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A psychological confrontation of adolescents on mass media and religious practices, in Tamil Nadu, South India,

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Abstract

India is an ancient, multi-cultural-religious country. The younger generations are much influenced by Mass Media in their expression of freedom, morality and religious practices, posing a challenge to combat. The question is: whether mass media always takes the Adolescents away from religious practices or does it contribute for its betterment? Hence, we intend to verify “the Psychological confrontation of the Adolescents of Tamil Nadu on mass media and religious practices” From the results of the data analysis we are given to know that the Adolescents in Tamil Nadu counterpoise European and American Experiments in the use of Mass Media.

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Introduction

The influence of *Mass Media*ⁱ, on the Adolescents has become a primary concern in India. As we know India is an ancient, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country. The country is geographically and politically and linguistically composed of 28 states. Each state has its own language and cultural uniqueness. *Tamil Nadu*ⁱⁱ is one of the 28 states of India. The southern part of the country is basically deep rooted in ancient *Dravidic*ⁱⁱⁱ history and Culture. The prominent language and culture of the Dravidians is called *Tamil*^{iv}.

The younger generation in Tamil Nadu is much influenced by mass media in their expression of freedom, morality and *religious practices*. “Technology and Technological changes are taking place even as we speak, and no one can predict where these changes are headed. However, some technological advances have clear impact.” (Adams, 2009, p.501). Mass media is no more an accessory thing in the present time. “In the brave new world a widespread access to information, communications and resources is the only solution to remove the insurmountable barriers to education, democratization process and overall economic growth,” (Dutta, 2010, p.1). Info tech has become part and parcel of the day-to-day activities and in religious practices as well. Speaking about religious practices we must remember that Hinduism is the major religion in India. Nevertheless the seeds of Christianity have been sown in India right from the first century by the arrival of St. Thomas the apostle. In Tamil Nadu Christian community is roughly 3 million out of 62 million. That is about 5.4% of the Tamil population. (Census India.com, 2011). For more of pragmatic and personal reasons we choose to limit ourselves only to “Catholic Religious Practices” in this article. Henceforth the “Religious Practices” would refer to Catholic Religious Practices.

1.1. Adolescents in Tamil Nadu counterpoising European and American Experiments in the use of Mass Media

There have been two experiments that draw our attention;

i) A group of 7888 Dutch Students were studied under the use of everyday internet and found that it is related to the psycho-socio-spiritual well-being. Researchers like Aa, Overbeek, Engels, Scholte, Meerkerk, Eijnden, proposed a Diathesis-Stress Model Based on Big Five Personality Traits, have shown that the adolescents who were using frequently the internet were losing the personal uplift and overall growth. “Results from structural equation modeling analyses showed that daily Internet use was indirectly related to low well-being through CIU (Compulsive Internet Use). In addition, daily Internet use was found to be more strongly related to CIU in introverted, low agreeable and emotionally less-stable adolescents. In turn again, CIU was more strongly linked to loneliness in introverted, emotionally less-stable and less agreeable adolescents.” (Aa,2009, p.765).

ii) A recent research study in America with the mixed student of White, Asians, Hispanics, Afro-Americans, and Indan-Alaskan Native students by Werner, Matthew, Bumpus, and Rock, in the article “Involvement in Internet Aggression during early Adolescence,” have noted that the present day Adolescents are constantly involved in internet communication and contacts and violence and also for other purpose of shopping and gaming and education as well. “About 89% of adolescents surveyed used email, 75% used Instant messages, 48% exchanged IMs everyday, 33% used cell phones to send text messages, 55% used Internet social networking on daily basis.” (Werner, 2009, p.608).

On the contrary many Indian Writers think that the use of mass media gives a positive result. “The electronic communication has significantly modified the life-style of youth (Zachariah 1996, Kumar 2004)... the lasting impact of information technology on Adolescents has provoked social behavior... (Mahajan, Luthra, 1993). Not only the urban, but also the rural setting is undergoing a tremendous transformation... (Johnson, 2000, Singh 1993). ‘In today’s world it is not so easy to eliminate the use of the media or restrict the influence of the media on the adolescents; hence it is better to educate the adolescents in the critical-analytical and creative use of the media.’ (Fernando, 2006, p.22-31). ‘High level media knowledge offers young people a strong, broad perspective to be able to interpret messages along many different dimensions giving them more choices of meaning and to select the one that is most useful from several, but interrelated points of view: cognitive, emotional, moral and aesthetic.’ (Devedoss, 2006, p.190). So it is more of ‘better use’ of the Media than ‘doing away’ with it.

1.2. Hypothesis

- i) The Adolescents in Tamil Nadu have remarkable access to Mass Media.
- ii) The Adolescents of Tamil Nadu use Mass Media to support the Religious Practices
- iii) The Adolescents of Tamil Nadu are not psychologically compelled by mass media to avoid religious practices.

1.3. Area of the Research

Tamil Nadu is made up of 32 districts in which we selected two districts with prominent Catholic Schools. Of the 24 Cities, we chose Chennai, (Madras) the Capital City of Tamil Nadu. For the Rural Setting we selected Vellore district, having the highest municipalities, (14). And other adjacent districts of Thiruvannamalai and Thiruvallur districts, where there are numerous Catholic Schools. Subjects: 506 boys and 494 girls, Area: In Tamil Nadu, Rural, towns, Urban. Language: Tamil and English. Age: 16 to 19 (pertaining to XI & XII Std). Religion: Catholics

1.4. Tool:

Questionnaire *ASRS-MCFC^v*: Adolescents Simple Response Scale to Measure Compulsion or Free Choice, is composed of 50 questions, the second part of 25 Items which we administered, that deal with Adolescents and Mass Media. There are 2 sections: demographical situations of 10 variables, and 25 items pertaining to mass media. The range of scale value is 1 to 4: never=1, sometimes=2, often=3, and always=4. The Demographical items are composed of *Education* and *Occupation* of the Parents, the *Size* and the *Type* of the Family, the *Gender* and *Age* of the adolescents and finally the *Location* of their inhabitancy. The second section there are 5 sub-scales^{vi}

2. Data analysis

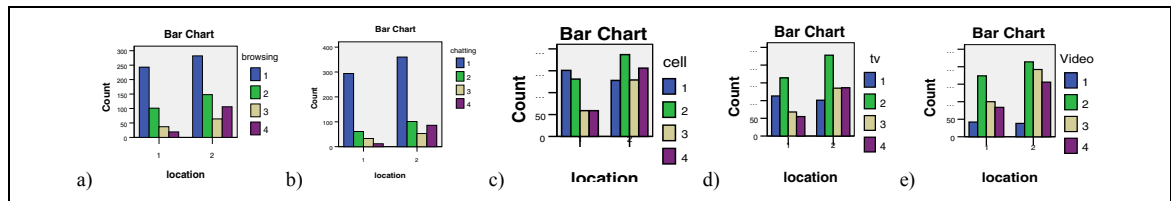
2.1. Verify the 1st hypothesis; ‘Adolescents in Tamil Nadu have a remarkable access to the Mass Media’.

Table – 1. Statistical report with location (1=rural / 2= urban)

Location		browsing	chatting	cell	tv	Video
1	Mean	1,58	1,41	2,07	2,16	2,57
	Std. Deviation	,846	,767	1,055	,989	,937
	Variance	,715	,588	1,114	,979	,878
	Grouped Median	1,46	1,30	1,88	2,04	2,52
	Pearson corr. Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
2	Mean	1,99	1,78	2,52	2,51	2,78
	Std. Deviation	1,134	1,101	1,095	1,021	,906
	Variance	1,285	1,213	1,198	1,042	,821
	Grouped Median	1,74	1,52	2,50	2,47	2,76
	Pearson corr. Sig.	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
Total	Mean	1,83	1,63	2,34	2,37	2,69
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
	Std. Deviation	1,047	,997	1,101	1,022	,924
	Variance	1,097	,995	1,213	1,044	,854
	Grouped Median	1,61	1,42	2,25	2,30	2,66

Reporting the summary of the Table -1 of the descriptive statistics, for each of the 5 variables such as: 1) *Browsing* 2) *Chatting* 3) *Cell* 4) *TV* 5) *Video*. (Refer Questionnaire). The table shows that the adolescents have recourse to *cell* and watching *TV* and use of (VCD + Films) *Video* are found to be very high, (72.1%, 78.6%, and

92% respectively), The “p” value is “0,000” in all 5 variables, indicating significant differences between each item. “An increasing number of young people spend a great deal of time watching television, reading newspapers and magazines, playing records, listening to the CD and surfing the Internet” (Devadvadoss, 2006, p.185). They have recourse to the *browsing* and *chatting* much less, (47.5% and 34.6% respectively),



Graph-1 demonstrates the location and mass media access.

One aspect that is very strongly emerging (Graph-1) is that of the use of *Video* especially among the urban adolescents ($M_2:2,78$ - table:1). It’s indeed a significant factor that sums up the best form of audio-visual media that the adolescents are attracted to. More appropriate for the Urban adolescents. Secondly the use of *Cell* phone (table-1 $M_2=2,52$) (Graph-1, *chart-d*), among the Urban Adolescents, is very high compared to the other items, the characteristic feature of the city adolescents.

2.2. Verifying the 2nd hypothesis: *The Adolescents of Tamil Nadu use Mass Media to support the Religious Practices.*

The fact that the access to mass media need not necessarily mean that someone is *psychologically addicted* in the oft used ‘*negative connotation*’. To verify this, the following variables are analyzed. 6)*Literature*, 7)*Production*, 8)*Song*, 9)*AV*, 10)*Propaganda*, 11)*Magazine*, 12)*MM*. (for detail, refer Questionnaire).

Table-2 Statistics

		literature	Productions	songs	av	propaganda	magazine	MM
N	Valid	1000	1000	1000	1000	999	1000	1000
	Missing	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Mean		2,35	2,43	3,02	2,51	1,93	1,99	2,36
Sum % (for values 2, 3, 4)		82.5%	81.4%	93.4%	86.1%	59.2%	74.8%	79.3%
Median		2,00	2,00	3,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Mode		2	2	4	2	1	2	2
Std. Deviation		,928	,997	,956	,954	,968	,944	,998
Variance		,861	,995	,915	,911	,938	,892	,996
Sum		2351	2433	3018	2508	1925	1993	2363

Reporting the table-2 of the summary of the descriptive statistics for each of the selected 7 variables (*literature, productions, songs, AV, propaganda, magazine, modern means*), using the process of ANOVAs, confronting the medium / average on the accessibility of the mass media the following interpretation is drawn.

Literature: 82.5%, *Production*: 81.4%, *Song*: 93.4%, *Av*: 86.1%, *Propaganda*: 59.2%, *Magazine*: 74.8%, *Mm*: 79.3%. The highest recourse is scored on ‘*Listening to faith oriented Songs*’, followed by ample use of ‘*AV*.’ This is followed by small marginal difference in having recourse to ‘*literature and catholic mass media productions*’. It’s a common phenomenon for the adolescents to be attracted more towards audio-visual program, thereby using them more for the purpose of religious practices.

Table – 3 Report

location		literature	Productions	songs	av	propaganda	magazine	MM
1	Mean	2,39	2,51	3,14	2,62	1,99	2,09	2,32
	N	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
	Std. Deviation	,941	,976	,921	,953	1,020	,998	1,005
2	Mean	2,32	2,38	2,94	2,43	1,89	1,93	2,39
	N	600	600	600	600	599	600	600
	Std. Deviation	,918	1,009	,972	,949	,931	,903	,993
Total	Mean	2,35	2,43	3,02	2,51	1,93	1,99	2,36
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000	999	1000	1000
	Std. Deviation	,928	,997	,956	,954	,968	,944	,998

Confronting the report of Table-3 the mean value of the 7 variables, of the descriptive analysis in 2 locations: Rural (M_1) and Urban (M_2) the following summary is drawn. The highest scoring is 3,14 for the variable 'Songs' "I listen to faith oriented songs" in Rural and 3,02 in Urban respectively. It indicates that in both the location the adolescents are using the songs in religious practices. This is followed by the item 'Av' 'I see faith oriented audio-visual programs', $M_1=2,62$ and $M_2=2,51$, the second highest scoring in the series. The third highest use of mass media is noticed in the item 'Production', My practice of catholic faith is better with the use of mass media of the Catholic Faith Productions. $M_1=2,51$ and $M_2=2,43$.

2.3. Correlation to verify, "mass media supports religious practice".

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Confronting the correlation statistics between two items of 'Tv' and 'Video' of the first objective variables with that of the items that are supportive to the religious practices such as 'Songs', 'Av', and 'productions', the following summary is drawn. Those who affirm the access to the 'TV' have a remarkable access to 'video', .417(**), 'songs', .069(*), and 'Av', .085(**) with 'p'=.000/,.028/,.007' respectively indicating a very high significance. And those who have greater access to 'Video' affirm that mass media support religious practice using the item 'songs', .147(**), 'Av', .094(**), 'p'=.000/,.003' respectively. Similarly we observe the variables 'songs' with 'Av', .388(**), and 'productions', .293(**) where 'p'=.000/,.000' respectively. While 'Av' with 'production', .293(**) where 'p'=.000' an optimum level of correlation with the said objective. Those who have greater access to mass media also confirm greater support of mass media in religious practices.

2.4. Verifying the 3rd hypothesis: The Adolescents of Tamil Nadu are not psychologically compelled by mass media to avoid religious practices.

To confront this objective we deploy the following 6-items: (ref.Questionnaire) 13) I get enticed to watching Television than going to the church (*Enticement*) (-ve). 14) Mass media gives me consolation than practicing catholic faith (*mm Consolation*) (-ve). 15) I spend more time with my modern gadgets (Cell phone and computers, Internet-chatting etc.) than with my Religious Practices (*moreMM*) (-ve). 16) Media is sufficient for me to get all the satisfaction and answers with regard to the practice of my catholic faith. (*mmSatisfy*) (-ve)

17) I am psychologically compelled / addicted to the mass media than to practicing of my catholic faith. (*mmcompel*) (-ve) 18) The use of the mass media has manipulated my freedom and spontaneity against practicing my catholic faith. (*manipulation*) (-ve)

Table - 5 Statistics

	fatheredu	motheredu	enticement	mmconsolation	moremm	mmsatisfy	mmcompel	manipulation
N Valid	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2,86	2,90	1,92	2,05	2,11	1,92	2,13	1,97
Percentage	80%	77%	75.6%	71.3%	66.8%	76.1%	67.9%	73.8%
Median	2,93(a)	2,99(a)	1,76(a)	1,86(a)	1,93(a)	1,75(a)	1,97(a)	1,78(a)
Mode	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Std. Dev.	,844	,852	,983	1,057	1,075	1,003	1,050	1,039
Variance	,713	,726	,966	1,118	1,156	1,005	1,101	1,079

Calculated from grouped data. * percentage is sum of 1+2+3 for father's education and mother's education. percentage is sum of 1+2 for all the dependent variables (ie. 'Never' + 'sometimes').

Reporting the table -5 of the summary of the descriptive statistics for each of the 6 variables the result: percentage referring to 1 and 2 (i.e., 'never' and 'sometimes' respectively), 'enticement'=75.6%, 'mmconsolation'=71.3%, 'moremm'=66.8%, 'mmsatisfy'=76.1%, 'mmcompel'=67.9%, 'manipulation'=73.8%. (The higher the score indicates negative result).

All the variables score very high on "never" (or sometimes) get *enticement*. 'I get enticed to watching Television than going to the church' indicating that they could stop watching TV when needed to go to church. Therefore the adolescents are not compelled and not psychologically controlled by mass media as against religious practices. Likewise, the rest of the 5 items. Interestingly the education of the father and mother are 80% and 77% respectively of graduation and post graduation. The more the parents are educated the better ascendancy of the adolescents over the mass media.

2.5. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Confronting the correlation statistics between items the following summary is drawn:

'Enticement' with 'mmconsolation'=,210(**), p=,000./ 'moremm'=,300(**), p=,000./ 'mmcompel'=,287(**), p=,000./ 'manipulation'=,115(**). P=,000. Indicate: one who is not enticed by mass media is also not compelled, does not spend more time with modern gadgets than it is necessary, and not manipulated by mass media as against the religious practice.

'Mmconsolation' correlates with, 'moreMM'=,089(**), p=,005./ 'mmsatisfy'=,159(**), p=,000./ 'mmcompel'=,249(**), p=,000, Indicate: there is an average score of correlation between the one who is not being satisfied with mass media and not spending more time in mass media, nonetheless the score is significant, similar experience of not being compelled psychologically than to religious practices.

'moremm' correlates with 'mmsatisfy'=,105(**), p=,001./ 'mmcompel'=,277(**), p=,000./ 'manipulation'=,155(**), p=,000. Indicate: one who is not spending more time with mass media than religious practices correspond to 'not being compelled psychologically' nor 'manipulated by mass media' as against religious practices.

'mmsatisfy' correlates with 'mmcompel'=,115(**), p=,000./ 'manipulation'=,079(*), p=,013. Indicate: an average correlation between not satisfying and not being manipulated.

'mmcompel' correlates with 'manipulation'=,145(**), p=,000. Indicate: a good score of correlation between not being compelled and not being manipulated by mass media as against religious practices.

All of the above correlations have optimum score such as: (**), p=,000, that various items of mass media correlate with inter-variables and intra-variables.

Conclusion:

Summing up the descriptive statistics of the data analysis with the output of table -1 to table-6 affirms that the Adolescents in Tamil Nadu counterpoise European and American Experiments in the use of Mass Media as referred

earlier. Instead, though i) *The Adolescents in Tamil Nadu have remarkable access to Mass Media*. Yet the Adolescents show in their experience that ii) *Mass Media could support the Religious Practices*. Moreover iii) *The Adolescents of Tamil Nadu are not psychologically compelled by mass media to avoid religious practices*. “Today a dialogical rapport has been created where in science and technologies continue to develop with the final end of bettering human conditions. The unique role of religion, in this regard, is to preserve values and wisdom necessary to handle the technological explosion.” (Fernando, 2006, p.30).

Our analysis of the data sheds light that Mass media could bear good fruits if they are guided “... guidelines on confronting these new phenomena. In the final analysis, however, in most of the cases informed individuals take their own moral decisions.” (Fernando, 2006,p.31). We need to focus our attention to ‘how we use Mass media than shutting down mass media from adolescents’, “... we will have to define very clearly what type of man and society we actually want, and then train the youth accordingly. ... this should not be done on the basis of the ready-made models of the so-called developed societies. We should develop our own models on the basis of our own socio-cultural and an economic condition, what really needed is ‘cultural revolution for freedom’. (Pant,1995, p.104).

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ⁱ *Mass Media* consists of media institutions and processes such as diffusion of information, and media effects such as persuasion or manipulation of public opinion. In addition to studying practical skills of journalism, public relations or advertising, they offer programs on "mass communication" or "mass communication research." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_communication/ (February 2011)

ⁱⁱ *Tamil Nadu* has a history that dates back to a thousand years or more. The state's reputation lies with the fact that one of the first three universities established by British East India is located here in Chennai – the University of Madras. (<http://www.tamilnadueducation.net/Facts/1>)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Dravidian peoples* refers to the peoples that natively speak languages belonging to the Dravidian language family. Populations of Dravidian speakers live mainly in southern India, Anthropologists are largely at odds. A number of earlier anthropologists held the view that the Dravidian peoples constituted a distinct race. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dravidian_peoples (18/10/2013).

^{iv} *Tamil* language belongs to the Dravidian family, which contains about two dozen living languages mostly spoken in southern and eastern India. Tamil, therefore, probably separated from its closest relatives around 1000-500 BC.

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<http://tamilculturewaterloo.org/tamilhistory.htm> (21/10/2013)