

ADULTHOOD, LEISURE AND THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGISATION OF LIFE

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Abstract:

In the context of television communication, in recent years, the Romanian market has been characterized by an exacerbation of TV shows that exploit, on one side, aggression (aggression, violence is a "behavioural invariable" seen in the Romanian society – studies showing, for instance, that Romania ranks on the top of the hierarchy of domestic violence directed against women, children and old people), violence, sexual instincts, and of shows that focus on the emotional-affective side, on the other.

Keywords: level of education, TV, television addiction

Introduction

In recent decades, more frequently than ever, television has become one of the most important sources of information about reality, keeping a central role in shaping the representations of the world, attitudes, opinions, values and norms, in a word, in the construction of social reality.

Since it emerged, nearly sixty years ago, television has managed to penetrate every corner of the public and private space in ways that have led to defining this unique period of time as the Age of Television. Currently, for the first time in human history, the greatest responsibility in the formative process of socialization has passed from parents, the church and school to television and the Internet. Also, in the Romanian society, television represents the main means to spend leisure time, to relax, and to “escape” from concrete reality, being considered the most inexpensive price paid to obtain these assets. Thus, today, television is the symbolic “place” where man is born, lives and then dies.

Research objectives

- To establish a correlation between level of education and the amount of time spent watching TV;
- To determine the degree of dependence that television shows in society at all the levels;
- To demonstrate that nowadays the TV has become a “new religion” for most of the adult population;
- To show that television is the “most comfortable” means of recreation, necessary in light of its informative character, but also harmful because it inhibits the other possibilities of knowledge through reading, study, tours, etc. and also the other means of recreation – sports, trekking, hobbies.

Research hypotheses

1. Depending on the *gender* variable, men will spend more time watching TV shows in relation to women, regardless of the *education* variable

2. Depending on the *education* variable, persons with higher education spend less time watching TV in relation to persons with secondary education;
3. If the female population watches mainly shows that focus on the emotional side, men watch especially action-type TV shows;
4. We suppose that in the adult population, television plays an informative, relaxing role, being the only means of recreation to all the groups in our experiment;
5. Adults show the tendency to publicly repudiate aggressive behaviour.

Methodology used

To test and verify the hypotheses we used the invocative, multivariate experimental method in which we have incorporated two methods for the collection of data, *the questionnaire-based survey* and *the psychometric method* represented by the application of the 16 PF test (from which we have selected three factors representative for this research: the E factor, the G factor and the Q4 factor). For data analysis and interpretation we used quantitative, mathematical-statistical methods, and qualitative psychological methods.

Description of the experimental sample

The experimental sample was composed of 120 people, divided into four experimental groups according to the criteria: gender (female – male) and education (high school, secondary education, – university, higher education). All the subjects of the experimental sample, regardless of the criteria mentioned above were selected according to the general criteria – age – 35 – 45 year old (the study focuses on adults). The subjects, divided into the four experimental groups, were recruited from the following Iași – based companies : CET Holboca, TOP DOLL, HBC COCA-COLA: group 1 – females with secondary, group 2 – males with secondary, group 3 – females with higher education, group 4 – males with higher education.

Experimental design

According to the hypotheses, the variables considered were the following:

1. Independent variables:

- *Exposure to TV programs*, usually during the day between certain values (e.g. 1 – 2 hours / day, 3 – 4 hours / day, more than 6 hours / day);
- *Favourite type of TV show*: the subjects were asked to rank eight types of shows according to preference and frequency of exposure: news and information, cultural shows, political shows, documentaries, music, sports, entertainment, movies;
- *Favourite type of movie*: drama, romance, comedy, horror, action, soap opera, documentary, historical;
- *The role of television in family life and society*.

2. Dependent variables:

- *Perceived violence*: this variable represents the scores of the subjects on a questionnaire investigating the extent to which the subject feels and shows the three main effects of televised violence, namely, increased aggression and the development of attitudes and values favourable to its use in solving problems, desensitization and perception of the real world as threatening and dangerous as it is presented by television.
- *The 16 PF personality test (for data analysis only three factors relevant for the hypotheses under consideration were selected)*

Presentation and interpretation of data

In this chapter we try to render some general patterns of television consumption in adults with secondary and higher education. Some crucial aspects should be taken into account: compared with other countries (according to referenced surveys and existing specialized researches) Romania shows a higher frequency of the amount of time spent watching TV, phenomenon which is consistent with

our hypothesis that the lack of material resources determines people to “take refuge” in the fantasy world of television. On the other hand, for adults, television is a very important means of both information and relaxation. One of the most obvious effects of televised communication is the very fact that people resort to this means constantly and on a daily basis.

At the level of the first two hypotheses, depending on the *gender variable and the education variable*, we notice a greater amount of time spent watching TV in men compared with women ($m_1 = 3.7\text{h} / \text{day}$, $m_2 = 5.2\text{h} / \text{day}$, $m_3 = 2.16\text{h} / \text{day}$, $m_4 = 3.5\text{h} / \text{day}$): the greatest amount of time is allotted to television by men with secondary education and the smallest by women with higher education. Regardless of the results obtained here in comparison with Western countries, the amount of time allotted to television is very important. Explanations are to be found in everyday life: lack of financial resources, lack of education for health and for the alternation of physical and intellectual effort, etc.

At the level of hypothesis number 3, the following results are to be noticed: significant differences occur in groups 1 and 2 at the level of items: romance movies, action movies and historical movies ($p=0.002$); in groups 1 and 3, significant differences appear at soap opera items ($p=0.004$) due to the high score given by the population of group 1; in groups 2 and 4 significant differences are recorded at the level of items romance movies ($p=0.002$), action movies ($p=0.004$); in groups 2 and 4 there are no significant differences at any item. These results confirm hypothesis number 3 that the female population watches mainly movies focusing on affectivity – emotionality while the male population usually watches action movies.

To highlight the *role of television* (hypothesis 4) we focused on both the dimension of self-attribution (which role does the TV play in the respondents' lives?), and the dimension of hetero-attribution (identifying the most frequent and consistent reasons for which people generally watch TV).

Regarding the matters under consideration, the following results were obtained in the experimental groups: In *group 1*, the reasons most frequently identified by women with secondary education draw up the following profile:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
informative	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
relaxation	8	26.7	26.7	63.3
spending leisure time	7	23.3	23.3	86.7
escapism	1	3.3	3.3	90.0
the only means of recreation	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Overall	30	100.0	100.0	

Tab. I: The role of TV in personal life: group “females with secondary education”

For group 1, the collected data show that *in the personal life*, the TV has an informative, relaxing and leisure time spending role. These data are consistent with other research conducted in the area that show that in adult population television is the first means of information, outpacing the radio and printed media (this happens because television addresses both the visual and auditory analyzer, sending a more complex message that is perceived and fixed more easily).

Regarding the *dimension of hetero-attribution*, the most common responses with the highest averages are: information, the only means of relaxation and spending leisure time, convenience. Uniformity of response is observed in group 1 women with secondary education for both tested dimensions, which shows that there is an identification of the person with the social environment in which it lives: personal reasons are the same as those of the vast majority of others because “one's life plan” does not differ much from that of most of the population.

In group 2 males with secondary education, the results on the dimension of self-attribution are distributed as follows:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
informative	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
relaxation	10	33.3	33.3	56.7
spending leisure time	10	33.3	33.3	90.0
the only means of recreation	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Overall	30	100.0	100.0	

Tab. II: The role of TV in personal life: group males with secondary education

In this group, the greatest frequency was attributed to the items relaxation and spending free time, outpacing the informative role of television; this can be explained by the greater amount of time allotted by men with secondary education to watching TV shows compared with the women with secondary education included in our study ($m_2 = 5.2$ hours / day, $m_1 = 3.7$ hours / day). In general, differences at the level of items are not significant for these two experimental groups.

At the level of the *dimension of hetero-attribution* the items with the highest frequency and ranking are: informative, the lack of other means of recreation and of spending leisure time; the most convenient means of relaxation.

Also, in this group we notice the emergence of new items such as the lack of other means of relaxation, the most convenient means of relaxation: on the one hand, we can say that usually the population does not have adequate material or educational resources to use other means of recreation, of spending leisure time or to get informed in their personal life and, on the other hand, the opinion that the TV is the most convenient means of relaxation is rather harmful for the physical and psychological health of the population (the perception of TV messages does not relax but stresses even more the human body: an hour of watching TV consumes twice as much mental energy than an hour of reading).

In *group 3, women with higher education* the role of television in personal life is structured as follows:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
informative	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
relaxation	6	20.0	20.0	66.7
spending leisure time	4	13.3	13.3	80.0
the only means of recreation	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Overall	30	100.0	100.0	

Tab. III: The role of TV in personal life: women with higher education

Like in group 1, in this group television also has, first of all, an informative role, then a relaxation one and it is also the only means of recreation. On this latter point, we should consider the fact that the subjects of this group argue that they allot to their job an average of 10 hours per day and thus they have a smaller chance to find time for other recreational activities such as hiking, going to the cinema or theatre. Again, the economic factor is pervasive: insufficient financial resources make people take second jobs, a factor which condenses significantly the amount of time spent for their personal life.

At the level of the *dimension of hetero-attribution*, the items selected after data analysis are structured as follows: the cheapest means to spend leisure time, informative, lack of financial resources.

In *group 4, males with higher education*, for the first aspect considered – *the dimension of self-attribution* – the statistical outcomes are structured as follows:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
informative	18	58.1	60.0	60.0
relaxation	5	16.1	16.7	76.7
spending leisure time	3	9.7	10.0	86.7
escapism	1	3.2	3.3	90.0
the only means of recreation	3	9.7	10.0	100.0
Overall	30	100.0	100.0	

Tab. IV: The role of TV in personal life: men with higher education

In this group, the informative role of television in personal life prevails; at a distance in terms of frequency and ranking there are the items 'relaxation' or 'spending leisure time'. At the level of the dimension of hetero-attribution, the results are the following: the habit of watching TV, the most accessible means of recreation, informative role, and curiosity.

Comparing the two dimensions, we see that in group 4 there is a gap: getting information from the TV ranks first in the personal dimension and in the dimension of hetero-attribution the first place is occupied by the habit of watching TV. This can be explained by the fact that people with higher education have a better knowledge of social reality.

So far we have tried to identify the role of television in people's lives; the amount of time allotted to this medium every day; personal preference for certain TV shows. Next, we try to establish whether or not there is a relationship between television, the way publicly shown violence is perceived and certain dimensions of personality.

To identify how *public violence is perceived*, how people would resort to violent behaviour and how a behaviour of personal fear is induced, this study focused on four main lines of work: *the attitude towards young people who get involved in street fight, the attitude towards verbal aggressiveness shown in public means of transport, the increased level of violence in society and security in the streets after dark*. Regarding the attitude towards young people who resort to violent behaviour in public, the results in the entire experimental sample show an overall disapproval of such conduct ($mt = 3.84$); this shows that in adult population, violent communication through the mass-media does not encourage, but on the contrary strengthens non-violent attitudes in each person (in the teenage population, the violence presented by the mass-media significantly influences violent behaviour).

The highest scores in sentencing the violent behaviour of young people in the streets were obtained in group 2 men (in proportion of 96.70%): this can be explained by the fact that they interiorize and are aware of street violence to a greater extent than women, possibly because they also had been through such experiences during adolescence and therefore condemn them the most.

At the level of the variable *aggressiveness shown by a stranger in public means of transport* and reaction to this behavior, the response expressed by the subjects of the experimental sample is that of justification ($mt = 2.04$), which means that about half of the subjects feel entitled to respond when aggression is focused on themselves. If at the previous item group 2 ranked the highest scores in sentencing violent behavior shown in the streets, on this item this group grades the lowest scores compared with the other groups when it comes to the use of violent behavior when facing the verbal aggression directed toward oneself. The other groups rank equal cumulative scores on the response variables "always" and "almost always" (approximately 75% of the population feels entitled to retaliate with verbal violence).

Regarding the variable *increased level of violence in society (perceived violence scale)*, the population of the experimental sample consider that the increased level of violence is not justified. This result is consistent with the result on first item of perceived violence (public violence), achieving a sample average of $mt = 3.37$.

For the last variable considered, namely *personal safety in the streets after dark*, the results are significant in relation to the gender variable as shown by the following graph. In general, based on the average obtained in the four experimental groups $m_t = 2.57$, we can say that the level of safety felt by the adult population is medium, with significant trends towards the variable “rather low”.

Depending on the gender variable, the results look like this: the vast majority of women in the experimental sample ($m_{\text{rather low}} = 55\%$) do not feel safe when they walk in the street after dark (plus other 32.65% percent who consider that there are no facilities to do that). This indicates a strong internalization of uncertainty, of anxiety even toward the public environment and the phenomena associated with it: women can be considered more vulnerable to violence, owing to their education that categorises them as the “weak gender”, because of the reduced physical capabilities to retaliate under attack.

Moreover, in the male population, the results look like this: about 64% of the people in the experimental sample consider that streets are a safe environment. This can be explained as follows: criminality is rather low compared with other countries, “male” education that promotes self-confidence, combativeness, the spirit of justice, a physique which helps to retaliate in the event of aggression.

We can say that the perception of violence is not significantly correlated with the exposure to television because the population is adult, is capable to “filter” the reality presented by the TV and adapt it to the requirements of their own life. A dimension that seems to be significant here is the level of violent response encountered in the experimental sample and the feeling of “personal anxiety” noticeable especially in the female population. These things would be better explained if we take into account the dimension of personality as it was illustrated by the personality test applied.

Now we intend to highlight the extent to which some *personality factors*, considered in this study, are or are not significantly correlated with how the subjects perceive and feel public violence and potential violence oriented against their own personality.

Based on the interpretation of the raw data obtained after the application of the three personality factors (of the 16 PF test: the E factor, the G factor and the Q4 factor), it can be said that the subjects of the experimental sample generally present significant tendencies to show independence of personality (in opinions, manner of expression), aggressive tendencies in relation to social reality sometimes near to authoritarianism (E factor), honesty, integrity and high sense of duty and responsibility (G factor) and a high level of frustration and low resistance to the stress factors that they are subjected to (Q4 factor). These general statements allow us to highlight from the outset that there is a reciprocal relationship between the personality factors that were tested and the results obtained concerning the perception of violence in the public space and the resistance to aggressive factors exert on their personalities.

In the entire experimental sample, we notice a relationship of interdependence between the way violence is perceived, reactivity to violence and the scores obtained on the personality factors test. An important aspect of the Q4 factor results (which test the degree of stress, frustration, and mental tension) is the high level of stress that characterizes the general adult population. It is well known that in contemporary society stress has come to be called the “disease of the third millennium”, this is explained by the fast pace of life, the polluted environment in which we operate, the reduction of the time allotted to physical and mental respite, the involvement in an increasing number of professional activities, etc. These issues are present as well in the population of the experimental sample because: all the subjects have at least one job, are married and 87% have children; they have little free time for personal recreation, and when they have free time they usually use it watching TV, a fact that does not lead to relaxation or physical rest, but to the addition of new stress factors to the human psychological system.

To conclude, we can say that the adults in the experimental sample show balanced personality features at the level of the tested factors, excepting the stress factor. The criteria used to select the sample, namely the gender of the subjects and their education, bring in more or less significant alterations to the overall trend of the sample. Also, we can state that there is a direct relationship between the scores obtained on personality factors and the way in which publicly shown violence is

perceived and assessed. We believe that in adults we cannot establish a significant relationship between aggressive tendencies and exposure to TV shows because at this age the structures of personality are already formed, mature; instead, watching TV shows brings a new factor to be considered, namely: *increased levels of stress and frustration*.

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