they spend on TV during weekends with their children and six percent of the respondents gave no answer on the questionnaire, but verbally indicated that it's too many hours and they even lost count.

4.3.4 Hours spent by children on TV

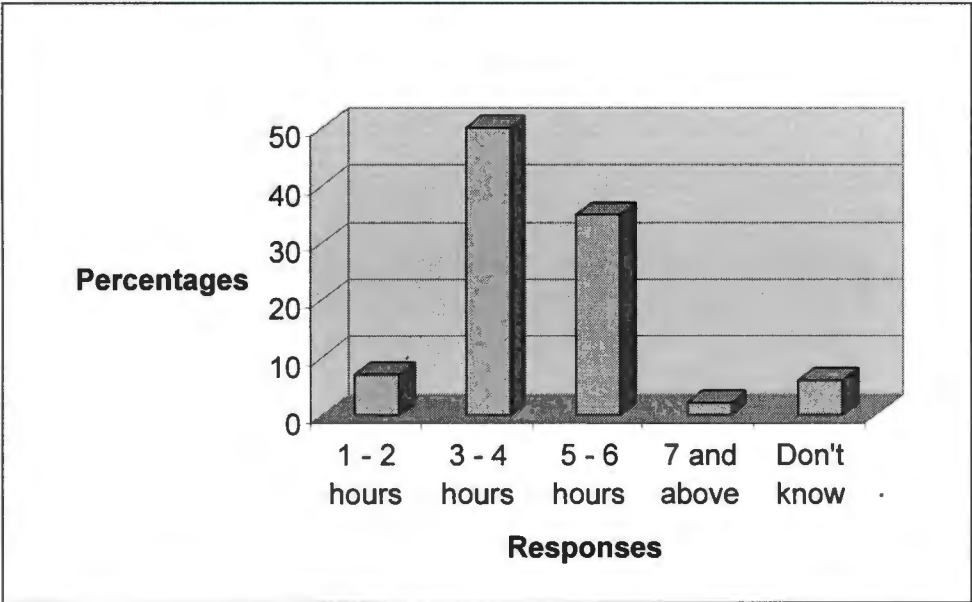


Figure 4

Seven percent of the respondents indicated that their children spend an average of two hours on TV a day. Fifty percent of the children spend three to four hours on TV a day and thirty five percent of the respondents' children spend five to six hours on TV a day. Two percent of the respondents' children spend seven or more hours a day watching TV and six percent of the respondents indicated that they do not know how much time their children spend on TV.

4.3.5 Is there a TV set in your child's/ children's bed room?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	24.0
No	76	76.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 8

Twenty four percent of the respondents' children have a TV set in their bedrooms and seventy six percent of the children have no TV set in their bedrooms.

4.3.6 Are you a DSTV subscriber?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	26	26.0
No	74	74.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 9

Twenty six percent of the respondents have subscribed for DSTV and seventy six percent are not subscribers.

4.4 PARENTAL MEDIATION STYLES

The following section has been divided according to the three parental mediation styles that have been found to be applied by parents *restrictive*, *evaluative* and *unfocused*

mediation (Valkeburg and Buijzen, 2005,Warren, 2003, Van der Voort *et al*, 1992, Weaver and Barbour, 1992, Bybee *et al*, 1982).

4.4.1 RESTRICTIVE GUIDANCE

4.4.1.1 How often do you set specific viewing hours?

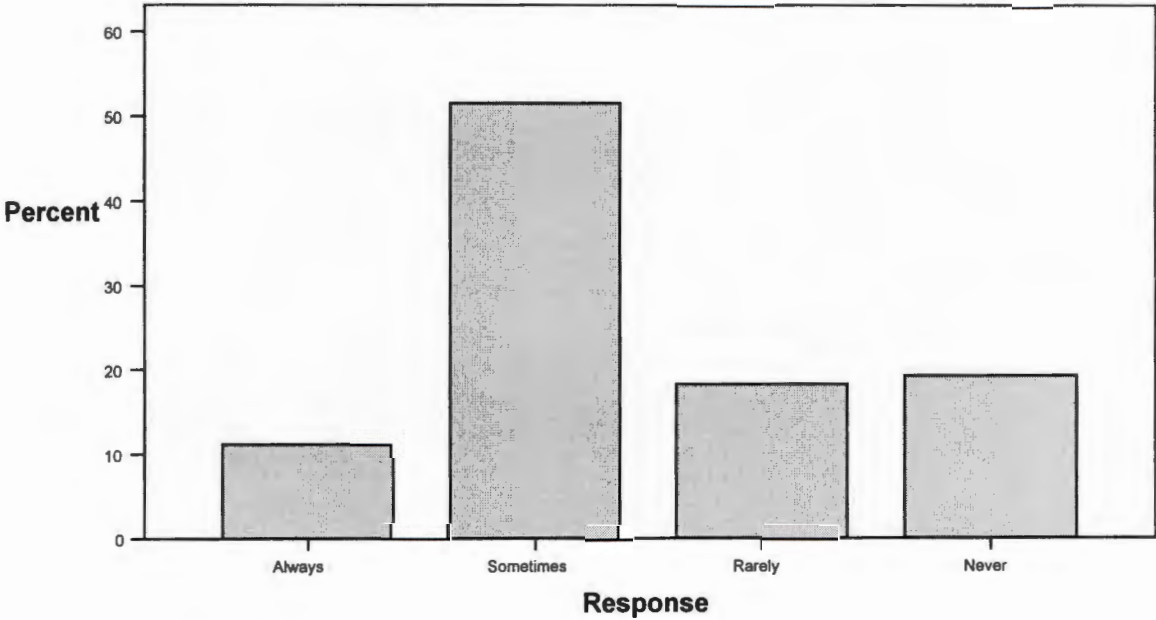
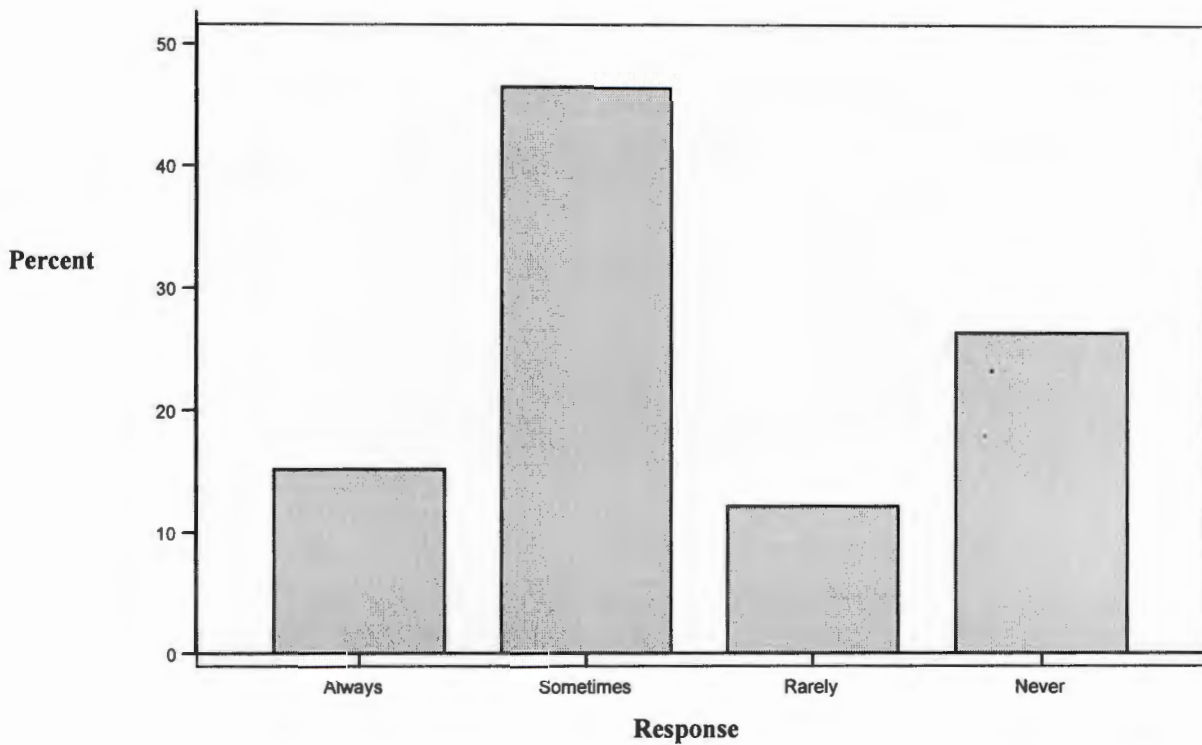


Figure 5

Eleven percent of the respondents indicated that they always have specific hours that their children can spend on TV. Fifty one percent set specific viewing hours sometimes and 18% of the respondents rarely have specific viewing hours for their children. Nineteen percent of the respondents have no specific viewing hours for their children.

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4.4.1.2 How often do you restrict the amount of viewing?



NWU
LIBRARY

Figure 6

Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that they always restrict the amount of viewing for their children and 46% reported that they restrict their children sometimes. Twelve percent indicated that it's very rare for them to restrict the amount of TV viewing and 26% of the respondents never restrict the amount of TV viewing for their children.

4.4.1.3 How often do you forbid the viewing of certain programmes?

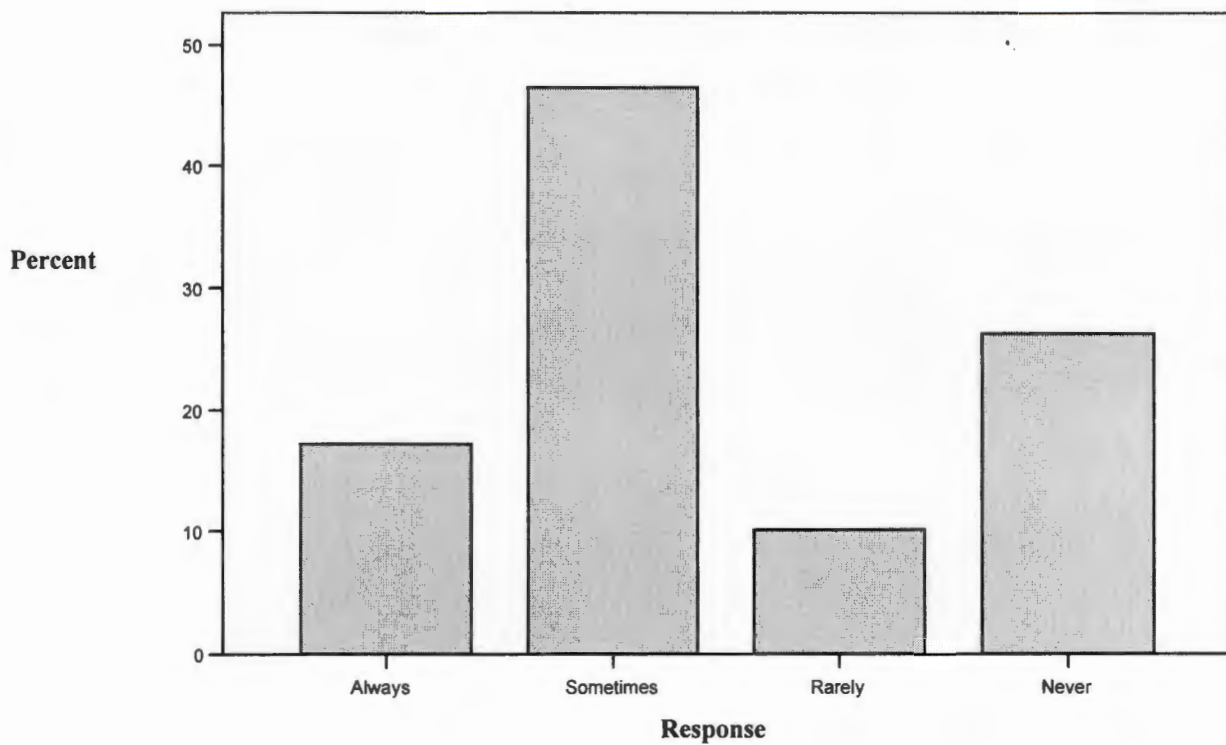


Figure 7

Seventeen percent of the respondents always forbid their children from viewing certain programmes and 46% of them forbid their children sometimes. Ten percent rarely forbid the viewing of certain programmes, whilst 27% percent never forbid their children from viewing certain programmes.

4.4.1.4 How often do you specify programmes that may be watched?

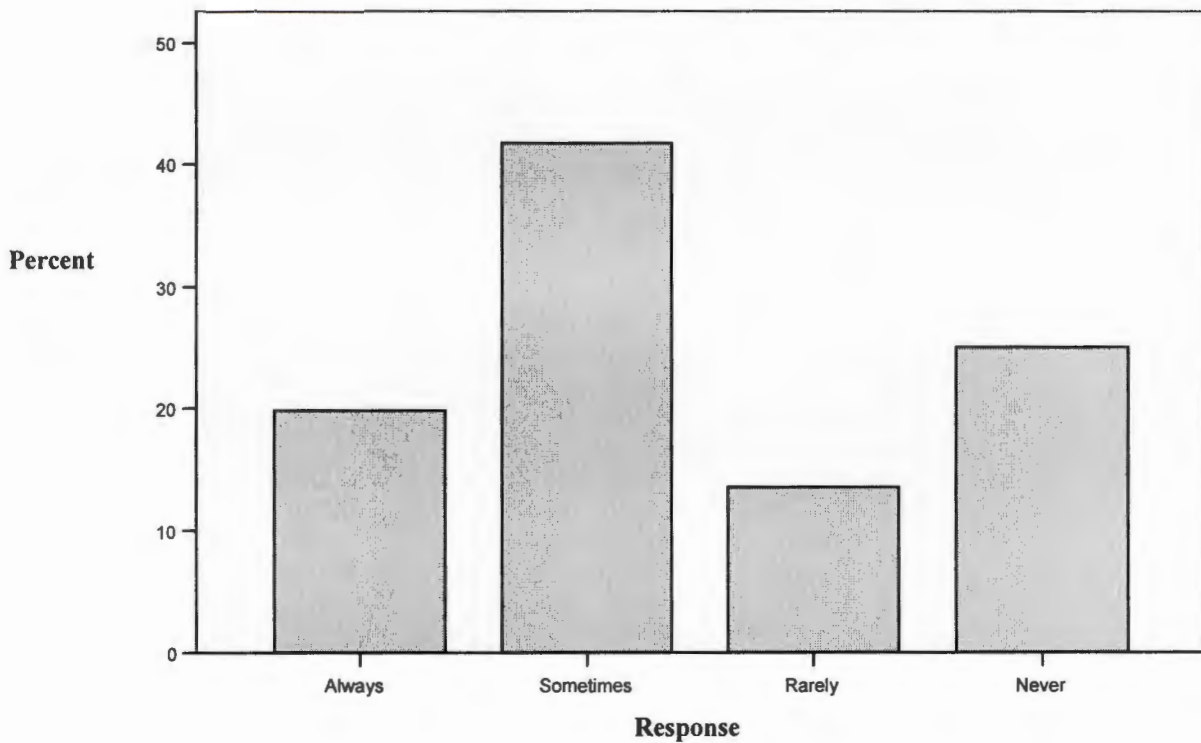


Figure 8

The respondents who always specify which programmes their children can watch were 20% and those who sometime specify the programmes to be watched were 41%. Respondents who rarely specify which programmes their children can watch were 14% and 25% of the respondents indicated that they never specify which programmes their children can watch.

4.4.1.5 Do you change the channel when there's a scene of kissing/ sex/ nudity/ violence?

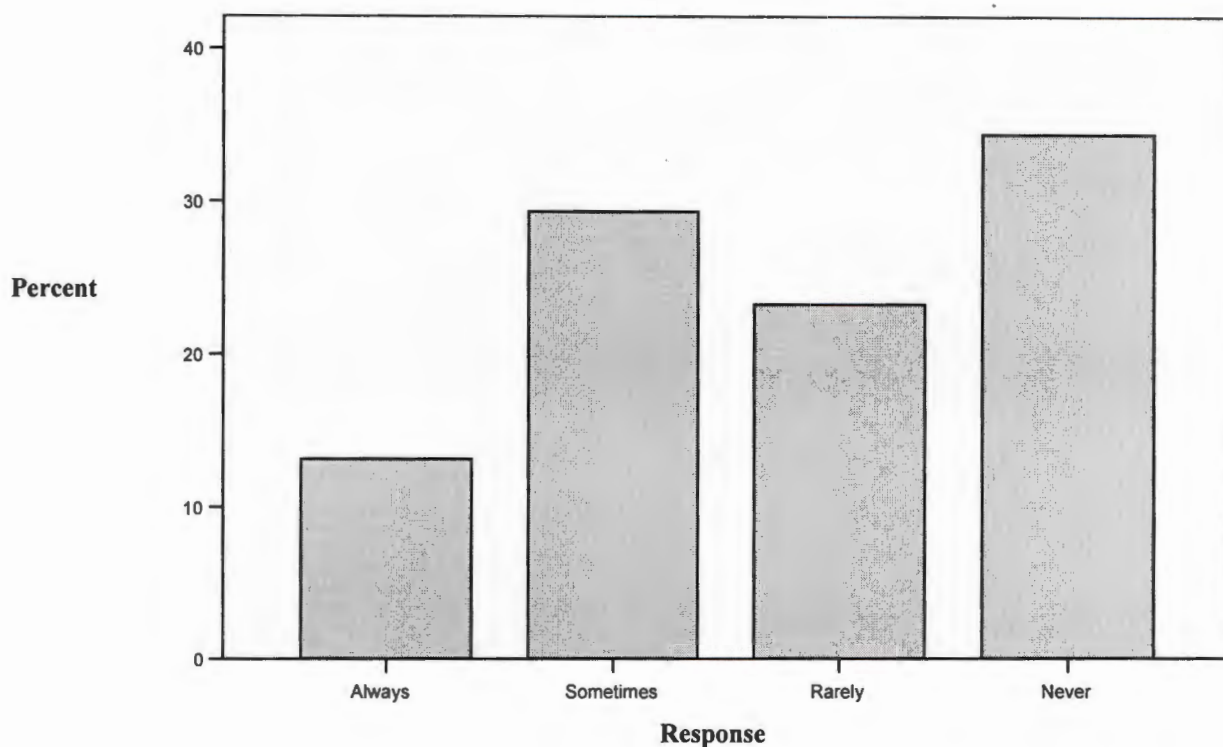


Figure 9

Thirteen percent of the respondents always change the channel when there is a kissing, sex, nudity or violence scene on TV. Twenty nine percent would change the channel sometimes and 23% of the respondents would rarely change the channel, whilst 35 percent indicated that they never change the channel during such scenes.

4.4.1.6 My child/ children choose what they want to watch and then ask for my permission

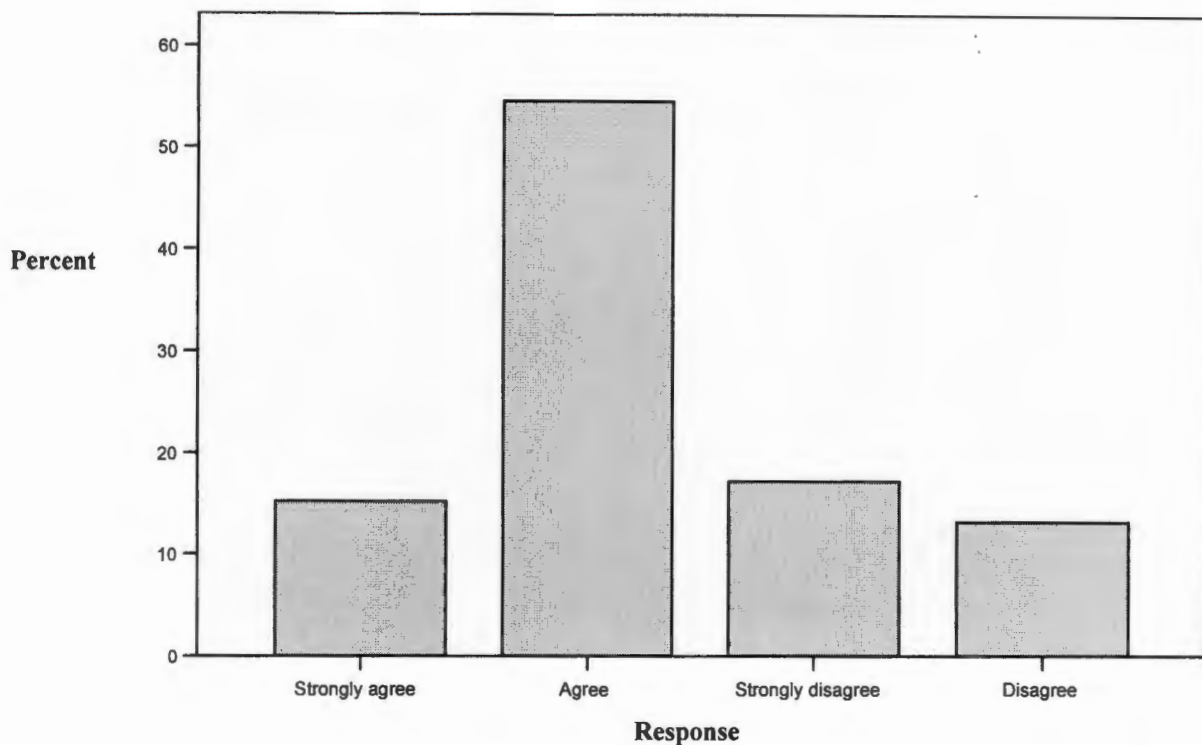


Figure 10

Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree that their children would ask for permission to watch programmes that the children would have picked out or chosen and those who agree were 54%. The respondents who strongly disagree that their children will choose a programme and ask for permission to watch it were 17% and those who disagreed were 14%.

4.4.1.7 I never allow my child/ children to watch shows with any violence

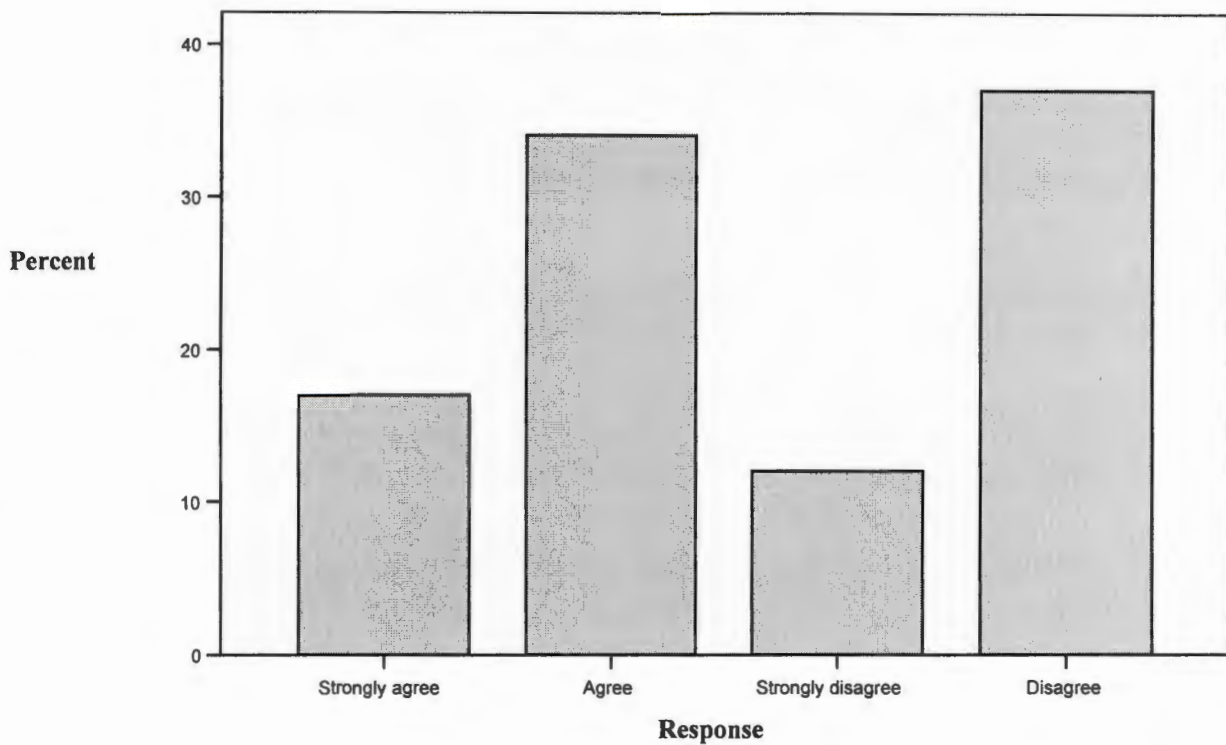


Figure 11

The respondents who strongly agree that their child or children never watch violent programmes were 17% and the ones who agree were 34%. Twelve percent of the respondents strongly disagree that they never allow their children to watch violent shows or programmes and 37% disagree.

4.4.2 EVALUATIVE GUIDANCE

4.4.2.1 Do you explain TV programmes that are not real to the child / children so that she/ he can understand?

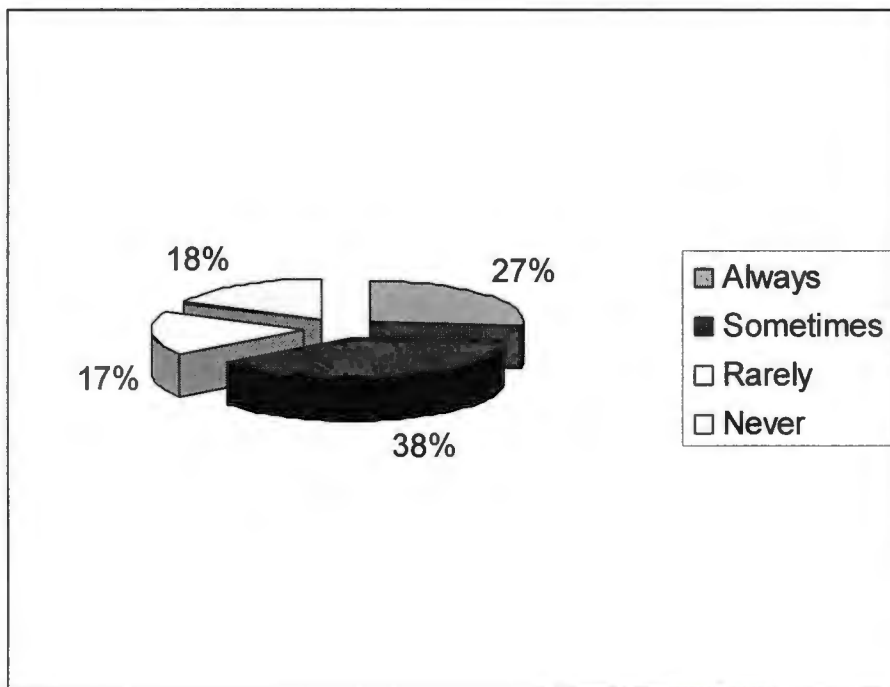


Figure 12

Twenty seven percent of the respondents always explain programmes that do not portray reality to their children. Thirty eight percent of the respondents indicated that sometimes they explain to their children if certain programmes were fiction. Seventeen percent said they rarely explain if programmes are real or not and 18% never explain if programmes portray reality or fantasy.

4.4.2.2 Do you talk about bad things that the actors are doing?

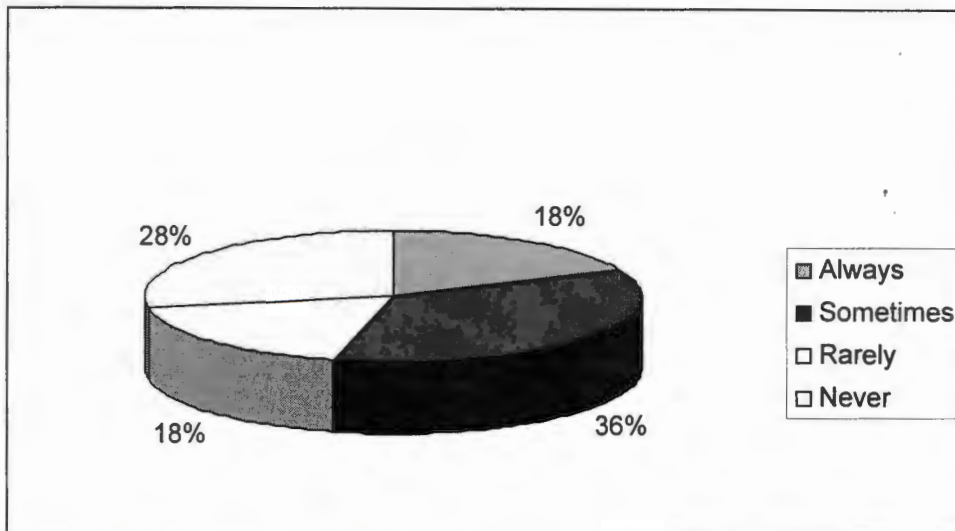


Figure 13

A majority (36%) of the respondents indicated that they sometimes tell their children the bad things that the actors are doing on TV. Eighteen percent of them said they always point out the bad things that actors do. The respondents that never talk about the bad things actors do on TV were 18% and 28% indicated that they never discuss or point out the bad things actors do on TV.

4.4.2.3 Do you point out the good things actors are doing?

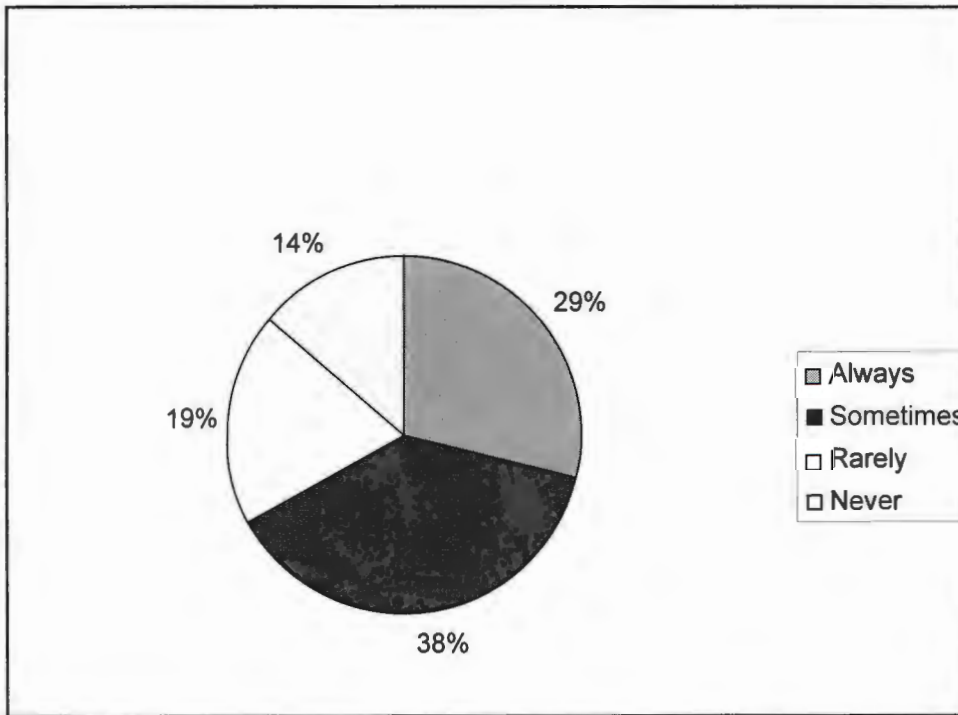


Figure 14

Twenty nine percent of the respondents would always point out when actors do something good. Thirty eight percent of the respondents would only point out the good things sometimes. Nineteen percent of the respondents indicated that they rarely tell their children the good things that actors do on TV and 14% never discuss with their children when actors do something good.

4.4.2.4 Do you discuss the programme(s) while viewing?

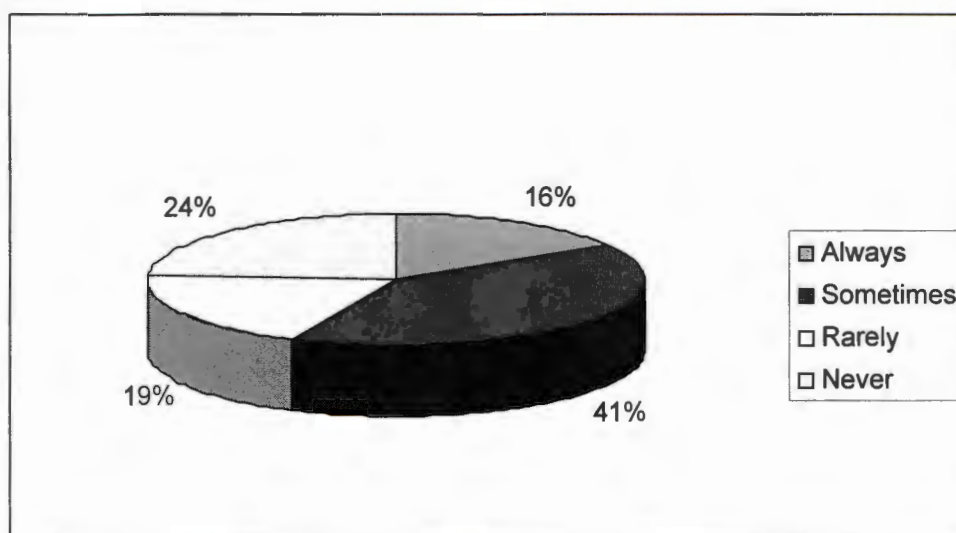


Figure 15

Sixteen percent of the respondents indicated that they always discuss programmes that they are watching with their children while it's still on. Forty one percent indicated that they would have such discussion sometimes, with their children and 19% of the respondents said it's rare for them to discuss about programmes while viewing. Twenty four percent indicated that they never have such discussions with their children.

4.4.2.5 We usually choose what programmes to watch together

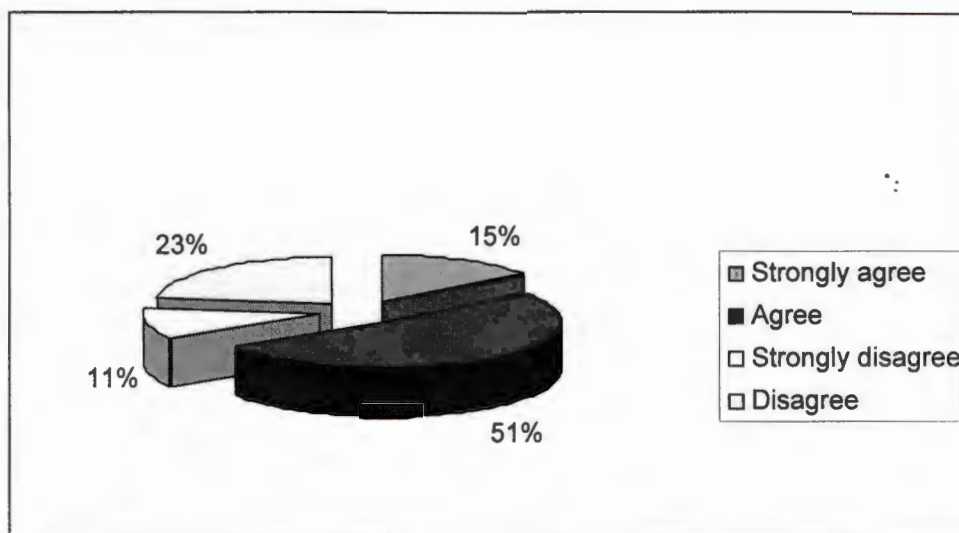


Figure 16

Fifteen percent of the respondents strongly agree that they would involve their children when choosing programmes to be watched. A majority (51%) indicated that they agree that they would choose programmes together with their children. Eleven percent of the respondents strongly disagree and 23% disagree that they choose programmes to be viewed together with their children.

4.4.2.6 I generally allow my children to watch cartoons

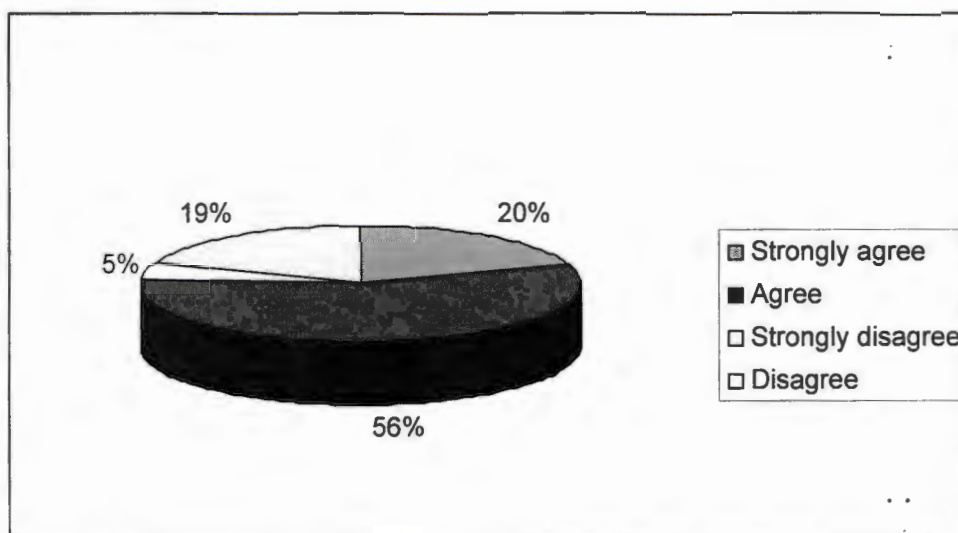


Figure 17

Respondents that strongly agree that they allow their children to watch cartoons were 20% and those that agree were 56%. Five percent of the respondents strongly disagree that they allow their children to watch cartoons and 19% disagree.

4.4.2.7 I'm very concerned about the effects TV has on my child's / children's behaviour

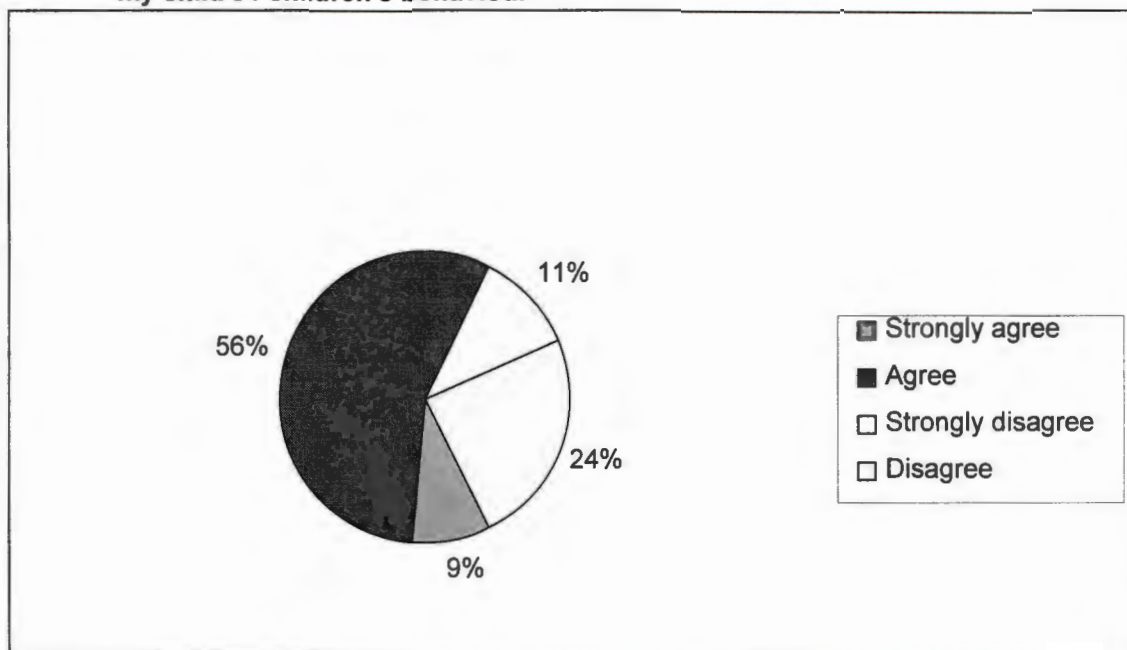


Figure 18

Nine percent of the respondents strongly agree that they are concerned about the effects that TV has on their children's behaviour. Fifty six percent of the respondents disagree that they are concerned about the effects TV has on their children's behaviour. Eleven percent indicated that they strongly disagree with this view and 24% disagree.

4.4.2.8 I'd like to find out more about how to control TV viewing in my house

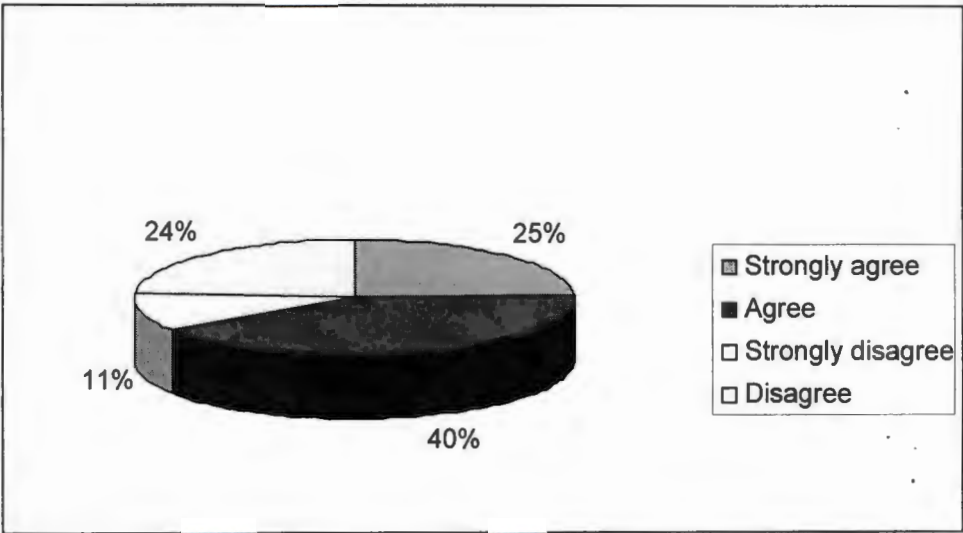


Figure19

Twenty five percent of the respondents strongly agree that they would like to have more information on how to control TV viewing in their homes and 40% of them agree. Eleven percent of the respondents said they strongly disagree and 24% have no interest in such information.

4.4.2.9 I have problems finding TV shows that are good for my child / children

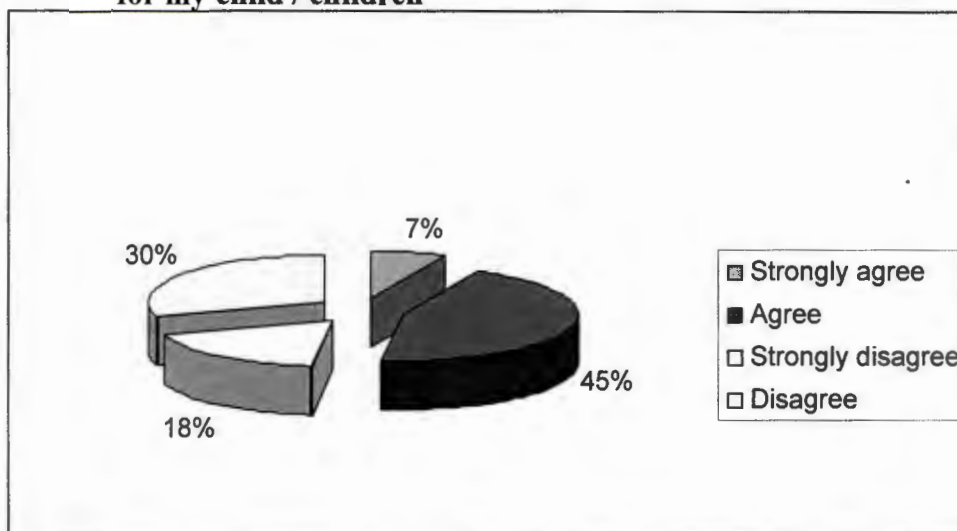


Figure 20

Seven percent of the respondents strongly agree that they have difficulties in finding good shows for their children and 45% agree. The other 18% indicated that they strongly disagree with this view and 30% of the respondents disagree that they have difficulties in finding good programmes for their children to watch.

4.4.2.10 What kind of information do you think is useful in selecting children's programmes

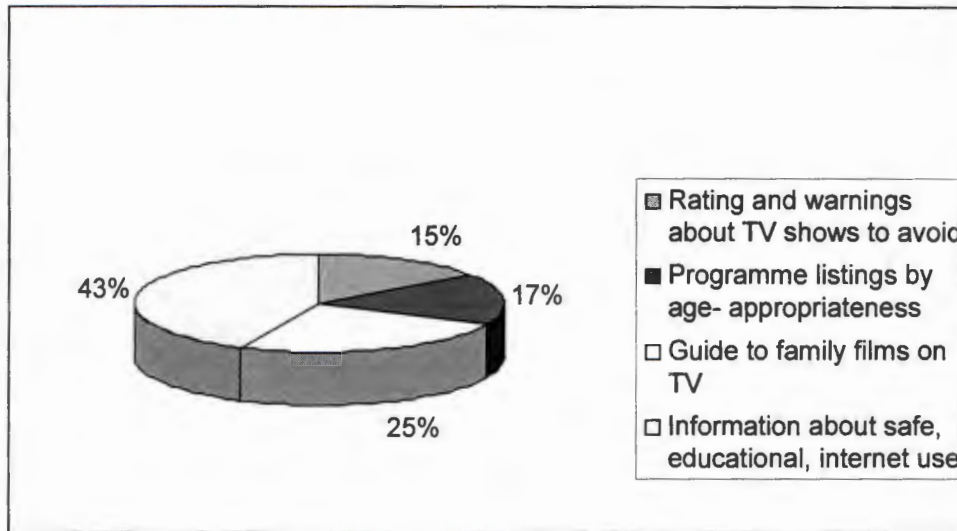


Figure 21

A majority of respondents (43%) think that information about safe, educational internet use would be useful for them in selecting children's programmes. Twenty five percent think that information on guide to family films on TV would be useful in selecting children's programmes. Fifteen percent of the respondents think that information on ratings and warning about TV shows to avoid would be useful for them to select children's programmes and 17% said programme listing by age- appropriateness in formation will be useful to them.

4.4.3 UNFOCUSED GUIDANCE

4.4.3.1 Do you watch TV together with your child/ children?

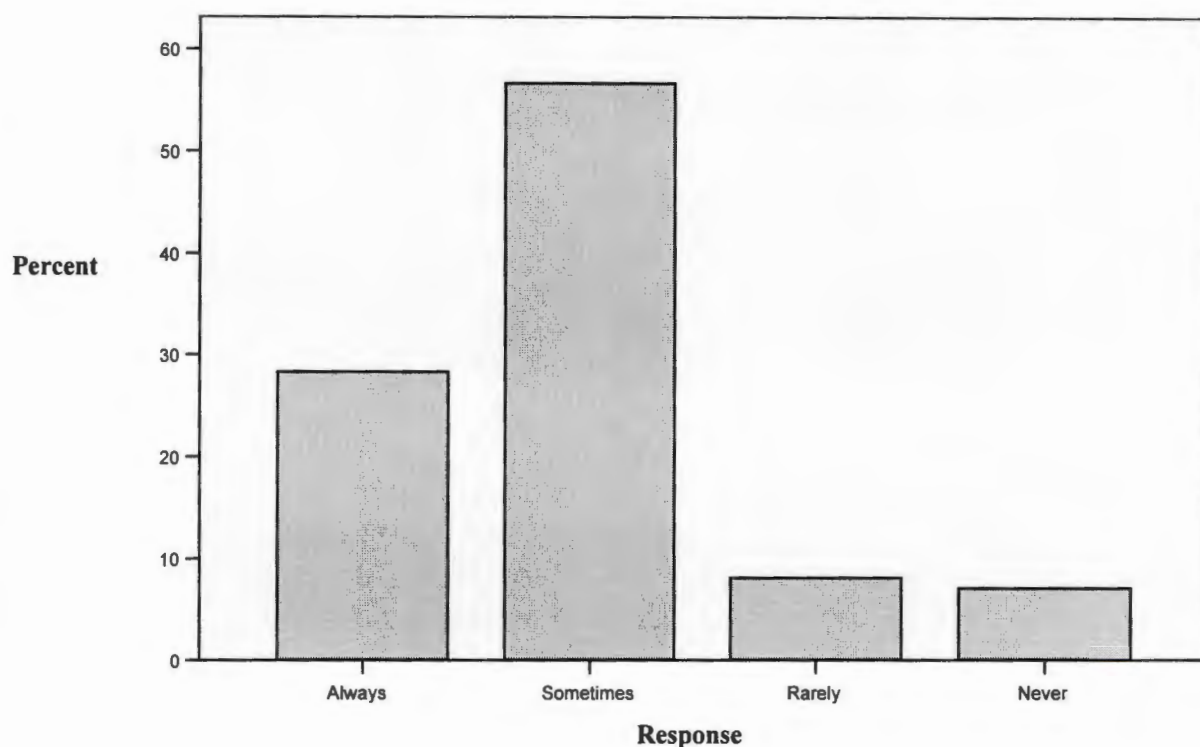
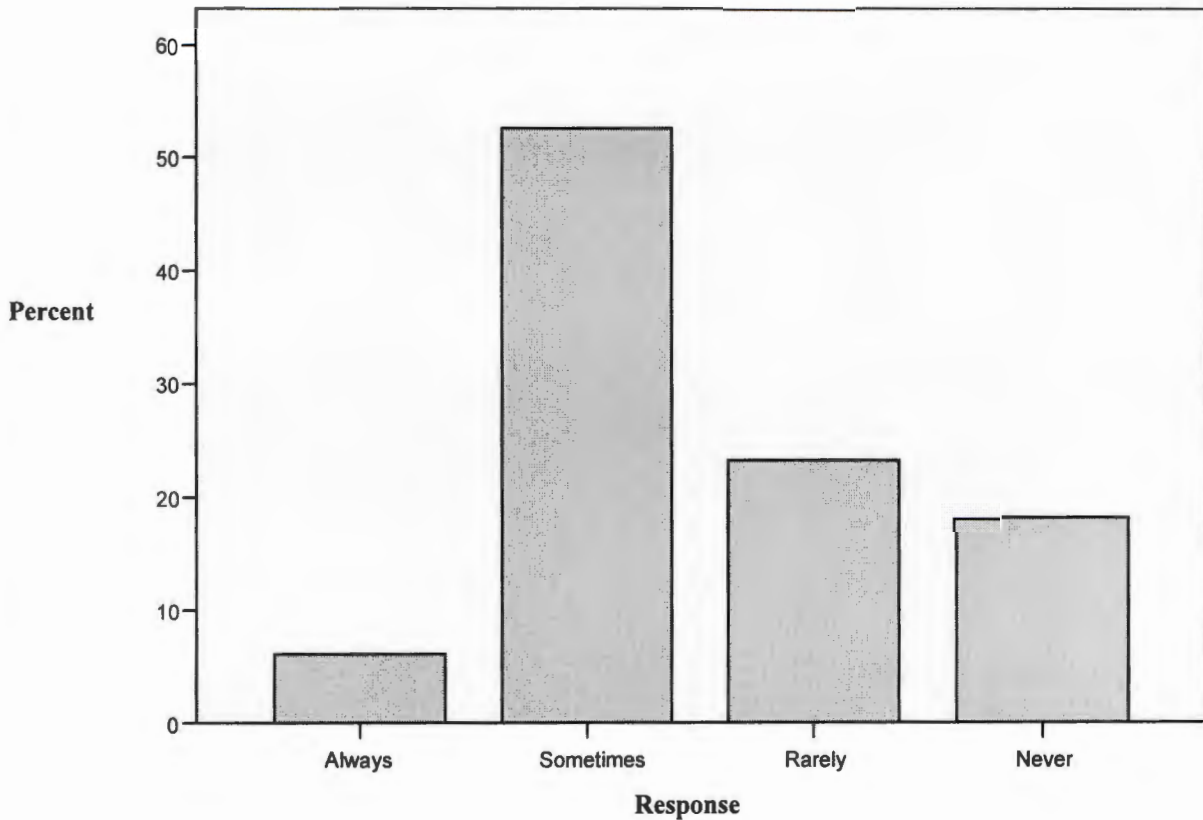


Figure 22

Highest number of respondents (56%) coview TV with their children sometimes. Twenty eight percent of the respondents always watch TV together with their children. Eight percent of the respondents indicated that they coview TV with their on rare occasions whilst 8% never coview TV with their children.

4.4.3.2 Do you discuss the programme(s) after viewing?



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Figure 23

A majority of the parents (52%) would sometimes discuss programmes with their children after viewing. Nineteen percent never discuss TV programmes with their children after viewing. Twenty three percent of the parents have such discussions on rare occasions with their children and six percent indicated that they always discuss programmes with their children after viewing.

4.4.3.3 Do you watch TV together for the benefit of your child/ children?

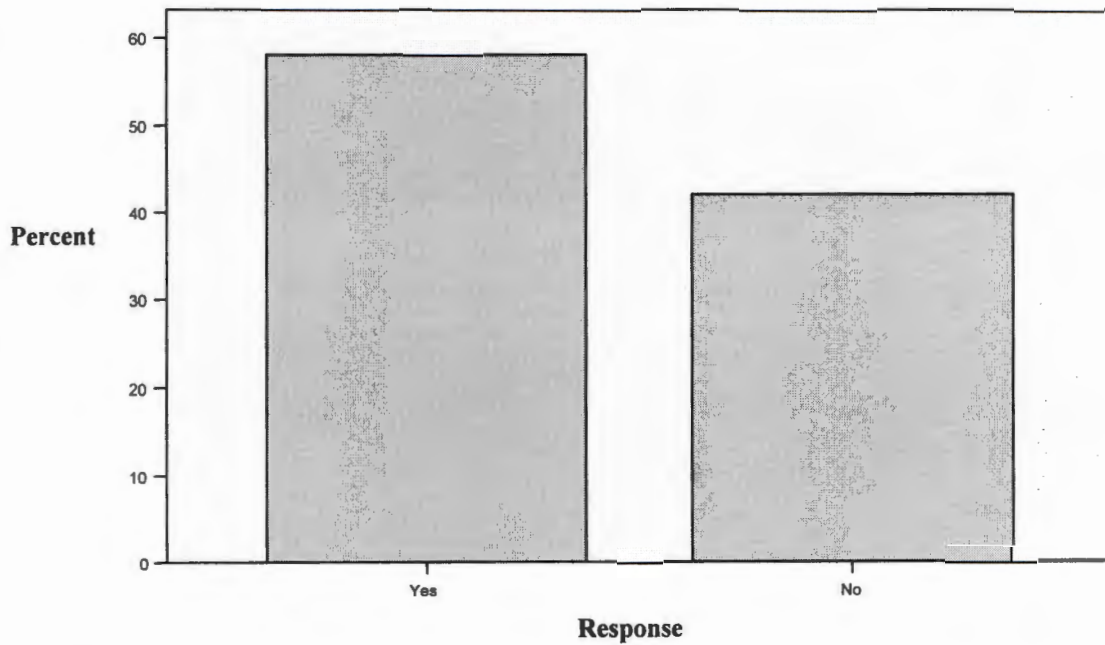


Figure 24

Fifty eight percent of the respondents coview TV together for the benefit of their children and 42% of the respondents indicated that they do not coview TV for the benefit of their children.

4.4.3.4 Do you watch TV together at your child's/ children's request?

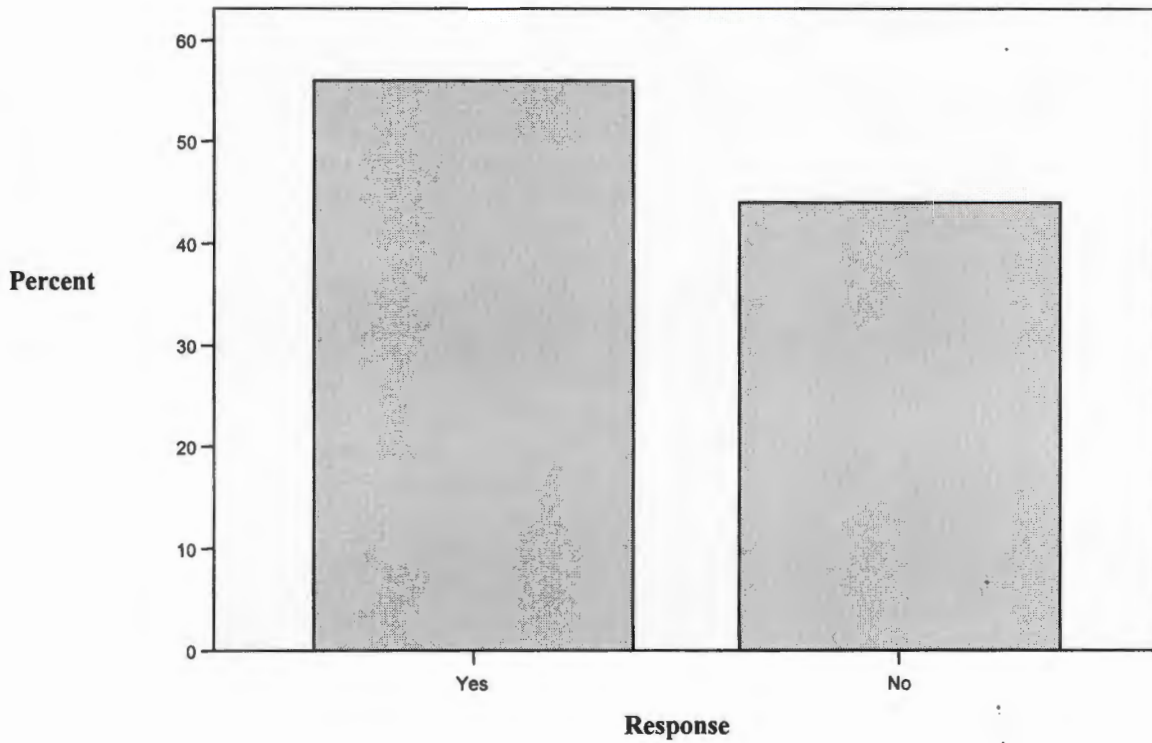


Figure 25

Fifty six percent of the respondents would watch TV together with their children because the children have asked them to and 44% would watch TV together with their children even if the children have not requested them to.

4.4.3.5 My child/ children watch whatever they want to watch

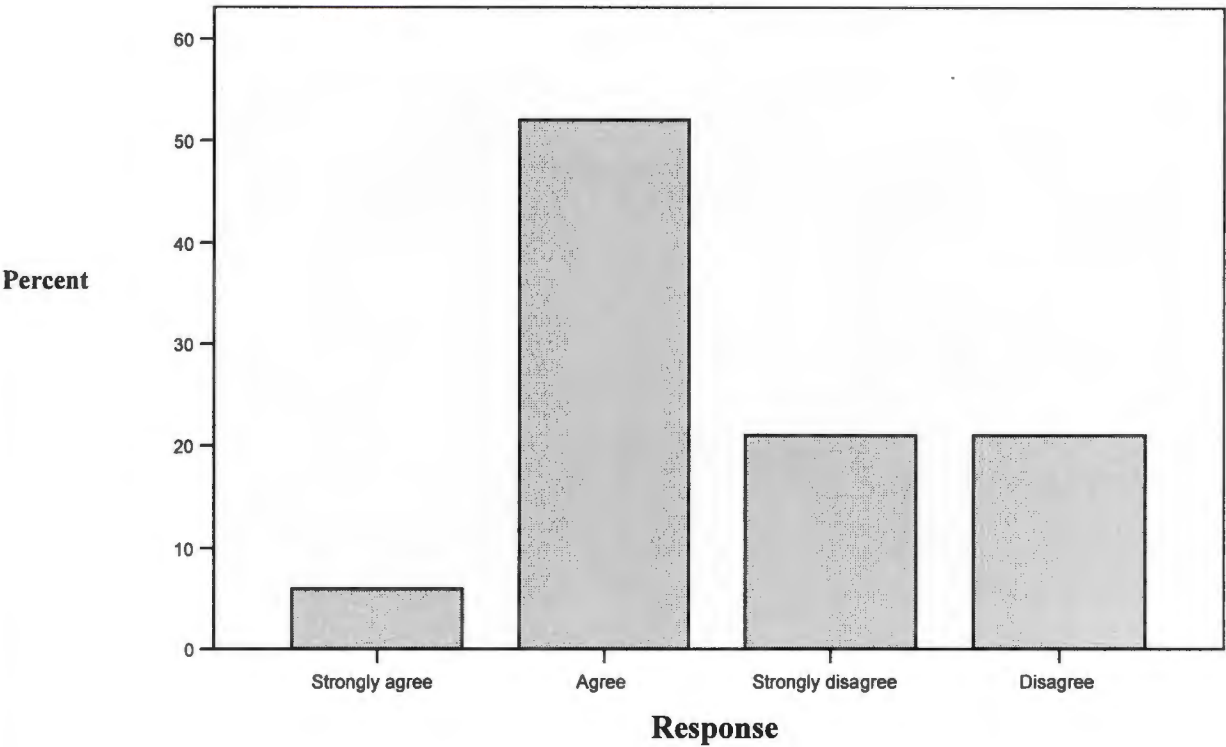


Figure 26

Six percent of the respondents strongly agree that their children watch any programmes they feel like watching, and 52% agree that their children watch whatever they want to watch. Twenty one percent of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagree that their children would watch whatever they want to watch and another 21% of the respondents disagree that their children watch whatever they want to watch.

4.4.3.6 What are your children's favourite programmes?

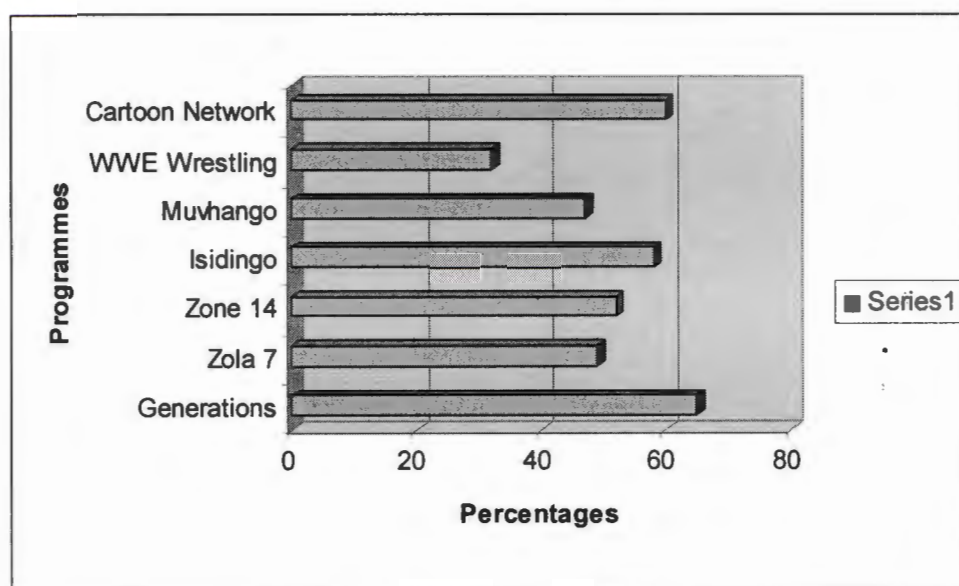


Figure 27

Sixty five of the respondents said that their children's favourite programme was Generations, followed by Isidingo at 58%. There were 52% respondents who indicated that Zone 14 was their children's favourite programme and Muvhango has 47% respondents indicating as their children's favourite programme. Thirty two percent of the respondents said their children's favourite programme was WWE Wrestling and 60% were for cartoon network. Forty nine percent of the respondents said Zola 7 was their children's favourite.

4.5 CHILDREN'S DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

4.5.1 Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	53	53.0
female	47	47.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 10

A hundred children took part in the study. Male respondents were 53% and female respondents were 47%.

4.5.2 Age

	Frequency	Percent
6-8	28	28.0
9-10	32	32.0
11-12	40	40.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 11

Twenty eight percent of the respondents were between the age of six and eight years.

Thirty two respondents were between the ages of nine and ten years. Forty percent of the respondents were between the ages of 11 and 12 years.

4.6 CHILDREN'S VIEWING PATTERNS

4.6.1 How many hours do you watch TV per day on weekends?

	Frequency	Percent
2 – 3	6	6.0
4 – 5	67	67.0
6 and above	27	27.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 12

Six percent of the respondents spend two to three hours on Saturdays and Sundays on TV. Sixty seven percent said they spend four to five hours on TV during weekends, while 27% indicate that they spend six and more hours watching TV on weekends.

4.6.2 How many hours do you watch TV per day during the week?

	Frequency	Percent
2 – 3	84	84.0
4 – 5	14	14.0
6 and above	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 13

Eighty four percent of the respondents indicated that they spend two to three hours on TV a day in a week (Monday to Friday). Fourteen percent of the respondents spend four to six hours on TV and two percent spend six or more hours on TV during the week.

4.6.3 How many TV sets are in your house?

	Frequency	Percent
1	42	42.0
2	38	38.0
3	15	15.0
4	5	5.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 14

The highest number of respondents, 42%, had one TV set at home. Thirty eight percent had two TV sets and 15% had three TV sets. Only five percent of the respondents have five TV sets at home.

4.6.4 Is there a TV set in your bedroom?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	23	23.0
No	77	77.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 15

Twenty three percent of the respondents had TV sets in their bedrooms and 77% of the respondents did not have TV sets in their bedrooms.

4.6.5 Is there DSTV at home?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	29.0
No	71	71.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 16

Twenty nine percent of the respondents had DSTV at home and 71% of the respondents did not have DSTV.

4.6.6 Children's favourite programme(s)

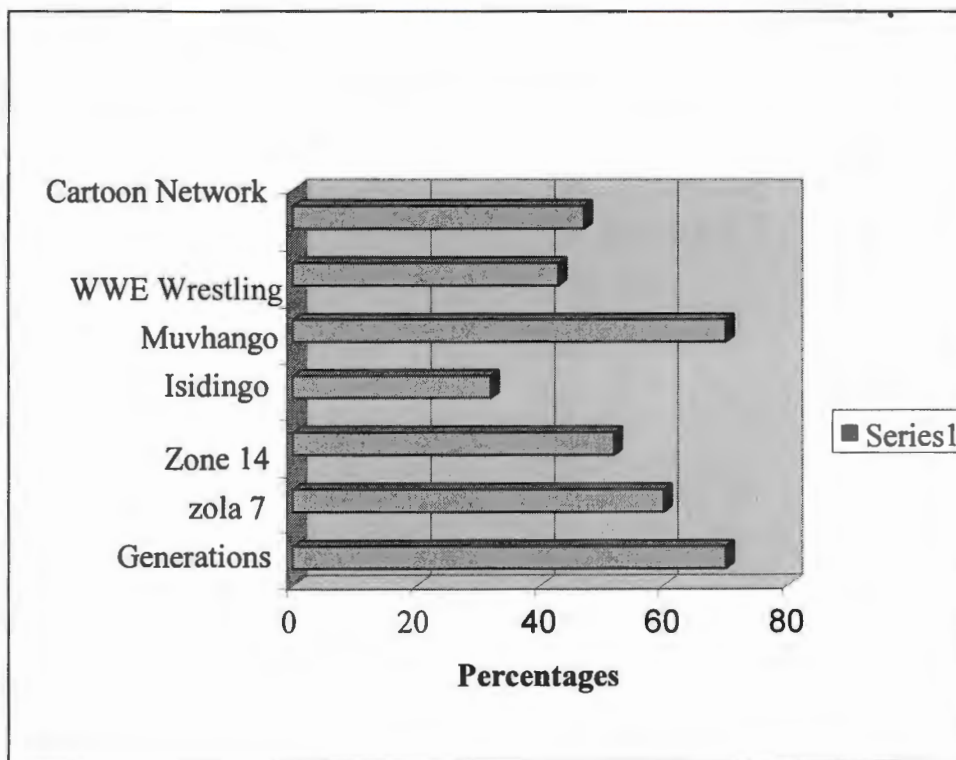


Figure 28

Muvhango and Generations were programmes most favoured by the children with 70% of the respondents having indicated that. Sixty percent of the respondents said Zola 7 was their favourite programme. Fifty two percent of the respondents indicated they liked Zone 14; WWE Wrestling was at 43% and Cartoon network at 47%. Lastly, only 32% of the respondents chose Isidingo as their favourite programme.

4.7 RESTRICTIVE GUIDANCE

4.7.1 Do you have to go to bed at a specific time?

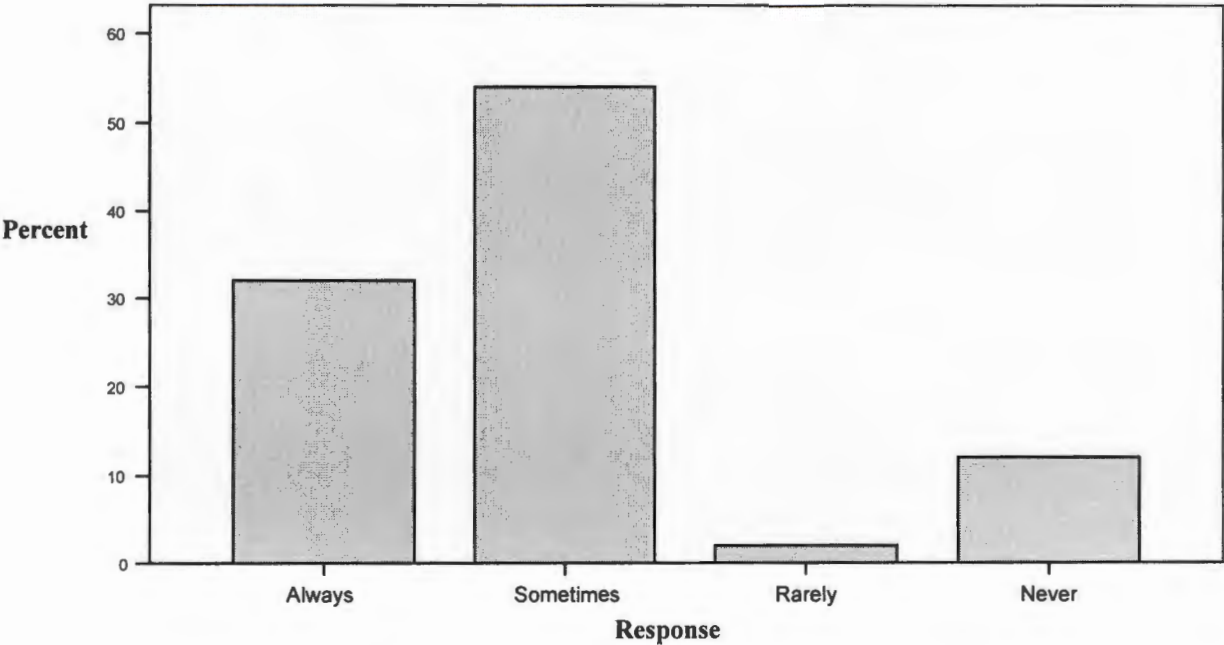


Figure 29

Thirty two percent of the respondents are always sent off to bed a specific time by their parents. Fifty four percent are sometimes sent off to bed and two percent indicated that

they are rarely told to go to bed at a specific time. About 12% of the respondents have never been told or sent off to sleep at a specific time.

4.7.2 Does your parent change the channel when there's a scene of kissing/ sex/ nudity/ violence?

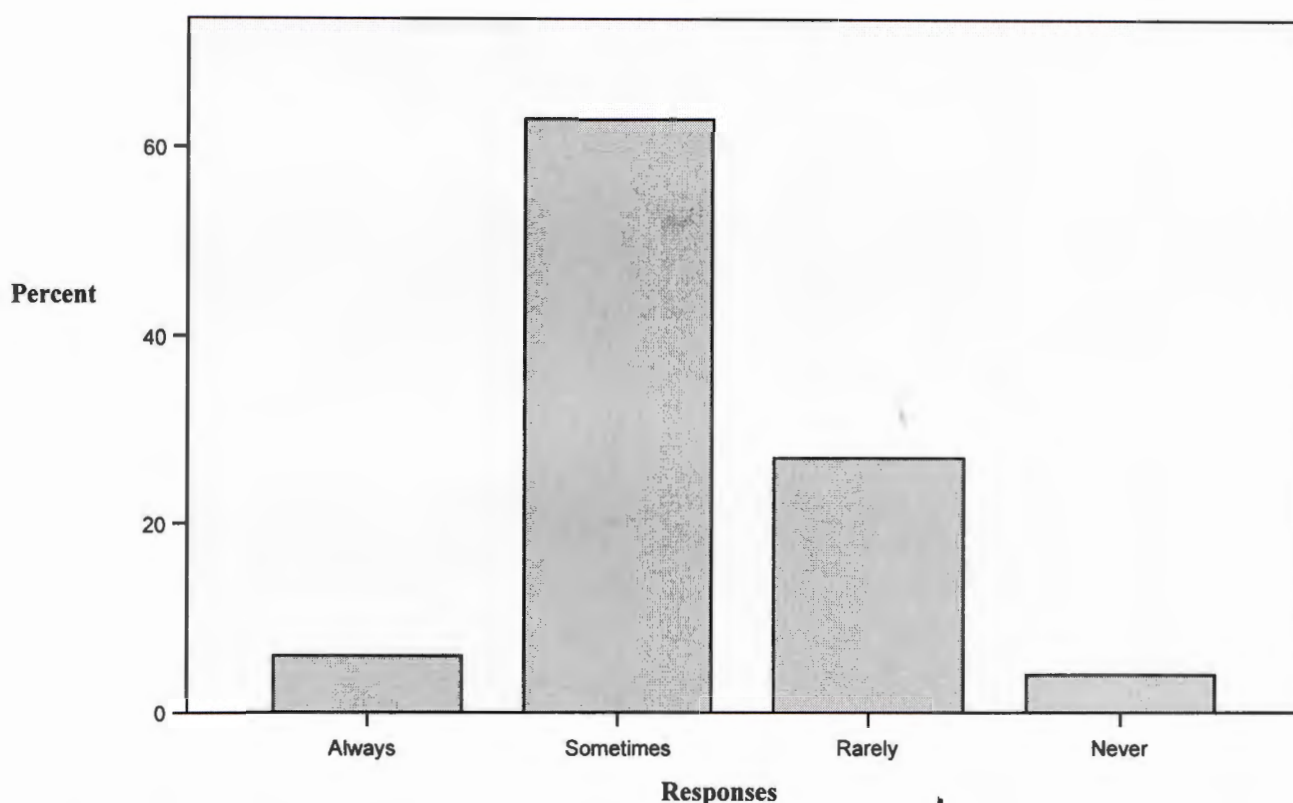


Figure 30

Six percent of the respondents' parents always change channels when there's a scene of kissing, sex, nudity or violence. Sixty three percent indicated that their parents would change channels sometimes. Twenty seven percent of the respondents' parents rarely change channel during scenes of kissing, sex, nudity or violence and four percent said that their parents never change channels during such scenes.

4.7.3 Are there programmes that you are not allowed to watch?

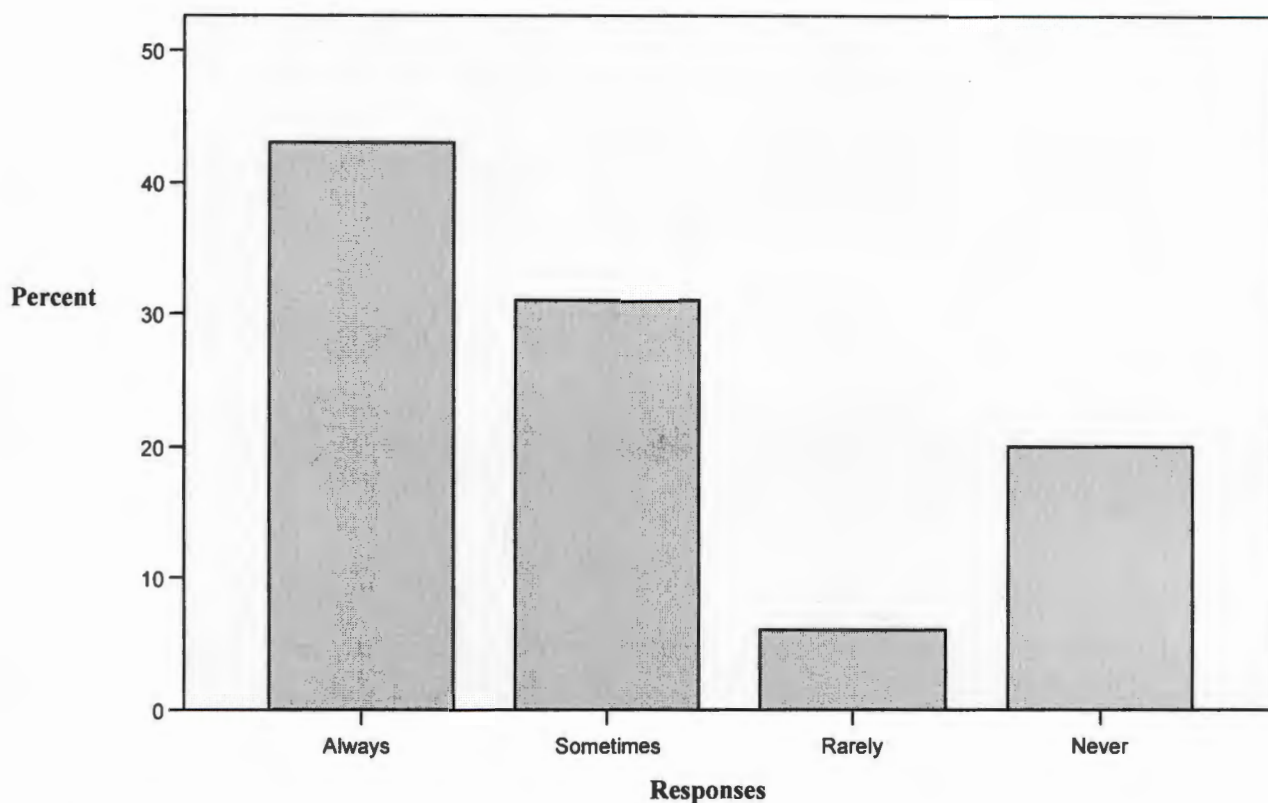


Figure 31

Forty three percent of the respondents are not allowed to watch certain TV programmes at any given day, whether under supervision or not. This rule applies only sometimes to 31% of the respondents. Six percent indicated that it is very rare that their parents would not allow them to watch certain programmes and 20% of the respondents are allowed to watch whatever programmes are shown on TV.

4.7.4 If there are name them

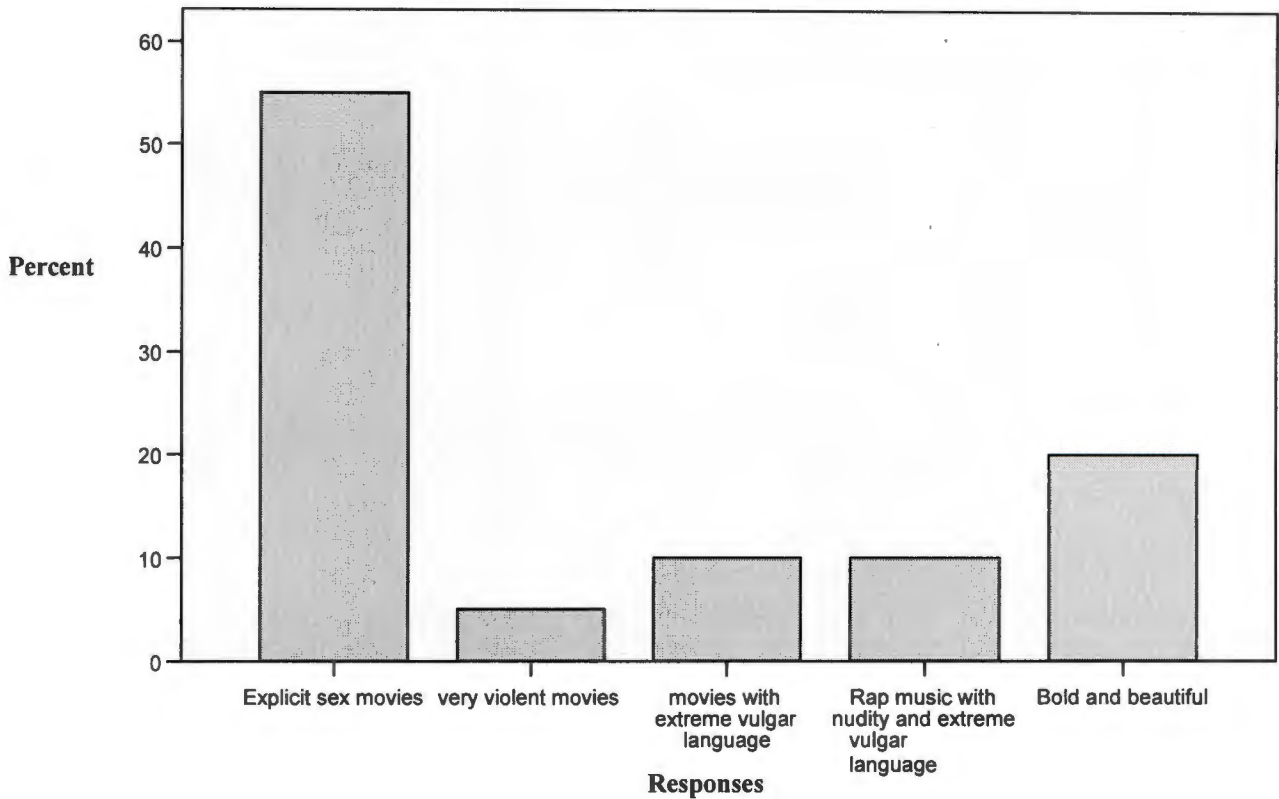


Figure 32

The respondents who indicated that they were restricted from watching certain programmes on TV, 55% were not allowed to watch movies showing explicit sex scenes, they verbally mentioned Emmanuel Movies on e.tv that are shown on weekends after 12 midnight. Five percent said they were not allowed to watch movies with very violent scenes and 12% indicated that they were restricted from watching movies with strong language. Respondents who were not allowed to watch rap music videos that have segments of nudity and strong language were 12%, while 20% of the respondents were not allowed to watch The Bold and The Beautiful.

4.8 EVALUATIVE GUIDANCE

4.8.1 Do your parents discuss the bad things that actors do on TV?

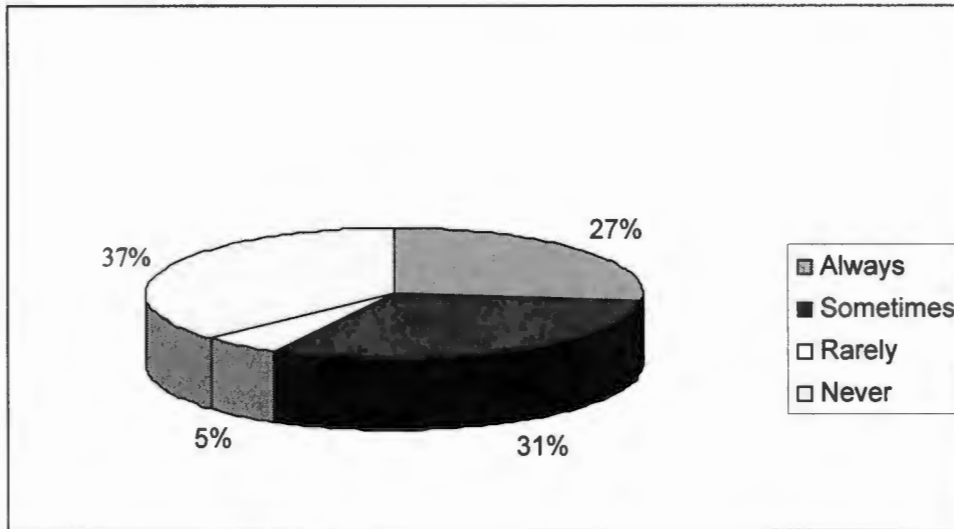


Figure 33

Twenty seven percent of the respondent indicated that their parents would always tell them when actors do bad things on TV. Thirty one percent have such discussions with their parents sometimes, and a highest number of the respondents (37%) are never told about the bad things that the actors do on TV and only five percent are told of the bad things that actors do on TV on rare occasions.

4.8.2 Do your parents tell you the good things that actors are doing on TV?

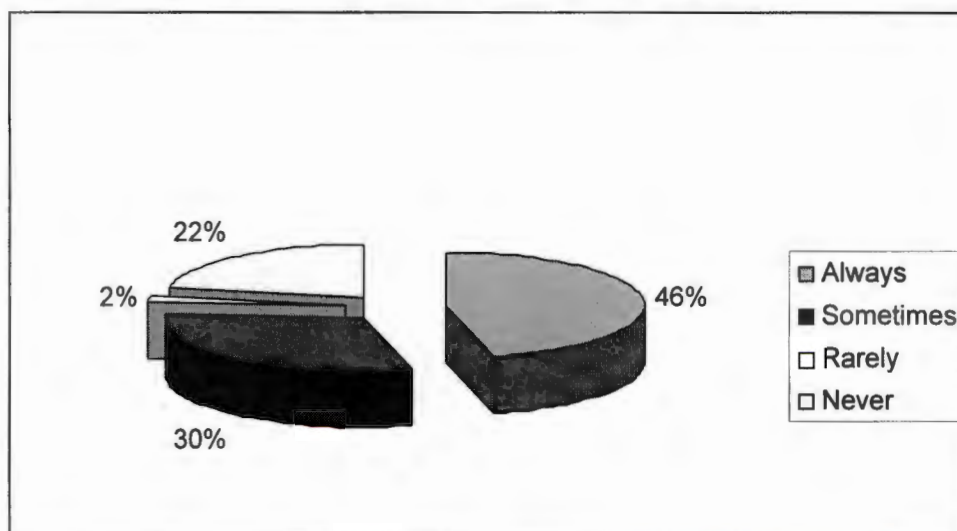


Figure 34

Forty eight percent of the respondent's parents would tell them if the actor is doing something good. Thirty percent of the respondents are told about the good things that actors do on TV sometimes. Twenty two percent of the respondents are never told of the good things that actors are doing on TV. 2% are rarely informed of the good things that actors are doing on TV by their parents.

4.8.3 Do you know the difference between reality and fantasy?

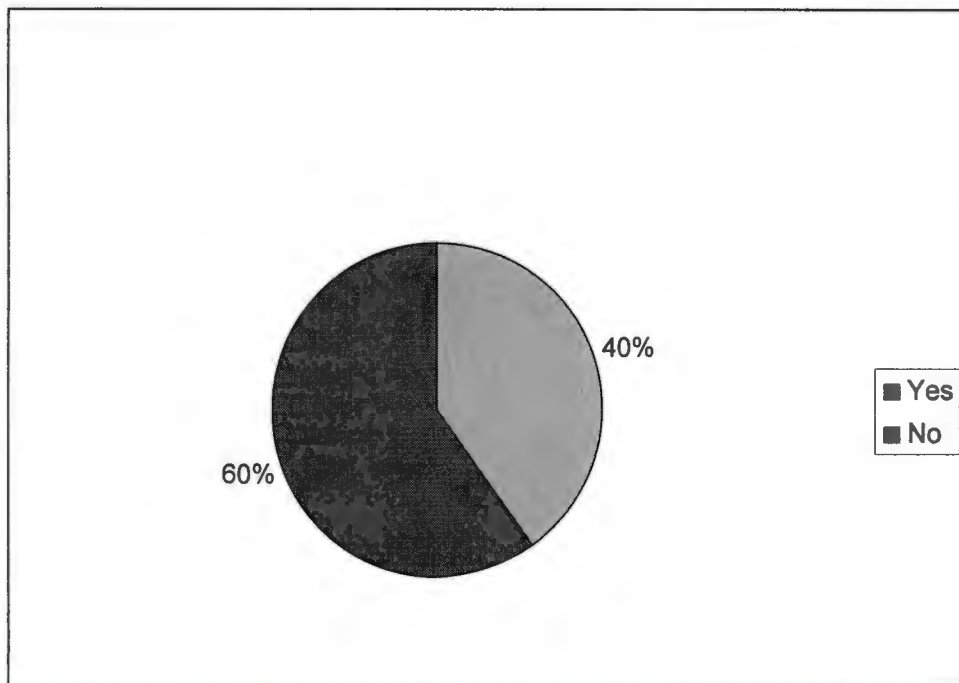


Figure 35

Forty percent of the respondents said they do not know the difference between reality and fantasy, while 60% said they that they know the difference between reality and fantasy.

4.8.4 Do your parents explain TV programmes that are not real to you?

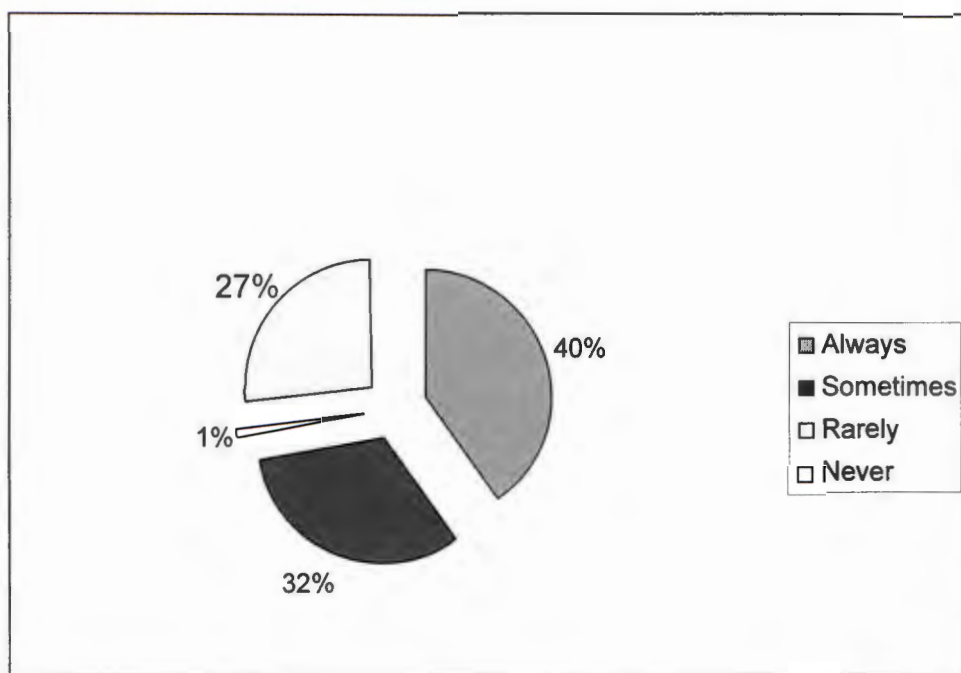


Figure 36

Forty percent of the respondents always have discussions with their parents about programmes that do not portray reality. Thirty two have such discussions sometimes, while one percent indicated that TV reality discussions are rare with their parents and 27% never hold such discussions with their parents.

4.8.5 Do you ask them to explain things to you that you don't understand on TV?

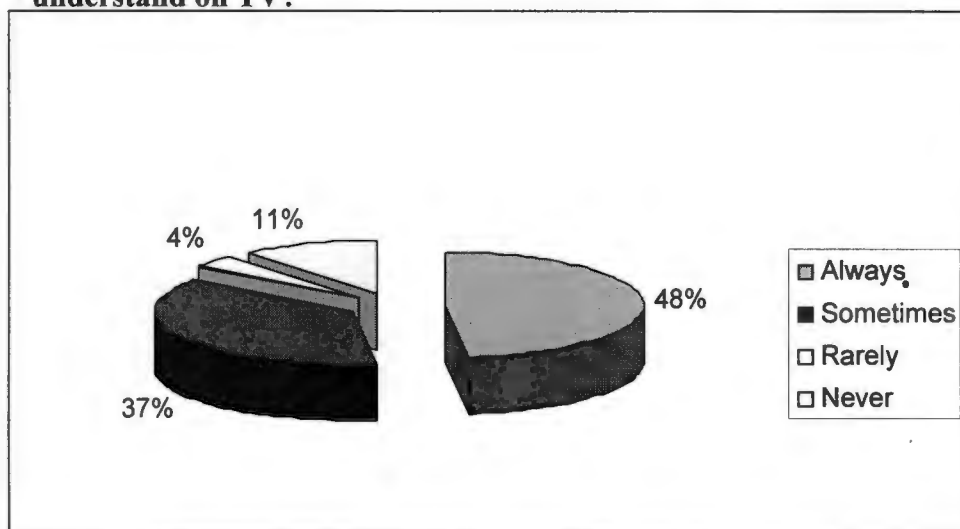


Figure 37

A majority of the respondents (48%) would ask their parents to explain what they do not understand on TV. Thirty seven of the respondents do that sometimes, 11% never ask their parents to explain to them and four percent of the respondent's parents do that on rare occasions.

4.8.6 Do you discuss the programme(s) while viewing?

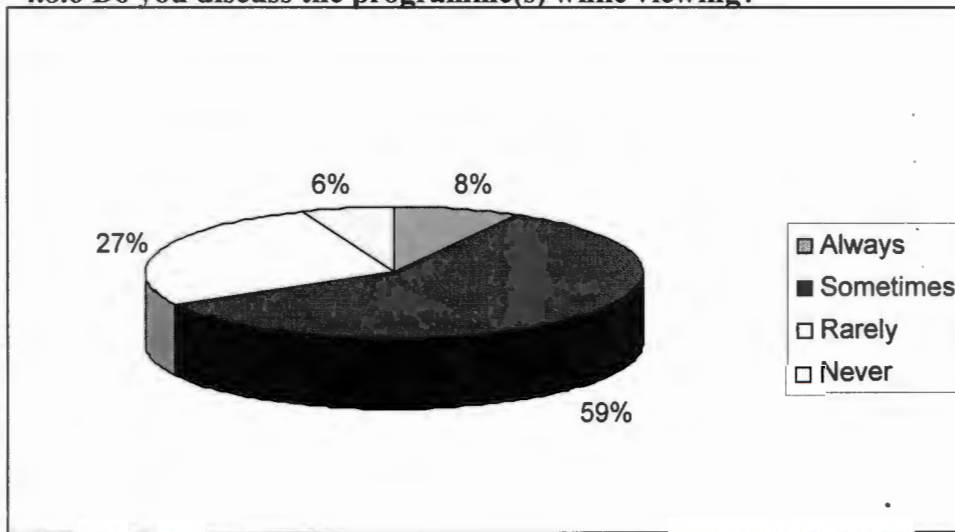


Figure 38

The above figure shows that a majority (59%) of the respondents would discuss the programmes with their parents whilst watching. Twenty seven percent of the respondents rarely discuss TV programmes whilst viewing and eight percent of the respondent indicated that they discuss the programmes with their parents sometimes. Six percent never discuss programmes with their parents whilst viewing.

4.9 UNFOCUSED GUIDANCE

4.9.1 Do you watch TV together with your parents?

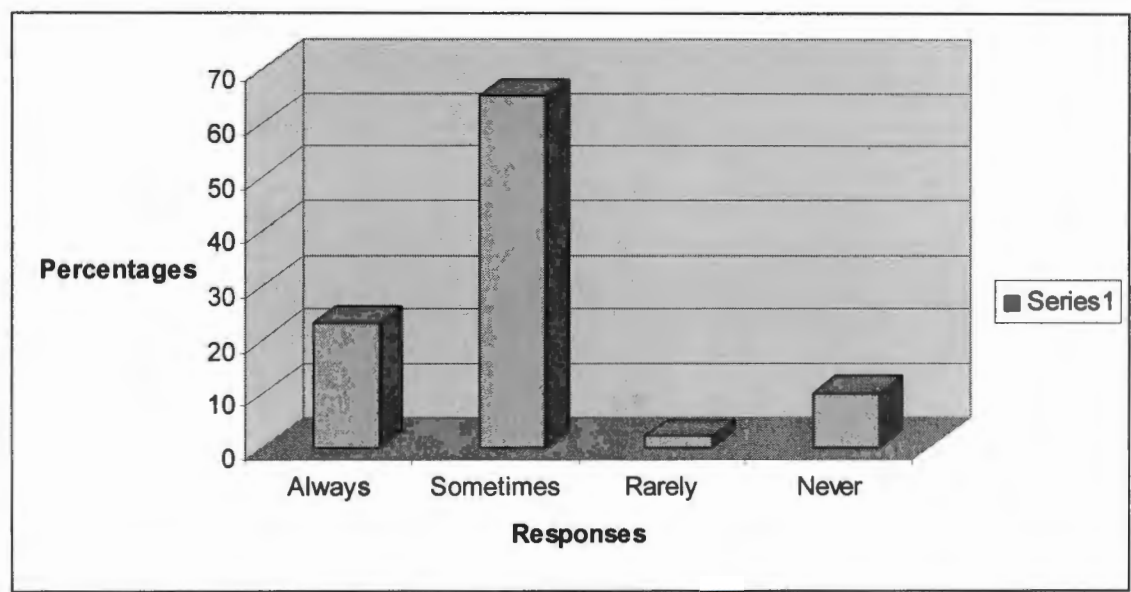


Figure 39

A majority of the respondents (65%) watch TV together with parents sometimes, 23% always watch TV with their parents. Two percent of the respondents rarely watch TV with parents and 10% never watch TV together with their parents.

4.9.2 Do your parents watch with you your favourite programmes?

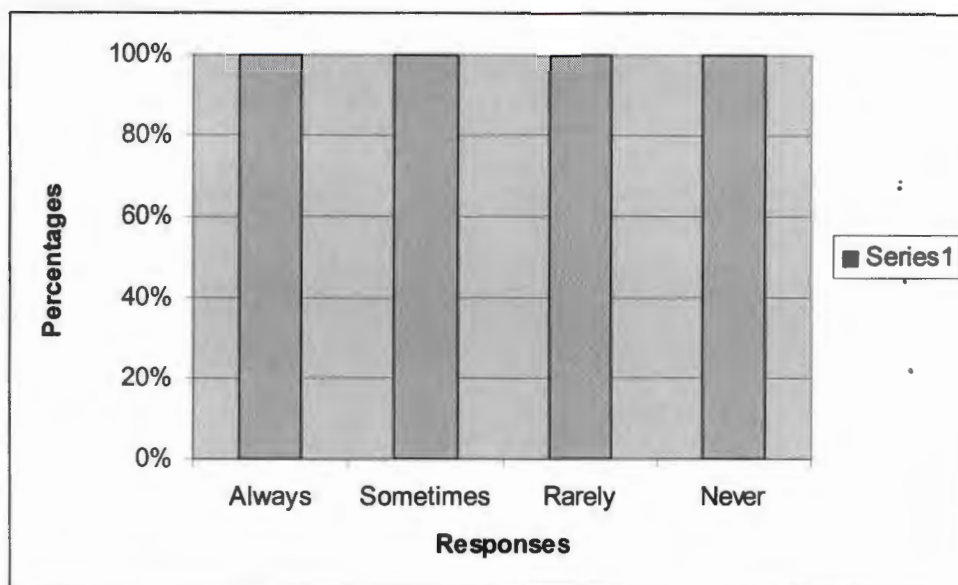


Figure 40

A majority (53%) of the respondent's parent would sometimes watch their favourite TV programmes with them. Nineteen percent indicated that their parents would always watch their favourite programmes with them. Twenty five percent of the respondent's parents never watch their favourite programmes with their children, and 11% of the respondents said their parent would watch with them on rare occasions.

4.9.3 Do your parents explain the TV programmes to you after watching?

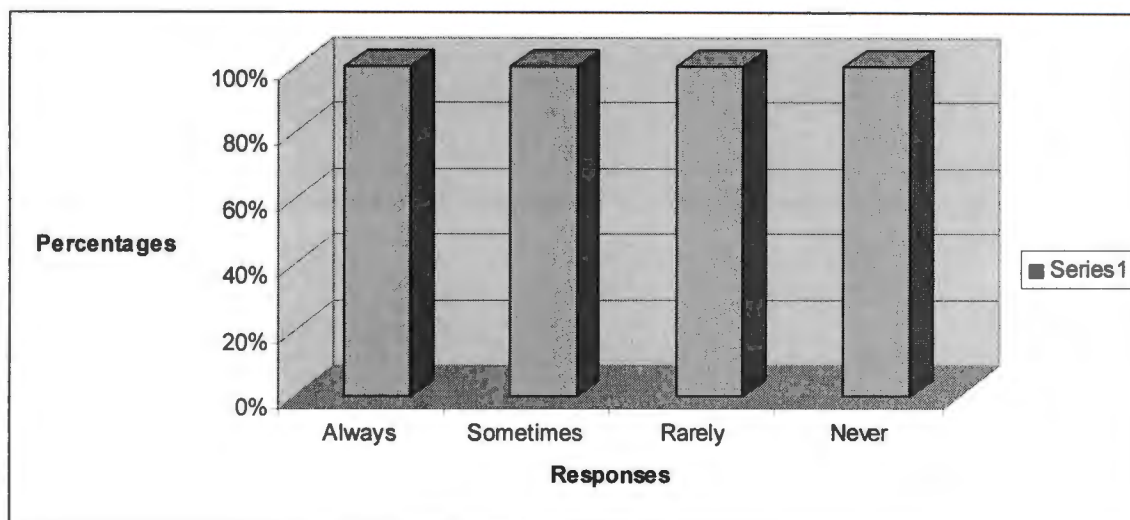


Figure 41

Nineteen percent of the respondent's parents always discuss TV programmes with their children at the end of the programmes. Forty five percent of the respondents indicated that their parents have such discussions with them sometimes. Twenty five percent of the respondent's parents never discuss TV programmes with them after watching and 11% said it's very rare for their parents to explain programmes after watching.

4.9.4 Do you discuss the programmes with your parents after watching?

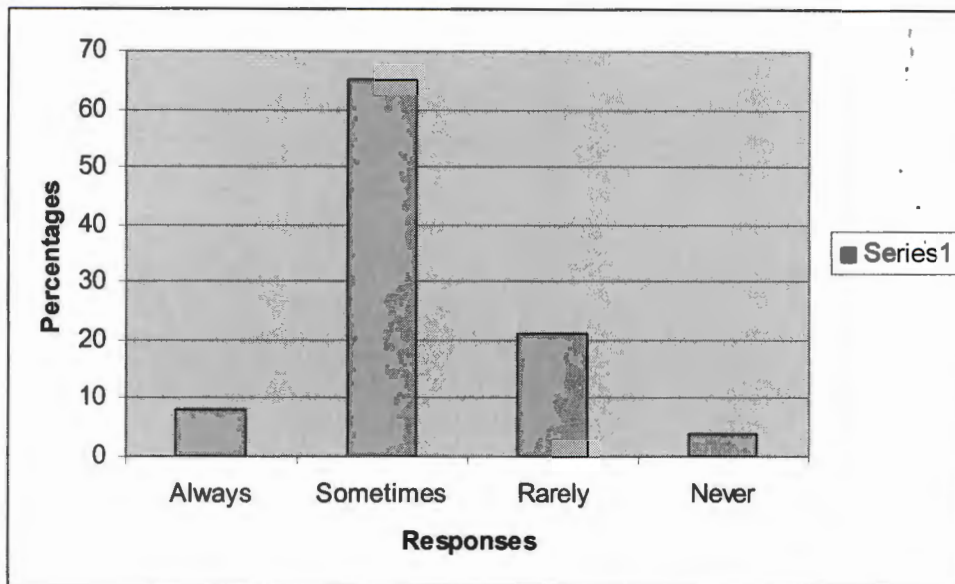


Figure 42

A majority (67%) of the respondent's parents would discuss the programmes sometimes after viewing for that day. Twenty one percent of the respondent's parents would do so on rare occasions. Eight percent indicated that their parent would always discuss the programmes at the end of the viewing session for that particular day, while four percent said their parents never discuss the TV programmes with them after viewing.

To summarize, the presentation and interpretation of the results of the study will now be followed by a discussion of the findings, conclusion and recommendations. Furthermore, suggestions for future research in the field of parental mediation on all media and stress its importance in South Africa, and the African continent as a whole will be briefly discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the discussions of the findings of the study and their implications, followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 DISCUSSION

5.2.1 TV VIEWING PATTERNS

Assessing parental guidance strategies within a global measure of parental involvement, this study sheds some light on TV's place within larger patterns of child-rearing. Early and middle childhood can be characterised as a time to decipher TV's complex symbols, comprehend narrative structures and grasp the psychological motivations of the actors on the screen.

The findings reveal that about 62% of the parents watch TV for four to six hours or more with their children from Monday to Friday. This means that from Monday to Friday parents spend 20 to 30 hours and perhaps, more with their children doing no other activity except watching TV. Eleven percent of the parents mentioned that it was difficult for them to state the number of hours because they spend most of their time in front of the TV with their children. Eighty percent of the parents in the study spend between four to six hours or more on weekends. This means that on Saturdays and

Sundays, parents and their children spend between eight to 12 hours or more watching TV.

Seventy percent of the children reported that they spend between four to six hour and even more watching TV on weekends. This gives an indication that on Saturday and Sunday these children spend eight to 12 hour and more watching TV. During the week (Monday to Friday) children spend between 10 to 30 hours watching TV. Two percent of the children reported that they spend six or more hours on TV. In a week these children are exposed to more than 30 hours of TV.

These findings give a clear indication that both parents and their children are heavy viewers of the medium. Children would copy such behaviour from an adult or older sibling around them (*Dorr et al*, 1990, Gómez, 1998, and Palmer 1986). Therefore, it would not be easy for the parents who are heavy viewers to control the amount of time their children spend in front of the TV. Some parents do not even know how much time their children spend on TV, because they would leave the children watching and when they come back from work the children would be still watching. It is possible that these children also learn negative behaviour or pick up unhealthy attitudes which they may put into action during adolescence. These bad or negative attitudes can have adverse consequences. According to Chandler (1995) states that heavy viewers are likely to be influenced by the ways in which the world is framed by TV programmes than are individuals who watch less (Chandler, 1995).

A majority of parents had no idea of what their children's favourite programmes are. For instance 60% of the parents indicated that the Cartoon Network was their children's favourite programme. There were only 43% of the children who reported that they like the Cartoon Network. For Isidingo, 58% of the parents reported it was their children's favourite programme. Only 32% of the children said they liked Isidingo. For Muvhango, 70% of the children had listed this programme as one of their favourite programme and 47% of the parents said Muvhango was their children's favourite programme. The only programme the parents got right was Generations, 65% of them indicated that their children liked the programme. Seventy percent of the children reported that Generations was their favourite programme. Another programme that had a small difference was WWE Wrestling. Thirty two percent of the parents indicated that it was their children's favourite programme and 43% of the children said they liked WWE Wrestling.

5.2.2 PARENTAL MEDIATION STYLES

5.2.2.1 RESTRICTIVE GUIDANCE

Parents were asked how often they restrict the amount of TV viewing. Forty six percent reported that they put restrictions to the amount of TV viewing sometimes. Twelve percent of the parents said that they rarely put restrictions and 26% said they never have restrictions on the amount of TV viewing. This indicates that 84% of the parents do not see the reason as to why such restrictions are important. Fifteen percent of the parents reported that they always restrict the viewing time of their children.

Thirty seven percent of the parents do not forbid their children to watch certain programmes on TV. Forty six percent of the parents were not firm on this rule. A small percentage (17%) of the respondents was firm in applying this rule on their children. A quarter (25%) of the parents reported that they always mention to their children which programmes they may watch. Though a majority (39%) of the parents do not often tell their children which programmes they may watch. Forty one percent of the parents reported that they specify to their children sometimes. Fifty percent of the children reported that this rule is not applied at home. Out of the 57%, there were 31% of the children who indicated that their parents told them which programmes not to watch sometimes. These results show that children spend many hours on TV and it is not necessarily that parents have no or control when it comes to TV viewing. What is possible is that there are no explicit rules.

With regard to kissing, sex, nudity and violence, about 58% of the parents never change channels and 13% reported that they always change channels. Twenty nine percent reported that they changed channels sometimes. The responses given by the children on this question give a different picture. Sixty three percent of the children reported that their parents would change the channels during kissing, sex, nudity and violence sometimes. One tends to wonder which result between the children and parents give a true indication of the parents' behaviour, because the results on this question was expected to be the same or have a small difference. Six percent of the children reported that their parents would always change channels. This percentage was half the number

reported by the parents who indicated that they always changed channels and 31% of the children reported that their parents never changed channels.

Parents were also asked if they allow their children to watch show with violence, 49% indicated that they allow their children to watch with violence. Fifty one percent said they never allow their children to watch violent shows. When comparing the results to this question with that of the children's favourite programmes, 32% of the parents had reported that their children's favourite programme was WWE Wrestling. This programme runs for one hour and is violence only. Which parent can spend one hour or more teaching his or her child violence? Yet, they let TV do that. Also if parents were very firm on the rule of violent shows or they had always been strict on changing channels during such scenes, then no parent or fewer than 32% would have listed WWE Wrestling. Since there was a high frequency of children exposed to TV everyday and also violent content, these may have a negative effect on children. Rosenkoetter (2001) argues that the perceived reality of violent shows may mediate emotional responses in children. Younger children, especially boys are more likely to judge violent responses as the right thing to do (Rosenkoetter, 2001: 468).

Sixty nine percent of the parents reported that their children would choose TV programmes that they want to watch and then ask for permission and 33% indicated that their children never ask for permission to watch whatever programme they have chosen. In this case there was a high frequency of parents who indicated that their children always ask for permission before they can watch TV programmes. If children asked for

permission to watch certain programmes, why would their parents allow them to watch WWE Wrestling? Why would they also allow a primary school child to be watching TV after 21h00 for Muvhango. One then wonders at what time to these children go to bed and also how to the parents deal with their children when they imitate what they had seen on these programmes? This is an indication that parents are either heavy viewers themselves or they do not know how to guide their children's viewing. This is a problem as most parents and children in this study lack media literacy.

In restrictive mediation rules would be more frequent use because they (rules) require less time to state and / or be enforced. Consistent rules can save parents time for other things such as doing more chores in the house or work place.

5.2.2.2 EVALUATIVE MEDIATION

Parents were asked if they explain programmes that did not portray reality to their children, 27% of them (parents) reported that they always explain that to their children. Thirty eight percent indicated that they explained sometimes. Children who reported that their parents would always explain TV programmes that did not portray reality were 40%. This was twice the frequency of parents' results on this question. Thirty two percent of the children reported that their parents explained to them sometimes. This was almost the same at the parents' responses. About 35% of the parents never explained TV programmes that did not portray reality to their children. This was also the same result given by the children, 33% said their parents never did explain.

Children were then asked if they knew the difference between reality and fantasy. Sixty percent said they did not know the difference between the two and 40% knew the difference. Then if there were 65% of parents who reported that they always or sometimes explain TV programmes that do not portray reality, why would there be a high frequency of children that did not know the difference between reality and fantasy.

Forty six percent of the parents reported that they do not point out the bad things that actors do on TV, 28% out of the 46% reported that they never have such discussions with their children. Parents who reported that they always do were 36%. The children's results on this question did not differ much from the parents' responses. Thirty one percent of the children reported that they discuss with their parents about the bad thing that actors do sometimes. Twenty seven percent of the children reported that they always have such discussions and 42% indicated that they never hold such discussion with their parents.

Thirty eight percent of the parents reported that they sometimes discuss the good things actors do on TV. There were 29% of the parents who reported that they always pointed out the good thing actors do. Almost the same results were reported by the children. Thirty percent of the children said their parents would tell them of the good thing that actors do on TV and 48% said their parents always point out the good deeds of the actors. There was a difference of 19% between the parents' and the children's responses. Thirty three percent of the parents reported that they never talk about the good thing actors do

on TV and 24% of the children reported that their parent never tell them the good things actors do.

A majority of the parents said that they usually choose TV programmes together with their children and 34% said they never choose programmes to be watched together with their children. A high frequency of parents watches TV together with their children. When asked if parents discuss TV programmes while viewing with their children while viewing, 41% said they have such discussions sometimes. Sixteen percent indicated that they always discuss the programmes while viewing with their children and 24% of the parents indicated that they never have such discussions. Fifty nine percent of the children reported that they always discuss TV programmes with their parents while viewing and eight percent reported that they discuss with their parents sometimes. In this question a frequency (56%) of children differed with the parents' responses, 16% of the parents reported that they always discuss TV programmes with their children while viewing. It has to be noted that during data collection children's questionnaires were group administered. Frey *et al*, (1991) state that a group administration can affect the data, however, since verbal and nonverbal comments made by some respondents in the presence of others can influence responses (Frey *et al*, 1991: 194). This could be part of reason why there is such a difference in the responses, especially in the above question.

According to Warren (2003) he states that evaluative mediation requires both access and engagement of parents. It demands a lot of parents' time and their presence. It is the most effective strategy for developing critical viewing skills (Warren, 2003: 409).

5.2.2.3 UNFOCUSED GUIDANCE

A majority of parents (56%) reported that they coview TV with their children sometimes, while 28% said they always watch TV together with their children. There was also a majority of children (65%) who indicated that their parents watch TV with them sometimes. Twenty three percent of the children indicated that their parents always watch. Eight percent of the parents said they rarely watch TV together with their children, and 10% of the children reported the same.

About half of the parents (52%) the parents reported that they coview for the benefit of their children, whereas 42% indicated that they do not coview for their children's benefit. Fifty six percent of the parents coview when their children have requested them to. There was a high frequency of (68%) of parents who indicated that their children watch whatever programme they watch to watch.

When parents were asked if they discuss TV programmes after viewing, 53% reported that they discuss sometimes and 23% said it is rare for them to have discussions with their children after viewing. Six percent reported that they always discuss TV programmes with their children after viewing. The responses were almost the same for this question when compared with the children's responses. Sixty seven percent of the children indicated that they have discussions with their parents after viewing sometimes and eight percent of the children said they would always discuss with their parents after viewing. There was a big difference in the rarely and never responses. Twenty one percent said it was rare for them to discuss TV programmes after viewing and four percent indicated

that they never have such discussions with their parents. Nineteen percent of the parents said they never discuss TV programmes after viewing with their children and 23% reported that it was on rare occasions that they (parents) hold such discussions.

Coviewing scores demonstrates a much higher frequency. These findings seem consistent with previous studies which found that most parent-child coviewing is coincidental (Gunter and McAleer, 1990, Dorr *et al*, 1989). In this case it may be because more households in this sample had one TV set. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the unfocused mediation strategy. Another factor it could be that for unfocused guidance behaviours by both children and parents may be due to the fact that unfocused guidance behaviours are events of common occurrence. As a result the frequency with which parents use unfocused guidance it is difficult to judge.

5.3 CONCLUSION

A majority of parents have raised concerns about the negative effects TV has on their children's behaviour. More than half of the parents reported that they strongly agree that TV has some kind of effect on their children's behaviour. Again a majority (65%) of parents reported that they need more information on how to control TV viewing in their houses. Another concern that parents raised was the difficulty of finding good quality TV programmes for their children to watch. Though less than half of the respondents (parents) reported that that information about safe, educational internet use would be useful to them when selecting children's programmes. A few of the parents reported that they would like to be provided with information on age-appropriateness of the

programmes that their children watch. A few parents (15%) indicated that they need information on ratings and warning about TV shows that their children should watch.

All these concerns emphasize the dire need for parental supervision. It is also important that parents should not allow their children to have TV set in their bedrooms. This will not only curb the amount of viewing, but it will help the parents to give proper guidance. TV is still regarded as a family entertainment as most of the families in this study had one TV set. In this case parents are in a better position to pick up or notice a negative influence and discuss that with their children. At times children learn from their parent's reaction and comments when they have seen something immoral, unacceptable or good.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

In the future the researcher would like to examine parental mediation strategies and parental concerns with the range of media to which children are exposed to, as South Africa is the fastest developing country in the continent. Besides the parental concerns there is a dearth of studies in this field.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking charge of television in homes is all about changing what one's children watch and the amount of time spent in front of the screen. From the results it is evident that parents do not have set rules and also do not have the knowledge about how they can protect their children from being exposed to too much TV, since some of the parents are heavy viewers themselves.

In countries outside Africa where studies about TV effects have been done for over 50 years, parents over there have support from the media industries and the government on parental guidance such as support groups and magazines also devices to prevent children from switching to channels which their parents do not allow them to watch. Children are taught at school about media effects, and are also involved in their own media projects.

A curriculum has to be designed for primary school children on critical viewing that will teach them how TV programmes are produced, how special effects are accomplished, how TV differs from reality, how stereotypes are portrayed on TV and the unreality of TV violence. This curriculum can be developed to counter some of the adverse effects of televised violence. In this curriculum children should be given a chance to create their own TV project and share their experiences with parents, teachers and their peers.

Since parents play a preeminent role in their children's social learning, workshops have to be designed for parents and teachers on critical TV viewing and media literacy in general. Parents and teachers have to be empowered with the skills of how media products often use persuasive techniques to keep viewers glued to the tube. Once parents are empowered they can then take charge of what their children consume on TV on daily basis.

If both parents and children are empowered this will encourage regular and on going conversation at home on what they are watching, learning and what they are curious about on TV. On the other hand parents will be able to:

- Plan their family's TV viewing
- Take total control of when and what their children should watch on TV
- They will actively use TV analysis and discussion.

Parent-child coviewing should be encouraged. Coviewing allows parents to discuss the programme and commercial content with the child, help the child distinguish between reality and fantasy, clarify misconceptions and reinforce the positive TV experience with a family.

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ANNEXTURE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions. Indicate your answer by marking the appropriate space with [x].

1. GENDER:

Male	
Female	

2. AGE:

25 - 29	
30 - 34	
35 - 39	
40 - 44	
45+	

3. NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS STAYING WITH YOU:

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 - 7	
8 +	

4. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:

University	
Technikon	
College	
High School	
Other	

5. OCCUPATION:

6. GENDER AND AGE OF YOUR CHILD/ CHILDREN BETWEEN 6 AND 12 YEARS:

GENDER	AGE

PART 1: TV VIEWING PATTERNS

1. How many TV sets do you have in your house?

1	
2	
3	
4	

2. How many hours do you spend on TV during the week with your child / children?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 and above	

3. How many hours do you spend on TV on weekends with your child / children?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 and above	

4. How many hours do your children spend watching TV a day?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 and above	

5. Is there a TV set in your child's/ children's bedroom?

Yes	
No	

6. Are you a DSTV subscriber?

Yes	
No	

7. What are your child's / children's favourite programme(s)?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)
- g)
- h)
- i)
- j)

PART 2: PARENTAL MEDIATION STYLES

2.1 RESTRICTIVE GUIDANCE

8. How often do you set specific viewing hours?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

9. How often do you restrict the amount of viewing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

10. How often do you forbid the viewing of certain programmes?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

11. How often do you specify programmes that may be watched?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

12. Do you change the channel when there's a scene of kissing/ sex/ nudity/ violence?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

13. My child/ children choose what they want to watch and then ask for my permission

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

14. I never allow my child/ children to watch shows with any violence

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

2.2 EVALUATIVE GUIDANCE

15. Do you explain TV programmes that are not real to the child / children so that S / he can understand?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

16. Do you talk about bad things that the actors are doing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

17. Do you point out the good things actors are doing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

18. Do you discuss the programme(s) while viewing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

19. We usually choose what programmes to watch together

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

20. I generally allow my children to watch cartoons

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

21. I'm very concerned about the effects TV has on my child's/ children's behaviour

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

22. I'd like to find out more about how to control TV viewing in my house

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

23. I have problems finding TV shows that are good for my child/ children

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

24. What kind of information do you think is useful in selecting children's programmes?

Ratings and warnings about TV shows to avoid	
Programme listings by age -appropriateness	
Guide to family films on TV	
Information about safe, educational internet use	

2.3 UNFOCUSED GUIDANCE

25. Do you watch TV together with your child/ children?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

26. Do you discuss the programme(s) after viewing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

27. Do you watch TV together for the benefit of your child/ children?

Yes	
No	

28. Do you watch TV together at your child's/ children's request?

Yes	
No	

29. My child/ children watch whatever they want to watch

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	

ANNEXTURE 2

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following questions. Indicate your answer by marking the appropriate space with [x].

GENDER:

Male	
Female	

AGE:

6-8	
9-10	
11-12	

PART 1: TV VIEWING PATTERNS

1. Do you watch TV?

Yes	
No	

2. How many hours do you watch TV per day in a week?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 and above	

3. How many hours do you watch TV per day on weekends?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 and above	

4. How many TV sets are in your house?

1	
2	
3	
4	

5. Is there a TV set in your bedroom?

Yes	
No	

6. Is there DSTV at home?

Yes	
No	

7. What is/are your favourite programme(s)?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)
- g)
- h)
- i)
- j)

PART 2: PARENTAL MEDIATING STYLES

2.1 RESTRICTIVE GUIDANCE

8. Do you have to go to bed at a specific time?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

9. Does your parent change the channel when there's a scene of kissing/ sex/ nudity/ violence?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

10. Are there programmes that you are not allowed to watch?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

11. If there are, name them:

2.2 EVALUATIVE GUIDANCE

12. Do your parent(s) discuss the bad things that actors are doing on TV?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

13. Do your Parent(s) tell you the good things that actors are doing on TV?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

14. Do you know the difference between reality and fantasy?

Yes	
No	

15. Do your parent(s) explain TV programmes that are not real to you?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

16. Do you ask them to explain things to you that you don't understand on TV?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

17. Do you discuss the programme(s) with your parent(s) while viewing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

2.3 UNFOCUSED GUIDANCE

18. Do you watch TV together with your parent(s)?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

19. Do your parent(s) watch with you your favourite programmes?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

20. Do you discuss the programme(s) with your parent(s) after viewing?

Always	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	