

The unethical and
corrupting side of
reality television:
negative impact of
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**ASSIGN
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Though reality television's purpose is to entertain the audience, it has a variety of negative impacts on viewers and participants. These impacts vary from low self-esteem in the audience (Peek & Beresin, 2015), to the humiliation of reality television participants. The impact of reality television on contemporary culture has always been clear to the public in general, but television displays its negative impacts as irrelevant. Reality television communicates highly unethical values and it is corrupting to society because of the way it manipulates reality. The influences of reality television can be separated into three main areas; impacts of reality television on participants, which is the damage originated behind the screen that involves humiliation of participants (Mast, 2016). Then, we have the effect of reality television on viewers, which transmits unethical values to the audience and induces the acceptance of immoral acts. The last point is the negative impacts of reality television on society and this occurs television affects not only its participants and viewers but also the society in general. By making the audience accept a new perspective on actions, the viewers transmit the values learned to those around them.

Reality television shows have always veiled the intrusion, humiliation and general unethical treatment of participants behind the screen (Mast, 2016) and even though television displays unethical actions as entertaining, there is a real negative impact on the participants. Reality shows force participants to reveal personal information and socialise in a non-spontaneous way, manipulating the nature of social interaction. In most reality television shows, participants are required to reveal personal information early on in the show. If more intimate information is revealed in the beginning, the

participants are more likely to be admired by the audience; this forces participants to change their normal behaviour (Tal-Or & Hershman-Shitrit, 2015). According to Mast (2016), the main unethical treatment of participants consists of the intrusion and humiliation of reality television members. Reality shows have access to the private life of a participant. This means that reality television shows expose participants' private thoughts, feelings, and ideas to the audience, violating the basic human right of privacy. The humiliation of the individual is another factor in the unethical treatment of members. In reality television "acts of humiliation broadly consist of performing actions or creating conditions that lower a person's or group's dignity or self-esteem, with the perpetrator, often deriving a sense of self-satisfaction from it by feeling above the other" (Mast, 2016, p. 2184). Humiliation displays participants as weak and exposes them to the social pressure of people watching them on television. Another factor that proves that reality television shows are unethical is the psychological issues that arise in participants. All television shows conduct a casting process before starting the show. Whitlock (2012) states that casting interviews fail to identify important psychological traits that might influence a participant's performance during the show. A person's mental state will define how their reaction when they find themselves in stressful situations, which proves that when casting interviews fail to identify certain traits, the pressure might outset psychological issues.

Reality television affects the audience by manipulating the audience's morals and using an "entertaining" reality, which generates unethical values (Bonsu, Darmody & Parmentier, 2010) such as materialism, low self-esteem

and illegal substance use. Reality television shows are the cause of many negative impacts on their audience, one of the most notorious consequences is the outset of low self-esteem in viewers. Dallesasse and Kluck (2013) proclaim that reality television builds high levels of body dissatisfaction on its audience. This is because most reality television shows display participants who possess the “ ideal” body figure that society perceives as attractive. The viewer perceives participants as “ regular” people and identifies with the actor or actress (Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013). The perception of participants as regular people with ideal physical appearance creates a sense of dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in the audience. Another relevant opinion is that reality television’s purpose is not only to entertain the public but to manipulate the viewer as well. Important companies use reality television to manipulate their viewers to consume. “ In these shows, we see the merger of production and consumption as audience leisure is transformed into participation, and then into financial value” (Bonsu, Darmody & Parmentier, 2010, p. 103). The Audience believes that if they act in similar ways as the reality show characters, they will relate more to the participants and reach a new level of confidence. Illegal drug and alcohol use is shown in reality television shows. In many occasions, television depicts alcohol and illegal drug consumption as something fascinating and ordinary (Fogel & Shlivko, 2016). Many reality television viewers try to identify with television a character, which means that the risk of consuming illegal substances and alcohol increases. According to studies, when a reality television viewer identifies more with a specific television character, the odds of alcohol and drug use increases. It is clear that reality television

influences drug misuse. Studies demonstrate that reality television shows manipulate its viewers on different levels.

The negative effects of reality television can affect not only viewers but also the ones around them since viewers accept the version of the world that is depicted in television as accurate, and they take the unethical values learned and transmit it to people around them (Oprea & Kühe, 2016). The negative influence of television does not only reach its watchers but also everyone around them. Reality shows are highly unethical and corrupting to society because of the highly unethical and immoral values that it shares to the public. Alcohol and illegal drug use, violence and crime are depicted as ordinary and exciting (Chauke & Malatji, 2018). According to studies, the negative impacts of reality television have a more significant influence on younger viewers. “ Young people who were interviewed claimed that seeing their favourite actors making a large amount of money and achieving massive success without working hard toward it, led them to develop the wrong perception of success in life” (Chauke & Malatji, 2018, p. 12184). These consequences might have a greater impact on them because during younger ages it is harder to differentiate on moral and immoral acts (Peek & Beresin, 2016). As people who grow up watching reality television shows turn older, the unethical values learned in their youth develop further to become part of their personality. A very important theory that relates to the negative impacts of reality television on society is the cultivation theory (Oprea & Kühe, 2016). Which means that people who watch television over a long period, tend to associate the false reality displayed on television to the real world. This theory claims that “ heavy viewers are more likely to accept the

world as created by television as an accurate depiction of reality and to use it as a reference frame in their day-to-day life” (Oprea & Kühe, 2016, p. 802). People who watch reality television more often will take the values learned from television and then use those values around others.

In conclusion, reality television is highly unethical and corrupting to contemporary society because of how it manipulates society and the improper values that it induces. Reality television shows do not consider morality when it comes to the treatment of its participants. Television shows manipulate their viewers to learn unethical values to corrupt the viewer and make a profit from the crowds. Society seems affected at large when reality television viewers take on practice immoral attitudes transmitted by television and pass them on to others around them in their day-to-day life. Television is a powerful tool used to communicate to a great number of people, but reality television shows can have a big negative influence on the future of society.

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