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The Causal Model of Psychological Traits which Influence Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

โมเดลโครงสร้างความสัมพันธ์เชิงเหตุผลของการเลือกรับรู้หรือตีความละครโทรทัศน์

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนาโมเดลโครงสร้างความสัมพันธ์เชิงเหตุผลของการเลือกรับรู้หรือตีความละครโทรทัศน์ของเยาวชนไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการศึกษา คือ เยาวชนชายหญิงที่ศึกษาอยู่ในระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย ภาคเรียนที่สอง ปีการศึกษา 2549 จำนวน 1,808 คน โดยสุ่มแบบหลายขั้นตอน การเก็บข้อมูลใช้วิธีการศึกษาจากเอกสารตำรางานวิจัย การสังเคราะห์งานวิจัยและวิธีการสำรวจ ผลการศึกษา พบว่า ตัวแปรที่มีความสัมพันธ์ในรูปที่เป็นสาเหตุส่งผลต่อการเลือกรับรู้หรือการตีความละครโทรทัศน์ คือ พฤติกรรมการเปิดรับละครโทรทัศน์ ทัศนคติ และตัวแปรจิตลักษณะ ตัวแปรที่ส่งผลทางตรงอย่างเดียว คือ ตัวแปรจิตลักษณะ ตัวแปรที่ส่งผลทางอ้อมเพียง

อย่างเดี่ยว คือ ตัวแปรพฤติกรรมกาการเปิดรับละครโทรทัศน์ ส่วนตัวแปรที่ส่งผลทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อม คือ ตัวแปรทัศนคติ และเมื่อพิจารณาผลรวมของอิทธิพลทางตรงและอิทธิพลทางอ้อมของตัวแปรแล้ว พบว่า ตัวแปรที่มีปริมาณอิทธิพลรวมสูงสุด คือ ตัวแปรจิตลักษณะ รองลงมา ได้แก่ ตัวแปรพฤติกรรมกาการเปิดรับละครโทรทัศน์ และตัวแปรทัศนคติ ตามลำดับ

คำสำคัญ: จิตลักษณะ ทัศนคติ พฤติกรรมกาการเปิดรับ การเลือกรับรู้ การตีความละครโทรทัศน์
เยาวชนไทย

Abstract

This study aimed to develop a causal model of psychological traits and interpretation of aggressiveness and sex in television dramas for Thai adolescents. The sample group was adolescents studying during the second semester in the academic year of 2006. The sampling total of 1,808 was selected by using the multistage sampling technique. Literature review, research analysis and a survey method were used to collect data. The major findings were that psychological traits had a direct link to television drama selection or interpretation. However, attitudes had both a direct and indirect effect on television drama selection or interpretation. Behavior from exposure to television drama had an indirect effect on television drama selection or interpretation. Considering the total direct and indirect effects on interpretation of aggressiveness and sex in television dramas, psychological traits had the most effect, followed by behavior from exposure to television dramas and attitude respectively.

Keywords: Psychological Traits, Attitude, Exposure Behavior, Selective Perception, Television Drama Interpretation, Thai Adolescents

Introduction

It is difficult to know what is good to promote because the same thing could be good or bad depending on one's interpretation, because everything has two sides. The Internet could be a source of good information and at the same time convey anti-social and detrimental information to the user. Similarly, "Football" could represent a sport contributing to good health provide comradeship and teach players team work, but at the same time could be a source of gambling and involve a lot of money.

Even though there are many kinds of mass media nowadays, research still shows that the influence of television is a major source of viewer behavior. In fact, adolescents are found to spend a great deal of time watching entertainment programs and television dramas. Once the television becomes a part of everyday life, it will have power to influence people strongly. For example, heavy television drama viewing can lead to some misbehavior that is learned from the program. Research has shown that aggressiveness can develop from long-term watching of television dramas. For example, adolescents fight or kill classmates just to get girls.

Sexual abuse has become one of the most serious problems in Thai society.

Research from the Thailand research fund (TRF) has shown that the majority of Thai adolescents had their first experiences viewing sex media when they were 10 years old. The factor that encourages them to watch sex programs in the media is that the programs always focus on sexual entertainment, but neglect sex education.

Television drama tells a story about two sides of human life. The dark side shows behavior that contradicts social standards, such as selling drugs or people being murdered. Normally the actors in these roles are known as people who look like criminals. On the other hand, the hero role will always be given to those who look like a hero. These show moral and right values to the viewers; they always seem to be good looking and well behaved.

At the present, there is confusion among Thai adolescents when a popular television drama actor plays the role of 'bad guy.' This role-switching by those commonly viewed as idols can result in adolescent behavior disorders. This is because they may think that the 'bad guy' role is suitable and good because it is acted by one who always gets to act the hero.

The main reason for confusion is that message receivers are not able to perceive or interpret the important theme the sender intended, but they interpret what they

understand. (Severin and Tannkard, 1992: 57; พัชนี เชยจรรยา, เมตตา วิวัฒนานุกูล และถิรนนท์ อนวัชศิริวงศ์, 2541: 115)

Each person has different steps and processes for selecting a message. Klapper (1960: 19-25) divided the process of message selection into four levels. The first level is selective exposure; there are many sources of information such as radio, television, newspapers or the Internet. Since it is impossible to tap all these sources for information, people will select only certain sources most easily available or pleasing to them. The second level is selective perception; once a person has selected a source of information, they will then select to accept some message and leave others. For example, they may elect to view television dramas and bypass the music program, or listen to music radio and abandon the radio news program. The third level is selective interpretation; once a person has accepted a message from one source, it is then interpreted according to that persons' understanding and/or positive or negative attitude. Two people may interpret the same message differently. The final level is selective retention; normally, people only select to remember things that correlate with their attitudes and concepts of usefulness. However, within these four levels, selective interpretation is considered the most important level because when people interpret

correctly, they would understand correctly, and right understanding would lead to appropriate behavior.

Based on the analysis of 28 research studies on psychological traits, the important factors selected for interpretation are biosocial characteristics and psychological traits consisting of five traits: self-esteem, anxiety, attitude, belief in internal locus of reinforcement and future orientation.

Fundamental Traits of Television Drama Selective Perception or Interpretation by Thai Adolescents

Among the many psychological traits, the most important can predict some significant human behavior, such as a trait that can correctly predict the sense of responsibility in a good person. In a search for important psychological traits, it is necessary to understand, and whether some people may respond differently and produce different psychological traits (ดวงเดือน พันธุมนาวิน, 2522: 39). Therefore, to predict how aggressiveness will be interpreted, it is necessary to define the appropriate psychological traits, and at which level the psychological traits are, before attempting to change and reshape the interpretation.

To identify the fundamental traits of television drama selective perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents, the study

synthesized 33 research studies, including the Factor Analytic Theory by Raymond (Cattell cited in กัญญา สุวรรณแสง, 2533: 95), and Psychology of the Individual (Allport, cited in กัญญา สุวรรณแสง, 2533: 94). Five traits were used as variables in this study. The conceptualization of each trait is as follows:

1. Self-Esteem signifies a self-measurement by the Thai adolescent when comparing himself/herself with others. Thai adolescents who have a low level of self-esteem could perceive or interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas as examples to follow.

2. Anxiety is demonstrated through stress, panic, worry or fear concerning some everyday situation in life. Thai adolescents who have a medium to high level of anxiety could perceive or interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas as examples to follow.

3. Attitude is the feeling and beliefs Thai adolescents have about Thai television dramas, whether positive or negative, and are willing to follow whatever is being shown in Thai television dramas. Thai adolescents who have positive attitudes about Thai television dramas could perceive or interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas as examples to follow.

4. Belief in internal locus of reinforcement refers to an individual's generalized expectations concerning where control over subsequent events resides. Thai adolescents who have low internal locus of reinforcement could perceive or interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas as examples to follow.

5. Future orientation and self control correlates with selecting beneficial things. Thai adolescents who have low future orientation and self control could perceive or interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas as examples to follow.

The Relationship of Psychological Traits and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

Self-Esteem and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

People who have high self-esteem will admire themselves and will have self-confidence. Acceptance of their personal abilities will lead to self-confidence, and does not need any external influence. People with self-confidence are not easily persuaded by external factors (Vande, 1989: 52-53). People with high self-esteem will always select only useful things for

themselves. On the contrary, those with low self-esteem will always have less self-confidence and perhaps dislike themselves. It is noticeable when people need to be part of a group, they easily believe things they see or are told. A person with low self-esteem will readily accept any kind of message, whether or not it is beneficial.

McDermott (1982) researched the influence of communication on self-concepts and found that television programs could influence self-esteem. The research demonstrated that black people had more self-esteem after viewing a television program about the positive sides of black people. These results were similar to those of Pedic (1989) and McMullen (1984). Their studies were about the influence of television programs on self-satisfaction with personal beauty and body shape. They found that women with low self-esteem would be persuaded to think negatively about themselves by television programs about beauty and slim bodies. Also, such TV programs could more easily result in eating disorders in women with low self-esteem than those who have higher self-esteem.

The results of the research can be generalized to show that television programs correlate with self-esteem in television viewers. It means that those with low self-esteem are readily persuaded by television

programs more easily than those with higher self-esteem. It can be said that television programs depicting aggressiveness and sex can persuade the person who has low self-esteem.

Anxiety and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

Anxiety is demonstrated by way of stress, panic, worry or fear regarding some everyday situation in life. Normally, an anxious person always wants companions. The result is a person will become dependent and easily encouraged by companions. However, sometimes anxious people would block all external messages from their mind. (อรวรรณ บิลันธนโอบาท, 2546: 83-84).

Research has shown that high anxiety correlates with less persuasion from messages because anxious people have closed themselves to any channels of contact and are fully taken up only with themselves. Consequently, the people are not open to any persuasion. Nonetheless, research has also shown that communicating high-fear messages to the highly-anxious people will persuade them because they believe the messages will help in some way to reduce their anxiety. People with normal anxiety levels are less easily persuaded. There is a correlation between high anxiety

and easy persuasion, while those with normal anxiety are less easily persuaded (Conway, 1989: AAT 9014824; Kelly, 2004: AAT 3135876; อรรณพ ปิณฑน์โหวาท, 2546: 84). It can be said that the person who has high anxiety will be more readily persuaded by aggressiveness and sex in television dramas compared to the person with a normal anxiety level.

Attitude and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

Attitude reflects whether a person has a positive and negative feeling, opinion or view of a situation or organization. Attitude reflects human behavior and prompts human actions one way or another. For example, the person who has a positive attitude about television dramas will watch more dramas than the person who has a negative attitude. It can be noticed who has a positive or negative attitude by the time spent watching television dramas. Positive attitudes will lead to a particular way of interpreting messages. The people's behavior will always be directed by their interpretations.

Belief in Internal Locus of Reinforcement and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

Up to the present, the correlation

between belief in internal locus of reinforcement and interpretation of aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas has not yet been studied. However, there is a study about belief in internal locus of reinforcement and the prediction of human behavior. For example, Brick and Austeen (1971 cited in รุจิเรศ พิษิตานนท์, 2546: 31) found that belief in internal locus of reinforcement is a psychological trait that can predict human behavior. Also, it can drive a person to finish or put more effort in doing the responsible thing. The people who believe in internal locus of reinforcement know that the result of what they do will be what they want and they will be acting as responsible people. Research was conducted by Ubol Leowarin (อุบล เลี้ยววาริณ, 2534) about the importance of psychological traits and human behavior among Bangkok workers. The research found that psychological traits that are important for good health contain three elements, including positive attitude, belief in internal locus of reinforcement and future orientation. The stronger these three traits concerning health are in the workers, the more likely they are to select healthy food and avoid anything harmful to their health. Strickland (1977) researched psychological traits and human need behavior. The results showed that the person with a strong belief in internal locus of reinforcement would

smoke less, has more regular vaccinations, and has a positive attitude towards exercise. These results are similar to the research done by Wallston and Wallston (1978: 160-167), which examined the relationship between exercising and eating. The results found that the person with a strong belief in internal locus of reinforcement about health will have appropriate eating practices. It can be said that belief in internal locus of reinforcement correlates with improved lifestyle, or the selection of only beneficial things for life.

Future Orientation and Interpretation of Aggressiveness and Sex in Television Dramas

Future orientation correlates with other traits, such as social responsibility, search for achievement, self-adjustment and intelligence (Mischel, 1974: 56-58). Furthermore, research has shown that having a future orientation correlates with people's selecting beneficial things for themselves (Koirusilta, Rimpela and Rimpela, 1999: 339-355). Koirusilta et al. studied the lifestyle of 16-year-old Fins, and what they want to be in their society. The result found that Finnish teenagers who have a high level of future orientation will have more concern for health, such as exercising, looking after their teeth, using car safety belts, drinking

low fat milk, not smoke, watch less television, or listening to music on TV, and go to church often. Prachit Sukhanan (ประชิด สุขอนันต์, 2545) found that students who have a high level of future orientation would not consider suicide.

People who have a high level of future orientation will search for ways to be successful; they will have characteristics that will direct them to beneficial, success-oriented behavior. In addition, they will have self-control, be devoted, be able to endure hardship in order to achieve their goals and focus on what is of value or more useful. Therefore, the person who has a high level of future orientation will understand self-control, devotion and being patient until the right time, including with regard to aggressiveness and sex.

Research Aims

The purposes of this research are 1) to investigate fundamental traits of television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents, 2) to measure the fundamental traits of television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents and 3) to examine and develop a causal model for television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents.

The Characteristic Scale

The characteristic scale of psychological traits was constructed in 8 parts, with a reliability of 0.8331-0.8487.

Population and Research Sampling

Population

The population was Thai adolescents studying in Muathayom Suksa 4, 5 and 6, and aged between 17-19 years old. The sampling was collected from 1,729,389 students during 2005.

Sampling

A group of 1,880 Thai adolescents from all over Thailand were selected by using the stratified random sampling technique.

Findings

1. To find out about fundamental traits

of television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents. The study found that the psychological traits of Thai adolescents were self-esteem, anxiety, attitude, internal locus of reinforcement, future orientation, and self-control.

2. To measure the fundamental traits of television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents. The study found that the psychological traits of Thai adolescents were high in future orientation and attitude regarding television dramas. The other traits, self-esteem, anxiety and belief in internal locus of reinforcement were at a middle level. The result of the study correlated with the hypotheses.

3. To examine and develop the causal model of television drama perception or interpretation by Thai adolescents.

Table 1: Direct Effect, Indirect Effect and Total Effect of Variables on Television Drama Interpretation (DI)

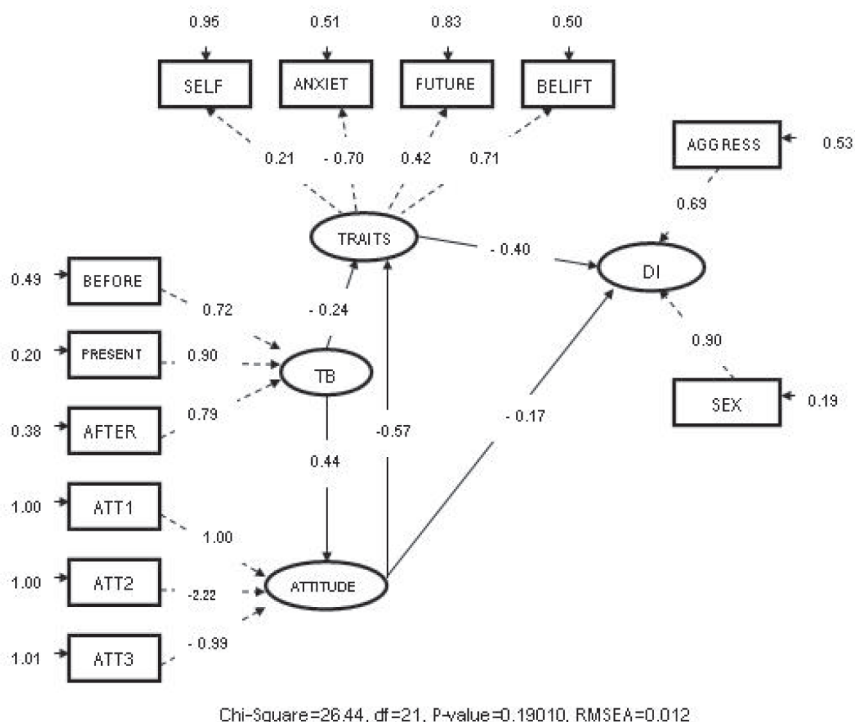
| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Total Effect |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| TB | | 0.00 | 0.12 | 0.12 |
| ATTITUDE | DI | -0.17 | 0.23 | 0.06 |
| TRAITS | | -0.40 | 0.00 | -0.40 |

From Table 1, it is seen that psychological traits (TRAIT) have a direct effect on television drama selection or interpretation (DI) at -0.40. Attitude towards television dramas (ATTITUDE) had a direct and indirect effect on television drama

selection or interpretation (DI) with a direct effect at -0.17, and an indirect effect at 0.23. Television drama exposure behavior (TB) had an indirect effect on television drama selection or interpretation (DI) at 0.12.

Considerations: Based on all the direct and indirect effects, it was found that psychological traits (TRAITS) had the most overall effect at -0.40. Second, television

drama exposure behavior (TB) had a total effect at 0.12, and thirdly, attitude towards television drama (ATTITUDE) had a total effect at 0.06.



The Symbols Used in this Study*

- ATTITUDE = attitude towards television drama
- ATT1 = cognitive component or beliefs
- ATT2 = affective component or emotion
- ATT3 = behavioral component or actions
- TRAITS = psychological traits
- SELF = self esteem
- ANXIETY = anxiety
- FUTURE = future orientation and self-control
- BELIFT = belief in internal locus of reinforcement

* Figure 1: Overall model of the Influence of psychological traits on interpretation of aggressiveness and sex in television dramas. Note: The numbers near arrows represent the standard path coefficients.

| | |
|---------|--|
| DI | = television drama selection or interpretation |
| AGGRESS | = aggressiveness |
| SEX | = sex behavior |
| TB | = television drama exposure behavior |
| BEFORE | = before exposure to television dramas |
| PRESENT | = during exposure to television dramas |
| AFTER | = after exposure to television dramas |

The results from Table 1 and the Figure1 show that the overall model conforms to empirical data. In this study of the influence of variables on television drama interpretation based on the overall model, following the examination and development of causal model of television drama interpretation by Thai adolescents, it was found that Thai adolescents who interpret aggressiveness and sex behavior shown in television dramas as behavior models had low levels of psychological traits. An allowance of 15 percent was permitted to explain the variance in selecting or interpreting of aggressiveness and sex behavior with statistically significant values at the .05 level weight. In conclusion, Thai adolescents with selected perception or negatively interpreted aggressiveness and sex behavior from television dramas, had a high level of anxiety and a low level of self-esteem, future orientation, belief in internal locus of reinforcement and attitude towards television dramas. The study showed that attitudes towards television dramas were

low in the cognitive component and high in emotion and action components.

Discussion

The study found that television drama exposure behavior (TB) influenced psychological traits and attitude. From Table 1, it is shown that the overall model is strongly consistent with data from the samples. The four psychological traits: self-esteem, anxiety, belief in internal locus of reinforcement, future orientation and self-control shown in Figure 1 reveal a correlation with the hypothesis and can be discussed as follows:

Adolescents with low levels of self-esteem would agree with aggressiveness and sex behavior on television. The results are similar to the study done on self-confidence, self-esteem, persuasion and television programs by McDermott (1982); McMullen (1984); Pedic (1989); Vande (1989). They found that women with low self-esteem would be persuaded by television programs about beauty and slim bodies. Also, the programs could more

easily result in eating disorders in the women with low self-esteem than in those who have high self-esteem. It may confirm that people who have low self-esteem will always think negatively about themselves. It will be evident that they lack self-confidence, need to be part of a group, and easily believe what they are told. It means the person with low self-esteem would be more easily persuaded by television programs than those who have high self-esteem. It can be said that aggressiveness and sex television programs can persuade the person who has low self-esteem.

Adolescents with high levels of anxiety would agree with aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas. The results support the idea that the person who has normal anxiety levels will be less easily persuaded. Correlation of anxiety and persuasion shows that the highly anxious people would be more easily persuaded than those with normal levels of anxiety (Conway, 1989: AAT 9014824; Kelly, 2004: AAT 3135876; อรรวรณ ปิรันธน์โหวาท, 2546: 84). It may be anticipated that adolescents with high levels of positive attitudes towards television dramas would agree with aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas. However, the study found that Thai adolescents with high levels of positive attitude towards television dramas would not agree with aggressiveness and sex

behavior on television drama. This can be explained by the fact that although their overall attitude was highly positive, they were low in the cognitive component and high in the emotion and action components.

Adolescents with low levels of belief in internal locus of reinforcement agree with aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas. The finding was consistent with the result of the research done by Ubol Leowarin (อุบล เลี้ยววาริณ, 2534); Strickland (1977); Wallston and Wallston (1978). They found that strong belief in internal locus of reinforcement correlated with wanting a better life or selecting only beneficial things for their lives.

Adolescents with low levels of future orientation and self-control would agree with aggressiveness and sex behavior in television dramas. The results are supported by the studies by Prachit Sukhanan (ประชิด สุขอนันต์, 2545); Koirusilta, Rimpela and Rimpela, (1999: 339-355); Mischel (1974), who present the concept that the person who has a high level of future orientation will want to be a success. This person will search for things that will make him or her successful.

Research Suggestions

1. Building an awareness of good or bad effects of television dramas.

Awareness of what effects television dramas have on the early of life of a child. Parents are the most important people to guide and direct in the selection of television dramas because children spend a lot of time with parents. Consequently, parents should inform their children about the effects on their lives of bad television dramas. Also, parents should pay more attention to explanations as to what about television drama is good or bad, in order to set the direction of selecting suitable television dramas for their children. Children who grow up with an understanding of causes and effects would also understand and be aware of the good or bad effects of sex and aggressive behavior.

The better way of teaching awareness of the good or bad effects of television dramas is to begin by building an awareness of useful television dramas representing beneficial aspects of Thai culture rather than simply avoiding undesirable television dramas. Children should know how to select suitable television dramas. Although children may be aware of unsuitable television dramas, they will avoid them because they understand the detrimental effects on their lives.

2. Developing a good attitude towards selecting appropriate viewing.

Developing and maintaining a good

example by selecting beneficial programs builds a good environment around children. In addition, spending viewing time together and providing appropriate feedback will reinforce appropriate attitudes towards various programs. Children will tend to adopt their parents' attitude and select beneficial programs. Ultimately, children will select good television dramas and will reflect the right behavior.

3. Developing self-control in selecting television dramas.

Children need to have an opportunity to select some television dramas and discuss their choices with their parents. Parents can consider the kind of program that their children select. Meanwhile, parents can listen to the way in which children discuss their choices to define children's attitudes. Giving praise for suitable selections and providing reasons for disapproving a selection reinforces the child's attitude. Parents should not force their children to accept good television dramas, but try to persuade them, little by little, with good examples.

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