

Impact of Mass Media on Young Generation

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Abstract: Media influence social components of human personality. It mainly focuses how human feelings and emotions can be altered or changed. This paper examines the impact of mass media on young generation. The study was conducted in three colonies of Faisalabad City with a random sample of 150 respondents. It was concluded that mass media, especially the electronic media and Internet are making young generation irreligious, aggressive and materialistic. Media promote fashion phobia and vulgarity. The study findings also demonstrate that media increased awareness about political, social and environmental issues. It contributed in business promotion and in improving standard of living.

Key Words: Mass Media, Young Generation Attitude, Fashion Phobia, Aggressiveness, Awareness

Introduction

Information is essential input for decision-making while media is an important source of such information. Media are of many forms of communication, which comprised of print media, electronic media and information technology. Print media includes newspapers, magazines, billboards, pamphlets, leaflets etc. and electronic media includes radio, television, cable network, audio cassettes, video cassettes, video games and the like whereas information technology includes computers, internet and various other magnetic data storage devices. All media have a common ability to provide information and make communication possible over larger distance. The media saturate, drench and overflow our lives: an endless torrent of words, images, sounds (Gittin, 2002). It is the media, which connect people with machines and in turn create awareness in the society. Radio and television played a vital role in creating awareness (Mahmood, 2000).

Mass media have pervasive influence and regarded as powerful agent of social change in the society. In the present digital age, societies are highly dependent on mass communication. Urbanization, industrialization and modernization have created the societal conditions for the development of mass communication. It performs the essential functions of society and reflects social structure, functions and social values of a society. Media act as both causes and effects or in the language of social theory are both dependent and independent variables. The personality of an individual makes up of his genetic and social inheritance and mass media have greater influence on the latter component of human personality. Both media and social scientists deal with human beings whose thinking, feeling and behavior keep on changing according to changing political, social, economic and physical environment and off course depends on the mood, which is eternal to mankind. It is the media through which thoughts of human minds are transferred to other human beings. The importance of media and communication can be judged from the fact that human relations can not be promoted without these. Humans are more concerned about their feelings and emotions and how these feelings and emotions can

be altered or changed (Kiai, 1998). Now media is being used as tool and technique to do all these. Mass media activate and reinforce latent attitude and contribute significantly in the formation of new attitude (Gittin 1998). It brings the world into our homes and ultimately into our minds. In every day of life we are dependent upon mass media to know what is happening or going to happen in our physical, social, economic and political environment. The commutative impact of both material and non-material cultures on human minds is shaped by mass media. Media today are occasions, for and conduits of a way of life identified with rationality, technological achievements and the quest for wealth but also for something else entirely, something we call "fun," "convenience," or "pleasure." (Gittin, 2002). It is the instrument of social control and social change and mostly target young generation.

The element of fiction, crime and yellow journalism in print media create environment for a particular style of writing and aim to leave a particular impact on young and adults or to safeguard the interest of particular personality, political or ethnic group. The element of bias reporting develops wrong traditions and promotes many social ills. Media reporting of facts revealed that some facts are selected and interpreted for a particular purpose perhaps to protect particular interest, to sensationalize scandalous aspects or to promote a particular thinking in favour or against a particular group, sect or society. Reporting of sectarian clashes in Pakistani media leaves adverse and harmful impact on the community (Shamsuddin, 2000). Action movies have been shown on television and viewed on computer or access through Internet develop the element of domination and gradually promote aggressiveness. Young people watch violence on media that left unpunished casting adverse impact on their cognition. The excessive view of violence on television program promotes the aggressiveness among children and may appears in the form of hitting other children, screaming at them, threatening them or intentionally destroying their toys (Mattersteig and Vetter, 1999 and Johnson, 1999). Such kind of people become less sensitive to violence around them and pay no heed to the pain and sufferings of others in society.

Materials and Methods

This micro-level study was conducted to ascertain what impact the media is leaving on our society. The data was collected through audience response on pre-designed structured and unstructured questionnaire during field survey. A random sample of 150 respondents was drawn from three colonies of Faisalabad namely Gulistan Colony, Samanabad and University of Agriculture Colony with proportionate size of 60, 40, and 50 respectively.

Findings of the Study: The information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents is of vital importance, which help to categorize the sample on the basis of educational attainments, income, profession etc. and also aid in the understanding of emerging trends. The study reported that majority of the respondents were young and fell in the age category of 15-25 years while 28% were in the last stage of their working ages and only one fifth of the total respondents were from middle age group of 26-45 years (Table 1). The mean age of the respondents was calculated as 31.8 years. The sex distribution revealed that 52% were males and 48% females. The data on the residential background and family type show that 67% were from rural background and 61% belonged to nuclear families. This indicates that most of the people living in the industrial city of Faisalabad shifted from rural areas and started living as nuclear families in the city area. They identified themselves with rural areas, as their roots are still there where their parents and other relatives are living. The majority (39%) of the respondents was graduate and little less than this i.e. 35% were post-graduates. The presence of University of Agriculture and network of public and private educational institutions are the major reason for this high literacy in the study sample. As regards occupation, 50% of the respondents were students 11% were government servants and 17% identified themselves as professionals which includes doctors, engineers, professors and 22% were running business. During survey, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the impact of mass media on the young generation. Different opinion statements were used to get the responses and measured on Likert scale with categories of strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree. All the respondents were educated and the researcher comfortably obtained the responses in the appropriate category. When asked about the impact of mass media on the religiosity of the respondents, 17% strongly agreed and 57% agreed that media is making young generation irreligious while just 16% disagreed to this (Table 2). As regards the impact on attitude and behavior, 61% strongly agreed that violence in programs and shows promote the element of aggressiveness among young generation while just 2% showed their disagreement. Forty seven percent were of the opinion that media is increasing fashion phobia, 47% said people are becoming materialistic, 43% agreed that mass media contributed in increasing crimes and almost same percentage agreed that media contributed in prevailing vulgarity among the young generation. These were some of the adverse impacts that mass media cast on young generation. The study findings also revealed that 21% and 57% respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the opinion statement that media is responsible for improving living standard respectively. Similarly 47% showed strong agreement while 37% simply agreed that media is turning this world into global village.

Table 3 deals with the beneficial aspects of mass media and responses were recorded in the response categories; to a great extent, to some extent and not at all. The respondents were asked to indicate up to what extent mass media serve as a source of increasing political awareness, 39% and 48% respondents agreed to great extent and some extent respectively while 13% said that media is not doing this at all. One another statement regarding awareness about social problems, 45% of the respondents agreed to great extent 45% to some extent that media is increasing awareness about social problems. The media contribution in increasing awareness about international affairs in the community has also been explored where majority (43%) showed their agreement to great extent and 44% to some extent in this regard. Similarly 52% respondent in the second category of response that media is increasing awareness about environmental issues. It is strange that media role in promoting awareness about health issues could not be proved. About 85% acknowledged that media promote business with split of 40 and 45% in the first and second category of response while just 8% showed their complete disagreement. Another important response recorded by the study was that 58% identified media responsible for spreading religious education up to some extent while about half (30%) responded in the category of not at all.

Results and Discussion

Majority of the respondents were young belonged to the age category of 15-25 years with mean age as 31.8 years. In case of educational attainments, 39% and 35% were graduates and post-graduates respectively. The mean years of schooling was 14.17. Sixty one percent of the respondents were from nuclear families. One half of the total respondents belonged to student category while from the other half 11% and 17% were Government servant and professions such as doctors, engineers and professors. From the total sample 37% of the respondents reported household monthly income as Rs. 10,000-20,000, 26% as less than Rs. 10,000 while 21% had monthly income of Rs. 20,001 to 30,000. The role of mass media in globalization has been confirmed by 77% of the respondents. The media role in increasing awareness about different social issues has been greatly acknowledged during the survey. In this regard, a significant majority of 87%, 90% reported that media is responsible in increasing awareness about political issues and environmental issues. An absolute majority of 92% and 97% confirmed that mass media is increasing awareness about international affairs and aid in the promotion of business respectively.

Forty one percent of the respondents maintained cable connection at their homes. Majority of the respondent i.e. 61% and 47% strongly agreed that mass media is increasing fashion phobia and turning this world into global village. The majority of the respondents i.e. 76%, 74% and 83% agreed with the view that mass media is making young generation irreligious, aggressiveness and materialistic. Similarly an absolute majority of 94% agreed that media promote fashion phobia in young generation and 77% agreed to the view that it is responsible in prevailing vulgarity in the society.

Iqbal Zafar et al.,: Impact of Mass Media on Young Generation

Majority of the respondent reported their household income as Rs.10,001 to 20,000 per Month while little more than half of this had monthly income of Rs.20,001 to 30,000.

The income level indicates that respondents were from well to do families and can afford all sorts of mass media i.e. newspapers, television, cable computer, Internet etc. This supports that selection of sample was appropriate because the impact of media can be measured from those who afford variety, of media. Forty one percent maintained Internet connection at their homes. Majority of the respondents (25%) confirmed computer as their favorite media and 24% identified themselves with television whereas 21% liked all media. Eighty one percent of the respondents viewed movies, out of which 39% watched movies sometimes and 33% occasionally. Majority of the respondents (39%) liked movies with suspense, romance, action and fiction. In the individual category 15.3% and 16% liked to entertain with movies based on action and romance respectively while just 9% liked to see documentaries.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Percentage (No)
Age (years)	
15-25	52.0 (78)
26-45	20.0 (30)
Above 45	28.0 (42)
Mean age	13.81
Sex	
Male	48.0 (72)
Female	52.0 (78)
Education (level)	
Matric	12.7 (19)
Intermediate	13.3 (20)
Graduation	39.3 (59)
Post-graduation	34.7 (52)
Mean years of schooling	14.17
Residential background	
Rural	67.3 (101)
Urban	32.7 (49)
Family type	
Nuclear	60.7 (91)
Joint	39.3 (59)
Occupation	
Student	50.0 (75)
Professionals	17.3 (26)
Govt. servants	10.7 (16)
Business	22.0 (33)
Income (Rs./month)	
Less than Rs.10,000	26.0 (39)
10,001 – 20,000	37.3 (56)
20,001 – 30,000	20.7 (31)
Above 30,000	16.0 (24)
Cable Connection	
Yes	41.3 (62)
No	58.7 (88)
Favourite Media	
Newspaper	20.0 (30)
Television	24.0 (36)
Cable	09.3 (14)
Computer	25.3 (38)
All media	21.3 (32)
Watching movies	
Frequently	9.3 (14)
Sometimes	38.7 (58)
Occasionally	33.3 (50)
Never	18.7 (28)
Type of movies	
Documentary	9.3 (14)
Adventure	12.7 (19)
Romantic	16.0 (24)
Action	15.3 (23)
Comedy	08.0 (12)
Suspense/romantic/action/ Science fiction	38.7 (58)

Table 2: Showing Opinion of Respondents Regarding the Impact of Mass Media on Young Generation

Aspects	Strongly % (No)	Agreed % (No)	Undecided % (No)	Disagreed % (No)	Strongly Disagreed % (No)	Total % (No)
Making young generation Irreligious	31.3 (47)	44.7 (67)	7.3 (11)	11.3 (17)	5.3 (08)	100 (150)
Promote aggressiveness	16.7 (25)	57.3 (86)	7.3 (11)	16.0 (24)	2.7 (04)	100 (150)
Increasing fashion phobia	60.7 (91)	35.3 (53)	1.3 (02)	2.0 (03)	0.7 (01)	100 (150)
Making People materialistic	35.5 (53)	47.3 (71)	8.7 (13)	6.7 (10)	2.0 (03)	100 (150)
Linked with increasing crimes	24.0 (36)	43.3 (65)	13.3 (20)	16.7 (25)	2.7 (04)	100 (150)
In Prevailing vulgarity	32.0 (48)	44.7 (67)	14.7 (22)	6.7 (10)	2.0 (03)	100 (150)
Improving living standard	20.7 (31)	56.7 (85)	8.7 (13)	11.3 (17)	2.7 (04)	100 (150)
Turing world into global village	47.3 (71)	36.7 (55)	12.7 (19)	2.0 (03)	1.3 (03)	100 (150)

Table 3: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Beneficial Aspect of Mass Media

Opinion Statements	To Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not at all	Total
Source of increasing political awareness	39.3 (59)	48.0 (72)	12.7 (19)	100 (150)
Awareness about social problems	44.7 (67)	47.3 (71)	8.0 (12)	100 (150)
Awareness human rights	39.3 (59)	48.0 (72)	12.7 (19)	100 (150)
Awareness about international affairs	52.7 (79)	44.0 (66)	3.3 (05)	100 (150)
Awareness about environmental issues	38.0 (57)	52.0 (78)	10.0 (15)	100 (150)
Awareness about health issues	38.7 (58)	53.3 (80)	8.0 (12)	100 (150)
Aids in business promotion	40.0 (60)	45.3 (68)	14.7 (22)	100 (150)
Spreading religious education	12.0 (18)	58.0 (87)	30.0 (45)	100 (150)

Being an Islamic country, Pakistan allows media to work within the specified boundaries of social norms. Religious parties keep an eye on the media to keep it on the right track and prevent vulgarity and nudity. But the revolution of information technology and its high rate of diffusion restricted the authority of both Government and religious leaders. The Internet and magnetic data storage devices allow easy and safe access to all sort of social ills through Internet café and home connections. Cable connections are available with small payment of Rs. 150/- to 300/- per month depending on the circumstances. Various TV channels ranging from Star-plus, ARY Digital, Star Movies, Movie Magic, V-channel, MTV, HBO, LBC, Star World and dozens other are working day and night to promote special type of culture. Television promotes consumerism, migration and desire for urban goods and entirely changes the social landscape of village life. Further the element of arrogance and lack of respect for elders are the other negative impact of this electronic media. No doubt media provide an easy access to different sources of knowledge and aid to research and development but low level of literacy limits the users' abilities to acquire knowledge oriented benefits. The means of outdoor entertainment are almost scarce and electronic media and internet technology were the only available means of entertainment. A significant majority turned towards these and yields negative utility from mass media especially from information technology and ignores long term beneficial aspect of positive utility. In the modern information age, societies are in a continuous process of social change, which is a central concern of social scientists and especially the sociologists. The traditional societies are under the severe threat of media war. Nations can not deploy any sort of army to keep the enemy media out of their frontiers. Media is travelling at a very fast speed from west to east or from developed to developing countries or from non-Muslim to Muslim societies. The impact can be easily observed in Pakistani society where the cable network

and Internet cafés and number of users are multiplying arithmetically.

Children lack the abilities to make accurate judgement of the benefits and harms of the information being fed to them and hence consciously or unconsciously accept it as a truth of life. They gradually develop a particular attitude and behavior. This not only influences the social aspect of individual personality but also influence other members of peer group. Mass media influence human behavior and attitude in childhood and adulthood and also play crucial role at the policy as well as decision making level. There is a need to take immediate steps to minimize adverse impact of mass media on young generation, especially from Internet. Parents are required to keep an eye on their children while working on internet through home connections and Government is required to morally bound internet café owners to restrict users access to those websites which promote vulgarity in the society. A further study may be conducted to explore the effect of Internet café on young generation.

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