

CHILD IN THE NEWS NETWORK

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Purpose

This research aims at discovering how children are under effect of the news while they are being prepared, even the children themselves are not considered as main mass audience.

Up to now, the publications and broadcastings such as cartoons, serials and movies have been studied carefully in all researches about media and children. Our purpose is to analyze the news with the eyes of child, to analyze the news that everybody accepts them as real information.

Because we need every kind of information about what's going on around the world.

Our another purpose is to remind news editors and news gate-keepers that children also are among the consumers.

Methodology

The research was realized in 1995 and in 1999, on 509 students, classified in two different age group.

In 1995, 188 students in 5-7 age group joined this research. And in 1999, 321 students in 5-7 age group were questioned. Students drew pictures describing the news and replied some questions. So we were able to understand the effect of the news on children who showed some comparative development according to their age.

In the context of Swiss scientist Mr. Jean Piaget's "Theory of Cognitive Development", the period up to 7 years of age was adopted as period that child begins to recognize the objects with simple symbols and develops the mother language.

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Children who joined in the first research were demanded to draw news pictures. Then the drawings that symbolizes the news were studied. In questionnaire, this group who doesn't know how to write and how to read, were spoken face to face.

As I mentioned before, 321 children joined the second part of this research. 92 of them whose ages are vary between 10 and 12 were demanded to draw the news picture and put a caption on them. Because this group was able to develop classification capability and identification the objects with simple words.

These 321 children were demanded to reply the questions in the written form. Because they knew how to read and write at these ages.

Findings of the Research in 1995

Our purpose was to watch the children how they drew an abstract concept such as the news with concrete tool. Out of the 188 students, only 45 percent (83 children) was able to draw the picture of the news. The news symbols used in pictures were; bomb, gun, blood stained knife, ambulance, smashed cars, charred house, burning forest and people who shoot.

These objects and figures drawn in 93 percent of pictures were showing the violence and terror in the news.

Exclusive Responses

"What is the news according to you?" or "What can you say about the news?". Some responses to these questions carry some exclusive meanings in this inquiry which was handled by 5-7 age group. Because of this, we had to comment them separately.

A girl who aged 6, responded, "If you say me the news I say pity". The news which contain every kind of negative transmission, the horror and almost every affair which resulted death, was described with only a word by this girl: Pity

This was the open answer to the news producers.

The same question was answered by another 6-year old boy with this sentence: "It's just like watching a malicious movie." The news had been identical to a horror movie film.

The rebellion of a girl who aged 6, was disguised in this sentence: "I don't like to watch the news" The reason of this answer was the news contained much more violence.

Evaluation of Inquiry (1995)

The inquiry, implemented to 188 children who aged between 5 and 7 and who represented middle and upper level income class consisted of 9 questions. And the purpose was to make clear the effect of behavior, perception and emotion of the children.

41 percent of the children who replied to inquiry remembered negative images when the news is purported. Remembrance negative information amongst the boys was 6 percent higher than girls.

"What is the most important news?" The answers of this question were "war-death" and "accident-death".

Especially Bosnia and Herzegovina and Chechen Wars were the most important events for 70 percent of the 7 age group in 1995.

When you asked them to express with only one word, 43 percent of the children said it was "real" while 32 percent said it was "frightening".

This was the ultimate result. The child had a perception that the news was "frightening reality".

The main news obtaining medium is TV. Therefore, the effect of the news can be said as the effect of the TV. 58 percent of the children believes that TV is the main source of the news.

This shows that TV's hegemony on the children is obvious. 13 percent of them believes the mother as a main news source while 12 percent chooses the father.

The research brought to light some realities too. 20 percent of the children was alone in front of the TV. One of every 5 children was subjected to TV education. A child without an adult next to him/her is more impressed by TV while watching the news. Child is going very easily under TV hegemony without any protection of his/her life experience.

At the end of this research, we observe that children learns the news as a frightening concept coming from TV. Children grow as passive individuals who are afraid of realities of life because of TV.

Findings of 1999 Research

As mentioned earlier, out of the 321 children, 92 of them who represented between 10 and 12 age group were demanded to draw the news pictures on March 1999.

They knew how to use words properly and how to classify the objects. The objects and figures used in purported pictures were smashed cars, burning forest, houses in flames, war planes, people who shot animals, criminal court, national assembly, police car, ambulance, people who committed suicide, coffins etc. The objects and figures in this group were identical to the first group students. Sometimes they wrote on the pictures in order to support their drawings.

For example, 2 children who aged 11, chose the assembly as the news topic and put a caption like this: "Policy, empty boiler" and "What a pity, they govern us" Both of them were signalling that policy was not trustworthy.

The words that children used them as a caption were brutality, curse, terror, fire, collapse, war, accident, massacre, helplessness, panic, bandits, attack, death, etc. All of these words contain non-affirmative meanings. 95.3 percent of these drawings were telling us negative messages.

Remember the first part of the research. 93 percent of the children between 5 to 7 age group who could draw, had made pictures with negative contents. This has shown us that even in further ages, this pessimistic trend would continue.

Exclusive Responses

In the second part of this study we have to relay the children's exclusive responses to you. Here are the answers to the question of "How would you describe the news?"

"The news tells us catastrophe. The news is death, is frightening. Very dangerous things come to my mind. The news is the source of sorrow. Killing people and animals is the news. I get confused while listening or watching news.

The Evaluations of Inquiry (1999)

An inquiry was realized amongst the 321 children whose 126 of them are female. A period of 45 minutes were given to the students in order to answer 12 different questions.

While talking about the news, first image coming to mind was "negative concept". The percentage was 22.5. 67 percent of the students was struggling to describe the news.

The description of the news with one word was "It's real". The percentage was 35.

14 percent of the 7-12 age group loaded the educational function to the news. 7.5 percent was saying it was frightening.

At further ages, frightening factor in the news was ceding to the educational factor. But this was the beginning of another period, a "dissensitization" period.

74.5 percent was learning the news from the TV and 24.2 percent was preferring newspapers. Share of the radio was only 1.2 percent. As for credibility. TV protects its first position with 41.7 percent. The newspapers follow TV with 26 percent.

However in the first research, 5-7 age group was saying that the second credible news source was mother. In this research mother fell to third position. The credible person with 11.5 percent was teacher and with only 3 percent was father.

The Result

The news full of violence, meet the needs of media. 5-7 age group children who joined the research where saying that they were afraid of the news. The children of second part say that they are educated by the news.

But this is the education of violence because the children of the second part were drawing violence symbols and words in their pictures. And this fact shows us that dissensitization replaces with fear.

The most important finding of research is that all the children are alone in front of the TV screen in a rising trend. This children that their parents don't protect, are thrown in the hands of news producers. In our country approximately 3 million children are caught alone in the news network.

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