



IMPACT OF INDIAN TELEVISION SERIALS ON WORKING WOMEN: A STUDY OF COMMON PROTOTYPES

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ABSTRACT

Television in India has proven a most influential, infotainment medium powerful and popular among its audience. Television plays a prime role, in the telecasting of entertainment programs. Sixty percent of the television slot is filled with entertainment programs such as serials, reality television, and comedy shows. Among these programs, television serials are the major entertainment program, occupying 20% of the schedule. In comparison to other television entertainment programs, teleserials have the highest TRP rate, pushing other programs aside. Modern television serials showcase women prototypes as a common element in their content. This may create a wrong perception towards real women. Since they are popular, woman prototypes are a matter of interest in this study. In this regard, the researcher is looking to analyse woman prototypes. Hence, a survey was carried out to know the impact among working women who reside in Bangalore City. Also, to examine the content of the television serial, the case study method was used by the researcher. The scope of this study is to evaluate the portrayal of women and its impact on society. The status of Indian women is changing gradually, and these television serial prototypes are impacting women somewhere in the world.

KEYWORDS : Television, Serials, Women, Prototypes

Introduction:

"Television! Teacher, Mother, Secret Lover"

-Homer Simpson, the Simpsons
In the modern era, television has played multiple roles in society. It plays the role of a teacher who gives an education, a parent who will be with us every moment to guide us and a special guru to its viewers. Indeed, television acts as an agent that transforms culture and tradition from one generation to another. It builds bonds in our relationship, with it and acts as a friend in loneliness, a device of empowerment, and a tool of learning. The history of television dates back more than four decades. The first transmission of television in the world was observed in 1928. It was brought into India in 1959. Television had been introduced here in India to spread social, educational programs among its viewers. In August of 1965, entertainment and information broadcasting was introduced on the television screen in addition to educational programmes. With this, television broadcasting service was expanded in the country, and also, many television broadcasting centres started operating from different parts of the country. During this phase, there was only one channel that was telecast for the entire nation, i.e., Doordarshan. Television broadcasting in India was under the control of the government, and only a small number of people could afford television set to access programs on Doordarshan. In 1975, television broadcasting became an independent division of the ministry of information and broadcasting, which raised the hopes of viewers for the services to be offered by Doordarshan. In the middle of 1980, another channel started functioning under the banner of Doordarshan, i.e., DD Metro. This channel was designed to broadcast entertainment programs. Later, the invention of satellite technology transformed television broadcasting. Private players entered the Indian television world with a multiple channel option offering various programs in entertainment and other genres to Indian audiences.

The Indian television industry is in an attractive growth phase. The sector, which had only five channels in 1991, has 612 TV channels today on the air, including 300 news channels; 138 million households in India have television sets, and the country has the third-largest TV market in the world. The TV broadcasting industry is dominated by Hindi and regional general entertainment channels (GECs), which collectively account for 52% of the total viewership.

The current market size of the Indian television industry is estimated to be around INR 20000 crores, where 8000 crores are from the advertisement market and 12000 crores are from encrypted or paid

channels (Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) report). The total Indian viewership market is 112 million, Cable and satellite viewership is 78 million, terrestrial or regional viewership is around 30 million, direct to home (DTH) service is around 4 million, and the IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) and mobile platforms have minimal viewership as of now (PWC) report-2008).

According to the survey done by Deloitte and ASSOCHAM, China ranks first in television viewership as its main source of entertainment and information media with 94% of respondents stating they watched television on a day to day basis; the United States stood second and India third with 92% viewership. The Indian television sector has grown by 12% per annum (2007-2010) (Deloitte (ASSOCHAM) M&E in India). For the next five year period, the cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) is estimated to be approximately 18%(PWC)report-2008).

According to the SWOT analysis, the media and entertainment sector is booming in India due to its reach. The television industry is based on its audience. The growth of middle-class incomes has become the strength of the media and entertainment industry in the present day. Accordingly, the changing pattern of Indian audiences and their lifestyle and expenditure has altered the entertainment industry. The online viewership of television channels is increasing by the day, which, in turn, is complementing the growth of television and the entertainment sector in the country.

The journey of the soap opera began in radio, where sequels were produced and broadcast to entertain an audience in the daytime. The emotional context of these serials attracted a mostly female audience to a large extent. The first teleserial appeared on a television screen in 1980. Social development issues and religious epics were the subjects of these serials in the beginning era. They achieved phenomenal success on the small screen. In fact, by 1987, over 40 serials had been produced; so that an average of two serials were being shown on the small screen during primetime. However, today, Indian soaps are filling maximum plots on the television screen. This encourages viewers to watch episodes regularly without missing a single one. Indian viewers, especially in rural areas and also urban women, are keen to watch this genre that is rolled out every day. However, today's serial narration revolves around vast spectrums of life, such as families, complicated relationships, murder, hatred, jealousy, the patriarchy system, historical issues, middle-class aspirations, dreams, and, as usual, the continuous climate of saas-bahu sagas.

A television serial adopts a domestic tone and form while depicting Indian women. The representation of women in the media has always been exploited. They are presented as objects to grab the attention of viewers. Women on small screens are made to look alluring and appealing and are depicted either as hallmarked and ideal, totally subordinate to their husbands, busy with house chores, goddesses of sacrifices, being showered with traditional values and attributes, or villain who presents herself as modern, independent, and free to think, but with a jealous feel, and revenge-seeking mentality. These regressive female characters of Indian soap operas are dishonouring the image of women. Television serials are promoting stereotypical roles of women, like "the ideal woman" and "the bad woman," which carry negative credits towards the real women.

Review of literature:

Serials are occupying most of the plots on small screens. The value of serials can be observed in the multiple episode and seasons, broadcasted every week. The following extracts express the representation of women by different authors.

Shashi Kaul and Shradha Sahni (2010) cited in their study "Portrayal of Women in Television (TV) Serials" that negative attitudes towards women in real life are reflected through media representation. This representation reveals that women are less accepted and respected as human beings and are looked upon like objects. She projected domestic and decorative and biological roles.

Debanjali Roy (2012), quoted in her study, "Reality or Myth: Representation of Women in Indian Television serials," stated that the two-dimensional representation of good and evil in the serial is a distortion of reality in modern days. These patterns of women projection have become even more problematic. Throughout the decade, such symbolization and defaming continue.

Aaliya Ahmed (2012), in her study entitled "-Women and Soap Operas: Popularity, Portrayal and Perception," stated soaps portray women with mutual problems, trauma in the family, he unfortunately traditional in beliefs and values and had attracted the considerable attention of the masses. In these soaps, women's roles are attached to beauty and glamour.

Nidhi Shendurnikar, and Nalanda Tambe Tere, in their study entitled "Where is the Real Woman in our TV Soaps?" found the advancement of technology and production has not brought any change in the portrayal of Indian women in the ambience of daily soaps. The woman serials are domesticated, and she drizzles with culture, family values, possessiveness, and responsibility towards the family. This depiction of women influences the audience to a large extent. Television serials create illusions about women; with the television audience is confused and unable to distinguish 'reel' women from real.

Archana Kumari & Himani Joshi (2015) conducted a study, "Gender Stereotyped Portrayal of Women in the Media: Perception and Impact on Adolescent", and found that the media propagate stereotyped images of women with domestic roles. The media should act responsibly to bring about a positive social change for women. As an excellent influencing tool, the media can create favourable situations for women by ending the promotion of assumptions about real women.

Arpita Sharma opined in her study, "Portrayal of Women in Mass Media", that television highlights gender stereotypes thereby strengthening their longevity. The negative stereotypes identify physical beauty as woman's most important asset. Women's place is in the home; in serials, their efforts and intellects are used to find the right man and keep him happy. Women are women's worst enemies. The working women are the undesirable exception who must be brought into the marriage fold and made to conform to social norms.

A recent UNESCO report describes how conventional images of women in the media depict women as glamorous, and devoted, yet

they are deceitful. Women in television series forcefully pulled real women into the frame of clichés. However, to achieve gender equality in media, another 75 years of programming is required.

Theoretical framework:

Television means different things for different age groups multi-channel environment. Exposure to this medium affects viewers of all age groups and includes different sectors of women. It has the power to mould viewers' opinions and shape their beliefs, habits, behaviors, attitudes and lives. Soap operas are powerfully impactful on an audience to the point where they even make people imitate certain characters. Television is also very much integrated into our daily lives. Television series are continuously trying to captivate the female audience. This is true not only for homemakers but also, TV is impacting women who work outside the home.

The cultivation theory of media, as developed by George Gerbner, is adaptable for the present study. Cultivation theory, in its most basic form, suggests that television is responsible for or 'cultivating viewers' perceptions of individuals. These Individuals can be heavy viewers or light viewers who are exposed to television for a few hours in the day or week to seek entertainment, information, and news. Gerbner has argued that the mass media cultivates attitudes and values among viewers and brings about effects that can be small, gradual, and indirect yet cumulative and significant.

The working women sector has less time to access television compared to homemakers. They are exposed to television serials less often, i.e., whenever they have time from their daily routine to take a break, have refreshment, and relax. Working women get exposed to television for fewer hours, so they can be considered as lighter viewers of television. Thus, television cultivates their perception less effectively than it cultivates heavy viewers. Thus, we are considering working women as lighter viewers. The impact of television is certain: Irrespective of being a heavy viewer or light viewer, very much.

Objectives:

Women prototypes in television serials have different impacts on their audiences. Serials can impart both positive and negative values on its viewers. There are lots of common prototypes that have been appearing on television in the recent times. Hence, the main objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To analyze the opinion of a working woman about these prototypes in television serials.
2. To analyze the impact of prototypes in television serials on working women.

Methodology:

In modern television, serial prototypes are becoming more common and popular, affecting the social status of women. Even a woman's power, her efficiency, is limited by the frame which is constructed by the television serials. Hence, this study analyses the social impact and opinions of working women.

To examine the prototypes which are used in serials, a case study method is used, and a survey method is used to evaluate the impact of prototypes on working women. Primary data for the study is collected by using a survey method. The sample for the present study consists of 120 working women. They were selected by using a purposive sampling technique, and they were given a questionnaire to gather the data for analysis. Secondary data on the prototypes is accumulated through content analysis of various serials and a review of the literature (various journals, books, and blogs).

Case studies:

Almost all Indian serials today have common prototypes of women, which have become popular among audiences. These prototypes can leave a strong impression, so in this study; we analyze a few of the prototypes of women in popular soap operas, focusing on a different regional channel to get a better understanding of the characters.

1.Kumkum Bhagya (ZeeTV, Language- Hindi)

This television series is produced by Ekta Kapoor under her banner Balaji Telefilms. It is a passionate love story of Pragma, who is practical, and hardworking and supports her family. It is also about Abhi, the love interest of Pragma.

In this series, the role of Pragma is as a weak character with strong emotions. She faces severe consequences and is ready to do anything for the sake of her husband and her other loved ones. Pragma also has a traditional appearance.

On the contrary to Pragma, Aliya and Tanu are negative prototypes in the series. Both are highly negative characters whose lives revolve around the idea of conspiracy. They can be seen blackmailing, cheating, and breaking marriage vows for the sake of a selfish agenda. These characters appear on the screen with ultra-modernised outfits.

As all of the characters belong to various sections of society, they resemble and project ideologies as prototypes among their viewers.

2.Puttagowri Madhuve (Colors Kannada, Language-Kannada)

The highest number of viewers follows this Kannada series. It has a TRP of 4,934. This story is a remake of the famous Hindi series Balika Vadhu. As such, the show is beamed onto the small screen Mondays to Fridays at 7 pm. It is a social drama that has created more awareness regarding the child-marriage issue. The journey of a child bride from her childhood to womanhood is the storyline of Puttagowri Madhuve. Guari marries at the tender age of eight, to an equally young boy, She then enters a new world, which is at once alienating and confusing.

Guari replicates the good woman role in this serial. As a dutiful daughter-in-law, she takes care of the household, remains a faithful wife even when her husband leaves her, and tolerates all the tortures as ideal bahu for the sake of Mahesh, who is the husband of guari in this serial.

Sagarika is a negative shade role that affects woman viewers negatively. Here, the role acts as a wicked home-breaker, a villainous woman who wants to separate Gauri from Mahesh's life forever. She exploits the opponent Gauri and always makes a plan to send Gauri away.

As strong women prototypes in the serial, they portray two different sections of society. Both characters are very true towards their characters, yet they are fighting for individual existence by leaving an impact on women to some extent.

3.Manasu mamatha (ETV Telugu, Language- Telugu)

The story revolves around two friends and their economic statuses. This serial is also famous among the Telugu audience.

The protagonist of this serial is Chandu. She tolerates all pain with patience; she offers helping hands to those who require them. Her innocence symbolically represents the good woman character.

The main antagonist of the serial is Bhargavi. She has always been a reckless woman in this serial. Her main aim is to get the hero into her life back by hook or crook. She is self-centred and always puts others down.

Strong women characters in the series belong to two different financial backgrounds in society. The fact becomes familiar to the audience through characters' personalities and life experiences. This is done so that it is possible to leave an impression on women viewers.

Data Analysis:

In an attempt to understand the context of an "Impact of Indian Television Serials on Working Women: A Study of Common Prototypes, various sectors of working women were interviewed,

from different areas, ages, and educational backgrounds. A questionnaire was administered to 120 working women in Bangalore City. The findings are as follows:

When the data gathered was analysed, 71% of working women were found to watch television series regularly, and the rest of the 49% respondents said that they did not have time to watch television.

The study also reveals that 38% of working women were found to spend 1 to 2 hours a day watching television series on a regular basis. Meanwhile, 28% of working women spend less than an hour watching television series. The rest of the respondents (3%) watch television for more than 3 hours per day, and 2% of the respondents said that they spend 2 to 3 hours per day watching TV.

The major language preferred by the audience that watches television was Kannada at 48%. Ten percent of respondents prefer the Hindi language. Another 10% of respondents prefer the Tamil language. Among the rest, 2% of respondents preferred English, and 1% preferred Telugu. The study sample shows that language preference among working women varies to a large extent.

From the survey, we found that family drama is the most popular television genre, watched by 47% respondents. While 10% of respondents preferred comedy, and 7% preferred reality. The remaining, 5% of respondents preferred to watch religious programs, and 2% are interested in thrillers. Working women were emotionally attached to family dramas; hence, they spend the maximum time watching the family drama genre.

The factor most influencing the viewer to watch serials was found to be the storyline, with 54% of respondents agreeing. Six percent of respondents felt that special effects were most influential, and 4% said costumes had influence; 4% said that some other element of the television serial influences them. For the rest, 2% claimed that casting also has influence, and 1% opined that appearance also has influence.

The study conveys audience preferences in television serials. The majority (31%) of working women found serials mostly entertaining; 25% view television serials as refreshment. The rest, 5% view serials to pass the time, and 2% view serials because they are instructive. The working class women felt that television serials act as a temporary relief from stress and various monotonous work schedules. A large number of the respondents discuss the acting, storyline, costumes, ornaments, or fashion in the serials with their friends.

To the statement "Television serials are today depicting women as which of the following" in the schedule 120 respondents, 49% respondents argued that women are depicted in both positive and negative roles, 12% said TV serials depict women as good and in an ideal manner, and 10% of respondents said TV serials depict women as bad villains. Women's roles are largely perceived as both positive and negative.

From the survey, we also found a considerable factor of recognising good women: 25% of respondents conveyed that innocence is a considerable factor, 17% of respondents said traditional outfits are factors, and 17% said sacrifice was a factor, 9% of the respondents' opined dependency is a factor, and 3% of the respondents said good women are unable to think freely. There is a considerable factor in recognising bad and villainous women in television serials. The majority of the respondents, 39% opined the revenge-seeking factor, 21% respondent said wickedness, 7% said the independence of women, 3% said Westernized outfits, and 1% said the free-thinking factor.

The sample revealed the strong preferences among respondents. The majority (53%) of respondents' favorite role is the good and idealistic woman. Those that couldn't say totalled 13% and the rest

of the 5% of respondents liked bad and villain roles for women in TV serials. Both the women characters are shown in the serials as essentially feminine, i.e., as beautiful and illusionary women.

As per the study, different segments of working women in society are aware of the impact and effects of television serial prototype. The majority, or 51% of respondents, believed that prototypes impact viewers, 13% believed it does not have any impact on viewers, and the rest of the 7% of respondents said they can't say anything.

The study revealed the impact of prototypes on women's status. The majority, or 45% of respondents, believed that prototypes have an impact on women's status in society, 13% believed they don't have an impact, and the rest of the 13% of respondents said they can't give any opinion on this.

Also, for the question, "Are Television Serials Falsifying Women's roles," 34% of respondents opined yes, 31% said no, and the rest of the 6% of respondents said they can't say.

To a question, "Do you feel that Television Serial Prototypes Obstruct Women Empowerment," there were 120 working women respondents. Of those, 31% showed their disagreement with the statement, 24% agreed with the statement, the rest of the 16% had no opinion.

Limitations:

This study is confined to Bangalore and urban working women. The study may be biased, and it cannot be generalised to other places.

Discussion:

The present study revealed that most of the working women watch television serials as a part of their entertainment, to get refreshed from their routines. Most of them spend one to two hours watching television serials in a day. Language-wise, Kannada is found to be the preferred language of the audience that watches serials. The influencing factor of the television serials is the story. As per respondents' views, today's television serials are depicting women in both positive and negative lights. Considerable factors to recognizing good or idealistic women in the serials are innocence and traditionalism. On the flip side, the bad or villainous women are recognized by their revenge-seeking and wicked qualities. An average respondent's favourite role was found to be good female characters. Viewers agreed that these prototypes impact them and women Respondents opined that prototypes obstruct the process of female empowerment to some extent.

Conclusion:

Serials are found to be the most popular genre on television. According to the respondents' opinions, women in television serials are depicted as good (idealistic) and bad (villainous). The language was found not to be a barrier to viewers. Most of the working women like good-women roles better than bad-women roles in serials. Both types of roles have an impact on female viewers and on the status of women in society. A good woman is depicted as innocent and sacrificing with idealised mannerisms. In contrast, a bad woman is depicted with elements of revenge-seeking and wickedness. In the respondents' view, prototypes in television serials obstruct women's empowerment to a minor extent. Respondents perceived both good and bad elements in serials. Also, viewers perceived both reality and fantasy in television serials.

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