

Television Viewing Habits and Moral Formation of Children in Rural India

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Abstract: *Television has a direct and straight relation with children lives. At early stage of their life, they become familiar to cartoon programmes on television. The early exposure to the television intermingle their lives with the characters they watch on television and affects their later life. It has been researched that television plays a significant role in the development of children's moral formation. But the social and economic dimension of Indian villages is different from cities. Mostly, rural children believe in what they watch on television while urban children are more intelligent in understanding and choosing their contents. The prime aim of this study was to find out the role of television in children moral formation. A fewer studies have been conducted on television impact in rural areas of India. A sample of sixty students was chosen randomly from the 9th and 10th class according to their availability. The study concluded that there is a deep relation in watching television and moral development of children. Majority of the children behave the way they watch people performing activities on the television screen and follow them in their everyday life.*

Key words: *Television, moral formation, violence, attitude and behavior.*

I. Introduction

It is believed that exposure to television is making children over smart and insolent. In their early age of childhood they need to take more care, and moral development is one of the most important factors. Today children spend more time viewing television rather than spending time with their parents and going out. In an era of globalization, media and popular culture have shattered all the national boundaries and a new culture has reached to the remote areas in India. Unquestionably, the local culture has been intermingling with the western culture. Is this transformation influencing the moral values of our children? The life of children in rural areas is different from urban areas. Therefore, it is necessary to study the role of television in their everyday life.

1.1 Introduction to Indian television

In India, before the arrival of TV, cinema and radio were very popular even among the villagers. Among all media the cinema was the most popular medium of entertainment and understanding of the society. Though TV was introduced on 15 September 1959 as experimental basis for ten years in view of its potential for development communication, it soon turned out to be an entertainment medium and its spread was more in cities than in villages. But now it has been available in every household in India. Many scholars have expressed their concerns on the negative effects of TV on children's learning and their socialization. Besides this, the cable television was introduced in 1991 and it changed the viewing patterns of its audience. Now we have more than 500 western, Indian, regional and Govt. television Channels. Overall, there is a large section of viewers of western television programmes.

1.2 Effects of Television on children behavioural and attitudinal change

Watching television varies with the age group of the children in India. As children grow up they watch more television. Most of the children prefer watching programmes with fighting scenes and music. Children often imitate the life style and fashion of their favourite hero and heroine. Children with middle class background are found to be light viewers when compared with the children of higher and lower economic background. One of the findings is that children lacking in parental care are more affected by TV (Namita Unnikrishnan and Shailaja Bajpai, 1996).

Most of the children demand from their parents the products they see or watch on Television. Kamna Raj (2000) opines that these days television influences the lives of young children and it is only going to get worst with each passing year. But there is a different scene in Indian villages. Children are great fan of television. They try to act and copy what they watch on television. During the telecasting of Superman serial on Delhi Doordarshan many children were injured and hospitalized in imitating their superhero.

Nowadays children do not spend money on nutrient foods and other important products. But, they like to buy Chips, Kurkure, Chocolate and other electronic devices. Dr. Kadambini Katke (2007) says that there is a positive relationship between time spent with television and its impact on the buying behavior of a child and its influence on family spending.

Bandura (1965) stated that children could learn new behaviours in one or two ways. They could learn it by direct experience through trial and error or by observing and imitating others in their social environment. He pointed out that observational learning was ultimately more efficient than trying to discover on your own. In addition to this, it is obvious that we learn more things by our eyes than ears.

Many parents also complaints that their children do not help in their household work and children have reduced other social activities because of watching more television. Dr. Harold Gladwell (2013) express that the time spend with television leads to a decrease in more valuable activities, and that these kids seem to spend less time engaged in activities that encourage cognitive development.

According to experts, it is found out that children who spend a lot of time in front of television do poorly in academic, but children who spend moderate amounts of time with TV perform better than absolute non-viewers. In the end, we can draw one simple conclusion although it can be highly useful for children; television can have negative effects when viewing rises above a certain level.

Vasan (2010) also expresses that visual media significantly influence attitudes and behaviors and, as such, have sought to highlight the specific content areas in which the negative influence of the media is especially serious.

Studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, have shown a consistent relationship between media viewing and sexual behavior. Viewing more sexual content on television was found to increase the likelihood of engaging in sexual intercourse among teens (Brown and Newcomer, 1991). Other studies have reported that adolescents “select” songs and speaking styles from films and TV for use as “scripts” in heterosexual interactions (Sodhi, Verma and Schensul, 2004; Belaku Trust, 2004). Goswami and Kashyap also found that imitating hairstyles, clothing and accessories of actors in popular films was widespread among both urban as well as rural youth (Goswami and Kashyap, 2006).

II. Research objectives

The objective of this study is to explore the moral influence of television on the lives of rural children. Specifically, the study will focus on four primary purposes:

1. Investigating the effects of television viewing on school children moral development.
2. Finding out how much the television is responsible for socializing children.
3. What amount of television children watch per week?
4. To identifying the risk factors of viewing television.

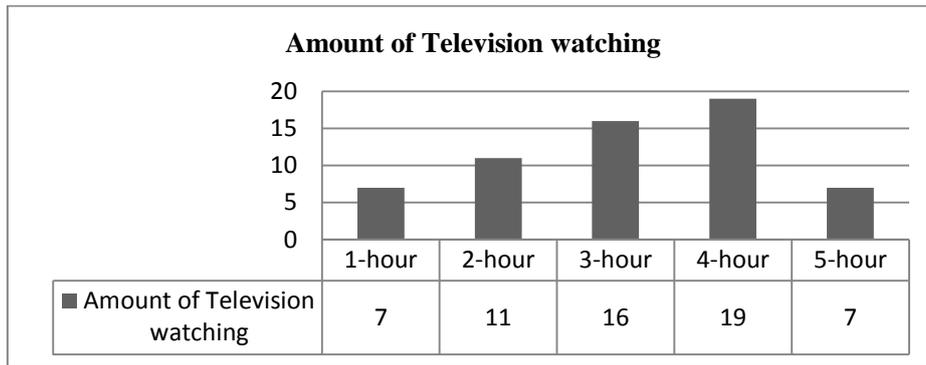
III. Methodology and data collection

The site for the sample was the Govt. High School Jia Gopalpur, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. The sixty school children from the 9th and 10th classes were chosen randomly in which there were 20 were girls and 40 boys. The data was collected through distributing questionnaire in Hindi to the children in their free class. After collection, the whole data was compiled, tabled and appropriate statistical tests like percentages were applied

IV. Results and discussion

Rural India is different in myriad ways from urban India and criticized for its backwardness. But television viewership has been increasing day by day in rural India. Average duration of television exposure to an individual child is 22 hours per week in the study. It was also found that girls watched more television than boys in average.

Table 1



The results of table 2 display that children preferred watching movies while watching drama was secondary by respondents. A major section of the survey does not like to watch news on television. As usual watching music on television is also one of the favorite programmes of the viewers.

Table 2

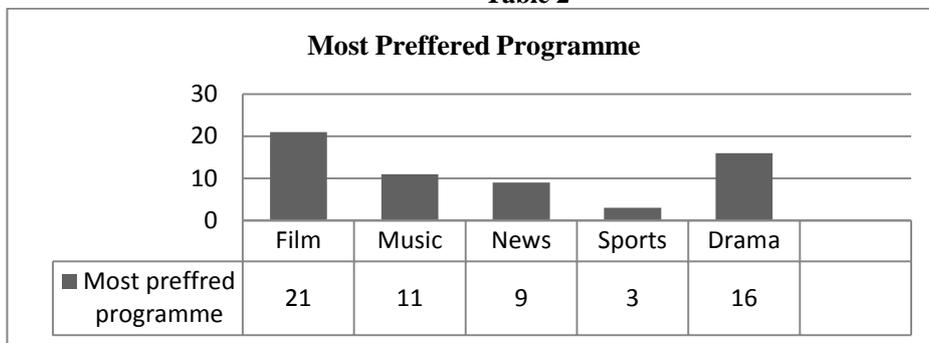
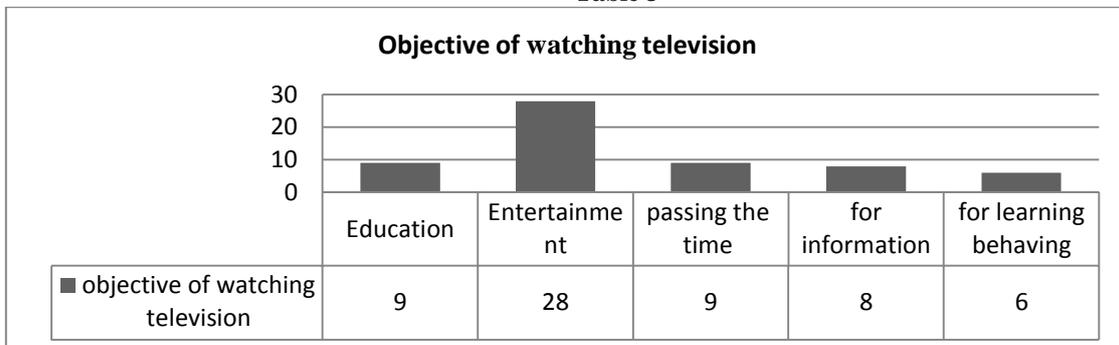


Table 3



The results of above table show that most of the children in rural areas watch television for entertainment. So, this is a serious matter for both parents and teachers. Only less than one third part of the entertainment viewers watch television for education and information.

Table 4. Impact on socialisation of children

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Don't know
I learn more respect for other people	11	37	5	7
We should talk politely	8	15	34	3
We should solve our problem with talking	3	22	30	5
Not use violence and crime	10	9	13	28
Not use alcohol and smoking	14	9	26	11

Treat the boys and girls same	14	26	13	7
Respect other caste and Religion	12	14	8	26
Peaceful solution of conflict	13	9	23	15
Promise should be kept	9	29	14	8
Should proud of our country	13	47	0	0
I see more clearly about what is wrong and right	6	21	16	17
I am influenced by the commercials	8	27	9	16
Encourage me to indulge in romantic activities	5	19	12	24
Inspire to be honest	16	24	8	12
Does TV help in your studies	7	9	11	33
Does TV give you anything that you do not get at school?	12	39	7	1
Does television attract you toward opposite sex	3	29	23	5

The above table shows that watching television has a deep impact on children attitude and behavior. Most of the children confirmed that they learned most of things from watching television. Most of them almost 65% admitted that they learned a lot of thing that they did not get at school.

Since the advancement of the television in India, a sort of generation gap is being developed, particularly in rural areas where people are orthodox. They do not accept the new culture easily. Many parents of the children criticize television for the declining of moral and human values in children. A large section of the respondents said television helped them (to some extent) to learn respect to others and most of the children revealed that television did not motivate them to speak politely and respectfully.

Several children believed that they could solve their problems with talking instead of fighting and any physical violence while a large number of the sample did not have the same opinion. Today the television is filled with violence, so the television violence is affecting the behavior and attitude of most of children. May be, that is why they want to resolve their problems with agitation and violence. Exposure to television violence are the learning of aggressive behavior, desensitization- because of all the exposure to TV violence, children become desensitized to violence and perhaps a tendency develops in some viewers to rely on violence in their own lives to solve problems and fear-media violence creates fear in audiences.

Today, smoking is one of the bad habits among children. In a year, thousands advertisement are broadcasted and printed to stop smoking among the children. But on the other hand, superstars and sport stars are shown with smoking cigarettes in the movies and television serials. Many rural children try to imitate their life style and behavior. Many children in the sample opined that there should be gender equality in the society. Boys and girls should be treated equally. A good number of students admitted that television inspired them to be honest. The flood of television advertisements increases the sale of junk foods, expensive clothes, foreign goods, and automobiles. It was found that television commercial had a negative impact on children. Most of the Bollywood hit films are based on love and romantic themes, therefore, their romantic scenes, songs and subject motivate children to fall in love.

The illiteracy rate being very high in rural areas, the parents are not able to advise their children what they should watch and what amount of television is beneficial to them. The results also confirm that television positively is not helpful in children academic performance. But they get many knowledgeable and informative things from television which they do not get at school. It was also found that children attracted toward opposite sex due to watching television. Film with more sexual scene on television forced them to think about sex.

Caste and religious issues are sensitive in Indian society. There is a need to develop a scientific temperament and harmony among people in rural areas. But television programmes are not capable to develop that attitude among people. Many of the children do not teach by television whether they should respect other caste and religion or not.

V. Summary and Conclusion

Watching television has a significant impact on various aspects of children's life in rural areas. So it is concluded that television programmes have both negative and positive impact on children's moral formation.

Systematic studies on the effect of television on children in rural areas are quite few in India. There can no longer be any doubt that heavy exposure to cable television programmes is one of the causes of moral declining. The evidence comes from both the Laboratory and real life studies. Television's programmes affects children of all ages, of genders, at all socio-economic levels and all levels of intelligence.

Findings confirm that the television indeed influence children's behaviors and attitude. Both qualitative and survey findings underlined the role of TV on children's behavior, at the same time, demonstrating gender differences. A large section of the sample believed that the television programmes has influenced changes in their social behavior related to interaction with the other people. Significant proportions of children—almost half—also reported that mannerisms had been prompted by the watching of television. Finally, it is concluded that watching television is beneficial to the children if it is done under a proper guidance.

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