An Impact of Electronic Media on the Development of Children's Personality

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Abstract

Personality is the total quality of an individual due to bodily pattern, mental integration and chemistry internal functions including almost all types of introvert and extrovert traits. Though the traits of any individuals personality development owe to heredity, but electronic form of environment may also be considered equally important. In order to assess that to how much extent the electronic media could affect the process of children's personality development, a study was conducted in two randomly selected areas of Faisalabad city. The data collected from 120 randomly selected respondents through personal interviewing were analyzed to draw conclusions. The analysis of data revealed the accessibility and interest of children in electronic media to great extent. However, majority of the respondents considered its impact as negative upon the development of children's personality.

Key words: Personality, Electronic media, Heredity,
Environment

Introduction

The word personality is derived from a word 'persona' which means a mask or false face used by actors, but the popular view of personality stems from certain features of an individual which are more or less superficial or external. These features are speech, quality of voice, manner of dress, charm, beauty, gestures, mannerisms etc. Thus a personality may be adjudged as good or bad, strong or week, solely on the basis of one or two such features. Rauf (1997) describes personality as a dynamic organization of all the constituent traits of an individual. According to him it is a unique combination of physical, mental, social and moral traits into a well knit whole.

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Crow and Crow (1994) define personality as the sum total of an individuals' behaviour in social situations. Behaviour includes not only overt acts but also inward feeling tone produced by the situations as interpreted by the individual through introspection.

According to Kundu and Tutoo (1991) heredity is the force by which some characters of the previous generation are transmitted to their descendants. The hereditary features of the personality are those that reside in the fetus from the moment of conception. On the other hand, the factors that work upon the child from the moment just after birth are those of environment.

Kakkar (2001) presents that personality results from interplay of the inherited constitution with all forces of environment from the moment of conception onwards.

The development of personality depends upon two factors; firstly on heredity i.e. the characters of ancestors passed to an individual; second one depends upon surrounding social environment, culture and family, attitudes, habits and interests as well as character including the morals and spiritual ideas, standard life's values and modes of social expressions which are all integral parts of personality (Barthelems, 1993).

Human life is a learning process which begins almost immediately on arrival in the world. This learning has to be in the context of society, starting with narrow confines of mother or nurse and widening to larger and larger dimensions of community as time passes. According to another view the personality development mainly depends upon three major social agents; family, school and media. It is the media which connect people with machines and in turn create awareness in the society. Radio and television play vital role in creating awareness regarding various aspects of life and personality as found by Mehmood (2000).

Personality development is a complex process, extending over a number of years and involving various people and organizations. These people or organizations are called agents of personality development and they all contribute in some degree to personality development process. Parents, siblings, school friends, personal experiences and electronic media are all potential sources of personality

development. From each of these sources, the child receives information and learns attitude and behaviour through formal instruction (being told what to do), through direct experience, or through the observation of the action to other. Electronic media activate and reinforce latent attitude and contribute significantly in the formation of new attitudes (Gitten, 1998).

The electronic media mainly consist of radio, television, and movies, and are actually classrooms without four walls. The audience being passive simply accept what is put in front of them, but the present view approaches the audience as active. We learn skills, values and patterns of behavior from the media both directly and indirectly. The electronic media offer dazzling potential as tool for learning, especially through interactive educational programming. There is no doubt that electronic media have a pervasive influence on children from a very early age, and that it will continue to affect children's cognitive and social development (Huston et aI., 1992).

Television is one of the most prevalent media influencing kids' lives. The impact of television on children depends on many factors, like how they watch, their age and personality, whether they watch alone or with adults and whether their parents talk with them about what they see on T.V. Personality development by television can help children develop skills and knowledge that will help them in school. The best example is "Sesame Street" which helps in developing skills of knowledge of numbers, letters relationship and vocabulary among children.

On the other hand, television has also some side effects, it affects the learning and school performance if it cuts into time kids need for activities crucial to healthy mental and physical development. The impact of television violence on children is of special concern. Young children are exposed to violence not only on crime shows, but also in cartoons, and in news. Some of most the violent T.V. shows are children's cartoons in which violence is portrayed as humorous and realistic consequences shows. This can be especially true of violence shown by young children, who are likely to exhibit aggressive behavior after viewing violent T.V. shows or movies. That is why, Rauf (1997) has strongly opposed the exposure of children to too highly exciting movies for their emotional health.

The other byproduct of television is TV -by-cable. The main risk lies in the availability of every type of good or bad programmes. The vulgar and sex obsessed films on cable T.V. produce a negative impact on morals and manners of the children. The newest type of media is "internet" which makes easy accessibility to knowledge sources within minutes but also has access to vulgar, trash and flotsam material in the hands of children (Harrison et al; 2000).

It is established that the impact of electronic media on children and adolescents is well documented, as is concern about some aspects of the media's powerful influence on children's attitudes and behavior. Considering the positive aspect, the television may be a powerful socializing agent than peers and teachers. This power of media may be used to affect positively on the lives of children. Television can enhance child development by providing positive role of models of cooperation and collaboration as a responsible way of acting in the world.

Media have also played a part in the moral development of youth. Most cultures have used visual arts, dramas and stories to communicate myths, ideas and values to the new generation. Some of those visual arts and stories might be considered immoral. The media in all forms have become a primary influencing instrument on the moral development of individuals including children.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that how electronic media can influence the development of children's personality and moral characters. Therefore, it seemed necessary to explore the effect of electronic media on personality development of children. For this purpose, the present study was undertaken

Methodology

The present project was designed to study the impact of electronic media on the personality development of children. For this purpose Faisalabad city was selected as universe and through simple random technique two areas i.e. Madina Town and Abdullahpur were selected by systematic sampling technique. By using this statistical technique 60 respondents were randomly selected from each area and thus totaling to 120 respondents. The data collected with the help of personal interviews were analyzed to draw conclusions and formulate suggestions.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that 34.2% of the respondents had television sets at their homes, followed by cable (32.5%), all media (27.5%) and internet (5.8%).

Table 2 depicts that 50.8% of the respondents reported that their children were interested in using electronic media, whereas, 16.7% of the respondents reported that their husbands were interested followed by all members (14.2%), wives themselves (12.5%) and in-laws (5.8%), respectively.

Table 3 reveals that 75%, 21.7% and 3.3% of the respondents reported that their children spent 1-3,4-6 and, 7 and more hours on watching electronic media, respectively.

Table 4 concludes that 42.5%, 37.5% and 20.0% of the respondents were of the view that their children's personality was affected to great extent, to some extent and not at all, respectively.

Table 5 reveals that 67.5% of the respondents reported that there was negative impact of electronic media on their children. Whereas only 32.5% of the respondents reported positive impact of electronic media on their children.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents with regard to the type of media they had at their homes

Media	Frequency	Percentage
Television	41	34.2
Cable	39	32.5
Internet	07	5.8
All media	33	27.5
Total	120	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of respondents with regard to the interest of their family

Interested Persons	Frequency	Percentage
Housewives	15	12.5
Their husbands	20	16.7
Children	61	50.8
In- Laws	07	5.8
All members	17	14.2
Total	120	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of respondents on the basis of time spent on electronic media by their children.

Time Spent (Hours)	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	90	75.0
4-6	26	21.7
7 and more	04	3.3
Total	120	100.0

Table 4: Distribution of respondents regarding the extent to which their children's personality was affected by the media.

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
To great extent	51	42.5
To some extent	45	37.5
Not at all	24	20.0
Total	120	100.0

Table 5: Distribution of respondents regarding their attitudes about the positive or negative impact of media on their children.

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	39	32.5
Negative	81	67.5
Total	120	100.0

Conclusions

From the above discussion, it is clear that electronic media play a vital role in the development of children's personality, attitudes and behaviour. But due to the danger of access of children to vulgar, sex obsessed and violent movies, majority of respondents were in favour of negative impact of electronic media on the attitude of their children. Therefore, it is suggested that efforts be made to keep children away from all such programmes which can ruin the personalities of their children.

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