

Media Communications at Home and Family Relationship

- From the Survey of Families with Primary School Children -

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(Summary)

The authors conducted a web survey of 516 households with primary school children to examine how family members communicate with each other using media devices (television, video games, and mobile phone.) As a result of cluster analysis, the following five types of family communication styles were emerged: “balanced media-communication type” where active parent-child communications via media are observed, “permissive media-communication type” where parental control over children’s media use is quite loose, “TV-centered media-communication type” where television is more actively used than video games, “videogame-centered media-communication type” where videogames are more actively used than television, and “inactive media-communication type” where parent-child communications as a whole are not vigorous. There were some differences among these types about parents’ attitude toward media and children’s media literacy. Especially, it was suggested that parents in “balanced media-communication type” group are more likely to recognize both positive and negative influence of the media on children than those in “permissive media-communication type” group and that “balanced” group also marked higher score in children’s media literacy than other groups.

In addition, individual interviews were conducted with mothers, fathers, and children of 20 families which fall under these five types. As a result, distinctive differences were found in parents’ attitudes towards the media, their interest in children’s media contact, types of media used by the family, parents’ histories of childhood media experience, and a sense of unity as a family.

Amid the rapid development of digital media, media communications inside a family are becoming more and more important for children’s acquisition of healthy media literacy. Since both parents and children need to improve media literacy, it will be necessary for us to broaden our views to consider the content of the media and diversity of families, in order to grasp the whole picture of media communications within a family.