



Adolescent Television Consumers: Self-perceptions about their Rights

Adolescentes consumidores de televisión: Autopercepciones sobre sus derechos

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the perceptions of a representative sample of the Spanish population aged between 12 and 18 with respect to the protection of their rights by television channels. To this end, a survey was distributed with 59 questions designed specifically for a much wider research to analyse the opinion of minors on the protection of their rights on television and the Internet. No question in the survey referred to specific channels or programmes identified by the researchers and the information on these arose from the adolescents' own opinions. The results presented refer to data on television and, more specifically, on the respect of the fundamental rights of television viewers in general and those of minors in particular. From these results, we can conclude that adolescents clearly perceive the infringement of the following rights: equality, dignity and privacy; objective, accurate and pluralistic information; free expression and opinion – particularly when this refers to children. Likewise, they demonstrate a critical position which rejects types of programmes that do not respect their rights. Researchers propose that this critical ability of younger viewers can be utilised from a dual perspective: on the one hand to create a school of citizenship and, secondly, to encourage social change to bring about a more just and equitable society.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la percepción que tiene una muestra representativa de la población española de entre 12 y 18 años sobre la protección de sus derechos en las cadenas de televisión. Para conseguir este objetivo, se aplicó un cuestionario de 59 preguntas diseñado para una investigación más amplia en la que se analizaba la opinión de los menores sobre la protección de sus derechos en la televisión y en Internet. Ninguna pregunta del cuestionario se refería a cadenas o programas concretos identificados por los investigadores y la información sobre estos partía de la propia opinión de los adolescentes. Los resultados que se presentan se refieren a los datos sobre televisión y, más concretamente, al respeto por los derechos fundamentales de los telespectadores en general, y de los de los menores en particular. De estos resultados se concluye que los adolescentes perciben claramente la vulneración de los derechos de igualdad, dignidad e intimidad, a la información objetiva veraz y plural y a la libre expresión y opinión –especialmente cuando ésta se refiere a los niños–. Igualmente muestran una postura crítica y de rechazo hacia los tipos de programas que no respetan sus derechos. Se propone utilizar esta capacidad crítica de los telespectadores desde una doble perspectiva: por una parte para crear escuela de ciudadanía y, por otra, para generar una sociedad más justa y equitativa.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Childhood, adolescence, television, rights, participation, critic consumer, opinion research, broadcast programming.
Infancia, adolescencia, televisión, derechos, participación, consumo crítico, estudios de opinión, programación televisiva.

1. Introduction and facts

Wide Extensive research has been carried out both in Spain and other countries on the consumption of television by children and adolescents, as well as the respect of their rights by this medium. In this section, a short summary of the most recent research with similar objectives to our own is presented. Various consumer surveys in Spain indicate that children and adolescents watch television every day and that their consumption increases at the weekend (AIMC, 2008, 2012; Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the Institute for Recreation and Quality of Life of the University of Gerona (Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya e Institut de Recerca sobre Qualitat de Vida de la Universitat de Girona), 2007; Defender of Minors in the Community of Madrid (Defensor del Menor en la Comunidad de Madrid), 2010; Regional Government of Valencia (Generalitat Valenciana), 2008; INJUVE, 2012; Rodríguez, Mejías & Menéndez, 2012). The results are not entirely conclusive with respect to the type of programmes, as these are determined by age: younger children prefer to watch films, cartoons and sport, whereas adolescents prefer series and films (Ararteko, 2009; AIMC, 2008; Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the Institute for Recreation and Quality of Life of the University of Gerona, 2007; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia (Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía), 2008b; INJUVE-CIS, 2011; Rodríguez, Megías & Menéndez, 2012). The programmes least viewed are gossip programmes and news broadcasts (Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the Institute for Recreation and Quality of Life of the University of Gerona, 2007). The channels most viewed –where they exist– are local ones (Barometer of Childhood and Television in Andalusia, 2008a; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, 2008b; 2009). On a national level, although the order varies from one study to another, the channels are: «Antena 3», «Telecinco», «Cuatro» and «Sexta» (AIMC, 2008; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, 2008b; Defender of Minors in the Community of Madrid, 2010).

Most of the studies on the respect of rights on television carried out in Spain have been done from the perspective of the fulfilment or infringement of the requirements set by the Self-regulation Code, with conclusive results. A clear tendency is observed, on all television channels, to broadcast content which violates the Code (ATR-Villanueva, 2009; CEACCU, 2008). When content is analysed, there is sexist content, inappropriate language, discriminatory, sexual and violent content, scorn and ridicule of people (CEACCU, 2008; Catalanian Association of Tele-

vision Viewers, 2009; Núñez, 2012). Likewise, infringements in advertising are also observed: there are many channels which show adverts aimed at children which contain misleading information (ATR-Villanueva, 2009, Regional Government of Valencia, 2008; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, 2008b; Medina & Méndiz, 2012).

These studies, developed on the basis of the opinions of adults on programming aimed at children and adolescents, clearly demonstrate that television violates fundamental rights when broadcasting programmes which discriminate, does not provide accurate information and undermines the dignity of people. The question we should ask ourselves is whether children and adolescents have the same perception of this reality, since only in this case is it possible to adopt an active and critical position regarding programming content.

The general aim of this paper is to provide some information about the opinion of adolescents with regard to the respect of their fundamental rights in the programmes they view regularly on different television channels. Their opinions may produce a more active participation by young people in the design of programming content and may serve both to mobilise society on certain topics and to act as a catalyst for change, fostering more critical and constructive thought which should be encouraged from the initial stages of development.

2. Materials and method

The sample was made up of 3,219 adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 18, who, in the academic year 2009-10, were studying ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education), Bachillerato (Baccalaureate – Upper Secondary) and FP (vocational training) in 150 state and subsidised schools in Spain. The selection was drawn from a stratified sampling in which all the autonomous communities were represented, and to which a proportional allocation of the number of schools was carried out. The size of the sample was estimated on the basis of the data from censuses of schools and students: 3,000 adolescents with a sampling error of $\pm 3\%$, at the 95.5% confidence level and $p=q=0.05$.

The material used was a survey of 59 questions specifically designed for a wider investigation called 'Programming and content on television and the Internet: The opinion of minors on the protection of their rights' (Ochaíta, Espinosa, Gutiérrez, De-Dios & Maciá, 2010). The approximate time allowed to answer the survey was 50 minutes. It was translated into the different official Spanish languages.

No question in the survey referred to specific channels or programmes identified by the researchers and the information on these was always based on the adolescents' own opinions. It included identification data which enabled the appropriate statistical analyses to be performed and to analyse the effect of the independent variables selected – educational level, age, gender and socio-cultural level.

The content of the survey was divided into six thematic blocks. The objective of the first block was to obtain information about socio-demographic data and the sociocultural level of the families of the participants. In the second block, the questions were oriented towards finding out about the television consumption of adolescents and the equipment available in their homes. A third block asked questions about the use of computers and the Internet. The fourth was aimed at investigating the risks facing adolescents on the Web. The fifth included questions related to the fundamental rights of adolescent television viewers. The sixth and final block included a question formed by 53 statements, with which the participants had to show their agreement or disagreement on a scale with four possible responses: 'completely disagree', 'disagree', 'agree' and 'totally agree'. The statements in the question were related to the rights of minors on television and the Internet.

This paper focuses on one part of the results obtained in the fifth and sixth blocks. Table 1 gives the questions that will be analysed in the results section.

	Questions analysed
Block 5: Fundamental rights of television viewers	P.45: Do you think that any television programme discriminates against girls or women? P.46: Do you think any television programme discriminates people from other countries, ethnic origins and/or cultures? P.47: Do you think any television programme discriminates people with different sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual)? P.48: Do you think any television programme discriminates people with some kind of disability (physical, mental and/or sensorial)? P.49: Do you think any television programme goes against the dignity and appreciation people have of themselves? P.50: Do you think that there are television programmes in which images of minors are shown without parental permission?
Block 6 Rights of minors on television and the Internet	P.59.11: News programmes on television provide objective information. P.59.12: News programmes on television provide accurate information. P.59.14: News programmes and debates on television provide information on peoples' different political and ideological views. P.59.15: News programmes on television make it sufficiently clear what is information and what is the opinion of the people making the programme. P.59.16: What is said in advertisements tends to be true. P.59.17: Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the different opinions held by adults. P.59.18: Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the different opinions held by young people of my age. P.59.19: Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the different opinions held by children (boys and girls).

3. Analysis of results

The results are expressed in terms of relative frequency (percentages). A Chi squared analysis was carried out to contrast the assumptions on the influence of the variables selected: gender, age, educational and sociocultural level. The description of the results only includes the cases in which the differences are statistically significant with a confidence level of $p \leq 0.01$.

Before analysing the results on the respect of fundamental rights, we need to present some results from block 2 of the survey, which included questions on consumption. Specifically, data regarding the amount of time per day devoted to watching television is presented –on week days and at the weekend– and the type of programmes usually watched.

As shown in table 2, the results indicate that adolescents spent many hours per day watching television, both on week days and at the weekend. Although the percentage of participants who do not watch television at the weekend increases considerably with respect to those who do not watch it on a daily basis, those who spend many hours in front of the television also increases significantly.

When asked about the programmes watched with the greatest frequency, the results were grouped in the types shown in table 3.

Adolescents preferred series and films, followed at a considerable distance by programmes of humour and critical analysis, adult cartoons,

Table 2. Percentage of adolescents who dedicated different times to watching television on week days and at the weekend

	From Monday to Friday	Saturdays and Sundays
Not at all	1.6	4.3
Less than 1 hour	20.2	12.1
Between 1 and 2 hours	34.7	22.2
Between 2 and 3 hours	22.2	23
Between 3 and 4 hours	11.5	18
Between 4 and 5 hours	4.6	10.7
More than 5 hours	5.2	9.6
No answer given	1.3	3.3

Types of programmes	Quite a lot or a lot
Series (comedies, soap operas, etc.)	73.2
Films	70.2
Programmes of humour or critical analysis	47.3
Adult cartoons	45.6
Sports programmes and sport	43.8
Programmes aimed at children and young people	40.7
Competitions	38.1
News programmes	37.8
Musical programmes	36.3
Reality shows	28.1
Cartoons for children	21.8
Documentaries	18.2
Gossip programmes and revues	14.1
Debates	7.9

sports programmes and sport, programmes for children and young people. Graph 1 summarises the results of which television channels they said they usually watched. As can be seen, Antena 3 is the most watched channel, followed at a great distance by Cuatro, then Disney Channel, La Sexta, Telecinco and, finally, by channel 1.

The main results on the opinion of adolescents on the protection of their fundamental rights on television are summarised below.

3.1. Rights of equality, dignity and privacy

The survey included six questions (table 1) aimed at finding out what adolescents thought about the respect of fundamental rights in the television programmes on different channels.

Question 45 asked whether they considered that, at the time of responding to the survey, there were programmes that discriminated against girls or women. The majority of the participants (66.9%) said 'no', but 33.1% thought that there was gender discrimination. The 33.1% who believed that discrimination existed, were asked if they could name specific programmes where this occurred, to which the majority answered 'gossip programmes'. This perception of discrimination was determined by the school year or age of the participants, since it was the older students who, to a large extent, considered that 'yes', there are programmes that discriminated against women (12.5% in the first cycle of ESO, 13.5% in second cycle and 19.3% in Bachillerato and FP). No differences due to educational level were found regarding specific

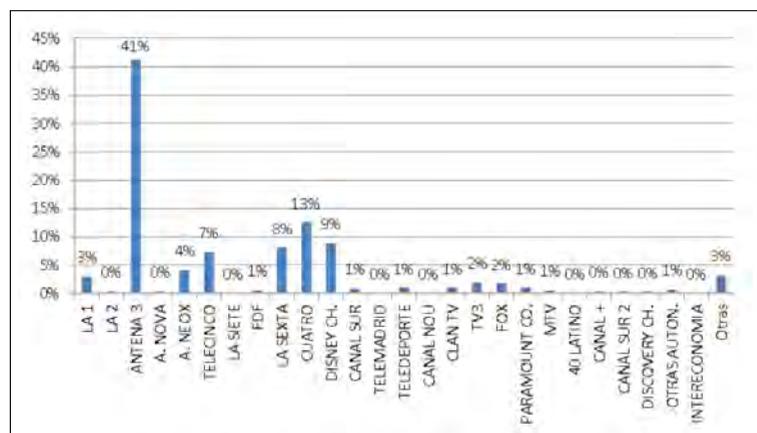
programmes which showed sexist content, possibly due to the wide range of programmes named, although differences were found on the channels broadcasting them.

Question 46 dealt with discrimination towards people from other countries, ethnic origin or cultures. The majority of participants considered that no discrimination existed (72.9%), whereas 27.1% thought that there was cultural and racist discrimination on television and 25% said that it was most evident on gossip programmes. Additionally, in this case it was found that the most critical opinions increased with age: only 11.1% of students from the first cycle of

ESO detected said discrimination, 15.1% in second cycle, increasing to 17.6% among students of Bachillerato and FP. Nor were any significant differences found between the types of programmes, but differences were seen regarding the channel broadcasting them.

71.1% of the adolescents thought that there was no discrimination with regard to sexual orientation, compared to 28.9% who thought there was (question 47). Again, it was the gossip programmes and those of entertainment and humour which were labelled as the most homophobic. Moreover, it was the students from Bachillerato and FP who considered to a greater extent that 'yes', homophobic discrimination existed in television programming (16.6% compared to 14.5% of first cycle ESO students and 11.8% of second cycle). Again, no differences were found with respect to programmes but there were differences related to the channels.

Question 48 asked about discrimination towards people with disabilities, with the result that almost all the participants (86.6%) thought that there was no dis-



Graph 1. Percentage of adolescents who chose the different television channels.

crimination on television. Only 13.4% thought that 'yes', there was discrimination. In this case, there were no differences between the educational levels. Those who thought there was discrimination attributed it to gossip programmes and those of entertainment and humour. With respect to the types of programmes, revues and cartoons were considered discriminatory by students from first cycle of ESO and reality shows by those from Bachillerato and FP. No differences by school year were found between the different channels.

Question 49 refers to whether any television programme violated the dignity and appreciation people have of themselves, to which 72.9% responded 'no'. Adolescents from higher educational levels were more critical. 24.4% from Bachillerato and FP considered that 'yes', there was discrimination, compared to 13.5% from first cycle ESO and 9.8% from second cycle. When specifying which programmes violated dignity, the adolescents between 16 and 18 chose a programme from the reality show category which was proposed as an example of violation of the right to dignity to a greater proportion than the younger ones (3.8% in the 12-14 age group, 5.9% in the 14-16 group and 14.5% in the 16-18 age group). The differences according to educational level were not significant when considering which channels broadcast said programmes.

Discrimination against women or girls in television programmes and that directed at people from other countries, ethnic origin or cultures was detected to a different degree depending on the sociocultural level. The participants from low to medium-low levels said 'no' in greater proportion. Conversely, those from a high level indicated to a greater extent that said discrimination did exist or occurred 'sometimes'.

A similar tendency was found when asking about discrimination due to sexual orientation, in which adolescents from a low sociocultural level said that it did not exist to a greater proportion than those from a high level. The latter group stated to a greater degree that discrimination did exist or took place 'sometimes'.

Differences between high and low sociocultural levels were also found in the responses to question 49. The adolescents from a low level indicated to a greater proportion that there were no programmes that infringed personal dignity; conversely, those from a high sociocultural level were those who responded 'yes' more frequently.

Table 4. Percentage of participants who considered that some television programmes went against some fundamental rights

	No	Yes ('yes' and 'sometimes')
Discrimination based on gender	69.9	30.1
Discrimination based on country of origin, ethnic origin or culture	72.9	27.1
Discrimination based on sexual orientation	71.1	28.9
Discrimination based on disability	86.6	13.4
Against dignity and self esteem	72.9	27.1
Against the dignity and self-image of minors	79.5	20.5

Question 50 asked the participants whether they thought that television broadcast images of minors without the permission of their parents or tutors. 79.5% said 'no', and that it occurred basically in gossip programmes and news programmes. With respect to the school year, again, the older students had a greater awareness of the violation of this right. Whereas only 8.9% of students from first cycle ESO considered that 'yes', they were infringed, this percentage increased to 11% among second cycle students and to 14.3% among those from Bachillerato and FP. No significant differences were found in the mention of programmes or broadcasting channels. With respect to the socio-cultural level, 73.2% of the participants from a higher level considered that this did not happen, compared to 81% from the medium-high level and 82.4% from the low level. Consequently, there were differences between those who responded that 'yes', there were programmes which showed images of minors without parental permission (low level 10.3%, medium-low 10.1%, medium-high 9.7%, high 15.5%).

Table 4 summarises the results obtained from the six questions related to the fundamental rights of equality, dignity and right to privacy and the self-image of minors.

3.2. Right to objective, accurate and pluralistic information

The final questions on the survey included a series of affirmations in which the adolescents questioned had to show their level of agreement or disagreement. Two of them (59.11 and 59.12) analysed what they thought about the information broadcast on television. 64% of those questioned agreed with the statement that 'television news programmes provide objective information' (59.11). The percentage assigned to the idea that they provided 'accurate information' was somewhat lower, at 61.2%. (59.12.). Educational level or age also influenced the agreement or disagreement of the adolescents regarding the objectivity and accuracy of the information in television news programmes. Disagreement with objectivity clearly increased with age with 28.6% in the 12-14 age group,

32.6% in the 14-16 group and 45.5% in the 16-18 age group. Similar results were obtained for the question on the accuracy of the information: Bachillerato and FP students were those who were most in disagreement (45.4% compared to 28.6% in the first cycle of ESO and 33.6% in the second cycle).

They were also asked their opinion on whether news programmes and debates provided information on the different political options of citizens (59.14). In this case, again, there was a significant majority, 67.7%, who were in agreement with the statement, although 32.4% thought that the information on television was not politically representative.

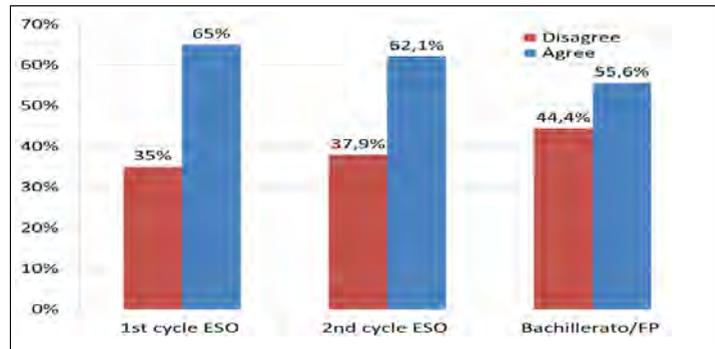
The participants were less in agreement with the assertion that it was sufficiently clear on news programmes which content is information and which is opinion (59.15), since the percentage of disagreement reached 40.9% and that of agreement 59.1%. Disagreement with this statement also increased with age, with 48.5% of adolescents studying Bachillerato and FP in disagreement, and 34.4% of those in first cycle ESO and 39.5% in second cycle.

Question 59.16 asked about the accuracy of advertisements broadcast on television with the following statement: 'What is said in advertisements tends to be true'. In this case, the majority opinion was against this statement, with 72.5% of the responses being in disagreement. Disagreement with the accuracy of advertising also increased clearly with the educational level; the majority of Bachillerato and FP students (82.7%) were clearly against the statement. Significant differences were also found due to the sociocultural level, since disagreement increased according to the adolescents' sociocultural level (68.5% of those from a low level, 70.3% from a medium-low level, 73.5% of those from a medium-high level and 78% of those from a high level).

3.3. Right to free expression and opinion

Most of the participants, 60.8%, agreed that 'Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of people's opinions'.

The tendency changed when they were asked their opinion on the statement 'Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the opinions held by young people of my age'. (59.18). In this case, slightly more than half the participants, 50.2%,



Graph 2. Percentage of agreement and disagreement, by educational cycle, with the statement, 'Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the opinions held by adults'.

were against this statement.

Adolescents were even more critical of the opportunities that television offered for young people to express their opinion (59.19). With respect to the previous statement on 'the opinion of children', the majority, 55.6%, indicated the shortcomings in children's participation. The response to these questions varied significantly according to school year or age, which always became more critical as these increased, whether considering opinions on adult participation or that of young people of their age or of young children. When the statement referred to those surveyed, the 'agreement' responses oscillated between 42.1% for the older group, 49.7% for the middle age group and 58% for the younger ones. Conversely, the disagreement responses increased with age. When the statement referred to children younger than the participants, 45.3% of the youngest, 55.6% of the medium age group and 65.3% of the older ones were in disagreement with the statement (table 5).

Most adolescents, slightly more than 60%, thought that television fostered the freedom of expression of adults. It is noteworthy, however, that half of those surveyed considered that television does not foster the free expression of adolescents and that the percentage increased to 55.6% when they were asked about the freedom of expression of children.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Spanish adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 years old dedicate quite a lot of time to watching television, both during the week and at weekends, as indicated in prior research (AIMC, 2008; 2012; Ararteko, 2009; Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the Institute for Recreation and Quality of Life of the University of Gerona, 2007; Defender of Minors in the Community of Madrid, 2010; Regional Government

of Valencia 2008; Rodríguez, Megías & Menéndez, 2012). This data, particularly that which indicates that 38% of those surveyed watched between two and five hours or more per day, should be considered as problematic, since the time devoted to television inevitably interferes with carrying out activities such as studying (Ochaíta, Espinosa, Gutiérrez, De-Dios & Maciá, 2010; Ochaíta, Espinosa & Gutiérrez, 2011). Related to the above, it should be stated that the adolescents should receive explicit training which enables them to select the most appropriate programmes according to their age and interests (Aguaded, 2012). Moreover, the media offers many opportunities for adolescents to adopt an active role in the creation and broadcasting of content (Ferres & Piscetelli, 2012). For example, the high impact social mobilisation that can be generated through the Web, in a very limited space of time. Therefore, the time dedicated to media should be used to advantage to attain a media literacy which

The majority of those questioned considered that in the television programmes they usually watched, rights were respected, although there was a significant percentage who detected shortcomings or infringements of the same (ATR-Villanueva, 2009; CEACCU, 2008; Medina & Méndiz, 2012; Núñez, 2012). The latter leads us to reflect on the different aspects and behaviour which require improvement, as well as initiatives which should be followed to ensure that due protection is afforded to childhood and adolescents (Ortiz, Ruiz & Díaz, 2013). The violation of rights is seen more clearly with respect to some rights than others, although it is always detected to a greater degree by the older participants and those from a higher sociocultural level but equally by girls and boys. The main infringements of rights of equality, dignity and privacy are detected in the broadcasting of sexist, homophobic, racist and xenophobic content and in those which violate the dignity and self esteem of people. To a lesser extent, violations were detected regarding the right to privacy of minors and, even less, the rights of people with disabilities. These results are similar to those obtained with adults (CEACCU, 2008; Núñez, 2012; Catalanian Association of Television Viewers, 2009).

With respect to the right to objective, accurate and pluralistic information, most infringements were detected in advertising since the majority of the participants said that advertisements did not portray the truth. Conversely, the majority of adolescents considered that

news programmes offered information that was objective, accurate and in accordance with different political options (ATR-Villanueva, 2009; Regional Government of Valencia, 2008; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, 2008b; Medina & Méndiz, 2012).

The young people also indicated shortcomings with respect to the right to free expression and opinion, particularly when this referred to the adolescents surveyed and even more with respect to younger children. Unlike what they think happens with adults, they consider that television does not facilitate the expression of young children's opinion. This means of communication and adults in general should give due weight to the views of children, as indicated in article 12 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is clear that adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 have formed their own opinion regarding television and that said opinion is fairly sensible and critical with the most negative aspects of this media.

Table 5. Percentage of agreement and disagreement with the statement referring to the participants themselves or younger children by educational cycle

Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of different opinions held by young people of my age (59.18)			
	1 st cycle ESO	2 nd cycle ESO	Bachillerato/FP
Disagree	42	50.3	57.9
Agree	58	49.7	42.1
Television facilitates democratic debates and the free expression of the different opinions held by children (boys and girls) (P. 59.19.)			
	1 st cycle ESO	2 nd cycle ESO	Bachillerato/FP
Disagree	45.3	55.6	65.3
Agree	54.7	44.4	34.7

should go beyond learning how to use equipment and should focus on the development of skills and values geared towards creating a more just and equitable society (Del-Moral & Villalustre, 2013; Gutiérrez & Tyner, 2012; Soep, 2012).

As seen in prior research, the most frequently viewed programmes were series (comedies, soap operas, etc.) and films followed by programmes of humour and critical analysis, adult cartoons, sports programmes and sport (Ararteko, 2009; AIMC, 2008; Audiovisual Council of Catalonia and the Institute for Recreation and Quality of Life of the University of Gerona, 2007; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia, 2008b y 2009; INJUVE-CIS, 2011). With respect to the most frequently viewed channels, Antenna 3 is the preferred channel, followed at a great distance by Cuatro, then Disney Channel, La Sexta and Telecinco with TV1 having the lowest adolescent audience (AIMC, 2008; 2012; Audiovisual Council of Andalusia 2008; 2009; Defender of Minors in the Community of Madrid, 2010).

It is worth pointing out that the programmes that are less respectful to the rights we have analysed in this paper coincide with those less viewed by adolescents and that those who detected these problems did so in a very precise manner, depending on which right they were questioned on, with very uniform responses.

Finally, to conclude, the adolescents were able to detect infringements of their rights on television and were critical and selective with those infringements. These results should be considered so that television includes a social dimension, making it a significant catalyst for social change, for the creation of a fairer and more equitable society; in short, to create citizenship (Aguaded, 2005; Ortiz, 2005; Rincón, 2011).

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