

Panel Discussion Papers
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Total population of Indonesia is ± 200 million people and among this population, approximately 74 million are children under 18 yrs and approximately 20 million among these children are under 5 years old.

For almost the entire population of Indonesia, television is the main entertainment. And almost all houses in Indonesia have this media as if television is a mandatory. Such a 'bonding' with television is passed on to their children.

The prices of television are affordable enough for most families in Indonesia. And with just this one entertainment media, people can choose a variety of TV stations, both national TV and local TV. And with additional antenna at a minimum price, people can also enjoy television broadcastings from other countries.

As you can imagine, how much influence the role of TV media on the Indonesian society overall; be it positive or negative for people in general and children in particular.

There are several reasons that make the TV media can be a bad thing for children:

1. Many Indonesian children now have been introduced to watch TV since their very early age for variety of reasons. Watching TV is "mandatory" in their habits.
2. Many children under school age, are invited to watch some adults programs by their care taker (mother or others)
3. Tens of TV channels in Indonesia with national and local scopes, must compete to attract the attention of the audience for the sake of their corporate existence and sustainability. To be the highest rating TV program has become the main goal of every program aired by most of television stations in Indonesia for commercial interests without considering the importance of other elements.

Television program's rating is conducted by involving public opinions. Unfortunately, the programs with high results are those which are not proper for the needs of the children, physically, emotionally, mentally as well as spiritually.

For example:

Films with high ratings are those (movies and soap opera) filled with violence, whether in words or vocabulary as well as in deeds. In any setting, family – comedy – drama – and so forth, we can easily find the elements of violence.

Not only movies for adults, but also a lot of cartoon films which are intended for children contains violence. Even these movies detail the scenes of persecution and murder.

Not to mention the news being broadcast, are those with cruelty, crimes, sex and gossips that are so distant from educating and building good character.

Advertisement with themes of war which expose guns are many found on local televisions.

Apart from violence, mostly TV programs in Indonesia are lacking in educating people to live healthy such as programs that can stimulate the children to eat more fresh food. Instead, children are flooded by junk food advertisements that are full of preservatives and dyes; provide society with misleading information, and offer products that are proven to be unhealthy and even damaging the human organs. But, still, these ads associate the benefits of consuming those junk products with macho-ism and physical vitality.

There are still many negative information being broadcast by televisions which, consciously or not, are filling up the brain and the mind of our children and building the mental map or patterns of thinking that are detrimental for their future.

This all should be a tragedy for us.

However, we believe that repairs / improvements are still doable. Recently, I found an Indonesian television channel, *i.e B Channel*, which has started to providing what is appropriate for the children and families. The B Channel assures its programs are all without violence, blood, sex, and free from negative elements. Even in broadcasting news, I found the Channel sorts out the materials of the news subjects in a very selective and unique way. It views and analyzes the subjects in terms of finding the good side or improvement of them as a lesson for the future.

We, as the National Committee for Child Protection along with several other groups in our society, also conduct activities to minimize or even alter the negative impacts of television and internet media to something more useful especially for children.

For example, we will have our July 26, 2010 as “Hari Tanpa TV” or “Day Without TV” throughout Indonesia. On this day, any related television watching activities will be substituted by outdoor

activities, reading books, family chatting, and so on. The purpose is to remind our society that television is not the only entertainment and that there are many other activities that are more exciting as well as useful in and for our day to day life.

For longer term purposes, as we want to set more examples and encourage communities to utilize television media as an effective means to communicate many positive things, we are now designing and setting up a television channel that can educate not only the children, parents or care-service providers, but to be a model for more other television channels to build better generations, future leaders of our society through better and responsible television broadcasting programs.

Well, if this is a dream, then I believe that the dream is never too grandiose to achieve. We are already starting now, and we will finish what we have started.

Thank you.

Therefore, aided by good friends, I am designing and setting up a television channel that can educate not only the children, parents or baby sisters, but to be a model for other television channels to build better generations, future leaders of our society through better and responsible television broadcasting programs.

Thank you.