

TV Content Ratings Systems: A Review of the Literature, Current Trends and Areas of Future Research

Catherine Kafu^{1,2}

¹Department of Communication Studies, Moi University
²Social Behavioral Team-Department, USAID-AMPATHPlus

Abstract-TV content ratings systems have been put in place by many countries as a way of reducing media effects on children. The relation between media effects and TV content ratings systems has been substantively analyzed within the social scientific community. This article provides such an overview. First, it lays out some of the main theoretical models of media effects, that is, the social cognitive theory and the cultivation theory. Second, it describes existing empirical research. In this section, it demonstrates the origin of content ratings systems and these ratings development over the years, parents understanding of TV content ratings and the factors that influence a parents understanding of these ratings, parental implementation of PG in practice and children's interpretation of their parents' mediation behavior. Third, the article points out future fields of research

Index Terms- TV Content Ratings Systems, Media Effects

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A substantive amount of scientific research has been carried out on the effects of popular mass media content, especially TV content, on human behavior. Most of these studies have examined the role of television content as an influence on a wide range of behaviors in both children and adult viewers. This is because TV has become so affordable, is easily accessible and is still one of the most loved media. The largest portion of these studies has focused on TV content's negative effect on children's social, cultural, and psychological development (Friedman, 1973; Grier, 2001; Wagner, 2001; Collins et al., 2004) with only a sizeable portion of studies on effects of TV content focusing on the beneficial outcomes for viewers (Kuchment & Gillham, 2008).

Recent studies have revealed that children are spending so much time watching television. Children in Britain, for example, spend an average of 2 hours 40 minutes in front of the television every day (Thomas, 2011). In America, TV is increasingly turning into an electronic babysitter with children spending more time before the screen. According to Nielsen (2010), preschoolers in America, aged 2-5 spend 32.5 hours a week in front of the TV while older pre-teens, aged 6-11, spend 28 hours in front of the TV. Years of research in America and Europe have supported a relationship between children's too much television viewing time and subsequent engagement in violence, teenage sex, and alcohol and drug abuse, among others (Grier, 2001; Collins et al. 2004;

Sargent et al. 2006). This disclosure that the potential of television is enormous and the fact that children are spending more and more time viewing television programs worries many parents.

Studies in America, Canada, UK, India and China have established that parents are very concerned about what their children view on television (Pennsylvania, 2000; Correspondent, 2011; Anlan, 2013). Parents are concerned about children's exposure to too much sexual content, violent content, and alcohol and drug abuse content on TV. Parents are equally concerned about the depiction of alcohol, smoking and drug abuse as "cool" in TV programs. The 2004 Kaiser Foundation National Polls revealed that 60% of American parents are very concerned that their children are getting exposed to too much sexual content on TV, while 49% of the American parents are concerned about the use of adult language in most TV programs. It further revealed that 53% of American parents are concerned that their children are getting exposed to too much violent content on TV. Parents in China are concerned with the amount of violence, crude language in cartoons on Chinese TV. These parents claim that Chinese TV cartoons are sending a bad message (Anlan, 2013).

TV content ratings systems have been put in place by many countries (including Kenya) as a way of reducing media effects on children. The basic mission of these TV content ratings systems is to offer parents some advance information about the content in the program about to be aired so that parents can decide what TV programs they want their children to see or not. This places the responsibility of restricting minor's access to adult TV content primarily on parents. Parents therefore must understand these ratings to enable them carry out this responsibility well. With the exemption of America, there is almost no literature on parents' knowledge of PG-Ratings in other countries. This is fundamental section of the area of media effects that needs to be studied so as to reveal what parents know about PG-Ratings. This knowledge will help establish whether parents use these PG-Ratings to help mitigate media effects on children, or whether there is a need to come up with new methods of preventing children from getting exposed to inappropriate TV programs.

1.1 REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES.

Various theories have been used to explain why television content may exert effects in the areas of violence, pre-marital

sex, drugs and alcohol abuse. The social cognitive theory asserts that children learn various behaviors by observing those exhibited by others while the cultivation theory asserts that heavy television viewing leads people to see the world as portrayed on television. These two theories are reviewed below to depict the varied nature of television programs, why this worries parents and why parents should implement parental guidance in practice.

1.1.1 The Cultivation Theory

The cultivation theory developed in 1976 by Professor George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, addresses ways in which Television influences the development of children's knowledge and beliefs about the world. This theory proposes that heavy viewing leads people to see the world as it is portrayed on television. Television programs over-represent the use of coarse language, the occurrence of violence, engagement in sexual activities, and the indulgence in alcohol and alcoholic drinks.

Studies have indicated media effects on teens' beliefs about sexuality (Aubrey et al. 2003; Brown et al. 2006; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse 1993). Collins et al. (2004) found out that among teen virgins, those who frequently viewed TV programs with sexual content were twice as likely to engage in sexual intercourse in the following year as compared to those viewing less sexual programming. Similar results concerning media exposure and sex initiation were reported by Brown et al. (2006). With more studies revealing that the level of sexual content in television programs is on the rise it is important that parents implement parental guidance in regards to television viewership so as to alleviate the effects of sexual content on children. Content studies indicate that about 70% of recent television programs contain some verbal or behavioral sexual content. While 67% of television programs that are popular with teenagers contain frequent talk about sex (Kunkel, Cope, & Biely, 1999). A study carried out by Leone and Osborn (2004) indicated an increase in sexual content on TV from 2000-2003.

Media sexuality appears to influence initiation of sex through shaping of teen viewers' perceptions of sexual norms, sexual patience, lowered expectations of potential negative consequences, and sexual self-efficacy beliefs (Kunkel, Cope, & Biely, 1999; Martino et al. 2005). TV is accused of rarely presenting messages about the risks or responsibilities associated with sexual behavior. The cultivation theory suggests that consistent portrayal of sexual content in the media cultivates common beliefs about sexual norms and patterns of sexual behavior, especially among frequent media users (Brown & Lu: 2006). Facilitation of sexual behavior in children and particularly adolescents by television depictions has obvious implications for

public concerns especially health-wise over unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases especially HIV/AIDS a disease that the society and the Kenyan government at large is working hard to eliminate.

According to Lorch (2006), alcohol use is shown frequently in Television programs with these programs typically portraying alcohol use as a normative, problem free adult behavior. Studies suggest that exposure to TV content in which characters consume alcohol can influence those behaviors in teen audiences. Sargent et al. (2006) found that natural exposure of children aged 10 to 14 years to motion pictures with prominent drinking scenes predicted non-drinkers' initiation of drinking within the next eighteen months. Similar results were found by Dalton and Colleagues (Glantz, 2002), and the primary explanation for both sets of results is that television and movies typically show highly attractive characters drinking with very few negative consequences of alcohol consumption.

Thus children who frequently watch television programs are relatively likely to view the world as mean and threatening, engage in pre-marital sex and to view drinking alcohol as a normal part of life. TV programs that contain any of this content have attracted ratings. However rating these programs would only be effective if parents understand the meaning and function of these ratings.

1.1.2 The Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura, a Professor of Social Science in Psychology at Stanford University and one of the most influential psychologists asserts in his 1977 Social Cognitive Theory that children learn various social behaviors by observing those exhibited by others. Bandura (1977) in this theory, states that factors that increase a child's likelihood of trying a behavior include whether the child can identify with the person exhibiting the behavior and whether the model succeeds in achieving a given goal or earning a reward. Heavy exposure to television characters that succeed in achieving their set goals by behaving in aggressive, violent, or stereotypical ways may encourage the child viewing them to apply similar strategies in his/her own live (Bandura, 2002).

There is sufficient evidence from various studies that heavy exposure to televised violence is interconnected with increased aggressive behavior in children and adolescents. Wagner (2001) citing Gostz (1974) confirms the assumption that professional killers on TV are often glamorized as heroes. He argues that when a child views a hero of a program kill and injure people to achieve his goal, and this child does not bother to question the means by which the hero reached his goal, this can easily make

this child believe that the only way to achieve his/her goals is through violence.

Wargner (2001) argues that there is too much violence and aggressive behavior presented on television today. This argument was confirmed by a study carried out by Thompson (2005) and her research group at the Harvard School of Public Health. Their study revealed that every one of the 74 animated feature films reviewed (100%) contained violence against another character. The pervasiveness of violent content on television combined with the vast scientific literature on media violence effects supports the notion that popular media plays a significant role in shaping social interaction that has both personal and societal consequences (Potts & Belden, 2009). That is why it is important to rate all television programs that contain violence so as to let parents know in advance that the TV program about to be aired contains violent content. But most importantly, parents need to know what these television content ratings mean so as to be able to implement parental guidance in practice considering the link between television violence and increased violence in children.

1.2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT STUDIES

1.2.1 Media advisory systems

It can be argued that the most common strategy for controlling undesirable influences of TV programs on children is to prevent them from gaining access to such programs. In the United States, restriction of minors' access to entertainment media deemed too mature for their consumption has taken the form of self-administered ratings in motion pictures, television, and videogames by respective industries (Bushman & Joanne, 2003; Gentile et al. 2005; Valenti, 2005). These advisory systems are intended to provide information to the public, with the ultimate responsibility for controlling minors' access to such media content placed primarily on parents or guardians.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) movie ratings system was the first self-imposed media advisory system and it is the most widely used. Some countries have lifted the MPAA movie ratings system and use it as it is, while other countries such as Kenya have slightly modified it. By slightly modifying it I mean that these countries use the MPAA movie rating system but just adjust a few things such as getting rid of the "PG" lettering that comes before the "13" in the PG-13 ratings criteria or replacing the "PG" lettering with "TV" lettering. This is the reason why it is important that before delving into TV content ratings systems, the origin and functionality of the MPAA movie ratings system is well understood.

1.2.2 The Motion Picture Association of America.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) movie ratings system was the first self-imposed media advisory system. Motivated by the several social, artistic, and legal changes occurring in the 1960s, the MPAA began assigning age-based ratings to movies in 1968. In the 1960s, movie producers were dissatisfied with existing studio censorship codes, the public wanted more honest movie depictions of social reality, and certain court rulings raised the possibility that individual state and local governments could legally regulate adult movie content in order to control minor children's access (America, 2011) because as Senator Margaret Chase Smith told the 89th Congress of America, "movies...are more adult than ever." p.44 (Burroughs, 1971).

On November 1, 1968, the MPAA together with the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) and the International Film Importers & Distributors of America (IFIDA) came up with the age-based movie ratings system as an effort to satisfy the above concerns (Valenti, 2000). This system allowed filmmakers to make the film they wanted and then this film would receive an appropriate rating (Leone & Bissell, 2005). The basic mission of the age-based movie rating system was to offer parents some advance information about movies so that parents could decide what movies they wanted their children to see or not to see. This placed the responsibility of restricting minor's access to adult movie content primarily on parents. The MPAA assigns five age-based rating categories to films:

G:General Audiences.

PG:Parental Guidance Suggested.

PG-13: Parents Strongly Cautioned.

R:Restricted.

NC-17:No One 17 and Under Admitted.

1.2.2.1 From age-based ratings to content-based ratings

Even with the introduction of the age-based ratings by the MPAA, some people were still not satisfied. It did not take long before these critics of the age-based ratings system went public with their concerns. The National Parent Teacher Association president Joan Dykstra called these ratings confusing and insufficient. Edward Markey, the father of the V-chip legislation argued that the ratings system did not give parents the information they needed so as to make appropriate decisions for their own children, and that these rating system will not give parents the choices they need to block programming (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999). On September 27, 1990, the MPAA yielded to the American public pressure and introduced brief explanations (forewarnings) of why a particular film received its R-rating. This new ratings system was called the content-based ratings system. These forewarnings, MPAA believed, would go a long

way in helping parents know a little bit more about a film's content before letting their kids access it (Valenti, 2005).

Even with relative failure of the original age-based rating system noted, more and more critics are still not satisfied with the content-based rating system. Thompsons (2005) acknowledges that ratings reasons provide some information about the content thus making them far more superior than just giving parents the ratings alone with no explanation. However she feels that the ratings reasons do not tell all the parents about all of the types of content that children might experience. The ratings reasons should provide parents with more descriptive and accurate content-based information because different parents are concerned with different issues (Miller, 2005).

1.2.2.2 Ratings Creep

The MPAA rating system has further been accused to have overtime stretched the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in certain rating categories, a charge that is referred to as "rating creep". Jane (1978) predicted that in future MPAA will have to "loosen the 'criteria' for G or PG ratings, an alternative which might seriously jeopardize the industry's image, p.204." Based on the past studies and findings of this study that revealed that parents and children feel that television programs rated "PG" are loaded with sexual content I believe that we are living in that future. Various studies have revealed that 'ratings creep' has occurred over the last decade and that today's movies contain significantly more sexual content, violence and profanity on average than movies of the same age-based rating a decade ago (Snider, 2004; Miller, 2005; Thompson, 2005; Today, 2005; Williamson, 2009). This has been noted specifically in the PG, PG-13 and R categories.

The MPAA rating system has been accused of being more lenient with violence despite public opinion polls showing that American parents worry so much about violence in the media than about sex or bad language (Williamson, 2009). Wilson et al.(1997) found that PG-13 films can either contain multiple scenes of violence or have no violence at all but be loaded with vulgar language (Jenkins, Webb, Browne, & Kraus, 2005). Jim Isaac, the director of "Friday the 13th" movie, expressed surprise at what he perceived as the MPAA's leniency with the violence in his movie. This film which depicts a woman's face being frozen and smashed into pieces, two women getting beaten to death, and a man being sliced in half received an "R" rating. Jim Isaac said he expected that MPAA would urge him to take out a lot more in order to receive the "R" rating (Federman, 2002).

This 'rating creep' has led parents groups and politicians to cry out for fixation of this rating system because they argue that this

system is not working (Today, 2005). Micheal Medved in a USA Today opinion column proposed that the industry changes the PG-13 category from its current status to R-13 so as to better alert parents that strong doses of material inappropriate for teens can be in these films. A survey by the National Institute on Media and the Family (2001) found that parents would rate movies much more strictly than the current system does (Lamb, 2001).

Stephen Farber looks at this leniency from a different but quite interesting angle; he argues that MPAA tends to rate films based on what adults find offensive, rather than using harmfulness to the children as a criterion. Thus movies containing sex and nudity receive more restrictive ratings than those containing violence because parents are more likely to be "disturbed" by sexual content (Williamson, 2009). There is hardly any documented research on child's knowledge and perception of PG-Rated television programs.

Some scholars however, argue that there is no such thing as rating creep. Former MPAA President Jack Valenti argued that as society changes, so do the ratings, "A PG-13 today might have been an R 15 years ago" (Today, 2005). The entertainment industry is including various obscene materials in programs meant for family viewing in the name of entertainment. We are in the next generation of media products, and it's time for the rating systems to come into this century so that they can be effective tools for today's parents. It is time, for industry to lead the charge in developing the next generation of media rating systems. This new ratings will only be effective if parents' and children's knowledge and views of the current PG-Ratings were known and considered while designing the new ratings.

1.2.3 Television Content Ratings system

The TV content ratings systems were put in place as a way of reducing media effects on children. This voluntary system of guidelines was aimed at providing parents with information to help them make informed choices about the TV programs that their children watch. America was the first country worldwide to implement the TV content ratings system in January, 1997. This American TV content ratings system was called the "TV Parental Guidelines" and it was based on the MPAA movie ratings system. This is the reason why it is important to understand the origin and of MPAA and how MPAA functions.

The American TV Parental Guidelines started off as an age-based ratings system, and just like the MPAA ratings system which initially had four ratings: G (General Audience), M (Mature Audiences), R (Restricted) and X (No one 17 and under admitted), the original TV parental Guidelines included four

ratings: TV-G (General Audience), TV-PG (Parental Guidance Suggested), TV-14 (Parents strongly cautioned) and TV-MA (Mature Audiences Only). With the exception of the addition of "TV" before each rating and a few minor changes in the ratings themselves, the TV Parental Guidelines were virtually identical to the movie ratings.

Just like with the MPAA age-based ratings system, the American public was not satisfied with this TV aged-based ratings system. Parents groups, media researchers, members of the congress, public health associations and media advocacy organizations argued that these ratings were not providing sufficient information for parents to make informed decisions about their children's viewing choices. In October 1997, the American television industry bent to public pressure and content categories were added to the age-based labels. These content categories are V (violence), S (sexual situations), L (coarse or crude language), D (suggestive dialogue, usually sexual), and FV (fantasy violence). The content categories are used as an addition to the age-based designations. Since the TV Parental Guidelines are based on the MPAA ratings system, we should expect the TV ratings to be just as informative as the movie ratings.

Although the ratings system is officially voluntary, all of the broadcast networks rate their programming, as do the vast majority of cable channels. With the successful implementation of a PG-Rating system in America, many European countries and a few Asian and African countries followed suit.

1.2.3.1 TV content ratings system in Europe

In Spain, members of the government and entities representing the four national television networks adopted a code on self-regulation of television content in 2004. This code classifies audiences by age-groups; Program particularly suitable for children, Program suitable for all audiences, Program not recommended for minors under age 7, Programs not recommended for minors under age 13, and Programs not recommended for minors under age 18 (Vivarta, 2006). In Netherlands, the Dutch institute for classification of audiovisual media which was established in 1999 regulates television content. This institute uses the following content-based ratings: Program suitable for all ages and children over age 6-may air at any time of the day, Programs recommended for children over age 12-may not air after 8:00 p.m., Programs recommended for viewers over age 16-may not air after 10:00 p.m. (Vivarta, 2006).

1.2.3.2 TV content rating systems in Africa

In Africa however, TV content rating systems seems like a far-fetched dream with South Africa being the only African country with a documented standardized ratings system. The Film and

Publication board issues and certifies the South African ratings whilst the various films and programs are regulated by the National Broadcasting Commission. All the TV stations must display the TV content ratings which include: *family* this is a program that is suitable for family viewing because it does not contain any obscenity, *PG* this a program that children under the age of 12 may watch but they must be accompanied by an adult, *13* this is a program that should not be watched by children under the age of 13, *16* this is a program that should not be watched by children under the age of 16 years old, *18* this is a programs that should not be watched by children under the age of 18 years old, and *R18* this is a reserve for films of an extreme sexual nature and may not be broadcast on TV. This ratings system also has additional symbols that include: D (Drugs), V (Violence), N (Nudity), P (Prejudice), and S (Sex) (Encyclopedia: Television rating system, 2011).

In Kenya, we have a TV content rating system that was put in place by the Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB) in 2010. This ratings system that borrows much from MPAA uses four ratings categories; GE (General Exhibition)-the film contains nothing inappropriate for viewers; PG (Parental Guidance) - the film may contain scenes unsuitable for children under the age of 10 years. However parental guidance is recommended for children 10 years and above; 16-film may contain moderate or medium impact classifiable elements of an intensity and frequency that will be appropriate to the development of teenagers. Persons under 16 years are not allowed and; 18-the film may contain scenes suitable for persons above 18 years or adults only. The KFCB claims that it must examine and classify all films in the country either locally produced films or imported films, however not all TV station use these ratings system (www.kfcb.co.ke, 2010). At the time of this review most stations were using the MPAA ratings system at the time of this study.

1.3. Parents understanding of television content ratings system

The introduction of the TV content ratings system shifted the burden of controlling children's exposure to inappropriate programs from filmmakers and TV program managers to parents. Former US president George Bush argued that it is the parents' responsibility and not the government's when it comes to protecting their children from indecent TV programming (Abelman, 2007). However, for parents to be able to carry out this responsibility well, they must understand the TV content ratings system.

Three years after the introduction of the TV content ratings system in America, the Annenberg survey of 2000 revealed that only half of 1200 parents of children aged 2-to-17- years old were even aware of the ratings and only 39% of parents reported

using the ratings to guide their children's viewing (Schmitt, 2000). Fifteen years later, an American national internet-based survey conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates in late 2011 revealed that 93% of parents reported being aware of the TV ratings system, 88% of parents were aware that the TV ratings system provide guidance based on the age of the child, 82% of parents were aware that the TV ratings system provides information about the content of a program using letters (L for coarse, V for violence, etc), while 68% of parents reported using TV ratings system (www.televisionwatch.org). This research revealed that parents in America have come to rely on the TV ratings system as a key tool in helping them monitor the TV content that their children are getting exposed to. However, there is almost no available literature on parent's knowledge and reception of TV content ratings systems in other parts of the world. It's important to note that any media ratings systems can only be truly effective when parents know that they are available, know how to use them, and when they provide accurate and descriptive content-based information.

Previous studies have established that there are various factors that affect a parent's interest and understanding of TV content ratings system. These factors include but are not limited to: a parent's perception towards TV effects, a parent's level of education, a child's age and gender, family composition and the parent's viewing habits. These are briefly reviewed next.

1.4 Parental perceptions of television effects.

A parent's perception of TV's impact on his/her child is one of the most prominent factors that are likely to contribute to the amount of Parental control of home-televiwing (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999). According to Mills and Watkins (1982) and Bybee, Robinson, & Turow, 1982 there is a clear relationship between parents' awareness of possible effects of televiwing and subsequent enforcement of rules at home. These scholars found out that one of the reasons for lack of parental mediation was that many parents did not perceive TV to be a harmful or beneficial force in their children's lives (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999).

1.4.1 Educational Levels

Maternal education is consistently found to be inversely related to children's television viewing (Hesketh, Ball, Crawford, Campbell, & Salmon, 2007). There is almost no documented research on whether there is any relationship between parents' education levels and children's television viewership. There is almost no documented research on whether there is any relation between a parent's level of education and his knowledge of PG-Ratings. And whether there is any relationship between a

parents' level of education and their consideration of PG-Ratings in program selection for children.

1.4.2 Child's Age and/or Gender

According to the FTC Report, children noted differences in their parents' attitudes and behavior towards TV viewership in the home depending on the child's age. Parents tend to give older children more freedom regarding the selection and use of entertainment products than they give younger children (Grier, 2001). This could be because parents assume that older children are mature enough to distinguish between fact and fiction, and that these children are capable of making informed decisions.

1.4.3 Parent's viewing habits

According to a study carried out in Ankara, Turkey by Yalcin, Tugrul, Nacar, Tuncer, & Yurdakok (2002) parental viewing habits had an influence on their children especially those aged 3-6 years. This study established that the longer a parent watched TV, the longer the child too. This is true because young children tend to look for affection from their parents thus they are always hovering around their parents. Thus if a parent spends much time on TV, there is a likelihood that the child will accompany his/her in viewing.

1.4.4 Family Composition

Family composition could be another reason why children are getting exposed to inappropriate TV programs. Older siblings are likely to watch more adult programs, and in most cases they watch these programs with the younger ones. Yalcin, Tugrul, Nacar, Tuncer, & Yurdakok (2002) argue that the amount of time sisters and brothers spent watching TV had an impact on preschool as well as primary school children. However there is no documented literature on whether this is true in Kenya, my study confirms previous findings that older siblings influence the preschool and primary school children into watching age inappropriate TV programs as discussed in detail in chapter 7 below. Parents watching habits are also contributing to children watching inappropriate programs. If a parent watches too much television, there is a likelihood that their children will watch with them most programs. However, this is an area that calls for further investigation.

1.5. Implementation of Parental Guidance on television programs

A substantial body of research indicates that parents have the potential to influence their children's media consumption patterns, interpretations and acceptance of media content. Parents can affect their children's TV use through intervention. However

very few parents get directly involved or actively exercise control over their children's selection, consumption and interpretation of television information (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999). This could be because of the current nature of our fast moving world whereby both parents have to work full-time, take time on the road commuting back home, prepare dinner, etc. Such parents will be lucky to have an hour at the end of the day to spend with their children. Meanwhile children arrive home from school as early as midday, well before any adults and studies have revealed that most children use their free time watching TV.

According to the Centre for Screen Time Awareness, American children aged between 2 and 7 years spend less than 20% of their TV viewing time alone and unsupervised (Alert, 2008). In Morocco, children spend most of their time watching TV unsupervised (Chebbak, 2012). This could be dangerous because of ratings creep. Studies have shown that if a child spends more than 2 hours on TV, TV becomes a potent source of information to the child (Yalcin, Tugrul, Nacar, Tuncer, & Yurdakok, 2002). And as earlier discussed, parents are very concerned about "rating creep". Different parents have come up with different ways of implementing parental guidance in practice considering the varied nature of television programs and children's interests. All these different ways can be grouped into three broad categories; restrictive mediation style, active mediation style and co-viewing mediation style as reviewed below.

1.5.1 Restrictive mediation style

Some parents use the restrictive mediation whereby they prohibit the viewing of some programs. According to Abelman and Pettey (1989), this type of mediation would be employed by parents who were primarily concerned about the behavioral effects of TV (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999). These parents would most likely limit their children's access to specific TV programs or channels that are perceived to be inappropriate (Abelman, 2007). These parents choose the time and channels that their children can tune into.

1.5.2 Active/Instructive mediation style

Other parents use the instructive mediation style. This is whereby they purposefully discuss and/or critic a certain program's content and its effects. A study carried out by Yalcin, Tugrul, Nacar, Tuncer, & Yurdakok (2002) found out that 42.7% of parents with children aged 3-6 years old and 26.4% of those with children aged 7-11 years discussed TV programs and content with their children. This mediation style is mostly used by parents who are more concerned with cognitive and/or affective level effects, that is, those parents who perceive the medium to

influence what children think about and their thought processes, and also the medium influencing how children feel about themselves and others (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999).

1.5.3 Co-Viewing mediation style

Some parents use the co-viewing mediation style. This is whereby parents view a TV program with their children but do not agree or disagree with the TV message, the TV characters and acts. However, as the number of TV channels increased over the years, parental control over television and family co-viewing dramatically decreased (Abelman & Gubbins, 1999). The cost of living can also be argued to be one of the reasons as to why family co-viewing has decreased, this is because both parents are forced to go out to fend for the family, and in some extreme cases they come back home after dark, thus they do not have time to co-view programs with their children. This thus calls for the incorporation of advisory ratings into the rules and regulations about TV in the home.

1.6 Children's interpretation of parental mediation behavior.

In any discussion of parent's interaction with their children and the possible outcome of these activities, it is important to point out that children are not mere passive recipients of parenting practices. Children have an active role in parent-child interaction yet there is hardly any literature on whether children even acknowledge that their parents engage in mediation at all. Very little has been documented about how children interpret their parents' mediation messages (Nathanson, 2002). The effectiveness of mediation should depend on how children understand these messages.

Studies in America established that restrictive mediation was related to less positive attitudes towards parents and more positive attitudes towards the forbidden content. Active mediation was found to mitigate possible negative outcomes because when children hear from parents about their own interpretations of television content, it increases the child's ability to be skeptical about television content. Co-viewing can create hostilities in children (Nathanson, 1999; Nathanson, 2002). There is almost no literature on whether children in other parts of the world especially Africa and particularly Kenya acknowledge that their parents engage in any mediation practice.

CONCLUSION

Generally, this review has established that apart from America there is hardly any insight; 1) in parent's knowledge and perception of TV Content Ratings Systems put in place in various countries worldwide; 2) on factors that affect parents' interest, understanding and implementation of TV Content Ratings System; 3) into how parents implement parental guidance in practice given the varied nature of TV programs; 4)

on the different aspects that determine the type of mediation that different parents employ; 5) on whether children in other parts of the world especially Africa and particularly Kenya acknowledge that their parents engage in any mediation practice and 6) on how children in other parts of the world and interpret their parents' mediation messages. Therefore there is need for further research in the above mentioned six areas in the media effects area of journalism studies.

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AUTHOR

First Author

Catherine Kafu is a part time lecturer at Department of Communication Studies, School of Human Resource Development, Moi University (Kenya). She is also the Manager, Social Behavioural Team (SBT) Department at USAID-AMPATHPlus.

Correspondence Author

Catherine Kafu

Email: catekafu@gmail.com

Cell: +254725243852