Impact of Television Viewing on Health and Behaviour of Children and Teenagers – Comparative Study of Audiences of Patiala City and Rajpura Town

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Abstract
Since the creation of culture increasingly sophisticated methods of communication has evolved. The desire to get in touch with a wider audience encouraged the development of new methods: from cave paintings to symbols pressed into clay or drawn onto paper; from words printed in books to those transmitted by radio waves, the circle of contact increased. With the advent of television, speech and pictures were combined in a medium which would prove able to excite, stimulate, interest, agitate or provoke people at some time or another. Today media has a major influence on people, their lives and their lifestyle. Like the rest of the world our society is also governed by the ideals of the Mass Media. The media has played a crucial role in modifying the lifestyle of the people. It has also been a major influence in shaping the present culture. Unlike the print media; electronic media have shown an almost instantaneous impact in influencing the culture. Television for example has established an important position in the homes. As a result it has made an indelible mark on the individuals as well as the society. Technically television has changed the tone and manner of conveying ideas to people. The generation next doesn’t even like to depend on their friends and family. For them the magic is in the ‘ICE’ (Information, Communication and Entertainment) age and they fancy media. Surely, the media (including Print, Electronic, and Cyber media) has served them well. It has informed them, educated them and improved their living standard and of-course entertained them. This study was undertaken to highlight the impact of television viewing in children and teenager’s day-to-day lives and how it is evolving as an important factor that can affect the health and behaviour of children and teenagers. This research study is supported by empirical data, and it is aimed at analysing the impact of television viewership on health and behaviour of children and teenagers.

Keywords: Television Viewing, Teenagers Behaviour, Cultural Influencing, Audiences, Physical Health
1. Introduction

Media in all its manifestations has been the epicentre of unending discussions, debates and controversies since its very inception. More frequently, its role has vividly been described as dubious and condemned more than it has been appreciated. The issues raised by it have seldom found favour even with its most ardent audiences. Everybody, consciously or unconsciously, has been using media as a substitute for quenching one’s many kinds of thirst, to hog the limelight or to damage others to meet one’s personal ends or motives. There is no doubt that today’s children and teenagers are confronted with a media environment that is very different from the one faced by their grandparents or even their parents. Terms such as digital television and Google did not even exist 20 or 30 years ago. One of the most profound changes concerns the sheer proliferation of media outlets and technologies. Children today live in a “multi-device, multiplatform, multichannel world”. The advent of cable and satellite television has dramatically increased the number of channels available in most homes today. Digital cable is multiplying this capacity. Many homes in metros are equipped with CD Players, DVD Players, Personal computers, wireless internet access, and digital cameras. At a very young age children are learning about keypads, CD ROMs, mouse and remote control.

As these technologies proliferate, they are changing the nature of more traditional media. The TV screen, which once provided a way to watch broadcast television is now being used much wider range of activities, including online shopping, video on demand and viewing digitally recorded photographs and home movies. Newspapers can still be delivered to the doorstep or they can be received online. in other words, old distinctions between the television screen and computer screen or between print and broadcast are becoming less meaningful. Television networks such as nickelodeon and cartoon network are designed for young viewers and even websites are aimed specifically at children and teenagers. Nicktropolis, a new site developed by nickelodeon allow young children to enter an immersive 3-D virtual world where they can design their own rooms, interact with characters, and chat with other kids in real time. Digital technology is altering the very nature of media experiences. Images and sounds are more realistic than ever, further blurring the distinction between real world and media events. Children can enter virtual worlds in arcades and even in their bedrooms, travelling to different places, encountering strange creatures and playing adventurous and often violent games. And these new media are far more interactive, allowing children and teenagers to become participants in their quest for information, action and storytelling.

Teenagers today are confronted with a media environment that is rapidly changing. Technologies are proliferating, merging and becoming more interactive. And the content featured in these technologies in increasingly graphic, realistic, and commercial in nature. At the same time media use is at an all-time high. Children and teenagers today spend from one third to one half of their
waking hours with some form of media. Preteens and teens frequently are engaging in more than one media activity at a time called “media multitasking”\(^1\). And much of this media use is becoming more private as children retreat to their bedrooms to watch TV, play videogames, or listen to music.

It is imperative to understand the format of TV programme designed for children and teenagers: television programme especially designed for child audience. It includes Cartoon Series, Quiz Programmes, and Game Shows etc. Television for teenagers include Quiz Programmes, Chat Shows, Reality Shows, Game Shows, Film or Music based programmes, Sitcoms. Television for all: the programming content which is broad based meant for general mass consumption. For example: Daily Soaps, Films and Music based programmes, Reality Shows, Sitcoms.

It is important that a good children and teenagers programme must combine the three fundamentals of Information, Education and Entertainment. To increase the infotainment value of a programme some commonly used strategies are:

**Humour**: - Depending upon the target age group, different forms of humour can be incorporated into programmes including slapstick, sitcoms, verbal humour etc.  

**Visual Variety**: - Variations in visual and verbal content as well as pace stimulate young minds.  

**Repetitive messaging**: - To ensure optimal assimilation and recall of important messages, frequency of messages is increased to augment its opportunity to see.  

**Indirect Instruction**: - Children can acquire desirable attitudes and habits through processes of modelling and imitation that is by emulating or empathizing with the protagonist on screen.  

**Action and drama**: - Action helps in keeping the young audience hooked to the screen. Music helps to attract and sustain child’s attention. It is an effective aid to memory; children are generally able to memorize concepts or passages when they are set to a tune.

Use of child characters:- Child views like all others empathize more with the characters from their own age group. Stories revolving around children like themselves are their favourite.  

**Use of live characters**: - Child viewing actors is unparalleled in forging an allegiance with the young viewer since they are spontaneous and smooth.  

**Puppets**: - Puppetry is fascinating to everyone.

2. **A Case Study**

Case Study for Parents of Patiala & Rajpura for Study of Impact of Television Viewing on Health and Behaviour (for age group 4-7 years)

The conduct of this study entails a detailed account of the demographic profile of the respondents. It is assumed that the attributes of the respondents influence their behaviour and

answers to the survey questions. Of particular significance to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the study, two questionnaires were framed. In both the cities, Patiala and Rajpura they were filled by children, teenagers and parents with a sample size of 1000. Respondents of every age group answered according to their television viewing habits, its impact on their health, lifestyle and behaviour.

3. **Major Findings**

The research was undertaken to study the impact of television viewing on health and behavior of children of age group 4-7 years.-comparative study of audiences of Patiala City and Rajpura Town. The idea was to analyze the degree to which television viewing and other means of mass communication have an impact on health and behaviour of children. The study was undertaken to know the relative impact of television viewing on age group 4-7 years with respect to its impact on health and behaviour. The study was also conducted to know how much time children spend for different modes of mass communication. This study, carried out in the span of last three and half years, through data collection tools namely survey and interviews, made an effort to highlight the television impact in our day to day lives.

*One of the finding was to understand correlationship between genders, occupation, economic status and family patterns as a consequence of television viewing habit of children.*

Following were some of the findings:

- Out of 200 children, 160 are males and 40 are females only.
- Maximum parents are happily married.
- A parent generally possesses graduate or higher qualifications.
- Business persons prefer to live in joint family.
- Single parent (divorcee or widower) mostly live in joint family and are earning members of society.
- Divorcee cases are minimum with parents having girl child.
- 6 out of 200 children have parent who are just up to 8th class and earning between 2 lakh to 5 lakh per annum.
- 6 out of 200 children have parent who are just up to 12th class, living in nuclear family are earning between 2 lakh to 5 lakh per annum.
- 12 out of 200 children have parent who are 12th pass, lives in joint family and are earning between 1.5 lakh to 5 lakh per annum.
- 45 out of 200 children have parent who are graduates, living in nuclear family are earning between 1.5 lakh to 11 lakh per annum.
- 36 out of 200 children have parent who are graduates, living in joint family are earning between 1.2 lakh to 12 lakh per annum.
• 35 out of 200 children have parent who are postgraduates, living in joint family are earning between 1.2 lakh to 11 lakh per annum.
• 55 out of 200 children have parent who are postgraduates, living in nuclear family are earning between 1.5 lakh to 10 lakh per annum.
• Diploma holder parents earn living in either joint or nuclear family are earning between 2 lakh to 5 lakh annually only.
• 30 out of 90 post graduate Parents earn more than 5 lakh per year.
• 15 out of 81 graduate parents earn >= 5 lakh per year.
• Only one out of 18 children have parents who are just 12th pass and are earning more than 5 lakh per year.
• As qualification increases, income also increases.
• There were no case of divorcee or widower in the families who are less qualified i.e. not even graduates.
• Divorcee graduate parents have an income between 1.2 lakh to 2 lakh while widowers have income between 2 to 3.5 lakh only per year.

One of the objectives of study was to trace various types of effort and regulation focusing on educational programming, media literacy based on content rating.

Although children are classified as passionate viewers, this isn't completely true. For children, TV is just one of many other activities which are why, in the beginning; children only glance at the TV content. Later on, when they start understanding it, their attention grows. Not every type of content occupies their attention with the same intensity. Some of the most attractive TV content for children is informative, signalling content that children are likely to find relevant or entertaining. Educational television programs are those designed around a curriculum with a specific goal to communicate academic or social skills, teach their intended lessons. While Media literacy is the process of accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating messages in a wide variety of forms. It uses an inquiry-based instructional model that encourages people to ask questions about what they watch, see and read. Media literacy education is one means of developing media literacy. So while dealing with the objective, the study revealed that 51% total respondents in both areas according to children and teenagers believe that television is a better medium of gaining knowledge. 53.5% respondents from Patiala and 48.75% from Rajpura treat television as a better medium of education. It is also seen that in nuclear families in both areas maximum respondents consider television as a better medium of gaining knowledge as compared to joint families. In case of gender also the male prefer television as a better medium of gaining knowledge as compared to females. To elaborate it further, it may be understood that nuclear families prefer television as a better medium for media literacy and educational programming.
is also seen that parents also watch television along with children to keep an eye on their choice of program and satisfy their queries related to content. 05% parents are seen who show no such efforts in controlling viewership of television among children and teenagers so it is seen that maximum children among them fall ill and are gaining weight. Besides television is considered as a source of education and effective way of reaching large number of audience especially children and teenagers as its audio visual part creates interest among them and increase their learning.

**Overall Demographic view of Parents**

The demographic survey was done under normal conditions. The following are the results for the survey:

1. In both the cities, boys are more in number than girls.
2. Parents of children of age group 4-7 are highly qualified, prefer jobs as profession and all are happily married.
3. Girl child parents are not divorced and most of them do jobs.
4. Working parents are approximately homogenously divided to live as nuclear or joint families.
5. Business families are very less and they prefer to live in joint family.
6. Single parents are earning and independent in living.

**Overall Impact of Television viewing for more than three hours on Behaviour Aspect**

- Junk food is favourite for children of all age group.
- Awareness, curiosity is increased while watching TV.
- Sharing is done mostly with friends but small children do share it their moms also. Young boys share more with father than mother.

**Overall Impact on Physical Health**

- Boys of both cities watch more TV than girls.
- It is also found that girls living in joint families watch more tv than males living in joint families in Patiala.
- Physical health of boys of both cities is more deteriorating than girls who watch TV for more than 3 hours.
- Immune system of children living in joint families is better than children living in nuclear families in spite of watching tv for >3 hours.
- Weight gain is generally there for all children who watch TV for more than 3 hours.
- Children feel pain after watching TV for >3 hours. The intensity varies with respect to area and gender.
- It was seen that 121/176 – 68.75% Junk food is liked by all children generally. Out of them 84 fall ill frequently as compared to 28 / 121-23.14% who do not like junk food.
Overall Impact on Mental Health

- Boys of both cities watch more TV than girls.
- It is also found that girls living in joint families watch more tv than males living in joint families in Patiala.
- TV viewing affects children on aggressiveness and destructive parameters.
- Social status is very important for today’s children specially living in joint family.
- Children feel more comfortable in getting information from their elders although now they also consult TV information.
- Sleeping pattern also gets disturbed when u watch TV for more than 3 hours and it is more for joint families. (94/167 – 54% for TV > 3; 140/377 – 34% for TV 1-2 hours; 162/432 - 37% for TV 2-3 hours)
- While watching TV for more than 3 hours, it becomes mandatory than some of the attributes for mental health gets affected.

References

[10] www.kidsites.com