

Mass media influence

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Abstract: *This article deals with the impact and influence of mass media in our lives, benefits and drawbacks, effects of violence in the media, and it is about how it will influence on public opinion.*

Key words: *mass media, impact of mass media, positive and negative sides, effects of violence in the media, internet*

In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet. We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our daily activities like work, entertainment, health care, education, personal relationships, traveling and anything else that we have to do. A common person in the city usually wakes up checks the tv news or newspaper, goes to work, makes a few phone calls, eats with their family when possible and makes his decisions based on the information that he has either from their co-workers, news, tv, friends, family, financial reports, etc. What we need to be aware is that most of our decisions, beliefs and values are based on what we know for a fact, our assumptions and our own experience. In our work we usually know what we have to do based on our experience and studies, however on our daily lives we rely on the media to get the current news and facts about what is important and what we should be aware of. We have put our trust on the media as an authority to give us news, entertainment and education. However, the influence of mass media on our kids, teenagers and society is so big that we should know how it really works.

Of all the media distribution channels the most influential has been the television, we are constantly exposed to thousands of images of violence, advertising, celebrities and much more, in fact it's known that a child is exposed to about 40,000 ads a year. But who owns the media, which are the companies or people that shape our values, beliefs and decisions? The media is basically dominated by five major companies they are: Time Warner VIACOM Vivendi Universal Walt Disney News Corp Those 5 companies own 95% of all the media that we get every day. They own the major entertainment theme parks, entertainment movie studios, television and radio broadcast networks and programming, video news and sports entertainment. They also own integrated telecommunications, wireless phones, video games softwares, electronic media, the music industry and more. Years ago there was more diversity in companies, but they have merged so now they are just a few and they have the power to shape the opinion and beliefs of us and our kids. So it's important to be aware of what your kids are exposed to every day and you should also try to look at things from different perspectives and not just from the one the media gives you. The media makes billions of dollars with the advertising they sell and that we are exposed to. We buy what we are told to be good, after seeing thousands of advertisements we make our buying decisions based on what we saw on TV, newspapers or magazines to be a product we can trust and also based on what everyone else that we know is buying and their decision are also based on the media. These are the effects of mass media in teenagers, they buy what they see on TV, what their favorite celebrity advertise and what is acceptable by society based on the fashion that the media has imposed them. When we watch TV or a movie we

usually see many images of violence and people hurting others. The problem with this is that it can become traumatic especially in our children as we see it more and more. Our kids that are starting to grow and are shaping their personality values and beliefs can become aggressive or they can lose a sense of reality and fiction of what they are seeing. In the past years there have been some cases of kids carrying a gun at school and even hurting others with it. Those kids have been linked to excessive use of violent video games and war images. Another problem is that real war is used as a form of entertainment by the media, we should make our kids and teen aware that war is not a form of entertainment and that there is no win or lose like in video games, in real war everyone lose. As we have said above, the media has a huge impact on society and also in public opinion. They can shape the public opinion in different ways depending of what is the objective. For example, after the attacks of 911 the media gave a huge coverage of the event and exposed Osama guilty for the attack as they were told by the authorities. This shaped the public opinion to support the war on terrorism, the same happened with the war in Iraq. The problem is that if media received un accurate information then the public opinion supported a wrong cause, this is the power of public opinion influence. Other ways to influence are with polls and trends, especially in political campaigns. The candidates that can pay for more TV and media exposure have more influence on public opinion and thus can receive more votes.

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