

The Role of Reality Television in Shaping Youth Behaviour and Social Attitudes among the Youth of Dehradun

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Abstract

Reality TV has become one of the most popular forms of entertainment in today's media world. It's not just about fun and distraction; it also plays a big role in shaping how people, especially young people, think, behave, and see the world around them. This research aims to understand how reality TV affects the youth in Dehradun, looking at areas like lifestyle, the way they speak, fashion choices, personal growth, and the values they hold. The study explores how these shows influence the thoughts and actions of young people in the city. Reality TV isn't just something people watch in the background anymore—it's everywhere, blending real-life moments with exaggerated drama, and it's changing how viewers see the world and themselves. The research looks at what happens when young people spend time with these shows. Do they start imitating celebrities? Do they become more focused on their looks? Does the competition shown on screen change how they pursue success or deal with relationships? Reality TV can have a positive effect on young people by helping them feel more confident, spotlighting their talents, and even making them think about important social issues. But there's another side to it. These shows can also promote materialism, encourage quick judgments based on looks, and create unrealistic expectations about life. By looking at all these aspects, the study helps us understand just how much media can influence youth culture. It also provides valuable insights for teachers, parents, and policymakers who want to help young people engage with media more thoughtfully. The research found that most respondents watch reality TV regularly, and these shows have a strong impact on their attitudes, how they express themselves, and how they interact with others. The study concludes that while reality TV can be motivating and entertaining, it also reinforces unrealistic values and encourages more aggressive communication styles.

Introduction

Television has always played a big role in how people see the world. It's not just about fun or entertainment—it also shapes how we think about culture, society, and ourselves. Out of all the things people watch, reality TV stands out. It's wild how popular and controversial it's become in the last twenty years. Unlike the old-fashioned scripted shows, reality TV promises to show real people in real situations. Sometimes they're competing, sometimes they're just living their lives, and the drama feels real, even if it's a bit exaggerated. This "real-life" angle pulls in millions, making ordinary people into instant celebrities.

Now, with everything going digital, TV doesn't just sit on a screen in your living room anymore. Social media, streaming, and YouTube have all blurred together. Young people aren't just watching passively anymore—they're talking about these shows online, joining fan

groups, and even copying scenes or challenges for their own videos. All this interaction makes them feel like they're part of the show's world. That's why it's so important to look at how reality TV influences youth behaviour and attitudes—especially in a city like Dehradun. Parents, teachers, and policymakers need to understand what's going on if they want to help young people use media in a healthy way.

In India, reality TV has completely changed how we watch and talk about entertainment. Shows like Bigg Boss, MTV Roadies, Indian Idol, Khatron Ke Khiladi, and Master Chef India mix drama, competition, and real emotions. These aren't just shows—they set trends. They influence the way people communicate, dress, and act. For young viewers, reality TV is more than just something to pass the time. It's a social experience. It shapes their dreams, values, and how they connect with others.

Dehradun is a great place to explore all this. The city is known for its schools and colleges, and its young people are very tech-savvy. They're caught between traditional Indian values and global trends, making them a perfect group to study if you want to understand how media affects the next generation. By focusing on Dehradun, this research looks at how reality TV influences a semi-urban, educated youth audience—a group that's starting to shape Indian culture in new ways. The goal is to figure out how these young people interpret and respond to what they see, and what that means for the rest of the country.

In short, reality TV is a huge part of today's India. Its impact goes far beyond entertainment. It affects values, social norms, and how people treat each other. As Dehradun grows as a center for education and culture, its young people show both the excitement and the risks of this media-driven world. This dissertation examines how much reality TV influences behavior and attitudes among Dehradun's youth, adding something new to the ongoing conversation about media's role in Indian society.

Reality TV puts regular people in the spotlight instead of trained actors, promising to capture real-life moments as they happen. But let's be honest—most of these shows mix real situations with some scripting or editing to keep things exciting and dramatic. Experts say reality TV is like a mix between a documentary and pure entertainment, all about watching how people react when you put them together in a controlled setting. So, why did reality TV become so popular? For one, it's cheaper to make. Producers don't need famous actors or expensive sets, so they save money and still attract huge audiences. Plus, people love peeking into other people's lives—it taps into our natural curiosity, or maybe just plain nosiness.

New technologies like digital and satellite TV helped these shows reach more viewers, and social media made it easy for fans to connect with contestants in real time. On top of that, as TV became a global phenomenon, hit shows from the West were remade everywhere from Asia to Africa to Latin America. They kept the main idea, but adapted them to fit local cultures.

Objective of the Study

The main aim of this research is to analyze the role of reality television in shaping the behaviour and social attitudes of youth in Dehradun. The study focuses on understanding how continuous exposure to reality TV affects their perceptions, interactions, and cultural values.

- To examine the viewing habits and preferences of Dehradun youth regarding reality television.
- To study the extent to which reality television influences the behaviour, communication style, and lifestyle of youth.
- To analyze how youth perceive the authenticity and message of reality television shows.
- To identify the areas of positive and negative impact of reality television on young viewers.
- To connect the observed influences with established media theories like *Social Learning Theory* and *Cultivation Theory*.

Research Design and Methodology

The research was conducted in the capital of Uttarakhand, Dehradun, which is well known for its diverse socio-economic background, large student population and developing global media culture. This made it a suitable location to study how youth interact with and respond to reality television. The study followed a **descriptive survey design** aimed at collecting quantitative and qualitative data from respondents. The focus was to identify patterns of media consumption and their influence on behaviour.

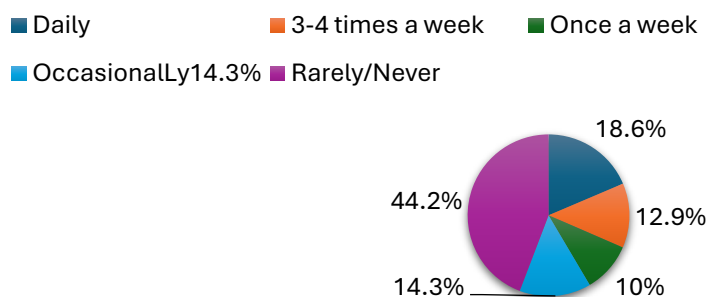
The research adopted both **analytical** and **interpretative** approaches — analyzing numerical data and interpreting it in the light of established media theories. A total of **70 respondents** were selected. Since it was not possible to collect data from the entire youth population of Dehradun, **non-probability sampling** was used. Specifically, the study used the **purposive sampling** technique. In purposive sampling, respondents are deliberately selected because they fit the study's criteria — in this case, they are youth aged 18–35 who live in Dehradun and watch reality television regularly. To make the process easier and faster, **convenience sampling** was also applied. This means that respondents who were easily accessible — such as students in colleges, libraries, coaching centres, cafés, and workplaces — were approached to participate in the survey. The participants were between **15-35 agegroup**, representing high school students, undergraduates, postgraduates, and early-career professionals. The sample included both male and female respondents to ensure gender diversity and balanced representation.

Research Methodology and Tool

Data was collected using a **structured questionnaire**. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering demographic details, viewing frequency, preferred reality show genres, behavioural imitation, and perception of authenticity. The data obtained was analyzed using **percentage methods** and presented through **tables, charts, and graphs** to draw meaningful conclusions. The study is based on **primary data** collected directly from respondents and supported by **secondary sources** such as books, journal articles, and online resources on media influence and youth culture. The research tool provided a clear understanding of how different aspects of reality television contribute to behavioural and attitudinal change among young viewers.

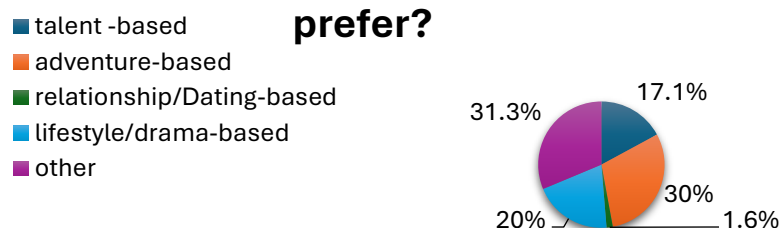
Tabulation and Analysis of Data

1. Frequency of watching reality television



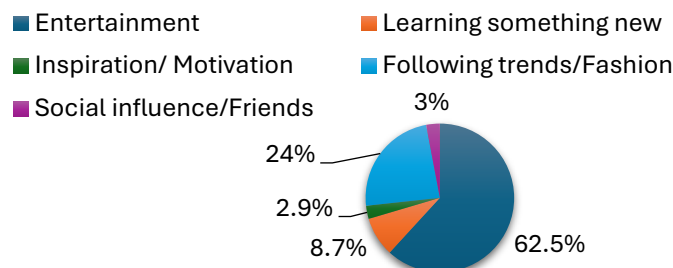
The interpretation of the data reveals that 44.2% of respondents rarely or never watch reality television, indicating that many young people in Dehradun are moving away from traditional TV entertainment and turning to other digital platforms. However, 18.6% watch reality television daily, representing a loyal segment that is highly engaged with such content. Additionally, 12.9% of respondents watch 3–4 times a week, while 10% watch once a week, showing moderate but consistent interest. About 14.3% watch occasionally, suggesting that some youths engage with reality TV based on specific shows or participants.

2. Type of reality shows do you prefer?



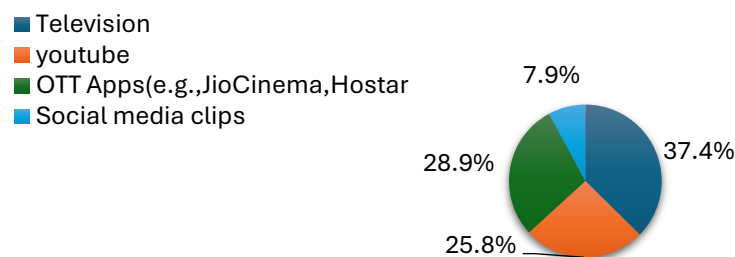
The data reveals that 30% of respondents prefer adventure-based reality shows such as *Roadies* and *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, showing a strong interest in thrill and competition. Lifestyle or drama-based programs like *Bigg Boss* are favoured by 20% of viewers, highlighting a fascination with celebrity lives and social interactions. Talent-based shows such as *Indian Idol* and *Dance India Dance* attract 17.1% of respondents, reflecting appreciation for skill and performance. Only 1.6% prefer relationship or dating shows like *Splitsvilla*, suggesting limited appeal in this category. Interestingly, 31.3% enjoy other regional or YouTube-based reality content, indicating a growing shift toward digital and locally relevant entertainment platforms.

3. Reasons for watching Reality Television



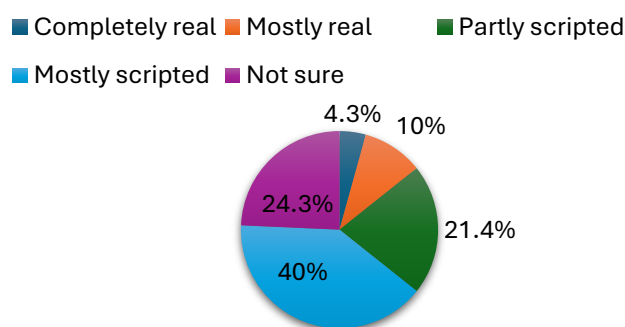
The data indicates that entertainment is the primary reason for watching reality shows, chosen by 62.5% of respondents, showing that most viewers watch for relaxation and enjoyment. About 24% watch to follow current trends or fashion, suggesting that reality TV influences youth lifestyle and style choices. A smaller portion, 8.7%, watch to learn something new, while 2.9% seek inspiration or motivation from participants or judges. Only 3% watch due to social influence or because their friends do, indicating that personal interest outweighs peer pressure in viewing habits.

4. Platforms use most often to watch these shows



The findings reveal that television remains the most preferred platform for watching reality shows, with 37.4% of respondents relying on it as their primary source. OTT apps such as Jio Cinema and Hotstar follow closely at 28.9%, indicating the growing shift toward digital streaming platforms. YouTube accounts for 25.8% of viewers, showing its popularity for on-demand and easily accessible content. Meanwhile, 7.9% of respondents primarily consume short clips or highlights on social media, reflecting the increasing trend of bite-sized viewing habits among younger audiences.

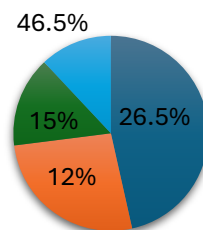
5. Perception of Authenticity



The findings reveal that only 4.3% of respondents believe reality shows are completely real, while 10% think they are mostly real. A significant 21.4% feel these shows are partly scripted, and 40% — the largest group — consider them mostly scripted. Meanwhile, 24.3% of participants remain unsure about their authenticity. This indicates that a majority of viewers perceive reality shows as being largely manipulated or pre-planned rather than entirely genuine.

6. Effect of reality television on youth

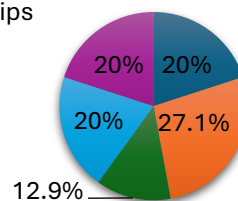
■ Positive ■ Negative ■ Both ■ Neutral



The findings indicate that 46.5% of respondents perceive the overall effect of reality television on youth as **positive**, while 26.5% believe it has a **negative** impact. Additionally, 15% feel that it has **both positive and negative** effects, and 12% remain **neutral**. This suggests that although many view reality TV as entertaining or motivational, a considerable portion also recognizes its potential downsides on youth behaviour and attitudes.

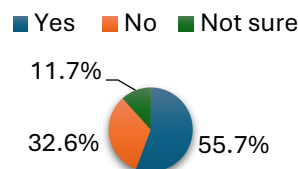
Area affected by reality shows

■ Fashion/Lifestyle
■ Communication/Language
■ Confidence
■ Social attitudes/Relationships
■ none



The data shows that 27.1% of respondents feel most influenced by reality television in terms of communication and language, while 20% each are influenced in the areas of fashion and lifestyle, as well as social attitudes and relationships. Around 12.9% believe it impacts their personality and confidence, whereas 20% reported that they are not influenced at all. This suggests that while reality TV affects certain behavioural and social aspects, its influence varies significantly among viewers.

Perception of relationships and success



The data reveals that 55.7% of respondents believe reality shows change their perception of relationships and success, while 32.6% do not feel any such impact. Meanwhile, 11.7% remain uncertain about the influence. This indicates that more than half of the viewers acknowledge the role of reality television in shaping how they view personal and professional relationships as well as their understanding of success.

Overview of Major Findings

The survey results show that reality television has become a **significant aspect of entertainment and identity construction** for Dehradun's youth. While the level of engagement varies, the majority of respondents confirmed that reality television affects their thinking, fashion, and social communication in some way. A majority of respondents (74%) indicating that reality television primarily appeals to younger youth audiences. Female viewers (71%) outnumbered males (29%), suggesting that women engage more actively with reality television content. In terms of frequency, 18.6% of respondents watch reality television daily, 12.9% three to four times a week, and 10% once a week, while 44.2% rarely or never watch such shows.

Adventure-based shows (30%) such as *Roadies* and *Khatron Ke Khiladi* and lifestyle/drama-based shows (20%) like *Bigg Boss* dominate viewing preferences. The primary motivation for watching is entertainment (62.5%), followed by trend following (24%), and learning new things (8.7%). When asked about imitation, 14.3% of respondents admitted to imitating reality show participants "many times," 22.9% "sometimes," and 29.9% "rarely," indicating that nearly 67% have mimicked on-screen behaviour at least occasionally. Areas most influenced include communication and language (27.1%), fashion/lifestyle (20%), and social attitudes (20%), showing that exposure extends beyond mere entertainment. 55.7% of participants agreed that reality shows change perceptions of relationships and success, while 32.6% disagreed and 11.7% were unsure. Regarding content authenticity, 40% of respondents believe shows are mostly scripted, and 21.4% consider them partly scripted, while only 4.3% see them as completely real.

Despite this awareness, viewership remains strong, reflecting a paradox where entertainment value outweighs critical evaluation. When asked about overall effects, 46.5% described reality television's impact as positive, 26.5% as negative, 15% as both, and 12% as neutral. Overall, the study establishes that reality television plays a **dual role**—it inspires ambition and creativity while simultaneously promoting unrealistic ideals and behaviours.

The research shows that reality TV has become a major part of entertainment and how young people in Dehradun see themselves. Most young people like watching these shows and think that they affect how they think, speak, dress, and act. Reality TV draws a big audience, especially among young women, and is mostly watched by students and those with higher education. Shows that focus on adventure and drama are the most popular because they provide excitement, emotional stories, and a sense of glamour.

Many young viewers watch reality TV for fun and to relax, while others follow it to keep up with trends or gain new knowledge. However, these shows often do more than just entertain. Many viewers end up copying the style, language, or behaviour of the people they see on screen. Reality TV clearly influences how young people express themselves, their fashion choices, and how they interact with others. The study also points out that reality TV shapes how youth define success and relationships, often creating unrealistic expectations.

Even though many viewers know that much of what is shown is scripted or exaggerated, they still enjoy the shows for their entertainment. Overall, the study says that reality TV has a mixed effect—it can boost confidence, creativity, and ambition, but it can also lead to materialism, unhealthy competition, and a focus on shallow values among young viewers.

Recommendations

For Youth:

- Develop media literacy to think critically about reality shows.
- Avoid blindly copying on-screen personalities or behaviour.
- Maintain a healthy balance between screen time and real-life activities.
- Choose reality shows that promote talent, creativity, and learning.
- Build self-esteem on real achievements, not media comparisons.

For Parents:

- Watch shows with children and discuss real vs. fake content.
- Set limits on viewing time and inappropriate programs.
- Encourage participation in real-world cultural and educational activities.
- Be a role model for balanced and mindful media habits.

For Educators:

- Include media literacy lessons in school and college curricula.
- Use positive reality shows as classroom discussion tools.
- Conduct workshops on media influence and responsible viewing.

For Policymakers:

- Enforce ethical standards and responsible broadcasting rules.
- Support and reward production of educational and inspiring content.
- Launch campaigns to raise public awareness about media reality.
- Fund ongoing research on media's impact on youth behaviour.

For Media Professionals and Producers:

- Uphold ethics, fairness, and authenticity in production.
- Balance entertainment value with social responsibility.
- Ensure diversity and inclusivity in casting and themes.
- Create shows that combine entertainment with education and innovation.

Conclusion

The study shows that reality television has a big effect on the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour of young people in Dehradun. It doesn't just show their dreams and lifestyle goals, but also helps shape how they see themselves, others, and the world around them. In a lot of ways, reality TV acts like both a mirror and a mold. It reflects the ambitions of today's youth in a globalized world while also influencing how they think about success, competition, and what is right or wrong. The research points out the need for young people to be aware of media and to think critically about what they watch. If they are given the right support and media is handled responsibly, reality TV can go beyond just being fun entertainment and become a helpful tool for learning, creativity, and empowering young people. The study looked into how reality TV affects youth socially, culturally, and psychologically by examining how they understand, copy, and respond to media content. The study shows that reality television has a strong impact on the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour of young people in Dehradun. It influences how they see themselves, others, and society. Reality TV not only entertains but also shapes youth ideas about success, lifestyle, and relationships. With proper guidance and awareness, young viewers can learn to think critically about what they watch. If used responsibly, reality television can become a positive tool for learning, creativity, and self-expression instead of just entertainment.

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