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**The Impact Of Television Programme On The Mindset And Attitudes Of Youths In
The Rural Areas¹**

Mohd Nizam Osman
Department of Communication
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan
Malaysia

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Abstract

Issues on the role of television as a medium of education and persuasion, apart from entertainment and information gathering have been widely discussed and debated by researchers in the past (see for example, Zajonc 1968, Tan, Fujioka & Tan 2001, Mastro & Tropp 2004). In this case, television is seen as a medium that is capable of positively educating and influencing the attitudes and mindset of the viewers. This assumption is consistent with the Cultivation Theory which provides the assumption that television is indeed capable of influencing the attitudes of the viewers. As a means of addressing the reliability of the assumptions derived from past studies indicating that television is perceived to be a powerful socialization agent of change among viewers, this study therefore is carried out among television viewers residing in rural areas in the state of Sabah, in Malaysia. The questionnaire survey method has been administered for the study, involving a total of 224 respondents residing in the rural parts of Sabah who have been asked to provide their reactions as to what extent television programming are capable of positively influencing and changing their mindset. The findings of the study will be presented and discussed using the descriptive statistics approach based on the frequency and percentage tabulation.

Television is an electronic communication medium which is accessed by billions of people worldwide. Television is largely watched not only for entertainment purposes, but also to obtain the latest news and information. Although television may be seen as an effective electronic communication medium, especially in its capacity of providing entertainment and in providing educational-related content especially for younger viewers which include teenagers and children, the impact of television viewing could result in a number of implications, especially in terms of the negative influence of television programmes on the mindset, attitudes, beliefs and overall social development of the viewers.

There have been extensive debates among scholars on the impact of television programmes on society (see for example, Zajonc 1968, Tan et al. 2001, Mastro & Tropp 2004). Some of these debates seem to question the negative impact of television viewing habits on society, in terms of influencing the mindset, attitudes, behaviour and overall lifestyle of the viewers, especially among teenagers and younger viewers. In this case, the content of television programmes is seen to be capable of shaping the overall mindset and behaviour of the viewers.

This study is therefore carried out to examine to what extent television viewing habits could have a significant influence on the mindset and behaviour of the viewers, specifically youths residing in the rural parts in the location of the study. Although television programmes are generally seen as having powerful impact on the lifestyles and behaviours of youths and teenagers residing in the urban parts of any country, the question here is whether television programmes are capable of influencing the mindset and attitudes of youths and teenagers residing in the rural parts of the country?

Physically, it is very obvious that the average lifestyle of teenagers and youths residing in the urban and city areas are significantly different as compared to the lifestyle of teenagers and youths residing in the less urbanized areas. This can be seen in terms of the fashion, hairdos, lifestyles, communication style and behaviour of teenagers and youths residing in the urban parts of the country which are largely seen to be more 'westernized' in nature. This obviously can be an issue of concern, especially since the younger population is seen to be losing their 'local' identities which include their values and norms. Questions are therefore raised as to whether these 'changing lifestyle' involving the younger population can be attributed to the role and influence of television programmes. The paper therefore addresses these issues in greater depth.

Review of Literature

The role of the mass media as an entertainment medium and social development medium in developed and developing countries have been widely researched and discussed among scholars, researchers, politicians as well as government and non-governmental bodies and agencies (see for example, Salleh 2006, Pecora et al. 2006, Asiah Sarji 1991 and Comstock 1980). Most studies tend to view television as an important electronic communication medium which is extensively accessed not only for entertainment purposes but also as a means of obtaining latest news and information. Due to the significantly low cost of television, almost all families in developed and developing countries own at least 1 television set in their homes while some may own up to 3 or more television sets in their homes. Part of this could be attributed to television viewing habits among viewers where according to Salleh (2006), television viewing is an important daily activity among most people.

Asiah Sarji (1991) argued that television is a multi-purpose communication medium with multi-tasking capabilities and is seen as capable of leaving significant impact on the viewers. Earlier studies, however also revealed the negative impact of television on the viewers. For example, the findings of Comstock's (1980) study clearly revealed negative impact of television viewing habits on social institutions in America, largely due to the portrayal of television programmes which are seen to be negative in nature. Likewise, Pecore et al. (2006) conducted a study on the influence of television on the social development of children and found a significant positive relationship between the extent of television viewing habits and the negative social development of children. Their study revealed that children who are frequently exposed to violence and crime-related television programmes are very likely to be involved in crimes and violence-related activities when they grow up. This obviously indicates that the more children watch television, the more they are exposed to the content of television programmes, which can also be negative in nature depending on the content of the television programmes they are exposed to.

In the context of globalization and the concept of 'borderless' world, society are largely exposed to endless information from a variety of communication mediums which include television, the Internet, movies, magazines and others. The content of these communication mediums obviously have a direct impact on the consumers, either positively or negatively. This is evident from the changing patterns of lifestyle among society, especially among younger generation who are now dressing, eating, communicating and behaving differently as compared to past generations. In relation to this, the findings of Aina Rahizan's (2006) study clearly revealed that television possess strong influential force on society, especially in revealing 'reality images' which is also called 'constructive images' which are shaped by the ideologies of production entities. The findings of the study also revealed that society are easily confused or are intentionally being made confused by the 'reality' images portrayed on television. This obviously could result in a number of implications, primarily in shaping the social cultures of the viewers, especially since the younger viewers can be easily influenced by the negative portrayal of certain lifestyles and ideologies portrayed on television.

The views and discussions presented above are supported by the findings of Samsudin A. Rahim's (2003) study which revealed television viewers are also exposed to external content which may have a negative impact on local consumers. This may result in local viewers losing their local identity such as disengaging in their local norms and beliefs when they are easily influenced by the external or western content portrayed in television programmes. Furthermore, the findings of the study conducted by Samsudin A. Rahim & Latiffah Pawanteh (2003) also revealed that the exposure to mass media such as television which portrays a large percentage of western television programmes may easily influence the norms, behaviour, values and beliefs of individuals. This is based on the findings of their study which revealed viewers especially youths, are more easily influenced if they are exposed to television programmes which portray extreme content which include sexual, violence and inappropriate ideologies and lifestyles.

Based on the discussions presented above which clearly revealed that the content of television programmes may have negative impact on the viewing audience, this study is therefore conducted to examine the impact and level of influence of television on viewers, especially on youths who reside in the rural parts of the state of Sabah, Malaysia.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of television programme on the mindset and attitudes youths residing in the rural areas of Malaysia, specifically in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Specifically, the study is conducted to provide fulfil the following specific objectives of the study:

- to examine respondents' (youths residing in rural areas) television viewing habits
- to examine respondents' (youths residing in rural areas) preferred television programmes
- to analyze respondents' (youths residing in rural areas) perceptions on television programmes
- to analyze the influence of television programmes on the mindset and attitudes of youths residing in the rural areas.

Methodology

The method of generating the primary data of the study is largely based on the quantitative approach by means of questionnaire surveys distributed to selected respondents, comprising of 224 youths residing in Kampung Poring, in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Since the respondents of the study were largely comprised of youths residing in the rural parts of Malaysia, the primary data of the study was collected largely by means of the interview survey technique, as compared to the self-administered questionnaire survey. This technique is felt the most appropriate approach due to the demographic nature of the respondents who may not understand the structure of the questions posed in the research instrument. A total of 12 enumerators were employed to facilitate in collecting the primary data of the study, by means of interviewing the selected respondents and assisting them in completing the questionnaire survey forms. The process of data collection was conducted at least three times between October 2009 and March 2010.

Location and Selection of Respondents

In terms of the location of the study, Kampung Poring, Sabah was chosen due to the following two reasons: 1) the demographic criteria of the respondents residing in Kampung Poring, Sabah which are seen to be appropriate for the study and 2) the geographical nature of Kampung Poring, which is considered rural due to the significant distance from the nearest urbanized area but with adequate facilities which include schools, post office, hospitals and with the availability of basic infrastructure such as clean water and electricity. The communities residing in the village also have access to television and this obviously fulfils the location and respondents selection criteria for the study.

Findings

This section of the paper discusses the findings of the study based on the data obtained from the distribution of questionnaire survey forms to the selected respondents. The discussions presented are largely based on the data obtained from 4 main categories in the questionnaire survey form, which include 1) respondents' demography, 2) respondents'

television viewing habits, 3) respondents' perceptions on television programmes, and 4) influence of television on respondents' mindset and attitudes.

Respondents' Demography

In terms of respondents' demography, Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the respondents' gender, age groups, religion/ethnic group, household monthly income, career and education. This demographic information is seen to be very important and significant in the study because the demographic variables identified above are assumed to have a significant relationship with the extent of influence television programming has in shaping the respondents' mindset and attitudes.

The data presented in Table 1 clearly indicates that female youths were larger in terms of numbers, comprising of 133 respondents (59.4%) as compared to 91 male youths (40.6%). This gender distribution could be due to a number of reasons, part of which include educational and economic factors where by male youths are encouraged to either pursue their studies in the city or to seek employment in city while female youths are highly encouraged to remain in the village to assist in family-related matters.

Table 1 – Respondents' Demographic Data (n=224)

Respondents' Demographic Variables		Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	91	40.6
	Female	133	59.4
	Total	224	100
Religion / Ethnic Group	Malay (Islam)	88	39.2
	Chinese (Buddhist)	-	-
	Indian (Hindu)	-	-
	Bumiputra (Natives)	136	60.8
	Total	224	100
Age Group	15-20 years old	56	25.0
	21-30 years old	96	42.9
	31-45 years old	72	32.1
	Total	224	100
Highest level of Educational Achievement	No formal education	63	28.1
	Primary school	85	37.9
	Secondary school	46	20.5
	College	69	30.8
	University	30	13.4
	Total	224	100
Household Income group	RM500 or less	127	56.7
	RM501 – RM800	53	23.7
	RM801 – RM1,200	24	10.7
	RM1,201 – RM1,500	15	6.7
	RM1,500 and above	5	2.2
Total	224	100	

In terms of the respondents' religion and ethnicity, the data in Table 1 shows that the youths involved in the study were either Bumiputeras (natives) or from the Malay ethnic origin. The data shows that Bumiputera youths represent the majority of the respondents in the study, comprising of 136 respondents (60.8%), while there were only 88

youths (39.2%) who were from the Malay ethnic origin. The ethnic distribution of the respondents is considered normal because most of the communities residing in the rural parts of the country are largely comprised of either indigenous (natives) people or the Malays.

In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, a majority of the respondents, comprising of 96 youths (42.9%) were between 21 to 30 years old. This was followed by 72 respondents (32.1%) aged between 31 to 45 years old while 56 respondents (25.0%) were from the 15-20 age group.

As for the level of education, a significantly large number of the respondents had no formal education. This is evident from the data presented in the Table 1 which shows that a total of 63 respondents (28.1%) had no formal education, as compared to only 30 respondents (13.4%) who had university-level education. A majority of the respondents (37.9%) had only primary-level education. This could partly be due to poverty and low economic situation which are significantly high among families residing in most rural parts of the country. Furthermore, formal education is not seen as an important requirement for survival in the rural parts of the country, as compared to acquiring skills related to farming, hunting and fishing which are seen significantly more important for survival among the village communities. This finding is obviously consistent with the level of monthly household income of the respondents, where as revealed in Table 1, a majority of the respondents' monthly household income were less than RM500. Only 5 respondents (2.2%), whose father or immediate family member were either the head of the village or holding a full-time government position, had a monthly household income of over RM1,500.

Respondents' Television Viewing Habits

This section provides data and discussions concerning the respondents' television viewing habits. The data presented in Table 2 clearly indicate that all the respondents involved in the study have access to and watch television for a certain amount of time daily. In spite of this, not all the respondents owned a television set in their homes. This is evident based on the data presented in Table 2 which reveal a total of 137 respondents (61.2%) said they owned a television set in their homes while 87 respondents (38.8%) indicated otherwise. This is obvious considering a majority of the respondents (56.7 percent) had a monthly household income of less than RM500, which means they could not afford to purchase a television set (see Table 1).

Although a significantly large number of respondents said they did not own a television set in their homes, most of the respondents revealed watching television quite frequently. This is evident from the findings of the study as revealed in Table 2 which shows that a total of 121 youths (54.0%) indicated watching television on average between 4 – 6 days in a week, followed by 89 respondents (39.7%) who said they watched television everyday while only 17 respondents (7.6%) revealed they watched television on average between 1 – 3 days in a week. Although some of the respondents revealed not owning a television set in their homes, they were able to watch television at either their friends'/relatives' homes, at their school or at the community centre in the village where they reside.

In terms of the amount of time spent watching television, the data presented in Table 2 shows that a total of 160 respondents (71.4%) watched television an average of between 3 – 5 hours a day, followed by 132 respondents (58.9%) who watched television

between 1 – 3 hours a day while a total of 54 respondents (24.1%) revealed watching television for more than 5 hours on average in a day. Part of the reasons why the respondents spent a significantly long period of time watching television is due to the lack of activities available for them to do in their village. Unlike youths in the urban city areas who would either go shopping, watch movies, dining out with friends and etcetera as part of their socializing activities, youths residing in the villages would normally engage in village-related activities such as farming, hunting, rearing farm animals, fishing and playing games or sports with friends. This is where urban youths are believed to be more easily influenced in terms of their thinking, beliefs, lifestyles, ideologies and behaviour due to the exposure they obtain largely from the media institutions and from their socializing activities.

Table 2 – Respondents’ Television Viewing Habits

Television Programmes	No. (%) of male respondents	No (%) of female respondents	Total
Ownership of television set at home	62 (68.1%)	75 (56.4%)	137 (61.2%)
I watch television every day	38 (41.8%)	51 (38.3%)	89 (39.7%)
I watch television between 4 – 6 days a week	45 (49.5%)	76 (57.1%)	121 (54.0%)
I watch television between 1 – 3 days a week	11 (12.1%)	6 (4.5%)	17 (7.6%)
I do not watch television at all	- (0%)	- (0%)	- (0%)
I watch television mostly during the day (6am– 3pm)	11 (12.1%)	22 (16.5%)	33 (14.7%)
I watch television mostly during evening (3pm – 6pm)	33 (36.3%)	40 (30.0%)	73 (32.6%)
I watch television mostly at night (6pm – 6am)	47 (51.6%)	71 (53.4%)	118 (52.7%)
I watch television mostly the whole day	18 (19.8%)	29 (21.8%)	47 (21.0%)
I watch television mostly at home with family members	79 (86.8%)	120 (90.2%)	199 (88.8%)
I watch television mostly at friends’/relatives’ homes	54 (59.3%)	67 (50.4%)	121 (54.0%)
I watch television mostly at school/community centre	17 (18.7%)	21 (15.8%)	38 (17.0%)
I watch television on average less than 1 hour a day	9 (9.9%)	16 (12.0%)	25 (11.1%)
I watch television between 1 – 3 hours a day	45 (49.5%)	87 (65.4%)	132 (58.9%)
I watch television between 3 – 5 hours a day	67 (73.6%)	93 (69.9%)	160 (71.4%)
I watch television more than 5 hours a day	23 (25.3%)	31 (23.3%)	54 (24.1%)
I watch television mostly for entertainment	60 (65.9%)	105 (78.9%)	165 (73.7%)
I watch television to obtain latest news & information on various matters (economy, politics, education, etc)	31 (34.1%)	17 (12.8%)	48 (21.4%)
I watch television for escapism (to release tension and during spare time)	19 (20.9%)	34 (25.6%)	53 (23.7%)

Note: the percentage figure is based on the total number of respondents according to gender (male = total of 91 respondents, female = total of 133 respondents)

The data presented in Table 2 also revealed that most of the respondents watched television for entertainment purposes, followed by to obtain the latest news and information and also for escapism. Entertainment seems to be the most obvious reason for watching television among youths. This could partly be due to the availability of other forms of communication and information technology in the villages which is significantly

low. Therefore, television viewing is seen as one of the only means of entertainment and for obtaining latest news and information for youths residing in the villages.

Youths seem immensely focused when watching entertainment-related programmes on television as compared to watching informative or educational-related programmes such as National Geographic, Discovery, Science, Health and others. Part of this can be attributed to the trend and lifestyle of youths who seem to always rely on television and other forms of media such as films, magazines and the Internet to obtain the latest fashion and clothing, hairstyle, fashion, entertainment and others. This is where youths could be easily influenced by the content of television programmes they watch. Apart from watching television for entertainment, the findings presented in Table 2 also show that youths watch television for escapism, where as revealed in Table 2, a total of 53 respondents (23.7%) indicated watching television for leisure which include to release tension and for escapism.

In terms of the respondents' preferred television programmes, movies and dramas as well as entertainment-related programmes seem to be at the top of the list. This is evident where a total of 209 respondents (93.3%) preferred to watch imported entertainment programmes on television while 183 respondents (81.7%) preferred locally produced entertainment programmes. Entertainment programmes in the study are comprised of programmes such as music video, situational comedy and reality TV such as *Academi Fantasia*, *Mencari Cinta*, *Jangan Lupa Lirik* and so on. This finding reveals that the respondents' preference in terms of watching locally produced entertainment programmes and imported entertainment programmes is not significantly different. This obviously indicates that the respondents felt locally produced and imported entertainment programmes are both equally entertaining. This can largely be attributed to the content and quality of locally produced entertainment programmes which are believed to be highly entertaining and much more interactive as compared to similar programmes produced many years ago.

Table 3 – Respondents Preferred Television Programmes

Television Programmes	No. (%) of male respondents	Number (%) of female respondents	Total
Entertainment programmes (local)	78 (85.7%)	105 (78.9%)	183 (81.7%)
Entertainment programmes (imported)	83 (91.2%)	126 (94.7%)	209 (93.3%)
Educational programmes (national geographic, history, animal planet etc)	47 (51.6%)	29 (21.8%)	76 (33.9%)
News (local and imported)	12 (13.2%)	26 (19.5%)	38 (17.0%)
Religious programmes	42 (46.2%)	37 (27.8%)	79 (35.3%)
Sports programmes (local and imported)	73 (80.2%)	21 (15.8%)	94 (42.0%)
Movies/dramas (local)	86 (94.5%)	127 (95.5%)	213 (95.1%)
Movies/dramas (imported)	79 (86.8%)	120 (90.2%)	199 (88.8%)

Note: the percentage figure is based on the total number of respondents according to gender (male = total of 91 respondents, female = total of 133 respondents)

Movies aired on television are also among the preferred choice of television programmes among the youths in the study. As revealed in Table 3, a total of 213 respondents (95.1%) indicated they prefer watching locally produced movies/dramas as compared to 199 respondents (88.8%) who preferred watching imported movies /dramas. This could partly be due to language barriers and difficulties where most imported

movies/dramas are mostly in English. This obviously makes it rather difficult for the respondents to appreciate the movies/dramas produced in English or in any other foreign languages due to their poor command of the language concerned. Since most of the respondents' highest level of educational achievement was only at the primary school level, this would probably explain why most of the respondents may not have a good command of the English language or other foreign languages used as the main medium of communication in movies and dramas aired on television. In this case, the respondents would obviously find it a lot easier to watch and understand movies and dramas produced locally which used either Malay or local dialects as the main medium of communication.

Respondents' Perceptions on Television Programmes

The perceptions of the respondents with regards to the content of television programmes are equally important and should therefore be analysed and discussed in greater depth. This is because respondents' perceptions on television programmes may result in whether the respondents would spend significantly longer period of time in watching television or otherwise.

One of the main focuses of the study was to examine whether television programmes are viewed to be highly informative or otherwise. As shown in Table 4, a majority of the respondents felt that the content of locally produced and imported television programmes aired by the various television stations in the country is highly informative. This can be seen from the data presented in Table 4 which revealed a total of 139 respondents (62%) agreed that locally produced television programmes are highly informative while a total of 194 respondents (86.6%) felt imported television programmes are highly informative as well. This can be seen true from the numerous educational and informational-related programmes that are aired daily by the various television stations in the country. ASTRO², for example allocates a number of television channels such as Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, History Channel and others as a means of providing useful and educational information for the viewers. Apart from ASTRO, other television stations in the country such as TV3, RTM and NTV7 also feature programmes which are highly informative and educational in nature.

Other than providing viewers with entertainment, the content of television programmes are also aimed at providing viewers with the latest information on the country's economic, political and social issues, apart from issues concerning other countries and nations around the world. In spite of this, a significantly large number of respondents, comprising of 91 individuals (40.6%) seemed unsure whether the content of local television programmes provide viewers with the latest information concerning issues discussed above. Questions should be raised here as to why the respondents had provided such feedback. It can be assumed that the respondents of the study may not be directly exposed to Malaysia's economic, political and social situations which occur in the more urbanized parts of the country, therefore they may not be directly aware of the latest development taking place in the more developed and urban parts of the country, although information about these developments may have been disseminated to them through the various television programmes.

² ASTRO is one of the privately-funded subscription-based television stations in the country which provides viewers in Malaysia and other surrounding nations with a selection of close to 100 channels ranging from entertainment, sports, family, news, travel and living, education and others.

Table 4 – Respondents’ Perceptions on Television Programmes (n=224)

Questions from Questionnaire Survey	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
I feel the content of local television programmes are highly informative	52 (23.2%)	87 (38.8%)	39 (17.4%)	29 (12.9%)	17 (7.6%)
I feel the content of imported television programmes are highly informative	69 (30.8%)	125 (55.8%)	12 (5.4%)	8 (3.6%)	10 (4.5%)
I feel the content of local television programmes are well regulated by the government	61 (27.2%)	95 (42.4%)	27 (12.1%)	32 (14.3%)	9 (4.0%)
I feel the content of imported television programmes are well regulated by the government	12 (5.4%)	30 (13.4%)	58 (25.9%)	66 (29.5%)	58 (25.9%)
I feel the quality of local television programmes are acceptable	82 (36.6%)	77 (34.4%)	31 (13.8%)	29 (12.9%)	5 (2.2%)
I feel the quality of imported television programmes are acceptable	112 (50.0%)	43 (19.2%)	33 (14.7%)	26 (11.6%)	10 (4.5%)
I feel the content of local television programmes provide viewers with the latest information on Malaysia’s economy, political issues, social issues, national development etc.	46 (20.5%)	27 (12.1%)	91 (40.6%)	42 (18.8%)	18 (8.0%)
I feel the content of local television programmes on government policies, initiatives, steps etc are effectively disseminated to the general public	22 (9.8%)	31 (13.8%)	125 (55.8%)	26 (11.6%)	20 (8.9%)
I feel the content of local television programmes are meant for all sectors of the population, including urban, rural and marginalized communities	35 (15.6%)	12 (5.4%)	28 (12.5%)	88 (39.3%)	61 (27.2%)
I feel the overall content of television programmes in general are informative, entertaining and educational	61 (27.2%)	70 (31.2%)	65 (29.0%)	15 (6.7%)	13 (5.8%)

Note: in the above table, S.A refers to Strongly Agree, A refers to Agree, U.D refers to undecided, D refers to Disagree and S.D.A refers to Strongly Disagree

Furthermore, the respondents generally felt that the content of the television programmes were largely produced for the consumption of urban viewers. This is evident from the data presented in Table 4 which shows a total of 149 respondents (66.5%) disagreed that the content of local television programmes are largely meant for all sectors of the population, including rural and marginalized communities. This finding clearly indicates that the respondents of the study felt that the content of locally produced and imported television programmes should be re-regulated by the relevant parties so that they are catered for all sectors of the society, including those residing in the rural parts of the country.

Here, a number of assumptions can be made with regards to the findings of the study. Firstly, one of the main objectives of producing movies/dramas would obviously be for profit making. Therefore, there is no point for producers of movies/dramas to focus on production aspects which are catered for the minority of the viewers such as language,

content and others. This obviously would not be beneficial for the producers of movies/dramas. Secondly, the nature of the content of television programmes may focus on important issues which include development-related issues which include political, economical and social issues. These issues obviously are less important and less significant to people residing in the rural and remote areas of the country, as compared to those residing in the urban and more developed parts of the country. Third, issues which are seen more significant to people residing in the rural and remote parts of the country, such as rural community development, rural economic plans and rural development policies are not highlighted in most television programmes. Part of this could be due to economic factors.

Apart from providing viewers with a large number of television programmes, the respondents of the study also felt that television stations in the country place high emphasis on the quality of the television programmes. Quality television programmes is seen as an important contributing factor which distinguishes a particular television station from the rest. Television programmes such as National Geographic, Animal Planet, History and Discovery which are aired on ASTRO place high emphasis on the quality of the programmes, especially in terms of the content and the overall production of the programmes. This is because providing quality programmes to the viewers could be one of the contributing factors towards the sustainability of television stations, partly due to the competition among the significantly large number of television stations operating in the country. This is evident from the data presented in Table 4 which shows that most of the respondents felt the quality of locally produced and imported television programmes are seen to be at the acceptable standard to the general viewers. In this case, a total of 159 respondents (71%) and 155 respondents (69.2%) commented positively on the quality of locally produced and imported television programmes, respectively.

Influence of Television on Respondents' Mindset and Attitudes

One of the main objectives of the study is to examine the impact and influence of television programmes on viewers. In relation to this, the study specifically focuses on the likelihood of television programmes to be able to influence the lifestyle and thinking of the respondents. Table 5 presents the distribution of the data with regards to the influence of television programmes on respondents' mindset and attitudes.

As revealed in Table 5, the respondents generally felt that the television programmes do have a significant influence on their beliefs about certain issues. This is evident from the findings of the study which reveal a total of 127 respondents (56.7%) who felt their beliefs about certain issues were influenced largely by television programmes. This finding is indeed very important and the government, policy makers as well as television producers and directors should consider broadcasting more television programmes which are more educational in nature, especially in terms of inculcating good moral values in the respective television programmes as a means of educating on certain important issues and simultaneously, positively influencing the mindset of the viewers.

Apart from beliefs, the findings of the study also show that the respondents' behaviour in general was also largely influenced by television programmes. In this case, 108 respondents (48.5%) agreed that their behaviour in general is largely influenced by television programmes as compared to only 62 respondents (27.7%) who felt otherwise (see Figure 5). It can be assumed here that since the respondents felt that their beliefs in general were largely influenced by television programmes, this could obviously explain

why the respondents also felt that their behaviour was also largely influenced by television programmes. It can also be assumed that the respondents may, subconsciously behave in a manner similar to the behaviour as portrayed in certain television programmes. This is where the content of television programmes is seen to be very significant in influencing the lifestyle and behaviour of the viewers.

Table 5 – Influence of Television on Respondents’ Mindset and Attitudes (n=224)

Questions from Questionnaire Survey	S.A	A	U.D	D.A	S.D.A
I feel my beliefs in general are largely influenced by television programmes	68 (30.4%)	59 (26.3%)	31 (13.8%)	42 (18.8%)	24 (10.7%)
I feel my behaviour in general are largely influenced by television programmes	37 (16.5%)	71 (32.0%)	54 (24.1%)	39 (17.4%)	23 (10.3%)
I feel my thinking in general are largely influenced by television programmes	48 (21.4%)	51 (22.8%)	49 (21.9%)	31 (13.8%)	45 (20.1%)
I feel my socializing behaviour in general are largely influenced by television programmes	41 (18.3%)	67 (29.9%)	61 (27.2%)	19 (8.5%)	36 (16.1%)
I feel my attitudes towards my family in general are largely influenced by television programmes	22 (9.8%)	10 (4.5%)	25 (11.2%)	98 (43.8%)	69 (30.8%)
I feel my attitudes towards my religion in general are largely influenced by television programmes	14 (6.3%)	8 (3.6%)	19 (8.5%)	116 (51.8%)	67 (29.9%)
I feel my patriotism towards my country in general is largely influenced by television programmes	86 (38.4%)	74 (33.0%)	27 (12.1%)	26 (11.6%)	11 (4.9%)
I feel the way I dress in general is largely influenced by television programmes	69 (30.8%)	51 (22.8%)	18 (8.0%)	49 (21.9%)	37 (16.5%)
I feel the way I interact with society in general is largely influenced by television programmes	16 (7.1%)	45 (20.1%)	86 (38.4%)	32 (14.3%)	45 (20.1%)
I feel my thinking is very westernized, due to exposure to imported television programmes	26 (11.6%)	16 (7.1%)	54 (24.1%)	107 (47.8%)	21 (9.4%)
I like to imitate the lifestyle as portrayed on television	61 (27.2%)	49 (21.9%)	34 (15.2%)	45 (20.1%)	35 (15.6%)
I like to try to do the things that are portrayed on television	77 (34.4%)	53 (23.7%)	44 (19.6%)	35 (15.6%)	15 (6.7%)

Note: the percentage figure is based on the total number of respondents according to gender (male = total of 91 respondents, female = total of 133 respondents)

In relation to the findings and discussions presented above, the data presented in Table 5 also indicate that the respondents’ thinking and mindset were also easily influenced by television programmes. In this case, a total of 99 respondents (44.2%) felt that their thinking was indeed influenced by television programmes as compared to 76 respondents (33.9%) who felt otherwise. Apparently, beliefs, behaviour and thinking are seen to be 3 contributing factors which had significant influence on the respondents’ overall mindset and attitudes towards certain issues. In spite of this, the respondents however did not think their thinking was very westernized due to their exposure to imported television

programmes from western countries. This is evident where a majority of the respondents, comprising of 128 individuals (57.2%) felt their thinking is still 'local' in nature. In other words, the respondents' ideologies are still based on the local contexts where they still think and behave according to local traditional customs. This could partly be attributed to the respondents' upbringing where local customs and practices are being taught from the very early stage and therefore the contents of television programmes are not seen to be a significant influencing factor in this respect.

Apart from the respondents' beliefs, respondents' behaviour and thinking are also seen to be significant contributing factors in influencing the respondents' mindset and attitudes towards certain issues. Furthermore, the findings of the study also indicate that the respondents' socializing behaviour was also influenced by the content of the television programmes they were exposed to. Based on the findings presented in Table 5, almost half of the total respondents in the study revealed that their social behaviour was influenced by the things they watch on television.

Apart from this, the findings also revealed that the respondents generally said that they liked to imitate the lifestyle as portrayed on television. This is evident from the data as presented in Table 5 which shows a total of 110 respondents (49.1%) admitted imitating the lifestyle as portrayed on television as compared to 80 respondents (35.7%) who felt otherwise. Part of this can be seen from the way the respondents dress and communicate during the data collection process. In this case, most of the respondents were seen in jeans and some even behaved in ways which did not reflect their true identity or their true lifestyle as youths residing in rural parts of the country.

This observation compliments the findings of the study which indicate that the majority of the respondents felt that the way they dress were influenced by the content of the programmes they watched on television. In this case, a total of 120 respondents (53.6%) revealed that the clothes they choose to put on were largely based on the things they watched on television. This could be viewed positively or negatively, depending on the nature of the respondents' clothing, whether the respondents' clothing was seen to be too revealing or otherwise. This finding is indeed contradictory to the initial assumption made prior to conducting the study, where it was assumed youths residing in the rural parts of the country are totally backward in nature, especially in terms of their lifestyles and behaviour.

Due to this, it is therefore important to ensure the content of television programmes, especially the content of imported television programmes are suitable for the consumption of local viewers. Some of the content of television programmes, such as those which portray sexual content or those which promote unhealthy lifestyle such as premarital sexual relationship, drugs taking, too revealing fashion wear, gangsterism and others are seen not suitable for the consumption of local viewers, especially teenagers and youths. Therefore, more steps should be taken by the relevant authorities to ensure such explicit television programmes are not shown on national television.

Discussions and Conclusion

The study has examined rather extensively the impact of television viewing on the viewers, specifically among youths residing in the rural parts of the country. One of the main objectives of the study was to examine to what extent the findings of past studies on the negative impact of television viewing on the audience in general are consistent with the findings of this study. Although past studies were largely focused on the impact of

television viewing on the general viewing audience, this study was specifically focused on the respondents of the study, specifically youths residing in the rural parts of the state of Sabah in Malaysia.

The findings generated from the study clearly revealed that the assumption made about the impact of television viewing on youths residing in the rural parts of Sabah was clearly wrong. In this case, it was assumed that the content of television programmes would not have a significant impact on the mindset and attitudes of youths in the location of the study. This assumption was made on the context that the respondents involved in the study were largely marginalized by the geographical location of their residence, thus being deprived of development and proper education. Apart from this, the respondents involved in the study were also believed to practice simple lifestyle, partly due to their minimal exposure to materialistic, wealth and power. Their main daily objectives are assumed to be survival, which include acquiring enough food to eat, water to drink, shelter from extreme weather conditions and safety from wild animals. However, the findings of the study clearly revealed that these assumptions were not fully justified.

The findings of the study clearly revealed that the content of television programmes do indeed have a significant impact on the mindset and attitudes of the respondents involved in the study. The data generated from the questionnaire surveys clearly indicate that the respondents were indeed influenced, to some extent by the content of television programmes. The findings of the study showed that the respondents' mindset, beliefs, behaviour, thinking and socializing patterns were mostly shaped by the things they were exposed to on television. The concern here is that some contents of television programmes were seen to be negative in nature, especially in terms of disseminating unhealthy and negative ideologies such as engaging in premarital sexual relationships especially among young couples, drugs abuse, gangsterism and others. This may have negative implications on the mindset and attitudes of society, including in the social development of youths even though they may be residing in the rural parts of the country.

The findings of the study should be taken seriously by the relevant authorities such as policy makers, the government, television producers and the general public. This is because most people, including youths, teenagers and children tend to view television as the third mode of education, apart from the formal education they had obtained from school and education and from the immediate family. This is where regulation and monitoring on the content of television programmes should be enhanced. This step is indeed important to ensure television is used as a 'teaching' medium which promotes positive thinking and positive social development across all sectors of the society.

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