

Television Reliant Attitudes among Rural Women in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Viewing television is an essential and frequent leisure activity for women. Television provides an alternative world of connections and communications. Television could become an integral part of their lives. This study is based on the findings of a UGC- UPE funded project. Rural women who spend more time viewing television start to exhibit television reliant attitudes.

Key words: television, television reliant, attitudes, rural women, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Television overrules other mass media with its range of characteristics. The reach of television is phenomenal. Women engage in television that makes them become dependent on television programmes. Entertainment programmes have become the important foundation in restructuring their lives. People are inclined to use television to

get psychological enjoyment and escape from stress.

Review of Literature

Viewing television is an essential and frequent leisure activity for women. It is mainly considered as a source of relaxation and stress reduction. Wiebe (1970), says that television watching has the function of relieving stress. Women could use television for information, entertainment, relaxation, and escape from boredom. Zillmann (2000a) argued from a historical perspective that entertainment media will occupy an increasingly prominent role in modern life.

Amu-Nnadi, Keshi, and Onwuanyi (1986) examined soap opera, 'Mirror in the Sun' and found that a generality of Nigerian university students derived satisfaction from the programme with more of the females than the males rating it as highly entertaining. People are more likely to watch

programs that match their own self-concepts in terms of content (Preston & Clair, 1994),

Television is said to provide a virtual network of connections and communications that, in spite of it being entirely artificial and imagined, tends to become an alternative for real social relationships. Viewers watch talk-shows and reality-shows as if these were part of their own social life. Television viewers tend to talk about people they see on television as if they had actually seen them and interacted with them. Therefore it can be said that, television provides a reasonable and uncomplicated world of relationships that is generally and increasingly used as an alternative for real social associations.

Grable (2006) in her study explained that individuals' utility of television is focused on social interaction and life satisfaction characteristics. People tend to use television to get psychological enjoyment and escape from stress. This could make rural women become dependent on television.

Another research by Frey, Benesch, and Stutzer (2005) reported that high levels of television consumption are found to be

negatively related to individual life satisfaction. This is because of the result of a lack of self-control on television viewing. Rural women having no alternative might become dependent on television and might start to exhibit television reliant attitudes.

Dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) posits that individuals become dependent on media for information, especially in times of social change and ambiguity. According to the dependency viewpoint, time spent with media is determined by socio-structural forces that dictate what informational resources are available to the media. These resources, in combination with an individual's need for information, determine audiences' dependency on media. But according to Rubin and Windahl's (1986) uses-and-dependency model reports that media users may become dependent on a medium. A lonely individual might not have any other alternative to fulfill their needs and turns on to the television.

Method

This study attempts to find out if rural women exhibit television reliant attitudes. The participants of the study were 514 rural women from Villupuram District of Tamil Nadu. These rural women were selected from the villages in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu.

A survey instrument was used to collect data. The questionnaire included a 5 point Likert –type scale from ‘Very Often’ to ‘Never’ and was used to measure rural women’s dependency on television viewing. Higher scores indicated lower television reliant attitudes.

Instrument

Analysis

Television Reliant Attitudes

Table TRA 1

Variable :	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
I usually plan my timings so I do not miss television programmes			
Very Often	10%	20%	25%
Often	11%	36%	43%
Sometimes	13%	13%	14%
Rarely	47%	16%	10%
Never	19%	15%	8%

For the statement ‘I usually plan my timings so I do not miss television programmes’ 47% of light viewers answered rarely followed by 19% of light viewers answered never, 43% of heavy viewers answered often

followed by 25% of heavy viewers answered very often and 36% of moderate viewers answered often followed by 20% of moderate viewers answered very often.

Table TRA 2

Variable :	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
It is important for me to watch my favourite television programmes from beginning to end			
Very Often	10%	21%	29%
Often	13%	31%	40%
Sometimes	14%	15%	16%
Rarely	45%	19%	9%
Never	18%	14%	6%

For the statement ‘It is important for me to watch my favourite television programme from beginning to end’ 45% of light viewers answered rarely followed by 18% of light viewers answered never, 40% of heavy

viewers answered often followed by 29% of heavy viewers answered very often and 31% of moderate viewers answered often followed by 21% of moderate viewers answered very often.

Table TRA 3

Variable :	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
I follow up with others if I miss the television programmes			
Very Often	10%	21%	23%
Often	14%	37%	45%
Sometimes	16%	19%	21%
Rarely	42%	13%	7%
Never	18%	10%	4%

For the statement ‘I follow up with others if I miss the television programme’ 42% of light viewers answered rarely followed by 16% of light viewers answered never, 45% of heavy viewers answered often followed

by 23% of heavy viewers answered very often and 37% of moderate viewers answered often followed by 21% of moderate viewers answered very often.

Table TRA 4

Variable :	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
I feel unhappy if I do not watch the television programmes			
Very Often	5%	21%	32%
Often	9%	33%	43%
Sometimes	15%	16%	8%
Rarely	47%	20%	12%
Never	24%	10%	5%

For the statement ‘I feel unhappy if I do not watch the television program’ 47% of light viewers answered rarely followed by 24% of light viewers answered never, 43% of heavy viewers answered often followed by 32% of

heavy viewers answered very often and 33% of moderate viewers answered often followed by 21% of moderate viewers answered very often.

Table TRA 5

Variable :	Light Viewers	Moderate Viewers	Heavy Viewers
I think about television programmes when I am not watching them			

Very Often	12%	24%	27%
Often	10%	31%	48%
Sometimes	15%	14%	16%
Rarely	44%	20%	5%
Never	19%	11%	4%

For the statement 'I think about television programmes when I am not watching them' 44% of light viewers answered rarely followed by 19% of light viewers answered never, 48% of heavy viewers answered often followed by 27% of heavy viewers answered very often and 31% of moderate viewers answered often followed by 24% of moderate viewers answered very often.

Discussions

It is seen from the above study that, rural women who are heavy television viewers are the ones who usually plan their timings so that they do not miss the television programmes. They feel that it is important for them to watch their favourite television programmes from beginning to end. They also follow up with others so that they do not miss the television programmes. They feel unhappy if they do not watch the television programmes. They say that they think about

the television programmes even when they are not watching them.

Conclusion

Television occupies an important place in the lives of rural women. This is because television has the capacity to transfer people from their real life settings to a make belief world. Most of the rural women do not have other alternatives for information or entertainment. They spend time on television viewing. They slowly start to exhibit television reliant attitudes wherein they feel that television viewing is an integral part of their daily life. When they are not able to spend the required time with television they feel unhappy and feel that their day was not complete.

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