

MEDIA AND ADOLESCENTS

Madhu Kumari

Assistant Professor

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,
Banasthali Vidyapith, Tonk, Rajasthan, India

Abstract : The access and use of new age media or new media (for example mobile phone, computer, laptops, I-pads, social media and internet) by adolescents' are increasing continuously and this detonation of technology comes with probable gain and loss. Parents must keep an eye on adolescents for becoming victims of aggression that are committed by peers with the use of new media technology. This article will discuss about the e-aggression which is most common due to the use of the new media technology. This e-aggression is an emerging health problem amongst the adolescents'. Media, "television" to the "new media" are working as a governing force for adolescents lives. Though television still continues to be the most dominating medium of media for adolescents, but new media's popularity is increasing constantly. The parents continue to be worried about the probable ill effects of media images and messages. However there are some positive effects of media on teenagers which must also be considered. There are two questions which every parent must answer or keep a watch on their child: How much time their child is giving on screen? Is it necessary to keep a television or internet connected device in their child's room? This paper suggests parents to make a media usage plan for their child. As media influences children both in negative and positive way it is the duty of both parents and schools to keep a check on the media technology usage by child and time to time tell them about the positive and negative aspects of new media technology through different workshops, seminars etc.

Index Terms - Adolescents, New Media, Parents, Technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

In adolescent's life, media are governing force as they have access to various forms of it such as television, computer, internet, social media, mobile phones, i-pads etc. The word media comes from the Latin word *medius* which means middle. It is a communication device which can be used to disseminate and commune with heterogeneous audience.

According to Marshall McLuhan media is bifurcated in hot media and cool media in which hot media captivating the sense of an individual completely as the content of hot media is similar to spoon feeding which typically restricts its user to have the complete focus on the content. It has the minimal participation by an individual for example films and radio. While cool media refers to the less captivation of an individual as it requires the participation of an audience in order to fill the gaps in the content. In this kind of media individual is familiar with genre in order to understand the source medium easily for examples mobile phones and television.

There are different types of medium to communicate with the heterogeneous audience for instance.

- Print Media: Newspapers, Magazines, Booklets, Brochures and Billboards
- Electronic Media: Television and Radio
- New Age Media: Mobile Phones, Computers, Internet and Electronic Books
- Traditional or folk media

Robert Logan mentioned in his book *Understanding New Media* that New media refers to "*those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication and involve some form of computing*". He also stated that New media is "*very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyperlinked and, perhaps most radical of all, easily searched for and accessed.*"

The New Media have potent influence on the adolescence as adolescence is a transitional stage which represents the period of psychological and social transformation of juvenile to adulthood. In human, adolescent is the phase of rapid development in which they develop knowledge, skills and learn to handle emotions and relationships. Adolescence is the period of life falling between 10 to 19 years of age as stated by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. There are numerous issues in this phase such as stupefaction, independence, self-identity etc. In this phase, biological maturity paves the way for psychological maturity.

Adolescents are very easily influenced by the media which subtle and cumulative and its effects last for longer period for which parents must deal with their children patiently and must seek necessary help and guidance required from pediatricians and educators.

II. IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS

Adolescent's use of the Media

In adolescent's life, media plays a pivotal role. Most adolescents have access to different types of media such as television, computers, mobile phones, internet, social platforms viz WhatsApp, Instagram, SnapChat, Facebook, Twitter, Hike, Tinder, Viber, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr etc. The contemporary generation, who grow up with Smartphone, I-pads etc do not memorize anything without the help of internet and are hence called *Digital Natives*. The access to media by adolescent are not saturated to only entertainment such as music movies, games but the media has paved way for learning new ideas, information and find out new happenings locally and globally as well which is known as '*Infotainment*'. With the help of media, students can work efficiently on homework and assignments. In schools, through smart class teachers demonstrate the topics of the concerned subject easily and resourcefully.

Today's adolescent uses media in multiple ways as technology has become more sophisticated. Media has enabled adolescent to be multitasking. Nowadays adolescent spend more time and energy in the use of media. The excessive use of media adversely affects the sleep. Most of the adolescents have the habit of keeping their mobile and other gadgets on the bed and their sleeping patters disturb because of the exposure of the bright light. The poor sleep can badly hamper their school performances.

According to national survey by the *Common Sense* Census in United Nation in 2015, on an average, the *tweens* age falling between 8-12 years and *teens* that fall between 13-18 years spend six hours and nine hours daily on the usage of media respectively. The adolescent whose media consumption is more than 1.5 hours daily is more prone to the risk of obesity and other ailments.

Adolescents: Television and Video Games

Television is a device which provides rich source of information as it telecast news and documentaries both at local and global which keep viewers updated and informed. Through the Educational TV Channels such as DD Gyan Darshan, Animal Planet, Nat Geo Wild, Nasa TV, Discovery TV, Epic Channel, National Geographic Channel television, educational programs are telecasts which educate and entertain the adolescents. The adolescents can watch world-class performances in drama, sports, music etc through television.

Nowadays adolescents have access to television and spend many hours in watching television for various reasons that have both positive and negative effects. To fill the gap and avoid other activities, adolescents spend more time in watching television as passive viewers. Adolescents try to imitate the action scenes or superficial features especially shown in the television programs such as films, daily soaps, advertisements which encourage violence and aggression in them.

According to *Dr. Douglas Gentile*, Developmental Psychologist and Research Scientist, United States and who is world renowned specialist on the mass media's effects on children, adolescent and adult said that adolescents are more exposed when a TV or video games are in the bedroom as they devote less time in reading, sleeping or any other creative and sports activities which have ripple effect on numerous results. As a result, their performances in school declines and there are easy target for the addiction of video games.

Gentile emphasized on that the adolescents never watch educational programs, when they turn on TV alone in their bedroom. Parents are unable to monitor their adolescents and put restriction on the use of TV as it become common for the adolescents to use TV for 2-3 hours.

In research journal namely *Developmental Psychology* mentioned that adolescents who have TV in their bedroom are more exposed to those TV programs or play video games which are full of vulgar and violence which have ripple effect and increases level of hatred and aggression in them.

The article published in leading English newspaper of India **The Hindu** on 22nd November, 2010, states that the adolescents of India spend five hours daily in watching TV programs. It was also highlighted that the adolescents falling between six to seventeen years are exposed to TV more than 35 hours in a week which have so many ill effects such as increase level of violent actions, health issues according to survey conducted by Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) under its Social Development Foundation (SDF).

TV programs increases the stereotypical attitudes in adolescents as the content highlights the traditional terms which portrays women doing domestic works and men with professional attitudes (Hust & Brown, 2008).

Adolescents are very passionate and keen towards playing video games. The electronic interactive video games are having realistic approach. The video games are very sophisticated and hook the adolescents. Teens and tweens are easily having access to video games on virtual consoles, portal guns, handheld games, play station, online games and Android. There are numerous interactive video games such as the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, Grand Theft Auto IV, Super Mario Galaxy, Super Mario Odyssey, NFL 2K1, God of War etc.

The researchers have highlighted the cordial relationship between playing video games and cognitive functions in adolescents which enhances their attention (Green & Bavelier, 2006) and improves the reasoning abilities (Greenfield et al., 1994). The adolescents who are regular video games develop a high level of interaction skills which develops the ability to manage the speed and challenges of games (Grodal, 2000; Vorderer, 2000). The managing skill may help the adolescents to experience a delightful charm as they attain a sense of flow while playing video games (Sherry, 2004). The video games like shooter may enhances the visual attention of adolescents as they are able to track multiple objects in rotation (Boot et al., 2008; Green & Bavelier, 2007).

The dominance of video games has aroused the concerns about the ill-effects of playing games on adolescents. The violent video games such as Dead Space 2, Mortal Kombat, Medal of Honor, Call of Duty: Black Ops, Fallout: New Vegas, Dead Rising 2, Halo: Reach are some of the most dangerous and disturbing games which raises the aggressiveness and negative attitudes in adolescents.

The addiction to violent video games is risk factor for increased aggressive attitudes (Andersons et al., 2007; Gentile, 2009) and lowers the level of pro-social behavior which desensitize the adolescents towards violence which is real in life (Funk et al., 2004).

In May, 2016 a suicide online game 'The Blue Whale Challenge' came to limelight for its disturbing and dreadful outcomes in the world. The soft target of this game was teenagers. The game was widely accessed on social media hubs such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The game was a sequence of online tasks for 50 days which encouraged adolescents to kill themselves. The game created havoc globally as the dreadful tasks which the adolescents had to complete such as harming oneself, spending time in

watching psychedelic and scary videos, craving with razor on hand, waking up at 4:20 a.m. and go to the higher roof etc. According to the report published in English newspaper of United Kingdom, The Sun on 20th February, 2018 states that 130 deaths of adolescents were reported globally.

III. ADOLESCENT: SOCIAL MEDIA HUB

“Social Media is the collection of tools and online spaces available to help individuals and businesses to accelerate their information and communication needs.” - Axel Schultze

Social Media is an umbrella term which incorporates integrated technology, multimedia such as video, audio, text, graphic for social conversation. The various platforms through which adolescents interact and socialize on social media are WhatsApp, Instagram, SnapChat, Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Hike, Tinder, Viber, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr etc. It is a web-based communication tools which help the adolescents to disseminate and consume information. Some of the basic features of social media are User Account, Profile Page, Group, Followers, Friend Requests, Hash tags, Memories, Events, Status, Chats, News Feed, Notifications, Like, Comment and Share buttons, Review, Voting etc.

Adolescence is period of storm and stress. Most of the time adolescents become rebellious as they are very conscious about their freedom and liberty. Through social media adolescents hook up with the world for open conversation and feel connected. In adolescent's life, social media plays an extremely important role as it is paving way for it to connect to the outer world and give it opportunity to socialize.

The social media helps the adolescents to develop professional skills as it facilitates the interaction socially. Through social media adolescents are able to attain the sense of identity with pro-social peers. The social media allows adolescents to socialize online through effective communication. Through social media, adolescents are able to accomplish companionship as they develop good liaison with friends and family members. They make new friends and share their thoughts, views and ideas on the different topics related to their lives. The social media provide platform to raise money for social causes. The adolescents express their thoughts through pictures and creative writing on various social media sites such as blogs, podcast, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. They can enrich their creative skills and share it in form of video, art, music on YouTube, Facebook, Whatsapp, Pinterest etc. The social media pave ways for adolescents who are LGBT, suffering from any severe illness and special children stay connected with the world and disseminate their viewpoints.

The social media provides opportunities to the adolescents to enhance their educational learning. It helps the adolescents to complete their school or college projects and assignments as they find learning resources online. Various educational institutions strengthen skills such as language, creative skills and expression through blogs.

According to the *Pew Research Center survey* conducted in March-April, 2018 adolescents are very fond of YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. The report highlights that 45% of adolescents are online throughout the day regularly and 95% of teens and tweens are regular user of smart phone globally.

Adolescents are very vulnerable group and they become easy target to be exploited through social media. It affects the adolescents extremely as they are using it intensely at regular basis. The adolescents are not able to figure out the difference between the real friends and online friends. They connect and communicate with the online friends which is not safe every time. They face so many problems such as cyber bullying, trolls, internet addiction, Facebook depression, sexting etc.

There is also a risk of losing privacy as the adolescents constantly share and post their personal information or day to day happening on the social networking sites and easily gets into trouble. The adolescent's mental health has been affected severely due to smart phone as their sleep pattern is disturbed regularly.

The excess use of social media sites such as Facebook has given a new mental disorder known as Facebook depression. The constant applications of Facebook contribute to depressive and vengeful thoughts in teenagers. The aggressive and depressive behavior hampers their day to day activities. The Facebook depression is very dangerous for adolescent as they become victim of isolation and they look for 'help' online that is fatal for them such as sexual abuse, sexual exploitation etc.

Adolescents are become easy prey to cyber bullying and online harassment. Cyber bullying is an online threat which is used to disseminate false information about another person intentionally. In this practice, adolescents become the victim of online harassment, embarrassment and aggression. The cyber bullying outcomes are very psychologically dangerous for the young mind such as depression, social isolation, anxiety, aggressive behaviour and suicide tendency.

Another digital threat to the adolescents is sexting. The process of sending and receiving sexually and erotic unambiguous text messages, video, audio, pictures and e-mail digitally is known as Sexting. Some adolescents send nude and semi-nude or vulgar photographs or videos of themselves. The nude photos, videos or sexting can damage the reputation of adolescents, if the mobile or laptop gets accessed by unknown person, then it may be viral and cause severe problems to adolescents.

The adolescents make so many fake friends online with whom they share their personal information. They are various conscious about 'like', 'comment', 'follow', 'share' on their photos, live stories or any updates online. Because of the virtual world, the adolescents don't give importance to face to face conversation. They lack human compassion, feeling and empathy.

IV. ADVERTISING TO ADOLESCENT

Advertising is a powerful communication tool for dissemination and promotions of goods, products and services by an identified sponsor. It is highly visible and used to communicate, motivate, persuade and influence the target consumers to purchase and use the products, ideas, services etc. The main motive of advertising is to convey the preferred information to the target audience and hence become the most important form of communication.

In 1963, the **American Marketing Association (AMA)** defines the advertising as "*Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor.*"

Advertising is an influential communication which informs, educate, entertain, inspire and encourage the target audience. Sometimes it is irritating, tempting, monotonous, invasive etc. The ultimate goal or motive of advertisements is to increase the purchase of the advertised goods, ideas, services, so it persuade the target audience's mind in such a way that they are compelled to purchase it. The adolescents are bombarded with so many advertisements such as junk foods, toys, video games, branded clothes, cosmetics that are harsh to their skin, automobiles, mobile phones, sexual content (deodorant, i-pills, condoms, lingerie) through different media such as TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, internet. The main target audience of advertisers is adolescents as they form a big market for the product, ideas, and service (Gunter et al., 2005). The adolescents are influenced by the advertisements of unhealthy food and beverages which contains saturated fats, high salt and sugar such as coca cola, pepsico, Fritolay, Maggie noodles, Cadbury, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald's, Burger King, Dominos, Pizza Hut, Subway products. The consumption of these products which is very high in calories makes the adolescents obese.

The adolescents are very weak with the perspective of cognition and psychological so they are defenseless against the marketing strategies of the advertisers. The advertisers spend huge amount of money on the advertisements targeting adolescents. The adolescents are easily influenced by the advertisements as they are immature. The advertisements have positive and negative influences on adolescents. Some advertisements are resourceful in spreading awareness about social causes through social advertisements.

The adolescents are very confused group and are not able to identify between real and materialistic world. The advertisements of products, ideas or services they see, they want to own it. In most of the advertisements, women have been portrayed as sex object for example bike, deodorants, condom, lingerie, cosmetic products, so the image of women in the mind of adolescents are very questionable and demeaning. In the stereotype advertisements like detergent powder, grocery, home appliances, household cleaning products etc. women are represented as the homemaker and it creates an image of women as non-professional individual. However, the precarious stunts shown in the advertisement have very strong impact on the adolescents, although the statutory warning highlights that the stunts performed by the professional and do not try to imitate it but adolescents don't give value to the warning and try to copy it at home which is very life threatening. Sometimes advertisements develop the feeling of low self-esteem in adolescents as they can't afford precious products advertised by the advertisers.

The advertisers attract and engage the attention of adolescents through new advertising media for the promotion of their brands or any one product through Advergaming. It is a combination of advertising and game. It is used to reinforce the brand image which boosts the selling of the product, idea or service. It involves interactive game which generates curiosity in adolescents. The junk or unhealthy foods and beverages are advertised to adolescents through advergaming (Lee et al., 2009). Some of the examples of advergaming are Mario Kart 8 which promotes Mercedes Benz, Crazy Taxi advertise KFC, Burger King's 3 Burger King Themed Xbox 360 games etc

Some advertisements have very healthy and positive impact on adolescents. The advertisements which depicts the social causes such as No Smoking or Drinking Alcohol, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, protecting environment etc. Through advertisement adolescents give value to the relationship like Bournvita 'Tayyari Jeet Ki' represent the mother and son hardship to practice gymnastic. Comfort After Wash by Ogilvy, smash the stereotype representation of gender under the slogan 'Chota Step, Badi Baat' depicts mother teaching her son that a small step can make a big change. She asked her son to learn how to wash clothes.

V. SUGGESTIONS

Media Intervention

The adolescents need to be taught about the proper use of media. Media intervention is helpful in developing critical thinking and understanding about the fundamentals of media. Media intervention is bifurcated into three categories such as:

1. Restrictive Interventions

The government ban and restricts the broadcast, telecast, printing or webcast of any TV programs, advertisements, printed material, scenes from movies or any other controversial material which has adverse affect on the adolescents. The Government of India has blocked 857 sites of domestic and international pornography websites in 2015 and banned 200 sites used for 'Escort Services in 2016 as per the IT Act, 2000. In December, 2017 the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting banned the telecast of condom advertisements from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. because it is indecent and can create unhealthy practice in adolescents as per the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994.

In India, there is statutory body working under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting called Central Board of Film Certification which certifies and regulates the films for good and healthy entertainment in the society. Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is a self regulatory organization which ensures the advertisements should maintain truthfulness, decency, fairness etc. In ASCI, the consumer can complain about the advertisements if it is vulgar, obscene etc to the Consumer Complaints Council.

Parents or guardian can exercise the Parental Control to lock to block the apps, games from playstore, music, webpage in mobiles and personal computers, laptops. The parents can restrict the timing of access of TV, mobile, laptop and internet.

2. Evaluative restriction or Co-viewing

The other type of media intervention is co-viewing. Co-viewing means parents or guardian give time to their adolescents when they watch TV, play games or surf internet. Co-viewing is very effective for the adolescents as the parents watch together. The parents can help the adolescents to make them understand the content shown through different medium. Adolescents can differentiate the reel and real world by the intervention of parents. If adolescents are fascinated by violence shown in films or documentaries, then parents can tell them that violence never rewarded and it affects the real life brutally. If any obscene or vulgar representation is broadcast or webcast, parents or guardian should give their adolescents a proper education and information.

3. Media Literacy

Media literacy is very effective for the proper communication and understanding of media. The adolescents should be educated about the proper use of different types of media. Media literacy will develop the critical analysis and independently comprehend the media. The parents, guardian or academician can inform the adolescents about the ethical and moral aspect of media. Media literacy can motivate the adolescents for the proper understanding and evaluation of media content. The adolescents can appreciate and raise question about the media content. The adolescents can develop critical thinking capabilities and authenticity of media content with the help of media literacy.

I would like to conclude with a suggestion that parents or guardian should give ample time to the adolescents for the holistic development. The parents, guardian or academician should encourage the adolescents to connect with real world with compassion.

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