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Working children and TV in Pakistan

Socio-cultural impact of satellite TV on working children in the Sindh province

In Sindh, Pakistan, 300 working children in different occupations were interviewed about their TV use. Most of them reported having access to satellite television, watching an average 92 minutes of TV on working days.

Electronic media were introduced in British India when the first formal Radio station was established in Bombay in July 1927. This medium was successfully used for agricultural and rural development in the 1930s. Television was first started at Lahore in 1964. Karachi TV Center started relaying its programs in November 1967. This brought the TV to Sindh province albeit it was limited to urban areas due to lack of electricity and boosters. In its initial years, the TV programs included news, dramas, and other entertainment programs. During the early 1980s, the PTV policy was changed to cater more for the ideological and religious dimensions. This resulted in diminishing popularity of state television and paved way for the introduction of VCR and satellite television in the early 1990s.

More recently, since 2005, several private TV networks have also entered the arena. At present, there are essentially 6 categories of TV channels that are providing a multitude of programs for viewers in Sindh and Pakistan:

(1) Pakistan Television and its global channels providing news, official

statements, and limited entertainment programs;

(2) Star and Zee TV networks which are mostly relaying Indian films, drama, and selected cultural and environmental documentaries;

(3) Main English news and movie networks such as the BBC, CNN and Fox TV which provide international news and commentaries; the HBO and STAR network also relay movies, sports and entertainment programs;

(4) Islamic channels such as Haq and SAMA TV etc. which continuously relay speeches of Islamic scholars, recitation from Holy Quraan and religious as well as Qawali songs;

(5) Private Urdu channels such as GEO, ARY, AAJ and others which mostly handle news and commentaries directed at Muslim audience;

(6) Sindhi language channels which relay news, music, and dramas. The overall communication strategy of Sindhi medium channels is secular in nature but their drama themes are mostly inspired by the feudal and dacoit culture prevailing in some rural districts.

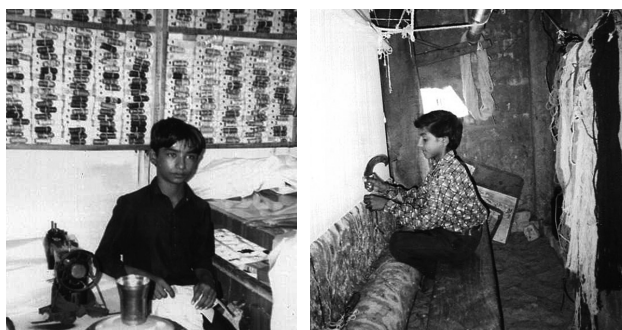
The study

Several studies have been done internationally to measure the impact of TV on kids and teenagers. Only one detailed study on Satellite TV and Social Change in Sindh has been published so far by Shaikh (2007). He stated that while there was not

much influence on the core set up, the satellite TV has influenced the outer shell of Sindhi society. A majority of sample respondents of that study reported changes in their approach to education of girls, music, traditions, house décor and architecture, attire, local cuisine, and culinary practices. The present study was a pioneering research to determine the use of television by working children and its socio-economic impact in urban as well as rural areas of Sindh province of Pakistan. This article incorporates field data addressing the following research objectives:

- To determine the time of viewership and popularity of various programs and the socio-cultural impact of satellite TV on working children in Sindh.
- To record perceptions of sample children and their parents on the impact of various categories of TV channels and types of programs on the personality development, work ethics, customs and value system of their kids.
- To propose guidelines for a secular and culturally compatible diet of satellite TV programs in Sindh, Pakistan.

This study used a sample survey method under a descriptive design. Distribution of sample by working category consisted of 60 girls working as house servants and 30 employed as bangle makers. The sample of 210 working boys comprised of 30 bangle workers, 30 hotel waiters,



Two of the interviewed children, working in tailoring (left), and carpet weaving (right).

30 tailoring assistants, 60 sanitary workers, 30 mechanic assistants, and 30 carpet weavers. Majority of sanitary workers belonged to minority groups (Christian and Hindus), while carpet weaving laborers represented both Muslim and Scheduled (Low) Caste Hindus in the remote area of Thar Desert in Sindh.

1. Socio-economic profile

Average age

On an overall basis, average age of the working children was 13 years which ranged from 10 to 15 years. While comparing age by occupation, no significant variation was observed. Nevertheless, house maid girls (average age 12.7 years) were relatively younger and the hotel waiters (average age 13.8 years) were comparatively older than the other groups (see table 1).

Family size and working members

An average family consisted of 7.65 members (2.93 sons, 2.72 daughters and 2 parents). Male population was thus higher. Working members, on an average, comprised of 1.32 sons (45 %) and 0.47 (17 %) daughters.

Average monthly income

Average monthly income of sample working children was computed to be Rs. 1,752 only (US \$ 21). The highest monthly income (Rs. 2,930, around US \$ 35) was reported for hotel waiters while the lowest (Rs. 884, around

US \$ 10.5) was accounted for mechanic assistants. Average monthly income of fathers was Rs. 4,620 only; while that of mothers was about Rs. 2,378 only – equivalent to 50 % of their husbands. Thus, the working children

came from families where parents' income constituted an average per capita income of US \$ 0.40 per day.

Formal education

On an overall basis, 38 % of the sample working children and 35 % of the parents reported some years of formal primary and middle level education. Highest proportion of formal education (80 %) was recorded for bangle making boys, while none for the hotel waiters. Only 1 or 3.3 % of kids working as carpet weavers reported any formal schooling (see table 1).

2. Impacts of satellite television

Possession of TV sets

It was computed from field data that 82 % households possessed TV sets

and about the same proportion also reported cable services. Thus, a vast majority of working children in Sindh had access to satellite TV channels. For carpet weaving children of Thar, the number of TV owning families was 13 % only. For most of these children, there was no access to cable services.

Timing of TV viewership

The most preferred time was prime evening hours (from 6 pm to 8 pm), as reported by 63 % working children (see table 2). About one-tenth (11 %) of respondents (mostly the hotel waiters) reported watching television during morning hours from 10 am to 12 noon. The duration of TV watching by working children was 195 minutes on holidays (Fridays). It was more than double that of their TV viewing on work days (92 minutes). The highest average duration (2 hours) of watching television was reported by hotel waiters, while the shortest average duration (1 hour) was recorded for sanitary workers.

Reasons for watching TV

One-third (33 %) of the sample working children reported that they watch television for entertainment. A similar response – enjoyment of leisure – was pronounced by 29 % kids; and watching TV as a time pass was stated by

Kids working as...	Age Ø	Formal Education – Kids		Formal Education – Father		Formal Education – Mother	
		%	Years	%	Years	%	Years
House Maids (Muslim Girls)	12.7	35.0	4.00	6.7	6.3	0.0	----
Bangle Makers (Muslim Girls)	13.7	16.7	5.40	16.7	7.0	0.0	----
Bangle Makers (Muslim Boys)	13.2	80.0	6.17	76.7	7.0	20.0	4.9
Hotel Waiters (Muslim Boys)	13.8	0.0	----	26.7	3.6	0.0	----
Tailoring Assistants (Muslim Boys)	13.0	76.7	6.17	76.7	5.6	30.0	5.2
Sanitary Workers (Christian & Hindu Boys)	13.5	28.3	4.06	28.3	4.6	0.0	----
Mechanic Assistants (Muslim Boys)	13.4	80.0	5.00	80.0	5.7	26.7	6.1
Carpet Weavers (Muslim & Hindu Boys)	13.1	3.3	5.00	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.0
Overall	13.2	38.3	5.17	35.0	5.7	8.0	5.4

Tab. 1: Formal education of the interviewed children and their parents

Kids working as...	Morning	Before Evening	After Evening		Don't Know	Average Watching Time of TV (minutes)	
	10 am – 12 noon	Up to 6 pm	6 pm – 8 pm	8 pm – 10 pm		Working Days	Holidays
	House Servants (Girls)	10.0 %	11.7 %	55.0 %			
Bangle Makers (Girls)	16.7 %	10.0 %	60.0 %	13.3 %	0.0 %	90	210
Bangle Makers (Boys)	6.7 %	3.3 %	73.3 %	16.7 %	0.0 %	90	196
Hotel Waiters (Boys)	20.0 %	6.7 %	60.0 %	13.3 %	0.0 %	120	159
Tailoring Assistants (Boys)	16.7 %	0.0 %	66.7 %	16.7 %	0.0 %	90	196
Sanitary Workers (Boys)	10.0 %	20.0 %	53.3 %	11.7 %	5.0 %	60	192
Mechanic Assistants (Boys)	6.7 %	3.3 %	73.3 %	16.7 %	0.0 %	75	204
Carpet Weavers (Boys)	0.0 %	0.0 %	80.0 %	16.7 %	3.3 %	80	168
Overall	10.7 %	8.7 %	63.0 %	8.7 %	3.3 %	92	195

Tab 2: When and how long do the interviewed children watch TV?

27 % of them. Only 2 % of the sample children asserted that they watch television for acquiring knowledge and learning various skills. A high percentage of tailoring assistants, who were comparatively elder, were the main group that reported watching TV for knowledge.

Ranking of TV channels

On an overall basis, Sindhi channels were ranked first, followed by Indian Urdu channels, Cartoon Channels, Pakistani Urdu channels, and English Movies channels. Sindhi channels were ranked first mainly by hotel waiters, tailoring assistants, and carpet weavers. Indian Urdu channels were highly ranked by house maids, bangle makers, sanitary workers and mechanic assistants. Pakistani Urdu channels were ranked at second position by bangle making girls. Cartoon channels were ranked at second position by sanitary workers (boys) only. A vast majority of boys in all occupations were fans of Indian movies, Sindhi drama, English action films, and Sindhi music channels. None of the respondents expressed any significant preference for private religious channels and the English and Urdu news channels.

stated that Sindhi drama and Hindi and English movies were preferred because of thrill and action.

About half (51 %) of the sample children mentioned movie/drama heroes as their favorite personalities, followed by sportsmen (28 %), politicians (15 %), singers/musicians (5 %) and teachers (2 %). Movie/drama heroes were mostly favored by sanitary workers (84 %), followed by hotel waiters (62 %). A significant proportion of hotel waiters (23 %) indicated Sindhi/Urdu/Hindi singers as their favorite personalities. This reflects the effect of playing music albums and movie videos on hotels round the clock to attract the customers in urban as well as rural localities.

Impact on aspirations

Quite a large proportion of sample children aspired to avail delicious food (85 %), wear good dresses (87 %) and decorate houses (80 %) as shown in their favorite television programs depicting elite culture. Some 53 % of the kids wanted to be action and romance heroes of TV drama and Urdu/Hindi movies. Proportionately more (75 %) sanitary worker boys aspired to be heroes of TV programs, dancers, and movie stars.

Most favorite programs

On an overall basis, Indian Hindi Films were ranked as 1st priority while Sindhi drama was ranked as 2nd priority; followed by cartoons (rank 3rd), Indian drama (rank 4th), sports (rank 5th), Sindhi and Urdu Music (rank 6th), English programs (rank 7th), news and current affairs (rank 8th), and religious programs (rank 9th). It was

Perceptions of parents

Parents in general and the fathers in particular, complained that the English programs, Indian Films and Sindhi drama serials have promoted sentiments of violence and immoral behavior among their boys. Mothers were not satisfied by the work ethic of their girls and complained lack of interest on their part in household chores. Parents of Muslim children showed concern on the drift away from religion and traditional values of respect for parents and arranged marriages, especially among boys. ■

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