

Analytical Study on the Portrayal of Children in Malayalam Reality Show

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Abstract: Mass media have a great role in the process of socialization. Mass media could convey messages in to the mind of people in early child hood itself. Mass media could influence people positively and negatively. Children are largely attracted to mass media such as Television, Computer, Internet, Smart Phones etc. These media could educate the child as well. How this media connect to the child is very much important. Children are very much interested about everything. So that the content produced by the media is very much important in the socialization process of a child. Especially the programs which are mainly targeted children. Children will definitely be a consumer of programs which children have a prime focus or the parents will insist to watch these programs. The children oriented programs should focuses on children more than parents or adults. Children oriented programs used children as a tool to make others laugh. This study intends to check this media attitude. How children are being treated by the media and how they are being portrayed in Malayalam Reality shows.

Keywords: Mass media, Portrayal of Children in Malayalam Reality Show.

1. INTRODUCTION

Television has a great impact on children in building basic personality structure because they are spending lot of time before T.V. T.V appears to compete with the traditional agencies of socialization such as family, school and religious organizations. The chief socializing agency is, of course, the family which is supported by the school and the religious community. Parents who are charged with the responsibility of socializing the young are naturally concerned with the impact TV may have on their wards.

Parents would want their children to follow the norms, values and beliefs of the society and not to be influenced by ideas or ideals that go contrary to their values. Thus along with parents' concern over their children there is a social concern as for the impact of TV on culture. There are people who express the fear that TV will undermine the culture of India.

Society has given prime most importance in the socialization of children. Even in the Tele Vision society have a notion that what should be watched by children. Every program can influence a child easily. Visuals can easily influence a mind. But the actual fact is that the Tele Vision Programs for the children is not actually targeted the children but the parents. Children became used as a tool to make laugh the adults. This is the context in which the present study has been undertaken.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Media has a great role in the socialization process of every human being. Media influence people knowingly or unknowingly. It's obvious that it has the power to influence people positively and negatively. Children in their early stages itself get addicted to media. So that the content in media will definitely influence children, especially the contents in the children oriented programs. This study intends to check how they are being portrayed in the visual media.

In the book “**Teaching Methodology and child development**”, V.K Nanda explains how children construct attitudes, Ideologies, believes themselves and the factors which influence in the construction. He quoted the words of the Greek philosopher, Epictetus “People are disturbed not by things but by their view of things” he also quoted William

Shakespeare “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” and explains that the import of these famous statements is that personal control derives from the way an individual construes what’s been seen, heard, or felt. V.K Nanda says that the things which has been seen, heard and felt will influence people. Visuals have a larger effect on children more than elders because it is the stage where they constructing fresh ideas and attitudes. They don’t think twice or critically evaluate the scene, they believe the things which are being portrayed in front of them. Silly things can also make strong influence on children. Visuals are most powerful media and these visuals will effects the mind knowingly or unknowingly, The visuals which is not preferred by an individual will also influence him. So that the contents and visuals are being presented in television has foremost important. “Kuttypattalam” Children’s reality show became relevant in this context. Every program has an effect on children; a program which is mainly targeted on children has got more prominence in the construction of attitudes, ideas and beliefs.

(V.K Nanda,(1998) Teaching Methodology and Child development, Anmol Publications. ISBN 81-7488-833-0)

The resulting report and a follow-up report in 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health identified these major effects of seeing violence on television:

- Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others.
- Children may be more fearful of the world around them.
- Children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

This study on children proves that the contents and visuals will definitely influence the attitude of children.

Research by psychologists L. Rowell Huesmann, Leonard Eron and others starting in the 1980s found that children who watched many hours of violence on television when they were in elementary school tended to show higher levels of aggressive behavior when they became teenagers. By observing these participants into adulthood, Huesmann and Eron found that the ones who'd watched a lot of TV violence when they were 8 years old was more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for criminal acts as adults. Interestingly being aggressive as a child did not predict watching more violent TV as a teenager, suggesting that TV watching could be a cause rather than a consequence of aggressive behavior. However, later research by psychologists Douglas Gentile and Brad Bushman, among others, suggested that exposure to media violence is just one of several factors that can contribute to aggressive behavior.

Other research has found that exposure to media violence can desensitize people to violence in the real world and that, for some people, watching violence in the media becomes enjoyable and does not result in the anxious arousal that would be expected from seeing such imagery. (American Psychological Association, Violence in the media- Psychologists study TV and Video Game for potential harmful effects (Article).

The effects of media on the developing infant and child are ubiquitous. Early media experiences can improve the well being of children, preparing them for school entry and academic and social success. Or media can undermine successful developmental out comes, resulting in aggressive behavior, consumerism, and perhaps even attentional problems. There are huge gaps in the literature about the newer interactive media, and about infancy and media effects, particularly how early media use affects reading skills, yet the implication for children’s healthy development are quite clear. Early media experiences can set developmental trajectories into motion, affecting the kinds of people our children will be, both now and in the future, as well as the kind of society we are creating for generations yet to come.

(Kathleen McCartney and Deborah Philips (2006), Blackwell hand book of early childhood development)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is an endeavor to find the way children are being portrayed in programs especially children’s programs. Children are being used as a tool to laugh or entertain adults. This research tries to find out this type of portrayal of children in media. For this purpose the show “kuttypattalam” has taken to find out the facts. “Kuttypattalam” is a highly rated Malayalam reality show which broadcast in Surya TV (Sun Networks). In this show children are being interviewed by the anchor Subi Suresh (Cinema and TV artist). Research also deals with the way the program affects children.

In order to develop a sound theoretical framework for this research, a review of literature was undertaken. It revealed that not much work has been done in the field of portrayal of children in media in India. Therefore, this study tried to include and extend the important parameters taken up by foreign researchers. An effort has been made to include issues that are

important in Indian Media Scenario and to Indian Society. How a TV program important in the process of socialization is an important concern of the study. So that the psychology of children and the way psychology related to media has also been incorporated in literature review and in other process.

The universal attitude of media on children also depicted in this study. The scope of the media in the process of socialization has also incorporated in this study. Indian portrayal of children in media and the effects of media on children are also depicted. This study attempts to understand how the family environment quality is a mediating factor between TV and its impact on children.

Hypotheses of the study:

Hypothesis of the study is that the portrayal of children as a laughing stock to entertain adults. It is notice that children are being used as an instrument to make others laugh. This study attempts to check whether it is right or wrong. To check this, a well known reality show from the Malayalam channel “Kuttyattalam” has taken.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Children’s program does not target children as their target audience. They consider children as a tool to make adults laugh. It also describes about the way they are portrayed. The program itself describes that it’s a children’s program for adults (episode1). Children are guests in the show and their duty is to answer the questions of the host. In this show children used as a tool to make others laugh.

“Kuttyattalam” reality show only focuses the funny element. They used the innocence and cuteness to produce comedy. The content and the presentation of children are in a stereotypical manner. Children are portrayed as comedian and their all comments taken as jokes. The questions by the anchor Subi Suresh are intended only to make others laugh. Certain questions are not suitable for children. Adult jokes also incorporated with the children’s show. The answers of the children are misleading by the anchor. Anchor tried to enhance the stereotypical attitude to make others laugh.

5. CONCLUSION

Children program uses children as a tool to entertain adults. “Kuttyattalam” show is an example for this argument. Children will easily get influenced negatively by the program.

Audiences actively construct meaning from media texts. Each member of an audience brings his own interpretive tools to the decoding situation. These tools are provided by his cognitive structure the foundation of which is laid in early childhood. A child interacting with its environment assimilates whatever is necessary to its survival. This assimilation is done in a structured way and it generates forms which controls further assimilation. A program really influences a child directly and indirectly. In “Kuttyattalam”, children are the primary guests but they treated as secondary guests and the actual audience got more prominence. Children portrayed as a laughing stock. The anchor asks questions which only satisfy the need of adults. Children may be answering in the right track but the anchor deviates from the answer to get the answer which she desires. These types of attitudes can easily influence them. They will take these attitudes to their daily life unknowingly. We all socialized from what we see, what we studied and from what we experienced. In this reality show the way the children are being portrayed is wrong and the children who participated in this show and the children who watching this show will adapt the negative attitudes.

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