



Media As A Source Of Learning – A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Media is always considered as a platform of sharing knowledge. It helps an individual to access information on a global level. This study documented how children were attracted towards television as sources of media in different settings .i.e. institutional settings and family settings.

Major findings of the study were that in both the settings there has been recorded that they uses different sources of media and access to material. However in the two contexts there is no particular routine habits which directs, how to use media as source of learning

KEYWORDS:- information, institutional, global, media, learning

1. INTRODUCTION

“Social media demands a lot of us on top of our already demanding lives.

So lets’ disconnects as we need to and renew our interests and ourselves”

“Simon Mainwaring”

Socialization is very important process, children in adolescent year seek their own identity. However, guidance is the key for social adjustment, risk taking and conforming. Children are part of a social world and there are many contexts to their social interactions ranging from the family, to neighborhood to friends and so on. The social set-up is an outcome of age and interests besides certain universal elements such as desire to play, explore and enjoy. In the contemporary social context television is an important social engagement as in urban areas its reach is widely penetrative. On an annual basis, children spend more time in front of the television than any other activity except for sleep. Therefore, television presents to the child considerable information about how one should look, behave, succeed in life, and be popular.

Television has become one of the most important mass media tools especially in recent years. Today India boast of being the third largest television market in the world. More than half households own a television. Television started with an experimental telecast in Delhi on 15 September 1959 (launch date) with a small transmitters and makeshift studio. The regular daily transmission started in 1965 as a part of All India Radio. The television service was extended to Bombay and Amritsar in 1972. Up until 1975, only seven Indian cities had a television services. National telecast were

introduced in 1982. In the same year color television was introduced in the Indian market. Indian small screen programming started off in the early 1980's. At that time there was only one national channel Doordarshan which was government owned. The Ramayan and Mahabharat Indian spiritual and Mythological stories were first television series produced. There single channel television programming has now reached saturation. In the initial phase after a single channel the government opened up another channel which had national programming and part regional. This channel was known as DD2 and later DD metro. Both the channels were broadcast terrestrially.

Valaskakis (1983) in his study examined television viewing tastes and habits among the Inuit Indians of the Eastern and Central Arctic. The findings revealed that the amount of different types of programming was significantly different among the Inuit Indians. Accordingly, the underlying assumption is that, the Inuit males who are heavily engaged in television's sports fare, would underestimate the mean world of television.

Lowery and DeFleur (1988) showed in their research that children tend to watch more television than adults, they prefer to watch adult programs as they grow, and usually watch as late into the night as do adults. Despite their emergence from the more limited world of childhood and their increased reliance on peers, adolescents continue to spend a great deal of their time watching television.

Sinichi Shimizu (1993) in her study found that MTV program are changing the entire music scene in Asia. Multinational rock music or world music is becoming the mainstream popular music among the youth in Asia, while the traditional style is becoming obscure and obsolete.

The central government launched a series of economic and social reform in 1991 under prime minister Narasimha Rao. Under the new policies the Government allowed private and foreign broadcaster to engage on limited operation in India. Foreign channels like CNN, STAR TV and private domestic channels, such as ZEE TV, ETV and SUN TV started satellite broadcast. Starting with 41 sets in 1992 and one channel by 1995, T.V in India covered more than 70 million homes having a viewing population of more than 400 million individuals through more than 120 channels.

There are at least four basic types of television in India.

1. Broadcast or "over-the-air" television,
2. Unencrypted satellite or "free-to-air",
3. Direct-to-Home (DTH),
4. Cable television

1.1 India's educational TV program especially for young children

In the nineties the University Grants Commission sponsored a educational television series Tarram Too under the guidance of prof. Yash Pal. The attempt was to reach young developing winds with the content to communicate conceptual ideas and literacy skills. The characters were designed keeping the India social background in perspective, special songs, folk stories, enhanced the appeal. However, lack chances put an early end to this project.

Sesame Workshop in India hit the airwaves in 2006 with a show called Galli Galli Sim Sim. It was something entirely new—a children's programme with the power to educate as it entertains. Five seasons later, Galli Galli Sim Sim is a fixture in the homes and hearts of families across India. As many as 80 million children have tuned in regularly to watch the show since its debut in 2006 till 2012. The show currently reaches approximately 18 million children per year with its diverse cast, vibrant set, and stories that reflect the country's many cultures and traditions.

In year 2013, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal announced that soon 50 educational channel are on air. He said these channels will be different from the existing program on air including Gyan Darshan as new one will be more interactive. He added that these channels will air program that will be live and not pre-recorded. They were insuring that the new initiatives will be one of the largest anywhere in the world of its kind.

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To explore TV viewing habits among adolescents in different living situations
- 2) To study responses of adolescents to educational television program.

2. Methods

The design of this study based on observations and understanding reactions to screening of a special learning program. The vital focus is to understand the role of television in everyday routines of young adolescents. Television is a major presence in the world of today, News and stories of different languages can be viewed with in the four walls of the house or whether they are living in home or in institutional settings.

The participants were located in two different types of residential settings. 20 children were living in institutions and 20 were part of family contexts. The study design aimed at investigating children's use of television as they lived through their daily rhythms. Total sample of 40 children comprised 20 boys and 20 girls al in the age range of 13-16 years. 10 boys and 10 girls lived in single sex shelter homes. 10 each boys and girls lived with their families. The children in families were classmates of the children from the shelter homes. Children shared schools.

2.1 Observation:

Families/ Institution with the children were observed while viewing a television programme. Children's reactions, behavior while viewing were noted. Both the institutions were visited 6 days each and detailed observations were taken on all days.

- Television viewing patterns among adolescent
- Access to television in different living situations

2.2 Intervention:

One episode DNA of Science Mein Twist series was screened. It was ensured that the children were familiar with the content as part of their school curriculum. A pre test was done to understand the information and knowledge that children had of the subject. The program was screened in four settings and behavior were noted.

2.1.1 Pretest And Post Test: To understand whether children learn from these educational program pretest and post test were conducted and their responses were studied.

3. Results and Discussions

Most of the participants watch television irrespective of whether they reside with their families or are living in institutions. In both the settings there are certain stipulations regarding time for viewing, access to viewing material. However in the two contexts there is no direction for inculcating habits for watching programs that may be useful or support school related learning. Children's use of television is largely for entertainment, as a matter of routine and at times for watching provocative material for erotic stimulation. It was noted that children find ways to acquire films and videos that are not approved material and are able to watch content that would certainly be disapproved by the family. The participant's daily rhythms were observed and recorded.

3.1 Daily living

Children in both situations went to school and a major part of their day went in attending school or in doing school tasks. Children in the institutional setting required some time to finish chores related to their personal needs such as washing clothes, washing the dishes and keeping their belongings in a tidy manner. The children in the families also help in household tasks but it not rigidly attributed to their rhythm as the mother always steps in to complete if not completed. Evenings are looked forward to as time to relax. In the institutions there is a two hour slot set aside for watching television as a group. It is not an activity that children really look

forward to as at times they have to watch repeated recordings of the same shows. However, it was an activity that provided some diversion.

Television enters in the lives of children as they grow up; the aim of this is to understand the presence of television in their life and explore the reasons that make TV an attractive tool. The access to television in children's life is quite easy. Participatory observation was made at both the situation of living. It is noticed that television is easily accessible at family setting, but at the institutions the time to watch programs is restricted and regulated by the shelter home authorities. In families participants were allowed to watch television according to their own interests with little monitoring.

3.2 Television and family setting

All adolescent boys and girls from family setting reported that they have access to cable channels. The boys had a little more freedom in sanctioned time and choice of programs. Girls could watch with their mothers, however, there were expectations to assist in household chores. All the participants had access to television within their homes with DTH (monthly payment mode) cable connection and almost all the channels were telecasted including Star Plus, Zee TV, Life Ok, Sony, Cartoon Network, Hungama, Disney, Discovery channels, Animal Planet, and UTV Action (Hollywood movie channel). These were channels mentioned by both boys and girls. Both boys and girls were not very keen to watch Hindi movies. No participants mentioned that they were watching Hindi movies or not. Adolescents did not find anything interesting in it in terms of story, characters, and actions.

Most of the participants were watching television during evening time as school attendance does not allow any morning for their own activities. After they return from school they have their tuition classes. So the only time they have for television is in the evening. Most of the boys watch television for more than two hours a day while for many girls viewing time is less than two hours per day. Six participants mentioned that they watch television while doing their school work while two boys said that they watch television only after completing their homework some can watch only at the time of dinner. In a rare case the child can watch television according to his own will. All the participants mentioned that they can manipulate their parents if they had to watch television for extra time. Girls were able to manage mother's cooperation but were fearful of their fathers. Majority of the participants mentioned that their father do not bother much about their television viewing habits but mother keeps on saying that instead of watching television they should go out and play with their peers.

Preferred programs: Boys watched cartoon network and were interested in some serials Balika Vadhu and Sasural Simar kaa, are also popular. Girls watched the serials watched by their mothers. Girls had access to all channels as well and mentioned watching Hollywood movies, daily soaps, and discovery channel, animal planet. Majority of the girls were watching Hollywood movies (dubbed in Hindi) not in the proximity of the family but downloaded on smart phones. They also mentioned that they do not like daily soaps but they had to watch just because their mother are watching those programs. Only one participant mentioned that she is watching Hindi movies, because Hollywood movies are out of bounds as the content of Hollywood films not age appropriate. Like the boys the girls in the evening time despite the fact that the girls were expected to help their mother in the household chores. In fact the fathers in the sample were insistent on the girls being trained in domestic chores. The rules for the girls are, no girl is allowed to watch whatever she wants to watch, she needs to help in family tasks and she cannot watch Hollywood films. For the boys the rules are not so clearly articulated. Like the boys some girls do their homework while watching television; four also mention that they completed their homework first and then watch television, while a few (two) mentions that they completed their homework in the school itself. Each participant mentioned that they cannot manipulate their father but they can do it with their mother. One of the participant said that her father don't want her to study... and he wants her to help her mother in household chores.

3.2.1 Institutional Setting: Boys

Participants in institutions have only one television and that too not always available for them. They do have a television but they do not have cable connection. Even the television is locked, and no one is allowed to watch television. They have only recorded cartoon shows to watch. All the participants had to watch these shows only, its compulsory for all of them to watch. Even if they don't want to watch these shows they were forced to sit in front of the television two hours a day. And that too the shows were repeated and recorded as well so they got bored of those shows. They were not allowed talk while watching television. However their energies could not be totally suppressed and they found another solution for this... they watch Hindi movies in the night. Movies were provided by the gate keeper and one of the boys had the keys of the television. So they watch those movies in the night, boys are able to as they have become sensitive to cues that indicate that it's time to switch off. The secret viewing is carried on the top wing and people climbing the stairs inform the viewers that someone is coming. Most of the participants watch television for more than two hours (four-five hrs) in a day in this secretive manner. They know every thing about upcoming movies. The Centre In-charge is unaware of all these actions.

3.2.2 Institutional Setting: Girls

Participants in the institutional have only one television and that too available for them for only two hours a day. And shows that they were watching are also recorded cartoon shows. They don't have cable connection and they were not allowed access to it. They actually have two hrs of forced television/compulsory television. They were forced to sit in front of television they were not allowed to talk. The television is a useless activity in the case of the girls. The content becomes repetitive and is not beneficial at all. There is no attempt from the shelter home to improve or change the viewing material.

3.3 Children and function of television

Most of the participants watch television for its appeal and they engage when the content is informative. Children are all different in their own individual way as they have their thoughts, hobbies, and interest. They learn different things at different speed and time. The influence of TV on them is inevitable as they are the most vulnerable population to be influence by this medium (Menon 2004).

3.4 Source of new knowledge:

Most of the participants said that if they watch something new specially content that has not been viewed by their peers then they were more excited to tell it to their mates also, so that they will become popular for having knowledge. One of the central connect with television content is the scope to learn new facts. One of the reasons for the boys to view Hollywood films was access to different cultures, which seemingly defined more freedom. Hindi films and regular serials were dismissed as they did not provide new substance.

3.5 Entertainment:

No doubt television is an powerful medium of instruction and amusement as it gives an chance to selected their choice of program. However, there was little scope for the instructive aspect and majority of the children are watching television just to amuse themselves. All of them mention that they have very hectic student life and watching television helps to release their stress. Cartoon shows, comedy shows, and daily soaps are enough to amuse them, however, repeated viewing is quite boring. Most them seemed to use the term "time pass" as a central relation with the presence in their residential units.

3.5 Intervention with an educational program

The research design had built in screening of a program in the edu-entertainment format from the series “Science Mein Twist” the episode selected dealt with the structure DNA. The program aimed for school children. The children were told that they would be seeing a program, which related to their curriculum. Interest in the program was generated by first probing the information regarding this topic of science. The pre screening talk served as a pre test. The attempt was to understand if the viewing would help raise an understanding of concepts.

3.5.1 Pretesting Of the content:

Before showing them a program the few questions asked by the researcher provided a range of responses such as cell means “battery vala cell”, “cell phone”, or “sell”. The conversation focused the idea of science by the probing with examples like human body is also made up of cell. Then answer then shifted to plant cell and animal cell, and then participants were talking about cell wall, mitochondria, nucleus, indicating a basic orientation to scientific concepts.

3.5.6 The program:

The format of the programme with music and action made the viewing quite interactive. The music in the beginning of the program captured their attention and afterwards participants were taking interest in the program when in the program they start telling that how you can actually test the DNA and the process of testing and its benefit about how it help to caught thief just from his/her fingerprints. Participants were much surprised to know all these fact and while watching they were talking amongst them that they also can do it and for examining whose DNA it is just give the sample to their science teacher.

3.5.7 Post testing:

After watching the program researcher again ask those question which were asked in the pre testing this time responses were quick and immediate. Participants were even asking for when are they going to watch next program like this.

3.6 Family setting:

In family setting the responses from both boys as well as girls were more accurate and does not need to probe it more. Likewise researcher told them in the beginning that it's a science program. Most of the responses were related to content of the program and while watching program they were seems curious to know about what happen next. Most of the participants were not discussing the their thought as participants from institutional setting were sharing their thought while watching.

3.7 Institutional setting

In institutional responses from both boys and girls were not appropriate in terms of content of the program which has to be shown to them. When researcher probe it further then responses were content appropriate. While watching the program participant were sharing their thought in between the program itself and they were talking among themselves about what has been shown in the program.

4. Conclusion

Television viewing is a source of connecting with diverse information. Children especially boys created ways of acquiring DVD's and other materials to watch. Of course the content was provocative such as Hollywood films. The shelter homes which are reformatory centers for runaway children have provision for entertainment, However According to rules of the shelter homes, the residents are allowed two hours of viewing time. The authorities follow the letter of rule not the spirit. Both boys and girls are attracted to the appeal of the of the audio visual material. They watch for amusement as well as gathering new information. They are not provided with appropriate material; however they do find ways to appropriate shows to watch. Boys learn new ways to dealing with rules. Girls were more conforming yet they too downloaded films on phone and laptop. The instructional and potential of television was established by the screening of the program “DNA”. The participants watched the program as eager audience absorbing the information, identifying practical procedures.

The program evoked excited responses igniting interest in tasks that could be easily done. Television's presence and use for 13 – 16 years can be enhanced manifold with appropriate content in an engaging format.

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