

# The Influence of Adolescent Soap Opera on Elementary Students' Behaviour

*By Aswasulasikin Aswasulasikin*



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Many elementary school students are imitating the scenes from the shows they watch and practicing martial arts scenes with friends at school. Most students like soap operas with action and drama genres, and often resemble the scenes at school. Everyone of all ages can watch adolescent soap operas and full parental control cannot be fully exercised. This study looked into the influence of adolescent soap operas on elementary school students' behaviour. The research method conducted interviews with competent informants. Data were collected via the observation and discussions made, and both were documented. Data from the research conducted showed that adolescent soap opera does influence student behaviour. A student's behaviour might mimic scenes that are less educational from the shows, such as fighting by using violence to recognise love. This makes children precocious.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, soap opera, elementary students' behaviour.*

## Introduction

As technology advances, providing an opportunity for all to easily access information, technology will impact on people's behaviour, which will gradually affect the community environment. Changes in traditional society can undoubtedly affect one's lifestyle. Likewise, with the mass media, both print and electronic media are places for socialization that can influence someone in their daily behaviour. One of the mass media, which is very influential among the public, is electronic media in the form of television. Many people like to watch TV. Shows featuring lifestyle such as eating, shopping, playing, entertainment are enjoyed as a spare time filler.

In Indonesia, there is a lot of school-aged children who love to watch movies, particularly drama and 'soap opera'. *Sinetron* (Ang, 2013; Modleski, 1979) is an abbreviation of *cinema*



*Elektronik* which aired on a television station recently and generally informs viewers about human life. Television is a medium that has the ability not only to convey information but can also affect people through altering their actions, attitudes, views and social norms. This may be either positive or negative (Babrow, 1987; Fogel & Carlson, 2006; Katzman, 1972; Livingstone, 1988).

The categories of soap operas that are broadcasted by television stations in Indonesia are of various types ranging from action, drama, fantasy, comedy, and musical shows. According to Erva (EB Surbakti, 2013; Lutfiya, 2017; Peter, 2015), television media strongly influences the attitudes and behaviour of children. For example, it influences how to dress, to feel, to think. It also alters their cognitive, psychomotor and moral fields.

Based on observations Students have been known to like action and drama genre shows and to practice the scenes of the shows they watch (Singhal & Rogers, 2012; Sujarwa, 2010; Suyanto, 2010; Villani, 2001). Not every show aired in Indonesian on television is positive. "In Indonesia, there is a lot of television shows that are not educative and have no positive values for those who watch, especially children and adolescent." With soap opera production programs in Indonesia, many offer the picture of life as the imagination of the creativity of the director's production and procedures.

There is a phenomenon rampant in the school environment. Students are fighting unnaturally, carrying sharp weapons to school, copying the dress style, and rebelling toward teachers and parents. During the school phase, according to Erikson (Brackney & Westman, 1992; Darling-Fisher & Leidy, 1988, p. ?), "at the age of 3-5, its essential strengths are methods and competencies. During this stage, it is often called latency, and humans can learn and create new skills and knowledge, thereby developing "creating" skills.

According to several researchers (e.g. Falck-Ytter, Thorup, & Bölte, 2015; Hidayat & Junianto, 2017; Jordan, Hersey, McDivitt, & Heitzler, 2006; Troseth, Saylor, & Archer, 2006), a lack of control and attention from parents towards the shows that children are watching is responsible for this behaviour at school. In particular, the adolescent soap opera and action genre, such as "*Anak Langit*" and shows in the drama genre, like "*Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta*", could eventually influence children's thought and perception and actions toward each other.

Soap operas, in general, depict daily life. Here, humans are coloured by prolonged conflict. Soap opera introduces characters who have different traits and cause conflict, that gets bigger and bigger until it reaches a climax (Pitout, 1998). The end of the soap opera show is sometimes happy, sometimes also sad, depending on the story script created by the author. Indonesian soap operas, in general, only show human life in big cities such as Jakarta, along with all the problems presented by city life. According to a group of researchers (see Anam, 2015; Mugianti, Mulyadi, Anam, & Najah, 2018; Sujarwa, 2010) "the core problem is based on love,



life competition, infidelity, cheating affairs, and is equipped with luxurious home facilities, furniture, and clothing, as well as expensive motorbikes and cars."

According to research (see Budd, Craig, Steinman, & Steinman, 1999; Huston, 1992; Surbakti, 2008),

"the role of television as a means of education has now been shifted by commercial shows which mostly prioritize consumptive lifestyles but have succeeded in attracting the interest of audiences including children. As a result, the role of television as a medium of education is unclear, although this is not said to be said vanished altogether."

The influence of soap operas educatively may adjust the insight and knowledge for those who watch it. Soap operas that have a good core story can certainly foster curiosity to gain experience and information about the latest news. This is the case in the soap opera story of "*Para Pencari Tuhan*." 'Behaviour' is the manifestation of an individual in interacting with their environment, starting from the action that is most visible to the invisible, from the tangible to the intangible. Meanwhile, according to Chaplin (1968) and Zan & Bethsaida (2011),

"behavior arises from reactions, actions, activities, combinations, and movements, responses or answers, which someone does such as thinking, work, and sexual relations."

The core of human behaviour forms cognitive, affective, and motor activities interconnected with one another. Behaviour emerges because of innate instinctual reactions from various stimuli formed through learning experiences. According to Hull (in Zan & Bethsaida, 2011),

"if someone can meet the needs, there will be an activity of reducing encouragement."

Based on preliminary observations, most elementary school students often watch soap operas rather than watch cartoons and they regularly practice soap opera scenes that are watched at school. For example, practicing martial arts scenes using tables with classmates at school to play on like motorbikes, they use language from the soap operas, and quote romantic words to their peers from soap operas. Not all soap operas that are broadcast by television in Indonesia are positive. Many television soap opera shows do not educate and do not have positive value messages for those who watch, especially children and adolescents. According to Kitley (2014) and Surya (2006), with soap opera production programs in Indonesia, many are imagined and created from the director's production and procedures.

As a result, Currently, rampantly in the elementary school environment, behaviour that appears linked to media consumption is playing out. For example, fighting unnaturally, carrying sharp weapons to school, getting to know about love through the media, inspiration to be a media



figure expressed through style of dress, 'talking dirty', and rebelling against the teacher and parents, is seeming common. Based on this, the researcher is interested in examining more deeply the effects of soap operas and their impression on the behaviour of elementary school students.

## Methods

This research is a descriptive qualitative analysis (Sofyan, 2009; Sugiono, 2016). This research manages and illustrates data and information based on observations that are later analysed. Data relating to field conditions were collected by conducting interviews with competent and relevant informants on this issue. Afterward, the data was collected and examined so that conclusions could be drawn. The data in this research relates to the subject matter that will be studied. Data collected by conducting interviews with competent informants and those associated with this issue was analysed.

The time and place in this study were carried out during one semester. This study worked with elementary school students in the Masbagik sub-district, Indonesia. Data collection involved observation and interview documentation. For the validity of the data, the researcher used a credibility test with triangulation techniques.

### *Data collection*

<sup>12</sup> The data collection techniques used in this study are observation, interviews, and documentation. For the validity of the data the researcher used a credibility test with triangulation techniques.

### <sup>22</sup> *Data analysis*

Data analysis techniques in this study used the Miles and Huberman model for analysis. The activities' analysis gathered qualitative data and carried out collection interactively and continuously until the data collection was saturated. Analysis activities included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## Results and Discussion

Soap operas tell us about the daily lives of humans coloured by prolonged conflict. Soap operas begin with the introduction of characters who have different styles and cause conflict that builds to quarrelling (Haferkamp, 1999; Kitley, 2014; Surya, 2006). Soap operas in Indonesia in general only show human life in big cities such as Jakarta, complete with all the problems presented. According to Alexander (1985) and Sutedja-Liem (2007), problems in adolescents are caused by teenage soap operas that tell stories of romance, life competition, infidelity,





fighting, and are equipped with luxurious home facilities, furniture and clothes as well as expensive motorbikes and cars.

Researchers found that Elementary School students often take actions that are not appropriate for their age (Alexander, 1985; Sutedja-Liem, 2007). For example, in terms of appearance, they dressed like their idols, fought using violence and acted precocious. It happened because primary-school-age children mostly watch soap operas with an action genre that is not appropriate to their age. Some adolescent soap opera shows, especially in today's times, are less educational for elementary school-age children. For example, soap operas with action genre such as "*Anak Langit*" and soap operas with drama genres like "*Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta*," displayed scenes of violence and love that are arguably not educating enough for children.

According to researchers (see Black, 2013; Morgan, Harrison, Chewning, Davis, & DiCorcia, 2007; Sutedja-Liem, 2007), television is one of many forms of entertainment media used by the public, especially elementary school-age children. Television presents various types of programs, such as adolescent soap opera shows, cartoon films, infotainment, religious cinema, and so on. Until now, soap operas are among television programs that are most popular in elementary school-aged students, especially those within the action and drama genre (Livingstone, 1988). From the results of the interviews with the adolescent informants, when asked about their favourite popular television shows, some were most interested in adolescent soap opera shows:

1. Favourite soap opera shows

Television is one of the places to look for entertainment for children, so it's no wonder that children become fond of watching soap operas than doing other activities. Based on the results of interviews, they stated the same thing - that they liked to watch the adolescent soap opera shows. Even though they are fond of soap opera shows, they liked soap opera shows that were different from one another. In this case, some students like adolescent soap operas because the storyline in them was fascinating and exciting to watch, while some students said that they liked the shows due to family members who are also very fond of soap operas, especially the drama genre - they also watch the television programs that their families watch.

2. The character of the actor/actress in a popular soap opera show

In everyday life, both at home and at school, students often imitate the behaviour of actors in soap operas that they watch. This includes following the improper language style, fighting scenes, and imitating love scenes that may promote precociousness. The reason they imitate these various behaviours appeared to be that they idolise the actors/actresses in the adolescent soap opera programs they liked. For example, they wanted to be like the *AL* and *Rimba* characters in the "*Anak Langit*" show. The role played by this character is a brave, selfish and inclined character to oppose.



The research noted that adolescents imitated the characters who are less educative. Their idols were 'brave, selfish, and defiant' characters and the adolescents applied these characteristics to their own everyday life. From the results of observations conducted in the field, researchers see that adolescents often fight using violence and do not feel afraid to beat each other in front of the teachers. As for them, no one wins before the opponent cries. There is no proof that, among the most potent.

Besides liking the character described here as 'brave, selfish and who likes to oppose', children appeared to also desire the roles of David and Sam in the soap opera "*Anak Punk Anti Cewek*" which is described here as a character who is 'spoiled, rebellious, and disrespectful' in attitude. In this case, fifth grade children who participated also liked the soap operas that tell teenage love stories. They loved the characters in "*Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta*" and "*Roman Picisan*" who have romantic styles, according to the data collated. Children of their age are not supposed to know the word passionate. Of the various types of soap operas broadcast, it was concerning to the research to find children have characters focussed on passion as their idols. The data showed that students like the characters that are brave, strong, and rebellious. They also like romantic characters. As for the physical aspects, they wanted their idol characters to be excellent in looks and beauty. It makes sense when children follow the characteristics of their idols in daily activities that watching these soap operas featuring these desirous characters will influence a children's development.

3. Favoured scenes from the actors of adolescent soap operas

Based on the results of the research in the field, researchers found that out of 18 fifth grade students who became informants, 15 students often imitated the scenes of the adolescent soap operas they watched. Children often behaved 'rudely', opposing the words of the teacher, fighting by using violence, harassing, and yelling at their friends if their pretensions were not met. Based on the results of interviews, the research noted that students' imitated the scenes of "*Anak Langit*". Particularly the male students admired the *AL* and *Rimba* characters because of their skills in fighting and using motorbikes. In this case, these students also made a bicycle community called SLC, which is an abbreviation of *Sepeda Liar Community* (re Wild Bicycles Community). This community is chaired by one of the students named MSH. They frequently conducted bicycle races and displayed attractions like lifting their bikes, like in the soap opera scenes they watched. Students mentioned that they would create a motorcycle community when they are adults. These observations strengthens the researcher's argument that those students quickly imitated improper behaviours in the soap operas.

Also, in terms of children's attitudes, children often behave like adults. They do not want to be directed. On the contrary, they want to lead others. Their attitudes towards teachers are not decent, in the sense that they know no shame in borrowing cellphones from their



teachers with the reason that they wanted to access YouTube and social media like Facebook and WhatsApp. Even though they did this outside of class hours, it is still a lousy attitude conducted by a student, especially elementary school students. In terms of appearance, the students often imitated the tufted hairstyle of the David and Sam characters from "*Anak Punk Anti Cewek*." They were noted to copy the love scenes from the actors they idolised, such as a scene when a character called Roman made a poem and recited it for his lover, Wulandari, in "*Roman Picisan*." This scene was imitated the most by them and acted out to their fellow friends. Another most imitated scene from "*Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta*" was Laras and Vino, who were in a relationship in the story. The students said that they were emotional when they watched this kind of scene, and the research proposes that this makes the students in their age precocious.

The results of this research indicate that television can inform a community's perspective on the world; TV provides actual descriptions of what is happening in the city; The Bullet Theory in this study is seen in the theory. There are effects directly experienced by children from the soap opera viewing which is perceived in this study to be stimulating the children to imitate them and alter their actions. The direct impact of the "Teenage Soap opera" program is to encourage children to imitate the scenes that arguably should not be imitated. Presented in the teenage soap opera, certain behaviours are very influential on the behaviour of elementary school children.

Based on the results of observations and interviews in this study, mass communication presented through television and specifically, in the form of soap opera shows, has been found to have a behavioural effect on informants.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of observations and interviews in this study, mass communication presented through television and specifically, in the form of soap opera shows, has been found to have a behavioural effect on informants.

Adolescent soap operas scenes were seen to be replicated in student behaviour. Students fought with violence which depicted a scene from "*Anak Langit*". Students also depicted love scenes as found on drama genre soap opera. As for the students' appearance, some of them imitated the style of their idols. For example, a hairstyle was common that is also seen styled in the hair of David and Sam in "*Anak Punk Anti Cewek*."

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