



PARENTAL PERCEPTION TOWARDS CONTENT AND EFFECTS OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS ON CHILDREN

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Abstract: This study was conducted to investigate the parental perception of content and the effect of television programs on children. Multistage random sampling was used to collect the data from parents. The study consisted of 110 parents with children aged between 8-12 years as a sample of the study. A self-constructed questionnaire has been used to study the parental perception of television programs. For the analyses, collected data were tabulated and converted into percentages. Results indicate that parents believed that television programs have both appropriate and inappropriate content which affects children. Parents felt that boys watch more violent and aggressive programs in comparison to girls. Data also reveals that television viewing increases knowledge, curiosity, creativity, eating disorders, vision problem, aggression, and anti-social behavior. On the other hand, television viewing is responsible for decreasing study time, and physical and social activities. Television viewing did not affect verbal ability, sexual activity, attention span, inclusion toward substance abuse, and buying behavior of children.

Keywords- Television program, parental perception, television viewing, effect, children

1. Introduction

Television is a prominent part of a child's life due to its widespread use and ease of accessibility. Currie, (2004) found that children under twelve years spend more than 3-4 hours each day in front of the television screen. Children watch television because they want to be aware and get connected with different people all around the globe and for entertainment. Many important activities such as eating, reading, and playing are being performed in front of the television. Family conversation, relating the events of the day to parents has been replaced by television viewing. Television appears to work with the traditional agencies of socialization such as family, school, and religious organizations. Parents who have the responsibility of socializing children are concerned with the impact television may have on their wards. Television exposes the child to not only one's own culture but also to the culture of other countries. Television has a variety of programs that are based on western and southeast Asian countries.

Television programs play an important role in daily activities: it provides information about current affairs in the world, discover new lifestyles, validate ideas, beliefs, and aspirations, find answers to their questions and enhance their image of the self and their view of the world. Television has a unique opportunity to contribute to social connectedness, information, and vocabulary skills. It motivates children to think and helps them raise their interests in spending their free time efficiently, enlarge their scope of interest and living spaces and develop their aesthetic tastes.

Television which is the most popular entertainment device is also responsible for the wastage of many hours which could be utilized for academic work. Television is often the main source of information or misleading information and opinion. It certainly exposes the children to foreign cultures thereby casting doubts on national values. Foreign productions on television attract children and motivate them to accept behavior that does not match their cultural values and thus the cultural system collapses and the native language deteriorates. Higher frequency television viewing is associated with attention problems and hyperactivity in children Ansari and Crosnoe, (2015). Children may develop an inflated sense of danger because of violent news, such as killings and bombings (Sajjan, 2013). Aggression is often prevalent in most of the cartoons shown on television. Children's television-viewing habits have been reported to be associated with a variety of significant behavioral consequences leading to, obesity and poor eating habits, decreased physical activity and physical fitness, and impaired school performance (Kakamad and Fatah, 2018).

2. Objectives

1. To study the parental perception towards the content of television programs viewed by children.
2. To study the parental perception towards the effects of television viewing on children.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample- The study was carried out in Agra city of Uttar Pradesh. The sample comprised 110 parents of children aged 8-12 years who belong to the Agra district. Agra district comprises of total eight wards. Out of them, one ward namely 'Hariparwat' was purposively selected by the researcher. After the selection of the ward, two *Mohallas* namely *Kamla Nagar* and *Gandhi Nagar* were randomly selected. After the selection of *mohallas*, door to door visit was conducted to make a list of parents in the selected *Mohallas* who fulfilled the selection criteria i.e., Parents of children aged 8-12 years. From the list thus prepared 110 parents were selected randomly as subjects of the study. This research was based on a survey method and multistage random sampling was used for the data collection.

3.2 Tool - A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was drafted in English and Hindi language and contained two sections A (parental perception towards the content of television programs) and B (Parental perception towards effects of television viewing on children). This questionnaire contains 2 items in section A and 15 items in section B. Every question was to be replied to by ticking multiple options out of the given options. In this questionnaire, each item has been assessed individually. In light of the objectives of the study, the data were tabulated and converted into a percentage.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Background factors		N	%
Gender of child	Male	52	47.28
	Female	58	52.72
Education	Up to Intermediate	30	27.27
	Graduate	50	45.45
	Post Graduate	30	27.28
Socioeconomic Status	High socioeconomic status	31	28.18
	Middle socioeconomic status	51	46.36
	Low socioeconomic status	28	25.46

The Sample was selected from two *Mohallas* that are *Kamla Nagar* and *Gandhi Nagar*. From *Kamla Nagar* 56 parents (50.9 % of the total sample) and from *Gandhi Nagar* 54 parents (49.08 % of the total sample) were selected for data collection. Other sample details are evident in table 1.

4. Results and Discussion

As per the objectives of the present study, the analyses of data were described and reported in the following sections-

- Parental perception toward the content of television programs
- Parental perception towards the effect of television viewing on children in various areas

4.1 Parental perception towards the content of television programs viewed by children

Table 2. Appropriate content in television programs

Appropriate content	Parents of boys		Parents of girls		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Importance of family	41	37.27	52	47.27	93	84.54
Social unity	37	33.63	49	44.54	86	78.18
Truthfulness	39	35.45	48	43.63	87	79.09
Respect for elders	36	32.72	49	44.54	85	77.27
helping others	32	29.09	39	35.45	71	64.54
Sharing	31	28.18	39	35.45	70	63.63
Educational information	38	34.54	19	17.27	57	51.8
Creativity	30	27.27	17	15.45	47	42.72
Cultural importance	15	13.63	21	19.09	36	32.72

Source: Primary data

The result shows that most of the parents (37.27% parents of boys and 47.27% parents of girls) reported the television program viewed by their children helped them understand the importance of family. This table also reveals that more parents of girls felt that their daughters were watching appropriate television programs in comparison to their counterparts. While more parents of boys than girls reported that their sons watched educational programs that enhanced creativity and general knowledge (Table 2).

Table 3. Inappropriate content in television programs

Inappropriate content	Parents of boys		Parents of girls		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical aggression	49	44.54	45	40.90	94	85.45
Verbal aggression	45	77.27	36	32.72	81	73.63
Revengeful behavior	30	27.27	39	35.45	69	62.72
Dirty jokes	39	35.45	19	17.27	58	52.72
Drinking alcohol	29	26.36	19	17.27	48	43.63
Drugs use	21	19.09	11	10	32	29.09
Smoking cigarettes	19	17.27	10	9.09	29	26.36
Sexual activities	5	4.54	2	1.81	7	6.36

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows that parents reported that television programs contain inappropriate elements like physical aggression (85.45%), verbal aggression (73.63%), and revengeful behavior (62.72%). This data also indicates that more parents of boys reported that their sons watched inappropriate television programs than their counterparts. However, as per parents' view, more girls than boys have seen programs based on the revengeful theme. Perhaps the story of most daily soaps has a main female character that is revengeful. Therefore, more parents of girls reported that their daughters were seeing television programs based on the revengeful theme.

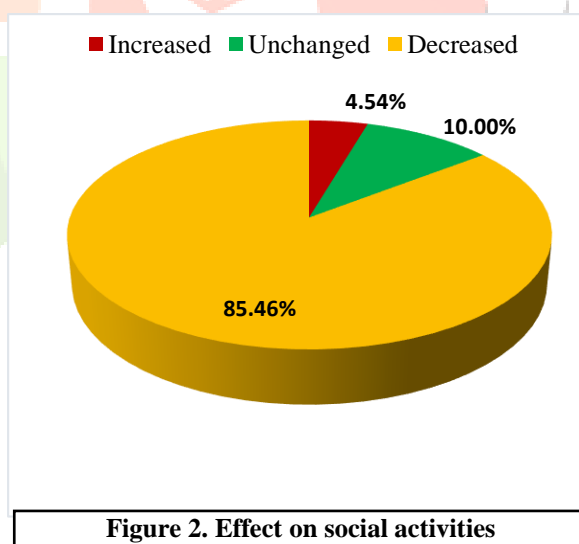
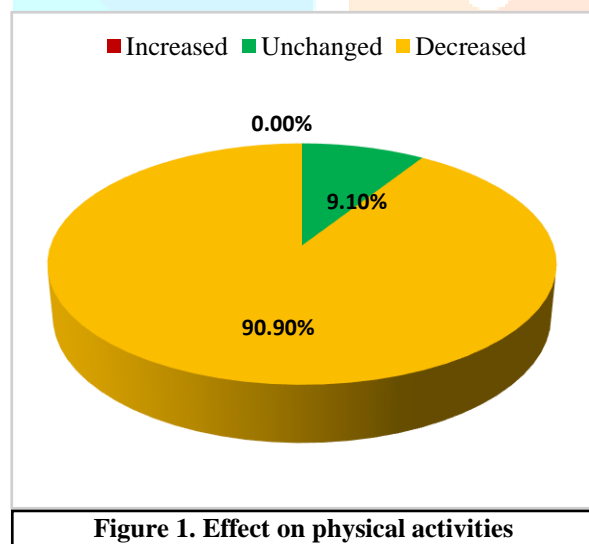
4.2 Parental perception towards effects of television viewing on children

Effect on physical activities:

Figure 1 shows the effect of television viewing on the physical activities of children. Most of the parents (90.90%) reported that television is responsible for reducing physical activities. Due to prolonged sitting in front of the television, the physical activity of their child has decreased. Some parents felt that their child was gaining weight because of television viewing.

Effect on social activities:

As can be seen from (Figure 2) 85.46% parents reported that their child's social activity time had considerably reduced due to watching television for long hours. Parents also felt that Child shows less interest in outdoor playing and social activities due to television viewing.

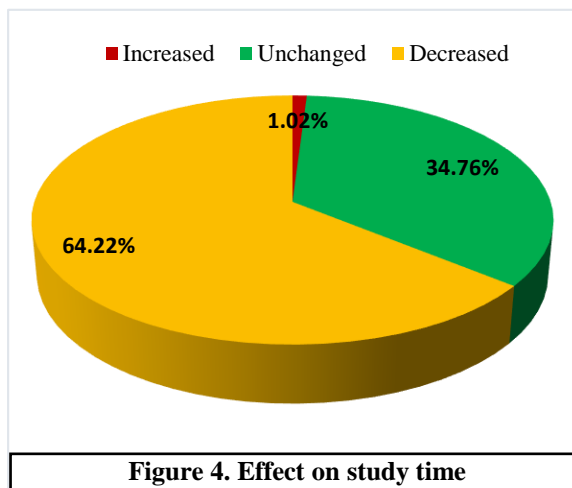
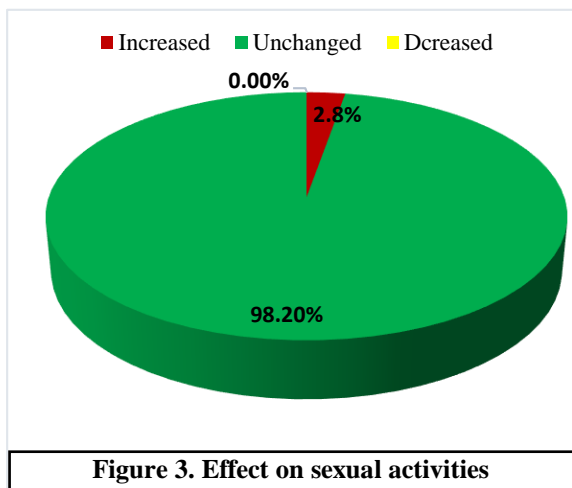


Effect on interest in sexual activities:

Most of the parents (98.20%) said that television did not affect their interest in sexual activities. Perhaps in Indian culture, programs with adult themes and content children are likely to view in the absence of parents therefore parents did not know about television content and its relationship with interest in sexual activity (Figure 3).

Effect on study time:

Figure 4 shows the effect of television viewing on study time. Most of the parents (64.22%) felt that because of increased hours of television viewing, their child's study time had decreased. Parents also said that their child's concentration on studies, grades, and school performance has also been affected due to television viewing.

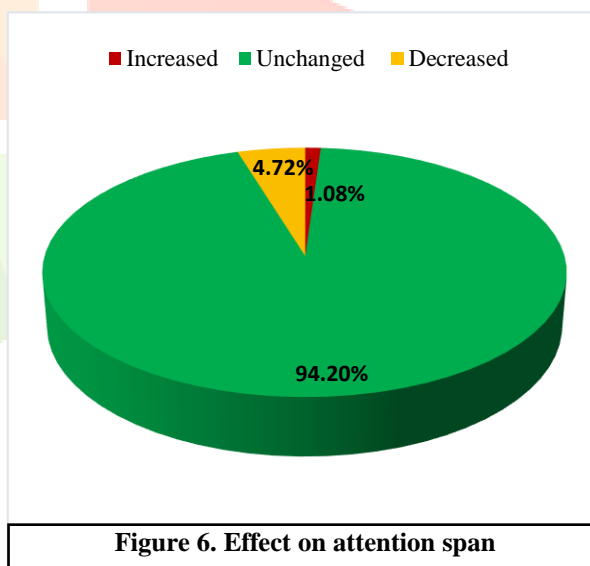
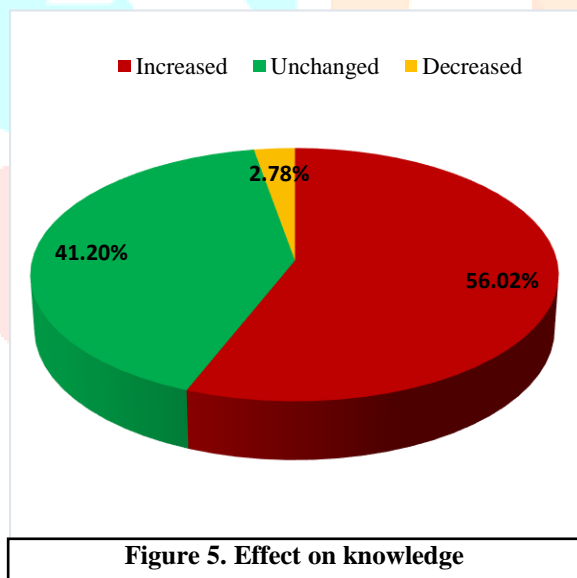


Effect on knowledge:

As can be seen from (Figure 5) 56.02% parents reported that their child’s knowledge had increased due to television viewing. Perhaps some children are likely to watch channels based on an educational theme like discovery, sports & epic, etc. Another 41.20 % parents felt that television viewing did not affect their child’s knowledge. Only 2.78% parents said that their child’s knowledge had decreased due to prolonged television viewing.

Effect on attention span:

Most of the parents (94.20%) felt that television viewing does not affect attention span. Another 4.72% parents reported that their child’s attention towards activities like playing, reading, talking and eating, etc. has been affected due to television viewing (Figure 6).

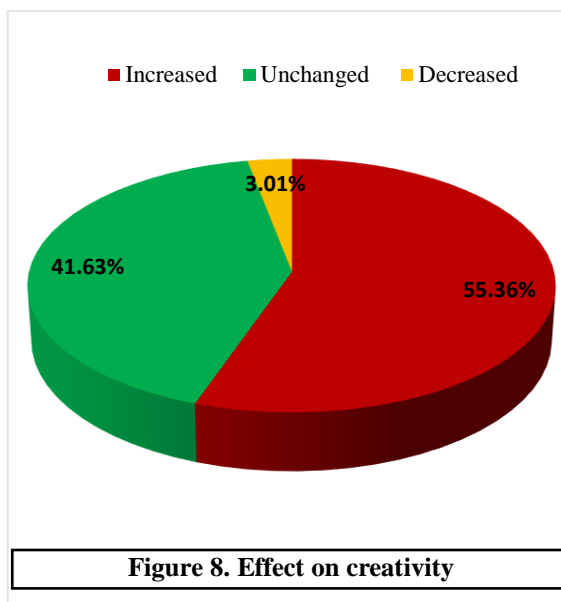
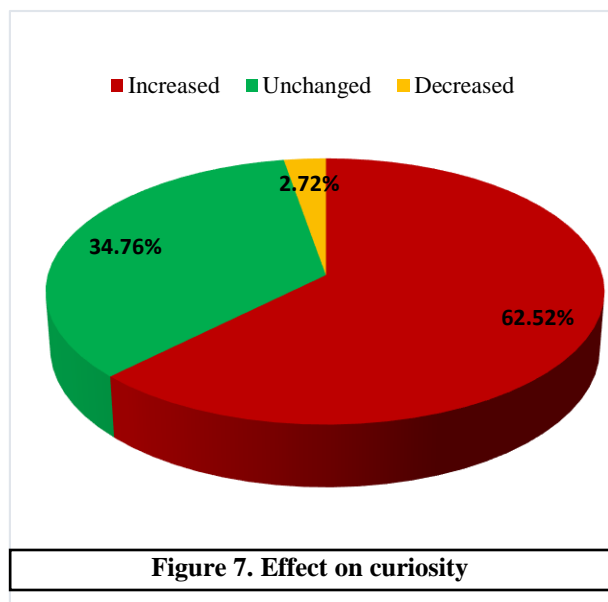


Effect on curiosity:

Most of the parents (62.52%) felt that their child’s curiosity level had increased due to watching a variety of characters and events in television programs. Another 34.76% parents felt that television viewing did not affect curiosity. Even some parents (2.72%) said that their child’s curiosity level toward social activities had decreased due to long hours of television viewing (Figure 7).

Effect on creativity:

Most of the parents (55.36%) said that watching different characters and events in television programs enriches the store of ideas which increases the creativity of children. They easily incorporate these ideas and thoughts into play, daily activities, and school work. Another 41.63 % parents felt that television viewing did not affect creativity. Only 3.01% parents stated that their child’s creativity had decreased. Perhaps television viewing may displace activities like playing and reading (Figure 8).



Effect on verbal ability:

Most of the parents (69.50%) stated that television viewing had not affected the verbal ability of their child. Another 20.50% parents reported that their child’s verbal ability has increased due to television viewing. Perhaps children learn new words and communication skills through watching television programs based on educational themes. Only 10% parents said that television viewing is responsible for reducing verbal ability (Figure 9). Similar results were reported by Takeuchi, et.al (2015).

Effect on motivation for buying:

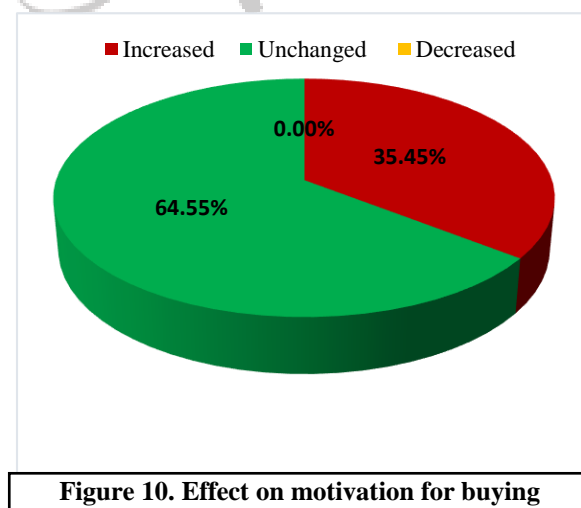
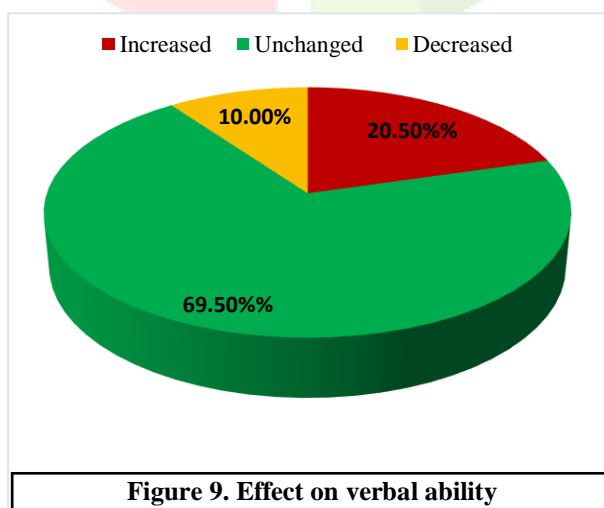
Figure 10 shows the effect of television viewing on buying behavior of children. Most of the parents (64.55%) reported that television viewing did not affect buying behavior. Similarly, very few parents (35.45%) stated that television viewing increases buying behaviour. The reason for this belief probably lies in the fact that children seldom see advertisements. During the time when the advertisement is aired, they generally change the channel.

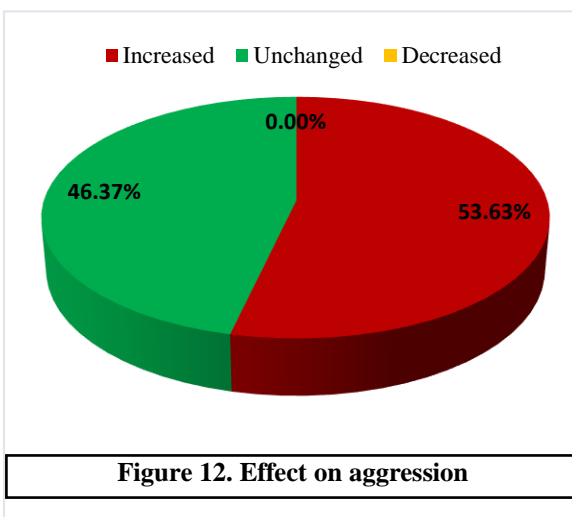
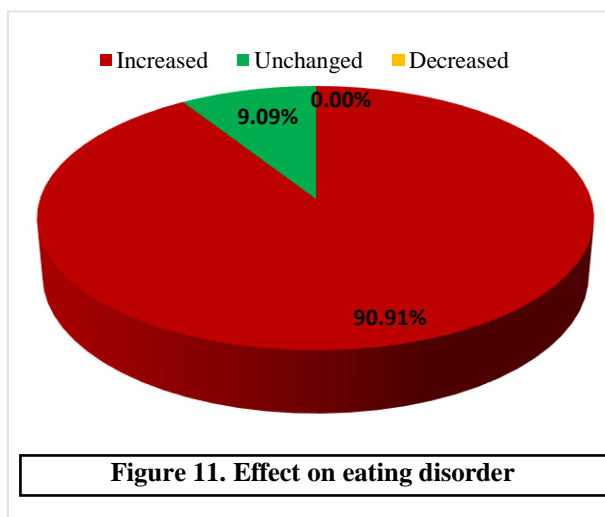
Effect on eating disorders:

Figure 11 reveals that 90.91% parents reported that television viewing increases eating disorders. This may be because children develop the habit of munching while watching television which often results the eating more than needed. None of the parents felt that television viewing decreases eating disorders.

Effect on aggression:

Most of the parents (53.63%) reported that the child’s aggression towards others had increased due to television viewing. They also said that most television programs show violent acts, aggression, and war casualties which increases aggressive behaviour in children. Moreover, they also felt that children also like to watch programs based on violent and aggressive themes (Figure 12).





Effect on vision problems:

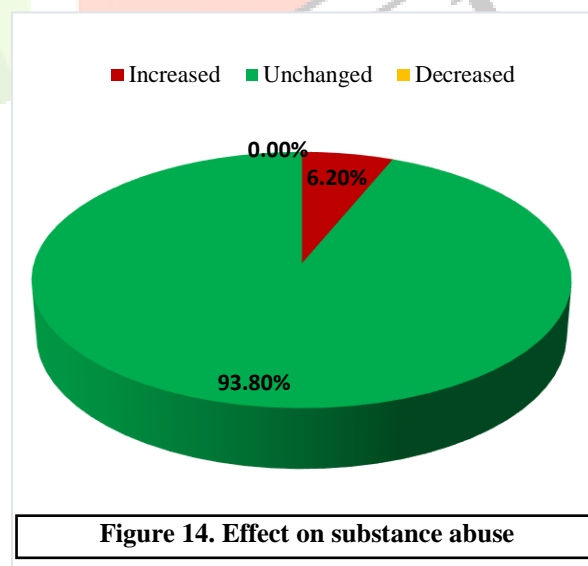
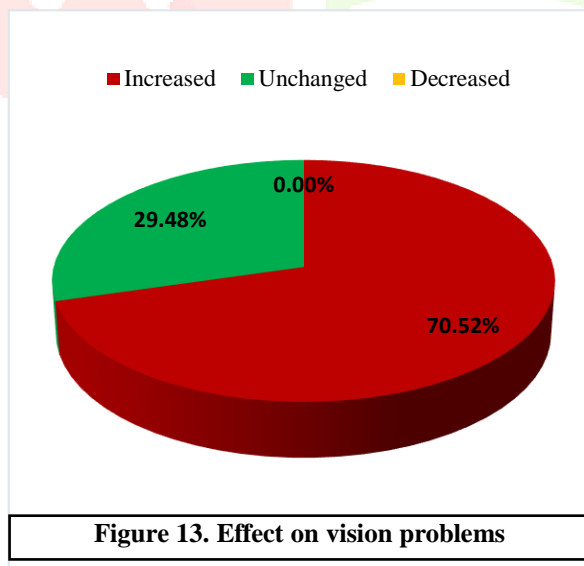
Most of the parents reported that their child’s vision has been affected due to long hours and close viewing of television in dim light. Another 29.48% parents in the present study reported that their child’s vision has not been affected due to television viewing (Figure 13).

Effect on substance abuse:

Figure 14 shows that 93.88% parents reported that television viewing is not responsible for substance abuse. Parents also said that their child’s inclusion towards substance abuse has not been affected due to television viewing. This may be because parents are not aware of all activities of children. Another 6.20% parents felt that television programs and movie characters promote and motivate children’s inclusion towards substance abuse. Brook, et al. (2008) also found that watching television serves as an indication of increased exposure to nicotine and drug dependence.

Effect on anti-social behavior:

The data can be seen from (figure 15) 53.64 % parents reported that television viewing is not responsible for anti-social behavior. Another 43.36 % parents said that they had observed anti-social behaviors in their children due to television viewing. Even some parents felt that their child had become more violent and aggressive towards others.



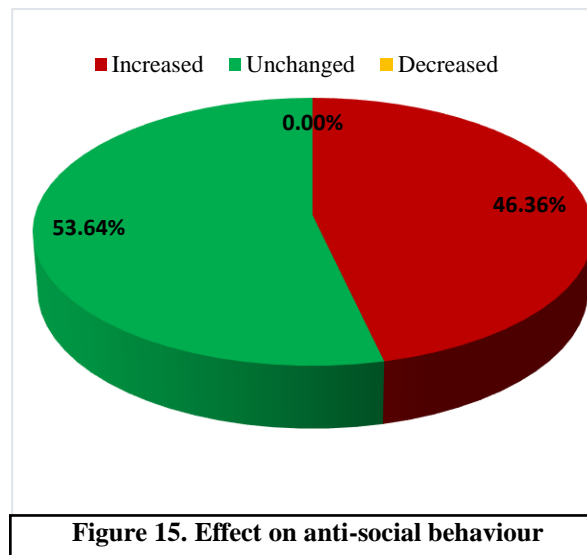


Figure 15. Effect on anti-social behaviour

5. Conclusion

In modern culture, television viewing is an important part of life because children depend on television for entertainment, sports, education, and news. It has both positive and negative effects on children. Television offers lots of benefits such as keeping updated about the world, improving vocabulary and communication skills, enhancing knowledge about sports, science, culture, events, and more, developing skills and new ideas, etc. Excessive and uncontrolled television viewing has a negative effects on children including vision problems, violent and aggressive behavior, overweight and obesity, poor academic performance, lack of communication and eating disorders, etc. Additionally, it also makes children addicted. Television addiction affects their social life as well as their development. Therefore, parents must be monitored and set the limit of television viewing.

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