UNIT 5 MEDIA INFLUENCE

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- define media;
- identify various types of media in view of access and interest of adolescents;
- explain how media is addressing the issues of adolescents;
- describe the impact and influence of media on adolescents; and
- recognize the need and ways for addressing negative influence of media.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical time as children indulge with building identity, belonging and attachment. However, children are not only learners caught up in pre-existing knowledge Systems, but are also active contributors and participants who form their own sense of society. By interacting with others in social systems children
can learn much about themselves and the world through exposure to it, by actively participating in its organization and establishment of their unique perspectives.

Media is the most important tool to shape and mobilize public opinion and spread information. Looking at its tremendous power to influence and impact human psyche, behaviour and actions, it can play an important role in adolescent’s health and overall development. This is of considerable importance in today’s world, where media is bombarding adolescents from all angles – TV, radio, films, magazines, bill board*, computer, CD*, VCD*, internet, cell phones etc. are having a cumulative effect on adolescents senses, psyche, beliefs and thinking. Also, in the context of the socialization process, like never before, media is playing a larger role than parents, teachers and friends.

Research indicate that media is displaying increasing content on glamour, consumerism*, early and irresponsible sex, drugs and alcohol, gender inequality etc. and adolescents are getting adversely affected by it.

The present unit focuses on mass media and its influence on adolescents. It discusses about the types of media adolescents are interested in and the type of content being produced and used by them. While highlighting the role of parents and other agencies in combating media influence, the unit also addresses the need for media literacy.

5.2 DEFINING MEDIA

Media has originated from the word medium and can be defined as a “way through which one can communicate with the other”. Letters, posters, e-mails, public meetings are forms of media. However, it is mass media, via which one can communicate with a large number of people.

Mass media can be defined as “those means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people via them.” It makes use of Information and Communication Technology in this day and age and is also considered as the fourth estate of the society. (Ref 1)

Mass media consists of Broadcasting Media such as Radio, Television, Cable, to Film or Motion Pictures whether in Cinema or in DVDs; Digital Media including the Internet, Mobile Phones, Satellite; Publishing or Print Media which includes Books, Newspapers, Magazines; Audio recording and reproduction like records, tapes, cassettes, cartridges, CDs. Video games can also be considered as part of mass media. On the whole mass media is all about innovation and modernity that is continually evolving and producing ways to help humanity evolve.

Electronic media is media that uses electronics or electromechanical energy for the end use (audience) to access the content. Print media is static media, which are most often created electronically, but don’t require electronics to be accessed by the end user in the printed form. (Ref2) The primary electronic media sources include video recordings, audio recordings, multimedia presentations, slide presentations, CD-ROM* and Online Content. Any equipment used in the electronic communication process e.g. television, radio, telephone, desktop computer, game console may also be considered electronic media.
5.3 USE OF MEDIA BY ADOLESCENTS

Approximately one-third of the world’s population is made up of 2 billion young people under 18. They make up half the population in the least developed nations and less than a quarter in the most industrialized ones. While increasing number of children are enjoying a lot of freedom in many countries, unfortunately, others are facing growing health and social problems including extreme poverty and civil war to substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases, political disturbances and warfare. The Unicef report (Ref 3) based on the ‘Inter-Media Surveys 2003-04’ conducted in the age group 15 to 19 years old in more than twenty countries including China, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan concludes that mass media are making the world smaller, especially for young people. Since today’s youth has greater access to various multi media including conventional, satellite and cable TV channels; radio stations; newspapers and magazines; the internet and computer and video games, the range of programmes has increased manifolds. Accordingly there is greater time spent on using media (as reflected in the table given below). Thus, the type of media popular and accessible to adolescents and their effect is gaining greater importance.

Kaiser Generation M2- Kids/Youth/Media Survey (January 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Among all 8- to 18-year-olds, average amount of time spent with each medium in a typical day:</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV content</td>
<td>4:29&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3:51&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3:47&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/audio</td>
<td>2:31&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1:44&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1:48&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>1:29&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1:02&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:27&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>1:13&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:49&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:26&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0:38&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:43&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:43&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>0:25&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:25&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0:18&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL MEDIA EXPOSURE</td>
<td>10:45&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8:33&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7:29&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multitasking proportion</td>
<td>29%&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>26%&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16%&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL MEDIA USE</td>
<td>7:38&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6:21&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6:19&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4.1: Average time spent with each medium

Fig. 4.2: Time Spent with Each Medium by Age
5.3.1 Television

As per the UNICEF report (Ref-3), Television can be termed as the most popular and dominant source of information in the lives of young people. Satellite television has reached all continents. There has been an increase in number of channels targeting specific population, for example in late 1990’s some 50 television channels targeting children only were introduced which tasted international success. Research also points that on an average school age children spend 1.5 hours to more than 5 hours watching television, which far exceeds radio listening, newspaper reading and internet use.

The article, Youth and media (Ref 4) in Europe highlights that a young person from Western Europe spends more time in front of the TV screen rather than at school’s desks. Youth between six to eighteen years old, during primary and secondary school, spend 11000 hours in front of the black board and 15000 in front of the TV and these 15000 hours do not include time spent in front of other ‘screens’ like computer, video games and mobiles etc.

The prevalence of television viewing in young people is a cause of worry because of rampant commercialization present in the industry where only a handful of large and powerful companies are dictating terms and content. This has caused national television services in many areas to cut back on their own programmes. In developed countries, there has been a lot of hue and cry over rise in levels of aggression, obesity, substance abuse, eating disorders and unsafe sexual behaviour among youth and commercial media has been accused of aiming similar stuff at children and youth. In developing countries, it has been observed that a majority of programs for children and youth are imported and much of the content contains characters and messages that are not relevant to local cultures and conveys violent images and mass marketing messages.

5.3.2 Radio

As per UNICEF report (Ref-3), listening to radio is the next most popular activity among children and young people worldwide. The reason for increase in radio listening in various countries all over the world in the past decade can be attributed to emergence of dozens of private radio stations and better quality of broadcasting. While most young people tune into radio for music and entertainment factors, few local radio stations have been successful in spreading information about social and political issues in an interesting manner to young and old alike.

The point that a substantial percentage of young people in a few countries including Albania, Bangladesh and Nigeria listen to political fare of public international radiobroadcasters —the BBC, Deutsche Welle and Radio France International, etc. highlights young people’s interest in political and social events and underlines the need for high-quality information to be spread via media, which is still lacking in many countries.

5.3.3 Internet

The internet as per Inter-media surveys conducted by UNICEF has been gaining popularity among young people at a much slower pace than television and radio as only rich and educated class can afford and use computers. However, the fact that the number of young computer literates far exceeds the adults points towards young people’s interest and aptitude in computers and technology. Research reveals
that internet use by young people in developed countries is far more than those in developing countries and in the latter ones it is being used by rich and urban youth only. Those not possessing computers at home are seeking information via internet at internet cafes.

Internet is mainly used by young people to communicate (sending e-mails or chatting), downloading (computer games, software and music) and obtaining information about education, entertainment, sports, taboo topics not addressed by adults and news that may be censored for political motives).

Although young people’s enthusiasm regarding internet can be understood because it helps them establish contact with the outside world and freely seek information however this openness and freedom is a cause of worry for parents, teachers and child advocates as it provides young people with access to uncensored, adult and many times inappropriate content.

Web surfing has become a way of life with young people and many young girls and boys surf the web and reuse them. (Ref 4). They watch extracts of videos, listen to music and are very keen on images as they not only look at them but also reuse them. Furthermore via internet, they send sms and play video games.

5.3.4 Print Media

As compared to rise of other media, print media’s popularity and usage has suffered a set back in many countries, mainly because of quantity and quality of information available via television, radio and internet. Research reveals that in developed countries, the reason for young people’s decline in interest in newspapers and magazines can be attributed to the distraction caused by numerous media choices and in poorer countries, either there is lack of youth oriented publications or those available are too expensive for them to afford. However slick, high quality publications with appealing content that cater to young people’s interest such as comic books, popular special magazines on computer, sports, business, science and music are in great demand among young people, yet often they remain out of reach for an average young person due to the high costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media use begets media use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The report ‘Generation M, Media in the lives of 8 to 18 years old’ (Refer 5), highlights that on an average young people spend nearly six and a half hours a day using media. Young people, who have televisions, computers or video games in their rooms spend more times using them and those in homes where TV remains on for most of the day spend more time watching it and less time reading. Contradicting the theory that use of computers and TV displaces time spent with television, the report reveals that media use begets media use as young people who spend most time using computers or playing video games also spend more time watching TV and listening to music. The study compared the amount of time spent by young people consuming media to five years ago and found out that although the amount remains the same yet, the total amount of media content they consume has increased. The reason being that young people are able to multi task with media, meaning that they might be sending messages on mobile, watching TV and doing homework simultaneously.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 1
Find out from your peers which are the media they know and are using the most.

Check Your Progress 1
a) Why is growing media prevalence in the lives of young people a cause of worry for adults?

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b) What edge does internet have over other forms of media?

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c) Why has print media’s popularity undergone a set back?

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5.4 MEDIA CONTENT AND ADOLESCENTS

5.4.1 Exploring Media Content
Media options for young people have grown in recent decades. However, there is a dearth of quality programming for youth and children across the board (Ref 3). Choice of programmes or content is limited in most of the countries and a large chunk of media content is exported from other countries and a great deal of it like animated programmes and programmes containing violence are produced in such a way that they can appeal to as many cultures as possible.

There is gross lack of coverage of adolescents in the news and whatever little is covered often portrays youth in the context of sensationalist issues, e.g., child abuse, exploitation and violence, with little respect for dignity and privacy for young people to speak for themselves. They feel excluded and disserved by media when they are portrayed as superficial, apathetic, poverty stricken or delinquent.

The report ‘Sex on TV-4’ released by Kaiser Foundation (Ref 6) in 2005 tracked the broad outlines of sexual content on television since 1998 and found out that the amount of sexual content on television has increased tremendously. It revealed
that the increase has been both in the number of shows with sexual content and also sexual scenes. As compared to 1998, the scenes, sexual scenes, have doubled and excluding daily newscasts, sports events and children shows, one in nine programmes across the TV landscape had explicit sexual content. Although the messages about safer sex or about risks and responsibilities had increased as compared to 1998, yet looking at the figures of HIV infections and STD increase in young people, much more needs to be done.

The average young TV viewer sees about 14,000 references to sex each year, however, out of those only a small fraction (around 165) will include any reference to abstinence or delay of sex, birth control, risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. (Ref 7). Television stations donated an average of 17 seconds per hour to Public Service Advertising totalling one half of one per cent of all TV airtime. The issue of concern was the finding that the time period when the PSAs were aired was between midnight and 6 am (Ref-9).

Consumerism and materialism are the central themes of television and media and it is from them that adolescents find out about the latest trends. However, materialistic people promoted via media, for whom money, fame, power and good looks are the most important things, becoming idols to be emulated by adolescents is a matter of concern for the society as too much materialistic approach is the cause of various psycho-social problems including depression, high levels of anxiety, various kinds of physical aches, insecurity, broken relationships etc. (Ref 10).

Despite restrictions on mass media for tobacco advertisements, young audiences still encounter’s substantial content related to smoking across virtually all media channels. For example, there is an increasing rate of tobacco use shown in films (an average of 11 instances per hour). An average adolescent has seen 91 occurrences of smoking via films and videos. (Ref 11). 89 per cent of the films released and analyzed after the tobacco advertising ban included generic or branded tobacco imagery. This is significantly up from the 76 per cent reported by the WHO (Ref 12).

The Unicef Report (Ref 3) says that although it is extremely difficult to determine about the kind of media content that should be presented to young people as producers, child specialists, parents and youth- all of them have different views regarding the same, however what can be certainly said about the media content for young people is that it should be credible, comprehensible and uplifting. It should not be dull, boring, patronizing, overly commercial or violent, vulgar, disrespectful, biased, manipulative or corruptive. It must empower youth to think about them.

### Activity 2

**Read the following article and discuss the questions given below with your peers:**

In the article ‘Trivial Pursuits’ (Ref 13), Head of institutions, teachers, counsellors, parents and others asked several questions regarding media content. How could children be protected from smoking, drinking and pre-marital sex? Who would they approach to protest against the exploitation of nudity and implicit and explicit sex? Globalisation and satellite TV expose Indians to Western
lifestyles. The media accords space for vulgarity, nudity and consumerism to compete with others, unconcerned about the fact crass materialism destabilises the economic situation and value system of most of its middle class patrons.

‘The ‘hip and happening’ crowd might argue that the media reflects society’s tastes. If society wants sex and sleaze, why should the media not cater to this demand? The question is, at what cost? First, can the media’s trivial pursuits be justified when it sidetracks issues such as poverty, illiteracy, corruption, gender bias and abuse and social backwardness? Second, can those with the means and power to highlight issues relating to the downtrodden and to mould public opinion, be it in government or society at large, forget their duties? Third, can it justly weaken the moral fibre of the youth? Four, by glorifying vice, is it not putting public health in jeopardy? Fifth, has it not failed its revolutionary role in bringing about a positive change the country’s socio-economic conditions?'

Questions:
1) What is the article trying to highlight?
2) Which issues are given importance and which should be given importance by the media?

5.4.2 Portrayal of Adolescents

Media does not portray adolescents realistically and sympathetically (Ref 3). Majority of them felt that by watching media it could be perceived by the consumers that youth committed more crimes, crimes of equal gravity as those of adults and crimes at an earlier age than adults. Such kind of coverage is inaccurate and inflammatory, which could distort public and political view in favour of repressive rather than preventive and educational solutions to growing violence in many societies. Studies indicate that more than half out of 600 respondents interviewed thought that stories about young people were negative and only 18 per cent could remember positive stories in 12 months.

Adolescents are portrayed by the media as alcoholics and drug abusers, criminals, lazy, complaining and aggressive. In general the message that is sent to the consumers about adolescents is that ‘Teens are all having sex and getting pregnant’; ‘Teens are violent and dangerous’; ‘Teens are disrespectful of adults’; ‘Teens are apathetic and don’t care of future’ whereas in reality it is not so for a majority of them. (Ref 14).

The news stories often portray youth as perpetrators of crime but rarely report when youth are victims of crime. For every violent or sexual offence committed by youth under 18 years there are three such crimes committed against a youth by adults. Media depicts that teens are disrespectful of adults. For example in commercials, teenagers are depicted as individualists who are hostile towards any authority (parental or otherwise), who try to intrude in their self-expression. However, in real life they’re not likely to admire those who break rules. Contrary to the popular belief that teens are all high and on drugs, a study by US drug abuse warning network found that 95 per cent drug related deaths in 1994 were adults over the age of 26 years.
Activity 3

1) Ask the adolescents around you what they feel about their image presented in the media?

5.4.3 Media Content and Gender

The portrayal and presentation of women and men, girls and boys on the screen, powerfully affect how they view their role in the world (Ref 7). Unfortunately media also shows and propagates gender stereotypes. For example, for girls how they look is much more important than what they do. Despite positive role models of women using their intelligence and acting independently, the media depicts that girls and women were more concerned with romance and dating. Children perceived most cartoon characters in a typical ways, boys were violent and active and girls behaved aggressively. No boys are shown unpaid labour roles while girls are mainly shown in traditional female jobs or roles of unpaid labour. This gender bias becomes deep rooted in children when they grow as adolescents and adults.

MTV, the favourite TV channel of youth, via its music videos and content regularly portrays women as sex objects, whereas the same happens very rarely with boys/men. Girls and women who are serious musicians are featured rarely. Men are fully clothed when they are shown in the background of a video, however when women are in the background half the time they are dressed in such a way that the focus is on their breasts and rear ends ((Ref 7).

The UNICEF report (Ref 3) reflects that young people are naturally drawn to subjects that interest them like music, sports, style, culture, celebrities, science and technology etc. While they like to know about how to have fun, be successful and look good, they are also eager to learn about issues and concerns of society, country and the world.

Females are highly sexualised in video games. Few female characters are shown wearing tight revealing clothing and having unrealistically large breasts and disproportionately small waists. In advertising, it is again women’s bodies, which are used sexually to sell products.

Women’s magazines have ten and a half times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men’s magazines do and over three quarters of the covers of women’s magazines include at least one message about how to change a woman’s body appearance – by diet, exercise or cosmetic surgery. Television and movies reinforce the importance of a thin body as a measure of woman’s worth. Majority of female characters in TV situation comedies are underweight and only one in twenty are above average in size. Heavier actresses tend to receive negative comments from male characters about their bodies and 80 percent of these negative comments are followed by audience laughter. (Ref 7)

Activity 4

Read the article given in the box and discuss the questions given at the end with your peers:

The article, ‘Sex, lies and media’ (Ref 15) talks about two disturbing trends emerging in the Indian media which have been ignored by the Government, social and women’s welfare organisations and the fourth estate itself. The first
focuses on cultural representations of woman as ‘sex symbol’. The second pertains to the decreasing coverage and under-reporting of important developmental and governmental issues concerning women and the crimes against them.

Little research has been done on the content and percentage of women’s representation in the media. But surveys confirm the broad trends. Globalisation and satellite invasion—from newspapers to TV, internet to cinema—use sex as a means to sell. Most newspapers and magazines carry pictures, stories and information about glamorous women (models, film stars, socialites). The Internet peddles pornography and many websites facilitate prostitution. Films, advertisements and TV serials also project women as underclad bimbos or educated rich or middle class career women who use sexuality to succeed. Though films and TV programmes do touch upon issues like dowry, infidelity, abuse etc, the presentation is negative and melodramatic. Therefore, rather than motivating people to fight social evils, it projects these as a part of life’.

Consider a recent UNDP study. Front Page coverage of women’s issues in newspapers has dropped from 4.7 per cent in the 1970s to 1.3 per cent in 2000-2001. Most reports are crime related 40 per cent in the form of news briefs and single column items. Though the number of women working in the print media has increased since the 1950s, this is largely due to introduction of glossy supplements carrying stories about models, movie stars and socialites.

Since the media shapes and mobilises opinion and is an effective tool for spread of information, its unwholesome projection of women is socially detrimental. On the one hand, it has sidetracked issues such as equal rights, status and opportunities for women. On the other, it has lowered the dignity of women. In doing so, it has played an unfortunate role in the corruption of morals.

Questions

1) How are women being presented in media, ever since globalization?
2) What kind of impact could it have children and young people?

Check Your Progress 2

a) What kind of image of adolescents is media promoting in general?

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5.5 IMPACT OF MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS

Growing number of parents, educators, researchers and policy makers around the world are disturbed about the lack of quality media content for children and young people and impact of low quality entertainment including violence, sexual content and undesirable role models.
Although it is debatable as to how much can media influence children and young people, sociologists and researchers in different regions agree that there is a growing influence of entertainment media on youth style and identity as the influence of family, society, community, religion etc. has ceased and young people are following youth set agendas. Young people have become more individualistic in approach. They are becoming confused about their values and have developed a misguided sense of right and wrong and human relations.

Adolescents are heavy consumers of the content in media that is loaded with sex, violence, substance abuse and that constant exposure to such content does impact young people’s mind and attitude and can push them into it. Young people have also admitted about the power media has on their lives and how it affects their thinking and behaviour. The following studies highlight the same:

The amount of time an adolescent spends watching soaps, movies and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin. Teenage girls who viewed commercials projecting ultra thin women as ideal and beautiful kind feel less confident and more dissatisfied with their weight and appearance. Shockingly in a study of 5th graders, 10 year old boys and girls told the researchers that they were dissatisfied with their own bodies after watching a music video by Britney Spears. (Ref 7).

Irrespective of their origin and cultural habits, young people cannot escape from the clutches of media, which is trying to control their lives (Ref 17), rarely they are able to place messages placed in media into perspective and use their critical analysis power to distinguish between reel and real. In most cases it has a hypnotic effect. The sexual content in media affects adolescents’ sexual beliefs and behaviour and can push them into sexual activity. Whether from rural and urban background, both girls and boys feel that today’s media including news papers and news channels are not playing a positive role. They are giving and presenting information in such a way that the message they are trying to convey becomes unclear and misleading. There is a lot of drama and sensationalism. Majority of adolescents agree that the impact and influence of media is immense and so media and media persons should act responsibly. Nearly 92 per cent adolescents said they were confused and dissatisfied with the media. Nearly 17 per cent felt that media propagated negative responses by showing frequent drug and alcohol abuse.

Activity 5

Talk to the adolescents around you and ask them about influence of media on their life.

Check Your Progress 3

a) What do you think is the effect of media on adolescents?

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5.6 HANDLING NEGATIVE MEDIA INFLUENCE

5.6.1 Media Literacy

Each day adolescents are bombarded by thousands of media messages be it via television or radio or internet, posters, billboards etc. Thus it becomes important for them to realize that there is an intended purpose for each one of them and that creative techniques have been applied by professionals and technicians in order to fetch their attention. That is why they should not accept these messages at face value and be critical of each and every one of them before accepting. Thus, adolescents have to be empowered by educating them in use of media i.e. they have to be media literate. It provides them with skills to analyze media and decide whether they should accept the messages being offered or reject them.

Media literacy can be defined as “the process of understanding and using mass media in an assertive and non-passive way”. It also means “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms”. Media literacy emphasizes both analyzing media and creating media.

Media literacy consists of three stages:

**First stage** is to become aware and realize the importance of managing one’s own media diet, that is self analysing as to how much time is being spent with television, video games, films, magazines etc. and if needed, reducing it willingly.

**Second stage** is to do critical analysis of the content that one is reading or watching. This would include questions like how it is constructed, what is in the frame etc.

**Third stage** is to go behind the frame and explore deeper issues. Questions like who produces the media we have interest in, for what purpose is it being produced? What profits would he/she gain from it?

Media Literacy not only helps in understanding media and its functioning but also helps shatter myths and illusions about glamour, consumerism, fashion and celebrities to a large extent. By critically analysing media content and messages, a young person can experience media without getting negatively affected by it. Media Literacy needs to be propagated in the country and workshops should be organized with the help of communication/media experts, counsellors, doctors, teachers etc. for the young people on the same, so that the negative media influence on young people can be lessened and eventually controlled.

**Activity 6**

Discuss with your peers how media literacy helps them.

5.6.2 Enhancing Life Skills

The process of analyzing media is through the education of *Life skills*. The term *life skills* refers to “*Abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.*” These skills are of utmost importance in adolescence to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions and actions toward others, as well as actions to change
the surrounding environment to make it conducive to positive health and daily living.

Media literacy through Life skills is an important approach in addressing the negative impact of media influence on adolescents. For example, the adolescents the scene in a film/advertisement where the role model hero/celebrity is using a particular harmful product (e.g. tobacco or wine), the adolescents may take up the issue as a discussion. Using critical thinking, they learn that the act is merely performed for the sake of commercial purpose and in reality this is not so. Accordingly, they can make a decision for themselves. The advertisements/news clippings etc can also be used in the same way.

Following are the most important life skills which, when learnt can effectively be used to analyze an issue on media:

- Self awareness
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Coping with emotions

The learner can refer to Course 2 (Block 4, Unit 1) for a detailed discussion on life skills.

**Activity 7**

Ask the adolescents in your neighbourhood about two TV advertisements of some products depicting their role models. Discuss with them whether the role models really use the products they are advertising or any other reasons are there for them to appear on TV.

**Check Your Progress 4**

a) Do you think media literacy is useful for young people and be promoted? Why?

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5.7 ROLE OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Parents are very much concerned about their children are being exposed to too much sexual content, violence and adult language in media and hold TV responsible for contributing a lot to children becoming involved in violence or in sexual situations. However, there is some kind of disconnect between their concerns and their actions with regard to bringing media into their children’s lives. While they are aware of the impact of TV viewing, they are inviting it into their homes, bedrooms and even their cars. Many of them are in the habit of watching late night movies and shows themselves. Thus, they mere preach what they do not practice. It is important for the parents to be the role models.

Moreover, most of the parents only rebuke the media and are not convinced about the role media especially TV could play to educate their children. They forgot the fact that out of hundreds of Channels, many are also showing educational
programmes which can be jointly seen by parents as well as adolescents. Afterwards various issues can be discussed openly with the adolescents.

Providing the correct information about issues considered to be taboo. This can be done through trusted family friends.

Adolescents can be helped by parents in developing life skills through enrolling them in life skill workshops. Parents can supervise the literature read/seen by adolescents through siblings. Teachers can play an important role as a guide, mentor, and friend to promote media literacy in adolescents. This can be done through:

- Discussions
- Debates
- Projects on use and comparison of highly advertised/not advertised daily use products
- Workshops on:
  - Adolescent issues in media,
  - Producing media (ESP print media) depicting positive aspects of adolescence
- Promoting use of life skills (e.g., critical thinking, decision making etc) in analyzing media

### Activity 8

Give the adolescents a highly advertised soap, toothpaste or any other daily use product to use. After a week replace it with a product which is not at all advertised but is often used. Have a discussion on advantages and disadvantages of both the products.

### 5.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have dealt with various issues related to media and adolescents, including the types of media adolescent are interested in and have access to the media content that they are exposed to. The effect of media on the thoughts and behaviour of the adolescents has been discussed followed by various ways to handle negative influence of media.

### 5.9 KEY WORDS

| Billboards | Posters, advertisements, hoardings CD or compact disc is a digitally encoded recording on an optical disk that is smaller than a phonograph record; played back by a laser VCD stands for ‘Video Compact Disc’ and basically it is a CD that contains moving pictures and sound. |
| Consumerism | Attachment to materialistic values or possessions CD-ROM (Compact Disc, read-only-memory) is an adaptation of the CD that is designed to store computer data in the form of text and graphics |
5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

a) The growing prevalence of media in the lives of young people is a cause of worry for adults because today’s youth has greater access to various multimedia and the range of programmes has increased manifold. In developed countries, concern has been expressed over rise in levels of aggression, obesity, substance abuse, eating disorders and unsafe sexual behaviour among youth and commercial media has been accused of aiming similar stuff at children and youth. As for developing countries, it has been observed that a majority of programs for children and youth are imported and much of the content contains characters and messages that are not relevant to local cultures and conveys violent images and mass marketing messages.

b) Young people’s interest and enthusiasm regarding internet can be understood because it helps them establish contact with the outside world and freely seek information. Internet is mainly used by young people to communicate (sending e-mails or chatting), downloading (computer games, software and music) and obtaining information about education, entertainment, sports, taboo topics not addressed by adults and news that may be censored for political motives. They can also send sms and play video games via it.

c) Print media’s popularity and usage has suffered a setback in many countries, mainly because of quantity and quality of information available via television, radio and internet. Research reveals that in developed countries, the reason for young people’s decline in interest in newspapers and magazines can be attributed to the distraction caused by numerous media choices and in poorer countries, either there is lack of youth oriented publications or those available are too expensive for them to afford.

Check Your Progress 2

a) Adolescents are portrayed in a very negative role by media whereas in reality it is not so for a majority of them.

Check Your Progress 3

a) Adolescents are becoming confused about their values and have developed a misguided sense of right and wrong and human relations. They are heavy consumers of the content in media that is loaded with sex, violence, substance abuse and that constant exposure to such content does impact young people’s mind and attitude and can push them into it. Rarely they are able to place messages placed in media into perspective and use their critical analysis power to distinguish between reel and real. In most cases it has a hypnotic effect. The sexual content in media affects adolescents’ sexual beliefs and behaviour and can push them into sexual activity.

Check Your Progress 4

a) Yes, because it shall increase young people’s skills of critical thinking and self awareness. It shall help them to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant content, myth and reality and not get affected by the negative content
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