

TV violence related issues in Yerevan:  
Assessment of children's exposure to media violence;  
Exploration of parents' opinions, attitudes, and knowledge  
about TV as an influential factor on health and behavior of  
children

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October 1999

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## **Abstract**

This paper addresses the problem of TV violence and its negative influence on children's behavior.

The research data are persuasive that high levels of television violence viewing are causally related to aggressive behavior, acceptance of aggressive attitudes, and desensitization to violence. TV violence also leads to "victim" effects such as increased fear, sleeping problems, and nightmares.

Since the Independence of Armenia there has been a dramatic increase of violent programming on Armenian TV. Thus, TV violence related issues in Armenia are to be investigated.

The study aims of the project are to assess children's exposure to media violence, viewing patterns, the amount of violent messages on TV; to explore parents attitudes towards TV, and their perception of TV as a potential endangering factor of their children's health.

The data was gathered from two sources: 15 in-depth interviews with mothers and TV monitoring of 8 channels. The data was gathered from July 4 to September 20.

## **Introduction**

Television and other media represent one of the most important and underrecognized influences on health and behavior of children of the 1990s (12).

The harmful effects of TV, particularly of large amount of violence have generated major concerns among many parents, educators and health professionals (5).

The harmful effects of viewing television violence are divided into three main categories. The first is the learning of aggressive behaviors and attitudes through observation and imitation, which leads to real-life aggression. The second harmful effect is emotional desensitization that leads to hardened attitudes about violence directed to others and decreased interest in victims of violence. The third negative effect is increased fear. Viewing violence can lead to nightmares, sleeping problems and make children being afraid of becoming a victim of violence (5).

In addition to violence, sex-depicted scenes, sexual references, innuendos, and jokes generate concerns too as having potential impact on teenagers' sexual behavior and attitudes (12).

In general, regardless of the content of TV programs, TV exerts a significant displacement effect: less time is spent on physical activity, reading, and interactions with family members and friends.

TV violence is an important public health issue to be studied in Armenia. During Soviet times there was only state television that limited violent programs. Now, with a lot of private TV stations there has been a dramatic increase in violent programming. As a result, Armenian children have become exposed to deforming effects of TV violence with potential risk of obtaining aggressive behavior. In contrast to USA, Canada and many European countries TV violence is not considered as a public health problem in Armenia and no actions are undertaken to decrease or moderate children's exposure to violent programming. Due to lack of TV programs content regulations by government and public awareness of harmful effects of TV violence children's exposure to TV seems to be uncontrolled. Therefore, there is need to explore current TV violence related issues in order to shape appropriate strategies of dealing with the problem.

## **The objectives of the study**

The study aims of the project are to assess children's exposure to media violence, viewing patterns, the amount of violent messages on TV; to explore parents' attitudes towards TV, and their perception of TV as a potential endangering factor for their children's health.

## **Background information**

The problem of TV violence has been studied since the early days of television. There have been done over 3000 studies in four decades. The majority of findings established a causal link between the violence on TV and real violence (15).

In 1975 the article “Effects of Television on Children and Youth” written by Rothenberg first alerted the medical community to the deforming effects the viewing of TV violence has on normal child development, increasing levels of physical aggressiveness and violence (2). Since that time the following organizations have reviewed the literature and concluded that there is a demonstrated link between violent entertainment and violent behavior: the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatricians, the American Psychological Association, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Surgeon General’s Office, and the National Institute of Health (13).

According to Harvard University developmental psychologist Ronald G. Sleby young viewers of violent messages can experience the following effects: aggressor effect (the heightened likelihood of violent behavior); victim effect (increased fearfulness about becoming a victim); and a bystander effect (increased callousness toward violence directed at others) (4).

Children experience victim effect as they find some of the images frightening. They may develop anxiety, phobic reactions, short-lived nightmares and other sleeping problems (1).

Television violence may have an impact on children in four ways. First, it may make children want to imitate what they see. Second, TV violence may affect children by reducing learnt inhibitions against violent behavior. Third, violent messages desensitize them to violence through repetition. Fourth, TV violence increases arousal (1).

The study on physiological responses of preschool children to TV programs showed that exposure to fast-paced, colorful, full of violence cartoons compared with slow, prosocial cartoons has significant effects in development of arousal. The danger of this arousal is that it is perceived as pleasurable, fulfilling an “elemental arousal need”, which means that TV viewers enjoy the violence shown on TV. Thus, TV can be considered as a one of the ecologically significant stressors of physiologic responses, such as increased heart rate etc. Excessive psychological reactivity is believed to potentiate atherosclerosis, and may exert a pathogenic effect during childhood. In addition, excessive stressors may play a role in the etiology of essential hypertension (6).

The power of television violence has been explored through behavioral research. Bandura applied social learning theory to support the link between TV violence and aggressive behavior. According to this theory humans learn ways of behaviors and its appropriateness directly from observing real life as well as

indirectly through the mass media. In the “ Bobo doll” experiment children were exposed to the film in which an adult behaved aggressively with dolls. After viewing these children played more aggressively with the Bobo doll than those children who were not exposed to the film. Further similar research with nursery school children and college students validated the experiment (8).

To explain how television affects children Centerwall emphasized the role of imitation in children’s development. The ability and desire to imitate other’s behavior is one of the most useful instincts of a developing child. It has been shown that neonates a few hours old can imitate an array of adult facial expressions (2). In an experiment infants 14 months old repeated the behaviors they observed on TV (10).

In addition, majority of the children of 3, 4 years old are not able to distinguish fact from fantasy in television programs (2).

Many longitudinal studies have demonstrated the correlation between exposure to TV violence and increased aggressiveness on the community level. After introduction of television to communities (for example, South Africa) homicides rates have significantly increased (2).

### Aggression

Aggression as a problem-solving behavior is learned early in life and is resistant to change. Many variables, except TV viewing, are involved in learning to behave aggressively. Constitutional, parental, educational and other environmental, for example, being a victim or witness of violence contribute to the establishment of an antisocial type of behavior. The most plausible model to explain the association between TV violence and actual violence is an interaction model. In this model viewing and aggression affect each other and are stimulated by other variables (1).

### Viewing patterns

Viewing patterns play an important role in obtaining of antisocial type of behavior. One of them is length of exposure. In a study done by a team at Temple University imprisoned young males and males from the general population were surveyed. The data showed that imprisoned males when they were children watched TV twice as much than the general population. Twenty two – thirty four % of imprisoned males said that they had consciously imitated crime techniques learned from TV programs. The Commission on Violence and Youth of the American Psychological Association communicated their conclusion derived from this and other studies. The conclusion was that viewing and hearing high levels of violence on television day after day were correlated with increased acceptance of aggression and more aggressive behavior. It was also mentioned that absence of moderating and meditating of what is seen on the screen, and parents’ supervision contributes to this correlation as well. The group of children who have little parental input is at higher risk (7).

### Context

Context is an essential aspect of television violence. There are certain ways in which violence is depicted that pose the greatest risk on viewers (14).

Social science researchers pointed six distinct characteristics of violent content in films and their potential effects on viewers (15)

*Reward for violence* When a violent act is rewarded or unpunished, viewers may obtain attitudes supportive of aggressive behavior.

*Reality of violence* Children are more influenced by movies that depict violence realistically. The more humanly possible violent acts are portrayed the more likely they are to be imitated.

*Violent Role Models* Children are more likely to imitate characteristics whose use of violence is portrayed as necessary or attractive.

*Justified violence* When acts of violence are justified they are more likely to be copied.

*Violent connections* Children who find similarity between them and character in a film are more likely to imitate violent acts in real life.

*Amount of violence* Excessive exposure to TV violence might produce a psychological blunting of normal emotional responses to violent events.

According to a study by the US- Santa Barbara Center for Communication and Social Policy 60% of overall TV programs in 1996 contained scenes of violence. The majority of the violent scenes showed no remorse or criticism of violent acts, no pain and almost no other long-term negative consequences from the use of violence (9).

According to the National Television Violence Study the context in which violence is presented has the following patterns: perpetrators go unpunished in 73% of all violent scenes; the negative consequences of violence are not often portrayed; one out of four violent interactions involve the use of handguns; only 4% of violent programs emphasizes an anti-violent theme (14).

Explicit or graphic violence showing blood and gore contributes to desensitization and can enhance fear (14).

There is a “reality based” trend in making movies and TV programs now. Reenactment of real crimes is used or actual violence is shown (4). The most common topics of TV entertainment are crime, physical murders, police cases, emergency services, international terrorism, and war. The violent scenes are played out realistically, usually accompanied by music or other sound effects (7).

Unlike horror films of past generations, the films of the new generation portray lots of violence in graphic details (13).

A team of Johns Hopkins researchers surveyed 700 Baltimore area high school children. Many students reported disturbing reactions to too much blood and gore. They experienced anxious feelings, bad dreams and nightmares, fears of being alone, and some somatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches (17).

Another trend of entertainment programs is combination of violence (splatter of gore, bullets and car-crash scenes) and sex (with hostility in sexual relationships). In contrast to TV of 1970-s, where sex was left to people who were in love, TV of 1990-s consists of recreational sex, sometimes presented as positive for teenagers (3).

Sex presented in TV entertainment may have a negative influence on children as it teaches them that a person can have sex with as many partners as he wants and there are no consequences for that kind of irresponsible behavior. AIDS, sex education, birth control or abortions are seldom mentioned in TV programs and film (3).

In a study of 75 adolescent girls, half pregnant and half non-pregnant, the pregnant girls watched more "soap operas" before becoming pregnant and were less likely to think that heroes of "soap operas" would use contraceptives (12).

Music videos often use sex, ultimately dehumanizing women's images and encouraging violence. Women are portrayed as nymphomaniacs, thinking only about sex. Violent themes are implied by depictions of whips and chains. A 1992 study of 750 MTV videos found out that 60% of the videos contained explicit violence, suggestive violence, degrading sexual portrayals, sexually suggestive themes, profanity, smoking and alcohol consumption (4).

Music is considered as a powerful tool that can change thinking. As music is more interactive than passive viewing it has greater ability to shape ideas and popularize behavior (3).

Technological advances such as satellite and cable television and interactive computer games makes access to violent images easier for children (3).

Although the effects of video games on children need further investigations, there is a concern that video games have even more harmful effects than passive viewing (4).

In addition, the huge amount of time children spent watching TV or playing video games represent the time they could dedicate to imaginary play, reading, and other creative activities. School children watch TV at the expense of doing well at school. Research studies stated the negative effect of more than two hours of TV viewing per day on academic performance (12).

As television is a business, it is not surprising that major themes of commercial television are violence and sex (13). The Television industry is interested in maximizing audiences and sells them to advertisers. Thus, the TV industry is not concerned with issues of quality of programs and social

responsibilities. Violence on TV is used as a tool to generate large audiences that can be sold to advertisers (2).

Producers of TV programs ascertain that scenes of violent actions accompanied with fear-striking music hold viewers' attention, keeps them awake, and makes them less likely to switch channels. Thus, in order to have more commercial value, programs should consist of violent actions. The TV industry can be compared with an individual who seeks only his own profit, lacks respect for others, and feels no sense of public trust (7).

Although the American Medical Association, House of Delegates passed the resolution that TV violence threatens the health and welfare of youngsters in 1976, violent programs continue their explosive growth (13). Levels of TV violence have been monitored in the U.S. for over 20 years: no downward movement was observed (2).

Most recently, the National Television Violence Study examined nearly 10,000 hours of TV programming throughout 3 years. The main finding of the study was that none of the key indicators of violence in the media changed, despite widespread public concern (12).

For these reasons, there is no sense to make recommendations (to produce programs that avoid violence, show more negative consequences of violence, increase portrayals of non-violent heroes, etc.) to television industry (2).

To appeal to TV industry to reduce the amount of violent programs can endanger such democratic fundamentals as freedom of expression and freedom from censorship. However, these concerns do not prevent huge disagreements over censorship and the degree to which the television industry should be free (4).

Content regulation of TV programs can be performed through V-chips. TV sets fitted with these devices can allow parents to instruct v-chips to block programs containing violence or sex beyond the level they consider acceptable. To block out a program, part of each electronic signal that produces a TV image would be used to send the chip a warning that a violent message is going to appear (11).

In contrast to the U.S.A., the use of v-chips in Europe seems to be impractical as it requires a pan-European rating system for violence to encode the programs. In addition, there are technical difficulties for encoded signals to reach homes. As TV sets last for at least ten years, it would take some time before the majority of sets would be fitted with v-chips (11).

Television networks are sometimes labeling violent programs with warnings so that parents could prevent their children from watching them. However, such warnings are not always useful. For example, children who are at home alone could watch violent scenes (16). There is an opinion that no rating system can be useful due to some inconsistencies, for example, each program may deserve labels on an episode-by-episode basis (9). There is a concern that rating system would not be able to distinguish between the

violence of “Shinndler’s List” (type of movie which is more educational) and “The Terminator” (type of movie which is more entertainment).

According to the children’s TV advocate Peggy Charren labels and public announcements may have opposite effect by attracting children and teenagers to watch programs labeled as violent (4).

#### Public health intervention

Children’s exposure to television and television violence should become part of the public health agenda with a simple statement: for children less TV is better, especially violent TV. Part of public health approach should be to promote other activities rather than TV watching (2).

Health care professionals’ role are essential in educating the public regarding optimal TV viewing habits. Health care professionals should make the information on TV viewing available for parents, as a part of a standard health care package (8).

The American Academy of Pediatricians recommends that pediatricians advise parents to minimize TV viewing hours of their children and limit TV viewing to 1 or 2 hours per day, monitor their children's use of media and coview television with children (2). The American Academy of Pediatrics has a pamphlet entitled "Television and the Family". This pamphlet offers practical guidelines to parents about TV use and is available from pediatricians (5).

Another example of health care professionals’ involvement is a guidelines for parents developed by Minnesota Medical Association. The guidelines help parents to reduce their children’s exposure to the media violence. Minnesota physicians should discuss the guidelines with parents and have it available in their offices (13).

Another way of intervention and educating the public on issues of TV violence is to organize public health campaigns in schools. This is one point of the proposal for regulation made by National Coalition on Television Violence (4).

One of the recommendations based on findings of the National Television Violence study, 1994-95 is to implement school-based interventions in order to target young audiences from 8 to 13 years old who may be more responsive to violent messages (14).

Health care professionals may cooperate with educators to target parents by organizing presentations at Parent-Teacher Association meetings (8).

On a personal level, parents can guide what their children watch and how much. Parents provided with information on the deforming effects of different kinds of violent programs on children, rating systems and labeling would have more opportunities to supervise and change children’s viewing patterns (2). Families can work together to chose appropriate programs for their children. A TV guide can help with this selection (5).

Recommendations for parents based on the National Television Violence Study, 1995-1994 include the following points:

- 1) parents should watch TV with their children to determine the suitability of programs and explain what is being viewed;
- 2) parents should encourage critical evaluation of programs content, by asking children's opinion;
- 3) parents should consider children's developmental level when making viewing decisions;
- 4) parents should be aware of the potential risk of viewing television violence;
- 5) parents should recognize that different kinds of violent programs pose different risk (14).

Parents can also encourage other activities such as exercise, reading, playing board games, and puzzles. To have a better possibility to monitor children's viewing patterns parents can place TV set in a central place of home. It is not recommended that children have TV sets in their bedrooms (18).

### TV related issues in Armenia

The problem of TV violence and its deforming effects on children's development has become relevant to Armenia. Armenian television being in the transitional stage and lacking the appropriate legal framework contains a lot of violent programs.

Armenian television consists of one state channel (Armenian Channel 1) and numerous independent local television stations. According to information from the Yerevan office of Internews, during the first part of 1998 22 local independent television stations were working (19). The number of local TV stations might have been changed since 1998. As each region have its own local TV station, the exact number is difficult to obtain (20).

Armenian channel 1 and Nork have the whole nation as a potential audience. Russian channels, ORT and RTR, are highly accessible stations. According to the Hekimian study conducted in 1997, 94% of respondents owned televisions and 94% had access to transmissions of Armenian Channel 1. The second and the third most accessible stations were ORT and RTR (19).

Access to local independent television stations and Russian NTV and TV6 is difficult to determine as Soviet-style televisions, which are incapable of receiving UHF or decimeter, are still used in the population. According to the Internews melteks -A1+, AR, Lotos, MTV -44 TV stations have a potential audience of 130,000 each (19). MH has a potential audience of 600,000 according to its advertisement.

Advertisements and private donations support local independent channels. Censorship on TV does not exist because of freedom of speech and press. Each channel has its own criteria of what is appropriate to broadcast. For example, Armenia channel censors sex depicted scenes (20).

One third of all households in Yerevan has 2 televisions; the rest have one television (21).

A group of AUA students conducted survey ("TV & We") in 1997 among pupils and students of the Ajaryan University and students of AUA. Among 7 channels offered in the questionnaire ORT, RTR, and AR were the three most preferred channels.

Among preferred TV programs the first position from the top occupied movies, the second - musical programs. On the question whether TV influences the shaping of their world-out-look, way of thinking or taste 42% of respondents answered positively (22).

In 1998 the majority of adolescents (participants of the Yerevan focus groups) mentioned that they had 2 televisions at home. Many of them said that they had televisions in their own rooms.

Adolescents reported 4 hours of TV watching daily. They also stated that they could watch whatever they want (19).

Armenian adolescents are interested in crimes and policy affairs: participants most often named the "02" – weekly crime newspaper of newspapers and magazines they read. (19).

When participants were asked to name people they like or respect Jean-Claude Van Dam was mentioned (19).

Movies with Jean-Claude Van Dam and other action movies like "Rambo", "The Terminator", and "Mortal Combat" are often shown on Armenian TV. For example, channel Armenia broadcasted "Mortal Combat" at 18:00 (June 17, 1999).

"Mortal Combat" is the best-selling video game of all time in which the object is not just killing the opponent, but mastering the skills to do it more and more viciously. (13).

Due to the growing video game facilities in Armenia, children have become exposed to violent video games such as "Mortal Combat".

"Tom and Jerry kids" cartoons are rated as having a lot of violence (on the list these cartoons occupied third place from the top) and are very common on Armenian TV.

## **Methods**

Data collected for the study consists of two components: qualitative (In-depth interviews) and quantitative (TV monitoring).

In-depth interviews as a method of exploratory qualitative research were chosen since there is little information regarding TV issues in Armenia. The qualitative data was gathered in order to obtain information regarding children's viewing patterns, their daily activities, behaviors and interests; and parents' attitudes towards TV, their perception of TV as a potential endangering factor for their children's health.

The data collection was conducted by the investigator from August 19 to September 17 in Yerevan.

For the qualitative part of the study 15 in-depth interviews were done. Mothers who have at least one child between 4-13 years old were considered eligible for the study.

General demographic information was collected for all participants. The age of women ranged from 26 to 44, with a mean age of 35. All participants live in Yerevan. Half of the women participating in the study are currently unemployed. The majority of participants have two children, one participant - three children, and the rest - one child.

Mothers were chosen because they spend more time with children and are engaged in child rearing more than fathers are.

The age interval (4-13) was chosen since the children of this age are more responsive to violent messages. Although children of 2,3 years old are responsive to violent messages too it was not possible to include them in the study. After pre-tests with mothers of children of different ages it was found that the interview guide is not applicable for children smaller than 4 years old.

Information about 19 children (10 girls and 9 boys) of the established age category was included in the study.

To have a sample of 15 women convenience-sampling technique was used. At first, friends and neighbors were contacted and then a snowball technique was used. In the majority of cases, preliminary contacts were made by phone and then the time and place of the meetings were arranged.

The drawback of the chosen method is that the sample is not representative for the whole Yerevan population.

Before participation each women read and signed an informed consent form. (Appendix, A).

The guide was designed for about a one-hour-conversation.

The interview guide consisted of 13 questions that covered the following topics: (Appendix, A)

1. TV viewing patterns of the whole family in particular children's viewing patterns
2. children's daily activities and interests
3. parents opinion regarding TV programs, their concerns regarding suitability of TV programs for children
4. parents' knowledge about TV violence issues, their attitudes towards violent scenes, the way parents deal with the problem of TV violence.

During the interview notes were taken. After the interview was completed, during the same day notes were expanded and then translated from Armenian into English.

In order to analyze the data, the interviews were coded. The codes represented the topics of research main interests (Appendix, A table 1).

### TV Monitoring

TV monitoring was conducted from July 4 to September 20 in Yerevan.

The purpose of TV monitoring was to assess the amount of violent scenes, sex depicted scenes, sex related conversations and bad language. TV monitoring was also focused on the context in which violence was presented: unpunished violent acts, depiction of negative consequences of violence, and anti-violent theme. In addition to getting the general picture of violence on TV, the purpose of TV monitoring was to find out the differences between channels: which channels display more sex and which channels display more violence.

A total of 184 TV hours were monitored. Each channel was monitored from 10 a.m to 11 p.m.. This time frame was chosen, since children living in Yerevan are likely to go to bed at 11p.m.

Eight channels - Armenian channel 1, ORT,RTR, NTV, AR, A1+, Armenia, and MH were included in the monitoring. These channels were chosen as the most accessible and most popular among the Yerevan population. These assumptions were confirmed by qualitative data.

Historical movies and cartoons based on tails were excluded from TV monitoring. Violent acts were counted only in movies and cartoons that seemed to have no value in terms of content. In other words, violent scenes in movies that conveyed educational messages or consisted of important ideas and themes were not counted. Sex and violence depicted scenes were not counted on MTV too. The reason for this was the fast-paced style of MTV and the repetition of the same scenes for many times. The hours and minutes of MTV were counted.

As one person monitored the TV it was impossible to watch simultaneously all channels for the whole day. Each channel was observed for several hours per day. On other days the monitoring was continued from the hours at which it was interrupted on previous days. In this way, 11 hours of TV monitoring for all channels were completed. The total sum of monitored TV hours for listed channels were obtained to get a general picture of Armenian TV programs during one day. Although information collected in the described way cannot be called a "typical day of Armenian TV" it gives an idea of the amount of violence on TV to which children can be exposed during one day.

TV monitoring was conducted according to the categories presented in table 2, (Appendix C). Each scene containing mentioned categories was counted.

## **Results**

In-depth interviews generated information regarding different aspects of the topic under investigation.

The information is divided into 6 domains.

The first domain includes information about factors of children's potential exposure to media violence (e.g. 1 or 2 TV sets at home, VCR ownership, channels received, amount of TV viewing, location of TV set).

The second domain represents the areas of parents' main concerns regarding TV programs (e.g. soap operas, action movies, horror movies, cartoons) and general negative impressions of TV.

The third domain consists of factors mothers consider as positive in TV viewing (e.g. interesting, educational programs).

The fourth domain covers children's TV preferences and viewing patterns.

The fifth domain includes information about children's daily activities and interests and information regarding the role of video games in children's life.

The sixth domain represents mothers' knowledge about the influence of TV on children, the problem of TV violence, their attitudes towards violent messages and the ways of dealing with the problem.

### **Factors of children's potential exposure to media violence**

The majority of women mentioned that they have one TV set. Families of several participants own two TV sets. The second TV set, as was mentioned by some women, is located in the bedroom, where they sleep with children.

Almost all women mentioned that their TV sets are able to receive ORT and RTR channels. The other most accessible channels named by the majority of the participants were Armenian Channel 1, Armenia, NTV, A1+, AR, and Mshakuit. Only two women had an opportunity to watch satellite channels.

About half of the women reported that their TV sets are on for 8 –9 hours per day. One woman mentioned that her TV is on for more than 11 hours per day, the rest – for 3- 6 hours per day. All women mentioned 1 or 2 extra hours of TV watching on weekends.

More than half of the women reported 4-5 hours of TV watching per day by their children. The rest of the women reported 1,5 – 3 hours of TV watching by their children. Almost all women reported 1 or 2 extra hours of TV watching by children on weekends. The majority of children were reported to

watch TV in the afternoon and in the evening. Few children (who attend school in the afternoon) watch TV in the morning. Three children were reported to watch TV after 10 p.m.

All women reported that their TV sets are located in living rooms. Only two women said that their TV sets are visible from the kitchen. About half of the participants mentioned that it sometimes is the case that nobody watches TV and it is on. The most commonly stated reason for this was TV usage as a background (“something should always be on”). Some women said that they like to listen to TV from the kitchen while working.

Almost all women, with few exceptions, mentioned that they own a VCR. The most common tapes of cartoons listed by majority of participants were Disney cartoons (“Tom and Jerry”, “Cinderella”, and “Lion King”, “Ninja Turtles”) and Soviet cartoons. Among tapes of movie “action” movies, American and French comedies were most often mentioned. One woman said that they have tapes of erotic movies only. More than half of the children were able to turn the VCR on.

### **General negative impression of TV and areas of mothers' main concerns regarding TV programs**

#### Negative attitude towards TV in general

Speaking about TV in general many women expressed their dissatisfaction with TV programs. According to them, TV is very poor in terms of content, messages it conveys. Participants said that primitive, boring and useless programs made at low intellectual level are dominating on TV. Many women also mentioned that sex and fighting appear on TV rather often, which provoke thinking of sex and death in children.

#### Negative impression of Armenian channels

When expressing opinion regarding TV programs majority of participants spoke negatively about Armenian TV programs. Armenian channels were criticized for lack of children's programs and for the poor quality of children's programs as well. Many women mentioned that ideas of Armenian children's programs are borrowed from Russian TV but they are not interesting and of a bad taste. Women criticized Armenian channels for bad programs for adults too. They mentioned that instead of creating interesting programs Armenian TV stations movies for the whole day. There was an opinion that Armenian MTV is worse than pornography because Armenian pop singers behave like nymphomaniacs. It was also mentioned that Armenian TV channels transmit “soap operas” of even lower quality than Russian TV channels.

### “Soap operas”

“Soap operas were stated as one of the areas of concerns regarding TV programs. Majority of mothers mentioned two reasons why they do not want their children to watch “soap operas”. First, “soap operas” are very simple and primitive. Thus, they can not contribute to children’s intellectual development. Second, “ soap operas” makes children interested in sex. The second statement was said to be important for girls and for boys as well. However, in general, mothers of girls were concerned with “soap operas” more than mothers of boys.

- Heroes of “soap operas” kiss each other all the time, speak about love and sex and wear almost no cloths. As a result, my daughters speak only about marriages. “Soap operas” provoke questions about sex in my children. It is difficult for parents to answer to these questions. We do not know what to do.
- After viewing “soap operas”, my daughter wants to kiss me in lips and asks many questions about man-woman relationships. She becomes obsessed with these issues.
- I have noticed that “soap operas” make children interested in sex. When my son sees many kisses, he begins to think about love and sex.
- “Soap operas” are very simple and empty; they can not develop children’s ability to think.
- Stupid, low-quality “soap operas” have no value for children’s intellectual development. They are all the same in terms of subjects, dialogs, and themes. They endanger concept of individuality by diminishing the desire to differ from other people, to be unique.
- Children can obtain distorted, bad taste due to "soap operas".

### Movies with erotic scenes

Many women mentioned that although there is no pornography on TV erotic scenes appear rather often in movies. One woman said that she was astonished to see intercourse on TV at 5p.m. However, the same women who complained that TV has too much sex and were concerned with "soap operas" were not against erotic scenes in movies.

- My husband is not against of sex-depicted scenes and wants my son to watch them. He thinks that impression from movie will be incomplete without these scenes.
- One day I will show to my children erotic movie so that they get complete understanding about sex. In my opinion, children should know about sex.
- My children even do not react on "light" erotic scenes because they have seen scenes like that for 100 times.
- I am not concerned with erotic movies. It is desirable that children do not watch them but if they watch nothing bad will happen.

A few women mentioned that they do not like their children watching erotic scenes.

- Children should not watch erotic scenes.
- In contrast to "soap operas", sex in movies is shown like in real life. "Soap operas" do not impress children deeply. Whereas movies can leave long lasting emotional effect on children.

### Horror movies

Many women were concerned with horror movies because of sleeping problems their children obtain after watching them.

- My son can not sleep after watching horror movies. He awakes all the time because of nightmares. He even asks me to turn light on. After these movies, he is depressed and scared.
- After viewing horror movies, my son had difficulties falling asleep and nightmares.

However, a few women mentioned that their children like to watch horror movies.

- My elder daughter likes horror movies. I can not understand this.
- He prefers to watch horror movies and he is not afraid. I do not know why he is interested in them.

### "Action" movies

Concerns regarding TV - "action" movies - were mentioned rather often. The majority of women criticized "action" movies for absence of content, sense, and for depicting violence. In addition, many women mentioned that "action" movies are dominating on TV and are shown even in the afternoon.

- There are good movies too but violent ones prevail. There are many American movies without content and full of violent scenes.
- My children need to watch a movie every day. Now they have to watch only cheap American movies with fighting and violence.
- I do not see any reason why children have to watch movies about mafia and criminal groups.
- TV is full of cruel, violent "action" movies.
- Violent movies are often shown during the afternoon. For example, "Advocate of Devil" has been recently shown in the morning. My son had watched how the blood was leaking out of the human body and thought that it was a red juice.

One woman mentioned that she considers Russian "action" movies more dangerous for Armenian children than American "action" movies.

- Violence on TV now is in new Russian movies and American movies. I am more concerned with Russian movies because they depict violence more realistically. In addition, Russia is more close to us than USA. Thus, Russian movies are perceived as more real. Besides, we have got already accustomed to American "action movies.

### Cartoons

The majority of women were not concerned with cartoons. However, several women mentioned that they do not like cartoons because of two reasons. First, cartoons increase the amount of TV viewing: when cartoons are shown it is impossible to stop children to watch TV. And second, Disney cartoons are full of violent, and cruel scenes.

- If nobody stops him, he will watch cartoons for the whole day by his favorite channel - Cartoon Network.
- If I do not forbid him to watch cartoons, he will permanently keep on watching them. When I want to watch TV news and interrupt his cartoons, he becomes very angry.
- In my opinion "Tom and Jerry" cartoons give rise to violence. These cartoons show how to make cruel, violent actions and how funny they are. They teach children that violence is funny and joyful.
- I do not like American cartoons like "Stars war", which are dominating and constantly shown.
- I am concerned with cartoons. They are really violent. For example, "Aladdin" and other Disney serials of cartoons attract attention only by bright colors. These cartoons do not convey any kind or educational message. When I watch them, I do not feel that they are made for children.

## **Positive factors of TV viewing**

### Good children's programs

In general, almost all participants mentioned that TV has a positive side too. They said that TV develops all children's abilities, develops them emotionally and psychologically. Children can get a lot of educational, useful information from TV. Popular scientific programs about animals, geography, and programs for children on Russian TV were given as examples of "good" programs most often.

- It is possible to find several good programs for children; for example, "Animal World" and "Call from Jungles" are informative and can educate children.
- Children's programs like "Call from Jungles", and educational programs like "Club of Adventurers" are always suitable and useful for children.

It was also mentioned that TV can be educational.

- As I know, "Seasam Street" is very popular children's program in many countries. Children can learn numbers and letters from this program in easy way.

Several women said that they use TV to teach children foreign languages.

- My daughter speaks poor Russian. This is one of the reasons I want her to watch TV.
- As my daughter goes to Spanish school, I encourage her to listen to the dialogs and songs in "soap operas". This is the only positive point about "soap operas".

Several mothers of boys mentioned that after watching sports programs and movies their sons began to exercise.

- My son had watched the "Rocky" and then ran in the mornings for about 10 days. Of course, "Rocky" is very stupid movie but its effects on my son were positive.

All participants speaking about positive aspects of TV referred to Russian TV only. All "good" programs they listed were Russian TV programs. Many women said that TV programs transmitted by Moscow such as "Call from Jungles", "Before 16 and older", and "Tower" are very interesting and educational. Children can learn useful concepts from Russian youngsters, for example, they can learn that people are free and can engage themselves in many interesting activities such as tourism and sports.

Only one woman said that she appreciates TV as a "baby sitter".

- I am satisfied with TV programs. When my son seats in front of TV I do not worry about him, as I know that he does not move and will not disturb me.

## **Children's TV preferences and viewing patterns**

Almost all children regardless of gender were reported to like cartoons (both Soviet and American), programs on Russian TV for children ("Morning Star", "Hour of Stars" etc.), popular scientific programs ("Animal World"), shows (talk shows and game programs) on Russian TV, movies for children (historical, tails, adventurous), and musical programs (concerts, MTV).

The majority of boys' mothers mentioned that their sons are interested in "action" movies and movies with oriental fighting.

The majority of girls' mothers mentioned that their daughters like to watch "soap operas". One woman said that her daughter is obsessed with "soap operas" and watches all of them.

The most commonly stated reason why children like to watch scientific programs was children's interest in animals.

One woman explained children's obsession with "soap operas" by saying that "soap operas" are very simple, at children's educational level.

- In "soap operas" the same things are said for 100 times, and children like repetition.
- According to one woman, poor knowledge of Russian is the reason children prefer American cartoons.
- Although American cartoons are translated into Russian, there are so few conversations and words there that children understand everything easily.

One woman mentioned that her children like to watch programs about police such as "02" and "Police Department on Duty".

As there was no specific question on children's viewing patterns, few women described how their children watch TV when answering other questions.

One woman mentioned that her son watches one TV channel all the time regardless of what kind of programs are shown.

- TV watching is like a "chain reaction": my son watches one program after another all the time. TV takes away all energy from the viewers and they can not regulate their viewing patterns to limit hours in front of TV.

Another woman was disappointed with her children's habit to switch the channels frequently.

- Because of this habit to interrupt sentences by switching the channels they have ceased to find sense in words, they have become inattentive to verbal messages. They watch TV mostly to get visual messages, not text.

## Coviewing

Eight women said that they watch TV together with their children from time to time. They do not watch more because of being busy and having few common TV preferences. Six women mentioned that they watch TV together rather often, almost always. Only one woman said that she almost never coviews

TV with her daughter. She even asked: "What can I watch with her?" The majority of women mentioned that they discuss with their children what they watch in a way of exchanging opinions and expressions like "I like this movie", or "I like this character".

The common pattern of the discussion was also answering children's questions. When children did not understand something mothers explained them. For example, when children watch game programs and do not understand the rules mothers explained them.

Several mothers mentioned that they discuss with their children death, evil, and kindness concepts and man-woman relationships.

Mothers of children of 4-6 years old said that they often deceive their children that nobody dies not to make them scared and distract their attention from thinking of death.

One woman described a contrary situation. When she watches "action" movies with her children they say to her: "Calm down, this is not real life, this is a movie" and describe to her from what liquids the blood is made for movies.

### **Children's daily activities and interests; the role of video games in children's life.**

Talking about children's daily activities almost all women stated three main categories: preparing homework, TV watching, and playing in the yard.

Less commonly listed daily activities were piano classes, sports, painting and drawing.

On the question how children like to spend their free time except for TV watching almost all participants mentioned playing in the yard, playing video games, playing board games, painting, and drawing. Several women also mentioned sports, reading, and dancing.

Information regarding toys was obtained from several participants. Mothers of boys mentioned that their sons like to play with cars and guns. Mothers of girls mentioned that their daughters like to play with plates, cups and dolls.

Many participants complained that their children do not read much. Several women mentioned that their children perceive reading as a responsibility; children have no desire to read and read only required books.

One woman mentioned that even when her children read they read only magazines with puzzles, and that books are in last place.

### Video games

Many women mentioned that they are not concerned with video games because their children do not play much. A few women considered video games as a useful activity for children.

- I think that video games in moderate amount are very useful for children. 20-30 minutes of playing per day will not harm; instead, it will develop children's thinking ability.

However, many women had contrary opinion. According to them, video games take a lot of children's time, can be harmful for eyes, and do not develop children's intellect.

- He played computer games too much. That is why we do not buy computer games any more.
- If I let him play computer games he will play all day, until his eyes become red and irritated.
- I do not like video games because they make people stupid, and exhaust people by requiring much energy and attention. In my opinion, it is not healthy for eyesight.

### **Mother's knowledge about TV influence on children; attitudes towards violent messages, ways of dealing with the problem**

#### Knowledge about TV influence

On the question how TV can influence children's behavior 5 women mentioned both negative and positive effects, 4 women spoke only about negative influence, 2 women mentioned that TV can have only positive influence on children. One woman said there is no effect. Three women said that they do not know. They gave some examples of TV influence on their children's behavior but said that cannot generalize it for all children.

Describing the way TV can influence children's behavior the majority of women mentioned that relationship between TV viewing and children's behavior is direct. They said that children like to copy and imitate behaviors they see on the screen.

- The main influence of TV on children is that TV makes them copy everything they see on it.
- TV influences children's behavior directly. When my son watches movies with fighting he then begins to fight. After viewing horror movies he has difficulties falling asleep and nightmares. After viewing nice, kind cartoon he is in a good mood.
- TV influences children's behavior directly. What children see on the screen they bring in their liveS.

#### Negative influence

Concerning negative influence the majority of women identified three main behavioral changes. First, many women mentioned that violent messages could make children play aggressively and fight. As a rule, mothers of boys provided such kind of examples. Mothers of girls mentioned that although their daughters do not play violently, they are aware of this type of influence and observe it on the friends' sons.

- When he sees car accidents on TV he then plays with his cars and makes accidents too. If a child watch such kind of things all the time he can obtain selfish, cruel personality.
- After watching "action" movies my son plays violently with toys.
- I see what is going on in the yard where boys are playing. They are very crude with each other, they sometimes punch each other and say phrases from violent movies.
- My friend's son is fond of "action" movies. He likes fighting and is very crude with his friends.

Second, many women (mothers of girls and boys as well) described depressing effect of TV viewing on their children. They described fears, nightmares, and sleeping problems.

- After watching "02" my children are scared and do not want to go outside and walk in the streets of Yerevan.
- When my daughter sees something violent she gets depressed. She imagines herself as a victim of violence.

Third, many participants mentioned that one of the negative effects of TV on children is making them interested in sex.

- My 6-year old boy has become aware of sex but, of course, he does not understand everything.
- Children become obsessed with sex. In my opinion, children should become interested in sex at certain age, not earlier; they should not ask me questions now.
- Moscow's youth that appears on TV is too dissolute, undisciplined, spoiled. My children are becoming interested in this type of behavior, in sex, drugs and alcohol.

Mothers who were concerned with amount of TV watching said that children read less because of TV and can become stupid.

- I can say it definitely that my children have begun to read less because of TV. When I try to convince them to read something they say that they have seen it already on TV.
- TV distracts children from such important activity as reading.

### Attitudes towards violent messages

The majority of women expressed negative attitude towards violent messages and said that they are not good for children. They explain this by saying that violence on TV can deeply impress children's psychology. Children are likely to either imitate observed behavior or become scared. One participant mentioned that her children are becoming desensitized due to violent movies. After watching movies with a lot of tricks, explosions they are not satisfied with movies that have less such effects. She also mentioned that because of these movies her children concentrate their attention only on technical details of movies (how tricks are done, from what material blood is made, etc.) but not on human feelings and problems. It was also mentioned that violent messages affect boys and girls differently. Some of women mentioned that children's emotions and concepts could determine to what extend they would be affected by violent messages.

- Violent scenes can make children want to repeat these actions in real life. Children can be deeply impressed by violence on the screen. It is impossible to watch violent acts and not want to imitate them.
- Violent scenes are not good for children: they scare them.
- Violent scenes are not good particularly for emotional children.
- Children who do not have stable emotions and confuse concepts of evil and kindness will be affected first of all by horror and "action" movies.
- Because of violence on TV boys can learn how to behave themselves aggressively and girls can become very nervous.

Few women expressed neutral opinion about violent messages and said that they do not believe that TV violence can make their children aggressive.

- I believe that people behave themselves violently because of genetic predisposition. If a person is violent from the birth TV will only enhance this side of his personality.
- Violent "action" movies can make children stupid but not cruel.

One participant mentioned that violent movies are useful because they make people less aggressive.

- Personally I have negative attitudes towards violent movies with gun usage, explosions, and maniacs. However, I think that "action" movies with violence can even be useful: people by watching these movies will loose their aggressiveness.

### Ways of dealing with TV violence problem

Among the participants who had negative attitudes towards TV violence only 5 mentioned that they consider TV violence as a problem. Only one participant said that she discuss TV violence issues with other parents.

Many women said that they do not have to solve this problem because they receive few channels and their children are not exposed to TV violence often.

- My children have no opportunity to watch movies because we do not have VCR and are not able to receive many channels.

There were few women who regardless of negative attitudes towards violence did not consider these issues significant to do something about it.

- I do not consider TV related issues significant to discuss them with other parents.
- I do not consider TV violence as a problem; I do not take it seriously and do not discuss these issues with other parents.

Another reason why many women did not have to solve TV violence problem was that their children did not like to watch violent movies.

- As my daughter is sensitive she turns TV off when there is violence.
- My daughter does not want to see violence. When violence appears on TV she turns TV off.

Several participants mentioned that TV violence is not a problem for them because they either turn TV off or do comments while watching. They discuss and interpret violent scenes to their children.

- My daughter is very sensitive; she can not tolerate scenes of murders. I explain her that it is a movie, not real life that nobody really dies.
- When I see violence on TV I either turn TV off or switch the channels.
- As I am against of TV watching in general, violence is not common in our home. When my son's friends lend him tapes with violent movies I forbid him to watch them
- I am not very concerned with violent scenes, as I know how to deal with this problem. I can explain how violent act happens. For example, when there is a murder I can say that murderer is bad, angry person, and that it is bad to kill.

### TV monitoring

The results of TV monitoring showed that 8 selected channels during the time of one day transmission (from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.) consisted of 834 violent acts, 33 displays of nudity and sex-depicted scenes, 108 sex-related conversations, and 83 bad language usage. Of all 834 violent acts 169 were murders (29 excluding use of guns and 140 - with use of guns) and 67 serious assaults. (table 1, Appendix,B). Perpetrators of these three main categories of violent acts went unpunished in 83.5% of all scenes. Negative consequences of violence were portrayed in 6.36% and anti-violent themes were suggested in 8.5%.

In addition to violent acts connected to people directly, there were 150 explosions, 40 car crashes and 37 acts of deliberate property destruction. MTV was shown for 5 hours and 20 minutes.

Contribution of each channel to transmission of violent scenes was calculated.

NTV and A1+ were at the top in these terms for having violence. NTV contributed 21.6% to the total number of violent acts and A1+ - 19.5%. Transmission of violent acts was almost equally distributed among ORT, RTR, Armenia and MH channels varying from 9% to 15% (table 3, Appendix,B).

The least violent channels appeared to be AR (5%) and Armenian Channel 1(4%).

Armenia channel transmitted 2 hours and 20 minutes of MTV and A1+ - 1 hour and 50 minutes. AR included 1 hour and 15 minutes of MTV and MH - 45 minutes. ORT and RTR both contributed 30 minutes of MTV each to the total number. NTV and Armenian Channel 1 did not show MTV at all.

The number of sex-depicted scenes and nudity was not significant across almost all channels varying from 1 to 3. Only A1+ showed a bit more: five scenes of nudity and six sex-depicted scenes. Armenian Channel 1 did not transmit mentioned scenes.

Sex-related conversations were present in all channels. RTR was the most heavy on sex-related conversations by contributing 29% to the total number. The second channel containing large number of sex-related conversations was A1+ (22%), and the third - ORT (19.4%). Armenian Channel 1 contributed 11% to the total number. NTV, Armenia, MH, and AR were the channels that transmitted less scenes with sex-related conversations, their contribution varied from 3.7% to 5.5%

### **Discussion**

#### In-depth interviews

Findings of in-depth interviews showed that majority of mothers were not satisfied with TV programs in terms of suitability for children. There were also found main areas of mothers concerns ("horror movies", "soap operas", "action movies", etc.).

However, it was found that despite these concerns almost all participants did not take TV related issues seriously. For example, many women had difficulties listing TV stations they were able to watch and could not recall all of them. The same situation was with videotapes: many women were confused and could not list what kind of movies and cartoons they had.

When describing children's daily activities four women did not speak about TV watching at all. While answering the question on how many hours per day their children watch TV the same women reported 4-5 hours of TV watching by their children.

Thus, the statement that parents do not control the media their children are exposed to with any consistency or regularity and underreport the number of hours their children watch TV (12) is true for Armenian parents as well.

As was mentioned in the results section, the majority of women watch TV together with their children from time to time and only few of them watch almost always. This point is important to emphasize the effectiveness of co-viewing in moderating the harmful effects of the media violence in further recommendations.

Location of TV set at home is an enabling factor for children's TV viewing control (16). According to the results of in-depth interviews only two women mentioned that their TV sets are visible from kitchen. If take into account eight-nine hours of TV turned on reported by majority of participants and women's engagement in the kitchen it is possible to conclude that children's exposure to media violence is uncontrolled.

One important finding was that three main effects of TV violence on children's behavior (increased aggressiveness, desensitization, and increased fear) described in the literature were observed and reported by almost all mothers. In addition, the majority of women described the direct influence of TV on children's behavior and spoke about children's desire to imitate and copy others behavior. Despite concerns regarding TV programs and observed impact on children's behavior the majority of women did not recognize TV violence as a problem.

Almost all women were not familiar with different sources of violence on TV. As a rule, women were concerned only with "action" and "horror" movies. Only few women mentioned that they are concerned with cartoons and MTV in terms of violence and sex-depicted scenes. The majority of women did not perceive cartoons and MTV as something dangerous and said that their children prefer to watch them. The example of poor knowledge regarding TV violence was a woman who called "Terminator" a "movie for children". Thus, the recommendations that parents should be aware of potential risk of viewing television violence and recognize that different kinds of violent programs pose different risk should be considered (12).

Another finding was that many women discuss TV programs with their children superficially, without serious interpretations. Few women that had deep discussions with their children said that TV violence is not a problem for them at all because their comments and interpretations help to moderate the deforming effects of TV violence.

Therefore, it will be helpful to recommend ways to parents to encourage critical evaluation of programs content, by asking children's opinion.

Another finding that gained attention was the amount of children's TV watching. Children were reported to watch too much TV (4-5 hours per day) by the majority of women. It was mentioned in the literature that the length of exposure to TV violence is crucial in obtaining aggressive type of behavior. Therefore, there is a need to implement one of the recommendations of American Association of Pediatricians – to advise to parents to limit children's TV viewing to 1 or 2 hours per day. In addition, watching much TV, and, consequently, having sedentary life style can lead to obesity. The time children can dedicate to healthy activities, such as exercise is being spent sitting in front of TV.

According to the majority of participants one of the favorite and common way of spending free time by their children was video games playing. Although many participants were concerned with video games, nobody spoke about violent behavior children can obtain due to playing video games. Women complained that because of video games children can impair their eye sight and do not develop intellectually.

### TV monitoring

Results of TV monitoring showed that for few exceptions (Armenian Channel 1 and AR) all channels are rather heavy on violent programming.

Private channels seemed to be more likely to transmit violent programs. (Table 3, Appendix). For example, NTV (Russian private channel) and A1+ (Armenian private channel) were the two most violent channels. Armenia channel and MH also contained more violent scenes than the Russian state channels (ORT, RTR) and Armenian state channel (Armenian Channel 1). Only one private channel - AR - does not fit into this trend by contributing small number of violent acts.

Private channels also arise concerns in terms of violent programming due to frequent MTV transmission.

Private channels compared with state channels consisted of more scenes with bad language also.

It was unintentionally found that there are discrepancies between what is really shown by private channels and what is written in the TV guide. For example, MH channel transmitted two movies, one cartoon and one educational program that were not listed in the TV guide. Armenia channel tends to show

programs later for 15-20 minutes and transmit MTV between programs that were not mentioned in TV program guide.

These discrepancies between the TV guide and channels real transmission are important to be considered as they cause difficulties in controlling children's TV watching.

Nudity and sex-depicted scenes are shown in much more less amount than violent scenes by all channels.

However, monitored channels, with few exceptions (AR, Armenia, NTV) were full of sex-related conversations. Russian state TV channels made a significant contribution to the total number of sex-related conversations: RTR - 29%, ORT - 19.4%. Armenian state channel was heavy on sex-related conversations too by contributing 11% of sex-related conversations.

Among private channels A1+ transmitted the largest number of scenes with sex-related conversations.

From all the above mentioned it is possible to conclude that , in general, private channels present more concerns in terms of violence and state channels - in terms of sex-related conversations.

However, if take into account MTV, private channels can be considered as heavy on sex too due to sexual references and innuendos seen on MTV.

## **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study is the generalizability of the data gathered from in-depth interviews. However, generalizability was not the main purpose of the research. The qualitative data was collected in order to get an idea of the range of mothers' perceptions about the TV violence problem.

Another limitation of the study was that TV monitoring was not completed during one day and the differences between weekdays and weekends were not considered. In addition, as one person monitored TV the definition of violent acts can be subjective.

## **Conclusion**

One of the objectives of the study was to assess children's exposure to media violence. Results of TV monitoring showed that Armenian TV contains much violence and its serious consequences, as a rule, are not shown and anti-violent themes are not suggested. Taking into account that children were reported to watch a lot of TV (4-5 hours per day) their exposure to TV violence seems to be high. According to the data from in-depth interviews majority of children already experience negative effects of media violence.

Aggressive playing after watching violent messages, desensitization to violence, increased fear, nightmares were described by the majority of mothers. Increased interest in sex-related issues were reported too. Children were also reported to read less, which was attributed to TV watching by several participants.

Another objective of the study was to explore parents attitudes towards TV as a potential endangering factor for their children's health. Although mothers were concerned with violent programming and had negative attitudes towards violent messages on TV, they lacked in knowledge about TV violence issues and did not perceive them as a problem. Although children were reported to play much video games, harmful effects of video games were underrecognized also. At the same time the positive attitudes towards useful, educational programs for children were expressed and the need for such kind of programs, especially on Armenian TV stations, was mentioned.

## **Recommendations**

Taking into account the results of this study, and some of the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatricians, The National Association of Elementary School Principals, and recommendations based on the National Television Violence Study can be offered to Armenian parents as well.

### Recommendations to parents

- Limit all media use to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day.
- Do not leave TV on all the time, even when engaged in other activities.
- Place TV set in a central location to monitor who is watching what
- Be aware of the potential risk of viewing television violence and recognize that different kinds of violent programs pose different risk.
- Watch TV with children to determine suitability of programs, explain what is being viewed, discuss programs with children, develop critical thinking skills, compare personal family values with those shown on TV.
- Do not use TV as a baby-sitter
- Encourage other activities such as exercise, reading, crafts, playing board games, puzzles, etc.
- Look for good TV: nature and wildlife shows, sports events, movies suitable for children
- Join forces to oppose TV violence: cooperate with teachers and other parents in efforts to reduce TV violence, advocate the development of quality programs for children

In addition to these recommendations, the results of TV monitoring can be used to recommend parents to be more cautious to private channels in terms of violence, and to the state channels (particularly Russian) - in terms of sexual references..

#### Recommendations to health professionals

- Develop printed material on media violence, educate parents on media issues and distribute printed materials to them
- Cooperate with educators and organize presentations at Parent-Teacher Association meetings at school.

#### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the advisor of the project Kim Arzoumanian for her valuable comments and advises, Varduhi Petrosyan and Sosig Salvador for providing me with the literature, and informants for their participation in the interviews.

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**Consent form  
American University of Armenia  
Public Health Department  
In-depth interviews with mothers of children of 4-13 years old**

**The purpose of the interview is to obtain information regarding television issues.**

**In order to obtain mentioned information we ask for your participation in the interview. Your answers are very valuable for us. The interview will last for about 1 hour. You will be given a range of questions regarding television programs and your children's viewing patterns.**

**Participation in the interview can not result in any negative consequences for you. The interview will allow sharing your knowledge and opinion concerning the role of TV in children's life.**

**Your name will remain confidential and will not be mentioned along with information provided by you.**

**You are free to decide whether you are participating or not. You have right to stop the interview at any moment you want.**

**If you agree to participate, please, write down your name here**

---

**Sign -----**

**Date ----- 1999**

Appendix, A table 1

**Coding System**

<b>Code-long Form</b>	<b>Code-Short form</b>	<b>When to use the code</b>
TV set, VCR ownership; channels received	<b>TCR-CH</b>	# of TV sets at home, VCR ownership, possibility to watch how many and watch channels
Amount of TV viewing	<b>TVV</b>	Information about for how many hours TV is on, how many hours children watch TV, at what hours
Possibilities to control children's TV watching	<b>PC</b>	Location of TV set at home, whether use TV as a background
Opinion regarding TV programs	<b>OPR</b>	Impressions of TV programs, Armenian/Russian TV stations, general ideas about TV, its quality and suitability for children
Concern- soap operas	<b>SOAP</b>	Attitudes towards soap operas in general, observed influence on children's behavior
Concerns - erotic movies	<b>ERO</b>	Attitudes towards erotic scenes, suitability for children
Concerns - horror movies	<b>HOR</b>	Attitudes towards horror movies, observed changes in children's behavior
Concerns- action movies	<b>ACT</b>	Attitudes towards action movies, observed impact on children's behavior
Concerns - amount of viewing	<b>AMO</b>	Attitudes towards long TCV viewing, concerns
Concerns - cartoons	<b>CART</b>	Attitudes towards cartoons, old/modern, influence on children
Good children programs	<b>GPK</b>	Positive side of TV, useful, interesting programs for children
Children's TV preferences	<b>PREF</b>	What kind of programs, movies, cartoons children like to watch
Daily activities and interests	<b>REG-FRE</b>	Children's daily activities and what they like to do, how they spend their free time
Video games	<b>V-GAM</b>	What mothers think about video games, useful/harmful for children
TV influence	<b>TV-IN</b>	Knowledge about TV influence on children's behavior
Knowledge, attitudes towards violence	<b>KA-VIO</b>	Attitudes towards violent scenes, knowledge about deforming effects of media violence
TV violence problem	<b>LEM</b>	Ways of dealing with TV violence problem, watching together, sharing concerns with others

## Appendix, A

### **Guide for in-depth interviews Mothers of children of 6-13 years old**

#### I. Opening

My name is Zaruhi Yeghiazaryan. I am a student of Public Health Department of AUA. I am interviewing women who have children from 4 to 13 years old. I am interested in TV related issues in general, and, particularly, in your opinion regarding TV programs and the role of TV in children's life.

*Instructions:*

*Present consent form, make sure that participant has understood the purpose of the investigations, her rights and confidentiality issues*

*In the case of refusal thank the participant for her time and leave.*

#### II. General questions related to family composition and children's daily activities

1. How many children do you have? (their age, gender)
2. How many people live in your household?
3. Can you describe your children's daily activities? When they go to bed?

#### III. Questions related to TV set ownership, location of TV set at home and access to TV channels

4. How many TV sets do you have at home? Where they are located?
5. How many channels are capable to receive your TV set? Which channels are they?

#### IV. Questions related to TV viewing patterns of the whole family

6. On average, how many hours is your TV set turned on per day?

Does it happen when your TV is on and you do not watch being engaged in other activities?

If yes, why do you keep TV turned on?

7. How many hours per day do your children watch TV? At what hours they usually watch TV?

V. Questions related to mother's opinion regarding TV programs in terms of suitability for children

8. What do you think of quality of TV programs? Are they always suitable for children? What are your main concerns about TV programs?

VI. Questions related to mother-child interactions during TV viewing

9. How often do you watch TV together with your children? Do you discuss TV programs with them? Can you describe your discussions in a little more detail?

VII. Questions related to children's viewing preferences

10. What kind of TV programs your children prefer to watch? Why?

Appendix

VII. Question related to access to VCR and video tapes

11. Do you have VCR? If yes, what kind of movies and cartoons do you have at home? Can your children turn VCR on by themselves?

IX. Questions related to mother's knowledge about TV as a factor that influences children's behavior and attitudes towards violent messages.

12. What do you think how does TV influence children's behavior, particularly violent messages? If yes (she thinks that TV has negative influence on her children) how do you deal with this problem? Do you share your concerns with other parents?

X. Questions related to children's interests and preferred activities.

13. How do your children like to spend their free time? What are their favorite activities except TV watching (hobbies, crafts, reading, playing board games, playing video games, etc.)? What kind of toys do your children like to play with?

XI. Background Information

Age –

Occupation –

Address –

Phone number –

XII. Closing

Thank you very much for participation. I highly appreciate your time spent for the interview and your interesting ideas and thoughts.

Appendix, B table 1

**TV monitoring**

Serious Assaults(excluding use of guns)	67
Murders (excluding use of guns)	29
Gunplay	147
Murders	140
Isolated punches	101
Pushing/dragging	61
Menacing threat with weapon	62
Explosions	150
Deliberate property destruction	37
Car crashes	40
Nudity	17
Sex	16
Sex related conversation	108
Bad language	83
Perpetrators go unpunished	197
Negative consequences of violence	15
Anti-violent theme	20
MTV	5 hours 20 minutes

Appendix, B table 2

**Distribution of violent acts and sex-related conversations in the monitored channels (in %)**

	<b>ORT</b>	<b>RTR</b>	<b>NTV</b>	<b>Armenia</b>	<b>A1+</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>Armenian Channel 1</b>
<b>violence</b>	11	9	21.6	15	19.5	14	5	4
<b>sex-related conversations</b>	19.4	29	5.5	4	22	5.5	3.7	11