Does Media Have A Negative Effect?

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The influence of the media on the life of the general public has given rise to a number of issues, due to which the researchers have claimed that media has negative impacts on the thinking, as well as attitude of the general public. This not only includes young children, teenage population, but young adults as well. This paper will discuss the literature review of three research articles which depict different ways and forms in which the media has left a negative effect on the general public.

Dale L. Cusumano and J. Kevin Thompson conducted a research study in 2001 which was entitled “Media influence and body image in 8–11‐year‐old boys and girls: A preliminary report on the multidimensional media influence scale.” The research study was published in the journal named “*International Journal of Eating Disorders*” and talked about the influence of the media regarding body image on the children as young as eight to eleven years old. The purpose of the research study was to develop the ‘Multidimensional Media Influence Scale’ in order to assess the components of media influence which were impacting the body image of the young children. The previous research highlighted that pressure, awareness, comparison, internationalization and importance are major components which define the media influence on the body image of the young children. The researchers selected a population of two hundred and ninety-five students for conducting the research study and asked for the permission of the parents of the selected population. Some of the participants of the research study backed off due to a number of reasons and the most important out of them was the lack of permission from the parents, as well as the non-availability of the students due to their absence or class schedule on the day research, was conducted. The participants were selected through random sampling and one hundred eighty-two participates finally took part in the research study, out of which seventy-five students were boys and one hundred and seven students were girls. The average age of the participants of the research study was ten years and three months and they belonged to different ethnicities which included African American, white American, and some other racial groups, as well (Cusumano, & Thompson, 2001).

The researchers utilized the “Eating Disorder Inventory” to check the “Body Image Dissatisfaction” among the research participants. Moreover “Multidimensional Media Influence Scale" was also utilized to assess the body image perception of the students. The researchers provided the questionnaires to the students which asked their demographic information, media exposure and other questions about body image perception. The results of the research study highlighted that girls had higher levels of body dissatisfaction, which was highlighted due to the regression and variance analysis. On the other hand, the body image dissatisfaction rate among the boys was quite low as compared to the girls. The article highlighted that the young girls between the age of eight to eleven years, were greatly influenced by the media perception of body image, however, young boys of the same age groups were not affected by the media perception ta the same level. The article has highlighted that the media influences even the young children in a negative manner and shapes their thinking and attitude in the wrong manner, accordingly (Cusumano, & Thompson, 2001).

Nelson, Leickly, Yang, Pereira, and Simoni jointly conducted a research study in 2014, which was entitled “The influence of sexually explicit online media on sex: do men who have sex with men believe they "do what they see"? The article was published in a journal named "*AIDS care*.” It is evident from the title of the article that it studied the sex perception and practices of the men having sex with men, commonly called MSM, and analyzed the impact of the available media that is pornography on the choice and perception of the participants. The researchers were of the view that over the course of the past two decades, the MSM have engaged in viewing the sexually content quite significantly, which also portrays unprotected anal intercourse (UAI). Such content motivates the viewers to practice the same, ultimately increasing the risk of HIV transmission, in addition to increasing the risk of other sexually transmitted diseases (Nelson et al., 2014). The researchers shared the concern that viewing the sexually explicit concern has significantly impacted the practices of the MSM, specifically contributing to the practice of UAI which has a greater risk of transmitting HIV. The online content does not focus on sharing the risks of such practices and the only focus is on emphasizing the satisfaction of the MSM.

In order to assess the thinking and perception of the specific group of the society, the researcher conducted an in-depth qualitative research study, in which the participants were interviewed. The research participants consisted of sixteen MSM, who belonged to the Seattle area. The participants did not only talk about their own practice and thinking about the matter but also shared the perception about other MSM. Sharing their opinion about the online sexually explicit media, the MSM shared the opinion that it played an important role in their education, provided them the opportunity of becoming comfortable with their sexuality and provided them the opportunity of setting expectations about their sexual behavior. The participants also highlighted that they were not influenced by the UAI practices, as it was risky. The participants also shared their opinion about the message being conveyed by the UAI practices is the online sexually explicit content, which included the point that UAI is not unusual. Moreover, it is acceptable and their future partner may depict interest in such an activity. The researchers highlighted the point that online media content, which is sexually explicit in nature, impacts the MSM in a negative manner by preaching and supporting the activity of UAI, while the MSM believe that it is providing them education (Nelson et al., 2014).

One of the most important aspects of the negative effect of media on the general public is that it has contributed to the increase in the suicide rate, by providing the motivation to the people to commit suicide through its reporting or depiction. Patricia Ortiz and Eindra Khin Khin authored a research article about the issue which was published in the year 2018. The article was entitled "Traditional and new media's influence on suicidal behavior and contagion" and was published in the journal named "*Behavioral sciences & the law*." The researchers have mentioned in their article that the fictional, as well as non-fictional media, has played an important role in promoting the suicide contagion. Although the media is much more effective and functional as compared to the previous times, however, the history of suicide contagion dates back to the latter half of the eighteenth century, when a novel by the author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was published. The novel ‘The Sorrows of Young Werther,' described the tale of a young boy who committed suicide, due to the failure of his love affair. It was the very first example of suicide contagion which was researched, as the suicide rate had increased significantly during that time period. The suicides were inspired and influenced by the novel because of the fact that the book was recovered from most of the people who committed or attempted suicide. The suicide contagion was also named as ‘the Werther effect’ being inspired by the effect of the novel on the suicidal thinking and behavior of the general public (Ortiz, & Khin Khin, 2018).

Ortiz, & Khin Khin (2018) have explored a number of other facts in their research article. The researchers have mentioned that the reporting of suicide through the news medium has the most important contagion impact on the readers which motivate them to commit suicide. They have presented the example of suicide reporting on the first page of the newspaper, which significantly increased the suicide rate among the general public. One of the most important point explored by the researchers in their article is their article is that the rate of suicide specifically among the male population of the society increased significantly after the suicide of Marilyn Monroe in the year 1962, which depicts the influence of the media celebrities on the thinking and attitude of the general public. Highlighting the most recent scenario, the researchers have presented the example of the season "13 Reasons why," which explored the scenario leading the suicide of an individual, the research highlights the significant increase in the suicide rate among the young adults following the release of the series. The researchers have shared the point that the news media, as well as the social media sites, blogs and other media sources need to be very careful in reporting such issues, as the reporting has the tendency of influencing the population to commit suicide, which is one of the most important examples of the negative effect of the media on the general public (Ortiz, & Khin Khin, 2018).

The research articles have highlighted the fact that different mediums and sources of media impact the perception and practices of the general public in a negative manner. The body image perception advocated by the media impacts the perception of young children and motivate them to act accordingly. The sexually explicit content raises the risk of motivating MSM to take part in UAI and the suicidal reports motivate the general public to commit suicide. The media does have a negative impact on the thinking and behavior of the general public which needs to be controlled.

References

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