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Role of Soap-operas in changing the social perspective of metro women in developing countries with special reference to India.

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With an ever changing world, Television has always been a very old and amiable companion of human being. It is not only The TV Film industry that is growing with a rapid pace, but even the personality and the attitude of the countrymen is getting changed. Initially, the pivotal role of women was considered to be a figure that was defined as, 'The House Maker' but now the scenario has changed. She is no more just confined to make bread and butter for her family but is now having an identity and personality of her own. The credit of her transformation which is in her lifestyle and her attitude goes to, our friend i.e. T.V., as it has always been an source of inspiration for the people and even is an effective mode which is used to empower people, irrespective of their class and status in the society. Our major part of study here would be centered on the women of our country.

Does this empowerment to Television a boon and a blessing in disguise? This has a very apt response and that is' No'. These serials, that are a part and parcel and a potent element in our world of Television, are a curse more than a blessing. The quality time of an individual is devoted to the so called families that are a part of T.V and due to this many important topics of an individual's family is not discussed. Most of the time is wasted in discussing the development of stories that are going on in our daily soap operas.

In this dynamic world the competition between men and women is increasing day by day as they are now on the verge of gaining equality and this is influenced by the western world. The soap operas have had in the recent past shown tremendous influence on the women of India and have successfully shaped up their lifestyles too. Now the main question that holds attention is that should the females or the women of India go on the track of role reversal and image transformation?

Women of India have always been associated with prefixes shy, covert and someone who is so poised calm and dutiful to all the spheres of her life. She is the one who is very aptly quoted as the homemaker who is engaged in multiple activities, such as taking care of the children, looking after their parents and many others, where in her main motive is to just keep everyone happy. But, as the world is progressing at a faster pace there is a change in the mindsets of the people too, where they are not only very educated but also aware of the realities and their moral duties. Now the women is seen at par with men and even the differences in respect to gender inequality is disappearing.

Now the most potent area of discussion is, how did this sudden change took place? The answer to this is very self explanatory….TV and all the soap operas, which do highlight the underlying themes of westernization and women empowerment. These Soap operas make the basic point of showing the women as protagonist whether in the main story or in the sidelines, and even inspire our women to be as impressive, bold, confident like many of the female characters in them. The women like to imitate and get inspired by characters like Shanti who is so bold, prerna who is the epitome of beauty and how can we forget parvati and tulsi who are the pillars of their houses and many more. So it is quite evident that from one phase to another in the path of westernization these soap sagas holds a very important place in shaping up the mindsets of people.

Ist phase: (Soap opera on TV took its first steps in India)

The foundation was laid by serials like Humloag, Buniyaad, Circus and Fauji. These were the serials dealing with the lower class or middle class of the society which acted as a bridge between the lay man and the thoughts of that time about women. The theme of empowerment of women was there but it was not that much prevalent and talked off or did not occupy the central idea of the story.

2nd phase: (The empowerment stage with the twist of elite)

This was the time when serials like Shanti and Swabhimaan were the most talked off and depicted the bold and outspoken images of characters like Mandira Bedi, who has been the inspiration for all the young girls and they look out to her to be as confident and independent as her character was in the serial. The main focus of the serials of this phase was in and around the elite class of the society and what the problems they face are and what kind of politics and criminalization revolve around them just because they are famous and belong to the aristocratic zone.

3rd phase: (The saas-bahu saga)

This was the time which was ruled in by the queen of soap series 'Ms. Ekta Kapoor' and she was there to spread her charm and magic through her serials and to be the undisputed leader amongst all the channels. The women of this time were more sophisticated and bitchiness was one of the traits of this era, which aroused due to envy and competition that they faced with other women. There were characters like Prerna, Tulsi, Parvati at this time who were as prominent and famous as ever. It was not only the female characters but the male ones also who possessed these key traits in them. Due to the immense influence of Ekta's series, every mom looked for Anurag or Mihir as the prospective grooms for their daughter's and even the negative characters were so influential that they were a taboo in themselves and got that fame due their style and presence. The pre-requisite of this phase was a craze for every woman who looked forward to the saris to the makeup, the accessories, the living style of the female characters of these serials and wanted to imbibe all these things in themselves too. This phase was a nerve reckoning phase for the soap operas and now Indian women had started thinking on a much faster pace.

4th phase: (Women-the central idea)

Now, this is the time to take women in the centre and deal with the problems in their life, may it be child marriage, dowry, barter of the girl child, educating girl child, women emotions etc. and now all the focus went on the female gender and about things associated with them, which were never talked before in our society. This phase is much more concentrated on the empowerment factor as compared to any other phase in the history of the Indian soap opera. The soap operas of this time were presenting and centered on trivial problems which were prevalent in the rural and even in the urban society and which were almost common to every class of the people. Moreover serials of these times, with a hint of drama and emotions are making us aware that the woman of today is no longer as we quote her since ages…'ghar ki daal', but she is the one who should and will live on her own terms as she has all the rights to do so.

The running phase even gave motivation even to those who were not coming in the forefront for many reasons. These serials had a deep emotional aspect and kept on asking one prominent question that was, why one is not proud of the fact of having a girl child? And why people are not proud of the girls and let them fly out in this world to make their individuality?

Where these serials have given the women their individuality, they had taken away much of the time which was before meant for the family. As soon as the soap saga is about to commence the dinner is served to the family with the instructions that now she doesn't need any disturbance in between her serials. The grip of these soap operas is so firm that now females are devoid of spending quality time with their families and now TV has become their so called beloved family. If we preview the earlier times then the topics that were potent in talking about women were about the working or health or liking and disliking of their son or husband which has now been

replaced by talks such as, "Do you know what sadhna's husband Aalekh in the serial Bidaai (Star Plus) is doing or Do you know Annadi in Balika Vadhu (colors) is going to die?", these are the points on which discussion are taking place which shows these soap operas as occupying the summit of a women's mind.

A research has been conducted to study the "Role of Soap-operas in changing the social perspective of metro women in developing countries with special reference to India". We conducted this research in National Capital Region of Delhi.

The objective of survey is as follows:

1. To study the TV watching habit of metro women.
2. To find out the effect of soap operas on individual behavior of women, living in NCR Delhi.
3. To find out the effectiveness of soap operas on familial relations of metro women.
4. To find out the impact of soap operas on social perspective of women, living in Metropolitan cities.

Review of Literature

A large number of researches have been done in western developed countries where as very few studies have been undertaken with respect to Soap Opera in India. There are many books which can be found which talk about the same research but with different perspective and yardsticks but somehow they are fulfilling the topic of the impact of soap operas on women in our society and some of the books are: The Soap Opera Slaughter by Marvin Kaye, Imaging Muslim Women in Indonesian Ramadan Soap Opera by Rachmah Ida, Women and Soap Opera : A cultural Feminist Perspective by Dannielle Blumenthal, Screen Tastes; Soap Operas to satellite Dishes by Charlotte Brunsdon, Love Ideology in the afternoon: Soap Opera, Women and television Genre by Laura Stempel Mumford, Russell E. Mumford

China Pop How Soap Opera, Tabloids and Bestsellers are transforming a culture by Jianying Zha,Tranying Zha.

These are few really good books to study about the topic and talk about each and every stage in the TV industry and the impact on women.

Methodology

The study has been conducted in the National Capital Region - Delhi, India. A survey has been conducted to study the Role of Soap-operas in changing the social perspective of metro women in developing countries with special reference to India. The data has been collected through Interview Schedule (questionnaire), specially designed for this purpose. The schedule consisted of both open and closed question. The open end questions were meant for obtaining in depth information and opinions from the respondent. The collected data has been analyzed using suitable statistical techniques.

A random sampling method was used with the sample size of 100. The average age of sample size varies from 20 to 35 years and they are all married. The respondent were from different professions have been asked different questions regarding the topic and their diverse answers have been analyzed.

Sixteen questions have been asked and there are very diverse views which are given by the metro women. And hence the mindset of every woman is according to the nature of the job or activities they are doing like if they are housewives they are more indulgent into the soap operas and the stuff and as a professional women don't have time and if they get some they will prefer to watch for an hour or something. Therefore the survey was the best possible option to study the perspective of the metro women.

Research Findings and Analyisis

We had found out many diverse outcome after the research has been made. The first question was that how much time do they invest in watching TV, 26% of the women doing job watch TV for less than one hour, the female who are housewives, considered as the target audience has proven this right, as 49% housewives say that they devote three hours and more in watching TV and in others 25% women devotes one to two hours watching TV.

The second question was that how many soap operas do they watch daily, almost 34% women say that they watch two to three soap operas daily, 28% say that one to two shows daily, 23% say more than three shows daily and 15% says no to soap operas.

Next question was, how many episodes do they watch of a particular soap opera in a week, 7% women don't go for soap operas, 11% women go for one episode if they feel like, 52% women watch 2 to 4 episodes as they find it interesting and 30% women are in a habit of watching all of the episodes as they are addicted to. In this series 57% women said that they sacrifice the other programs due to these soap operas and other 43% watch all kind of programs.

76% women concentrate on the attire and the jewelry and love to buy the identical one as they are like the trend setter and for 24% women say it doesn't matter what they are wearing.

Next question was do they feel their way of thinking changes due to these soap operas around 32% women admit that yes their mindset is changing as the world around them is changing and 68% believe that they are just fictitious things and one should watch it for time pass.

The next question was that do they feel worried or disturbed when the stars suffer the pain in the serials, 61% says yes they got attached to the character and feel the pain and for the rest 39% women they are just acting their role out.

16% of the women like to watch such serials with the whole family as now everyone wants to know the whole story, 27% women watch it alone, 42% watch it with their husbands and 15% watch it with children as nowadays there are lots of options available.

Next question was do they have the silent communication while watching the shows and the answer is 65% families have silent talks what is going to happen and the remaining 35% families don't want any disturbance.

Next question was that do they compare the attitude and the behaviors of their family members from the characters of the serial so 28% women match them a little bit as they fantasies to have a family like them, 7% do that very much , 43% don't do that and 22% can't say.

65% respondents say for the next question that they live in a real world and world is not larger than life so they can't celebrate the marriage and the festivals on such large scale whereas if given a chance 32% women want to do so.

75% respondents say that they spend more time together now as we watch and discuss the opera collectively and always be on the timing when it is going to start and 25% women say that yes now importance has been shifted but not that much.

Now main discussion among the people is about the stories of the serial and this is our next question and 76% women feel not majorly but yes this has now become an integral part of the discussions and the remaining 24% say that there are a lot of other things to be discussed.

Next question is that do they like to read the gossips that are printed in the newspaper or shown in the other form of media and 58% say yes they love watching all that stuff and 42% say who cares! We only watch serial and that's more than enough for us.

Next question was do the soap opera present the real picture of their nearby social world and people, 45% say yes but not completely, 24% say no its all scripted and this doesn't exist in real life and 10% say can't say.

And the last question was if they like to contribute any how in eliminating the social problems, they watch in the soap operas like dowry, child marriage etc. and people say, around 82% would like to contribute for the eliminating such problems and 18% just watch the things just for fun.

The objectives of the research study are very much fulfilled by the survey as the pattern of watching TV shows are very well studied through the questionnaire and the survey also suggests that there is also the change in the behavior and the attitude of the women as now they are comparing themselves with the men and don't think themselves less as compared to men of the country, they want to be independent and also want to be the one who can also earn bread and butter for the family. Now they don't want to be the one who stay in house to look after the whole family they also want the freedom and individuality for themselves.

Yes they agree that the time devoted to the family is decreasing nowadays but they say why only women have to be the one losing her on self all the time. Now they feel it's her duty to look after others and herself also.

According to some of the women they say that nowadays even the in laws are asking for a well established women for their boys so there is nothing wrong in it and everything should be and can be balanced.

The impact is very much seen now from the dressing to the trends, from relations to the professions everything is inspired by these soap operas. Before these soap operas none of the women have thought like this as they were not getting any exposure but now the exposure is there and on a very large scale.

The survey shows that people are nowadays indulging in things that soap opera are providing but the good thing is that people are now aware that there are so many misconceptions and superstitions that still prevails in the country and they should help in tackling them.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The discussion in the previous paragraphs shows that people are indulging into the soap operas and they are devoting there time and money to the serials and due to this we get to know that there is a big role of soap operas in changing the prospective of today's women.

Serials like Kyuki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, kasuti Zindagi Ki, Kumkum, Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki etc have provided them a platform to look the relations in different way with a larger than life prospective.

Now the women in India are more independent and make her own decisions and that boldness and integrity has been provided by such serials. But as the coin has two sides these serials are also like that. On one hand they are educating the people but on the other hand they take the time away from the hands of the women and the ultimate discussion among the women is nowadays stories of the serials and who married to whom, who got divorced, who died and so on or on the other hand the culture is so much changed that the women are now working also and due to that the time is all the more less given to their families.

Soap operas are becoming the mentor of metro women. Their hypnotism is converting their world. The imaginary world of soap operas is changing them into introverted personalities. The research reflects the fact that the characters of soap operas are taking the place of members of their family. They know the social problems of neighboring state, which is a healthy sign about their awareness. But the sad part is that they are now more unaware about the needs of their own society.

The 4th phase, having all the women centralized like Balika Wadhu, Uttarn, Devi, Agale Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Kijo etc. with topics like women empowerment, child marriage, female foeticide etc. are also going on but it's just the beginning and as we can see the beginning is very positively drastic as once in an interview the writer of the show Balika Wadhu said that when I brought this scripts the producers were very reluctant to the script as they taught at that time the era was all about Saas Bahu soaps and nobody will be excited to see the story of a young girl being the victim of child marriage, but as we can see the show is getting the highest TRPs for itself as we say everything has its own time.

From the impact we can also evaluate that the women of today has very high aspiration for themselves, they also want their place and they don't want these aspirations and desires to die for anyone. They want the equality and they agree that we are growing and they really want to grow and hope to land up in an era where there is no discrimination between men and women and one don't have to sacrifice everything for other and should have their own individuality.

Annexure

Table 1.
Respondents invest time in watching the TV daily

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Less than one hour	26	26
2.	One to two hour	25	25
3.	Two to three hour	31	31
4.	More than three hour	18	18
Total		100	100

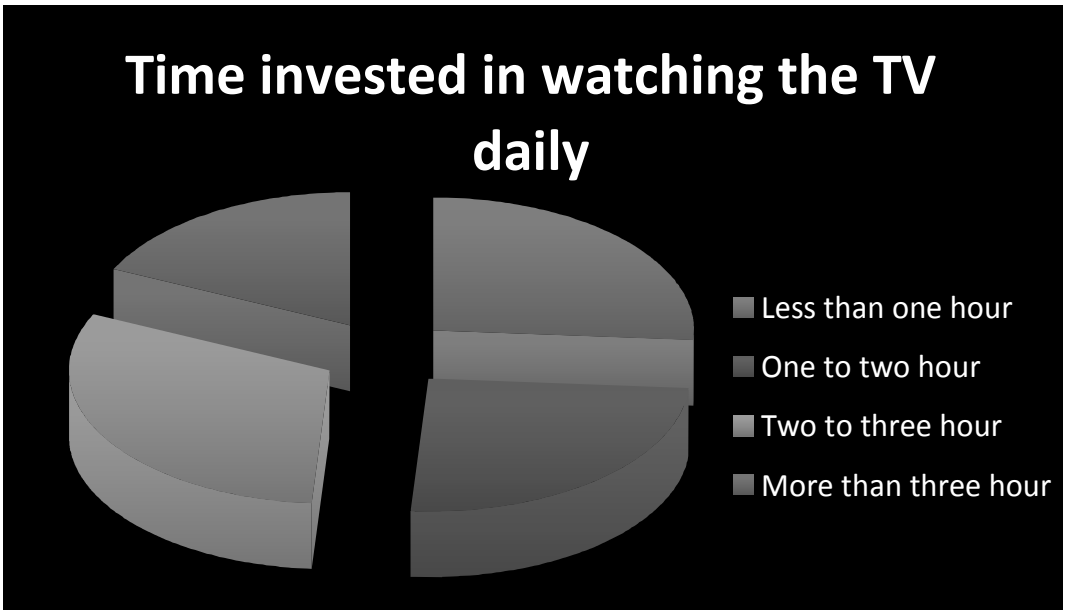


Table 2.

Respondents watching number of Soap Operas daily

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	No	15	15
2.	One to two	28	28
3.	Two to three	34	34
4.	More than three	23	23
Total		100	100

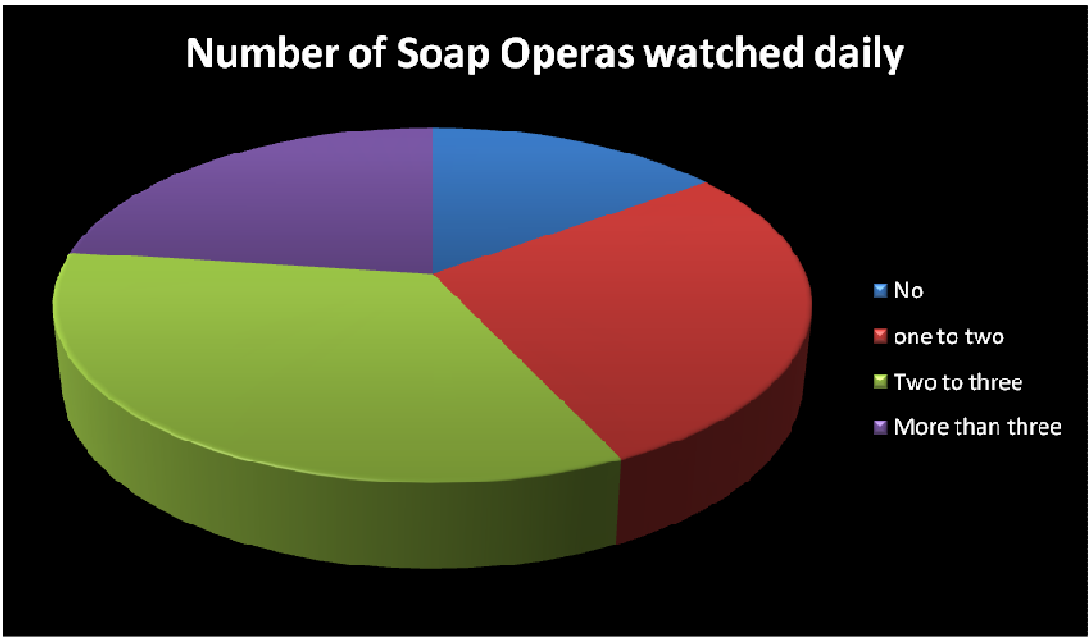


Table 3.

Respondents sacrificing other programs on TV for Soap Operas

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	57	57
2.	No	43	43
Total		100	100

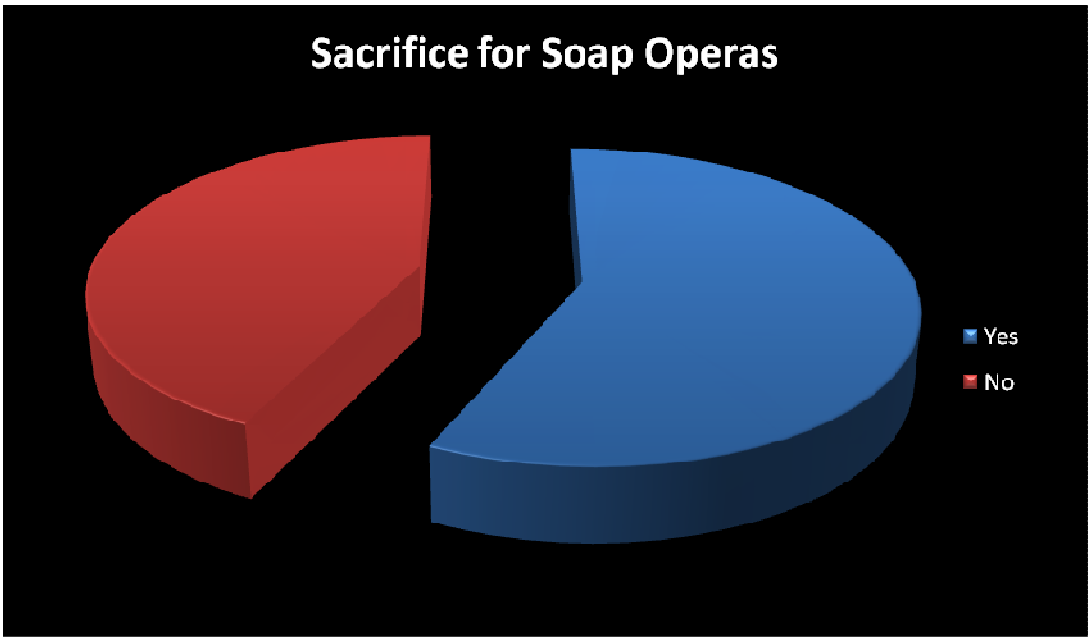


Table 4.

Respondents feeling about change in thinking due to these soap operas

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	32	32
2.	No	68	68
Total		100	100

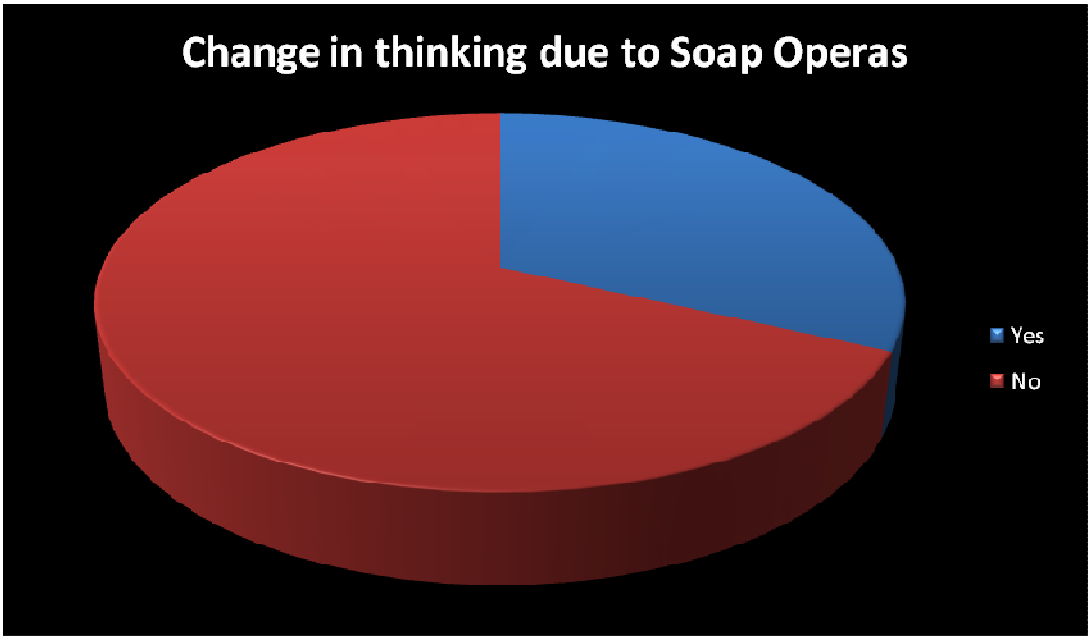


Table 5.

Respondents perception when the stars suffer pain in the serials

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	61	61
2.	No	39	39
Total		100	100

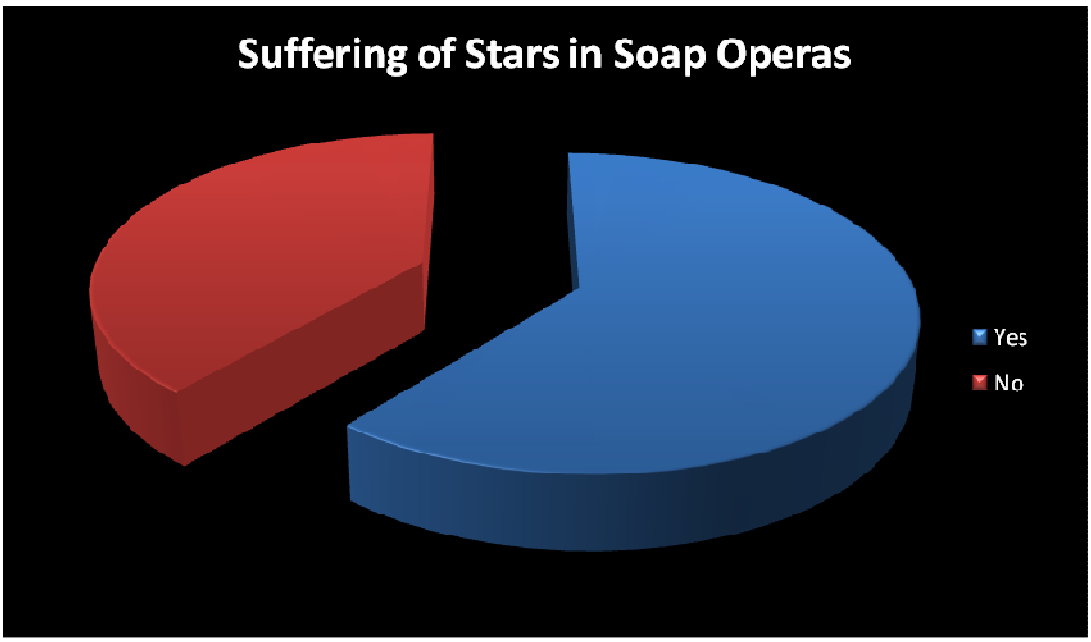


Table 6.

Respondent's partner while watching soap operas

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Alone	27	27
2.	With husband	42	42
3.	With children	15	15
4.	With whole family including in-laws/parents	16	16
Total		100	100

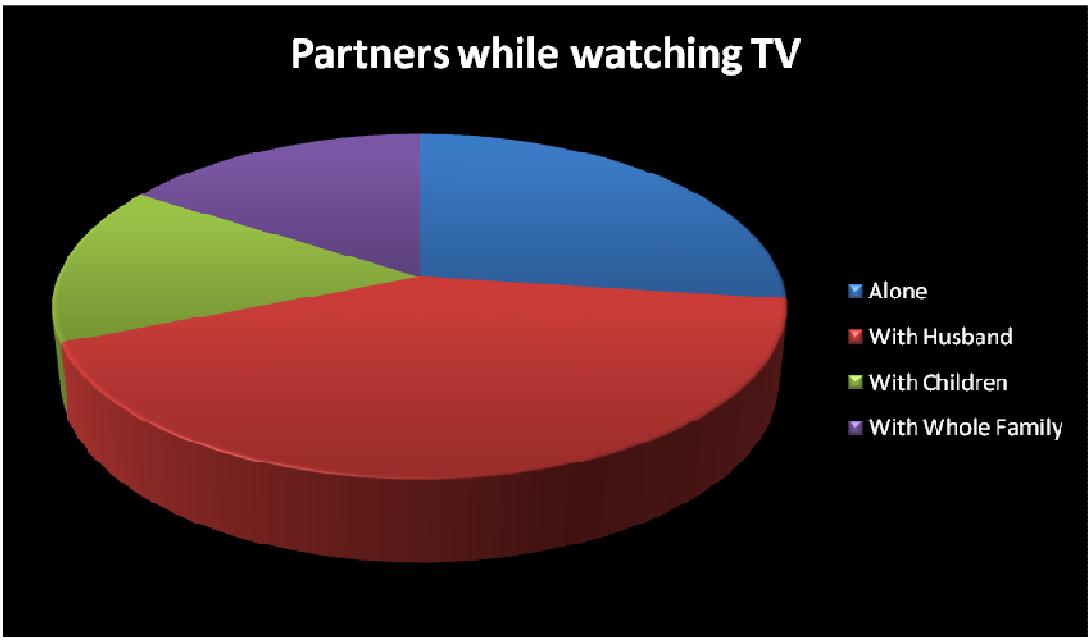


Table 7.

Showing respondents comparing the behavior and attitudes of members of family with the characters of Soap Operas

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Never	43	43
2.	A little bit	28	28
3.	Very much	7	7
4.	Can't say	22	22
Total		100	100

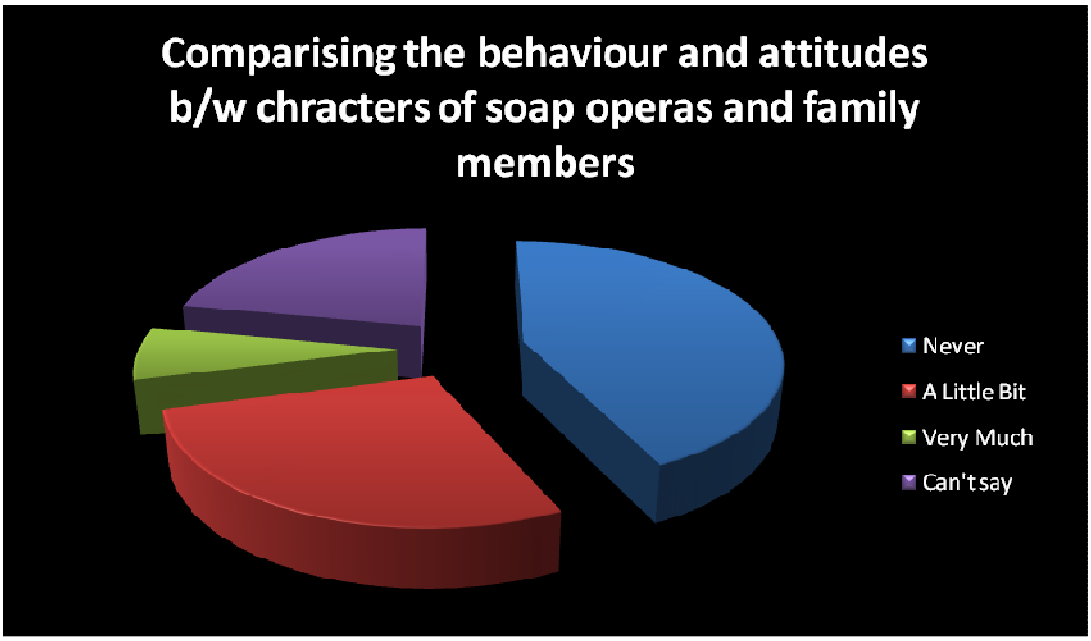


Table 8.

Showing respondents interest in reading the materials related with Soap operas in News Papers or in any another media.

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	58	58
2.	No	42	42
Total		100	100

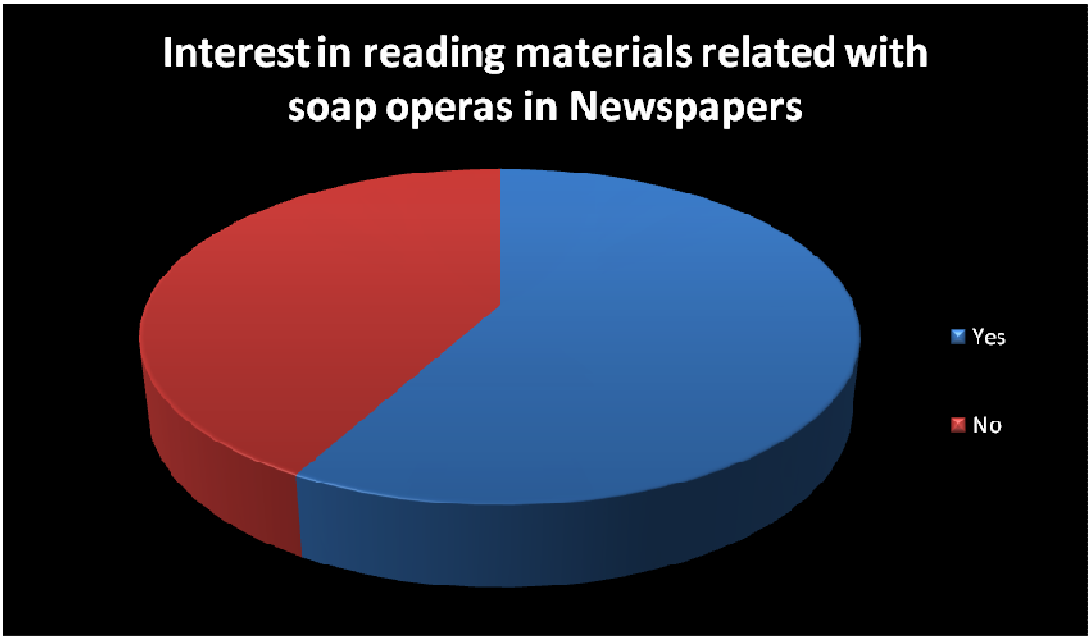


Table 9.

Showing respondents perception on portraying real picture of social world by these soap operas.

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	21	21
2.	No	24	24
3.	Yes but not completely	45	45
4.	Can't say	10	10
Total		100	100

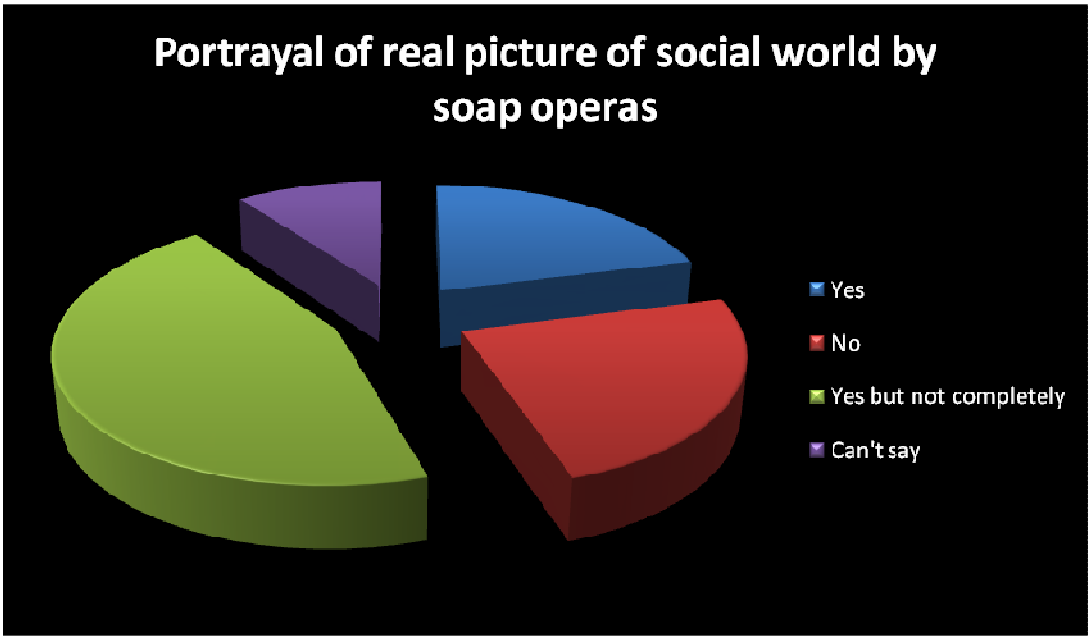
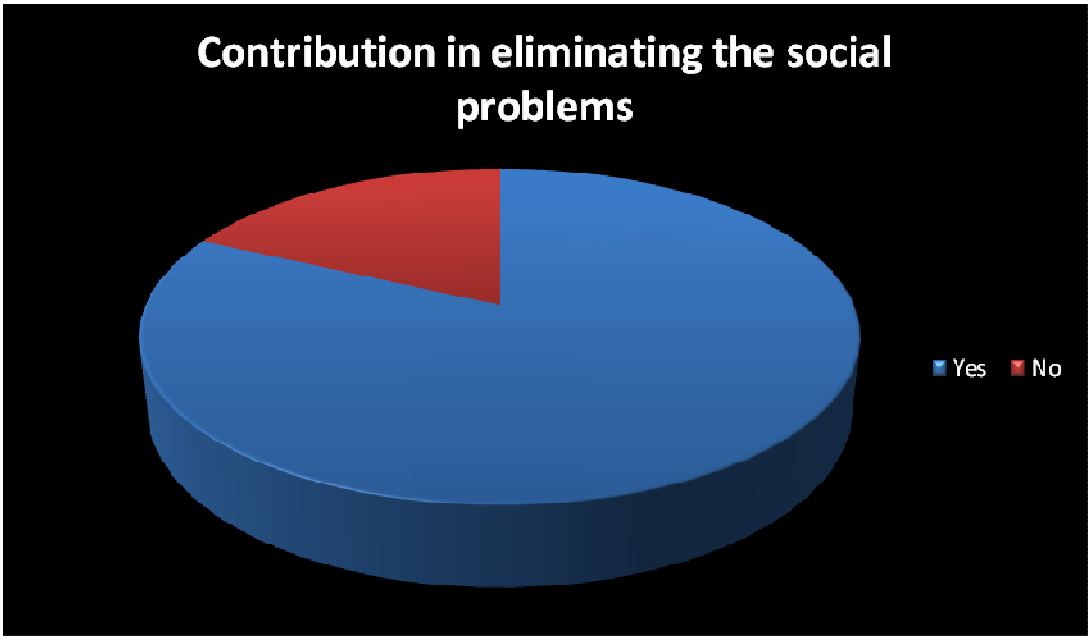


Table 10.

Showing whether respondents would contribute in eliminating the social problems as shown in soap operas

SL. No.	Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Yes	82	82
2.	No	18	18
Total		100	100



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