Negative Impact Of Drama Reality Television On Its Audience

A contemporary issue in society today is that of the augmented risk of behavioural changes, reduced self-esteem, and poor mental health in one's personality after being exposed to drama reality television by female adolescents. Drama reality television has become very prominent within the 21st century, where, to an extent, the majority of society has a desire to explore what goes on in the world surrounding them, while some may wish to watch media through drama reality as it suffices pure entertainment on a wide variety of media outlets and channels. Viewers of drama reality television, particularly female adolescents, are primarily at an increased risk to reduce their depictions and perceptions of themselves and those around them, arising unhealthy physiological and psychological consequences to become evident. Adolescents are often most vulnerable to the harmful physical and mental impacts from viewing drama reality television considering that this age group is more liable to the pressures and comparisons of those on their screens, thereby making them feel the need to alter their bodily features and strive to fit into the media's expectation of "beauty", deriving these individuals to consequently gain behavioural issues, eating disorders, and mental disorders (such as anxiety and/or depression). Anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and escalating rates of substance use affect women to a greater extent than men across different settings and different countries. Pressures created by their multiple roles, gender discrimination and associated factors of hunger, malnutrition, low self-esteem, behavioural changes, and poor wellbeing combine to account for adolescent female's poor mental health. Hence, the unrealistic expectations and promotions of irresponsible behaviour are what imply the negative physiological and psychological impacts of drama reality television, thus, these substantial health costs indicate the crisis occurring amongst female adolescents and the detrimental effects the topical issue can have on these individuals.

The aim of this investigation will be to thoroughly discuss drama reality television's negative influence on female adolescents and its pernicious impacts on their physiological and psychological health – all of which will be explored through statistics, facts, and studies relevant to the topic.

A relatively new genre of entertaining production is that of reality television; a worldwide phenomenon in which has become quickly diverse and popularised among all audiences. Reality television has become one of the most lucrative niches and demanded-for broadcasting programs in mass media for its extremely appealing content, making it a standout amongst the most-talked about subjects to have ever revolutionised. By definition, drama reality television is essentially unscripted programming that does not employ actors within the footage. Instead, the focus is to film real life events and situations, most often hosted or narrated in order to tell the story or set the stage of events that are about to unfold. The defining aspect of reality television is the manner in which the footage is shot – whether it takes place in a real setting with real people (much like a documentary), uses hidden surveillance, or shoots in front of a live studio audience that participates in the program. Oftentimes, reality television does not rely on actors nor writers, unlike newscasts, sitcoms, etc, and instead, run by a team of editors and producers. Due to this, it can be a very affordable programming option from a production standpoint. Though the footage captured from reality television programs may be real, the material is

usually extremely edited. It is done so under the pretence of reality, and is false in the sense that it is often subjectively represented or dramatised. An example of this is evidenced in numerous drama reality television programs, such as MTV's first season of "The Real World", in which footage was shot over a three-month period. Ostensibly, there are 24 hours in a day, thereby adding up to around 2,160 hours of footage. However, only 13 half-hour episodes aired, thus, cutting out most raw material. Moreover, various contestants on shows such as "The Apprentice" and "The Bachelor" have claimed that their actions were taken out of context and presented in misleading ways.

The main objective of reality television is to capture every moment in a day, therefore, its intended purpose for the audience is to heighten drama through intense emotion and constant confrontation from interesting characters. It is evident that reality television is constantly derided as low brow, and in some cases, is false due to content being manipulated in order to entertain the audience, reducing the belief of the content being depicted. Much in film and television, the genre of "drama" is incorporated within the shows, integrating fictional representation through performance and dialogue. Drama film is a genre of which relies on the emotional and relational development of realistic characters. While drama film relies heavily on this kind of development, a large contributing role that stimuluses its influences are that of dramatic themes within the plot. Habitually, these themes are taken from intense, real-life issues, substantially providing self-destructive behaviour among characters and ultimately resulting in degrading its audience. The confrontation of this drama within reality television shows can severely promote negative impacts on the viewer's behaviour, self-esteem, and mental health, resulting to dictate how these individuals live on a daily basis and perceive themselves, increasing the risk of obsession over how one may look or feel about themselves.

The behaviour within female adolescents is impacted by drama reality television during many different aspects of their life. It is evident that the reality television platform is emerging among these group of individuals, resulting to detrimentally impact the way they act and behave due to the glorification of abuse, dysfunctional relationships, and shallow personalities exploited throughout the content of drama programs. Although reality television has become symbolic of female adolescent's current culture, their behavioural responses become impacted due to the way a scene within a program is fabricated to carry out. Drama reality television shows such as 'Bachelor in Paradise' and 'Big Brother' intend to focus on harassment and misconduct. Incidents of harassment and misconduct can not only impact the people involved with the incident/s, but the viewers and how they would personally respond to an event in a similar circumstance. If one were to view physical abuse as a result of an incident, the audience will most likely model these actions due to the television show they were viewing endorsed bad behaviour in a dramatic and hyped up way. One such opportunity became evident in the American season of 'Bachelor in Paradise', in which old contestants from 'The Bachelor' and 'The Bachelorette' have the opportunity to vacate at a remote destination in order to obtain a second chance at love. Production of season four of this drama show was abruptly suspended amid allegations of misconduct after two contestants, DeMario Jackson and Corinne Olympios, had a sexual encounter in a pool after partying and drinking throughout the day. It was found that DeMario and Olympios were not featured in this season, however, the incident that suspended production was mentioned in the trailer to enhance drama to promotional advertisements. Harassment on drama reality television grants an opportunity to discuss healthy behaviour as well as actions that are or are not acceptable. When female adolescents view irresponsible behaviour on their screens, (such as physical, verbal, or sexual abuse) they are more likely to replicate these actions and respond to a circumstance in a similar way, resulting

to promote bad behavioural habits and outcomes in future events.

According to Brad Gorham, an associate professor of Syracuse University and researcher of how mass media contributes to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, “reality television has an effect on the behaviours of people in society”. He claims that people are easily influenced by reality television because they eventually replicate the behaviours portrayed on screens and use them in real life situations. Based on another study conducted by, Jaime Riccio, a student at Syracuse University, focus groups were developed in hopes to discuss the social effects of reality television. In this study, Riccio inferred that reality television causes problematic behaviours amidst the younger generation, juxtaposing with Gorham’s perception of this popular media source and its negative behavioural influences on the audience.

Television plays a big role in manipulating individuals and conveying implications concerning the standards of attractiveness in the society significantly in females. Generally, women who appear in drama reality television are presented as being “flawless”, which often leads to viewer’s feeling self-conscious and insecure. This is evidenced in a survey conducted by ‘Medical Procedure News’, in which revealed that reality television largely contributes into influencing individuals towards cosmetic surgery procedures, with more than 9.2 million procedures performed as result of females watching reality shows. Correspondingly, another study revealed that nearly 40% of female adolescents consuming reality television such as ‘Love Island’ have a propensity to experience diffidence about their appearance, while 30% of women contemplate going on a diet for the sake of appearing “flawless” as a direct result of the show. In conjunction to this, a Sydney based psychologist, Jacqui Manning, states that “today’s mainstream media [specifically drama reality shows] enhance and heighten to such an extent where the line between imitation and reality is almost imperceptible”. This corroborates with the findings evidenced by The Daily Beast, where a survey disclosed that approximately 78% of individuals going through cosmetic procedures for the first time were influenced by reality television, and almost 57% of the patients were considered as ‘high- intensity’ viewers of the entertainment production industry of drama reality television, elevating that the increased ‘thin ideal’ has over the western society by storm.

Analogous to the previously examined question, the toxic nature of reality television similarly has an immense negative impact on one’s mental health. Psychologists: Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, and Tantleff-Dunn argue that due to drama reality television, females are feeling self-conscious and can be perceived making exceptional attempts in order to meet the unrealistic standards of “beauty” set by drama reality artistes, and these attempts are increasing significantly to a point where it has become a substantial concern. In corroboration to this, research conducted by YouGov revealed that one in four individuals belonging from the age group 18-24 expressed that reality television makes them concerned regarding their body image, while one in seven stated that they had self-harmed or intentionally hurt themselves concerning their body image. Although no one is secure in the lethal hands of drama reality television, female adolescents are one of the most dominant categories of individuals being adversely influenced by this matter.

In order to investigate this matter more in-depth and consider the additional perspective attributed to the targeted representatives of the data, a survey was conducted in which consisted of participants aging from 14-18. Below are the results obtained:

The results collated from the conducted survey indicated that although most individuals did not

consider altering their physical features by the means of cosmetic surgeries, nearly partial of the participants did, however, felt compelled and insecure about their appearance specifically due to consuming reality drama television. Moreover, the participants suggested that drama reality television negatively influenced their self-esteem and body image. Upon being asked why they feel the need to fit into the media's perception of beauty, the majority of the participants alluded that in order avoid being judged and feel accepted, they felt obligated.

In conclusion, it may truly be stated that drama reality television has a fairly negative impact on its audience's, predominantly female adolescents. Throughout the extensive research conducted, it was identified that drama reality television is a relatively new genre within the entertainment production industry, which has rapidly developed a consistent viewing and significant popularity, among these individuals. Such addictive and creatively appealing content is harmful towards young female adolescents, where they are at risk to be physiologically and psychologically effected due to what they view. Overall, it can be concluded that drama reality television influences its consumer's mental health in a negative manner, imposing the societal standards of attractiveness upon an individual harming one's self-esteem, body image, and adversely modifying one's behaviour resulting in them feeling self-conscious and insecure regarding their appearance.