

A Case Study :

Influence of television viewing on the developmental tasks of elderly

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ABSTRACT

The present paper describes about the influence of television viewing on elderly citizens residing in Vadodara city of Gujarat. From 500 elderly citizens quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Findings of the study revealed that there was moderate influence of television viewing on elderly. High influence of television viewing for the developmental task ADJUSTING TO DETERIORATING PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND HEALTH of television programmes is there. There was strong recommendation for a special channel for elderly, which can telecast information and issues related to elderly

Key words : Influence of TV, Developmental tasks

When the elderly watch the television, it becomes a part of their daily routine. They receive entertainment and information about the world just sitting in the four walls for their houses. The television helps the elderly to reduce loneliness in their life. Variety of programmes on the television caters to wider interests groups of the elderly. There are programmes on sports, music, films, business, health and fitness news, wild life, travel and fashion. The elderly can watch programmes of their interest during the leisure time it happens to them without spending much money and discomfort. While they are bedridden or alone at home, they want to pass their time or want some information related to their own health or about how they should lead their life in a changing world. They have access to the television for such purpose just sitting at home and without sacrificing their household responsibilities.

The role of the television is to spread information and awareness amongst masses related to present, past and future on issues of our country and its people. "Old age" or the "aged" is one such group whose population is rapidly increasing. They have their own needs, problems and issues and should be adequately attended to by the society. Media owes responsibility for this emerging group of audience with specific characteristics. Therefore, it is a need of an hour to telecast programmes, which are helpful for the elderly to lead a happy life. There is no research data available, which indicates the influence of television viewing on elderly, hence the study was undertaken with the following objectives: to study the influence of television viewing on elderly citizens in relation

to their following developmental tasks:

- Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health
- Adjusting to retirement and reduced income
- Adjustment to death of spouse
- Adapting to social roles in a flexible way
- Establishing satisfactory physical living arrangement.

Population of the study:

The population of the present study comprised of elderly citizens (60 and above) watching television from Baroda city of Gujarat State.

Selection of the sample :

The sample of the present study comprised of 500 elderly citizens watching television and residing in various residential areas of Baroda city.

A purposive sampling method was used to draw the sample. Researcher identified 22 senior citizens' clubs functioning actively in Baroda city, which are visited regularly by their members. Out of these 22 senior citizens' clubs, three situated in different directions of Baroda city were contacted, namely - Karelibaug, Sardarnagar and Subhanpura Senior Citizens' Club. Elderly citizens used to meet in these clubs once in a week. Researchers asked these members, whether they watched television. Those watching television were selected as sample of the study. Almost 40 elderly citizens from each club were selected as sample of the study. Thus, the total was 120.

These 120 elderly citizens provided the names and

addresses of the elderly citizens whom they knew. The names and addresses of elderly citizens were also collected from colleagues, friends, relatives, neighbours, who knew elderly citizens watching television. The snowball sampling technique was used to identify the sample that represented North, East, and West and South of Baroda city.

Research tools for data collection:

The present study was an Ex-post facto research. Therefore, survey method was adopted for studying the influence of television viewing on elderly citizens. The questionnaire, opinionnaire, test, proforma, and rating scales were used as tool for data collection. The tools were prepared in English and then translated in to Gujarati for better comprehension by the respondents and ease in communication.

Data collection:

Data were collected from 500 elderly citizens residing in different residential areas of Baroda city during November 2004 to January 2005. A large number of respondents were identified through senior citizen clubs of Baroda city. Many a times, elderly citizens took more than 30 to 35 minutes to fill the questionnaire as it required them to do some thinking on the items and relating it to their television viewing habits. Interview method was used to collect data from those elderly people, who faced difficulty in reading or were not used to filling the Questionnaires. Focus Group Discussion method was used to collect qualitative data from selected elderly citizens of Baroda city.

Findings of the study:

– Overall and task wise, there was moderate influence of television viewing on the developmental tasks of elderly citizens. The influence of television viewing was higher on the developmental task - “Adjustment to decreasing physical strength and health” than other developmental tasks.

– Higher percentage of the elderly citizens perceived moderate influence of television viewing on all the developmental tasks except one task, *i.e.* “Establishing satisfactory physical living arrangement”, wherein the higher percentage of the elderly citizens showed less influence of television viewing on them. Nearly thirty per cent of the elderly citizens showed high influence of television viewing on the developmental tasks, *i.e.* adjustment to decreasing physical strength and health, adjustment to retirement and reduced income, and adapting to social roles in a flexible way. Very few elderly citizens

showed less influence of television viewing on the developmental tasks adjustment to decreasing physical strength and health, adjustment to retirement and reduced income, and adjustment to death of spouse.

Item wise findings regarding developmental tasks of elderly:

Intensity indices were calculated for the items indicating the influence of television viewing on the developmental tasks of elderly citizens *i.e.* adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health, adjusting to retirement and reduced income, adjustment to death of spouse, adapting social roles in a flexible way and establishing satisfactory physical living arrangement. The items for each developmental task, which reflected high and low intensity, are reported in Table 1.

In relation to the developmental task “Adjustment to decreasing physical strength and health”, elderly citizens reported that watching of television programmes, to a great extent, led them to eating of junk foods and use of cosmetics / creams to look younger. Watching of television programmes, to a great extent, made elderly citizens feel ashamed of their deteriorating health, inferior about their physical looks, and they also felt that they look older than their age (Table 1).

Table 1 further reveals that watching of television programmes to a great extent, disturbed sleep of elderly, made changes in their meal times, led to eating packaged food, and they spent buying their money on new health related products, and also made them sacrifice doing other important activities. Watching of television programmes to a lesser extent developed ability to adjust to their deteriorating health.

In FGDs, elderly citizens discussed that television played a role towards their physical and mental health. They came to know about various home remedies for common diseases, Ayurvedic medicines to control diabetes, Yogasans and Yoga which led to living better life and about taking balanced diet. Few of the elderly citizens got motivated to participate in sports and various other physical exercises by watching sports programmes on television. One elderly woman said that after watching sports programmes and especially swimming competitions, she was motivated to join swimming classes.

One of the elderly male participants said that watching television programmes leads to mental illness and mental breakdown. When participants were asked regarding the influence of television advertisements on them male participant said that they never got tempted to eat fast food items, after watching advertisement of Maggi or McDonald’s was shown. Whereas, few elderly women

Table 1 : Item wise intensity indices showing the influence of television viewing on “Adjustment to decreasing physical strength and health” of elderly citizens (N=500)

Sr. No.	Items	Intensity indices
1.	Watching of television programmes lead to : – Eating of junk foods	2.75
	– Use of cosmetics / creams to look younger	2.71
2.	Watching of television programmes made elderly citizens feel: – Ashamed of their deteriorating health	2.70
	– Inferior about their physical looks	2.70
	– They look older than their age	2.70
3.	Due to watching television programmes elderly citizens – Sacrificed on doing other important activities	2.67
	– Sleep got disturbed	2.60
	– Spent buying on new health related products	2.59
	– Made changes in their meal time	2.57
4.	Watching of Television programmes – Led to eating packaged food	2.54
	– Led to adjustment to deteriorating health	1.56

Table 2 : Item wise influence of television viewing on ‘Adjusting to retirement and reduced income

Sr. No.	Items	Identify indices
1.	Watching of television programmes made elderly citizens Buy things not needed	2.77
	Felt useless / worthless	2.66
2.	Through television programmes elderly citizens' came to know that They should not get involved in any activity after retirement	2.62
	Old people are not valued in society once they retire	2.46
	Television viewing helped to Pass the time constructively in retirement phase of life	— 2.07
	Take retirement positively	1.89
	Invest money / savings in a wiser manner	1.78
	Recall days of gainful employment	1.78
	Become financially independent	1.69

said that they got tempted to eat fast food items shown on television.

Table 2 shows that item wise intensity indices ranged from 2.77 to 1.69 which means there was high and moderate influence of television viewing on the developmental task “Adjustment to retirement and reduced income”. There were no items showing less influence of television viewing on it.

In relation to the developmental task “Adjustment to retirement and reduced income”, elderly citizens’ perceived high influence of television viewing on buying things which were not needed. They felt useless / worthless after watching television programmes. Through television they even came to know that they should not get involved in any activity after retirement, and old people are not valued in society once they retire.

Television viewing helped elderly citizens to some extent, to pass their time constructively, take retirement positively, invest money / savings in a wiser manner and become financially independent. It also helped them to recall the days of gainful employment.

Almost similar results were seen when FGDs were analyzed. The participants revealed that they bought new products after watching TV advertisements but one of the male elderly participants said that television advertisements gave false information about products

which mislead their buying decisions. Majority of the elderly citizens said that television did not give information related to employment opportunities for elderly. Whereas one male elderly participant said that television do give information about employment opportunities for elderly. One male elderly participant said that he could collect lot of information about stock market from “Business News” programme which guided him for investments in stock market.

Table 3 reveals that intensity indices for the above mentioned items ranged from 2.62 to 1.43. It means that there was high influence, moderate influence, and less influence of television viewing on the developmental task “Adjustment to death of spouse”.

Table 3 further shows that viewing of television programmes developed fear of living alone, and helped elderly to know that their status in the family will reduce after the death of spouse, to a great extent. Viewing of television programmes, to a great extent, also helped to know that one gets lot of freedom to live their life in their own ways after the death of a spouse and life can not be enjoyed after the death of a spouse.

To some extent, television viewing helped elderly citizens’ to know the problems after the death of spouse and prepared them to live life in absence of spouse. To a lesser extent, television viewing helped elderly citizens to know that there are more widows than widowers, and

Table 3 : Item wise intensity indices showing the influence of television viewing on "Adjustment to death of spouse" (N=500)

Sr. No.	Items	Intensity indices
	Viewing of television programmes:	
1.	Developed fear of living alone (without spouse)	2.62
2.	Helped to know that their status in the family will reduce after the death of spouse	2.52
3.	Helped to know that one gets lot of freedom to live their own way after the death of a spouse	2.52
4.	Helped to know that life can not be enjoyed after the death of a spouse	2.37
5.	Helped to know the problems after the death of spouse	1.65
6.	Prepared to live life in absence of spouse	1.61
7.	Helped to know that there are more widows than widowers	1.57
8.	Helped to know that one can marry / remarry at any age of life	1.43

one can marry / remarry at any age of life.

Table 4 reveals that intensity indices on the items ranged from 2.71 - 1.78. It means that influence of television viewing on the items varied from great extent to some extent. There was no item which revealed influence to a lesser extent. Viewing of television programmes led to hatred towards social life and developed negative feelings towards today's generation, to a great extent.

Television viewing, to some extent, developed liking towards interaction with people of same age group, helped to know about the changing social life of our society, helped to learn the ways to adjust / behave with today's young generation, developed the ability to express feelings / views / ideas to media / family members / friends / relatives, helped to learn about the expectations of youngsters from elderly, and changing needs and problems of young generation. To some extent, television viewing made elderly citizens flexible on social expectations. Besides, influence of television viewing on developmental tasks of elderly citizens, there were influences on other aspects of their life, which were reported in sessions of FGDs. Majority of elderly increased their television viewing hours. They came to know about tourist places in India and abroad by viewing television programmes. They reported that their spiritual / religious quotient increased and their ability to discuss the recent issues of

Table 4 : Item wise intensity indices showing the influence of television viewing on 'adapting to social roles in a flexible way (N=500)

Sr. No.	Items	Intensity indices
	Viewing of television programmes	
1.	Lead to hatred towards social life	2.71
2.	Developed negative feelings towards today's generation	2.57
3.	Developed liking towards interaction with people of same age group	2.12
4.	Helped to know about the changing social life of our society	2.07
5.	Helped to learn the ways to adjust / behave with today's young generation	2.07
6.	Developed the ability to express feelings / views / ideas to media / family members / friends / relatives	1.99
7.	Helped to learn about the expectation of youngsters from elderly	1.98
8.	Helped to know about the changing needs and problems of young generation	1.96
9.	Made elderly citizens flexible on social expectations	1.91
10.	Improved communication with grand children	1.84
11.	Developed ability to visualize social role clearly	1.79
12.	Improved relationship with family members	1.78

the country and the world increased due to watching of "Current affair" programmes on television. In one FGD, which included the elderly women participants they said "that we enjoy copying television characters and get fun out of it."

Regarding the negative influence of television viewing on them, most of the elderly participants reported that their social life got affected. They could not visit their friends or relatives at television viewing hours of the family. Attendance in the senior citizen club was thin, when cricket match was being telecasted, which shows that people do not like to socialize when there is an interesting programme on television.

In FGDs, elderly citizens also discussed about influences of television viewing on their near and dear ones, which indirectly affected them. They said, "TV teaches family members to neglect elderly members, which affects us adversely". One elderly female said that today's daughter-in-law learns many things from

television, which is not desirable and acceptable to our families and us. Family members speak in the same manner as characters on television, which is derogatory sometimes

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