

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Project Title: Familial Control of Mass Media Usage and Thai Adolescents' Psychological Characteristics.

Researchers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duangduen Bhanthumnavin (Head)
Instructor Miss Orapin Chuchom (Assist. Head)
Researcher Miss Supaporn Loyd

Office: Behavioral Science Research Institute
Srinakharinwirot University
Prasanmitr, Bangkok 10110
Tel. 258-4482

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The present study was designed to examine the correlates of adolescents' media use which could possibly be its cause and effect. The research objectives were threefolded. First, to investigate whether different types of parents would differ on their awareness of mass media influence on children and on the control of their children's media use. Secondly, to find the relationships between the amount of parental awareness and control, on one hand, with the quantity and quality of adolescents' media use. Thirdly, to observe the levels of 3 important psychological traits in the Thai adolescents who differ in their usage of television, radio and print. Six hypotheses were tested in this study.

The sample in this field study consisted of 1,600 child-parent units. The children were upper elementary (age 10-13 years)

and lower secondary (age 12-15 years) schools pupils. There were 780 boys and 820 girls from 7 schools in Bangkok and 11 schools in the provinces within the radius of 80 kilometers from Bangkok. The parents were first asked to respond to sets of questionnaires in a booklet while attending a school meeting. Afterwards (no later than one month) the children of these parents completed separate sets of questionnaires in their classroom.

There were 12 important parental variables: (1) awareness of the mass media influence on children (2) belief in the advantages of mass media for children (3) control of the child's media exposure (4) control of the child's comprehension of the media contents (5) control of the child's acceptance of media persuasion (6) providing children's books to the child at early age (7) love-oriented child-rearing practice (8) reasoning-oriented child-rearing practice. Each of these 8 variables were assessed by the use of rating-scale method. There were 10 items, each accompanied by a 6-unit rating scale. The sum of scores for each individual with the range of 10 to 60 scores was used in the statistical analyses. (9) level of parental education (10) economic status (11) working status and (12) parent-child daily contact assessed by multiple choiced questions and fill-in-the blanks items.

There were also 12 important child's variables: (1) amount of television's viewing (2) amount of radio's listening (3) amount of reading, in hours per week. Television's viewing was divided into sections in each of the 7 days of the week to prevent overestimation. (4) preference for positive television content (5) preference for positive radio content (6) preference for positive print content (7) attitude towards parental control of the mass media use (8) love-oriented practice (9) reasoning-oriented practice (10) Future Orientation trait (11) Belief in

Internal Locus of Control of Reinforcement. The 4th to 11th variables were assessed by the use of rating scale method, each consisting of 6 to 15 items with 6 unit rating scales. The sum of scores was used for each variable of each individual. (12) level of Moral Reasoning assessed by 10 dilemma each accompanied with 6 choices which corresponded to 6 levels of moral development in Kohlberg's theory. In addition, there were 16 more variables in this study which totalled up to 40 variables.

In this study, the statistical analysis of the data was carried out by computer. The Analyses of Variance, three-way Factorial design, the Multiple Regression Analyses with stepwise and the intercorrelation matrices were computed for the whole sample as well as for each of the subsamples categorized by some characteristics of the respondent and the family. In some parts of the statistical analysis, family was used as unit of analysis to examine the interpersonal relationships as typically used in Social Psychology.

There were 5 major research findings as follows:

First, it was found that 91% of the adolescents' households owned a television. In this group, the adolescents spent on the average of 25 hours per week viewing television, 11 hours per week listening to the radio and 4 hours and 30 minutes reading newspapers, books and magazines. However, not the amount of usage of the mass media as much as the quality of the preferred programs and contents by the adolescents that was found to be significantly related to other variables in this study.

Secondly, preferences for positive contents in the 3 types of mass media, namely television, radio and print were found to account for 20% of the variance in the Future Orientation scores, 8% in the Moral Reasoning scores and 6% in the Belief in Internal Locus of Control scores. One could also say that the higher the preferences for positive contents in the 3 media prevailed,

the more future-oriented, the more internally controlled and the higher in moral reasoning the adolescents became. In smaller scale, it was found that the adolescents who spent less time on television and radio and more time in reading than their peers scored higher on the traits mentioned above.

Third, concerning the awareness and control on the part of the parents and adolescents' media use, the results showed that the stronger the parental awareness and belief in benefits from the media, the more their children preferred positive radio programs. This finding was most evident in the families of highly educated parents. As for the parents who reported stronger control of their children's media use in 3 ways, their children were found to read more and to prefer positive printed content to a higher degree than their counterparts. This result was most evident in families with lower economic status. Furthermore, the adolescents who showed stronger preference for positive television programs also reported that their parents were more reasoning-oriented toward them. Nevertheless, two other variables which were found to be the most predictive of the adolescents' preferences for positive contents in the 3 types of media were children's attitudes towards parental control of media use and the amount of viewing of useful television programs with parents. These two variables together with other variables mentioned above could account for 18 to 25% of the variance of the preference scores for the 3 types of media.

Fourthly, it was evident in this study that the parents who reportedly controlled their children on the use of the 3 types of media to a high degree, were the ones to be highly aware of the media influence, to provide suitable printed matters for children at an early age and were the ones who strongly reported love-oriented and reasoning-oriented practices. All these variables together could account for 20 to 32% of the variability in the 3 control scores.

Finally the result showed that the parents who were less aware of the media influence were the ones with less education and low income. The parents of the secondary school children in Bangkok also had lower awareness scores than their counterparts. In addition, the parents who reported less reasoning-oriented practice and the ones who more recently became owner of a television set also had lower awareness scores.

From these results, many important implications and suggestions were offered for the better management of media content, the improvement of parental practices and for youth socialization and development. More importantly, the results from this study were expected to be more applicable to the newly widespread video usage.