

Impact of television on children's socialisation

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Abstract:

Television is one of the most influential mass media platforms, offering audio-visual programs that target all social groups. However, children are most affected by television, as they are more impressionable and more straightforward to influence.

Thus, this research paper aims to shed light on the topic of television and its role in the socialisation process of children by addressing the following points:

- *Television and its role in socialisation.*
- *Factors that make television a powerful tool of influence.*
- *The role of television in fulfilling children's diverse needs.*
- *The positive role of television for children.*
- *The negative role of television for children.*

Keywords: *role, television, socialisation, children.*

Impact de la télévision sur la socialisation des enfants

Résumé :

La télévision est l'un des médias de masse les plus influents, offrant des programmes audiovisuels qui s'adressent à tous les groupes sociaux. Cependant, les enfants sont les plus touchés par la télévision, car ils sont plus impressionnables et plus faciles à influencer.

Ce document de recherche a donc pour objectif de faire la lumière sur la télévision et son rôle dans le processus de socialisation des enfants en abordant les points suivants :

- *- La télévision et son rôle dans la socialisation.*
- *- Les facteurs qui font de la télévision un puissant outil d'influence.*
- *- Le rôle de la télévision dans la satisfaction des divers besoins des enfants.*
- *- Le rôle positif de la télévision pour les enfants.*
- *- Le rôle négatif de la télévision pour les enfants.*

Mots clés : *rôle, télévision, socialisation, enfants.*

Introduction

Mass media play a significant role in socialisation and have become an effective and influential tool in shaping the social development of societies. The family, in general, and children, in particular, have been significantly impacted by this influence. Television stands out among the various forms of media due to its ability to attract attention, captivate, and profoundly influence. It combines the advantages of radio in terms of sound, cinema in terms of images, and theatre in terms of movement, which brings vitality to the scenes it presents.

Television has become one of the most influential forms of media for children due to its impact and distinct characteristics compared to other forms of media. This research paper aims to explore these aspects and attempt to answer the following questions:

- What role does television play in the socialisation of children?
- How does television contribute to shaping a child's personality and social development?
- How does television contribute to fulfilling the various needs of children?
- What are the key characteristics, advantages, and functions of television?

Before addressing these questions, it is necessary to clarify some concepts related to the subject of this study.

1. Defining Key Concepts:

1.1. Television:

1.1.1. Linguistically:

The word *Télévision* is a combination of two terms: *Télé*, which means "remote" or "at a distance," and *vision*, which means "sight" or "viewing" (Khaled Al-Khatib, 1992, p. 5).

1.1.2. In Terms of Definition,

Television is a social institution consisting of administrative and technical services that broadcast media programs and shows via electricity and at a distance, utilising modern technological methods (Murad Zaimi, no date, p. 170).

Television is considered the most powerful media tool known to humankind because it combines image and sound, thereby stimulating both the auditory and visual senses – two of the most crucial senses closely connected to human thoughts and emotions. It often presents events as they occur, conveying meanings and emotions, and provides new, domestic, and international information in an easy and engaging manner. Television helps viewers understand their environment and gain insight into the world around them (Mohammad Munir Saad al-Din, 1998, p. 153).

Television is a mass communication medium known for transmitting various media content through sound and images. With the advances in new technologies for sending and receiving, television's communicative capabilities have greatly expanded. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in transferring and promoting information among individuals. Technological developments include the emergence of video devices, which complement the television set, direct broadcast satellites, magnification screens, and antennas (Hanaa Al-Sayed Muhammad, 1999, p. 14).

1.2. Socialisation:

The definitions of socialisation vary, sometimes referred to as the process of socialisation and social normalisation. In some cases, it is described as a process of socialisation, normalisation, and social integration, and some scholars even use the term "gathering process." Some of the most notable definitions include:

James Drever defined socialisation as "the process through which an individual adapts to or aligns with their social environment and becomes a recognised and cooperative member, capable and competent" (Abdel Rahim Al-Aswi, 2000, p. 261).

Brehm and Weiler define it interactively as "the process through which an individual acquires knowledge and skills that allow them to have the opportunity to participate in social life, as well as its members as active contributors" (Abdel Aziz Khawaja, 2005, pp. 15-16).

Meanwhile, Child added to the definition of socialisation, describing it as "the overall process through which an individual develops their behaviour within a more specific context, which is the usual and acceptable extent according to the norms of the group they are raised in" (Saleh Mohammed Ali Ayo Jadu, 1998, p. 77).

Robert and Don view socialisation as teaching beliefs and values, making the child responsible and an effective member of society. Similarly, Arden sees socialisation as a process of learning, teaching, and upbringing based on social interaction to enable the individual to acquire behaviours, standards, and attitudes suitable for specific social roles. This process allows them to align with their group, achieve social harmony, and gain a personality that facilitates their integration into social life. Through social interaction, the

individual learns their social roles and acquire the social norms that the group approves of, and that society accepts (Abbas Mohammed Awad, 1974, p. 65).

1.3. Child:

1.3.1. Linguistically:

The plural of "children," and the child refers to the newborn until adulthood, whether male or female. Al-Asma'i said: "A boy is called a child, and a girl is called a little child." (Fouad Afram al-Bustani, 1995, p. 443).

1.3.2. Terminologically:

Childhood is the phase immediately following birth and continues until full awareness and the ability to make decisions and take responsibility are reached, generally a few years after puberty. Sociologists define childhood as the stage where the child is always the respondent in social interactions and depends on their parents until they reach physiological and economic maturity. (Mansour Youssef Ali, 1999, p. 139).

Childhood is defined as: "The stage through which a human being passes from birth to around the age of twelve. The childhood stage is characterised by flexibility and adaptability. It is a phase of education and learning, where the child acquires habits, skills, mental, social, and sensory attitudes." (Amaal Dakkak, 1995, p. 156).

2. Characteristics of Television:

These can be summarised as follows: (Murad Zaimi, undated, p. 171)

- It combines vision, movement, sound, colour, and appeal.

- It enlarges small objects, reduces large ones, moves the static, and stabilises the moving.
- It is an economical medium in terms of the audience it reaches, its users, and the space it requires.
- It is the most comprehensive media institution in terms of functions.
- It is the most influential medium for individuals.
- It is easy to use (simple button, remote control, scheduled programming).
- The media institution is most capable of deception, distortion, and concealing facts.
- As a mass communication tool, television is no longer just a means for broadcasting recorded or live news via satellites. It has developed an extraordinary ability to persuade, influence, and dominate. (Fadil Dilio, 2007, pp. 125-126)

Marshall McLuhan believes that the medium is more impactful than the message, and he is famous for the saying: "The medium is the message." He argues that all the tools invented by humans are extensions of their senses. He views television as a crucial medium for societal change, as it has managed to turn the world into a small global village. McLuhan also considered that television brought humans back to their natural environment after printing had distanced them, as it confined them to using only their sense of sight. This led to alienation since the 15th century, making people prisoners of print. With television, however, humans can use all their senses. McLuhan believes that as long as the medium is effective, the message will inevitably be good, allowing viewers to participate and deeply interact with the television. (Jamal Al-Ayfa, 2003, pp. 68-69).

3. Features of Television:

- Television is an audiovisual medium for mass communication that broadcasts specific programs. It has characteristics and features not found in other media.
- Television culture revolves around the body, voice, and images. It exerts its influence on the viewer by combining the voice with the body, which represents one of its material foundations.
- The viewer's mandatory presence forces the individual to use both senses of sight and hearing, and their effects are embedded in memory.
- It does not require much mental effort and is characterised by attractive presentation, excitement, immediacy of events, and psychological comfort for the viewer.
- It possesses all the elements of persuasion, interaction, and penetration into human consciousness.
- It soothes tired nerves, helps release repressed emotions in the unconscious, and stimulates many conscious and unconscious mental processes, such as illusion, imagination, and a sense of boasting.
- It freezes the mind at specific cues, leaving no time for processing, scrutiny, or critique due to the overwhelming flow of information and images.
- Television is an entertaining and educational medium that provides global media coverage, making it a tool for communication and understanding between people.
- It contributes to consolidating or gradually changing the prevailing values, norms, and traditions in society according to the sender's will and ideology.

- It shapes diverse behaviours by presenting ready-made behavioural patterns that viewers imitate or show off.
- It breaks down class barriers because it targets various educational, social, and ethnic backgrounds and all age groups. It spreads the culture of the masses, which imposes itself on all populations and transforms into a common sense that manifests in practical behaviour.
- The image should not deceive one as objective truth. It is, in fact, the truth that the sender wants to highlight or portray as the truth. The selection of scenes, shots, angles, exaggerating one scene while minimising another, points of focus, and image backgrounds are all influenced by specific ideological dimensions.
- The television image has the astonishing ability to summon the absent and obscure the present. The image almost replaces reality – there is only what the camera shows. Events that the television camera has not captured or does not want to show and broadcast are forgotten events that do not exist for most television viewers.

4. Functions of Television:

Its functions are informative, marketing, entertaining, social services, political, religious, cultural, educational, and instructional (Murad Zaimi, no year, pp. 172-178).

We will detail the most important functions:

4.1. Educational Function:

Mass media, especially television, is key in spreading and generalising human knowledge. The dissemination of

knowledge enriches the mind and personality, helping to enhance a person's skills and abilities throughout their growth stages. Television programs fulfil psychological needs and spread joy among people by connecting different societies and shortening distances. Television can create familiarity and knowledge between children and unfamiliar subjects, especially when these subjects are presented in a dramatised form.

4.2. Entertainment Function:

Children find television attractive, enjoying the movement, colour, and sound even before they understand what those movements or songs represent. They begin to choose their favourite programs and, even before age three, insist on watching certain cartoons, expressing their admiration for simple forms of expression.

4.3. Social Function:

Television has become an effective tool for transmitting society's habits, values, and traditions to children. Studies have shown that children are drawn to stories featuring talking birds and animals and tales of courage, heroism, and adventure. This aids in their attachment to noble ideals.

4.4. D. Educational Function:

Children, in particular, are targeted by the educational programs offered by television. Children's desire to watch these programs leads them to imitate what they see, whether in terms of understanding, behaviour, or scientific ideas. Television is an educational media tool that supports the school curriculum by showcasing experiments and teaching languages through sound, image, and word. For television to be an effective educational tool in the learning process, its

programs must align with the school curriculum and use the best educational methods.

5. Factors of Television's Power and Influence as a Media Tool:

Television has become the leading media tool for audience numbers and diversity, reaching various segments of society. It is also the most effective advertising medium. It has become the primary tool for political propaganda in the hands of governments due to its advantages that no other media form possesses. The presence of this media service in any country is seen as a sign of its cultural and civilisational advancement, as well as its openness to global events and interaction with them. Governments have found it to be an unparalleled tool for shaping public opinion, influencing beliefs, and consolidating convictions to control the emotions and feelings of people (Anshrah Al-Shal, 1988, p.99).

Some of the most significant factors that make television a powerful media tool include:

- Speed in delivering news and events.
- Free access to services.
- Changing patterns of collective entertainment and recreation.
- Broad reach and extensive coverage.
- Ability to update and follow events in real time.
- Multiple sources of television programming.
- The addictive nature of television.
- The variety of entertainment content offered.

6. The Educational Role of Television:

Television is considered one of the significant mass media tools humanity has known since the invention of the print-

ing press and the emergence of newspapers. It unconsciously contributes to the process of socialisation, value formation, and the development of attitudes in children. Depending on the appeal and type of programs offered, children learn a lot through television.

For television to play its role in education and proper socialisation, the content should align with the child's age, interests, and needs, and these programs must be related to the child's environment. The programs should be transparent, honest, and objective, without contradictions between different programs. Additionally, television must strive to achieve the following goals seriously, including:

- Satisfying the child's desires.
- Supporting the role of home and school in the educational process.
- Informing the child about what is happening around them and the events in the world.
- Contributing to the child's education, guiding their behaviour, and instilling values that society accepts.
- Contributing to instilling religious, national, political, social, and economic values.
- The child will be trained to appreciate beauty through various programs, such as music, painting, poetry, and quiz shows.

7. The Role of Television in Satisfying Children's Needs:

According to Ahmed Jassn Al-Khalifi (2009), education aims to provide children with care that helps them grow healthily and holistically across all physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. Television plays a crucial role in this process due to its ability to attract attention and influence. The educational function of televi-

sion is evident in the following areas (Murad Zaimi, no date, p. 75)

- Influence on beliefs, perceptions, and ideologies.
- Influence on language.
- Influence on behavioural.
- Influence on attitudes.

Some of the key roles that television plays include:

7.1. Physical Growth of the Child:

Television can guide children and encourage them to follow general health guidelines, show them ways to prevent illnesses, instil healthy habits, teach the correct methods for eating, drinking, sleeping, and dressing, and encourage physical exercise. Programs that address all of the above-mentioned aspects achieve this.

7.2. Psychological and Emotional Growth:

Children have psychological and emotional needs that must be satisfied. These needs include love, belonging, security, self-esteem, success, freedom, self-regulation, guidance, and knowledge. These needs should be fulfilled through various purposeful and meaningful television programs. Such programs help children develop good character and healthy psychological attitudes like self-confidence, respect for others, honesty, and sincerity while maintaining freedom of opinion, supporting the truth, and properly guiding their emotions and feelings. They also foster values of citizenship.

7.3. Intellectual Growth:

Television should contribute to the growth and development of children's thinking through different programs and encourage them to ask various questions. In this regard,

John Locke states, "Encourage the child's inclination to ask questions as much as you can."

7.4. Social Growth:

Family and social relationships often face disruptions that affect a child's social growth. These disturbances can sometimes persist throughout their lives. Therefore, television must promote healthy social relationships, guide children in behaving appropriately and teach them about their rights and responsibilities—especially during the transition to school. This phase represents a shift from a small environment to a larger one, where family members like siblings and parents are not as present, which can lead to psychological or social impacts due to this change. Television should address this transition and make it smooth by presenting programs that describe school life, make it appealing to children, and encourage them to open up to the external world. It should also promote the development of strong relationships and deep friendships with peers.

7.5. Development of Religious Values:

Just as children need to develop social values, they also need to develop religious values. While the primary role in teaching these values falls on the family, television is complementary in meeting the child's religious needs through various programs. Television helps instill faith, ethics, and religious practices by teaching the child the ways of worship and the values derived from our noble religion. It clarifies what is permissible (halal) and forbidden (haram), what is right and wrong, and teaches patience, strength, and resilience in the face of hardships. It also encourages self-control and instills values such as honesty, kindness, justice, duty, endurance during adversity, bravery, humility, mercy, loyal-

ty, compassion, maintaining family ties, honouring the rights of neighbours, refraining from harmful speech, doing good deeds, and caring for the poor and needy – traits that every Muslim should embody.

8. Positive Aspects of Television: The following are some of the positive aspects of television:

- Television is more effective at attracting attention than other forms of communication, as it combines sound and image and relies on the senses of hearing and sight.
- Psychologists emphasise that the more senses are involved in receiving a specific idea, the more it strengthens and solidifies it in the individual's mind. This highlights the importance of television as an educational medium.
- Television presents media content in real-time, providing viewers with a collective sense of experience.

There are three significant uses of television in children's lives:

- The joy and impact television adds to children's lives are reflected in their enthusiasm for their favourite programs.
- The information television provides on various aspects of life influences their behaviour.
- Television has social benefits, as it facilitates collective viewing opportunities and offers ideas and values to both young and adult viewers, fostering discussions among them. (Jamal Abdu Muhammad Suleiman, 2006, p.46)

Additional benefits of television for children include:

- Enhancing their linguistic skills and promoting the use of formal language.
- Introducing them to new and different worlds, they would not have known about at this age without television.
- Acquiring behavioural patterns and experiences.
- Forming a mental image of the world.
- Transmitting social heritage and positive social values through certain films, series, and children's programs.
- Providing entertainment options for children.
- Contributing to the development of positive values. (Nawaf Adwan, 1990, p.85)
- Television serves as a means of communication with the surrounding society, helping children interact, innovate, and learn.

9. Negative Impact of Television on Children:

Excessive television watching and spending too much time in front of the screen detracts from engaging in other, more beneficial activities. Children, one of the most age-sensitive groups to television, tend to watch it for extended periods. One study found that "children watch television for an average of three hours and 35 minutes daily, and a child over the age of three spends one-sixth of their waking hours in front of the screen" (Mohamed Maawad, 1994, p.112).

Sociologists believe that television fulfils young people's desire for adventure, freedom from restrictions, and connection with the adult world. It also satisfies their need to develop an identity. However, excessive viewing can lead to behavioural deviations (Mohamed Maawad, 1994, p.177).

- **Physical Impact on Children:** Late-night television watching affects children's health and general well-being, leading to fatigue when they wake up. This

tiredness may even cause them to fall asleep during school hours. Additionally, excessive screen time impacts eyesight, as the continuous focus on images and motion within a small area can strain the eye muscles, especially if viewing conditions are incorrect. Bright or dim lighting, as well as improper distances, contribute to eye strain.

- **Social Isolation:** Television kills social relationships by filling the viewer's free time, leading them to become accustomed to laziness and inactivity. It also negatively impacts family relationships, reducing interaction between family members, with each person focusing on their preferred program.
- **Learning Violence:** Some children blur the line between the real world and the world of fantasy and mimic aggressive behaviours they see on the screen in their daily lives. They experiment with violent actions, such as fighting techniques and dangerous stunts, through historical dramas, adventure films, and heroic characters.
- **Reduced Creativity:** Television reduces independent thinking and creativity, as the child becomes a passive receiver of information without an active role in processing or critically analysing it.
- **Distorted Mental Images:** Watching television for long periods can lead to confused or distorted mental images about the world.
- **Exposure to Adult Content:** Watching programs intended for adults may lead to a cultural imbalance. Children may mix adult culture with their own and engage with topics beyond their maturity level.

- **Waste of Time:** Excessive television watching wastes time that children should have spent gaining direct life experiences and may lead to television addiction, affecting their health.
- **Negative Impact on Direct Experience:** Television watching deprives children of time they should have spent acquiring direct experiences and life skills (Atef Adly Al-Abd, 1995, p.97).

Conclusion

In conclusion, television plays a significant role in the socialisation of children, as they are the age group most influenced by the models presented on TV and the type of programs, incredibly animated shows, through which ideas, traditions, cultures, and behaviours are transmitted. Therefore, monitoring and supervising what children watch should remain a priority for parents. The National Centre for Educational Statistics in the United States reported that the daily viewing time for young children exceeds three hours, which is a substantial amount of time that may lead to various issues like autism and others.

Teaching children discipline in television viewing by using persuasion and dialogue, setting a daily viewing schedule appropriate for their age, and avoiding TV watching during exams and study days is advisable. Additionally, we must set an example for our children by watching meaningful programs, participating in their viewing experience, and diversifying the programs watched, including educational, cultural, and religious content.

Although these guidelines may seem difficult at first due to children's attachment to television, their upbringing and

mental and physical well-being require us to be vigilant, firm, consistent, and wise in regulating their television-watching habits.

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