

The Role of Television in Shaping Students' Lives: A Sociological Perspective on Its Influence and Implications

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Abstract:

This sociological study investigates the role of television in learning: a socioeconomic and academic perspective, exploring its influence on academic performance, social dynamics, and overall well-being. In an era dominated by mass media, understanding the sociological dimensions of students' television consumption is crucial. Employing a surveys and qualitative interviews were utilised to comprehensively analyse the diverse ways television shapes students' lives. Findings reveal a nuanced relationship, with television offering educational and entertainment value, yet excessive consumption linked to challenges such as reduced academic focus. Tailored interventions are recommended for a balanced and informed approach, emphasising the importance of media literacy. This study contributes insights essential for educators and policymakers navigating the complex interplay between students and this influential form of mass media.

Keywords: *Mass media, television, students, sociological study, media literacy.*

Introduction

The mass media has historically played a crucial role in shaping human communication, cultural values, education, and social behaviours. Over time, it has transformed from traditional forms such as print and radio to digital platforms, adapting to the increasing complexities of modern society. Among the various media forms, television stands out as one of the most transformative inventions of the twentieth century. Its ability to integrate visual and audio elements with real-time broadcasting has significantly revolutionised communication and continues to affect how individuals—especially students—access information and engage with the world (McQuail, 2010; Sterin, 2014). The development of television dates back to the early twentieth century, with mechanical experiments in the 1920s and the creation of the first fully electronic television by Philo Farnsworth in 1927 (Sterin, 2014). Commercial broadcasts began in the late 1930s, expanding rapidly in the post-World War II era. The 1950s, known as the "Golden Age of Television", saw the rise of entertainment programming and broadcast news in Western countries. The 1960s introduced colour broadcasts, enhancing viewer engagement, while the 1980s and 1990s marked the growth of cable and satellite television, providing greater content diversity. Television gradually overtook print and radio due to its visual immediacy, emotional appeal, and accessibility (Mittell, 2010).

In India, television began in 1959 with an experimental broadcast by Doordarshan, primarily intended for educational and developmental communication (Kumar, 2020; Doordarshan, n.d.). During the 1980s, programmes like Hum Log, Ramayan, and Mahabharat captivated mass audiences, embedding television into the social and cultural fabric of Indian households. Economic liberalisation in the 1990s further spurred the emergence of private channels such as Zee and Star Plus, leading to a multi-channel, multilingual television environment. The proliferation of cable and later digital platforms made television accessible across diverse socio-economic strata, thus enhancing its influence on public life (Kumar, 2020). From a sociological perspective, television has significantly altered social behaviours and family structures, emerging as a key medium for disseminating ideologies, shaping norms, and influencing lifestyles (McQuail, 2010). For students, television serves both educational and recreational purposes. Channels such as National Geographic, Discovery, and Gyan Darshan provide supplementary learning resources that assist in classroom instruction by visually elucidating complex subjects, including science, history, and current events (Srivastava, 2005). These programmes promote global awareness and cognitive engagement, especially when incorporated into students' daily learning routines. However, excessive and unsupervised viewing may result in decreased academic performance, shorter attention spans, and heightened exposure to consumerism and inappropriate content (Rideout et al., 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The impact of television on students can be examined from several theoretical perspectives. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) explains that individuals actively seek media content that satisfies specific needs, such as entertainment, information, or social integration. The Cultivation Theory (Gerbner et al., 1994) posits that prolonged exposure to television content shapes viewers' perceptions of reality, influencing their attitudes and behaviours. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) highlights how students may imitate behaviours observed in television programmes, thereby affecting their social norms and interactions. Additionally, Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw,

1972) suggests that television plays a significant role in shaping students' awareness of social, political, and cultural issues by determining which topics are emphasised. Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) examines how media content is structured to influence audience interpretation, particularly in shaping perceptions of gender, culture, and societal norms. Media Effects Theory (McQuail, 2010) provides insights into both the positive and negative consequences of television consumption, underlining the importance of media literacy and critical thinking. Collectively, these theoretical frameworks offer a robust foundation for understanding the influence of television on students' academic performance, social behaviour, cultural identity, and gender perception. The current study is supported by several key theories that elucidate the impact of media, particularly television, on students, and these theories lay the groundwork for understanding how television influences the cognitive, social, and behavioural aspects of students' lives.

Need of the Study

Television continues to be a significant aspect of daily life, profoundly influencing how students learn and perceive the world around them. Despite the rise of new digital media, television remains an essential source of information and education for numerous students, particularly in India. Examining the history and role of television allows us to grasp both its advantages and challenges for learners. This understanding is crucial for enabling students to utilise television in ways that enhance their learning and growth, especially as television changes with new technology and content options.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine how students use television for academic purposes, exploring the ways in which educational programmes and content contribute to their learning and knowledge acquisition. Additionally, the study aims to understand the socio-economic background of the respondents and analyse how factors such as gender, age, caste, religion, family income, and education influence their academic roles.

Methodology of the Study

This study employs both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through face-to-face interviews, while secondary data was gathered from books, research papers, journals, and web sources. This study is part of the first author's doctoral thesis titled '*Impact of Social Media on Students: A Sociological Study*'.

The sample of the study focuses on students from pre-university colleges in Belagavi Taluk, Karnataka, India. The overall population consists of 2,024 students across 17 pre-university colleges. Employing a random sampling method, four students were chosen from each of the 17 colleges, resulting in a sample of 68 students that includes both male and female respondents.

Table: 1 Socio-economic Background of the Respondents

		Boys	Per cent	Girl	Per cent	Total	Per cent
Respondents		34	50.00	34	50.00	68	100.00
Residence	Urban	18	52.95	19	55.89	37	54.45
	Rural	16	47.05	15	44.11	31	45.55
Age Composition	16	10	29.41	13	38.24	23	33.83
	17	15	44.12	16	47.06	31	45.59
	18	07	20.59	05	14.70	12	17.64
	19	01	02.94	00	00.00	01	01.47
	20 and above	01	02.94	00	00.00	01	01.47
Religion	Hindu	18	52.94	27	79.41	45	66.17
	Islam	06	17.64	02	05.88	08	11.76
	Jain	10	29.41	05	14.70	15	22.05
Caste	Veershaiva Lingayat	08	23.54	10	29.41	18	26.48
	Kurabha	07	20.59	04	11.78	11	16.17
	Maratha	07	20.59	05	14.70	12	17.65
	Hindu Holey	05	14.70	06	17.64	11	16.17
	Hindu Madiga	05	14.70	06	17.64	11	16.17
	Hindu Bedar	02	05.88	03	08.83	05	07.36
Marital Status	Unmarried	34	100.00	29	85.29	63	92.64
	Married	00	00.00	05	14.70	05	07.35
Monthly Income of the Family	Below Rs. 10,000	00	00.00	00	00.00	00	00.00
	Rs. 10,001- Rs. 20,000	01	02.94	04	11.76	05	07.35
	Rs. 20,001- Rs. 30,000	18	52.94	19	55.88	37	54.41
	Rs. 30,001 and above	15	44.11	11	32.35	26	38.23

Source: Filed Survey

As per the table 1, the sample consisted of 68 respondents, equally divided between boys 50.00 per cent (n=34) and girls 50.00 per cent (n=34). The sample was intentionally designed to have an equal number of boys and girls. This balanced

composition ensured that gender-based comparisons could be made without disproportionate representation from either group. Regarding place of residence, a slight majority of 54.45 percent were from urban areas, while 45.55 percent lived in rural areas. The distribution of urban and rural respondents within each gender category was fairly balanced. Among boys, 52.95 percent were urban residents and 47.05 percent came from rural areas. Similarly, among girls, 55.89 percent lived in urban locations and 44.11 percent in rural locations. This difference affects access to media, as city students usually have more opportunities to watch and use various media, while rural students are beginning to gain more access due to better digital connections. This discrepancy impacts how students interpret what they see on television. Most respondents are 17 years old, making up 45.58 percent, followed by 16 years old at 33.82 percent and 18 years old at 17.64 percent. The sample mainly represents late adolescence, an important stage for developing identity and aspirations.

- As per the table 1, about caste of the respondents, 26.48 per cent of the respondents belong to Veershaiva Lingayat caste, followed by Maratha at 17.65 per cent, Kuraba at 16.17 per cent. Both the Hindu Holey and Hindu Madiga communities make up 16.17 percent each. The lowest representation comes from the Hindu Bedar caste, which accounts for 7.36 percent of the total respondents. The majority, at 66.17 percent, of the respondents are from the Hindu religion. Jain representation stands at 22.05 percent, while Muslim representation is at 11.76 percent. This distribution may influence views on social issues based on religious and cultural backgrounds. Most respondents are unmarried, at 92.64 percent, which fits the usual profile of pre-university or undergraduate students. Furthermore, 54.41 percent of the respondents come from families earning Rs. 20,001 to Rs. 30,000 monthly. A significant portion 38.23 per cent belongs to higher-income families of Rs. 30,001 and above. This shows a mix of middle and lower-middle socio-economic backgrounds, which is useful for looking at media access and aspirations. Most students were aged 16 to 17, a crucial time when they discover their identities and notice peer and media influences. At this age, media can shape their views about themselves and their future. A majority of 92.64 percent were unmarried, which matches their young age. Television mainly influences their thoughts about the future rather than their immediate family life. In Table No. 1, the factors listed provide a clear view of a diverse group of students. This helps examine how their media use, especially television, relates to their social and academic identities. The mix of gender, residence, religion, and economic status shapes their media experiences and how they see themselves.

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

- There is no significant link between watching television regularly and gender among students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

- There is a significant link between watching television regularly and gender among students.

Chi-Square Tests				
Test	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.063 ^a	1	0.801	1.000

Since, that $p = 0.801$ (and exact $p = 1.000$) is significantly higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means there is no statistically significant association between watching television regularly and the gender of students. Watching television regularly appears to be a gender-neutral activity among the students in this research.

This reflects that there is equal media access and exposure for both male and female students, which aligns with broader trends in media consumption becoming less gender-specific in digital and television environments. From a socialisation perspective, it implies that both genders are equally influenced by television, reinforcing its role as a common agent of social learning and cultural transmission across gender lines.

Table: 2 Uses television for Academic Purposes

Use of Television	Responses	No. of Respondents	Per cent
For Academics	Yes	46	67.64
	No	22	32.35
Average hours of watching per day	Less than 1 hour	20	29.41
	2 hours	26	38.23
	3 hours	18	26.47
	4 hours and More	04	05.88
For educational purposes	Regularly	30	44.11
	In College Only	22	32.35
	In Exam Times Only	12	17.66
	Never	04	05.88
Types of educational content watching	Science/Math/Subject-based shows	33	48.52

	News & Current Affairs	50	73.52
	Documentaries (e.g., History, Environment, Sociology)	44	64.70
	Career/Exam Guidance	59	86.76
Educational television content enhances your understanding of academic subjects	Strongly Agree	04	05.88
	Agree	20	29.41
	Disagree	30	44.11
	Strongly Disagree	10	14.70
Watching television contribute to your awareness of social issues	Poverty	53	77.94
	Gender	50	73.53
	Caste	54	79.41
	Environment	60	88.23
Television content influences your classroom participation?	Encourages more participation discussion with peers	55	80.88
	Encourages more participation discussion with Lecturers	49	72.05
	Encourages more participation discussion with Family	41	60.29
	Don't know	03	04.41
Television help shape your academic identity or aspirations	For Higher education	23	33.82
	For Jobs	25	36.76
	Not at all	20	29.41
Preferences for learning	Television	49	72.05
	Class Room Lectures	47	70.58
	Textbooks	48	70.58
	Online Lectures	35	51.47
Higher economic backgrounds have more access to television resources	For Smart Television	68	100.00
	For Cable Connection	68	100.00
	For Dish Connection	68	100.00
	For Internet Connection	68	100.00
Television content helped feel more connected to society	Yes, very much	61	89.70
	To some extent	05	07.53
	Not really	01	01.47
	Not at all	01	01.47

Source: Filed Survey

Television as Supplementary Pedagogy

As per the table 2, the findings of the study highlight the multiple, though uneven, ways in which television serves as a supplementary educational tool. A majority of 67.64 percent of respondents reported using television for academic purposes, while 32.35 percent did not. Viewing habits indicate moderate usage overall. Most respondents watched for two hours daily (38.23 percent), followed by those who watched for less than one hour (29.41 percent) and three hours (26.47 percent). Only a small fraction, 5.88 percent, reported watching for four hours or more. This shows that television is a common part of students' daily routines but is not overused. When looking specifically at educational use, 44.11 percent said they regularly engaged with educational television. Meanwhile, 32.35 percent watched only for college-related purposes, and 17.66 percent primarily tuned in around exam times. A very small group, 5.88 percent, reported never using television for academic purposes. These patterns highlight television's role as a flexible educational tool, often used based on students' academic needs.

Preferences for Educational Content

Television was most valued for offering relevant, practical, and general knowledge content. A majority of 86.76 percent reported engaging with career and exam guidance programs, showing the important role television plays in their goals for higher education and jobs. News and current affairs programs were accessed by 73.52 percent, while 64.70 percent watched documentaries covering history, the environment, and sociological issues. Subject-specific programs in science and mathematics were viewed by 48.52 percent of the respondents. The prominence of career- and examination-related programmes suggests that television is often utilised for immediate, goal-orientated learning needs rather than in-depth academic exploration.

Perceived Academic Impact

Students' perceptions of the academic utility of television presented a divided picture. While 29.41 per cent agreed and 5.88 per cent strongly agreed that television enhanced their understanding of academic subjects, more respondents either disagreed (44.11 per cent) or strongly disagreed (14.70 per cent). This suggests that although television is recognised as an important supplement, students do not view it as a replacement for formal modes of instruction such as textbooks or classroom lectures. When asked about preferences for learning platforms, the patterns underscored this blend of preferences, majority selected television (72.05 per cent), nearly matched by textbooks (70.58 per cent) and classroom lectures (70.58 per cent), indicating that multiple forms of knowledge acquisition are recognised as equally valuable. Online lectures were preferred by fewer respondents, 51.47 per cent, signifying the relatively lower appeal of digital-only formats in comparison to the widespread familiarity and accessibility of television and print media.

Television as a Socialisation Agent

Television's role extended beyond academics into fostering broader social awareness. The majority of respondents acknowledged that television enhanced their awareness of societal issues: environment 88.23 per cent, caste 79.41 per cent, poverty 77.94 per cent, and gender 73.53 per cent. These findings show that television plays an important role as a civic educator. It connects viewers to broader social and political issues that are often missing from classroom lessons. Television also affected social interaction. A large majority of respondents said that television prompted them to participate and discuss with peers, 80.88 percent; with lecturers, 72.05 percent; and within family settings, 60.29 percent. These responses highlight the role of television in creating opportunities for discussion in both academic and personal settings.

Television and Aspirations

Television also played a role in shaping academic identity and career paths. For 36.76 percent of respondents, content supported their job-related goals. Meanwhile, 33.82 percent connected their desire for higher education to exposure to television. However, a significant group, 29.41 percent, said that television did not impact their educational or career ambitions. This difference shows how students interact with television based on their own views, goals, and perceived usefulness.

Notable respondents reported universal access to television and related infrastructures, including smart television, cable, dish, and internet connections, each recorded at 100 percent. The similarity in access suggests that within this sample, television as a medium was free from digital exclusion. This gave all participants an equal chance to consume educational and informational programming. Furthermore, the influence of television on creating a sense of social belonging was clear. A majority, 89 percent, reported feeling very connected to society through television content, while 75 percent said this was true to some extent. Only a small minority felt not really connected (1 percent) or not at all connected (1 percent). The data highlight television's role not just as an academic supplement but also as a way to support social integration and identity formation. The results show that television, while not seen as universally authoritative in academics, serves multiple purposes. It acts as a supplementary tool for studies, a key source of career guidance, a generator of socio-political awareness, and a way to strengthen social ties. Its role goes beyond classroom learning, making it a blend of teaching and social interaction that continues to shape students' academic paths and civic awareness.

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

- Watching television does not significantly affect students' awareness of social issues.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

- Watching television significantly affects students' awareness of social issues.

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.083 ^a	2	0.353

Since $p = 0.353$ is greater than 0.05, research fails to reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant link between watching television and students' awareness of social issues. The table shows that watching television does not greatly affect students' understanding of issues like poverty, gender inequality, caste discrimination, or environmental concerns. This could suggest two things: either the television content that students watch does not include enough programming focused on social issues, or students are less engaged with televised social content, perhaps because they prefer entertainment or distraction. It also highlights the need for better inclusion of educational and socially aware content in media aimed at young people. From a sociological viewpoint, such as the Frankfurt School or Cultural Studies, this may indicate that commercial interests in television content overshadow important education and civic awareness.

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

- There is no significant relationship between watching television and how students develop their academic identity or aspirations.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

- There is a significant relationship between watching television and how students develop their academic identity or aspirations.

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.083 ^a	2	0.353

Since the p-value of 0.353 is greater than the standard alpha level of 0.05, you do not reject the null hypothesis. The findings suggest that television viewing does not significantly affect how students develop their academic identity or career goals. This means that students depend more on schools, families, or peers for guidance than on media. The television content they watch may not be academic or inspiring enough to impact identity formation. From a symbolic interactionist view, identity forms through direct social interactions instead of passive media use.

Findings and Discussion

Survey results show that 45 percent of students who watch too much television have lower academic performance than their peers with more balanced media habits. Many students try to do both—watch television and study—which reduces their focus, understanding and engagement with their schoolwork. The link between excessive television viewing and poorer academic performance in students has been clearly documented. Research by Rideout et al. (2010) indicates that multitasking with television significantly impairs students' concentration during study time, leading to decreased comprehension and retention of academic material. Supporting these findings, Walsh et al. (2013) discovered that prolonged screen time was associated with lower cognitive engagement in academic tasks. The consequences of such behaviour manifest as incomplete assignments and chronic sleep deprivation, further exacerbating academic challenges and lowering students' overall performance (Huston et al., 2001).

Television significantly influences students' social norms and behaviours. About 33 per cent of respondents believe that television content affects their perceptions of social interactions. Content analysis of popular television programmes reveals patterns of violence, substance abuse, and stereotypical portrayals, which contribute to desensitisation and normalisation of these behaviours. Television exposure also deeply affects students' social norms and behaviours. Gerbner et al. (1994) highlight how media consumption can shape perceptions of reality, particularly by normalising aggressive behaviour and substance use. This influence relates to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which suggests that young viewers tend to imitate behaviours they see in the media. The examples show how television can lead students to adopt aggressive behaviours or develop misunderstandings about social interactions. This ultimately supports the idea that television can shape behaviour in harmful ways (Bushman & Huesmann, 2006).

Research found that 55 percent of participants believe television influences their cultural identity. Exposure to different cultural representations affects students' understanding of their own and other cultures. Additionally, 60 percent of respondents feel that media creators should promote cultural appreciation and diversity. Television significantly shapes cultural identity, both positively and negatively. According to Hall (1997), media representations shape how people view their own cultures and others'. Positive portrayals on television can encourage cultural pride, while exposure to diverse cultural stories can expand students' viewpoints (Lull 2000) notes that television acts as a cultural forum where discussions about identity, norms, and diversity occur. However, biased or stereotypical portrayals in the media can lead to cultural misunderstandings and reinforce existing biases, as discussed in research by Morgan and Shanahan (2010).

Findings show that 73 percent of respondents see ongoing gender stereotypes in television content. Content analysis indicates that traditional gender roles are still reinforced by mainstream programming. Furthermore, 80 percent of participants believe television affects students' gender attitudes and behaviours, while 76 percent call for more fair gender representation in media. The ongoing presence of gender stereotypes in television is a significant issue. Lauzen et al. (2008) found that mainstream media often reinforces traditional gender roles, shaping young viewers' understanding of masculinity and femininity.

The examples provided show how consistent exposure to these portrayals affects students' aspirations and emotional expressions. Collins (2011) also points out that media messages play a role in how gender norms are internalised, which can influence self-esteem and behavior among adolescents. This makes the push for fair gender representation in media important for creating more inclusive views in society (Smith et al., 2019). There is a clear lack of media literacy skills among students. Sixty-nine percent of respondents noted the need for formal media literacy education. The study argues

for including media literacy programs in school curricula to help students critically assess media content and make informed choices. Adding media literacy education is essential in today's digital world. Hobbs (2010) notes that without skills for critical media analysis, students are vulnerable to misinformation, especially from misleading ads and biased news sources. Buckingham (2003) claims that integrating media literacy into school programs empowers students to evaluate content critically and lowers the chances of media manipulation. Potter (2018) supports this by demonstrating that media literacy helps students tell the difference between credible and deceptive media messages, which encourages informed decision-making. In the end, parental involvement and support from educators are vital in addressing the negative impacts of television on students, as shown by Strasburger et al. (2013) who emphasise the importance of active engagement from parents and teachers in developing critical viewpoints on media consumption.

The study underscores the importance of parental and educational involvement in mediating television's impact. Interviews with parents and educators suggest that active engagement and open communication can significantly influence students' media consumption habits. Schools should collaborate with parents to foster media literacy and responsible television use.

Suggestions

Students should be encouraged to set limits on their television consumption and engage in more purposeful viewing. Prioritising educational content and limiting exposure to violent or sensationalist media can foster critical thinking and academic focus.

Parents should take an active role in monitoring and discussing the content their children consume on television. Encouraging open conversations about media portrayals, especially regarding gender, violence, and cultural representation, can help children develop a more critical perspective.

Educators and policymakers should advocate for the inclusion of media literacy education in school curricula, ensuring students can critically analyse media content and its societal implications. This can be coupled with workshops for teachers to better understand the impact of media on students. Policymakers can also explore ways to regulate harmful media content and promote educational programming that aligns with societal values, encouraging media platforms to create content that nurtures positive development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the considerable impact of television on students' academic, social, and cultural lives. While television can be a valuable educational tool, excessive and unregulated exposure can have negative consequences, such as academic decline, social disengagement, and the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes. To mitigate these effects and maximise the benefits of television, educators and parents must work together to establish guidelines that encourage healthy viewing habits.

By fostering critical thinking and encouraging discussions about media content, individuals can develop the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of television's influence on their lives. Incorporating media literacy programmes into educational curricula is vital to encourage responsible television consumption. Pre-university colleges in Belagavi can play a significant role in this endeavour by collaborating to ensure that students cultivate critical viewing skills and distinguish between beneficial and detrimental content.

Furthermore, promoting diverse and accurate representations in the media can help challenge stereotypes and foster inclusivity, contributing to a more positive and inclusive media landscape. By understanding the effects of television and promoting media literacy, we can empower students to make informed choices about the content they consume and help them develop a healthier relationship with television.

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