Encoded Exposure and Social Norms in Entertainment-Education

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Abstract

Background: Entertainment-education (EE) is an effective health communication strategy that combines or embeds educational messages into entertainment programs to bring about social and behavior change. For years, scholars have considered “how” entertainment-education works. Some contemporary theories posit that entertainment-education does not directly engender behavior change but does so through mediating variables.

Research Question: This study is one of the first to explore the direct relationship between exposure and social norms. Key to this study is encoded exposure, a unique measure of exposure, which includes recall, involvement, and dose in its operationalization.

Results: Using cross-sectional data from Kyunki…Jeena Issi Ka Naam Hai, an entertainment-education program in India, results from this exploratory analysis indicate a significant relationship.

Conclusion: How can we apply this finding to future programs? Questions remain, but if social norms are not an intermediary but the true outcome itself, then our educational narratives may have a wider capacity for change than we ever imagined.

Introduction

Kyunki… was the flagship television program of UNICEF’s Facts for Life Initiative in India. The messages included health information across major causes of morbidity and mortality for children and families.

Figure 1: Directing the serial on a hot summer day

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Encoded Exposure

Conceptual Framework: Encoded Exposure

Exposure (traditional): whether and how a message reaches the audience

Encoded Exposure (our conceptualization): a continuous measure of engagement with a program

Recall
Involvement
Dose

Conceptual Framework: Norms

Descriptive Norms: an individual’s estimation of what other people do

Importance: analogous to outcome expectations; expected benefits of a certain behavior

Social Norms (our conceptualization): the “grammar” of social interactions; a composite of descriptive norms and importance

Figure 3: Conceptual Model of Norms

Conceptual Framework: Narrative

Theory and Social Norms

Idiomatic
Theory of Planned Behavior
Diffusion of Innovation

Figure 4: Social and Behavioral Theories Incorporating Norms

Research Methods

• Secondary analysis of large, cross-sectional dataset from Kyunki…evaluation (baseline, midline, and endline survey with different respondents over multiple years)
• Data was collected before, during, and after the program from six states across India

Analytical Methods

• Creation of independent variable (encoded exposure)
• Creation of dependent variable (social norms)
• Descriptive statistics
• One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)
• ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance)

Results

Sample size: 13,656 women from six states

Age range from 15-35

83% rural; 17% urban

ANOVA Results

We calculated the mean score for the dependent variable of norms for each level of the independent variable. A one-way ANOVA determined that this mean difference was significant, F(2,13655) = 60.711, p < .001. This provided evidence in support of our hypothesis, that a higher level of encoded exposure is indeed related to more positive social norms.

ANCOWA Results

The ANCOVA found that this observed difference remained, even after controlling for age, area, state, literacy, and marital status. The high level of significance (p < .001) further supports rejecting the null hypothesis that no relationship exists.

Discussion

Most EE interventions use behavior change as the outcome variable of interest. We know, however, that individuals do not exist in a vacuum.

For years, scholars have been hypothesizing about norms as the future of this field, but what is methodologically different with a social norms approach has yet to be crystalized. What this study demonstrates is the more a person is involved with an EE program, and the longer she watches, the stronger her association with positive social norms.

Figure 6: A family watches Kyunki… together

Conclusion

There is theorizing to suggest that community level change requires more than just changing individual behaviors and changing social norms is more important to change than simply changing behavior.

This preliminary evidence takes this theorizing, and applies it to a long-running EE program, and shows that exposure to long-running EE is significantly associated with a positive change in norms. How can we apply this finding to future programs? Questions remain, but if social norms are not an intermediary but the true outcome itself, then our educational narratives may have a wider capacity for change than we ever imagined.

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Figure 5: Sample characteristics

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