

PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN – AN ANALYSIS OF FILMS AND TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

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Abstract:

Film is a popular medium when compared to any other medium. The expenditure for the making of the films is more and it tries to attract the larger audience with its technical advancement and the script it delivers. The availability of films in television medium is increasing day by day and many television programmes invite film personalities for their programme that increases the awareness of films and content related to films. Even the participation of film personalities are more in television programmes. This increases the access to television medium as it is easily available in most of the Indian homes and the maintenance of the medium is also less expensive. Children are the active audience of television medium as they are encouraged by the family members to view films and television programmes at home. Most of the family members believe when children are exposed to films and television programmes in a controlled environment they are safe from the negative influence from the society. Children are influenced by television and they develop their behaviour in a positive and negative way based on the choice of selection of the television content. This study focus on the perception and behaviour of children when influenced by the films and television programmes.

Key words: Films, television programmes, perception, behaviour, children.

I. Introduction

Television is an easily available medium at home that brings the events occurring across the globe to home. The content available in television is surplus that focuses on the commercial growth of the television channel. Thus provides many types of content that may not be suitable for all types of audience. Children are the viewers who are influenced by the medium as it is easily available for them. The advent of technology has brought continuous exposure to the television content and other types of medium like film, radio and internet in one television set through the development of smart television. The television screen is also available in various sizes that it gives a feel of viewing visuals like that of theatre. Children do not regularly go to theatres to view films as the new films are often being telecasted in television at home during special occasions or at festival season. Children are more attracted towards the television content and it influences their behaviour in positive and negative way based on various reasons like co-parental viewing, internet usage, having separate television and peer group. The study has selected the children of age group 10 – 15 years as respondents. These children enter into their early adolescent and middle adolescent stage. Their choice of television content differs as they undergo physical changes in this age group. A qualitative study is done through focus group discussion and having personal interviews using simple random sampling method. It is significant to understand whether films and television programmes influence the behaviour of children.

II. Review of Literature

According to Commun (1986), the lonely children who were isolated by their peer group depend upon television viewing for entertainment to get relief from the stress they face in their life and meet their social needs. It was stated in the study that television may isolate the children and used as entertainment and companionship.

Emmers sommer & Allen (1999) found that the target audience for the animated television programmes were the children. Children learnt behaviours and beliefs from these programmes that were satisfactory. Anand (2003) had opined in his study that children who spent less time in viewing television were socially integrated. Robinson & Anderson (2006) in their study had revealed that in earlier days before the advent of television the process of socialization was done by the elders in the family, parents, teachers and relatives. But after the growth of television the scenario has changed. They concluded that television plays a vital role in socialization of children. The also stated that the children believed the visuals shown on television and accepted them as normal if the same information were repeatedly exposed.

According to Bikham et al (2006) the excess exposure of television by children had reduced the time spent by them with their families and friends than the children who spent less time in viewing television. They found that this caused the increase in risk for social isolation, poor relationship with their peers, social isolation that had resulted in anxiety disorder and anti-social behaviour that included aggression and gang involvement.

Various studies were undergone showing the negative impact of television exposure by children. But there were studies undergone to study the positive impact of television on children. Wong (2007) found that television had acted as a story teller for children and had nurtured them the cultural values that were portrayed in its content. According to Weatherholta (2007), the television programmes for children had also used pro – social content that had included moral concepts, fictional characters and the story that had guided them to understand the concept of the programme. Children understood the televised content based on their ability that were previously registered in their minds and developed their imitative behaviour that were found similar in their regular life.

Bryant (2009) had pointed out from the result of the previous studies that most of the mothers were anxious about heavy television exposure by children. These mothers had revealed that the content in television were poor and had produced insufficient number of good programmes for children.

According to Agrawal (2009) found in his study that in India among 400 television channels only 3% of television channels were meant for children. These television channels were also from western countries like Cartoon Network, Pogo, Nick and Disney XD. The content in these television channels contained values of the foreign nations and had shown practices that were not suitable for Indian children.

Su, (2009) had stated in the study that the content in cartoon programmes described the school home life with the moral values suitable for children. It was also mentioned that cartoon programmes usually began as a general series for the age ten or eleven. Young (2012) had stated in the study that according to Cartoon Network New Generations Research (2011), nearly 48% of the parents have controlled their children from exposure to television. As 66% of the parents view these television programmes along with their children these television channels had content to attract the parents and children.

III. Research Methodology

The study has selected the district of Tiruchirappalli in the state of Tamilnadu as the locale of the study as it is the geographical centre of the state. The district has people with mixed culture as it is the only district in the state surrounded by five other districts. According to census 2011 it was also recognised as an economically developing district. The sample chosen for the study is children of age group 10-15 years. The children above 15 were excluded for the study as they have to undergo their board examination and children below 10 years were excluded as many studies were done. According to World Health Organisation (2012) the children of this age group undergoes a developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. This creates interest to study the age group as the respondents for the study. The study focused on qualitative method by simple random sampling. It used focus group discussion and personal interview with unstructured questions to 10 respondents as the sample for the study. As it is a qualitative study the interaction with the children is necessary to find in depth analysis of the behaviour they have adopted as the consequence of the exposure to films and programmes in television. The respondents were briefed about the focus of the study and it was informed to them that the data provided by the respondents will be kept highly confidential. They were also reminded that wherever needed, they could avoid any questions they felt as uncomfortable but giving factual data was more vital for the study to be effective. The main focus of the study is to find the choice of

preference of films and the exposure to programmes in television and the impact on their behaviour. This study tries to understand the choice of content the children prefer to view and their level of understanding of the television content. It is also necessary to analyse the behaviour they adopt through the exposure of television that may be continued till their adulthood.

IV Result of the study

The result of the study revealed that the children of the age group 10-12 years had viewed more cartoon and comedy based television programmes. They said that they used mobile phone to play video games than viewing films and television programmes. These mobile phone devices were restricted by their parents and elders as continuous news about the impact of harmful video games were informed. So the children preferred television medium to view films and programmes as their parents show less restriction when compared to the usage of mobile phones. In most of the families the children were accompanied with their parents to view television programmes and films. The children revealed that as the parents show more interest to view reality shows that involved game shows, they also preferred to view the programmes with their parents.

These respondents found interesting to view programmes based on competitive content that were rewarded for the winners. These children liked comedy shows. They had shown their interest in viewing cartoon films in television. Few respondents revealed that their preference of viewing films was television as majority of the newly released films were telecasted in television. This age group were interested to view action films, comedy and cartoon films in television. They liked to imitate the stunts performed and imitate the dialogue by their favourite hero or heroine. Majority of the children of this age group do not understand the meaning of the dialogue.

The films with children characters and story based on children life were more interesting for them to view as they could relate themselves with the characters. The dress code of their protagonist character portrayed in films was highly imitated by these children. They also revealed that some of their parents also encouraged them to imitate the dialogue of their favourite actor or actress. Some of their parents encouraged to perform the imitation of the actions or dialogue from the films in front of their relatives and friends.

The children of the age group 13-15 years preferred to view reality shows in television that included the participation of film personalities. The girls of this age group liked to view film music programmes and music competition programmes in television. They had shown their interest to view interviews based on film personalities and were more interested to view comedy and romantic films. They also liked to view women centric films with a positive climax. Girls prefer to view television programmes with their parents or elders at home but like to view films with their peer group. But as they were restricted to visit theatres to view films with their friends they spend more time on weekend to view their favourite films in television and try to skip all the household works especially during festival season.

The girls of this age group like to dress up very fashionable and so try to imitate the dress code, accessories, gesture and body language of their favourite actress. They found it very upset that they are often not accompanied by their parents while viewing the programmes or films. The choice of channel selection is restricted as their parents and elders prefer to view more serials. Due to the hormonal development they found unanswered questions due to their physical changes. Their moods started to swing when they face any embarrassing situation in their life. They seek solution from films and television programmes if any related situation occurs. The children of this age group imitated the body image of their favourite actress. They revealed that they were attracted towards the opposite gender and expected the compliment from them.

Boys of the age group 13-15 years liked to view comedy shows and talk shows. They were interested to have separate television in their room and needed privacy. Majority of the boys of this age group liked to view television programmes of their choice. They don't like their parents suggesting their opinion in the decision taken by these boys. They believed that they are good decision makers. They like to bully their siblings and friends. As they wanted to look more smart and handsome in this age they gave more importance to their body fitness. These children did heavy exercise to imitate the body image of their favourite actor. Appreciation by their peer group was the only happiness as they felt it rewarding when they imitated their favourite actors' actions, dialogue, style of walk and fight actions. They often try to imitate the hairstyle and

walk to find themselves very attractive by the opposite gender. Some of the boys revealed that they tried to smoke just to imitate the actions performed by their favourite actors. The boys when exposed to violent and horror content in television during night without the parent as co-viewing with them they felt very unrest and had sleepless night.

V Discussion

Among both the gender of both the age groups 10-12 years and 13-15 years the co-parental viewing of television with these children were guided with the proper understanding of the content. But they revealed that very few parents encouraged and answered their unsolved questions when exposed to the television content or in their real life. Many parents suggested the children to go for study as they themselves felt very embarrassing to the questions raised by these children. Majority of the children do not reveal the behaviour learnt from the television in front of their parents as they don't know whether the parents will like or not. The study suggests media literacy to children by the parents, elders, teachers and relatives. It will provide understanding of the television content and develop positive behaviour of children when exposed to films and programmes in television.

VI Limitation

The study is limited to the district of Tiruchirappalli in the state of Tamilnadu. As it is a qualitative study the number of respondents for the study is limited to 10 to analyse the exposure of television and behaviour of these children.

VII Conclusion

Co-parental viewing and interaction with the children of both the age group will bridge the gap between them and their parents. Television is loaded with content and many programmes and films telecasted in television may not be suitable for the children. Rather than restricting them to view those unsuitable content these children has to be educated about them and guided them to develop the positive behaviour like decision making, sharing of kindness, problem solving and learn to respect the feeling and emotions of others.

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