

Pros and Cons of Tv Programmes on Women: A Theoretical Approach

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Abstract:

Mass media have become vital instruments of social change apart from disseminating information to people. Television, an important means of media is one of the most powerful force in the world affecting the viewers. Television programmes can produce harmful as well as harnessing effects on women. The present study is an attempt made to analyse the impact of television on females in different stages of their life viz., children youth and women. Television has become part and parcel of our social life and it is very difficult to part with this magic medium of communication. How best television can be used for positive purpose depends on the family background, educational standards, tastes and preferences of the viewers.

Key words: Television programmes, positive impact, negative impact, females (children, youths and women), theoretical approach.

Introduction:

Mass Media comprising of print and electronic media of late, have become vital instruments of social change apart from disseminating information to people. Among the various forms of electronic media like audio media, audio-visual media and computer driven media, Television is the most popular and wide spread media reaching nook and corner of the country, producing everlasting effects on the minds of people of all age groups. Television assists in the minds of people of all age groups. Television assists in changing the attitudes by imbibing ideas and providing real or ideal model of behaviour and will raise aspirations for better standards of living. Television can be considered as a powerful socializing agent in respect of communicating and popularizing women issues. Television, a bi-product of technological advancement can become a tool in influencing the mind set and behaviour of women.

Just as atomic energy can be used for constructive and destructive purposes, similarly Television can also produce harmful as well as harnessing effects on women. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the effects of Television on females in different stages of their life, viz.,

i) Children ii) Youth and ii) Middle and Old age women.

i) Children

It is observed that generally children watch television for about three to four hours a day. They watch a variety of programmes in different channels like Animation Cartoons, POGO, Discovery, National

Geography, Animal Planet, Star Sports, ESPN, Ten Sports, Movies, WWF, etc. Children by watching various sports channels will come to know of various games like cricket, football, hockey, tennis, volleyball, basketball, etc. Some of these games will motivate at least a certain percentage of children to develop interest in them and take part in sports activities. Children at an young age may have sports models like a famous cricketer, hockey player, chess player, tennis player, etc. and may imitate them to become one like them. Children gather a lot of information by watching programmes like quiz. They learn moral lessons by watching serials on Panchatantra, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Jai Hanuman, Bal Ganesh, Krishna etc. Music and dance programmes will not only entertain the children but will also encourage them to cultivate these as hobbies.

Cartoon programmes will take the children altogether to a new fairy world and enhance their imaginative power. By watching programmes in channels like Animal Planet, Discovery, National Geography, etc., will develop inquisitive nature in children.

"The TV exposure promoted positive results among the children such as the achievement in school subjects, classroom interaction and the language development."1 Though it is true that TV has a great positive influence on children from an early age, it will also affect children's cognitive and social development. It is interesting to note that medical research conducted on kids, reveals that most of the speech delay cases seen among babies are caused due to the excessive TV watching. Because when a child begins to produce the babbling sounds, elders must produce a similar sound, so that the young one is motivated to talk more, which slowly leads to verbal communication?

Since children do not possess rational thinking power, they will not understand what they see on TV and are not able to distinguish between fantasy and reality. By thinking TV images as real, children may enter into difficulties if they start imitating adventurous characters of TV like Shaktiman or Superman etc.

In the 21st century because of the increasing number of women taking employment outside home, they do not have much time to devote to their children. In such

Circumstances TV has almost become a third parent to the children. Excess TV watching may spoil the children's interest towards studies and make them to develop interest towards easy-going kind of life. With the inception of TV, children do not want to play either outside or inside house but which is most essential for a child's overall development. "Girl children over a period of time may subconsciously or (and) unconsciously imbue several gender unjust roles and values from an early age due to exposure to media messages that deeply influence the social milieu."

ii) Youth

"Globalised media have quickly taken a front seat in every one's life over the last decade. And today it plays a very powerful role in the lives of young people as they have an extensive influence over the way in which youths are exposed to the information." Television, an important means of media both shape and is shaped by the meanings and practices of young people's everyday life. Among the various means of globalised media, through TV youths have an easy access to information not only within the country but also outside the country. Youths can shape their career better by watching career oriented programmes. They can gather information about social problems, environmental issues, law related problems, etc. Some of the TV serials show the youth the way in which social

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problems can be tackled, viz., how women can face a problem like dowry in the family. TV provides the youth awareness in respect of various laws and teaches them how to make use of them. TV can motivate young females to become achievers in various fields like Arts (music and drama), sports, and various professions, etc.

Television can be considered as carriers and promoters of our culture. In this modernized era, because of the impact of western culture in substantial number of families, the adolescent females do not even know anything about our traditional culture and values. For such females, TV programmes can become an eye opener. They can also guide our females with regard to preservation and continuation of our ethnic values. It may change the mindset of these youths who are the representatives of the future and can help them to imbibe good values of life like honesty, truthfulness, hardwork, courage, respect to elders, etc. By watching kitchen related programmes the young women can become good cooks and can cater to the diverse tastes of their family members.

Television programmes will help the youths to develop their competitive spirit by enhancing their competencies. Some of the programmes encourage the youth to start their own business and enable them to become self-reliant and self-confident. Various TV channels prefer females as anchors rather than males and thus create ample job opportunities to them.

The TV programmes which consist of documentary films and special live programmes on Independence day, Republic day celebrations, etc, promote the feeling of patriotism. It will foster a feeling of national unity and integrity. Telecasts of the Holi and Diwali and other festival celebrations will help the youth more to know about the nation and culture. Programmes on traffic and road sense, community health, the adulteration of foodstuff, town planning will provide them information to lead a better life.

Television programmes will have profuse influence on youth's dressing patterns, behaviour and consumption patterns also. A large number of songs telecast from commercial cinemas, the important ingredient of TV viewing have a negative effect on the minds of young females, since they comprise of vulgar vibes and suggestive lyrics of sexuality. Blind imitation of characters shown in fashion shows and beauty contests may inspire the young females to take to modeling and other related Occupations. However, it is found that women are exploited most in such occupations.

Television's influence on declining reading habits and listening to the radio of youths is a matter of serious concern. Younger generation has a fascination to ape (imitate) all that is shown on TV but they do not realize the fact that the negative roles shown on TV convey the message that they should not be imitated.

iii) Women

For illiterate women TV is the only media from which they can get information. "With its reach extended into rural areas, Television can play a crucial role instilling confidence and self-respect in rural women (and urban women) and help them in securing their dignified and rightful place in society."

A study conducted with regard to newspaper and magazine reading, cinema and theatre viewing, TV watching etc. revealed that "every state had registered an increase in women watching

Television, with a 20% or more increase in Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Kerala and Punjab."s

Television watching helps women to discover new identities rather than be what they have been socialized to become. For women at their ripe ages TV becomes an important tool of entertainment to a larger extent and infotainment to a smaller extent. For old women and for physically challenged women TV becomes an instrument of time pass. It can indicate the lines of struggle against male oppression and violence on women.

Generally, women after the age of 40 become indifferent to the new styles of dresses and changing fashions. However, by watching TV they also become interested in modifying their dressing patterns in accordance with the changing fashions of the times. By watching programmes on yoga and health, women can get solutions to many of their physical and mental ailments.

Learning through imitations is a well-accepted phenomenon of developmental psychology. TV watching will energize the women by removing their inertia. It will provide them an opportunity to exhibit their hidden talents by participating in events like cookery, music, drama, etc., for both literate as well as illiterate women. Women use television programmes as part of their general discourse on their own lives, the lives of their kith and kin and add interest to their working lives.

Television teaches women to have ambitious plans of action and thus become achievers in their own fields. It suggests women how to utilize their time more productively by involving themselves in diverse activities.

For elderly women who cannot travel and for those who cannot afford to frequent different places, travelogue programmes will create an impression in their minds as if they have actually visited those places. Exposure to television can enable women to become confident, self-reliant and independent. By making amendments in their behaviour and outlooks can help them to maintain family peace.

The UNESCO study report has revealed the fact that women are depicted as house wives, consumers and sex objects in advertisements shown on TV. This will caution the mothers to be selective while sending their daughters to participate in such events. TV shows extreme images of women which are both false and damaging their status.

Conclusion

Television plays an important role by providing information and entertainment needs of the people. It is one of the most powerful force in the world today affecting the viewers. Television has become part and parcel of our social life and it is very difficult to part with this magic medium of communication. Despite its negative effects, TV has almost become an integral part of people's lives in the 21st century. As such, to make TV a boon or a bane very much rests with the individual TV watcher. The wisdom lies not in highlighting its minus points but in minimizing them. While the parents will have to be watchful about the type of programmes that their children watch, the children and youth will have to be careful in selecting the programmes and in putting a limit on the duration of their TV watching. The social activists will have to raise their voice against the telecast of objectionable programmes. TV channels by

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realizing their social responsibility must not consider TV programmes as purely a business proposition. How best TV can be used for positive purposes depends on the family background, educational standards, tastes and preferences of the viewers.

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