

## **Educational Effects of Cable TV on Children: A Case Study of Sindh**

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### **Abstract**

Television is generally blamed worldwide by parents for its negative effects. The present study was conducted to find out the effects of cable television on the academic and educational achievements of the children in the Sindh of Province in Pakistan. For this study the researchers used quantitative and in-depth interview with the parents of the children. Data was collected through survey from 624 children of grade V and VIII in cable and no-cable town residents, while 64 parents of such children were interviewed randomly in three locations Sukkur, Nawabshah (now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad. To find out objective results the researchers used statistical package for social scientists, SPSS Version15, for the data analysis and interpretation.

The findings revealed that children with cable television have maintained positive effects of television much in line with those children, who are living with terrestrial television channels. A – slight improvement among senior graders, girls and Urdu speaking children was reported. The cautious behavior of parents and informational role of cable television regarding education of their kids needs still more attention of the concerned circles to meet future challenges regarding education and cognitive tendencies.

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### **Introduction**

Television has emerged as one of the most influential means of mass communication in present times. The arena, where images, forms, styles and ideas surrounding the human existence are transmitted. Television has brought its mark as the most popular mean for communication and information due to the considerable convenience it offers to its audience globally, of all ages, nationalities and social status. Television does not need literacy and presents information in audiovisual form requiring no additional skills for comprehension.

According to a survey,<sup>1</sup> the popularity of television in the advancing world over the last two decades has been worth seeing.

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Estimates say that since 1980s, the number of television sets in Asia has increased more than six times, from 100 million to 650 million and in China, television seeing grew from 18 million people in 1977 to 1 billion by 1995. In more recent years, satellite and cable television presence has substantially increased. Again in China, the number of people with access to satellite grew from 270,000 in 1991 to 14 million by 2005. In India, 63,000,000 TV sets and 61 per cent cable connections with 39,112,150 cable subscribers were reported in 2008.

Table 1.1 shows the increase of TV sets in Pakistan.

**Table 1.1: Television sets in Pakistan**

	Province	2004	2005	2006	2007
1	Punjab	2,294,390	4,704,707	5,548,455	6,280,173
2	Sindh	1,327,407	1,335,306	1,564,723	1,782,760
3	NWFP	165,345	629,595	740,802	803,939
4	Baluchistan	40,559	93,125	117,902	137,010
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,827,701</b>	<b>6,762,733</b>	<b>7,971,882</b>	<b>9,003,882</b>

*Source: PTV*

### Literature review

Milton Chen<sup>2</sup> concluded that it was very simple to make television responsible for adverse effects on children's academic abilities and performance. They are generally believed to pay less attention on their homework, reading and other healthy activities. On other hand, watching television excessively was made responsible for deterioration of academic performance of children.

In same context, The Blue Ribbon Panel, in 1977 also reported lower that children who watched television for more than five hours, scored lower on SAT exams, but interestingly, the studies conducted in Japan and Canada showed contrary findings. H. Gardner,<sup>3</sup> concluded that that television was a big source of inspiration for children, especially in

<sup>1</sup> Bella Thomas, 'What the World's Poor Watch on TV', *World Press Review*, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> M. Chen, 'Television and Informal Science Education: Assessing the State of Research and Evaluation', in V. Crane (ed.), *Informal Science Learning* (Dedham, MA: Research Communications Ltd., 1994).

<sup>3</sup> H. Gardner, *Art, Mind and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

early years. Christakis<sup>4</sup> discovered that children exposed to TV at very age have greater rate of attention problems during study.

Schramm, et al<sup>5</sup> could not isolate the effects of TV in contributing to improvements in knowledge but their observation that TV indeed had its contribution in promoting knowledge and expanding vocabulary was supported by specific finding that knowledge and words used by viewers were indeed used by celebrities in TV.

Anderson and Collins also supported this concept and concluded that watching television makes children mentally powerful and helpful in learning, particularly when they watch programs prepared for them. Defleur<sup>6</sup> concluded that views of children regarding occupation were influenced by TV as they preferred to have profession they had no firsthand experience.

Hearold<sup>7</sup> found in her study that pro-social effects of television content were more lasting and more potent than anti-social effects. The results indicated that TV itself is not bad, that is its use as pro-social content have led to less stereotyping and more positive social interaction by children and helped in discipline formation and altruistic tendencies as well, but pro-social program which glamorizes violence throughout can back fire unless it ends with certain moral lessons. She indicated other factors like, children's own abilities to get the message, watching with others, grade, age and gender also contributed in shaping their attitudes.

Sesame Street, a television series was also investigated and was helpful regarding preparing children for school but not bringing any difference in the gap between privileged and non-privileged children. Some more research conducted by CBS Broadcast Group (1974) also demonstrated the pro social impact of television programs like Cosby Kida and Fat Albert, discovered to be facilitating learning pro-social guide to under aged.

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<sup>4</sup> D.A. Christakis, *et.al.*, 'Early television exposure and subsequent attention problems in children', *Pediatrics*, 113:4 (2004), pp.708-13.

<sup>5</sup> W. Schramm, J. Lyle and E.B. Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> Melvin L. DeFleur and Lois B. D., 'The relative contribution of television as a learning source for children's occupational knowledge', *American Sociological Review* 32 (October, 1967), pp.777-89. [coe.csusb.edu/faculty/newberry/classes/archive/fall2008/.../12.pdf](http://coe.csusb.edu/faculty/newberry/classes/archive/fall2008/.../12.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> S. Hearold, 'Effects of Television on Social Behaviour', in G. Comstock (eds.), *Public Communications and Behaviour*, Vol.1, 1986, pp.65-133.

Mitchell Stephens<sup>8</sup> argues that TV mediate reality for viewers and then transport them into it and though it has sharpened the grip on happenings around the clock it has stymied our abilities to infer and conclude from the chain of events and further more we live with surrogate friends and family and feel no need of real one or perhaps have lost ability to have either.

Perkinson<sup>9</sup> has implied that social interaction has improved a great deal as our major focus is on how two people relate to each other than on how they engage in dialogue. Meyerowitz J.<sup>10</sup> said that face impression dressing and the way feelings are conveyed are improved due to media as focus of media is on visual than rational thoughts.

In Turkey, Sarem Ozdemir<sup>11</sup> carried out a study on 'Effects of Television as a natural Educator.' The study on Turkish Cypriot children and adolescents was an important study in terms of finding the socialization effect of TV, it found that people spent most of time before TV and then they imitated the character they liked in their practical life. U. Joshi and A. Maniar<sup>12</sup> concluded that television viewing not only helped adolescents to gain knowledge regarding world's happenings, but it also helped them to adopt healthy food habits, in known ways of behaving with elders, increased their vocabulary, clarified their science and math's concepts, refreshed them for other day's work, help them in respecting another religions and also helped them in performing various developmental tasks.

### Objective of the study

- To find out educational and learning effects of cable television on the children of Sindh province.
- To look for factors that effect children.

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<sup>8</sup> Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News: From the Drum to the Satellite* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988).

<sup>9</sup> Henry Perkinson, *Getting Better: Television and Moral Progress* (Piscataway NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 2nd edition.

<sup>10</sup> Joshua Meyerowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Sarem Özdemir, 'Affects of Television as a Natural Educator: Can Television be a Tool as an Informal Educator?: A Trnc Sample', *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET*, 5:1 (2006). [www.tojet.net/articles/v5i1/511.pdf](http://www.tojet.net/articles/v5i1/511.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> U. Joshi and A. Maniar, 'Influence of Television Viewing on Adolescents as Perceived by Themselves and Their Mothers in Relation to the Selected', *Media Research: Cross Sectional Analysis*, Delhi, 1994, pp.20-21.

- To determined the difference of effect on gender, town, grade and ethnicity base on the children of Sindh province.
- To search out kind of effects on the children.
- To explore the impact television on learning and educational improvement of children.

### **Hypothesis**

Cable television viewer children achieved higher ranks in examinations as compared to the children who watch terrestrial television (PTV).

### **Theoretical framework**

The perspective of social learning theory is that people learn within a social context. The theory roots in the behaviorist notion of human behavior as being determined by learning, and shaped by reinforcement in the form of rewards or punishment.

Albert Bandura's<sup>13</sup> social learning theories suggest that the mutual relationship among behavior, environment, and cognition; all reciprocally influence each other, for which Bandura invented the term 'reciprocal determinism'. In this regard an example has been given that hostile thoughts can result in hostile behavior, which can affect our environment by making others hostile and inducing additional hostile thoughts. Therefore, not only our environment influences our thoughts and behavior, but our thoughts and behavior also play a role in determining our environment.

Bandura is known for his research on the importance of imitation and reinforcement in learning. His work on modeling has been recognized in the development of new therapeutic approaches, especially the methods used in cognitive-behavior therapy.

Bandura also expanded on Julian Rotter's concept of expectancy and argued that our expectations about the outcome of situations are heavily influenced by whatever we think we will succeed at the things we attempt, means action will result in the desired outcome. Bandura introduced the term 'self-efficacy' for this idea, and argued that it has a high degree of influence on our expectations as well as on our performance.

The researcher assumed these theories provide most suitable base to explore all these aspects of this study. As the young minds are vulnerable to influence of media, it is also assumed that characters and environment portrayed in television/ cable television programs leave

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<sup>13</sup> A. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: General Learning Press, 1977).

powerful effects on the attitudes of heavy viewers. School children were assumed more suitable to assess this aspect and were, therefore, selected for this study. The influence of violent scenes in TV/Cable TV programs promoting aggressive attitude was another assumption to assess in the light of cultivation theory. The school children (Class V and VIII) were selected to determine this factor. The study is aimed at finding out the impact of television on attitudes and behaviour on various aspects of the lives of young minds and a comparison of effects of cable viewers against their non-cable viewer counterparts.

### **Methodology**

Survey method was used for this quantitative research. A well developed questionnaires comprising 76 questions were distributed among the respondents of Sukkur, Nawabshah (now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad. Data was collected through random sampling from V<sup>th</sup> and VIII<sup>th</sup> class students of cable town and non-cable town residents of Sindh province. Statistical package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version15) was used for data analysis and interpretation to ensure impartiality in the results.

### **Data analysis and interpretation**

One of the major areas of research on television effects focuses on its effects on children's education. In this area a number of studies have been conducted in various countries to analyze the impact from different angles. The relationship between television and education is probed mostly in respect with time, reading, imagination, obesity and many other factors.

In Turkey, Özdemir,<sup>14</sup> in his concluding remarks in a study on 'Effects of television as a natural educator' asserted television as an informal educator and having a great potential for educating the children in positive way. He further stated that our children are colonized by TV and affirmed it as most important for teachers and authorities.

In the present study, as the respondents were chosen from government schools, with a huge majority of children from lower socio-economic strata, attempt has been made to assess the issue from their academic achievement in examinations. The respondents were asked if they had achieved any position in past examinations. The findings are as under:

The data in Table 1.1 shows that in Cable Towns, majority of children in all zones gained better results in their examinations. The children who had got good results are

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<sup>14</sup> Sarem Özdemir, *op.cit.*

more in number in Cable Towns in comparison with the children who have seen only terrestrial television.

**Table 1.1: Distribution of the respondents, academic achievement according to cable zones**

	Better Academic Achievement											
	Sukkur				Nawabshah				Hyderabad			
Cable Zone	Yes (f)	No (f)	D.R* (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	D. R (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	D. R (f)	No reply (f)
Cable Towns	68	25	4	06	76	16	9	03	76	16	9	04
Non Cable Towns	61	25	13	05	57	26	21	00	64	32	8	00

\* D.R stands for ‘Don’t remember’

Data segregated by grades (V and VIII) shown in Figure 1.1 indicates that senior grade children are slightly more in number who have obtained higher positions in examinations than junior class children, in cable towns.

**Figure 1.1: Distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements according to their grades in Cable Towns**

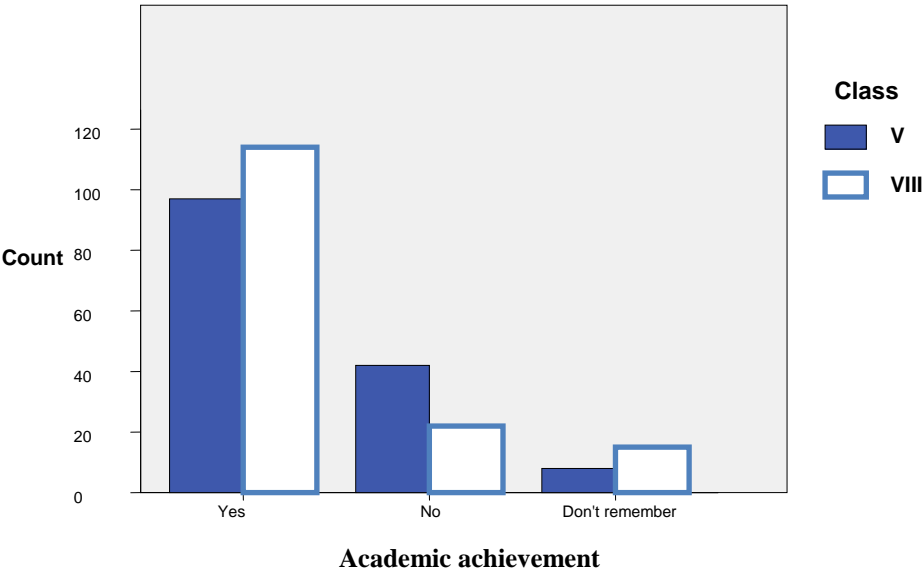


Figure 1.2 presents the ratio of the non-cable town children on grade basis (V and VIII) indicates that senior grade children who have obtained better positions in examinations are slightly more in number than junior class children.

**Figure 1.2: Grade wise distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements in Non-Cable Towns**

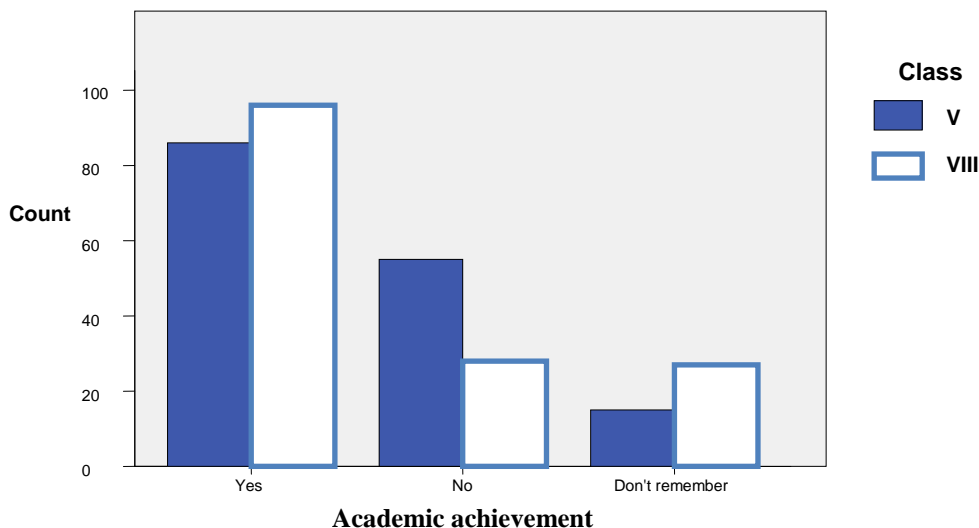


Figure 1.3 represents the data on gender basis. It is found that in cable towns, girls have obtained better academic achievements than boys.



**Figure 1.3: Gender wise distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements in Cable Towns**

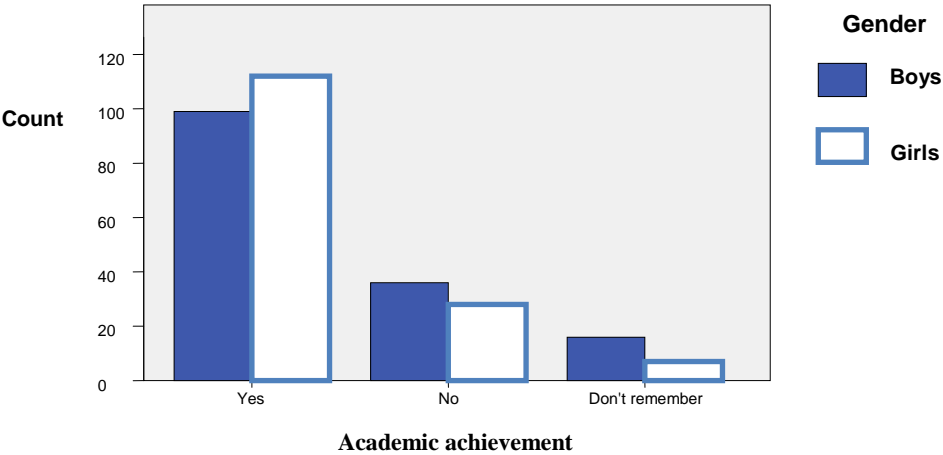


Figure 1.4 which presents data on gender basis, shows that in non-cable towns, girls have obtained better academic achievements than boys. While the same trend is observed with little fractions in the non-cable towns.

**Figure 1.4: Gender wise distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements in Non-Cable Towns**

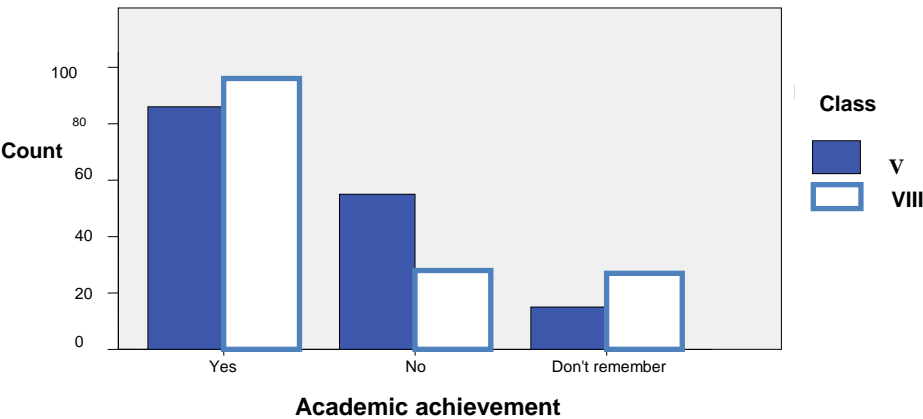
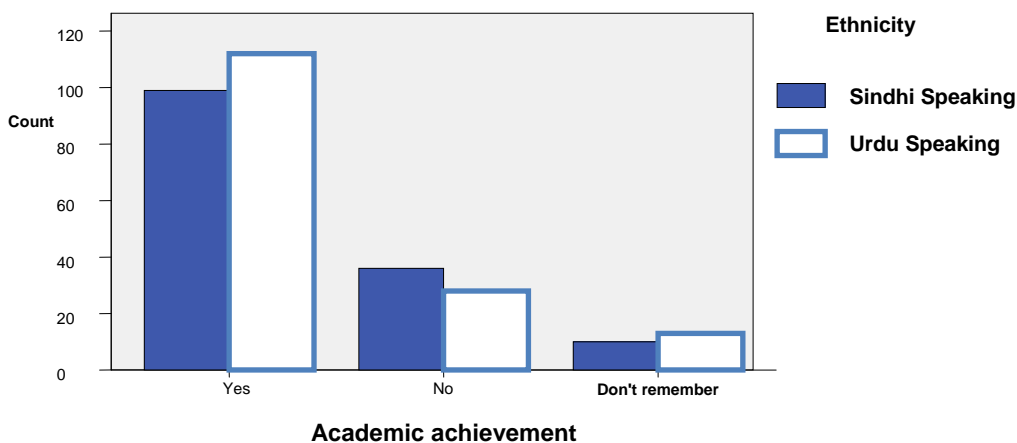


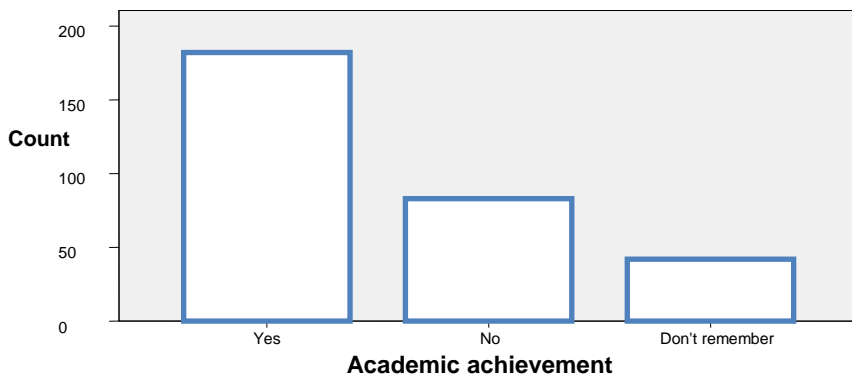
Figure 1.5 indicates that in cable towns, more of the Urdu speaking children have obtained better academic achievements in examinations than Sindhi speaking children.

Whereas, in non-cable towns (Figure 1.6), with homogenous ethnicity, majority of children also got better academic achievements during examinations.

**Figure 1.5: Ethnic distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements in Cable Towns**



**Figure 1.6: Ethnic distribution of the respondents by their academic achievements in Cable Towns in Non-Cable Towns**



### Parents opinion

To know the opinion and concerns of the parents of school going children regarding effects of television on their children, a survey was conducted. For this purpose, a sample of 64 parents was selected randomly in both cable and non-cable towns. The parents were interviewed in person and were asked for their comments about the advantages and disadvantages of television, content in context with their kids.

The parents showed mixed opinion regarding effects of television on their kids. Almost all of them were affirmative about the role of television in the lives of children, imitating nature of child, relationship between TV and child and possible effects of television programs. They expressed their mixed reactions over the effects of TV content. The parents also confirmed the casual demand of some specific brands of foreign products which incite and encourage the children to buy the product. Here is the summery of their opinions:

A significant number of parents also termed television very helpful for mental growth of children. They favored the use of television for benefits to learning and for cultivation of healthy social and cultural values. They agreed that TV meets the entertainment needs of kids in very effective manner. They appreciated religious programs telecast specially during the month of *Ramzan-ul-mubarak*. They also appreciated the programs of QTV (Quran Television), National Geographic and Cartoon Network channels. They believe that such programs help to enhance civic sense and hygienic among children. A significant number of parents were also critical about some contents of television channels. They believed that when a child watches negative programs s/he learns violence and adopt negative and aggressive behavior.

A good number (40%) of parents reported that their children were reluctant to get up in the morning due to late night TV viewing. They also believed that television effects education negatively, especially their homework. According to them, children become mentally disturbed and pay less attention to their studies.

### Discussion

Television is generally blamed worldwide by parents for its negative effects. Often they have shown concern about the effects of mini-screen on their children's life style in general and academic life in particular.

They believe that television has affected their academic activities their time allocation for home work and their achievements in school.

Summarizing their study on 'learning from television', Barbra Seels et al,<sup>15</sup> suggest that a number of factors like age, mental abilities, socio-economic status, television viewing environment and nature of programs watched are contributing factors in affecting the light viewers. The summary further suggests that light viewing of television may help to increase the scholastic performance of children belonging to lower socio-economic status and with lower mental abilities.

Concern in the same regard prevails among the parents in Pakistan also. Although any specific apprehension has not been expressed in any organized forum, but parents and teachers are generally found expressing their anxiety over this issue in their everyday chat. The present study attempted to investigate this assumption. The children were asked about their academic achievements. They were asked if they have obtained 1-5 position in any examination. The answers were affirmative in most cases. More than 70 per cent children in cable towns and around 60 per cent in non-cable towns obtained 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> positions in school examinations. The difference of ratio in cable and non-cable towns children seems due to an obvious reason of exposure of more TV channels to the children of cable towns.

On grade basis, the ratio of senior students in both cable and non-cable towns is higher than junior graders. On gender basis, the results show higher number of girls in achievements than boys in both the cable and non-cable towns. On ethnic basis, in cable towns, Urdu speaking children have an edge over the children of other ethnicity, while in non-cable towns, a significant number of Sindhi Speaking children obtained good results in examination with viewing PTV channels.

It would be very appropriate to note that the relationship between socio-economic status of the respondents and their academic achievements, which indicates that majority of parents in Sindh region, despite of their lower socio-economic status is conscious about the education of their children. The results also reflect the possible contribution of television to enhance the rate of achievement in the examinations of children.

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<sup>15</sup> Barbara Seels, H.B. Louis, F. Karen and J.H. Laura, *Research on Learning from Television, Handbook of Research for Educational Communications and Technology*, The Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 2001.

**Conclusion**

Parents' resentment about the negative effects of television has also been probed in different countries. Cable television provided an additional ground for study of this issue to see if this influx of foreign channels has further affected the children's education. This study tried to ascertain the negative effects of cable television, and, in the light of collected data, the perception receives little support. The study discovered that children with cable television have maintained positive effects of television much in line with those children, who are living with terrestrial television channels. A slight improvement among senior graders, girls and Urdu speaking children was reported. The cautious behavior of parents and informational role of cable television regarding education of their kids needs still more attention of the concerned circles to meet the future challenges to the education and cognitive tendencies.