Parents' concerns about the negative effects of television viewing on children's behavior and school performance in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Very little is known regarding parents' concerns about the undesirable effects of unsupervised TV viewing on children's development in Ethiopia. This study investigated the extent and areas of parents' concern about the harmful effects of TV viewing on children's behavior and school performance. A mixed-methods study design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 390 parents of schoolchildren aged 7–15 in Addis Ababa using a standardized measure of parental concern. Qualitative data were also collected from Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) members using FGDs. Results showed a moderate-to-high level of parental concern about the adverse effects of viewing on children's behavior and school performance. The findings further indicated that children's learning of offensive language, premature exposure to sexual content, engagement in violent activities, and drug use were reported as parents' areas of concern in relation to children's behavior. In the same way, disengagement in academic activities, mainly not doing homework, not studying, and getting poor exam results have been reported as parents' areas of concern in relation to school performance. Statistically significant differences in level of concern across parents' and children's socio-demographic characteristics were observed. As children's screen and digital media environment is fast-changing in Ethiopia, future studies in the area by child developmentalists, educationalists, and health professionals are highly warranted.

Introduction

Children's behavior and schooling are substantially influenced by the social environment they live in. One of the influential social contexts that profoundly shapes children's development is the media (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Heim et al., 2007). Media is used by children for various purposes in their daily lives, such as obtaining information, entertainment, and education. Children's access to the media is increasing more quickly today than ever before. According to Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010), children between 8 and 18 years old collectively spent an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes on media (TV, computers, video games, music, print, cell phones, and movies) daily. Rideout and colleagues further

indicated that as a result of the explosion in mobile and online digital media technologies, today's children are becoming multitasking in their media use and experience a significant rise in their total media exposure time.

Despite access to so many new media technologies, television continues to control the media lives of young children (Rideout et al., 2010) including in Ethiopia (Erena & Gutema, 2021; Gebru, 2021). Television viewing has many functions in children's lives. Watching educational and supervised entertainment programs has been associated with positive child development outcomes (Wilson, 2008), increased friendliness, cooperation, self-control, delay of gratification, and reduction of stereotypes (Saleem & Anderson, 2012), better learning and language skills, high intelligence scores, and problem-solving skills (Barkin et al., 2006), and improved cognitive and academic skills (Anderson et al., 2017).

Although careful and supervised uses of TV benefit children most, negligence uses may impede children's healthy behavioral development and school performance. Exposure to excessive and unsupervised viewing has been associated with multiple negative child development outcomes such as increased hostility and aggression (Anderson et al., 2003), unsafe sexual behavior, early initiation and experience of sex (Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005; Ward, 2002), learning of bad language and repeated use of it (Cressman et al, 2009; Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009), poor academic engagement and lower school performance (Ballard, 2003; Pagani et al., 2010), substance use (Armstrong et al., 2010), diminished attention (Christakis et al., 2004; Nikkelen et al., 2014), sleep problems (Arora et al., 2014), and conduct problem, hyperactivity and poor prosocial behavior (Limtrakul et al., 2018; Poulain et al., 2019).

Television viewing negatively affects children's development in different ways. Displacement theory suggests that viewing simply replaces time that might normally be invested in important activities such as reading, doing homework, playing and social interaction (Moses, 2008). Observational learning theory (Bandura, 1973; Bandura & Walters, 1977), on the other hand, emphasizes that children learn a variety of undesirable behaviors from models or TV characters through imitation. Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002) states that repeated exposure to television misleads children's understanding of objective reality by influencing them to develop behaviors and attitudes that are more consistent with a media-constructed version of reality. Television's influence on children is related to both the amount and type of content they are exposed to (Dietz & Strasburger, 1991).

The prevalence of television viewing among children and the corresponding surge in exposure to inappropriate content have become a subject of discussion for parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers across the globe. The Council of the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) has expressed its concern that children are heavily exposed to television, much more than the recommended two hours of quality programming per day. Gigli (2004) also reported that in developed countries, there have been a series of concerns over growing levels of aggression, obesity, substance abuse, eating disorders, and unsafe sexual behavior among youth, principally attributed to children's increased exposure to the media. This could be even worse in low-income countries, where resources limit domestic production and the majority of children's programs are imported, and where much of the content contains culturally irrelevant characters and messages, and at times conveys messages that are contrary to cultural values.

According to Nathanson (2015), parents not only provide access to the media, but they also play a critical role in shaping children's media experiences. However, parents are expressing their grave concerns about the harmful effects of television viewing on children, particularly as the entertainment industries, children's TV advertisements, and TV options are growing rapidly (Carlsson, 2006).

According to Cantor et al. (1996), parental concern refers to parents' attitude towards potential negative effects of viewing harmful television content. Parents' concern has been associated with a host of personal and environmental factors. According to Pearson et al. (2011), parents' concern about the harmful effects of television viewing was related to personal beliefs about television viewing, children's actual viewing habits, and the home environment. Similarly, Chan and McNeal (2003) indicated that parents' concerns depend on the demographic characteristics of parents and children. In their study among Chinese parents, Chan and McNeal (2003) reported that mothers, older parents, parents with a higher educational level, parents of younger children, and parents with a medium household income had higher concerns regarding the negative effects of television.

A number of studies in the West (e.g. Nathanson, 2001; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Warren, 2002) have documented the effects of TV viewing on children and the concerns and practices of parents to mitigate the harmful effects of excessive viewing. However, such issues have started to attract the attention of researchers in sub-Saharan African countries only recently (Miller et al., 2018; Ngula et al., 2016; Ngula et al., 2018; Ofosu-Brako, 2022).

In Ethiopia too, although there have been significant changes in children's access to digital and satellite TV channels in recent days, studies that directly pertain to children's screen media usage and associated parental concerns about the effect of viewing on children's development are scarce (Gebru, 2021). Whether TV viewing has adversary effect on children's developmental trajectory is unclear. The studies on TV viewing and its influence in Ethiopia is less consistent. Some studies examined the influence of television viewing habits of primary school children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and their results suggested that children viewed on average 2.32 hours of television per day (Desie et al., 2021). Another study that examined the TV viewing habits of high school students in Ethiopia indicated that most of the students were heavy TV viewers, and TV was rated as the favorite medium by them (Erena & Gutema, 2021). The absence of studies in this area means that parents and other socializing agents do not have the opportunity to acquire evidence-based knowledge about the harmful impacts of excessive TV viewing on children's development. Furthermore, it compromises the quality and appropriateness of the efforts they put in place to mitigate the detrimental effects of viewing. The present study was designed to examine the extent and areas of parents' concerns about the impact of television viewing on children's behavior and school performance in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Methods

Design and Participants

We employed a mixed methods design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected independently but at the same time. The quantitative part was aimed to examine

the extent of parents' concerns, and the qualitative part was used to generate data about parents' areas of concern.

Participants of this study were parents of primary school children (grades 1 through 8) randomly sampled from six primary schools in Addis Ababa. Parents of children at this grade level and age group were targeted because previous studies reported a high level of concern among them (Pearson et al., 2011). Three government and three private schools were selected from Addis Ababa using a convenient sampling method. Then one section from each grade level of the six schools, a total of 48 sections, was randomly selected from the available sections, and, considering Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size recommendation formula, eight students from each section, 384 students in total, were randomly selected. To account for non-returns and incomplete questionnaires, a 15% oversample was used, resulting in a total sample size of 443. Based on the child's inclusion into the sample, parents of children were automatically considered as participants, and questionnaires were sent to them through the child with the help of homeroom teachers. Parents were notified to complete the questionnaire thinking about the child who brought the questionnaire home. Of the 443 questionnaires distributed, 390 (a response rate of 88%) were used in the final analysis as 53 of them were either not returned, not properly filled out or parents declined to participate.

In addition, 15 parents who were members of the Parents Teachers and Students Association (PTSA) were purposively selected from both government (7 members) and private (8 members) schools for focus group discussion. PTSA is an arrangement in the Ethiopian school system that bridges schools with parents and is responsible for supporting and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning processes in schools.

Measures

Demographic Characteristics

This section comprised of items assessing parents' age, gender, marital status, educational level, income, and focal children's age, gender, and grade level.

Parents' Concerns

This questionnaire contains items that measure parents' level of concern about the negative effects of television viewing on children's behavior and school performance. To measure parents' concern about the effect of television viewing on children's behavior, an eight-item Likert type scale developed by Cantor et al. (1996) was adapted. The measure was originally developed to assess parents' level of concern about the negative effects of TV viewing on children's behavior. An example of an item that measures concern was "How concerned are you that watching inappropriate programs on TV would encourage your child to engage in illegal or risky behavior?" For each item, parents were asked to rate their concern on four levels: "not concerned at all," "a little concerned," "moderately concerned," or "very concerned." The measure has been widely used in different contexts (e.g.Warren, 2002) including in Ethiopia (Gizachew, 2014). Desie et al. (2021) validated the measure and reported a high internal relatedness of the items (.92) among Ethiopian parents. In the present study, the

psychometric quality of the measure was checked with a pilot test on 58 parents, and a Cronbach alpha of .89 was obtained.

To measure parents' level of concern about children's school performance, a questionnaire with nine items was developed by the authors based on literature review. Parents were asked to indicate their level of concern on a four-point Likert type scale of "Not concerned at all," "A little concerned," "Moderately concerned," and "Very concerned." An example of an item was "How concerned are you about the effect of television viewing on your child's homework?" The pilot test indicated a Cronbach alpha of .94.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held among parents who were members of the PTSA. PTSA is responsible for any aspect of school activities, particularly those that could affect students' behavior, school performance, and wellbeing. We believed that PTSA members are excellent in providing relevant information about the issue. Two FGDs were conducted separately with PTSA members in their respective schools. The FGDs were facilitated by the first author. An FGD guide was used to facilitate the discussion. The discussion began by introducing the purpose of the study to the participants. The FGD covered a range of issues such as sources and areas of concern, children's and parents' experience of viewing, and mechanisms of mitigating negative effects of viewing on children. Each FGD lasted for about an hour and was audio recorded.

Procedures and Ethical Considerations

We secured a support letter from Addis Ababa University and presented it to the respective school directors. The purpose of the study was explained to the directors, and permission was secured from them for data collection. With the help of homeroom teachers, questionnaires were sent to parents along with information sheets detailing the purpose of the study, participant's rights, anonymity, and data management process along with consent forms asking parents' agreement to participate in the study. Parents who were willing were requested to fill out the questionnaire and send it back to the homeroom teacher through the child. Parents who were not willing were informed about their right not to participate. In addition, oral consent was secured from FGD participants after they were informed about the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

We employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. Quantitative analysis was carried using the SPSS version 24 for Windows®. In order to summarize the data and describe parents' level of concern, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used. To examine differences in parents' level of concern across demographic background, we employed independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs. Qualitative data was transcribed and thematically analyzed.

Results

Characteristics of the Participants

About 58% (n = 225) of the parents were mothers of the target children. The ages of the parents ranged from 25 to 70 years (*Mean* = 40.25, *SD* = 8.13). Parents indicated their level of education as: not literate (3.6%), traditional church/mosque education (4.4%), some primary (35%), some secondary (13%), certificate/diploma (22%), and degree and above (22%). About 58% of the target children were from government primary schools. Approximately 56% (n = 219) of them were girls. Children's ages ranged from 7 to 15 (*Mean* = 11.01, *SD* = 2.35). Close to 37% (n = 144) of children were in grades 1 to 4, and the remaining 63% (n = 246) were from grades 5 to 8. All parents reported the availability of TV sets at home and their children's access to it (Table 1).

Table 1

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants (n =390)

Variables	n	%
Parents relationship with the child		
Mother	225	57.7
Father	165	42.3
Parents age: *M* = 40.25 years (*SD* = 8.13); range = 25-70 years		
Parents educational level		
Not literate	14	3.6
Church/Mosque education	17	4.4
Some primary (up to grade 8)	136	34.9
Some secondary (up to grade 12)	51	13.1
Certificate/diploma	85	21.8
University degree and above	87	22.3
School type		
Private	162	41.9
Government	225	58.1
Child's gender		
Female	219	56.2
Male	171	43.8
Child's age: *M* = 11.01 years (*SD* = 2.35); range = 7 to 15 years		
Grade level		
1-4	144	36.9
5-8	246	63.1
TV ownership	390	100
Children's access to TV		
Yes	390	100

Concern about the Negative Effects of Television Viewing on Children's Behavior

The score of concern for children's behavior for this sample of parents ranged from a minimum of 8 for not concerned at all to a maximum of 32 for very concerned. Parents scored a mean of 25.01 with a *SD* of 4.66, suggesting a moderate level of concern about the effect of

TV viewing on children's behavior. As can be seen from Table 2, about 79% of the parents reported their level of concern as either very concerned (36%) or moderately concerned (43%). The proportion of parents who reported that they were not concerned at all was very minimal (3%).

Table 2

Parents' Extent of Concern about the Effect of TV Viewing on Children's Behavior (n = 390)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	f	%
Level of concern	8	32	25.01	4.66		
Very concerned					142	36.41
Moderately concerned					166	42.56
A little concerned					69	17.69
Not concerned at all					13	3.33

Parents' Level of Concern about the Effect of Television Viewing on Children's School Performance

The score for this sample of parents varied from a minimum of 3 for not concerned at all to a maximum of 12 for very concerned. Parents scored a mean of 9.83 with a *SD* of 1.55, suggesting a higher level of concern about the effect of TV viewing on children's school performance. As presented in Table 3, about 97% of the parents were either very concerned (32%) or moderately concerned (65%) about the effect of TV viewing on children's school performance. The proportion of parents who were not concerned at all was very negligible.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on Parents' Concern about the Effect of Television Viewing on Children's School Performance (n = 390)

Level of concern	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	f	%
	3	12	9.83	1.55		
Very concerned					125	32
Moderately concerned					252	64.7
A little concerned					10	2.6
Not concerned at all					3	0.7

Parents' Level of Concern across Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Parents' concern about the effect of TV viewing on children's behavior and school performance was examined across demographic backgrounds such as parents' gender, educational level, child's gender, and grade level. Results are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4

Level of Concern on Children's Behavior and School Performance by Parents' Gender

Area of concern	Parents' Gender	N	Mean	SD	t (388)	P
Behavior	Father	165	25.77	4.48	2.78	0.006
	Mother	225	24.45	4.73		
School performance	Father	165	10.10	1.56	2.91	0.004
	Mother	225	9.64	1.52		

As can be seen from Table 4, fathers ($M = 25.77$, $SD = 4.48$) were more concerned than mothers ($M = 24.45$, $SD = 4.73$), $t(388) = 2.78$, p =.006) about the effect of viewing on children's behavior and school performance $t(388) = 2.91$, p =.004) though the effect size is small ($d = 0.29$). The results further showed that parents were more concerned about the effect of viewing on the behavior of lower grade (grades 1-4) ($M = 25.96$, $SD = 4.39$) children than children in the upper grades (grades 5-8) ($M = 24.46$, $SD = 4.74$) $t(388) = 3.09$, p =.002). All the other comparisons were not statistically significant.

Table 5

Parents' Concern on Children's Behavior and School Performance by Parents' Education Level

Area of Concern	Source	*df*	*ss*	*ms*	*f*	*p*
Behavior	Between	5	4613.55	922.71	91.78	<.01
	Within	384	3860.35	10.05		
	Total	389	8473.90			
School performance	Between	5	595.85	119.17	133.42	<.01
	Within	384	342.97	.89		
	Total	389	938.82			

A one-way analysis of variance was computed to examine differences in parents' level of concern across educational levels. As shown in Table 5, parents significantly differed in their level of concern about the effect of viewing on children's behavior, $F(5, 384) = 91.78$, *p* .000) across their educational level. Parents who were not literate reported a low level of concern ($M = 19.14$, $SD = 5.82$), compared with parents with traditional church/mosque education ($M = 23.05$, $SD = 2.56$), some primary ($M = 22.40$, $SD = 3.56$), some secondary ($M = 22.39$, $SD = 2.36$), certificate/diploma ($M = 26.54$, $SD = 3.66$), and degree and above ($M = 30.47$, $SD = 1.47$) educational levels. The post hoc comparison showed that parents with better educational levels (certificate, diploma, and degree and above) demonstrated a higher level of concern about the effect of viewing on children's behavior in all the pairwise comparisons.

Similarly, significant differences were observed in parents' level of concern about the effect of viewing on children's school performance across parents educational level ($F(5, 384) = 133.42$, *p* .000). The post hoc comparison showed that parents with university degrees and above showed a statistically significantly higher level of concern (M = 11.88, SD =.55) compared with parents who were not literate (M = 8.71, SD =.82), traditional church/mosque education (M = 8.64, SD =.86), some primary (M = 8.88, SD =.73), some secondary (M = 8.86, SD =.82), and certificate/diploma (M =10.28, SD = 1.50) educational levels.

Areas of Parents' Concern: Findings from the Qualitative Study

Parents were asked to qualitatively describe their areas of concern about the negative effects of television viewing on their children. Two overarching themes describing parents' overall areas of concern about children's exposure to television were identified from the FGD data. The two themes were: concern about the negative effects of viewing on children's behavior and concern about the negative effects of viewing on children's school performance. The themes are described below with illustrative quotes from the participants. All the names mentioned next to the quotes are not real names.

Parents' Concern about the Negative Effects of Viewing on Children's Behavior

Participants repeatedly reflected their concern about the negative effects of television viewing on their children's overall behavior. Most of them reported that their concern particularly heightened following the introduction of Kana Television in April 2016 in Ethiopia. Kana is a satellite entertainment television channel that broadcasts mostly dubbed foreign movies translated into Amharic language. Participants indicated that the 24-hour intensive and repetitive transmission makes the channel very powerful and available to everyone, including children. An FGD participant, for example, reflected her overall concern saying that:

> I remember the time when Kana was introduced in Ethiopia and the concern, feelings, emotions, and responses of many parents. Parents were concerned that the channel would have a greater influence on their kids, including their personality and educational achievement. Still, parents are raising questions and expressing their concerns to the school management for a possible intervention. It is a common agenda item and source of concern in our monthly PTSA meeting (Mrs. Martha, parent and chairman of PTSA).

Another participant has also reported his general concern as follows:

> As a parent, I'm highly concerned about my children's TV watching because it might have an effect on their spiritual, behavioral, and academic lives (Mr. Amhatsion, parent and chairman of PTSA).

These qualitative accounts substantiated findings of the quantitative analysis that showed parents high level of concern about the effect of viewing on children's behavior and school performance. Parents were further asked to cite specific areas of concern in relation to children's behavior and school performance. With regards to behavior, parents frequently indicated that television viewing has powerful effects on their children's use of bad words, exposure to sexual contents, violent actions, and sensitivity to drug use. A participant has explained how the dubbed films have affected the way her son's choice of words was influenced by his TV viewing:

> These days, one of my challenges and concerns is Kana. There are lots of films that contain indecent words. Unfortunately, my son picks those words and uses them regularly in his daily conversation. Specifically, if some of the famous characters whom he appreciates on Kana use those words, it does not give him a

time to repeat those bad words. I have observed in him that he quickly gets inspired by famous characters. (Mrs. Fetlework, parent and member of PTSA).

Another FGD participant further indicated the effect of TV programs on her child's use of bad words as follows.

> Since the transmission of Kana, we have heard from our children's use of both good words, such as "ውዴ," (my dear), and lots of bad words (insults), such as "የማትረባ" (useless), "ዋጋቢስ," (valueless), which are directly imitated from Kana and have become common in their conversation. I have a fear that if our children continue their imitation, they might be highly influenced by the negative words (Mrs. Martha, parent and chairman of PTSA).

Parents also expressed their concern on children's untimely exposure to sexual content. An FGD participant has shared his concern on how TV programs prematurely exposed his child to sexual content:

> Films and music videos exposed my twelve-year-old child to sexual issues such as fondling, kissing, and sexual intercourse. I once heard him explaining some sexual content from Kana to his older sister with passion. After that, my concern becomes so serious that I start to think about what to do about it (Mr. Eyob, parent and member of PTSA).

On top of the above areas of concern, participants indicated that children easily imitated violent actions from television films and even influenced them to think that aggression is a normative way of solving problems in everyday life. A father participant shared his experiences as:

> I found my child involved in fighting at school after his watching of films from the dubbed TV channel. They told me that he acts and speaks like Kuzi-a famous character in the Kuzi Guni film [from the dubbed TV channel]. I was also called by his homeroom teacher concerning the fighting character that he was exhibiting in class. His teachers told me that instead of discussing differences, my son blames any reaction on his classmates. I think the characters in these films inspired him to engage in such fighting action during disputes (Mr. Beka, parent and member of PTSA).

Another participant reported his observation as follows:

> I remember that there has been an incident reported to the PTSA in which grade eight boy students were involved in group fighting that continues outside of the school compound too. I can say that their fighting is after watching some of the films from Kana Television because we found out that one of the fighting groups even named itself "Kuzi" and was acting as a defender of victims (Mr. Amhatsion, parent and chairman of PTSA).

Furthermore, participants have also indicated that children's exposure to television has significantly influenced their sensitivity about drugs. Many participants believed that as a result of watching unsupervised television programs children are now very much aware about different drugs such as cocaine and marijuana. A parent has indicated her concern saying that:

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I know some cases of grade seven and eight students who were a great threat to parents and schools too. It was about students who smoked, took drugs, and drank because of imitating the lifestyle of their favorite musicians on TV. We have discovered these facts as a result of the school's principal's discussion with parents (Mrs. Hawi, Parent and member of PTSA).

Concern about the Negative Effects of Viewing on Children's School Performance

Many of the FGD participants expressed their grave concern about the effect of television viewing on children's academic performance. Participants frequently reported that in addition to the overall negative influence of viewing on children's behavior, children's unsupervised television viewing seriously disengage them from academic work and results in poor school performance. Participants reported that repeated exposure to television viewing seriously compromised children's important school activities of doing homework, studying and their exam results. An FGD participant described her concern saying that:

Television viewing really affects my child's school performance. Because of her favorite films, she does not concentrate on her reading and studying. She gives much attention to films instead of doing her homework, which has affected her results (Mrs. Seble, parent and member of PTSA).

Participants indicated that children watch too much TV particularly on weekends and it affected their academic activities and sleep behavior. Parents' concern is observed in one of the FGD participants as follows:

My child spends time on Kana films only at weekends; it affects her reading and studying. She exclusively focuses on the completion of her homework instead of further book reading and studying for the exam. Currently, I'm not satisfied with her results, and it's not up to my expectations. It's considerably dropped. I know she has the potential to perform well on exams if she studies and reads more instead of spending much time on films (Mrs. Meaza, parent and member of PTSA).

Another FGD participant explained her concern saying that:

My child's homeroom teacher frequently called me at school because of his incomplete homework. The reason for this was my child's exposure to the Kana series films. The time the films are transmitted is a prime time for my fourth grader to do his homework. Sometimes, he also suffers from sleep problems. One of his teachers told me that he sleeps during lesson hours (Mrs. Hawi, parent and member of PTSA).

Poor performance has been reported as a major source of parents' concern as a result of children's excessive watching of TV. A participant described his concern saying that:

There were several complaints from parents about the poor school performance of their children because of TV viewing. Parents were reporting to the school principals and homeroom teachers that their children failed to do homework, stopped reading and studying due to excessive TV viewing (Mr. Amhatsion, parent and chairman of PTSA).

Overall, data generated from the FGDs clearly indicated that parents were seriously concerned about the effect of TV viewing on children's behavior and school performance.

Discussion

We investigated the extent and areas of parents' concern about the effect of television viewing on children's behavior and school performance in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We also examined demographic differences in parents' level of concern. The results revealed that while parents had a moderate level of concern about the effect of TV viewing on children's behavior, they were very concerned about the effect of viewing on children's school performance. Our results further showed that fathers and parents with a relatively higher educational level were more concerned than mothers and parents with low educational levels. Furthermore, parents showed a higher level of concern about the effect of viewing on younger children in lower grades than on older children in upper grade levels. Concerning parents' areas of concern, qualitative results indicated that children's learning and use of bad words, premature exposure to sexual content, involvement in violence and aggression activities, and awareness and sensitization about drugs were the major areas of parents' concern in relation to children's behavior. Similarly, not doing homework, not studying, and low academic results were the concerns reported by parents in relation to the effect TV viewing has on children's school performance.

The finding that indicated parents' moderate to high level of concern about the impact of TV viewing on children's behavior and school performance was congruent with previous international (Chan & McNeal, 2003; Haines et al., 2013; Wartella et al. 2014) and local (Desie et al., 2021; Gizachew, 2014) studies. For example, one local study on the parenting practices of children's television viewing in Addis Ababa revealed that parents were moderately concerned about the effect of viewing on children, and they reported restrictions on children's viewing time as a mitigating strategy. Parents' higher level of concern in this study may be related to the unprecedented escalation of television channels and the concomitant rise in children's exposure to it in recent times in Ethiopia. Another local study indicated that the fast-paced growth of both local and paid foreign digital channels in Ethiopia has created great access to children to navigate through many channels; that some may be relevant and enlightening, while others may be damaging to their healthy development (Gebru, 2020). Parents' serious concern about the harmful effects of television viewing on children's behavior and school performance was aggravated by the introduction of the Kana Television program in 2016, which parents and guardians, participated in this study, raised a greater concern about.

This study has revealed that fathers are more concerned about TV viewing and its influence. This might be related to the overall patriarchal structure of society, where males have better access to education and exposure to many things that help them understand the harmful effects of excessive viewing. In addition, the difference in the level of concern may be related to the mother's positive attitude toward television watching as a mechanism of engaging children at home instead of letting them go out. As anticipated, parents' levels of concern were also different as a function of their educational level. Parents with better educational levels

demonstrated a higher level of concern than those with low levels of education. This might be because of the fact that better educated parents are more aware and critical of the content broadcast on television and better understand the negative effects of viewing on children's behavior and school performance. Parents were also highly concerned about the effect of viewing on younger children in lower grades than older children in upper grades, which was consistent with other local studies (Desie et al., 2021). This result might be due to the fact that parents are aware of younger children's inability to filter out important content from deceptive content on television.

The finding on parents' concern about children's use of bad words was similar to previous studies that indicated the commonness of profane language on television (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009). In consistent with other international studies (e.g., Cantor et al., 1996), parents in this study indicated that children's learning and use of offensive language, exposure to sexual content, violence and aggression, and risky behavior were the main concerns in relation to their overall behavioral development. Furthermore, parents reported that disengagement in academic activities such as not studying, not doing homework, and attaining poor exam results were major concerns in relation to children's school performance. Similarly, parents' concern about the effect of viewing on children's sexual behavior was congruent with previous studies (Kunkel et al., 2007; Lou et al., 2012). These studies indicated that as sexual talk and behavior are highly frequent in the entertainment television environment, excessive and unsupervised exposure of children to these programs prematurely exposes them to sexual content. Parents' concern about the effect of viewing on children's violence and risky behaviors was also consistent with results of prior studies (Anderson et al., 2017). Similarly, parents' high level of concern about the effect of viewing on children's schooling was in agreement with previous studies that showed a strong correlation between excessive viewing and poor academic engagement and school performance (Ballard, 2003; Pagani et al., 2010). Overall, the results of this study on parents extent and areas of concern about the effect of viewing on children's behavior and school performance were congruent with several studies that asserted the harmful effects of excessive and unsupervised viewing on children's development (e.g.,Anderson et al., 2017; Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009).

Conclusion and Implications

We examined the extent and areas of parents' concern about the effect of TV viewing on two important child development outcomes: behavior and school performance. Parents demonstrated a moderate to high level of concern about the harmful effects of television viewing on children. In addition, parents have also identified important areas of concern with regard to their children's behavior and school performance.

Though the study highlighted some important points in relation to parents' level and areas of concern, we would like to recommend comprehensive research in the area that considers the changing media landscape of children in Ethiopia. As children are becoming more multitasking in their media use, future researchers need to consider children's exposure to multi-forms of media and study parental concerns and mediating strategies associated with it. We further suggest future researchers focus on qualitative studies in order to understand the

issue from a grounded point of view. The findings of this study also suggest the need to design interventions that are aimed at providing awareness and skills training to concerned parents about supervising children's viewing and how to help children to become critical consumers of media.

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Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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