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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH AND MEDIA

Pompi Kalita¹ and Sabitri Devi²

1. PhD.Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Cotton University, GHY, Assam, India and Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya, Lakhimpur, Assam, India.
2. Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Cotton University, GHY, Assam, India.

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Abstract

Out of the different stages in the life of an individual, youth signifies an important stage. It is a stage of endless learning and gathering new experiences. Along with it, it also indicates a beautiful phase of life where the individual after experiencing their wonderful childhood slowly enters or transforms into an adult form. They are full of curiosity and are open to imbibe and gather all forms of knowledge. The influence of media during this phase is an important study to be undertaken. This paper is an attempt to explore the concept of youth and how we can study the concept of youth in relation to the media studies. This paper also explores the positive and negative consequences of media upon the younger generation.

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Introduction:-

The etymological meaning of the term youth has been derived from an old English word 'geong' which means being in a youthful state or being young and also the term has been derived from the Sanskrit term 'Yuvan' which implies a person who has attained the stage of youth. According to the dictionary meaning, the term youth refers to that crucial period in the life of an individual where one enters into the age of youth but cannot be categorized as being an adult human being. The United Nations (2013) defines the youthful state of an individual in between the ages of 15-24 years in an unbiased manner to the other definitions provided by the Member States of the organization. Thus the term youth implies a transitory phase in the life of an individual, a process in which one transforms oneself from a child to an adult human being. It signifies an important phase of life where the individuals are heading from being dependent upon others as a child to an independent adult human being.

It is a midway between childhood and adulthood where the individuals has entered into that phase of their life where they will be undergoing various physical and emotional changes in themselves, they will be exploring their surrounding environment in their best possible way to satisfy their curiosity. They will instil and develop new interests that will lead them to form their own self identities and will help them in developing and identifying themselves as a unique individual having a specific existence of their own, will engage in various community development programmes, participate in various collaborative issues, develop social adaptability skills and leadership qualities and many more. Thus it is a crucial period in the lives of individuals. A healthy positive

Corresponding Author:-Pompi Kalita

Address:- PhD.Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Cotton University, GHY, Assam, India and Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya, Lakhimpur, Assam, India.

environment will help them to become a matured individual having the sense of a sound critical mind and a negative environment can have many negative and harmful consequences upon the lives of the individuals.

Methodology:-

In order to carry out the proposed work, both analytic and descriptive methods have been employed based on various textual and interpretive studies. This paper takes up various primary and secondary sources related to the concept of youth and the significant influence of media that exercises upon the younger generation. Emphasis has been laid upon in having a better understanding of the various factors that significantly leads to the formation of the concept of youth and the prominent place that it holds within the realm of media studies.

Relationship between Youth and Media:-

Youth signifies a dynamic phase in the entire life span of an individual. Many definitions of youth have been forwarded till date by different eminent personalities, but there is not a single satisfactory definition that can be forwarded to describe youth. The term in itself is a complex process comprising of various emotional, physical, mental and social factors that are important in the personality development of an individual. Thus the concept of youth is essentially a social construct and promotes a dynamic aspect. According to the sociologist's point of view, youth is described not only from a biological perspective but also how the various cultural and institutional factors that together constitute the eligible age of determining an individual as an adult human being (Bennett, 2017). Healthy personality growth and development will contribute towards a healthy and a positive nation making. The success and the rise of a nation can never be imagined without the support and the active engagement of the youth force.

Youth generally depicts a flexible phase of life imbibing all forms of knowledge. It may be in the field of education, employment sector etc. and thus they are in a continuous quest for attaining new knowledge and experiences. It is the time when the youths are in their energised forms fully active with strong determination and with lots of hope and positive expectations for the future happenings. They begin to develop empathetic attitude towards the fellow beings and forms adaptability skills to cope with ever-changing new situations and circumstances. Youth is a stage when the individuals undergo various physical changes, mental and emotional changes, social changes and undergoes various spiritual experiences.

Communication is a vital tool in the lives of every individual being. Media plays an important role in carrying out communication in which people can express their thoughts and opinions on a wider scale at ease and at cost efficiency and within a short span of time. Media has a dynamic role to play in every form of society and at every stage in the life of an individual. The youths are regarded as the most active media users across the globe. Valkenburg and Piotrowski (2017) regards media as the most useful source through which the young generation remain informed, entertained and gets access to learn and acquire many educational contents. Youths are considered to be a valuable human resource in the progress of a nation. The lives of the youth can be very much influenced by the family members, peer-group, school engagement etc. Being youthful is not an easy task. They are exposed to various challenges like identity formation, building effective relationships, combating peer pressure and many more crucial aspects.

Thus media is utilized by the youths as not only a leisure based activity but a significant platform through which they get to construct their own personalised identities and have an independent say in important issues. The youths of the present modern generation are engaged with the digitalised media environment that gives them ample scope of creating contents in a diversified manner and in self-participation and expression (boyd, 2014). Thus media is considered as an influencing factor behind the formation of identity amongst the youth. Arnett (2019) asserts that the influence of media and globalization upon the youths has resulted in the formation of a 'bicultural identity' a term signifying an infusion of local traditional cultures into the realm of global media contexts. Communication is a vital tool through which individuals come across with each other to share their thoughts, feelings etc. The creation, distribution and consumption of media content comprising the various forms of media may it be in printed forms, broadcasted or digitalised forms etc, and the individuals responses towards those media contents is not static. It is constantly evolving along with time and according to the demands of the specific time situations. The significant changes occurring within the realm of media owes not only to the technological advancements but also involves the transformation of traditional media contents to a digitalised form. Thus consumption of media among the individuals both adult and the younger generations undergoes massive transformations from time to time.

Media effects upon the individuals of young age have varied consequences. In today's evolving era of science and technology and the means of modern machineries and systems, the shift of interest with regard to the learning activities and experiences among the young generation is of great concern. The duration of media use from a desirable limit to an extensive limit is also a matter to be looked upon. It is noticed that rapid use of media can hamper upon the rational thinking of the emerging youths. When we talk about the importance of media in the lives of youths, then we can say that media has a significant and an influencing role in shaping and developing the younger generation in forming their attitudes, behavioural skills and adaptability, forming a world-wide view and in building a positive mental and an emotional attitude in themselves.

Exposure to media contents enables the youth to develop social communicable skills, the gender based roles, learn and acquire political ideologies and also in imbibing the behaviours of being a responsible consumer, (Buckingham, 2017). Media content has both a positive and negative consequences upon the minds of the younger individuals. If we enquire upon the positive effects than we can notice that media has an immense influence upon the lives of the youth. Media facilitates a broad educational platform and keeps the youths informed and provides them access to the current trends in the educational system and helps them to broaden and strengthen their skills and educational outlook. Media exposure enables the youths to be aware and in touch with the latest forms of information thereby increasing their knowledge and understanding on different grounds like that of social issues, world events etc. It also helps them to acquire and develop various skill based education, increase their technological skills and knowledge and provides them confidence and an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions freely.

It is through media itself that the youths remain in touch with their fellow beings. It also provides them an opportunity to stay in touch with the distanced friends and encourages behavioural outlook. Media acts as a platform where the individuals including the youths have an independent say towards the various social issues and helps to promote awareness on these issues and develop decision-making skills among the youths. Moreover media also helps the people to know about the various mental health issues that may arise from illogical and irrational thinking and encourages individuals to maintain a healthy physical body and a sound mind. Media also promotes various engagement programmes related to livelihood and the youths can have a choice in their profession based on their personal interests and talents. In today's evolving world, the use of social media which is a form of media, has become a part and parcel in the lives of every individuals be it youth, adults, older ones etc. Social media facilitates never ending communication between individuals from known to unknown and across the globe at all times. Today's generation can never imagine their lives without social media uses. Thus media inserts valuable influence in every aspects of life of an individual.

In encountering the positive effects of media, however its negative side cannot be avoided. In providing access to educational field, however misuse of media with regard to educational sector is one of the serious concerns. Youths may be attracted in gaining inappropriate knowledge content, may indulge in various unethical and unlawful acts that may take toll in their personal growth. There are also reports suggesting that increased screen time and surfing the media contents may also impact upon the mental well-being of the youths. Thus the youths are solely responsible for making the ethical use of media. Surfing the media can also make them less empathetic to situations and lower their emotional cognition. Constant media uses also insert a negative and a harmful effect upon the youths. It can lower their self-esteem, they may lack in their inner confidence and capabilities, may undergo depression, may develop anxiety and suffer from social comparison.

Frequently viewing the media can also create false hopes and aspirations in the minds of the youths and they may also find it difficult to bridge the gap between the real and the unreal world. They may also develop unrealistic expectations impacting their mental health. Along with communication, since media also promotes entertainment to the viewers, therefore the fantasies, violent scenes and behavioural attitudes along with the different illusory scenes and events displayed through the various entertainment programmes can also develop negative attitudes amongst the youths. They may too indulge in various unethical violent acts, be addicted to different bad habits like consuming alcohol, injecting drugs etc. leading to their moral degradation and promoting harmful lifestyle impacting upon their health. The portrayal of unhealthy media content can also lead to many sinful acts amongst the youths which in turn may have many detrimental effects. Excessive access to media can also make the youth wholly dependent upon it resulting in withdrawal of their moral responsibilities and duties as a human being and may cause many health issues like sleep deprivation, constant shift in moods, and many other ill consequences.

In order to combat the various positive and negative consequences of media, it is very important that the youths are equipped with media literacy skills and knowledge. It will enable them to surf the media safely and keeping in terms only with its positive impacts avoiding the negative ones, will help them identify misinformation portrayed in the media. It will help them to develop and analyse the contents of media critically and logically and understand the potential risk that can come along with the unsafe use of media. Parental guidance along with the active role of the educators, policymakers, peer group together can also serve as a necessary boon for the youths. It enables them to set media boundaries, understand the pros and cons of media use, helps them realise the importance of outdoor physical activities and offline communication and limit screen time consumption.

In today's age of globalization, media has an important role to shape youth cultures and identities. Increased access to media in a globalized world has significantly influenced the perceptions of the youth not only upon themselves but upon the nation and the world as a whole. The impact of globalization upon the youth is immense. When we talk about the influence of media upon the individuals, then we generally point to the fact that media has an adverse affect upon the younger generation. It is generally assumed that media robs the younger generation of their rational consciousness. Whatever the fact may be the study of youth and their use of media is an important and an interesting topic to be undertaken. Thus the relationship between youth and media is regarded as complex, multifaceted and constantly evolving. Media, along with social media inserts significant impacts upon the mental health of the youth's and overall in all other developments in both positive and negative ways. Thus the active engagement of the youth with media helps them in forming a suitable understanding of the world and it also helps them to contribute to their identities.

Conclusion:-

Efforts need to be enhanced at all cost in order to promote healthy youth development. This is a time when the youths develop their rational consciousness, realises their worth and begins to take part in all activities be it their personal, professional, social life etc. In a way they are to be regarded as a valuable and productive human resource contributing to their own self and the nation as a whole. Since the youth faces a lot of challenges during this period, therefore there can also be a risk that they may get entrapped or walk in a wrong and misleading path. Youth cannot be defined simply as a biological construct for social and cultural construct also have an influence upon them. Considering the advantages as well as the disadvantages of media use and its impact upon the youth, it can be stated that the use of media depends solely upon the youth. Responsible and effective use can yield a positive outlook and negative use can have a deteriorating and harmful impact. A balance between the real and the unreal/virtual world through the lens of media is therefore necessary for proper youth development.

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