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Influence of media exposure on vocational interest among adolescents

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Abstract

Vocation is valued by most adolescents, for its contribution to self-esteem, financial independence, and social maturity (Dube, 2013). Vocational interest is one of the most influential judgement that adolescent has to attain. Mass media is considered as an important medium of innovation. The media does tend to influence a person's career choice. Media may also serve as a powerful force in shaping how young people perceive the world. Media is advantageous to create a comprehensible picture of occupations for adolescents, which they want to opt for their future. Media can help expose people to global political and social events, people with greater or lesser incomes, and personal resources and items (Lipscomb, 2015). Movies and television shows in particular tend to focus on certain careers which can help shape people's ideas of those careers. The impact of media on children suggests that television provides a powerful context for career development. An overwhelming majority of young people are influenced by television programmes when choosing a career, research reveals. Lipscomb, (2015) believed that the entertainment options can even turn some careers into trendy options like law enforcement, advertising and journalism, by glamorizing them. This glamorous view may make some people interested in entering these professions.

Keywords: Media Exposure, Vocational Interest, Adolescent, Career choice

1. Introduction

Adolescence has been recognized as a stage associated with substantial change in self and a major life stage for identity formation (Sandhu & Tung, 2005) ^[51]. For most people, young and old, vocational identity forms an important part of their overall identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Osipow, 1986) ^[54, 53, 52]. Career selection has become more complex in 21st century due to individual's dependence upon mass media that plays a significant role in imparting information to patents and shaping personal choices. Apostol & Năsi (2013) ^[1] maintain that the young generation is more media prone and the societal dynamics are continuously changing because of the media exposure and people are influenced more from media characters' occupations.

Mass media plays a paramount role in today's society. Used to communicate news and events on a daily basis, mass media is defined as those media that are designed to be consumed by large audiences through the agencies of technology. It is an integral part of a modern communication system (Bodo, 2008) ^[3]. This is despite wide recognition that mass media is likely to be a primary source of children's early occupational learning (Dorr and Lesser, 1980; McMahon, Carroll, & Gillies, 2001; Morton, Kryk, Awender, & Diubaldo, 1997) ^[8, 32, 35].

Mass media caters to a diverse audience, ranging from children, to adolescents, to adults. Amongst said audiences, "Adolescents are vigorous users of the information broadcasted in media" (Werner-Wilson, Morrissey & Fitzharris, 2004) ^[49].

Mass media is any medium used to transmit mass communication. Until recently mass media was clearly defined and was comprised of the eight mass media industries; Books, Newspapers, Magazines, and Recordings, Radio, Movies, Television and The Internet (Lane, 2007) ^[26].

From the mass media, many respondents reported learning positive and/or negative aspects about work, which were mentioned equally often. The mass media, more often than other sources, were described as communicating the message (Levine and Hoffner, 2006) ^[19, 27].

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The mass media is likely to be a primary source of children's early occupational learning (Dorr & Lesser, 1980; McMahon, Carroll, & Gillies, 2001; Morton, Kryk, Awender, & Diubaldo, 1997) [8, 32, 35]. That television is a source of occupational learning is evident in research conducted decades apart. For instance, O'Bryant and Corder-Bolz (1978) [37] established that children learn to gender stereotype occupations based on the gender of a television role model, which children learn about occupations from the television content that they view, and that girls will modify their occupational aspirations as a result of viewing particular occupational roles portraying women. Moreover, Wroblewski & Huston (1987) [51] claim that Television is one of the important sources of occupational information for youth because it regularly portrays work-related activities of fictional characters.

More recently, Wright *et al.* (1995) [50] established that elementary school children have learned to differentiate between real occupations and those depicted on television. Children perceived occupations portrayed on television as more glamorous and more stereotypical, amongst other perceptions, while real life occupations were perceived as requiring greater individual effort. The latter findings appear to be supported by McMahon *et al.* (2001) [32] who found that; media was a major source of information for the children in their study.

According to Gibson (2004) [15], the media often depict role models as essential to career success. Organizational behaviour and career theorists have suggested that the identification with role models is critical to an individual's growth and development (Dalton, 1989; Erikson, 1985; Hall, 1976; Krumboltz, 1996; Schein, 1978; Speizer, 1981) [5, 6, 11, 17, 25, 40, 43]. The popular media reflect and encourage this scholarly view, suggesting that career success is caused by a person having "good role models" and career failure by a "lack of role models" (Girona, 2002; McQuillan, 2002; Ross, 2002) [16, 33, 39]. Individuals are urged to seek role models who can help them achieve their goals (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997) [30], and leaders of organizations are, in turn, urged to be role models for their employees (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; McGregor, 1960) [7, 24, 31].

The impact of media on children suggests that television provides a powerful context for career development that deserves more attention. Responses from 108 African American junior high school students indicated that the younger ones were more likely to be influenced by television role models. However, the amount of television viewing and gender did not influence career aspirations. Higher levels of mothers' education were a significant predictor of television influence on career aspiration; fathers' education was not, perhaps because 57% lived with only their mothers (King & Multon, 1996) [23].

Media (mainly printed and video material) appear to impact children's goals and understanding of their career development, and children engage in selective learning based on their personal characteristics (King & Multon, 1996) [23]. Cartoon watching has been found to relate inversely to 6- to 10-year-old children's positive perceptions of scientific professions (Potts & Martinez, 1994) [38]. Fortunately, however, children as early as 2nd and 5th grade are capable of distinguishing between documentary and fictional televised material and selectively shaping their beliefs about real-world occupations (Huston, Wright, Fitch, Wroblewski,

& Piemyat, 1997) [21].

A few studies provide evidence for the sex-typing effects of television or print media on children's knowledge and beliefs about occupations (Heintz, 1987; Huston *et al.*, 1997; Potts & Martinez, 1994) [18, 51, 38].

Other studies have found modelling to be an effective intervention for increasing children's awareness of a broader range of occupational possibilities for women and men and reducing their occupational sex-role stereotyping (Bailey & Nihlen, 1989; Garrett *et al.*, 1977; Miller, 1986; Tibbetts, 1975) [2, 14, 34, 44].

The role of television as the leading source of information on science and technology is also evident from the results of surveys carried out in several countries (National Science Foundation, 2006) [36]. In Europe, according to the previous Euro barometer on this topic, television is regarded as the most important medium of information on science and technology (European Commission, 2001) [12].

On TV, the talk within organizations is often social or relational rather than task or work related (Lichter *et al.*, 1994; Signorielli, 1993; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992; Vande Berg & Trujillo, 1989) [28, 41, 47, 48]. Anecdotal evidence suggests that shows focus on how the characters do their jobs, exclude the tedious and mundane aspects of work and glamorize the depicted occupations (Houck, 2006; Jones, 2003; Simanoff, 2006) [20, 22, 42]. Distorted occupational portrayals of television may cultivate inaccurate perceptions of the workplace. A small number of studies have examined the effects of TV on occupational learning, but this research has focused on what young people learn about particular occupations and the extent to which they aspire to occupations similar to those shown on TV (e.g., Hoffner *et al.*, 2006; Huston, Wright, Fitch, Wroblewski, & Piemyat, 1997; King & Multon, 1996; Signorielli, 1993; Wright *et al.*, 1995) [19, 27, 21, 23, 41, 50].

Levine and Hoffner (2006) [19, 27] studied that mass media is cited most often as providing positive information about work. Friends and the mass media were rarely mentioned as providing information about job requirements. Apparently, this is not a common topic of conversation with peers. TV and movies frequently depict people at work, and both scholarly research (Hoffner *et al.*, 2006; King & Multon, 1996; Wright *et al.*, 1995) [19, 27, 23, 50] and anecdotal reports (Houck, 2006; Simanoff, 2006; Torry, 1996) [20, 42, 45] suggest that media portrayals affect young people's occupational aspirations. However, many traditional occupations and much of what typically takes place during a workday are not exciting or dramatic enough to be depicted on programs designed primarily to entertain (Signorielli, 1993; Vande Berg & Trujillo, 1989) [41, 48]. Thus, it is reassuring that respondents reported learning relatively little about job requirements from the mass media. In fact, nearly one fifth of the sample spontaneously expressed scepticism about the accuracy of work-related information depicted in the media. Bulk and Beullens (2007) [4] studied the relationship between adolescents' viewing of docu soaps and their career aspirations. The results show that among a sample of 369 adolescents in their last year of secondary education, regular viewing of a docu soap about midwives, veterinarians or para-commandos was a significant predictor of more positive perceptions of that profession. Ecological data on student numbers suggested that these went up in periods following the broadcasting of successful docu soap about a particular profession.

Mass Media especially television, newspapers and social media websites, is frequently been used by youth to seek information regarding various professions, job market and knowledge about the world around them. Wroblewski & Huston (1987) ^[51] argue that children knew more about the “real life” and “television occupations” than other jobs, therefore, television serves as a source of occupational information. Television is one of the important sources of occupational information for youth because it regularly portrays work-related activities of fictional characters. Hoffner, *et al.* (2006) ^[27] conducted interview from 132 economically disadvantaged young people and maintained that “the income and education levels of respondents” dream jobs are positively correlated with the attributes of the TV characters’ jobs. DeFleur and DeFleur (1987) ^[9] maintained that the television “is an important source for “incidental” learning about the labor force. A substantial “homogenization effect” was noted regarding children’s knowledge of the world of work, apparently resulting from the stereotyped ways in which TV portrays occupations.” Moreover, Trujillo and Ekdom (1987) ^[46] argued that Television plays vital role in teaching us about occupations that are socially. To sum up, media not only create awareness and inform people but also make their mind for change. Therefore, above mentioned studies concludes that media play vital role in informing about careers as well as shapes students’ mind through fictional characters.

2. Discussion

The process of gaining knowledge about work begins in early childhood, with information coming initially from parents, friends, and the mass media. The process continues into the young world and the working world. Mass Media especially television, newspapers and social media websites, is frequently been used by youth. The present review adopted a learning framework within which to review the research literature of the last three decades on the career development of children. It has identified several issues related to children’s career development research. The importance of information in the mass media has been highlighted by several authors. Whether young people decide to opt for a particular career because of what they have seen about that career on television is difficult to study. Before any declarations can be made, a much larger and much more review and inquiry would be needed. In general, we can say the mass media is the one of the important factor of the adolescents’ career choice.

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