



# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDIA FOR ADOLESCENTS AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine what role the media played for adolescents during the Covid- 19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. There are more than 300 million adolescent boys and girls in India. The emotional and mental development of adolescent boys and girls depends on many factors, the media being one of them. The main function of the media is to inform, entertain, serve and enlighten the masses. Adolescents are also a major part of our society. The media is expected to meet the content needs of adolescents, but it has been noticed that adolescents are the most neglected social factor during the Covid-19 pandemic. Adolescents are becoming heavy viewers of smartphones and trapping themselves in a trap of cartoon series, games and pornographic content. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on their body and mind. It is the responsibility of the parents, teachers and the media to rescue them from this trap. Media literacy is the only way to hope. This can only be achieved if the government, schools, teachers, parents and the media come together and train adolescents in media literacy in a planned manner. This research is based on observation carried out on adolescents and followed by interviews of parents. This research is based on primary as well as secondary data.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Covid -19, Media, mobile phone, Lockdown, online, Pandemic, Social distancing.

## Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 has affected all nations, society and people. Lockdown started in India at the end of March 2020. Suddenly schools, colleges, playgrounds, movies, newspapers, magazines closed. With the shooting of new programs stopped, TV channels started airing old programs.

The lockdown prevented everyone from going out on the streets, meeting friends and relatives. The whole world was terrified of Covid and every family was affected directly or

indirectly by Covid. Everyone began to feel sad and anxious about the future. Adolescents also began to suffer from this fear.

Parents, schools, teachers and the media play an important role in this. The media is the primary source of information and plays an important role in educating the masses. This research paper is based on observations and interviews of parents.

The most neglected social component of the Covid epidemic is adolescent boys and girls. Lockdown started in India at the end of March 2020. Suddenly schools, colleges, playgrounds, movies, newspapers, magazines closed. With the shooting of new programs stopped, TV channels started airing old programs. The lockdown prevented everyone from going out on the streets, meeting friends and relatives. The whole world was terrified of Covid and every family was directly and indirectly affected by Covid-19. Everyone began to feel sad and anxious about the future. Adolescents also began to suffer from this fear.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as “Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19”. There are more than 300 million adolescent boys and girls in India. The physical and mental development of adolescent boys and girls depends on many factors. Parents, schools, teachers and the media play an important role in this.

The media is the primary source of information and plays an important role in educating the masses. The main function of the media is to inform, entertain, serve and enlighten the masses. In this research, the researcher seeks to answer the question of whether the media has succeeded in meeting the needs of the adolescent audience.

### **Objectives:**

- i) To know effects of Covid-19 pandemic on society.
- ii) To know the problems of adolescents during pandemic.
- iii) To know the role of media for adolescents during Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Research Question:**

Whether the media has succeeded in meeting the needs of the adolescents?

### **Methodology:**

This research is based on observation carried out on adolescents and followed by interviews of parents. Sample size is 12 boys and 8 girls, total 20. Short interviews of 20 parents. This research is based on primary as well as secondary data. This research paper is based on George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory; he proposed that “cultivation theory assumes that viewers who are heavily exposed to TV are more likely to perceive TV as being realistic than lighter viewers”. (Mosharafa, 2015)

### **Discussion:**

In the pre-covid period, boys and girls spent most of their time in school and class. Parents used to enroll their children in sports and ritual camps during the school holidays. But due to Covid-19, children and parents are confined at home. Scientists around the world are working to save lives. Vaccines have now been developed and vaccinations have been

introduced for individuals over 18 years of age. However, adolescent boys and girls are still not considered.

Schools have been online for the last year and a half due to Covid -19. So the parents gave the children mobiles. Mobile has become a magic wand for the teenage generation. For the first few days, the boys and girls appreciated the online classes. But within a few days the excitement subsided, many students pretended to be online but actually muted the sound and video and watched other things. Now parents are happy because they think their children are learning on mobile, teachers are happy because they think students are attending their online class and children are happy because they can see what they want on mobile. Such a joyful learning is currently underway. It has been proven by many surveys that teens are more confident in media content. "Content of the media consumed by children and adolescents is dominated by sexuality and (especially) violence".( Arnett 2007)

Due to availability of internet connectivity and smartphone everyone is connect globally. "In the Internet era, pornography has become easily accessible to people of all ages, including children and adolescents".( Werner-Wilson. 2004). Porn links are readily available on mobile phones and there are many games that keep children awake day and night. As a result, some teens get caught up in mobile games and porn, and parents don't realize it. Some teens are addicted to mobile. If you take the mobile out of their hands for fifteen minutes, they become restless first, then aggressive. Therefore, parents do not dare to remove their children's mobile phones. Teenagers have gone beyond the limits; they spend all day watching everything on mobile. They are emotionally moving away from school, teachers and parents. Their minds are shrinking due to the freedom of unlimited use of the internet. In these days, thousands of teenagers are suffering from the bad effects that a cell phone led to them.

Parents in urban and rural areas, on the other hand, are struggling to survive. Covid-19 has shut down many industries in the city, so there is no employment, so the workers returning to the village are in a lot of trouble.

Parents are marrying off girls at an early age as it seems difficult to take responsibility for them. Parents' financial situation does not allow them to have time for their children, they do not have the means to buy a smart phone for their children. Even if a child takes a mobile phone, their children are being thrown out of the competition due to lack of mobile network and lack of electricity. The knowledge gap between rich and poor students is widening. This will lead to new crises in the future.

"Adolescents are active consumers of messages broadcast on radio and television, printed in magazines, distributed on the Internet, and presented in video games" ( Lemish 2015)

The media did not fulfill its responsibility during Covid-19. Even before the Covid-19 crisis, the media did not think much about the world of adolescents. During the Covid-19 outbreak, the media had to face a crisis of survival; therefore, the media did not pay much attention to the problems of teenagers. The shooting of new films stopped due to the closure of the cinema, so the cinema media did not get a chance to do anything. Radio is mainly controlled by the government and in some places All India Radio has made efforts for online education. Private FM radio stations only have the freedom to play songs. Since the target

group of private radio stations is young audiences, they prefer to play love songs. New emerging OTT platforms like Amazon, Netflix are competing to show romantic, uncensored scenes to attract young viewers, so they have no reason to worry about the teenage generation. Newspapers and magazines were closed for some time. When they started their publications, the parents did not dare to buy it for fear of Covid -19. Now the situation is nearly normal, but newspapers and magazines have lost the capacity to meet the reading needs of teenage readers. The writing in it does not succeed in connecting with the emotions of teenagers. Television was also initially in crisis as the shooting of series and reality shows was not allowed, so old programs were being rebroadcast. Filming was allowed a few months later, however, TV channels resumed orthodox, conservative programs, no matter how baseless and repetitive. There are more violent, brutal programs on channels like Pogo, Cartoon Network, which are for children. The tenderness, innocence, purity of children's minds is nowhere to be found. During the Corona period, the media failed to teach adolescent boys and girl's brotherhood, unity, and good manners. "Provide children's with media content prepared for them especially for them without taking advantage of them, content that entertains but entertains but at the same time tries to advance children physically, mentally and socially" (Levish 2015)

George Gerber's Cultivation Theory was based on television viewers. But it is also applicable to mobile screen viewers. Adolescents are becoming heavy viewers of smartphones and trapping themselves in a trap of cartoon series, games and pornographic content. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on their body and mind. It is the responsibility of the parents, teachers and the media to ensure that the brotherhood of these teenage boys and girls was not compromised during this period. When teenage boys and girls hang out with friends, play and become social, they are unknowingly nurtured by mutual affection, brotherhood, collective effort and philanthropy. With it all closed, this teenage generation is becoming like a bonsai. This generation will grow up but it is a big concern that they will stay away from culture, friendship, dialogue, cooperation and brotherhood. Bringing this teenage generation back to real life and educating them as responsible citizens of tomorrow is a big challenge. The government is also confused about when and how to start the school. The government should come up with a special policy for the teenage generation and help these schools, teachers, parents and the media. It requires solid planning, tireless efforts. If we do not do this, we will face an incomprehensible and big crisis in the future. Media literacy is the only way to hope. This can only be achieved if the government, schools, teachers, parents and the media come together and train adolescents in media literacy in a planned manner.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation:**

### **a) Conclusion**

- i) Media do not give any attention towards needs of adolescent viewers during Covid-19 pandemic.
- ii) With the availability of smartphones with internet facility, many adolescents get trapped in mobile games, cartoons and porn content.
- iii) Adolescents are facing many health and psychological problems due to Increased

screen time.

**b) Recommendations:**

- i) It is necessary to minimize screen time of adolescents.
- ii) Implement media literacy training programs for adolescents in every school.

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