

## **Small Screen for Women's Empowerment: An Analysis on the Capability of Television Morning Shows in Empowering Women**

Jayawardhana, K.G.L.A.N.S<sup>1</sup>, Rathnayaka. R.M.S.N<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages and Communication Studies,  
Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup>B.A. in Communication Studies, Department of Languages and Communication Studies,  
Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

---

**Abstract:** Television consumption is accepted as a part of the most women's everyday life which becomes a major source of motivation, entertainment, information, knowledge and education, significantly for rural women. This exploratory study was conducted attaining general knowledge about a group of women to find out their most viewed television morning show (magazine), to find out the most popular content/segment of the program among the female and, to find out the extent to which they have been empowered through these morning television shows telecasted targeting the female. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, qualitative method was employed while the cultivation theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, conducted with 20 women from a rural women's association in Nuwara Eliya District in Sri Lanka. When designing the questionnaire, three television morning programs (shows) from three prominent television channels were considered which had been top ranked according to the LMRB report in 2020. Findings of the study highlight that, 11 respondents (55%) watch "Nugasewana" which is telecasted in Rupavahini, while 06 respondents (30%) watch "Vindaneeya Udasana" telecasted in Hiru TV and, "Ayubowan Sri Lanka" by Swarnavahini is watched by 03 respondents (15%) of the sample. When considering the most popular segment of the programme, 35% of women (7 respondents) are interested in cookery segment, 35% (7 respondents) of them are interested in sewing and knitting, while 30% (6 respondents) of the respondents are into handicrafts such as making flower vases, doing creative works (wall hangings) using waste materials. And 05 respondents (25%) are in favor of watching the segment related to gardening while 4 respondents (20%) are interested in the segment related to health & well-being (including counseling) and beauty culture related programs and, 3 respondents are interested in astrology. The programme contents have been supported the respondents to [1] learn and acquire the skills which are completely new to them (knitting, embroidering, making bakery items, making flower vases, doing creative works using waste material), [2] gain updated knowledge related to their current self-employment (Tailoring - saree jacket designing, flower nursery), [3] earn an extra income (making cakes for orders), [4] get advice on women's health and well-being and, [5] for entertainment while relaxing their mindset.

**Keywords:** Television, Morning shows, Women Empowerment, Homemakers

---

### **1. Introduction**

As far as the communication media in Sri Lanka are concerned, currently television, radio, print media and new media are famous among Sri Lankans. Television is more popular in rural settings than modern communication media like the internet (Ternholm, 2011). The number of television sets in use in Sri Lanka compared to its population of over 20 million is far excessive. According to the 2009/2010 Census and Statistics, over 79% of rural houses have television sets while the number of views is far greater when those who do not have television set visit their neighbors to watch programmes (Ransirilal, 2016). In exact values 3.8 million households own a television out of a total of 5.2 million households in Sri Lanka with a recorded 73% TV penetration (Sri Lankan Television Market-2012/2020, 2013). Significantly, the television coverage which is more than 95% of the country's land mass provides a strong reason for investigating the effect television has on Sri Lankan society. Accordingly, contemporary television as a complex social institution has the potential to have a profound impact on receiver's demographics.

Intimate domestic quality can be pointed out as a key feature of television (Wijenayake & Samaraweera, 2016). Schramm (1964) also states that mass media including television can act as a middleman, a watch man, a change agent etc. in empowering communities. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the majority of television programs telecasting in the morning, target the females. The basic reason for this may be many women who are unemployed, stay at home during the morning. In Sri Lanka, there is strong tradition of both men and women working, with men focusing more on income opportunities and women focusing on the house hold, commonly

referred to as a stay at home mom or homemaker. Gender-based occupational segregation in the labor market has not change significantly. Despite the entry of few women to areas of employment, the majority of women are concentrated in domestic and plantation agriculture, assembly- line industries in the modern sector, traditional local industries, in the health and education subsectors, and in domestic service. Currently, women's participation in the pair labor force is significant, although not evenly distributed, concentrated in professions such as teaching, nursing, tea plucking, and garment industry, yet the majority of women do stay at home.

Hence, the television morning shows target the homemakers bringing two-hour programme which consist of a few segments that talk about topics such as tips for self-employments, women's beauty tips, health and wellbeing related matters, farming and gardening and, astrology. Both the private and government channels telecast morning television programs to motivate women such as, "*Nugasewana*" program telecasted from Monday to Friday at 8.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. on Rupavahini which is a government channel, "*Vindaneeya Udasana*" program telecasted from Monday to Friday at 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. by Hiru TV which is a private channel and, "*Ayubowan Sri Lanka*" from Monday to Friday from 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. by Swarnavahini, a private channel. In these programmes, experts from various fields are invited to share their life experiences, achievements and, opinions where the female community get encouragement and motivation to spend their time more effectively while engaging in self-employment, being entrepreneurs contributing financially to the family and to the community.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

In Sri Lanka, women have access to employment opportunities and to get incomes, however, they are employed for low payment basis in semi-skilled labor intensive industries irrespective of their educational level, without opportunities for upgrading skills. Long working hours, exposure to occupational health hazards, inequitable gender divisions of labor, vulnerability to job insecurity and, gender suborders nation in the labor market are some of the practical difficulties that women encounter. Hence, many women tend to stay at home as home makers while supporting their families. That is where the country reports its female labour force participation as 31.8% compared to men, which is 71.0% (Dept. of Census and statistics, 2021).

Moreover, the television channels have designed their morning programs (shows) specially targeting the women who stay at home as homemakers. Basically, they have included different segments to these morning programs such as information related to self-employments (farming and gardening, handicrafts, beauty culture), health and counseling programs and, discussions with experts on women related subjects. If women utilize and get motivated through these programmes to engage in self-employment, or spend their stay-at-home time efficiently enhancing their quality of life, then the women will be able to contribute in various aspects of the socio-economic development of the family and the community. Therefore, through this research, it is basically taken in to consideration whether women get really empowered through such television programs, if so, what kind of benefits women have gained from these television programs. Significantly, this research seeks to find out the usefulness of the television morning shows" and how they empower women to stand strong.

### **1.2 Objectives**

1. To find out whether women watch television in the morning.
2. To find out the most viewed morning television programme (magazine) by the women.
3. To find out the most popular content/segment of the morning show among the female.
4. To find out the extent to which women have been empowered by morning television magazine programs.

## **2. Literature Review**

The pivotal role of television as an instrument of development by altering the human perspective and transforming the traditional mindset of society is well recognized (Devadas & Sarawanan, 2015).

Wijenayake & Samaraweera (2016) in their study on "Determinants of Programme Preferences and Watching Hours of Television: With Special Reference to Gampaha District" explains that "within the unemployed category, females are dominant in terms of the number of hours spent watching television and single females watch more hours of television than single males. Further, they explain that a person being unemployed or economically enactive increases the number of hours of television watching hours per day relative to the employed person".

Moti, (2014) has done a research titled, "Impact of television health programs on women: A study on Gulbarga television viewers". The study also includes women's rationale for watching health related shows. The findings show that the respondents agreed that health programs are very helpful for providing information and remedies about certain common disease.

Bhatt & Singh (2017) have done a research on "Television viewing habits among rural women of Tehri Garhwal District". They found out television is considered to be a major source of information, education,

entertainment and knowledge for women.

Further, Tunoi, et.al (2015) has done a similar research on “Role of television in awareness of women’s rights among women folk with special focus on women of district Naushahro Feroze”. In that study, they elaborate that the television is the most widespread medium of communication, having various implications in society. Nature of impact may be viewed positive or negative that all depends on television content.

Women have been most suffered from many kinds of rights, such as political, social cultural, economic and political rights of women. Television can play a vital role in the empowerment of women by informing and educating them. However, no evidence for previous research on the same can be found in this field in Sri Lanka, which has been conducted to search the women’s perspective on the effectiveness of television morning shows in empowering them. Hence, this study will contribute to filling that knowledge gap.

### **3. Methodology**

The research study used the qualitative research approach. An audience analysis was conducted in the form of In Depth Interviews in order to obtain intensive information from a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives in depth on one particular idea, program or situation. Twenty (20) women (age ranged from 20 to 55) were selected randomly out of the total population of 42 members from “*Diriya Matha*”, a rural women’s association, in Perawella Grama Niladhari Division in Welimada, Nuwara Eliya District, in Sri Lanka. The sample represents almost the half of the total population which enables the researchers to get adequate information about the population. Furthermore, in depth interviews were conducted as telephone interviews and each telephone interview was continued for 20- 30 minutes and, recorded with the permission of the participants. All the records were transcribed and analysis through coding and thematic analysis.

Further, for the particular study, questions for IDIs were designed based on three television morning shows namely, “*Nugasewana*” program telecasted from Monday to Friday at 8.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. on Rupavahini which is a government channel, “*Vindaneeya Udasana*” program telecasted from Monday to Friday at 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. by Hiru TV which is a private channel and, “*Ayubowan Sri Lanka*” from Monday to Friday at 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. by Swarnavahini, a private channel.

These three programmes were selected purposively with the reason that they have been listed as the most viewed three morning programs within a day, by LMRB (Lanka Market Research Bureau) report, 2020.

Data analysis was done by using Glaser’s constant comparative method, which is a process, or sorting and organizing data into groups in a structured way to formulate a new grounded theory.

### **4. Findings**

The study was carried out among 20 participants (women) and all of them are Sri Lankan Sinhalese. The researcher used in depth interview method and data were collected through telephone interviews to find out whether women watch television in the morning, to find out the most viewed morning television programme (magazine) by the women, to find out the most popular content/segment of the program among the female and to find out the extent to which women have been empowered by morning television magazine programs.

The following results were found.

The respondents were inquired about their availability to watch the television in the morning, especially the television morning shows. According to the collected data, 80% of women watch television programmes/shows in the morning whenever they are free from domestic/household works or while performing household works. Out of the total sample, 50% of women (10 women) watch television in the morning regularly (as husband works in a remote area away from the home, once the kids go to school, women are free to watch television). 30% of women (6 women) watch morning women empowering television programs irregularly. 20% (4 women) of them do not watch television in the morning, even though they stay at home. The respondents’ reasons for not being able to watch TV in the morning were, many of them engage with farming activities in the morning by helping their husbands, engaging with animal husbandry, doing government/private jobs and one respondent has an Autism child where she doesn’t get time to watch television in the morning.

#### 4.1 Television Viewership in the morning

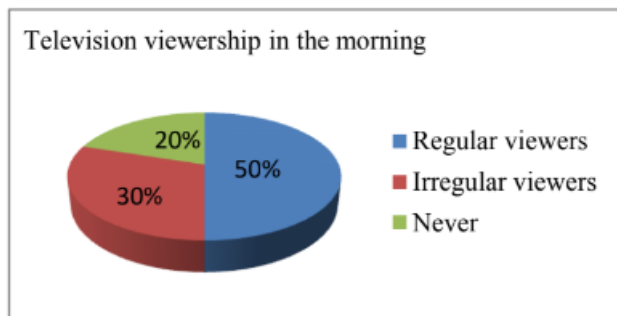


Figure 1: Television viewership in the morning

#### 4.2 The most watched television channel

When considering the most watched television channel among the selected women as the sample of the study, it was mentioned that Rupavahini is the mostly watched television channel, when Hiru TV takes the second place, keeping Swarnavahini in the third place. According to the data collected, 9 respondents (45%) watch Rupavahini, while 8 women (40%) watch Hiru TV and, only 3 respondents (15% of women) watch Swarnavahini. The main reasons to watch Rupavahini by many of them are because of the better broadcast coverage provided by Rupavahini and the public trust the channel has gained throughout its history. The data are shown in the below diagram.

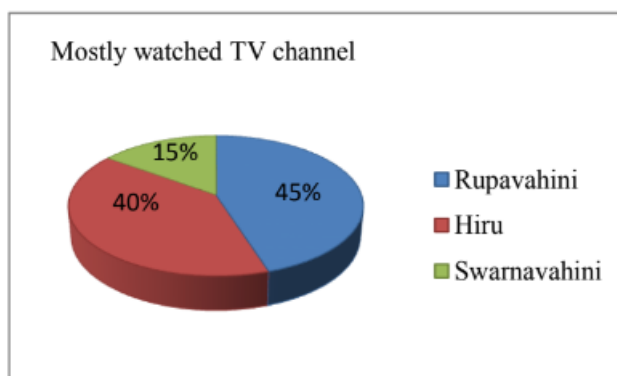


Figure 2: The most watched television channel

#### 4.3 The most favorite morning show among the respondents

When analyzing the responses received on the most favorite morning show among the female respondents, it was revealed that "Nugasewana", is the most viewed morning show. As per the collected data, 11 respondents (55%) watch "Nugasewana" which is telecasted in Rupavahini, while 06 respondents (30%) watch "Vindaneeya Udasana" telecasted in Hiru TV and, "Ayubowan Sri Lanka" by Swarnavahini is watched by 03 respondents (15%) of the sample. Below figure illustrates about the most viewed morning television program by the selected sample. "Nugasewana" is watched by respondents because of the better broadcast coverage they experience and the long term history and the trustworthiness of the programme and the channel. "Vindaneeya Udasana" is watched by the respondents mainly because of advice given based on astrology and for medical advice. "Ayubowan Sri Lanka" by Swarnavahini is watched because the respondents can learn from the experiences of experts in the relevant fields (Eg.cake designer Ms. Dushanthi Madanayaka, Ayurvedic psychiatry Mr. Kamal Jayasekara).

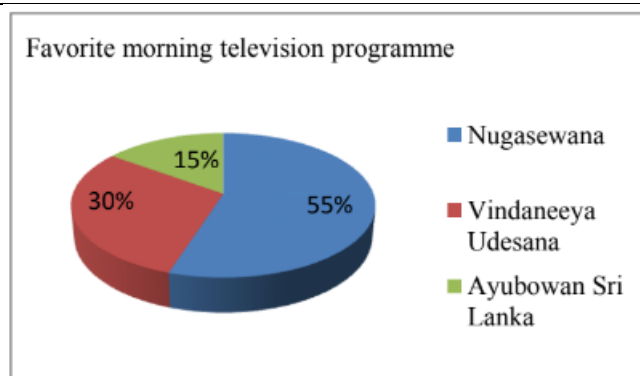


Figure 3: Favorite morning television programme

#### **4.4 The most popular content/segment of the program**

The majority, 35% of women (7 respondents) are interested in cookery segment (making bakery items, traditional food, sweets) while 35% (7 respondents) of respondents are interested in sewing and knitting. 30% (6 respondents) are into handicrafts such as making flower vases, doing creative works using waste materials. And 05 respondents (25%) are in favor of watching the segment related to farming and gardening while 4 respondents (20%) are interested in the segment related to health and well-being, counseling and, beauty culture related programs and 3 respondents are interested in astrology.

#### **4.5 The extent to which women have been empowered by morning television magazine programs**

As per the responses received from the respondents regarding the benefits they have gained by watching these television shows, it was highlighted that the morning programme contents have supported the respondents to [1] learn and acquire the skills which are completely new to them (knitting, embroidering, making bakery items, making flower vases, doing creative works using waste material), [2] gain updated knowledge related to their current self-employment ( Tailoring - saree jacket designing, flower nursery), [3] earn an extra income (making cakes for orders), [4] get advice on women's health and well-being and, [5] for entertainment while relaxing their mindset.

### **5. Conclusion**

It has been investigated through this study to find out whether women watch television in the morning, to find out the most viewed morning television programme (magazine) by the women, to find out the most popular content/segment of the program among the female and to find out the extent to which women have been empowered by morning television magazine programs.

According to the results, not all the respondents watch morning television programs regularly, however, 55% of the respondents are cohere with the "Nugasewana" program, telecasted by Rupavahini. The major reasons for that are the long and trustworthy history of the channel and the programme, the better broadcast coverage than other television channels and, encouragement receiving through shared experiences by the self-employers instead of celebrity discussions.

The study concludes that the television morning programmes (shows) have an empowering effect on women's lives, especially on the home makers. With the knowledge gained through morning television magazines, majority of the respondents tend to [1] learn and acquire the skills which are completely new to them (knitting, embroidering, making bakery items, making flower vases, doing creative works using waste material), [2] gain updated knowledge related to their current self-employment ( Tailoring - saree jacket designing, flower nursery), [3] earn an extra income (making cakes for orders), [4] get advice on women's health and well-being and, [5] for entertainment while relaxing their mindset.

As the results elaborate, it is proven that these programs have a strong impact on women for those who watch these programmes regularly. The programmes bring empowering messages and the information disseminate through these programmes facilitate women's day to day activities in different aspects. Hence, it can be known that to improve women's social status, television may be a substantially more cost effective medium that can be used to empower women than other medium, especially the morning television shows that involve expanding education and awareness among the women.

### References

- [1]. Bhatt, G. Singh, "A study of television viewing habits among rural women of Tehri Garhwal District. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, (2015).  
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-Study-of-Television-Viewing-Habits-among-Rural-of-Bhatt-Singh/74bdd41aac431331c295bc8aecca68af8540deb4>
- [2]. B.A.D. Athula Ransirilal, The Current Situation of Sri Lanka TV Media and the Challenges Ahead, 24th JAMCO Online International Symposium, January 2016 - August 2016,  
<https://www.jamco.or.jp/en/symposium/24/5/>
- [3]. G. T. Madhubhashini, The Role Of Television As An Educational Medium In Empowering Rural Students In Sri Lanka During Covid 19 Pandemic, INSANIAH: Online Journal of Language, Communication, and Humanities, Volume 4 (2), October, 2021.
- [4]. K.V.A.H.P. Wijenayake, G.R.S.R.C. Samaraweera, Determinants of Programme Preferences and Watching Hours of Television: With Special Reference to Gampaha District, 13th International Conference on Business Management 2016, University of Sri Jayawardanapura, Colombo.
- [5]. M.B. Devadas, V.M. Saravanan, The television and rural women development. Journal of Art Science And Commerce, (2015).  
<http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosrjhss/papers/Vol.%2022%20Issue7/Version2/I2207024456.pdf>.
- [6]. R. Jenson, E. Oster, The power of TV: Cable television and women's status in India, NBER Working Papers 13305, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc. (2007)  
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/nbr/nberwo/13305.html>.
- [7]. S. Tunoi, G. Shoukat, "Role of television in awareness of women rights among women folk with special focus on women of district Naushahro feroze", Journal of Asian Development Studies, Vol. 4, Issue 1, (March 2015)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281404505\\_Role\\_of\\_Television\\_in\\_Awareness\\_of\\_47Women\\_Rights\\_among\\_Women\\_Folk\\_with\\_Special\\_Focus\\_on\\_Women\\_of\\_District\\_Naushahro\\_Feroze](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281404505_Role_of_Television_in_Awareness_of_47Women_Rights_among_Women_Folk_with_Special_Focus_on_Women_of_District_Naushahro_Feroze).
- [8]. S. Ternholm, Thinking through Communication: An Introduction to the study of Human communication. USA: Pearson. (2011).
- [9]. V.Moti, "Impact of television health programs on women: A Study on Gulbarga Television Viewers", Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism, 04.04 (2014).  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269548403\\_Impact\\_of\\_Television\\_Health\\_Programms\\_on\\_Women\\_A\\_Study\\_on\\_Gulbarga\\_Television\\_Viewers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269548403_Impact_of_Television_Health_Programms_on_Women_A_Study_on_Gulbarga_Television_Viewers)
- [10]. W. Schramm, Mass Media and National Development. USA: Stanford University Press. (1964).
- [11]. Media Ownership monitor, Sri Lanka, 2018 <https://sri-lanka.mom-gmr.org/en/media/tv/>

### Author Profile



**Ms. K. G. L. A. N. S. Jayawardhana** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Languages and Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka. She has completed her B.A. Hons (Special Degree) in Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka [2007 – 2012] with a Second Class (Upper Division) and she has completed her M.A. in Mass Communication degree with a first class in the Department of communication and Journalism, Gauhati University, India.



**R. M. S. N. Rathnayaka** obtained her B.A. Hons (Special Degree) in Communication Studies in Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka [2014 – 2020] with a Second Class(Upper Division).