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Abstract

Researchers have focused widely on how the media affect children's behaviors, both prosaically and antisocial. But they have paid little attention to the moral lessons children learn from the media that may be underlying these behaviors. Our society today is taking on new values that are at loggerheads with the time tested and religiously accepted principles of our society, a large part of the responsibility for which must be borne by the television commercials (henceforth TVCs) and the unethical practices of the business and corporate houses, which sponsor them. Every day, one comes across innumerable images and commercials for various products. This excessive amount of media in our day-to-day lives cannot be side lined and affects all those surrounded by it. The world is changing rapidly today and in its footsteps, our core values are changing too. The last two decades because of globalization have seen an unparalleled change, which has expressed itself in the form of diminishing community values. Social values are being eroded, moral values have become fragmented and the society is facing an unprecedented cultural evasion. Children can readily find stories about violence, sexual promiscuity, theft, and greed in a variety of media outlets including fictional programming, reality shows, rap music, and the Internet. Almost no research, however, focuses on how the media shape children's moral development.



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Introduction

Social media was made possible by web and mobile based technologies, which were used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organizations, communities and individuals. It has also been described as an interactive mechanism on the internet. The high interactive stance of the social media has made it a vital part of social life all over the world. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), defined social media as a group of internet based application that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. In his own contribution views social media as social instruments of communication which are different from the conventional instruments like newspapers or magazines. They are online content, created by people using highly accessible and a scalable publishing technologies to disseminate

information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people. It supports demonstration of knowledge and information, thereby making the people both information producers and consumers. This feature of making the people information producers and consumers is one of the distinguishing features of social media from traditional mass media that only make the people consumers only (Adelabu, 2011). One criticism often leveled against the media is that they are contributing to the decay of morality. Indeed, a recent national poll reported that 70 percent of Americans are very or somewhat worried that popular culture, as portrayed in television and movies, is lowering moral standards in the United States. The concern is fueled by the tremendous amount of time youth are spending with the media and by their easy access to explicit content. Children can readily find stories about violence, theft, and greed in a variety of media outlets including fictional programming, reality shows, rap music, and the Internet. Almost no research, however, focuses on how the media shape children's moral development. Researchers have written widely on how the media affect children's behaviors, both prosocial and antisocial. But they have paid little attention to the moral lessons children learn from the media that may be underlying these behaviors.

Social networking is a recent development made possible by the internet which has become every popular across the globe mainly with young people. This is mostly because it affords users the opportunity to interact with one another making it possible to share information, pictures and videos. This new form of social interaction also brings people of different social background together in a forum and enables them to interact regardless of location and time. According to (Asemah and Edegoh, (2012), social network is a social structure made up of individuals or organizations called “nodes”, which are tied or connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. In addition, social network can also be referred to as a map of specified ties, such as friendship, between the nodes being studied. The nodes, to which an individual is thus connected, are the social contacts of that individual; the network can also be used to measure social capital, which is the value an individual gets from the social network. Social networking sites include: Yahoo Messenger, Facebook Messenger, Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Google.

Moral development in children follows a predictable developmental path. When presented with an ethical dilemma, children under the age of eight typically judge an action

as wrong or incorrect when it results in punishment or goes against the rules set forth by authority figures. As children mature, they begin to consider multiple perspectives in a situation, taking into account the intentions and motives of those involved and recognizing the often-conflicting rules inherent in moral dilemmas. In other words, their moral reasoning becomes more flexible and “other” oriented.

Every day, one comes across innumerable images and commercials for various products. This excessive amount of media in our day to day lives cannot be side lined and impacts all those surrounded by it. It is an expression of the society of which we are a part, its mirror-image for all practical purposes and has a far reaching influence on the social, cultural and moral values of its inmates (Ciochetto, 2004). The world is changing rapidly today and in its footsteps our core values are changing too. The last two decades on account of globalization have seen an unparalleled change, which has expressed itself in the form of diminishing community values. Social values are getting eroded, moral values have become fragmented and the society is facing an unprecedented cultural evasion. Our society today is taking on new values which are at loggerheads with the time tested and religiously accepted principles of our society, a large part of the responsibility for which must be borne by the television commercials (TVCs) and also the unethical practices of the business and corporate houses which sponsor them. Today, the reach of television is widespread. Commercial television channels have penetrated even the remotest of areas and most adults are exposed to thousands of advertisements annually. It is thus natural for the ramifications of the violations of ethics by TVCs to be seen in our personal lives and also on the society as a whole (Pollay, 1986).

Theories of powerful media effects assume that a wide range of social values and behavioral practices are learned from the ideas and images conveyed by popular television entertainment, glossy magazines, internet websites, music videos, consumer advertising, feature films, and news reports. Cultivation theory developed by Gerbner and his colleagues treat the mass media as one of the standard agencies of socialization, rivaling the role of parents and the family, peer-groups, teachers and religious authorities, and social norms operating within the local community and national culture. Socialization is a multidimensional process involving the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and values. In particular, cultivation theory suggests that frequency of exposure to the mass media, especially television viewing, leads towards the internalization of its messages. Through this process, the media are thought to be capable of influencing moral standards, including

attitudes towards the family, marriage and divorce, orientations towards sex roles, support for gender equality, and tolerance of sexual diversity, and beliefs about appropriate ethical standards in public life, as well as shaping broader religious values, beliefs, and practices. Regular exposure to messages conveyed by mass communications is believed to have a cumulative effect upon moral values and behavior, with a particularly influential role upon impressionable young children and adolescents during their formative years as they transition to adulthood.

The direction in which TVCs are moving today, has generated enormous social tension to which we have not been able to find appropriate solutions. The situation as on date is that via these commercials, power has been transferred to business houses that have consistently ignored the social implications of their actions. The problem is fundamental, as on the basis of the review of literature, it has been established that the content of TVCs is damaging for not only society, but morality too. Complaints and concerns about TVCs have been extensive since their advent. Although some substantial research has been done on the negative consequences of TVCs across the world, the behavioral consequences and distortion of values caused by exposure to them is yet an unexplored area. The researchers have not come across much research on this issue in India.

CONCLUSION

It has paid little attention to media's effect on other moral issues such as altruism and even other types of antisocial behavior such as cheating, lying, and stealing. In addition, the research has focused solely on television. Websites, video games, movies, and even children's books sometimes grapple with moral dilemmas, and researchers need to explore their impact as well. Some research suggests that extensive viewing of television violence can alter children's views about the acceptability of violence and perhaps even hinder the development of their moral reasoning. Fantasy violence that is portrayed as justified or heroic is most strongly implicated here, again suggesting that the type of content children watch is important. Such conclusions must be tentative, however, because of the paucity of studies in this area. With the exception of one experiment and one longitudinal study, nearly all the evidence is of the snapshot-in-time variety and does not permit drawing causal conclusions. In addition, the research has examined only children's moral views about aggression.

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