

**TELEVISION AS A MEDIUM
OF INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE:
A STUDY OF RURAL MEGHALAYA**

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Background

The influence of mass media as a medium of information to society has become so vital that any activity cannot move towards innovation and development without the touch of media. There is a continuous flow of media culture in the modern society. It is next to impossible to go through a single moment of our lives without encountering a book, a magazine, television, advertising media, music, billboards, movies - and they all send messages to every nook and corner of the world. Media influences people and brings about change. Change is the law of nature; society keeps on changing either for good or bad. Change may be rapid or slow. Although various factors contribute to bring change in society, the quickest, most attractive and fascinating of them all, is mass media.

It is an established and proved fact that television has been one of most influencing factors to bring various changes in a society. Due to its various advantages over the other media of communication and information, its popularity is much higher than others in rural as well as in urban areas. Most of the leisure time all over the world today, is being spent on viewing television programmes which have wide varieties and different purposes in addition to recreation. A few factors among the many that influence change in society had been taken for the purpose of the present study; they are Social development, Culture, Education and Economic. These factors were analysed to find out the influence of television on them because change in these factors bring change in society.

For the purpose of the present study the following factors have been defined as follows:

- i. **Social development:** Social development has been defined as the positive social change that takes place in social life of a society through changes in beliefs, values, norms, media, ideas, works of art, religious practices fashions, rituals, economic, political development that are passed on to a society by communication from one culture with other cultures. It is a process of bringing advancement in the society through the factors like education, economic, technology and media, which act as the agents of change in the society.



- ii. **Culture:** Culture has been defined as a way of life of a group of people, who accept the alien behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols generally without thinking about them, and they are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next and from one community to the other which change the society for the better.
- iii. **Education:** Education has been defined as a medium of information for the development of knowledge, skill, values, positive attitudes and character. Thus, from the above definition, we might assume that the rationale of education is to enrich children, youth and elders for the transformation of individuals and society.
- iv. **Economic:** Economic has been defined as the study of the persons living in society who promotes welfare of the nation in the ordinary fiscal life.
- v. **Television** The word Television has been defined in many ways. The roots of the word 'television' are Greek and Latin. "Tele" is Greek for 'far' while 'vision' is from Latin "Visio" which means 'Vision' or 'sight' meaning vision at a distance. Thus television has been defined as a multi sensory electronic media which supersedes all other media because of its proximity, motion pictures, music and voice. It welcomes every one who wants to access it, whether they are young or old, educated or uneducated, urban or rural dwellers.

Objectives

Television is the most significant electronic medium of progress for the transformation of a society. It is considered as the medium of the mass, because with its sound and visuals, it captures the mind and heart of its audience and has become a part of a new culture and cultural values of those who watch it. But a study of its kind in Meghalaya has not been undertaken hence the present researcher wanted to carry out the study in the state for the economic, social, educational, technological, cultural development of the villages in the state, to improve the living standard of the people and to make them self-reliant, since most of the people of villages come under the low income strata. One cannot ignore the fact that they too form the fibre of our country. The people of the state and also the citizens of our country have the right to develop themselves and have a responsibility to play an important role in building our mother land. Hence the following objectives have been framed to find out if television acts as an agent of change in society.

1. To identify the relationship, if any, between television as a medium of information and social development.
2. To identify the relationship, if any, between television as a medium of information and cultural changes.
3. To identify the relationship, if any, between television as a medium of information and education.
4. To identify the relationship, if any, between television as a medium of information and economic conditions.

Hypotheses

With the above objectives the present study attempts to examine if there is a relationship between a few factors of social change and television.

The following are the assumptions with reference to the objectives:

- Hypothesis # H₁ Television has no relationship with social development of a society.
- Hypothesis #H₂ Television has no relationship with the cultural changes in a society.
- Hypothesis #H₃ Television has no relationship with the educational development of a society.
- Hypothesis #H₄ Television has no relationship with economic factors of a society.

The Research Site

The state of Meghalaya comprises of seven districts, consisting of three Hills, i.e., Khasi, Jaintia and Garo. According to census of India, 2001, Khasi Hills are divided into three districts, East Khasi Hills have 8 towns and 899 villages, Ri-bhoi district with 1 town and 570 villages, West Khasi Hills with 2 towns and 914 villages, Jaintia Hills comprise district with 1 town and 465 villages and Garo Hills are divided into three districts, East Garo Hills with 2 towns and 856 villages, West Garo Hills with 1 town and 1481 villages and South Garo Hills have 1 town and 595 villages. Three districts were selected to represent the three major communities of Meghalaya – The Khasis, The Jaintias and The Garos.

Sample

From each district, two villages, one with television and the other without television had been identified for the purpose of primary data collection. Random samples of 50 families from each village were selected for the final data collection. One person from every household was chosen by the family, to respond to the questionnaire. The following table presents the details of the Sample. The following villages were selected keeping in mind the nearness of the villages with and without television, since; they have similar topography, climatic condition, culture and the influence by the other factors of the society, so as to enable the investigator to study the factors that causes for changes in the two groups villages.

Villages with and without television

Districts	Villages with TV	Villages without TV	Distance
East Khasi Hills	Krang (50 families)	Kshaid (50 families)	45 Km and 47km from Shillong
Jaintia Hills	Tluh (50 families.)	Mukain and Neighbouring Villages (50 families)	150 and 130 Km respectively.
West Garo hills	Ganapara (50 families)	Ajugri and Neighbouring Villages. (50 families)	80 and 85 Km from Tura.

The Assessment Method

Primary data was collected using the questionnaire method. Questionnaire booklets in English were translated into Khasi and Garo and were used for assessing the influence of television as a medium of information.

Questionnaire Booklet

Questionnaire, which forms an important aspect of the research, was prepared after conducting a pilot study and this was supplemented by studies of different literature on television and different types of questionnaires prepared by various research scholars. A self prepared questionnaire was structured by using five point Likert scale, consisting of six sections.

The various variables of social change that were measured are as follows:

1. *Personal information*
2. *Television and Social Development*
3. *Television and Culture*
4. *Television and Education*
5. *Television and Economic Conditions*

Collection of Data

The investigator made copies of the questionnaire and the next step for the investigator was to distribute them among the respondents. After the prior information and preparation to visit these villages, the investigator with the guide and translator proceeded to the different villages under study and spent sufficient amount of time to explain and answer their queries.

Data Analysis

The raw data was analysed by using the suitable statistical tools such as; Percentage, Mean, Median, Correlation Analysis, Cross Tabulation and Canonical Correlation Analysis.

Findings

1. There is positive and negative correlation of television with factors of social development. This is evident from the responses of the respondents from the villages with television and villages without television. Striking differences of awareness between the two types of samples are also apparent. The glaring influence of television on social development is more obvious in the villages without television than in villages with television.
2. The respondents from the villages without television are not completely deprived of viewing television and being frequent viewers they are quite aware of the impact of television. Since there is no television, either in their houses or villages they go out to watch their favourite programmes either in video parlour or renting gadgets. Because of this reason their expense on watching television or video shows is higher than those with television in their villages.

3. The correlation coefficients of composite variables signifying cultural changes with television are highly correlated but amazingly, the influence of television on cultural changes seems to be more significant in the villages where television facilities are not available than those who have access to television in their villages.
4. Educational programmes on television in particular and other television programmes enrich students' learning, they are able to understand better because they see and hear what is taking place in different programmes. They are also aware that teachers can make their lessons interesting by using televised programmes to create interest in students, to learn fast and understand better since television can cut through geographical barriers and bring inaccessible events in a concrete way.
5. The respondents from the villages without television indicated the influence of television over educational development more significantly than those respondents from the villages with television. Though there are slight variations in the values of canonical correlations analysis, both the sample types are scoring high and based on these scores it is safe to assume that educational development are significantly correlated with television
6. It is interesting to know from both the groups that those with television and without television spend money on watching television programmes and videos. It is fitting to highlight here that 22 of the respondents from the villages where television is not available spend more than Rs. 500 per month to watch films, television programmes and video shows.
7. The respondents with television show that watching television has reduced on saving for medical expenses; the reason could be that they are informed about preventive methods and also learned to take care of themselves. They also learnt to spend less on religious celebrations and cooking. They may follow the television programmes where the celebrities spend on fast food and on eating in restaurants. On the other hand the respondents from the villages without television indicate that television had highly increased the spending habits so as to be able to watch television programmes or video shows of their choice. However, the findings show that there are both positive and negative relationship on both the villages with television and villages without television.

8. The study reveals that the respondents are exposed to regional, national and international news and they make a choice of listening to different programmes like agricultural, discussions quiz films, serials and others. But those with television choose to listen to different types of music, news and other programmes compared with those without television. The respondents with television are open to watch and listen to programmes in Hindi, English, and other languages.
9. The respondents indicated that television is a significant medium of information, education and entertainment, which brings changes in the society.
10. Contrary to the four hypotheses television is found to be significantly related to social development, cultural changes, educational development and economic factors of a society.

Suggestions

The following are a few suggestions made for future research based on the experiences gained while conducting the study.

1. Studies should be conducted on the skills of the residence of the villages so that those skills could be utilised in the production of programmes according to the relevance of their background, this will create interest in them to extend their contribution in the preservation of culture and at the same time it will create job opportunities to them.
2. Comparative study of the use of television in the urban and rural areas to be undertaken so that they will be encouraged to find the differences between their life and the life of people in towns and cities.
3. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that education brings development in the society; a study of the impact of distant education on rural life could be undertaken, so as to make necessary arrangements for the distant education to reach the unreachable.
4. The respondents are of the belief that television enriches their knowledge of health care and child care. A study could be undertaken to know the degree of awareness of health created by television, so that the evil practices of smoking, over eating of betel leaves and drinks could be highlighted by television programmes.

5. Many of the villages in the remote areas of Meghalaya do not have electricity, which is one of the causes of not able to have television in the villages, so a study could be undertaken to find out how to harness the solar energy for the development of villages.
6. A study on the impact convergence of media may be undertaken to instil in the people of the rural areas, the need for the preservation of culture and to make use of multimedia for development.
8. Majority of the people of the rural areas are educated up to primary level so the education and information could be intertwined with entertainment so that the facts of life may reach them. A study on the compression of media could be of a great help in the process of development.
9. For further research, samples should be collected on the basis of owning or not owning television. Few households owning television in the villages being used to generalise the village as having shows on marked differences with the villages without television.
10. From the data collected and the personal experiences of the researcher, the presence of television in a few household appears to have inculcated so much of jealousy in the minds of the respondents who did not own television sets but came from the villages where television facilities are available. The jealousy factor of the respondents from the villages with television seems to have negated the perception of television. On the other hand, the absence of television owners in the villages seems to have made the respondents from these villages very fascinated with television. This fascination to television factor of respondents from the villages without television seems to have influenced them to validate the perception of television more positively. It is suggested that a parameter to measure other psychological factors like jealousy and fascination may be incorporated in future researches on the perception of the same population types.