

**MEDIA PARTICIPATION:
COMPARISON OF TWO DEVELOPING VILLAGES**

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Low participation media seem to command themselves more to the swifter, widespread and latest communication of information to individuals.(1) These media are newspapers, radio, books and magazines, whereas time period is maximum in radio and television, the space-organized media involving the eye being more appropriate to study and reflective purposes. Books give the most permanence. However, the television and motion pictures elicit a high degree of recall.

Motion pictures and television are a direct way to reach the public. In Pakistan, television has been introduced within the last three decades. In some places even later than this. A new generation is in the process of growing up or has become adults who are exposed to television. The effects of television cannot be easily assessed, as this same generation of children has been exposed to other modern influences also, which have provided them with new information. Population has grown rapidly and resulted in crowding of houses and schools; there is rapid expansion of suburban living and income; and living standards are rising in today's world. As such, since many social conditions have changed, comparison of different generations alone cannot bring out the effects of television. However, this study was carried out to compare the outcome of media participation in two villages of Sindh, the more modernizing village - Allah Bachayo Shoro, having the facility of television while the lesser devel-

oped village - Village Karni having no such facility.

The introduction of electricity, has changed the life style of the villagers. Electricity has not only brought the bulb and the tube-light in the homes, which has extended the waking hours of villagers but has made the installation of tube-wells possible. It was the installation of tube-wells which ensured adequate water for the production of cash crops, which in turn led to increased production and a raised socio-economic life-style of the village. Electricity also made the introduction of television to the village possible.

This medium of information which simultaneously feeds the eye and the ears, exposed the residents to the outside world while they are sitting in their own homes. They were not only exposed to different cultures, but different ideas, norms, values and behaviour also. Through television the resident learnt how to role-play and empathise with modernizing roles. The residents have been exposed to many new ideas and practices. For example, nearly all the children have been vaccinated and the residents are well-aware of the importance of vaccination. The idea of Democracy had gained wide-spread acceptance in Shoro.

The majority of the villagers agreed that the level of knowledge of the villagers has increased considerably with regard to the modernizing life-style. Due to television most of them are attracted to new fashions, new hair styles, jewellery, cosmetics as well as modern household articles. These things are fast becoming the vogue in the village. However, most of the older people disapprove

of a number of these new-fangled nonsense, especially the use of cosmetics. There is one thing noticeable and even marked by the elder villagers i.e. that the age-old customs and traditions of the village have been very slowly but surely devoured by the process of modernisation brought about by the explosion of information as well as entertainment product and services.

The behaviour of children was interesting. Answers were given swiftly and confidently. They looked at the questioner frankly in the face exhibiting no signs of awkwardness or shyness. All the children are avid watchers of television. The seven-eight house-hold which had television sets at the time of data collection usually had a large number of children, grouped around the sets in the evening. When a programme of special interest was on, the room usually was crowded with children. Children could move easily into other house-holds, and interaction among them as a group continued for the larger part of the day.

Entertainment programmes and news on television are most popular, although a number of informative programmes are shown on television, but the adult residents show little interest in them. They claim that such programmes usually are out of their frame of reference and difficult to understand. Children, however, watch most types of programmes with interest.

The hotels/tea shops provides a place for the airing of views, discussion and reinforcement of ideas. They are places where villagers of different socio-economic levels gather at all hours. In this way they come

into contact with a greater number of people. The video-cassette recorder is also popular in the village. It has helped to increase the business of the hotels/tea. The hotel owner charges a very low admission fee for the films he shows. He makes money out of it because he shows to a large crowd. Moreover, he increases his own hotel business by selling more food and drink to customers who come to watch films. It is a novel way of increasing business and very popular all over Sindh.

Television sets are not found in all households in village Shoro. Few villagers can afford their high cost. Furthermore, television like the newspapers, also cater more for the literating urban population. Entertainment and news take up most of the telecasting time. However, there are even then, quite a number of educational and development programmes. The morning transmission is oriented towards development and stresses the educational aspect. In the future, educational channels could become a powerful instrument of education and citizenship training.

Children of Shoro are well exposed to television. Television is a vastly important element in the lives of children, because it is the single form of lesiure-time activity on which the most amount of time is spent. In the United States Children's viewing hours are on an average of three hours a day at ages twelve to fourteen. One study showed that a large portion of time was spent on programmes meant primarily for adults. In Pakistan, no such scientifically measured statistics for villages are available, but the researcher observed that television seemed to be on nearly all of the telecasting hours in hotels where the

menfolk eat, drink and pass their leisure time and meet to exchange pleasantries. How much attention is given to different kinds of programmes could not be ascertained here. In the homes also television is on for long hours and there is the tendency for group viewing by most of the neighbourhood children. How much attention is really paid needs further research but children seemed to give rapt attention to those programmes that interested them.

Although the above mentioned study did not concentrate on children alone, however, it was observed that in Shoro the children keenly watch programmes which are for entertainment,⁽³⁾ but a large portion of these are telecast mainly for adults. The viewing of programmes meant specifically for educational purposes is limited, nevertheless, children and even adults are educated in an indirect way, through entertainment. They witness how people behave in different situations and if the situation presents itself then they may act similarly. Although a number of studies have been carried out to observe the effects of some types of programmes, but it is difficult generally to evaluate the cumulative effect of television programmes on children in different social-settings and observe the change in their attitudes and views. What has been observed, however, is that television does provide children with models for action which they can imitate if a similar situation arises. People learnt potential behaviour from television. They learnt through viewing how to behave when faced with a similar situation.

Television, as other forms of dramatics, serves to interpret reality. This is specially true in the case of chil-

dren who through television see and understand different life experiences. It serves as a source whereby information is taken in, interpreted in their own field of experience so as to prepare them for future roles.

Klapper citing Holoday and Stoddard say: (4) "Most children and many adults tend to accept unquestioningly all presumably factual information in films. Even inaccurate statements or pictures are apparently accepted as the truth". Whether this blind trust in screen material is of any greater amount than that inspired by other material, needs further research.

Klapper cites Bhimer that on the basis of personal reports, commercial films exercise a peculiarly deep emotional possession over children. The children imaginatively enter into the pictured world and have an unquestioning trust. Klapper says that Charters believes: "All of these factors and probably others produce a condition that is favourable to certain types of learning. This is the quality of authority".(5)

Television has brought about a great deal of change in the lives of children.(6) At the time when television was introduced there were great hopes and fears about it. The advantages were seen specially in the field of education. Television presented the opportunity to learn about different cultures and science in such a fascinating way that learning became a pleasure instead of labour. The fear arose in many minds that television might corrupt by showing too much crime and violence.

Many research findings suggest that viewing ag-

gressive programmes serves to arouse aggressive impulses to some degree. Studies, such as those undertaken by Randura and Ross, suggest several things. Firstly that seeing aggressive episodes on television serves to arouse aggressive feelings in the viewer. If a viewer already has some aggressive feelings, the seeing of episodes in which fighting occurred did not "discharge the viewers" aggressive feelings rather a study of his subsequent behaviours proved the opposite. Secondly, children learnt potential behaviour to some extent. The important thing, however, is that what a child learns from television and his subsequent behaviour depends on other factors to a large extent, apart from television. The main factors are the attitudes and beliefs of the groups he belongs to the primary groups of his home, school and peer groups. The effectiveness with which he has been taught the group norms also plays a major role.

Although these studies have provided a lot of information but the important point is that the child is not a passive recipient of information from television, (7) nor does television act upon a passive child, rather he selects that material from television which is according to his needs and interests. Choice of programme is influenced by education level and taste of parents and peer group. A child's intelligence is not only affected by television but it is also his level of intelligence, which influences what he chooses to watch and how much of it he watches.

In addition, different children pay attention to, or are attracted by different aspects and elements of the same programme. Furthermore, there may be difference

in perception according to the educational background. Not only that, the retention may be of different aspects and details of the same programme. Thus influence of television on each child may be termed as unique.

This does not mean that some meaningful, information cannot be gathered by studying the effects of television. Some studies carried out in different countries which serve as a basis for research have pointed out to some fairly consistent effects. They have shown that the attitudes and beliefs can be affected to quite an extent by what is seen on television.

Studies show that television can create desire for more detailed information on a particular subject. A number of documented instances have proved that the presentation of a classic story of play on television stimulated interest in reading the original and that libraries reported the sudden increased demand for a book.

Movie watching is common in Allah Bachayo Shoro. The men and the youth visit the city regularly to watch films at the cinema house or watch films at the hotels/tea shops. Often a video cassette recorder is hired from the city to watch films at home, these films are generally in Urdu or Sindhi. Action-packed English movies are also popular among the youth. The women-folk are also avid movie-watchers that is those who can afford the luxury of seeing films at home.

Apart from some notable exception, films continue to remain aloof and remote from social realities. They are mainly produced for the box office and stress

heavily on emotionalism. As Dube put it that a few progressive slogans and pious sermons thrown in with a lot of irrelevant absurdities do not leave an indepth message.

Media use increases with education and economic status and the amount of education correlates with what a person chooses to read or listen to. Older, better educated people tend to choose more "serious material". Media use tends to increase from childhood to middle age, with the exception of motion picture attendance which decreases.

This study concludes that Shoro is more media participant than Karni. The residents of Shoro have more money to spend on media consumption. Not only that, they have developed the attitudes which led them to seek information and entertainment. Furthermore not only more and more of the residents are becoming participants of the media but there is evidence of group viewing of television and group discussion in the tea shops and at the Otaks of private houses. Nevertheless in Karni also it is seen that newspapers are read-out to the people. In Karni there is group discussion between the school master and his friends and between the young intermediaries. Radio listening is popular and film watching evident among the men. However, on the whole there is lesser media participation and discussion of news or new ideas in Karni than in Shoro. In Karni not only is mass media scarce but there is also scarcity of the facilities that make it possible for persons to talk to any, except those close around them.

REFERENCES

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4. Klapper, "Comparative", p.102.
5. Maccoby, pp.72-80.