

Societal Curriculum: Effects of Television on Social Values System in Pakistani Society

Syeda Tahira Shah* and Farhana Khurshid**

Abstract

A curriculum is all the experiences that an individual has in the course of living. Television media, the most important component of the societal curriculum has been receiving increasing scholarly attention. It has become an integral part of our lives and portrays our religious, cultural and societal norms and practices. This study explores the effects of television media as a source of informal curriculum on the social and religious value practices in Pakistani society. For the study, mixed methods were utilised whereby the quantitative data was collected through a five point Likert scale questionnaire from 100 students selected purposively from four universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In addition, three focus group discussions were conducted with 15 students (five students each group), yielding the qualitative data. The findings of the study indicate that television has a strong influence, specifically; the way dramas, news and advertisements are presented. This has brought conflicting effects to the social and religious value system and practices of our society in general and particularly, on youth.

Keywords: Societal curriculum, social value system, television media

* M.A Education, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Islamabad-Pakistan.

Email: tahirashah666@gmail.com

**Assistant Professor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Islamabad-Pakistan.

Email: f.khurshid@fjwu.edu.pk

Introduction

Schools are not the whole of education; they are the part of the education system. When curriculum is mentioned, most people think of school curriculum, whether manifest or hidden (Wear & Skillicorn, 2009). In reality, two curricula operate side by side. In addition to the education we receive in schools through the formal curriculum, all of us receive a lifelong education through the societal curriculum (Cortes, 1981). Therefore, the question here arises, what is this societal curriculum? It is the massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, church organizations, occupations, mass media and other socializing forces that "educate" all of us throughout our lives (Cortes, 1981). As one of the most important components of the societal curriculum or informal curriculum, television has received increasing scholarly attention (Cortés, 1979). One study reported that adolescents in America spend an average 28 hours per week watching television (UNESCO's statement, 2000). This shows that television is the most powerful medium impacting through its content e.g. infotainment, which is in fact an important aspect of the societal curriculum.

Literature review

Focal point of this study was to explore the effects of television media, as part of societal curriculum, on social value system. From the existing literature, the following text discusses and highlights the relationship and impact of mass media on the value system of any society.

Curriculum

From a broader perspective, rooted in Dewey's view, the curriculum can be defined as 'dealing with the experiences of the learner' (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012, p. 367). It encompasses almost everything in the school, even outside as a part of the curriculum. For example, if we see the curriculum in broader sense, it is defined as "curriculum is all the experiences that learners have in the course of living" (Marsh & Willis, 2003, p.108). Moreover, Livingstone (1999) viewed curriculum as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies" (p.5). Informal learning embraces all learning that does not take place inside the formal and non-formal programmes and educational institutions i.e. outside their curricula (Talla, 2012).

Mass media

The term media means middle, i.e. the connection of media and people. The mass media are the devices for the broadcast of impartial communications to a huge audience (Lule, 2010). Mass media means communication technology (newspapers, radio, television, films, and the Internet) that transfer information regarding social & political issues, news and entertainment, on a massive scale to the vast majority of the general public (Nielsen Media Research, 2008; Lule, 2010).

Television

In the industrialised world, watching television has now become ubiquitous pastime activity, which takes up more of our time than any other activity, except for work and sleep (Sigman, 2007). It can be found in homes, offices, restaurants and bedrooms, having become an integral part of our lives. It is a common observation that it has changed the financial and social patterns of the world (Besley, 2008). Television influences our views about religion, celebrity, politics, and fashions as well as all the culture and norms (Spingel, 1992).

Value system

Values are the guiding principles to live in a society or to the maintenance of social relationships, for example, what ethical principles are needed for society and the unethical practices which are harmful for the survival of a society. Generally speaking, value refers to the relative worth of a quality or object, being 'what makes something desirable or undesirable' (Shockley-Zalabak 1999, p. 425). It is the fact that the value system is the backbone of any society (Faizi, 2010).

Being a Muslim, knowing Islam is initially a matter of faith. This faith stands for certain beliefs, including the belief in the unity of Allah (the Almighty), belief in the last prophet hood of Muhammad (SallallahuAlaihiWasallam), belief in the Holy Quraan and other Holy Books revealed by Almighty Allah to the Prophets from time to time, belief in Angels, belief in the life after death and belief in the destiny. All these beliefs constitute the Islamic value system and standards for living (Faizi, Shakil & Akhtar, 2011). This value system in Islam represents the standards on which we judge an action to be right or wrong. These value systems are classified as social, moral, and religious etc. (Faizi, Shakil & Akhtar, 2011).

Television and the Value System

Television is one of the most important factor in the formation of attitude, values and behavior (Besley, 2008). It is a social educator helping to shape social, emotional, and physical development (ibid). Television entertains and amuses its common viewers, but along with this, the need is to educate people as well. Television develops or influences the development of values for example, materialism, inequality and the status quo in the society (Sotirovic, 2005; Besley, 2008). Nevertheless, this is harmful from the point of view of moral education (Sotirovic, 2005). We see now that pro-social and materialistic values both exist in society that are conveyed through television media (Besley, 2008). Many times we see that television media convey and reflect such values which are in conflict with the values what an educational curriculum reflect. For example, keeping in view current situation, our society demands peace, nevertheless, it show violence through different programs. (Carr, 2006; Witenberg, 2007).

Rationale of the study

Clearly the media is a great source of informal education, playing a strong role in the transformation of values, culture and norms in a society. It has directional role in bringing social change and guiding the society to achieve the desired goals. It can successfully invigorate the change into rigid ideas and attitudes, and resultantly can transform the society in desired direction. Moreover, media is emerging as a strong and powerful tool in shaping the social values in the light of what we see on television advertisements, dramas/plays and news reports. Therefore, this study investigated the effects of today's television media particularly the advertisements, dramas/plays, and news reports on the social value systems in the context of Pakistani society.

Research Questions

- How does television as an important part of societal curriculum affect perceptions, attitudes and beliefs relating to social values?
- What are the views of the university students (the youth) about the effects of television media on the value system of Pakistani society?

Methodology

For the purpose of this research, a mixed method i.e. both quantitative and qualitative approaches, was designed to address the research questions.

Population and sample

The population of the study was students studying in four public sector universities located in the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

For the purpose of a survey (the quantitative part of research), 100 students were purposively selected from the targeted population. All the students have cable television subscription and are regular viewers of multiple television channels. The age range of the students was between 18 and 24 years, as this is the age group when youngsters are considered started knowing what the culture is and what values and norms must be followed. Moreover, the care was taken to ensure that the sample included respondents from all socio economic classes of the Pakistani society. Among the 100 students those who had consented, were invited to take part in the focus group discussions (qualitative part of the research). A total of 15 students volunteered for this part of the research and three focus group discussions were conducted i.e. five students in each group.

Survey questionnaire

For the survey, a questionnaire was developed in order to obtain the perceptions of students about the television as a societal curriculum. The questionnaire consisting of four parts, six items in each; part A had items relating to 'television as informal curriculum', 'part B contained items about television drama', part C has items regarding the 'television advertisements', and finally the focus of part D was items on 'television news'. Thus in total there were 24 items, which were scored on five point Likert scale as 5. Strongly Agree, 4. Agree, 3. Neutral, 2. Disagree, and 1. Strongly Disagree.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

To determine the content validity of the questionnaire, different experts were consulted and changes were made in accordance with their suggestions. After, the validity of the questionnaire was determined, the next step was to find out the reliability of the tool. The reliability in terms of internal consistency was calculated through Cronbach's alpha, which is generally referred as the alpha coefficient of reliability. For this purpose a pilot study was conducted and the questionnaire was administered to 40 university students. The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for these students' scores on the questionnaire was found to be 0.79, which indicated that the questionnaire was reliable for utilising in this research.

Focus group discussions

In media studies, focus group discussion enable researcher to understand the reasons for a specific media consumption by the participants of the study (Lule, 2010). During the focus group discussions, participants establish group dynamics and researcher can judge their reactions to a particular media style and content (Lule, 2010).

Three focus group discussions were conducted with 15 students, i.e. five students in each group. A focus group guide was developed which covered a range of issues related to television media and its impact on societal value system. Students discussed in detail how they feel about the impact of television on the value system of Pakistani society, and this yielded qualitative data. Each focus group discussion was lasted for 30 to 45 minutes and were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. All the audio recordings were transcribed and analysed through coding and thematic analysis.

Results of the quantitative data

As explained above, a survey was conducted to find out the perceptions of students about the effects of television on the social value system in the Pakistani society. The participant students' responses were obtained on a five point Likert scale Questionnaire (detailed above). The data were analysed through descriptive statistics, which involved calculation of frequency and percentages. The item wise analysis is presented below.

Table 1

Participants responses about television as an informal curriculum (n=100)

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Television has become a pastime activity.	30%	0%	0%	30%	40%
Television is intentionally Unintentionally eye catching informal curriculum.	0%	0%	50%	30%	20%
Television has become important part of our life.	0%	20%	30%	30%	20%
Television has a great impact on daily routine.	0%	30%	40%	20%	10%
One can't deny exposure and importance of television.	20%	15%	15%	20%	30%
Television affects societal values.	0%	0%	30%	55%	15%

Table 1, presented the participants' responses regarding whether they considered television as being an informal curriculum. There was a mixed response, when we combined 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses together, it appeared that 50% of the participants agreed that television has become important part of their lives and an important component of societal curriculum. Only 30% agreed that television has an impact on their daily routines whereas the majority, 70% agreed that it affects the value system of our society.

Table 2

Participants' responses about television dramas/plays (n=100)

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Drama is an art and entertainment.	0%	45%	20%	20%	15%
Drama is informal learning what message they convey.	0%	20%	0%	55%	25%
Drama is helpful in promoting our culture and societal values.	0%	50%	30%	20%	0%
Today's Drama is raising social issues for social awareness among people.	0%	50%	30%	20%	0%
Television drama has a great effect on our language.	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%
Drama without any objective is responsible for spreading offensiveness.	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%

Table 2 showed the results regarding the students' responses on the role of television dramas, here 80% agreed that drama was an informal source of learning, 50% of the respondents disagreed that the drama was promoting our cultural and societal values and 50% disagreed that drama was creating awareness about social issues, while, 100% participants agreed that drama on television was affecting our daily language usage and also responsible for spreading offensiveness.

Table 3
Participants' responses about television Advertisement (n=100)

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Television advertisements are important part of life.	0%	30%	20%	50%	0%
Television advertisement contains statements that are false, deceptive, untruthful, or misleading.	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%
TVCs encourage adoption of unethical ways of fulfilling materialistic desires.	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Comparison with idealized images shown in advertisements encourages lower satisfaction with the self.	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Television advertisement affects the time tested and religiously accepted principles of our society.	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Television advertisements are responsible for negative stereotypes of women, e.g. portrayal of women as sex objects, homemaker etc	0%	0%	50%	30%	20%

Table 3 showed the results in relation to the students' responses on the role of television advertisements, here 50% agreed that television advertisements contained false, deceptive, untruthful and misleading statements, whilst 100% of the respondents concurred that the advertisements encourage adoption of unethical ways of fulfilling materialistic desires, and affecting the time-tested and religiously accepted principles of our society. Moreover, 50% of the respondents agreed that advertisements were responsible for the negative stereotypes of women in society.

Table 4
Participants' responses about television news (n=100)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is aim at informing viewers about their surroundings, law and order situation.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
The way news is present great effect on your perception, thinking, believing.	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
If It helps in critical thinking process.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
It creates fear a sense of insecurity among viewers.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
The television news is presented, have made the audience desensitize toward it.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Viewers feel that giving news on every small happening may devalue this Concept.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%

Table 4 showed the results about students' responses regarding the way news was broadcasted on television, all of the respondents, 100%, agreed that it was aimed at informing them about their surroundings and the law and order situation, 50% of the respondents agreed that the way news was presented had a great effect on their perception, thinking and believing, 100% disagreed with the statement that the news helped in promoting the critical thinking process and all agreed that the way news was presented created fear, a sense of insecurity, and desensitised the audience towards the concept of news, consequently, lost its value and importance among the viewers.

Analysis of the qualitative data

The analysis of focus group discussion transcripts was undertaken through coding and thematic analysis. As a result, three main themes emerged relating to the effects of television media on the social value system in the Pakistani society, which were: 1) Positive effects of television media on society, 2) Negative effects of television media on society, 3) Productive role of television media in the Pakistani society. These are discussed in detail in the following text.

Positive effects of television media on society

Since its invention, television has been used for many different purposes that include broadcasting information, providing entertainment to the masses and educating them as well. During the focus group discussions, students shared that the television has a great influence in our daily life and plays a significant role in the transformation of information and shaping people's opinions. They acknowledged that television provided information from around the globe, resultantly increased the general knowledge of the viewers. In particular, documentaries and news about social issues helped in creating awareness among the young ones, and assisted in developing their concerns towards the society.

Regarding cultural transformation, the participants emphasized how television has brought about a major transformation in the way any culture or society thinks. All agreed to, when one participant said:

“The content presented over television affects the thoughts and behavior of the general public. It helps in shaping ideas and attitudes. It influences the way we live”.

Despite a multitude of concerns being expressed by the participants regarding the positive effects of television in society, they described the importance of television in identity transformations. One of the concern was about the traditional role of women, whereby, they were only portrayed as being homemakers. Regarding this students commented:

“In recent years, viewers of television have witnessed a shift from portrayals of females as they should stay at homes or homemakers, to working ladies. While traditional heritage has characterised by the typical roles of women as they can be only homemakers, the portrayal of women on television has challenged this ideal. Rigid ideas of people now have changed and they send their girls for education easily, both the women in urban areas as well as in rural areas also”.

Some participants also pointed out that the talk-shows focused on presenting and highlighting social issues, have a great impact on viewers, for instance, talk shows, and serials that deal with the ill-effects of practices like “dowry, sati, child marriage, and drug abuse and child abuse, harassment issues etc. in the society”.

Negative effects of the television media on the society

In contrast to the views expressed about the positive effects of television media on the society, the focus group participants described specific negative effects as well. They agreed with one another that television places emphasis on materialistic values, which has promoted among society the greed for money and glamour. During the discussion about the materialistic aspect, some participants also raised the common observation that in television advertisements, rock bands and music videos are displayed in a way that gave away the message that dance and music are an enjoyable part of life. It creates an ideal life which is totally different from the actual productive life.

“It seems that they are presenting content only for the leisure aspect of life. There is no purpose of life left, instead of enjoying”.

The participants also pointed to the changing mind-set and deteriorating quality of lifestyle of people. Instead of spending their time in exercising, playing outdoor games, studying and reading good books, they spend all their evenings in front of television.

Many participants felt that television also has psychological effects that refers to what we can say dissatisfaction of one with his or her own self. Television also portrayed the image of unrealistic perfect body shape that motivate people to opt for unhealthy ways of weight loss in order to attain the athletic look and fairness of colour, that so many desires to be look like. This affects the viewers’ mentally and psychologically, as one of the participant named the diseases that caused by dissatisfaction form self in order to look like ideal “*bulimia and anorexia*”.

The respondents elaborated more upon the mental and psychological effects caused by the movies and music programmes shown on television. They said that violent and abusive rap songs are getting popularity day by day. The viewers are continuously exposed to violence and unhealthy habits like drug abuse, which resulted into frequent occurrence of such incidents where people exhibit low tolerance and aggressive behaviour. Regarding physical problems the students discussed how television had effected negatively physical well-being of the viewers. As mentioned by one of the participant that

“People who spend hours in front of a television, suffer from health problems like obesity”

Along with the psychological and physical effects, they also pointed out the cultural affects that how television affected our culture and value system. Although, all television programs should be aligned with the cultural practices of our society, nevertheless, the reality is opposite, and they did otherwise. This exaggerate the situations by declining our social values in a way that is conflicting to our Islamic education.

Productive role of television media in the society

Keeping in view that the television media has a strong influence, either positive or negative, in shaping the attitude, ways of thought and the lifestyle of people, the participants during the focus group discussions showed great interest and had given some suggestions regarding the productive role of television in the society. They said that Pakistani dramas on television should be created on pure Pakistani culture, reject westernization in the Pakistani society and reflect Islam as a strong basis for the future generations. Dramas should promote the dignity of women instead of highlighting their weaknesses. The focus of a drama should be on the story and growing ill practices in our society instead of glamour and romance. They should promote the way for youth in order to correct their weak aspects of personalities instead of promoting west, secularity and disrespect for their elders.

The participants of the focus group discussions suggested that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulating Authority (PEMRA) need to take different and severe actions against news channels, violating PEMRA Law and showing violence because, these kinds of programs and news containing violence are not just affecting local people, it create negative impact on our country in the whole world as well. PEMRA should give proper workshops about ethics of journalism and PEMRA rules, to every channel and make certain they have presented whole lectures to every single channel.

The participants further discussed and suggested that there should not be glamour or materialistic approach in the advertisement, for example, advertisements were not based on the target audience, rather, they tend to attract young adults and teenagers. These teenagers were in the age where they were always more conscious of their appearance, physique, clothes, and what they carry in their pockets. The advertisement should be with a thoughtful message rather than what we see in actual in the advertisement shown on the Pakistani television. The advertisements should stop touting products, which contain sexually explicit content, abusive language, and portray violence. But unfortunately, occurrence of these type of advertisements on television had increased.

Discussion

Living in the 21st century, we are being influenced by technology. As quantitative and qualitative results of this research indicated that television media has a great influence in our life. It provides us with information and entertainment. This came to observation that after the busy and hectic routine of the day, we tend to relax by watching television in the evening. In this way television becomes a pastime activity and posed a great influence on our society (Sigman, 2007). Television viewing has become such an integral part of everyday routine, that many people think that it is not possible to consider life without it. The participants of this research agreed that what they saw on television influenced them in many ways and they learnt intentionally and unintentionally from television. As Cortés (1979) argument also supports the findings of this study that television is a great source of informal societal curriculum.

It influences through the message it conveys. The content, which is presented on the television, affects the thoughts and behavior of the general public. It shapes ideas and attitudes of the people that one cannot deny the importance and exposure to the television (Sotirovic, 2005). However, we can't deny the power of television and also acknowledge its central role in the formation and practices of values. Whatever we watch and experience on television, it effects the way we think, molds and shape our behavior. Qualitative and quantitative findings of this study show the productive role of Pakistani media in today's scenario. So, there should be a link between what we study or what we watch on media. However, in practice, not only the violence is growing on television, but every form of immorality, is also being presented for our families, which in turn limit the effectiveness of formal curriculum. This affects our social values as well. The above discussion clearly indicates that in this modern era television as societal curriculum does not support the formal curriculum.

Conclusion

The present study was aimed at exploring the effects of electronic media, particularly the television as an informal curriculum, on social values in the Pakistani society. There is no refuting of the fact that the present modern society is going through a lot of social crises. Social value crisis is the one among these. Societal curriculum is an important part of learning, and if we see television as an important component of societal curriculum, we see that it has a great influence in our daily life and affecting the value system of our society. The dramas and advertisements shown

on television, were not promoting our religious, cultural and social values, nevertheless, affected the daily language use, spread offensiveness among the people, and encouraged the adoption of unethical ways of fulfilling their materialistic desires. The way news has been presented, affected viewer's perception, thinking and believing, created fear, and a sense of insecurity, resultantly, lost its value and importance among them. Therefore, it is suggested that the societal curriculum should be frequently considered in curriculum planning and implementation of school curricula. To teach without considering the implication of societal curriculum is useless. Students learn from societal curriculum, consequently, this learning affects their formal learning.

References

- Besley, J. C. (2008). Media use and human values. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(2), 2311-330. doi:10.1177/107769900808500206
- Carr, D. (2006). Moral education at the movies: on the cinematic treatment of morally significant story and narrative. *Journal of Moral Education*, 35(3), p.319-333
- Cortes, C. E. (1979). The Societal Curriculum and the School Curriculum: Allies or Antagonists? *Educational Leadership*, 36(7), 475-79.
- Cortes, C.E. (1981) The societal curriculum: Implications for multiethnic educations. In Banks, J.A (ed.) *Education in the 80's: Multiethnic education*. National Education Association.
- Faizi. W. N. (2010) *The Reflection Of Islamic Values In The Compulsory Subjects Of Social Sciences At Secondary (IX-X) Level In Karachi*
- Faizi. W.N., Shakil F.A., Akhtar. S., and Lodhi A. (2011) The Role of Different Factors in the Promotion of Islamic Values among the Students of Secondary Level in Karachi, Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 3 ISSN: 2222-6990
- Livingstone, D. (1999). Exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Findings of the first Canadian survey of informal learning practices. *CJSAE* 13 (2), 49-72.

- Lule, Jack. (2010) *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication, v. 1.0*. Retrieved from: http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/3833#lulemedia_1.0-ch03
- Lunenburg, F. C. & Ornstein, A. O. (2012). *Educational administration: Concepts and practices*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning
- Marsh, C. J. & Willis, G. (2003). *Curriculum: Alternative approaches, ongoing issues*. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.) Retrieved From:<http://coefaculty.valdosta.edu/stgrubbs/Definitions%20of%20Curriculum.htm>
- Neilson Media Research (2009) Americans watching more tv than ever; Web and mobile video up too. Retrieved from: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/americans-watching-more-tv-than-ever.html>
- Shockley-Zalabak, P. (1999) *Fundamentals of Organizational Communication: Knowledge, Sensitivity, Skills, Values*, Longman: New York.
- Sigman, A. (2007). Visual voodoo: the biological impact of watching TV. *Title image: Young child engrossed in a television programme. Photo: OscarBurriel/ Science photo library*, *Biologist*, 54 (1).
- Sotirovic, M. (2005). "Television and Child Development", *Journalism and Mass Communication*, 82(2), p.477-478.
- Spingel, Lynn. (1992). *Make Room for TV* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- Talla.M. (2012). *Curriculum Development; (perspectives, principle and issues)*. Printed in India at Efficient offset printers New Delhi.
- Wear. D and Skillicorn. J Hidden in Plain Sight: The Formal, Informal, and Hidden Curricula of a Psychiatry Clerkship The Educational Environment *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 84, No. 4 / April 2009
- Witenberg, R. T. (2007) The moral dimension of children's and adolescents' conceptualisation of tolerance to human diversity. *Journal of Moral Education*, 36(4), 433-451