Role of Entertainment-Education Dramain Awareness-raising amongst Young Women in Paki`stan

Qurrat-ul-Ann Malik
Aniqa Ali
Ayesha Sadaf

Introduction

The aim of the present research was to examine the extent of public awareness created as a result of TV content promoting social change and to find out whether such content promotes dialogue amongst the viewer’s leading them to provide support for pro-social change. In this regard; the perception of the television drama serial “Udaari” was analyzed which aired on Hum TV from 10/04/16 to 25/09/16. The play can be considered to be a classic example of Entertainment-Education drama as defined by Singhal& Rogers (1999) who suggested that such content is designed and implemented for the purpose of educating as well as entertaining so that there is an increase in the knowledge of the audience members about an issue.

Greenberg et al. (1989) pointed out that television is considered to be a primary source of awareness-raising about issues ranging from the environment to health. The drama under consideration was purposely developed to promote pro-social change and contained two primary messages, firstly recognizing child abuse and bringing the perpetrators to justice and secondly encouraging female economic empowerment.

The influence of interpersonal communication on drama has been found to be a very effective method for awareness-raising as compared to information without any story in it (McGill & Joseph, 1996). Further, though issues like child abuse are condemned by the society in general but no specific measures can be taken as it is a taboo topic for discussion. Research has shown that child abuse within the home and immediate surroundings (Abel & Harlow, 2001) is the most common kind yet the issue is kept under the wraps and is not discussed. Similarly, financial matters are not discussed with women leaving them without any knowledge which would be of benefit for them. This indicates the need to analyze whether the drama has generated effective public dialogue which can be a true indicator of the increase in awareness about these sensitive issues.
Background

When state Television was launched in Pakistan in 1964 as Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), the objective was to educate the viewers about the values that are necessary for building a “united, integrated and disciplined society”\(^5\). Throughout the history of PTV various attempts have been made to create awareness about social issues through entertainment education drama. The first attempt of this kind was the play entitled “Taleem-e-Balighan” which was aimed at promoting adult literacy. In the early days of PTV many such plays were aired. The first attempt at a collaborative effort for creating entertainment-education content was made in 1991 with the drama serial “Aahat” (approaching sound) which was sponsored by John Hopkins University, USA and focused on the desire for sons in a middle income family and the resultant problems for the entire household (de Fossard & Lande, 2008)\(^6\). The play was an instantaneous success which led to the next attempt at creating entertainment education through the play entitled “Nijaat” (Salvation) in 1993 with the same objective of introducing family planning.

The drama serial “Udaari” was aired on the popular entertainment channel on a primetime weekend slot. The play was a collaboration of Kashf Foundation which is the first micro-finance initiative of its kind in Pakistan (Oxford Policy Management, 2006\(^7\)) as well as the Hum TV’s own production house, Momina Duraid Productions.\(^8\) The play was written by a leading playwright Farhat Ishtiaq and directed by Ehtishamuddin. The play also featured a popular well-known cast including Bushra Ansari, Ahsan Khan, Samia Mumtaz, Urwa Hocane and Farhan Saeed.

There were two parallel storylines, the primary E-E messages were about a widowed woman Sajidawho marries to secure her own and her daughter Zebo’s future but it is her new husband who starts to sexually abuse her young daughter. When Sajida finds out the truth she runs away to the city and starts a catering business with the help of a small loan to stand on her own feet. These two themes were the primary messages in the play. In order to make the story more commercially viable two more themes were added one a romance between a popular onscreen couple and an ever popular rags to riches story where a village singer Meera who is ostracized because of being a “Mirasan” (hereditary musicians in villages) is discovered and her beautiful voice makes her a popular singing sensation. As the play is set in rural Punjab, the title of the play “Udaari” is a Punjabi word meaning “flight” and is meant to refer to the Sajida’s flight to freedom and Meera’s flight to stardom.

Literature Review

Entertainment-Education & Awareness-Raising

Various names have been given to the activity where media is used to deliver educational persuasive messages through any of the entertainment media
such as info-tainment, enter-education, edu-tainment, pro-social, pro-development as well as Entertainment Education (Brown & Singhal, 1993). Further, Singhal & Rogers (1999) suggested that such messages also create a favorable attitude, shift societal norms and also help in changing behavior patterns. In order to use the media to solve problems faced by humanity or to improve life quality, it is important that the mass communication strategies being used for development are successfully implemented.

Social learning theory is often utilized to look at E-E programming particularly on television (Brown & Singhal, 1999). Bandura (2004) links social learning with EE by suggesting that such content puts forward models of behavior which can be positive or negative and also presenting the consequences of their actions. Further, these presentations start dialogues and discussions which can lead to individual, communal or social level change. The social learning theory developed by Bandura (1986) pointed out that individuals learn their behaviors from multiple sources which also includes mass media. He further stated that the social learning process goes through a specific sequence involving four steps of attention, retention, production and motivation. Also, the media provides us with models to guide behavior in advance of actual experience. According to McQuail (2010) the social learning theory posits that the media plays a conformist role whereby the media do not put forward a pro-social or anti-social message but rather favor the persisting socio-cultural norm. However, Smith et al. (2006) found that a significant portion of TV content (73%) contained some positive message. Similarly Newcomb & Hirsch (1983) also observed that most TV content even humorous content contains references to larger social problems. Also, it is not just the producers who have hidden some kind of meaning within the content but it is mainly the audiences who take the content and create their own meaning and receive their own message.

Entertainment is perceived as being un-important and non-serious, which can bring about no significant change in the lives of the audience members and only takes up their time. However, Entertainment-education (E-E) is not tainted with this impression and is credited with a great amount of change in the lives of the audience members (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Also, researchers (Brown & Singhal, 1993, Piotrow, 1994) have elaborated that the entertainment genre is a good avenue to present pro-social messages because it is present everywhere, its popular, and the audiences consider it to be personal and pleasurable, and the messages can be more persuasive and passionate as well as being more practical.

Brown (1992) pointed out that the concept of combining education and entertainment is not wholly new. This has existed since the advent of the mass communication but it was only after the 1970’s that entertainment media started to be used to promote ideas and behaviors that could be considered socially desirable. Various factors such as social, economic and political transformation all over the world have created a dire need for creating “effective, equitable and socially acceptable communication strategies” that are aimed at solving social
Role of Entertainment-Education Dramain Awareness-raising amongst Young Women in Pakistan

problems. In earlier times, print was a more popular medium to present pro-social messages, now radio and TV have become a more feasible choice. Although E-E strategy is difficult to produce, requires a great deal of planning and analysis as well as presenting ethical dilemmas yet it has proven to be very effective in overcoming the two main limitations of entertainment and education, which are that entertainment alone can be degraded while educational content on its own is considered to be boring (Brown & Singhal, 1999: 263).

Research has indicated that many E-E programs aired all over the world such as in India, Kenya, Turkey, Mexico, Egypt, Brazil, Japan, China etc. which have met their objectives of creating pro-social change (Brown & Singhal, 1999, Brown, 199018, Kincaid et al. 199319). Also, the most commonly used media for E-E initiatives are radio or television which were used in Gambia, Zambia, Nepal, Tanzania and India about issues ranging from family planning, HIV prevention, reproductive health, antenatal care and inter-spousal discussions (Valente et al., 199420, Yoder et al., 199621, Storey et al., 199922; Vaughan et al., 200023; de Fossard & Lande, 2008; Papa & Singhal, 200924). Findings indicated that these interventions were fairly significant in promoting positive changes messages. However, an important element to consider is the timing of the media content, it has been observed that prime time airing results in generating discussions within the whole family which in turn ensures social change as a result of increased awareness (Papa & Singhal, 2009).

The primary method used by E-E dramas is that of story-telling which has proven to be very powerful way of communicating knowledge as well as experience. This is so because stories can be used to describe people’s behaviors, their interactions as well as the consequences of their actions. It has been found that when audiences observe these characters that are undergoing similar life experiences, they are compelled to adopt the change, even when their earlier behavior was rooted in culture and traditions (de Fossard & Lande, 2008). This is so because they relate and empathize with the situations, feelings and the conflicts of the characters (Singhal & Rogers, 200225). Also, when the audiences see these characters as being in control of their lives and solving their problems, they too will try to emulate them (de Fossard & Lande, 2008). This is in accordance with what Bandura (2004) posits that people can learn and believe that they have the ability to change when they observe others. Singhal, Rao & Pant (2006)26 suggest that the genre of the serial drama as a means for delivering the E-E message is very appropriate as the audiences get time to get to know the characters and the longer duration also allows for in-depth analysis of the issues. Also, the presence of the various sub-plots allow for a more varied perspective whereby multiple other similar issues can also be tackled (Singhal, Rao & Pant, 2006).

Analysis of the influences of a popular radio entertainment-education program revealed that listeners had an internal dialogue (para-social interaction) in their minds with the characters of the drama and were also discussing the contents of the program with their families and communities especially about sensitive and
taboo issues (Papa & Singhal, 2009). This is because social change is never a “simple linear process” as group discussions tend to counteract the influence of social messages and actually support social stability. The authors suggested that this was due to the social opposition present in the community which was contrary to the media messages. Inspite of this the authors pointed to the advantage of disseminating pro-social models of behavior that would encourage dialogue.

The objective for any entertainment programming is to create an obvious change in behavior (Khalid & Ahmed, 2014). Further, the strategy adopted by entertainment-education programming is primarily motivational rather than informational and acts as a catalyst in initiating interpersonal communication amongst peers which results in changes in the social discourse of the masses. Thus, the audiences are compelled to engage in fruitful discussions about issues learnt from E-E programming as well as adopting behavior change. Also, the role modeling by the audiences about the negative as well as positive characters portrayed in the programs as well as the script that was used also initiates also supports behavior change (Khalid & Ahmed, 2014).

Papa et al. (2000) tried to determine the contradictions and difficulties of the audience members when adopting the change messages being propagated by the media. Intense audience involvement with the media content leads to role modeling which may be strengthened by peer communication amongst audience members. Merely the exposure to media content seldom brings about the behavior change. Change occurs when media content encourages discussions between audience members, which further create individual and collective opportunities for social learning to analyze the new patterns of thinking and behavior. Collective efficacy and community action about pertinent social problems is only possible when there is interpersonal dialogue amongst the audience members.

Bandura (2002) also suggested that that personal influence can either reinforce or counteract the effects of media messages. Papa et al. (2000) suggest that behaviorally oriented para-social interaction is the extent to which audience members relate to media characters or discuss them amongst themselves. These conversations influenced by media content go a long way in convincing the audiences to adopt behavior change. This happens because the discussions create a “learning environment” where the audience members can test new ideas or behaviors. Also, sharing of related personal stories plays a strong role in this regard as well as discussions of outcomes or consequences of experiences similar to the narrated stories (Papa et al. 1995).

Wakefield, Loken & Hornik (2010) pointed out that mass media messages can set an agenda for and increase the frequency, depth, or both, of interpersonal discussion about a particular health issue within an individual’s social network, which, in combination with individual exposure to messages, might reinforce (or undermine) specific changes in behaviour. Similarly, Southwell & Yzer (2007) pointed out that interpersonal communication acts as an important
mediator in the influence of mass media campaigns for public awareness; they can either reinforce the campaign messages or even dampen their effect. Putte et al. (2011) found that public awareness campaigns about smoking cessation had greater impact when accompanied by social interaction and interpersonal communication. Also, mass media or interpersonal communication alone cannot bring about as much behavior change as mass media accompanied by interpersonal communication (Korhonen et al., 1998).

Based on the literature the following research questions were proposed for the study:

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Was the drama serial “Udaari” successful in generating dialogue about female economic empowerment?

**RQ2:** Was the drama serial “Udaari” successful in generating dialogue about child abuse?

**RQ3:** Did the exposure to drama “Udaari” raise awareness about adoption of preventive measures to stop child abuse?

**RQ4:** Did the exposure to drama “Udaari” raise awareness about female economic empowerment?

**Method**

The aim of the research was to gauge public perception about the entertainment-education based drama serial “Udaari”. For this purpose the methodology adopted was the survey format which has been found to be the appropriate method to check public perception regarding dramatic content (Kim et al. 2007, Liou, 2010, Li, 2014). As, the primary messages of the drama are targeted at women so it was important to gauge their perceptions, thus, the population of the study was female students over the age of 18 who as future homemakers and mothers will have the responsibility of looking after young children in their families as well as managing the family’s finances.

In this regard an instrument comprising of 20 statements along with demographic details was created which was first administered to 10 respondents as a pilot test to check its validity. As a result two items were discarded as being extraneous. Ratings for the 18 items were collected using a three point Likert-scale with statements ranging from dis-agree to agree. The sampling method adopted for the survey was the purposive sampling technique. The instrument was administered to 400 respondents who had seen the drama “Udaari”, but only 325 questionnaires were returned which showed a response rate of 81%. Further 9 questionnaires were discarded as they were either in-complete or contained errors. The final sample size for statistical analysis was 316.
The data was collected one month after the airing of the final episode of the play.

**Results**

Data was collected from female young adult audiences who had been exposed to the drama serial “Udaari”. The data revealed that out of 316, majority of respondents were students (65.8%) while 15.8% were self-employed, 2.8% were employed, and 15.5% were unemployed. With reference to qualification level of respondents, 54.7% had completed their graduation 32.6% had completed their post-graduation while 12.0% had completed their intermediate level studies.

The respondents were asked whether they viewed Pakistani television dramas, 12% stated that they rarely viewed them, 39.6% stated that they watched them sometimes, 31.6% respondents stated that they often watched them while 16.1% were regular viewers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to “Udaari”</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watched few Episodes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watched most Episodes</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>33.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watched all Episodes</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>53.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table 1 indicates that 53.8% reported that they have watched all episodes of drama “Udaari”, and 33.6% reported that they have watched most of the episodes of drama “Udaari”. Only 12.7% indicated that they have watched only few episode of “Udaari”.

**RQ1: Was the drama serial “Udaari” successful in generating dialogue about female economic empowerment?**

To understand that was drama “Udaari” successful in generating dialogue about female economic empowerment, following statements were asked;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After watching “Udaari” I often discuss financial matters with my family members now.</td>
<td>174 (55%)</td>
<td>84 (26.6%)</td>
<td>58 (18.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of respondents (55%) agreed that that they now often discuss financial matters in their family now, 26.6% remained neutral while 18.3%
disagreed with the notion (see Table 2). Findings thus suggest that the play was able to generate dialogue about financial matters to some extent.

**RQ2: Was the drama serial “Udaari” successful in generating dialogue about child abuse?**

To understand whether the drama serial “Udaari” was successful in generating dialogue and discussion among its audience about its major theme of child abuse, various statements were asked from the respondents such as how much its viewers discuss the issue shown in the drama.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liked the theme of Drama serial “Udaari”</td>
<td>252 (79.7%)</td>
<td>54 (17.1%)</td>
<td>10 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started thinking about the issue of child abuse after watching drama “Udaari”?</td>
<td>210 (66.4%)</td>
<td>62 (19.6%)</td>
<td>44 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After watching drama “Udaari” I discuss the issue of child abuse with my friends now</td>
<td>191 (60.4%)</td>
<td>59 (18.7%)</td>
<td>66 (20.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After watching drama “Udaari” I discuss the issue of child abuse with my family members now.</td>
<td>129 (40.8%)</td>
<td>90 (28.5%)</td>
<td>97 (30.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data revealed that majority of respondents (79.7%) like and understand the importance of theme of drama “Udaari”. 17.1% are neutral about it and only 3.1% do not agree with the importance of its theme. Majority of respondents have started thinking (66.4%) about the issue of child abuse after watching drama “Udaari” and only 13.9% are not concerned about the issue. Data also indicated that 60.4% respondents claim that they discuss this issue within their friends circle and 40.8% discuss with their family members as well. This indicates that although the drama was fairly significant in generating dialogue overall, it was not as effective in promoting family discussions.

**RQ3: Did the exposure to drama “Udaari” raise awareness about adoption of preventive measures to stop child abuse?**

To understand relationship between exposure to drama “Udaari” and awareness about adoption of preventive measures to stop child abuse following statements were asked (as shown in Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After watching drama “Udaari” I have become concerned about the welfare of young children in my</td>
<td>238 (75.4%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After watching drama “Udaari” I have become concerned about the welfare of young children in my</td>
<td>238 (75.4%)</td>
<td>50 (15.8%)</td>
<td>28 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After watching drama “Udaari” I have started taking preventive measures to protect the children in my family and surroundings  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After watching “Udaari” I have started thinking that women can financially support themselves.</td>
<td>233 (73.8%)</td>
<td>58 (18.4%)</td>
<td>23 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learnt from watching “Udaari” that women can also start their own business by taking a small loan</td>
<td>233 (73.7%)</td>
<td>53 (16.8%)</td>
<td>28 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After watching it, I have started thinking women need not be dependent on men to financially support them.</td>
<td>205 (64.9%)</td>
<td>61 (19.3%)</td>
<td>50 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 revealed that 75.4% respondents are concerned about welfare of children in their family and surroundings regarding this issue. Only 15.8% are neutral about it and 8.9% are not concerned about this. Moreover 57.6% are concerned and started thinking about taking preventive measures regarding this issue. 29.1% are neutral about preventive measures and 13.3% do not consider about taking any preventive measures. Thus, the drama serial was fairly successful in raising awareness about the adoption of preventive measures to stop child abuse.

**RQ4: Did the exposure to drama “Udaari” raise awareness about female economic empowerment?**

To understand relationship between exposure to drama “Udaari” and awareness about female economic empowerment following statements were asked (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5: Awareness about female economic empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After watching “Udaari” I have started thinking that women can financially support themselves.</td>
<td>233 (73.8%)</td>
<td>58 (18.4%)</td>
<td>23 (7.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learnt from watching “Udaari” that women can also start their own business by taking a small loan</td>
<td>233 (73.7%)</td>
<td>53 (16.8%)</td>
<td>28 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After watching it, I have started thinking women need not be dependent on men to financially support them.</td>
<td>205 (64.9%)</td>
<td>61 (19.3%)</td>
<td>50 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 revealed that 73.8% of the respondents agreed that after watching “Udaari” they have started thinking that women can financially support themselves, while 7.3% disagreed with the statement. 73.7% of the respondents agreed that they had learnt from the drama that women can also start their own business by taking a small loan while only 8.8% disagreed with the statement. Further, 64.9% of the respondents agreed that they have started thinking women need not be dependent on men to financially support them while only 15.8% disagreed with the statement.

**Findings and Analysis**

Findings of the study reveal that the Entertainment-Education initiative in Pakistan through the drama serial “Udaari” proved to be successful as the play received the highest rating amongst content from terrestrial, cable as well as satellite channels in 2016 (Media logic, 2016). This popularity supports the
assertion by researchers (Brown & Singhal, 1993; Piotrow, 1994; Brown & Singhal, 1999) that a popular drama can be a good platform to present pro-social messages as the messages are not perceived to be boring. The fact that the play was a drama serial and not a long play or drama series also went a long way in creating impact as previous research (Singhal, Rao & Pant, 2006) has pointed out that such programs allow for more time for the audiences to get to know the characters. The play was aired in the prime time weekend slot which could also have helped with its popularity as suggested by Papa & Singhal (2009).

The first research question related to whether the drama serial “Udaari” had been successful in generating dialogue about female economic empowerment while the second research question related to whether it had been successful in generating dialogue about child abuse. Findings indicated that the play had been fairly successful in generating dialogue about child abuse as well as female economic empowerment. Further, it was revealed that the play was successful in generating dialogues with family as well as friends which corresponds to assertions by Khalid & Ahmed (2014) that suggested that audiences often engage in fruitful discussions about E-E programming. Similarly, other researchers (Papa et al., 2000; Southwell & Yzer, 2007; de Fossard & Lande, 2008) also pointed out that interpersonal communication about E-E programming can act as a catalyst in encouraging behavior change amongst peers. Thus, it can be concluded that the E-E media messages have greater impact when accompanied by social interaction and interpersonal communication as elaborated by Korhonen et al. (1998) as well as Putte et al. (2011).

Another research question related to whether the drama serial “Udaari” had been successful in raising awareness about effective preventive measures to protect children from child abuse. Findings revealed that a majority of the respondents became concerned about the welfare of children in their family and surroundings and also started thinking about taking preventive measures. The study also showed that a significant majority of the female respondents suggested that there had been an increase in their awareness about female economic empowerment such as being financially independent and not financially dependent on men, or starting their own businesses etc. This corresponds to the assertions by Wakefield, Loken & Hornik (2010) that interpersonal discussion in combination with exposure to messages, might reinforce (or undermine) behavior change.

In conclusion it can be stated that E-E is an effective platform for creating pro-social change and keeping in mind the literacy rates as well as the socio-economic conditions of the majority of the populace measures need to be taken to create more programming of this kind for the betterment of society.
Notes and References


5. www.ptv.com.pk


8. www.hum.tv


33 Putte, Bas van den, Marco C. Yzer, Brian G. Southwell, Gert-Jan de Bruijn & Marc C. Willemsen. “Interpersonal Communication as an Indirect Pathway for the Effect of Antismoking Media Content on Smoking Cessation”, *Journal of Health Communication* 16, no.5, (2011), 470-485


