

Youth and Media - Its Implications

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ABSTRACT This study was conducted to find out the media habits or behaviour of youth in relation to their personal and family characteristics. The data was collected from 124 male and 153 female students youth selected from 2 female and 3 co-ed colleges. Univariate statistics, correlations and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The results indicate that the family characteristics of youth such as parents education, occupation, income and material standards of living are very much reflected in media possession, media exposure and perception of media autonomy, coverage and implications.

INTRODUCTION

Mass communication research has largely been a sideline to most psychologists who have written about it. Their primary interests are in other fields of psychology. They also move out of mass communications research very quickly. This lack of specialism enhances the chances of importing theories from other areas of psychology.

The mass media have made us instantly aware of the outside world. We are used to knowing what happens hundreds or thousands of miles away within moments of its happening. This outside world is delivered to the doorsteps by a newspaperboy or relayed by friendly people on radio and television, but the newspapers, radio and television seem no better at coping with it than we are.

What has mass communication done to society? Society must have changed in many ways with the advancement in communication technology. Has the change always been for better and can the media be blamed for the terrible things going on in the outside world which they bring to us so eagerly? Could we use the mass media to change the outside world to make it a less dangerous, less horrifying place.

More research has emphasized the role of the mass media in causing crime, violence, civil disturbance, educating those whom the education system has failed, and so forth. In short the research is social problem oriented rather than academic and theoretical. The earliest mass communication research by psychologists was probably the Lashley and Waston (1922) study of the effects of an anti-venereal disease film. This was foremost a pragmatic enterprise directed at a social problem, inclined towards a social engineering philosophy, and stemming from no particular theoretical interest at all. Himmelweit et al. (1958) conducted a research into the impact of television on children's education, attitudes and behaviour. Baker and Ball (1970) studied television violence as a possible contribution to the urban violence associated with demonstration and riots.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this investigation was to study the media habits or behaviour of youth in relation to their personal and family characteristics.

More specifically the objectives of this study are:

- to find out the extent to which youth are exposed to various means of mass communications;
- to study their perception of mass media in terms of credibility, autonomy and coverage;
- to understand the implications of mass media as perceived by youth;
- to identify significant personal and family correlates and determinants of mass media exposure and perception; and
- to generate and elaborate hypotheses as they are emerging from the data collected from youth.

METHODOLOGY

For this study relevant data was collected from 124 male and 153 female student youths selected from 2 females and 3 co-ed colleges conveniently selected from the capital city of Delhi. A self-administered questionnaire, which was pre-tested and pre-coded, was used to collect the data. These questionnaires were distributed to second and third year arts, commerce and science students either in the class or elsewhere, wherever they were available within the campus.

The questionnaire covered the following sets of variables .

1. Personal variables such as sex, age, type of course and type of high school where they have come from.
2. Family variables such as parent's education, occupation, income and material standard.
3. Mass media variables such as media possession, media exposure, media credibility, media perception, media coverage and media implications.

Statistical Analysis Used

- univariable statistics to see the distribution of youth on various parametres;
- bivariate tables to find out significant associations;
- correlations to identify significant relationships and;
- regressions to identify crucial determinants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Univariate Analysis: Table 1 shows that from a sample of 277 respondents 44.8 per cent males and 55.2 per cent are females, further 56.7 per cent are from arts group and only 43.3 per cent belong to commerce or science group. Finally most of the respondents, i.e. 58.5 per cent come from government schools and only 41.5 per cent from public school.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Youth by Personal Characteristics

Characteristics	Percentage
Sex Male	44.8
Female	55.2
Type of Course Arts	56.7
Commerce/Science	43.3
Type of High School Government	58.5
Public	41.5

Table 2 shows that so far as parents of these youth are concerned 74.7 per cent are highly educated are in service or business. These fall into the middle income group (Rs. 1001-2000) and the material standards of living of these people comes out to be 38.3 per cent,

It is clear from table 2 that :

- a vast majority of 75 per cent youth come from the highly educated class of parents.
- a considerably large majority also comes from the class of parents with relatively better occupations such as service, profession and business.
- a majority comes from the class of parents who belong to either upper middle or high income group with relatively better material standards of living.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Youth by Family Characteristics

Characteristic	Percentage
<i>Parent's Education</i>	
Low (2-4)	5.1
Medium (5-7)	20.2
High (8-10)	74.7
<i>Father's Occupation</i>	
Low (Cultivator/labourer)	30.7
High (Service, business)	69.3
<i>Income Monthly</i>	
Low (upto Rs. 1000)	11.9
Middle (1001-2000)	36.5
Upper Middle (2001-3000)	26.4
Higher (More than 3000)	25.3
<i>Materials Standards of Living</i>	
Low (0-2)	38.3
Medium (3-4)	36.8
High (5-6)	24.9

Table 3 gives a description of the material and media possession in terms of percentages. From a sample of 277 respondents only 25.5 per cent possess a car/jeep, 44.6 per cent possess scooter; 45 per cent possess telephone; 94.9 per cent possess the radio, 66.8 per cent possess AC/Cooler; 78.3 per cent possess refrigerator 53.6 per cent possess geyser, 90.1 per cent possess T.V. 80.4 per cent possess Tape-recorder, only 16.0 per cent possess VCR/VCP and 39.9 per cent possess stereo/record player. Among all the items the radio, TV and tape recorder, respectively seem to be the most popular or widely used items. The car and VCR is used by few individuals who belong to the high income groups.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Youth according to Material and Media Possession

Item	Percentage
Car/Jeep	25.5
Scooter	44.6
Telephone	45.0
Radio	94.9
AC/Cooler	66.8
Refrigerator	78.3
Geysar	53.6
T.V.	90.1
Tape Recorder	80.4
VCR/VCP	16.0
Stereo/Record Player	39.9

Table 4 gives the percentage distribution of youth according to media exposure. The newspaper is the most popular item, 82.6 per cent of the respondents read the newspaper regularly, next comes the television, 72.16 per cent watch T.V. regularly. Thus newspaper and TV are the most popular means of media. 46 per cent watch Indian films regularly and only 23.8 percent foreign films. 41.9 per cent listen to all India Radio regularly and only 35 per cent listen to Western music/songs. In case of magazines 40.8 per cent read current affair magazines and only 21 per cent read science/fiction magazines. The VCR is also used only by a small proportion of the sample, 19.1 per cent of the respondents only use VCR.

While 90 per cent youth possess TV, 96 per cent watch TV either occasionally or regularly. Similarly, even if only 16 per cent youth have their own VCR/VCP as many as 84 per cent are exposed to them. Interestingly the influence of western media seems to be quite high. About 83-85 of youth are exposed to western media/programme.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Youth according to Media Exposure

Item	Never	Sometimes/ Occasionally	Often/ Regularly
Newspaper	1.1	16.3	82.6
Novels/thrillers	23.1	50.2	26.7
Film magazines	13.7	65.7	20.6
Science fiction/ magazines	24.5	54.5	21.0
Current affairs magazines	14.4	44.8	40.8
Indian films	1.1	52.7	46.2
Foreign films	13.4	62.8	23.8
Western Music/songs	15.9	49.1	35.0
All India Radio	6.5	51.6	41.9
Foreign radio station	39.4	48.7	11.9
Watch Television	4.3	23.1	72.6
Watch video films	16.2	64.7	19.1

Table 5 shows percentage distribution of youth in terms of selected items related to credibility, autonomy and coverage of mass media. So far as credibility is concerned newspaper seems to have the highest credibility followed by TV, radio and film in that order.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Youth saying yes on various items Related to Perception of Mass Media

	Newspaper	Radio	T.V.	Films
<i>Do you think that :</i>				
- Presents a true picture of reality	63.8	46.0	51.0	34.0
- Takes impartial view on issues	62.8	47.4	50.2	44.4
- Provides complete information	57.3	36.1	38.5	21.3
- Gives useful information	95.6	85.4	83.3	50.7
- Misused by those with money power	56.1	34.3	51.5	
- Need for censorship	77.0	74.7	63.5	
- Need to be free from government control	76.5	68.7	68.8	
<i>Do you think that the following are adequately covered</i>				
Punjab problem	55.0	31.5	36.2	
Assam Problem	54.6	27.7	28.8	
Gujarat agitation	63.8	35.1	35.4	
Bhopal tragedy	69.4	53.9	53.1	
Riots after Mrs. Gandhi's death	56.1	38.5	41.8	

It shows newspaper is perhaps more misused by those with money and power than TV and radio which are controlled by government. Among government controlled media TV is more misused than radio. Interestingly about 75 to 77 percent youth want censorship for newspapers and radio. Even for TV about 64 per cent youth want censorship.

In terms of coverage of recent important issues like Punjab, Assam, Gujarat, Bhopal and death of Mrs. Gandhi, about 55 - 69 per cent youth felt that newspaper gave adequate coverage to these issues. As against this only about 28- 53 per cent youth thought that government media such as TV and radio adequately covered these issues.

The table 6 shows various implications of newspaper, radio and TV as perceived by the youth studied. According to their opinion TV has the maximum negative implications. Radio

and TV occupy the second and third positions. Only in advertising the goods which people cannot buy the radio gets the first rank followed by newspaper and TV.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Youth Saying Yes to Various items of Mass Media Implication

Do you think that it :	Newspaper	Radio	Television
- Disturbs your studies?	6.3	20.1	57.1
- Minimizes interaction with friends and relatives	14.7	6.5	46.2
- Encourage crime and violence in society	16.8	14.9	49.4
- Raises expectations which cannot be fulfilled?	33.0	33.1	59.3
- Advertises goods which we cannot buy?	42.4	56.4	25.6
- Undermines our rich Indian culture and tradition	25.6	28.8	39.9
- Paralyzes our ability to think independently?	32.8	31.3	35.2

TV seems to have significantly greater negative implications in terms of the follows:

- disturbs study and minimises interaction
- encourages crime and violence and raises expectations which cannot be fulfilled
- undermines rich Indian culture and traditions.

Correlational Analysis

Table 7 is the correlation matrix of all the variables included in our study. It gives us the extent of relationship among various variables included in the study.

Personal Characteristics

To begin with age has significant negative correlation with type of course and sex (-.25, -.12 respectively) which indicates that youth belonging to science/commerce group are younger than the youth belonging to arts groups. Secondly

Table 7: Pearsonion Zero-Order Intercorrelation Matrix

	Type of course	Sex	Age	Type of high school	Family Income	Father's Occupa	Parents educat	Material possission	Media exposure	
Type of course	1.0	-.06	-.25**	-.03	.10*	-.04	-.13**	.00	-.01	
Sex		1.00	-.12*	.12*	.06	.05	.17**	.18**	.02	
Age			1.00	-.02	-.11*	-.14**	-.27**	.01	-.00	
Type of high school				1.00	-.40**	.02	.21**	.35**	.27**	
Family income					1.00	.19**	.39**	.47**	.41**	
Father's occupation						1.00	.19**	.47**	.41**	
Parent's education							1.00	.41**	.41**	
Material possession								1.00	.62**	
Media possession									1.00	
Media Exposure										1.00

** significant at .01 level (r = .15)

*significant at .05 level (r = .13)

	Media Credibility	Media Perception	Media Coverage	Media Implication
Type of course	.11	.12	.13	.14
Sex	-.07	.04	-.07	-.12*
Age	.09	.01	.01	.15**
Type of high school	.11*	.08	.03	.13**
Family income	-.06	.18**	-.15**	.23**
Father's occupation	-.07	.08	-.02	.29**
Parent's education	-.05	.01	.03	-.11*
Material possession	-.12*	.23**	-.16**	-.28**
Media possession	-.4	.17**	-.11*	-.18**
Media Exposure	-.03	.07	-.01	-.014**
Media Credibility	1.00	.23**	-.07	-.19**
Media Perception		1.00	-.32**	.15**
Media coverage			1.00	-.15**
Media implications				1.00

**significant at .01 level (r = .15)

*significant at .05 level (r = .13)

the male students are relatively younger than the females in the same group, i.e. the science/commerce group. Type of school also has significant positive relationship with sex (.12) which shows that more female students come from public schools.

Family Characteristics

Family income has significant negative relationship with type of school (-.40) and age (-.11) which shows that parents with high income send their children to public schools and at a younger age. Family income also has significant positive relationship with type of course which depicts that there is the probability that well-to-do parents prefer their children to take up science subjects. Parents education has highly significant positive relationship with type of school (-.21) and sex (.17), it has significant negative correlations with age (-.27) and type of course (-.13), from these significant correlations we can infer that educated parents send their children to public schools at a younger age. Moreover the educated parents prefer their children to take up science subjects. The significant positive correlation between sex and parents education shows that in our sample the parents of the female respondents are more educated.

Family Characteristics and Material Possession

The significant positive correlation (.19) between father's occupation and family income indicates that higher the occupation of the father, higher will be the family income. There is also significant positive relationship between family income. There is also significant positive relationship between family income and parent's education (.39) this indicates that higher the education of parents, higher will be their occupation and therefore higher will be the income. Family income and parents education also have significant positive relationship with material possession 47 and 41, respectively. This simply means that parents education leads to higher family income which ultimately results in higher material possession.

Media Possession

The ownership of media is positively and strongly correlated with parent's education, income and material standards of living, which

means that higher the education; income and material levels of living of parents the greater will be the probability of having or owning various means of communication. Similarly we find that the type of high school is also positively related with media possession. This implies that youth coming from public schools are likely to have more mass media than others. This may be due to the higher levels of education, income and material standards of living.

Media Exposure

It is positively and significantly correlated with parents education income and material and media possession on the one hand and type of high school and type of course on the other. It seems that commerce/science youth are more exposed to mass media than arts youth.

Media Credibility

The credibility of mass media as a whole is positively correlated with age implying that elder ones are likely to consider media as more credible, and positively correlated with parents education implying that youth with less educated parents are likely to perceive media more credible. Mass media credibility is negatively correlated with media perception and positively with media coverage and media implications. It is quite possible that credibility depends on the media coverage and the implication perceived.

Media Perception

The overall perception of media is positively correlated with parents education and material possession on the one hand and type of school on the other. Similarly it is also positively correlated with media exposure. This means that youth with educated and rich parents, public school background, and higher exposure to mass media are more likely to have more positive perception of mass media.

Media Coverage

The degree to which media have covered various national issues of importance is negatively correlated again with parents education and material possession on the one hand and type of high school on the other. This also means that youth with rich and educated parents and public school background are likely to say that the media coverage was not adequate and sufficient.

Media Implications

The index of media implications was found to be negatively correlated with parent's occupation and education on the one hand and material and media possession on the other. This means that youth whose parents have high occupation and education and higher material and media possession are likely to perceive more positive implications of mass media than others perhaps due to the intensity of the exposure to mass media.

Interestingly family income and type of school are positively related with mass media implications, this indicates that youth coming from rich families and public school backgrounds are likely to perceive more negative implications than others. In addition to this we found that younger ones, females and arts youth are able to perceive more positive implications than others.

An attempt is made in table 8 to find out the significant determinants of selected mass media variables as zero-order simple correlations are likely to be dubious and spurious without any casual implications.

means that type of high school has nothing to do with media possession particularly when other variables are controlled. Table 8 shows that youth from wealthy, and educated families are likely to have more media possession.

Media Exposure

Table 8 shows that elder and male youth from educated families are more exposed to mass media. It also shows that parent's income, material standards and type of high school do not have direct effect on media exposure.

Media Credibility

Female youth are likely to perceive greater credibility of mass media than male youth.

Media Autonomy

Age has negative and parent's education has positive relationship with media autonomy. The younger youth coming from educated families are demanding more autonomy from the media.

Media Coverage

Youth coming from more educated and af-

Table 8: Significant Correlates (r) and Determinants (Beta) of Selected Mass Media Variables

Dependent/ Independent	Media Possession		Media Exposure		Media Credibility		Media Autonomy		Media Coverage		Media Implications		
	r	B	r	B	r	B	r	B	r	B	r	B	
1. Sex (1 male 2 female)	-	-.11	-	-.26	-	.14	-	-	-	-	-	-.15	-
2. Age	-	-	-	.13	-	-	-	-.14	-	-	-	-	-
3. Type of high school	.27	-	.24	-	-	-	.18	-	-.15	-	-.23	-	-
4. Income	.40	.11	.26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.29	-.16	-
5. Parent's Education	.41	.21	.26	.16	-	-	.23	.22	-.16	-.17	-.28	-	-
6. Material possession	.62	.50	.36	-	-	-	.17	-	-	-.15	-.18	-	-
7. Media possion	-	-	.21	-	-	-	-	-	-	.17	-	-	-

Media Possession

The significant determinants of media possession or ownership are as follows

- Sex
- Income
- Parent's education
- Material possession

Although simple r was not significant in case of sex, beta turns out to be significant implying that male youth are likely to have more means of mass communication. Similarly, type of high school was significant in terms of simple r but turns out to be insignificant in regression. This

fluent families are likely to feel that the media coverage of important national issues is insufficient and inadequate.

Media Implications

Only youth from richer families are likely to perceive more positive implications of mass media.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the main conclusions of the study. A majority of youth at the final stage of college came from the upper middle and upper

class of society. The family characteristics of youth such as parent's education, occupation, income and material standards of living are very much reflected in media possession, media exposure and perception of media autonomy, coverage and implications.

The personal characteristics of youth such as type of course and type of high school were also found to be influenced by their family background. For example youth from educated, rich and affluent families have opted for commerce or science rather than arts and had gone to public school rather than government school.

Male youth have greater media possession and exposure but perceive less credibility and more negative implications of mass media as compared to female youth. Younger youth are less exposed to mass media but demand more autonomy. The public school background of youth

is reflected in their choice of course, greater mass-media exposure, demand for media autonomy and perceive less negative implications of mass media and less media coverage.

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