

## Effects of Dramas of Pakistan Television on Youth

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**Abstract:** No one can deny the importance of television in terms of its effects. It has a relatively a persuasive impact on a country like Pakistan where majority of the people are illiterate. Pakistan television (PTV) a state owned and government controlled television was introduced in 1964 and now has access to 99% population of the country. There was a time when PTV was the only channel available to the people but with the advent of advanced technology and introduction satellite channels through dish antenna and cable television a competition has been created between the programmes of PTV and of foreign channels. Thus this 'invasion from the sky' forced PTV to glamorise its programmes specially the drama, in order to maintain the interest of the audience. In this context this study was done to evaluate the effects of PTV dramas on the youth of Lahore. It applied survey method and data was collected from the postgraduate students of Universities of Lahore, including University of the Punjab, Government College University and Lahore College for Women University through structured interviews. The study concluded that PTV is cultivating alien culture and norms and gradually bringing a change in the attitude of the youth through dramas. It also indicated that PTV drama is generating frustration among the youth but to a certain extent.

**Key words:** Dramas • Paksitan • Television • Youth

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### INTRODUCTION

Media theorists believe that a new global culture is emerging through Television. It has exercised great influence on norms and values including fashion, dress, decoration, food, language and so on. It has also become a part of everyday life and it forms the subject of public and private interest and discussion. With the expansion of Television, a general observation is that this mass medium has more power than its predecessors (print and radio). After the introduction of television (TV) in 1964 in Pakistan, the country witnessed a change in social and cultural life of the masses. But with the passage of time, this change turned into a revolution. Presently Pakistan Television has access to almost 99% population of the country [1].

Today no one can deny the importance of TV in terms of its effects. It has a relatively pervasive impact on a country like Pakistan where majority of the people are illiterate. With the recent technological developments it has become the most important medium. The advent of dish antenna and cable television has exposed the television viewers to an array of channels. Pakistan is not affected by these changes. There was a time when

Pakistan Television (PTV) was the only TV channel for people and they watched it because they did not have any other choice. But with the development of communication technology people got access to many foreign channels through dish antenna and now by cable television. A large number of people have moved towards foreign channels to get information and entertainment. This situation affected the PTV viewership, which is a matter of concern for PTV administration [2]. But still PTV has the largest viewership as cable television in Pakistan is concentrated to only 55% household whereas PTV is accessible to 99% of the total population [3].

A general observation is that introduction of satellite channels through dish antenna and cable television has created a competition between the programmes of PTV and that of the foreign channels'. Thus this 'invasion from the sky' forced PTV to glamorize its programmes specially the drama, in order to maintain the interest of the audience. In this context the present study was conducted to evaluate the "effects of PTV Drama on the youth in Lahore" and became more significant as it will help both PTV administration as well as the information policymakers to understand the reactions and behaviours of their target audience.

The designed hypothesis for this study was that PTV Drama is creating frustration among the youth. The present research kept a broad framework of theories of effect and took into consideration the theory of uses and gratification, theory of cultivation, theory of limited effect and the partial implication of social learning theory.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- Find out the PTV viewing habits among the youth.
- Identify their purpose of watching PTV
- Find out the viewership of PTV Dramas
- Effects (if any) of PTV Dramas on the youth.

**Background:** Television drama is a popular and favourite form of entertainment all over the world. Basically television drama is an adapted form of art that comprises the traditions of theatre, film and radio. Later the unique television presentation techniques brought about a clear distinction to television drama. Generally TV Drama is meant for entertainment purposes. It has also been instrumental, in the third world country for propaganda, publicity and to create awareness about various social issues. Drama has a strong emotional involvement for the audience [4].

Several studies have demonstrated that the information and exposure provided by television can influence a wide range of attitudes and behavior. There was much discussion about the exact nature of television when it first arrived on the cultural scene in the 1930s. How precisely it differed from its competitors (particularly radio and cinema) produced much debate, both cultural critics and practitioners arguing over what the small screen could do most successfully. As [5] reveals in 'The Intimate Screen', the conclusion of many early commentators could be categorized under three broad headings:

- The live immediacy is its defining characteristic: television is a means of instant transportation of material. The co-temporality of viewing and event signifies authenticity and realism.
- Television is a medium of 'intimacy'; it is the delivery of images to the domestic sphere (as with radio broadcasting) and the visual 'closeness' described by the television close-up, that are the characteristic features of television. This intimate form of direct visual address to the viewer in the domestic (familial) home is sometimes seen to set up a new social/communal relationship...
- Television is a hybrid medium... a combination of theatre, newsprint, radio and film: it can do all the

things these other media can do, but with the advantage of 1 and 2.

TV is still the medium in which people believe the most due to its visual impact. A general assumption is that TV is the most powerful medium and its exposure assures impact. Therefore a number of researches have been conducted throughout the world regarding TV effects. However, research on Effects of Broadcasting has produced variable results. Charles Osgood's development of the semantic differential isolates meanings that are universally understood. But Holmes and Doob report that visual symbols are not transferable from one culture to another. Greenberg and Colomina De Rivera may find an indication that television serves as vehicle for escapist fantasies in research [6].

Concerns regarding the effects of television consumption have been voiced since the 1970s. In 1972, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee established a causal relationship between violence on television and violent behavior in audience [7]. In their examination of literature on effects of television on individuals, It was found that most studies were based upon how individuals learn to apply themselves in social situations or solving problems when they identify with the televised images being presented. The molding of one's behavior may occur by observing either representative situations or real-life situations

A longitudinal study on the social impact of television in rural Indonesia confirmed several positive effects there and concluded: Television helped to narrow the knowledge gap between the lower and upper social and economic strata. It contributes to the learning of national language. Television promotes the adoption of family planning and modern healthcare encouraged greater participation in village social organizations and facilitated more active use of rural markets and public financial institutions. In the lower social and economic strata, television helped to raise the adoption of modern agricultural practices. Among viewers television became the predominant source of information. Consumption of advertised product increased markedly among viewers [8].

On the other hand, a study on communication technologies impact on traditional culture concluded that the spread of television sets in Indonesia had mostly negative impact. People did learn easily from the television scene of the city - they copied lifestyles such as dress costumes, hairstyles and food, however, the people lack the ability to comprehend the programmes and the greater TV set ownership did not result in wider knowledge to the remote people [9]. Television like other

media does not necessarily work indirectly observable ways to have an influence and it may take time for the constant exposure to create ideas to have an effect [10]. It was reported in a study on television in school that many teachers still value the power of television to give insight into the natural world, distant places, or past events. The teachers look for TV to provide them with materials relevant to school life [11].

Whereas, in an international survey report, carried by UNESCO, TV and American films were held responsible for raising sexual harassment and physical torture in the world. It was reported, "In daily 18 hrs transmission of American TV 260 incidents of torture are shown which have their influence on the viewers". A research "An analytical study of PTV drama, serial carrying social issues 1996-98" conducted in Pakistan assesses the change in behaviour of the viewers. In the above mentioned period PTV Lahore telecasted 18 different Urdu drama serials out of them, in 12 social issues were highlighted of feudal system, marriage problems, social customs, child labour etc. [12]. Another survey in Pakistan finds that majority of the viewers prefer PTV drama whereas comedy and information programmes get second priority. PTV viewers give last priority to discussion and current affairs programmes. Furthermore, the study points out that 45% people are of the opinion that Punjabi PTV drama has a negative impact, whereas 46% think that its impact is positive [13].

The above-mentioned results confirm that different conditions and intervening variables appear to produce different results. This confusion of results highlights the need for more research in this field. Therefore, present study examines the effects of PTV Drama, which is the most favourite and immensely viewed programme by the people.

**Methodology:** The basic purpose of this study was to assess the effects of PTV Drama on youth in Lahore, Pakistan. So the survey method was applied and data collected through structure interviews. Universe of this survey-based research was the student of the University of the Punjab, Government College University and Lahore College for Women University and the sample size was one hundred. This number should be sufficient for the calculations of the percentages. In this study the researcher applied purposive sampling method and selected 34 respondents from University of the Punjab, 33 from Government College University and 33 respondents from Lahore College for Women University giving the total of 100. The selected sample was students of BS final year of different departments and was viewers of PTV

Table 1: PTV viewing habits of respondents

Category	Frequency of watching PTV	Watching PTV Drama
Daily/Regularly	31	24
Occasionally	21	45
When Free	48	31
Total	100	100

Table 2: Time spend watching PTV by the respondents

Category	Time spend watching PTV
1-2 hours	53
2-3 hours	20
More than 3 hours	24
Not sure	3
Total	100

drama. The data was collected by structured interviews and interview schedule was developed comprising of 18 close-ended questions. These questions were designed to gauge the influence of the PTV dramas and the values that are inculcating among the youth.

**Findings:** This research was aimed at evaluating the cumulative effect of PTV drama on youth in Lahore. All 100 respondents were students of BS final year and viewers of PTV dramas. Out of these 89% respondents said they have their own TV sets, whereas 10% said they watch TV at Hostel, with neighbours or relatives while 1% did not respond. Most of the respondents (48%) said they watch TV when they are free, while 21% occasionally and 31% watch PTV regularly (Table 1).

Duration of the viewership is only 1 to 2 hours for 53% respondents and 20% watch PTV 2 to 3 hours and 24% watch for more than 3 hours, whereas 3% were not sure about time they spend watching PTV (Table 2). What's noteworthy is that the majority of the viewers watch PTV drama for entertainment with information as 2nd and 3rd choice (Table 3).

Data showed that drama viewers have an overall trend of watching/liking romantic plays with comic, tragic, historical and other choices taking second precedence respectively. The table 4 reveals that 48% respondents have given first preference to the romantic plays and very few of them (12%) have specified historical dramas as their first preference.

When asked about the general opinion about different dimensions of PTV drama, interesting responses were gathered (Table 5). Majority of the respondent (59%) held that PTV drama conforms to our moral and social values, while 24% disagreed.

Table 3: Reasons for watching TV

Category	Entertainment	Information	Education/guidance	Killing Time	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	72	13	109	06	100
2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	19	42	21	18	100
3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference	4	40	28	28	100
4 <sup>th</sup> Preference	5	5	42	48	100
Total	100	100	100	100	

Table 4: Favourite types of PTV Drama of the respondents

Category	Type of Drama				
	Tragic	Comic	Romantic	Historical	Any Other
1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	16	24	48	12	7
2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	20	60	48	18	17
3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference	60	18	10	27	12
4 <sup>th</sup> Preference	----	----	2	3	----

Some respondents chose only one or two options

Table 5: Respondent's opinion about different statements presented to them regarding PTV dramas

Category /Statements	Conforms moral and social values	Projects only Elite class	Fascinating portrayal of elite	Gives inspiration and guidance	Good for passing time	Melodramatic end	Changed during last 5 years	Away from reality	Strongly React to contrary situations in real life and dramas
Agreed	59	38	35	55	72	39	93	81	21
Disagreed	24	42	60	24	12	58	6	18	78
Not Sure	17	20	5	21	16	3	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Tbale 5: continue

Category /Statements	Pushes in a world of fantasy	Portrays dreams and wishes	Characters as a role model	Free from culture and religious values	Liking frankness of male and female in Drama	Like same frankness in university
Agreed	84	54	8	55	46	49
Disagreed	12	44	90	43	53	46
Not Sure	4	2	2	2	1	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

38% believed that PTV drama projects the elite class only with 42% expressing vice versa opinion. 55% respondents considered PTV drama as a source of inspiration and guidance, on the contrary 24% disagreed. As many as 72% take TV drama as a time pass, 12% contradicted.

Melodramatic end is stand out as distinguishing feature of PTV plays. It was an effective yardstick to measure the extent of departure of PTV drama from reality. So a response to this feature was helpful to understand the overall approach of the viewers and that do they have a liking for a diversion from reality. 58% respondents said they do not like PTV plays have a melodramatic end and 39% said they do, whereas 3 respondents gave no response. 93% viewers observed a diversion in PTV's drama during last four or five years against 6% disapproval and 1% no response.

Realism is an evaluative term, however broadly speaking realism means reflection of society as it exists with all its charms and deformities. Moreover, it is

assumed that there is always a deft touch of exaggeration on the part of writer in portraying the character. As such when the viewers were asked about the departure of PTV drama from realism 81% respondents answered in affirmative, 18% in negative while 1% were not sure.

Portrayal of life in PTV drama or any other form of art can, at times, leads viewers into a Utopia. This can have devastating effects. A question was constituted for the audience's analysis of PTV drama vis-a-vis its role as a vehicle pushing the audience in the world of fantasies. The dominant viewers response was again in the affirmative (84%) with partial negative (12%) and 4% gave no response. 54% of the viewers take PTV drama as portrayal of their dreams and wishes against 44% differing. Here it is pertinent to mention that in spite of the fact that majority take PTV drama as portrayal of their dreams and wishes only a small number of respondents take drama characters as role models as dominant response (90%) were not agreed.

Table 6: Experiences of Respondents having PTV Drama hangover

Category	Hangover of PTV Dramas
0-1 hours	29
2-3 hours	19
More than 3 hours	14
Not at all	38
Total	100

Table 7: Confirming influence of PTV Drama on respondent's life

Category	Influence			No Influence
	New Ideas	Better Standard	Others	
Agreed	51	26	35	14
Disagreed	44	71	48	83
Not Sure	5	3	17	3
Total	100	100	100	100

Transmission of culture, traditions and social values from one generation to another generation has always been acclaimed; and rightly so; as one of basic functions of mass communication. When asked about whether PTV drama is breaking free from our culture and values 55% responded in the affirmative while 43% said no. As far as the question about the mixing of opposite sexes is concerned 46% favoured while 53% disapproved. However the opinion was divided into two halves the respondents were asked about similar thing in the University.

TV drama contains glamour and life is portrayed as more fascinating than it really is, as is obvious from the opinion of the respondents given above. Keeping in view this fact a question was asked as to how the viewers respond to such a portrayal. 60% of the respondents held that they weren't fascinated by it whereas 35% said they were. When asked how would they respond if encountered with situation contrary to the one portrayed in dramas, that's to say any unvarnished reality of life, 21% of respondents said they will show strong reaction and would, yearn for a drama-like quick remedy in real life while 78% answered in negative (Table 5).

As far as the effects of TV drama are concerned no one can deny the fact that longer the hangover, greater the effect. In this regard the public consideration was interviewed and interesting responses were gathered. 38% respondents felt no hangover at all, 29%, said they feel for one hour, 19% 2 to 3 hours while 14% confirmed hangover of PTV drama for more than 3 hours (Table 6).

The Table 7 reveals that 51% of the viewers believed that they have been influenced by TV drama as they have learnt new ideas whereas 26% respondents said that they have learnt better standard of living while 35% respondents mentioned some other facts. 14 % respondents said they have been uninfluenced by PTV drama.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that an overwhelming majority watch TV for entertainment and information. In this concern PTV drama is a major focus of interest of the viewers. Our youth turns to drama as a form of escapism as is obvious from their inclination towards romantic and comic plays. In this way not only that they seek escapism from PTV drama they also use it as a mode of realization of their unripe wishes and dreams.

Moreover TV lends those dreams and desires that can hardly be fulfilled in real life. This is intensified by the portrayal of glamorous life. Our youth hankers after similar sort of glamorous life but when it sees that its dreams and wishes are going unfulfilled they become victims of frustration. We see that majority of the PTV viewers understand the fact that PTV drama is removed from reality but still it is drawn to it as it provides an escape from unsavoury realities of life. Here it might be argued that if this is the case then why the respondents don't take TV drama character as a role model. Justification can be found in the fact that they are more interested in the fact and in the paraphernalia that surrounds the hero/heroine than the hero/heroine himself/herself. That's why the theory of limited effect comes into play.

Here another point must be mentioned that PTV Drama is cultivating alien culture and norms as have been admitted by a sizeable number of respondents. This cultivation has even won the acceptance of a small section of the youth. This means that PTV drama is gradually bringing about a change in the attitude of our youth as well.

Keeping in mind the above discussion and of course the responses of youth, it can be concluded that PTV drama is influencing and is generating frustration among the youth but only to a certain extent.

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