

## Research Paper

## Information technology



## Media- An Inevitable Part of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

*Adolescence is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. Psychologists have defined this stage as the "period of anxiety". Media plays a significant role at this stage on adolescents. Today media has achieved the position of becoming the best companion and guide for these adolescents. Adolescents of 21st century live in a "Hi-Tech" world, where media is an inevitable part of their life. Previous researches have revealed how media has adversely affected the intellectual, moral, emotional and physical development. But we all know that every cloud has a silver lining. Through media teens are exposed to a vast array of positive messages that encourages them to become globally successful citizen. It is this media that provides them with information on topics where parents completely shut-down on or don't have the time and patience to discuss. This research shows that media plays a positive role in adolescents life. Media is instrumental in development of education and a sense of independence among adolescents. It also provides easy accessibility for public health messages and awareness. Media even has a great impact on modification of social viewpoints among adolescents. Thus, the present study has emphasized that today the positive effects of media has an upper hand over the negative ones, and has become an inevitable part of 21st century adolescents.*

**Keywords : Media, adolescents, positive impact.**

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade the daily experience of adolescents has been transformed by developments in electronic media, including the computer, the Internet, and cell phones. They are the daily tools of communication, information, and amusement for a majority of adolescents. The word adolescence comes from the Latin verb, "adolescere", which means "to grow to maturity". Maturity takes place physically, emotionally, cognitively and socially. In this sense adolescence is a process rather than a period, a process of achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in society. Taking into consideration the cognitive aspect, in Piaget's conception of cognitive maturity, there is development in the levels of thinking, reasoning and rationality. Piaget suggested that rational cognition is constructed in the course of interaction with the environment (Campbell & Bickhard, 1986; Moshman, 1994, 1998). Moreover when we describe an adolescent as growing up, we mean that the youth is leaving behind the phase of protective childhood and is becoming independent. His environment now includes not only parents but is mostly peer dominated. The cognitive development of adolescents increases their inquisitiveness about various matters. Also the development of independence in adolescents encourages them to satisfy their inquisitiveness on their own. Thus, they depend on different sources to get the information. Many a times they also try to fulfill their queries through parents. But unfortunately, parents completely shut down on topics they don't feel comfortable discussing about. Also, when it comes to working class parents, they don't have the time and patience to the answer the in-numerable queries of their growing child. Apart from this, parents at times also use withdrawal to encourage independent action and personal responsibility in a growing child. Therefore, this information is generally obtained from sources other than parents, like peers or media. Thus, here media becomes the most attractive alternative for adolescents to obtain information as well as entertainment. Being able to get information by themselves with the help of media not only satisfies their inquisitiveness but also makes them feel independent and enhances their self esteem.

In this 21st century, adolescents and media are plugged in together. The harmful effects of media have been known for

quite some time. There is a strong body of research linking exposure to violent television program content in childhood to violent behavior both as children and later as young adults (Huessman, R.L. and colleagues, 2003). Talking about the health and well being of adolescents, there is concern that excessive media use promotes obesity by reducing time devoted to physical exercise and by increasing consumption of high calorie non-nutritious foods. The evidence relating media use to obesity shows some evidence of a relationship, but is not conclusive (Escobar-Chavez, S.L., and Anderson, C.2008). Also, little research has been done to date relating exposure through video games or the Internet to adolescent smoking and drinking behaviors (Ibid).However it is still

important to realize that there are other mediating factors that affect the relationship between consumption of media violence with behavior abnormalities and health, such as genetics, mental health, gender, parenting style, home and neighborhood environment, peer relationship and so forth. Previous research has also indicated negative impact of media on educational development. It was found that children who watch excessive amounts of television score lower on standardized academic assessments than those who watch less television (Bushman, B., and Anderson, C. 2001). However, research that takes into account program content generally finds that educational programming is associated with positive academic outcomes while entertainment programs are negatively associated, though most of that research focuses on young children rather than adolescent (Schmidt, M.E. and Vandewater, E.A. 2008). Taking into consideration the social development of adolescents, Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) conclude that, where relationships with others are concerned, adolescents use the Internet primarily to strengthen existing "offline" relationships with friends. They also indicate that online interaction with friends can help relieve social anxiety and social isolation for some.

Thus, this research emphasizes the positive impact media has on today's adolescents in the area of their educational development, health and well being, becoming independent and modification of their social view point. This in turn makes media an inevitable part of their life.

**Objectives:**

1. To ascertain the positive role of media in 21st century adolescents.
2. To identify the role of media in educational development of adolescents.
3. To identify the impact of media on providing public health messages.
4. To determine the role of media in developing autonomy among adolescents.
5. To identify the role of media in modifying the social viewpoint of adolescents.

**METHOD**

The study is exploratory in nature; therefore survey method has been used followed by descriptive analysis of the results.

**VARIABLES:**

**Independent variables** – Sources of media

**Dependent variables** – its effect on various areas like education, awareness, independence, health, and social viewpoint of adolescents.

**Sample**

411 subjects of both genders from classes 7th, 8th, 9th were taken belonging to age group 12, 13, 14 and 15 respectively. All subjects were from English medium schools of similar socio-economic background.

**Tools**

A self structured questionnaire consisting 48 items was used.

**Reliability**

Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized item was found to be 0.87.

Spearman-Brown Coefficient was found to be 0.77.

**Statistical analysis**

The collected data was analyzed by simple statistics. Frequency and percentage were obtained to interpret the data.

**RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The following tables show the positive role which media plays on various areas of adolescents' life like educational development, providing health messages, spreading awareness, developing autonomy and modification of social view point.

**TABLE 1 shows that how media plays an important role in adolescents' life**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Television	198	48.2
Internet	110	26.8
Newspaper(Magazines)	76	18.5
Radio	25	6.1
Any other	2	0.5

**TABLE 2 shows the kind of role media plays in adolescents' life**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Source of Information	142	34.5
Source of entertainment	24	5.8
Both	245	59.6

**TABLE 3 shows media's positive role in educational development**

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
T.V. (National Geography)	207	50.4
T.V.(News Channel)	84	20.45
Newspaper (Information)	261	63.5
Newspaper (Vocabulary)	236	57.4
Internet	230	56

**TABLE 4 shows role of media in providing public health messages**

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Awareness about negative effect of addiction	326	79.3
Information about healthy food products	209	50.9
Awareness about sex, STD's, pregnancy	200	48.6
Awareness about diet programs and exercise regimes	166	40.4

**TABLE 5 shows the impact of media in modification of social viewpoint**

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender Equalities	289	70.3
Decreasing racism and prejudice	287	69.8
Gender sensitive	251	61

**DISCUSSION**

Table-1, 2 & 3 are discussed here-

From the research it was found that Media plays an active and important role in an adolescent's life. As shown in Table 1, 2 and 3 respectively, when asked about their preference, 48.2% of adolescents agreed that they prefer T.V. viewing and 26.8% of adolescents showed their preference for internet surfing. Other media sources like Newspaper, Magazines and Radio were preferred by 25% of adolescents. The result also shows the kind of role media plays in an adolescent's life. It is a source of both information and entertainment for 59.6% of adolescents and only 5.8% of adolescents preferred media as a source of entertainment alone. This reveals that for today's adolescents' media is not a source of entertainment alone.

It has also been found out that 50.4% of adolescents watch national geographic channel which they find very informative. 20.45% watch News channel to keep them updated about the latest happenings of the world. Also 63.5% agreed that newspapers provide them with information and 57.4% of adolescents agreed that reading newspaper enhances their vocabulary. 56% of adolescents agreed that Internet helps them complete their educational projects. Media provides them advanced knowledge beyond textbooks or their curriculum. Thus, this reveals that today's adolescents can independently work on their educational projects at home because of media. Also with the help of media, adolescents today are able to take career related decisions independently.

**Table 4 discussed here-**

Data in Table 4 shows the role of media in providing various types of public health messages. 79.3% of adolescents think that media provide them with awareness about the negative effects of addiction (smoking, drugs, and alcohol consumption). 50.9% of adolescents think that media through its advertisement provides them with information about buying or choosing healthy food products. 48.6% of adolescents agree that they get information about sex, sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), and pregnancy from media sources. And lastly 40.4% of adolescents agree that they get information or awareness about diet programs and exercise regimes which help them maintain their physique. Thus, Media provides a vast array of information and awareness to adolescents about maintaining or enhancing their health and hygiene.

**Table 5 discussed here-**

Media has also been found to have an impact in the modification of social viewpoint of the adolescents. As shown in Table 5, 70.3% of adolescents agree that media through its programs helps them to appreciate equality between genders, thus making them gender sensitive. 69.8% of adolescents agree that media helps them decrease the taboos of racism and prejudice. 61% of adolescents feel that media helps them

reduce the sense of isolation by helping them maintain relations with their peers through cell-phones and social networking sites like facebook, orkut, etc.

### CONCLUSION

From this research we can conclude that media plays a positive role in adolescents life. Media is instrumental in development of education and a sense of independence among adolescents. It also provides easy accessibility for public health messages and awareness. Media has a great impact on modification of social viewpoints among adolescents. Thus, the present study has emphasized that today the positive effects of media has an upper hand over the negative ones, and has become an inevitable part of 21st century adolescents.

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