

**Mass Media And Teen Culture In Singapore :  
An Exploratory Study**

**By**

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INTRODUCTION

All too often, in many parts of the world where the mass media have gained significant inroads, critics have pointed their fingers toward the direction of magazines, radio, television, motion pictures and other modern media technology as responsible for creating a youth culture which many associate with negative behavioural manifestations. Like drugs, violence, sexual permissiveness, junk foods, and general rebelliousness. Third World countries in particular view the development of this youth culture as a vivid example of the negative influence of the Western media on the cultures of developing nations. They perceive this culture as the effect of the dominance of the Western media in world communications, as a clear manifestation of media and cultural imperialism.

For example, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has expressed his apprehension about the influence American values, particularly those relating to respect for the elderly, were having on Singaporeans of Chinese descent. Mr Lee said Chinese and other East Asian societies revered age because it was equated with wisdom. But he noted that the Americans practically worshipped youth and vitality. Mr Lee said he was not sure that the younger generation was not being affected by American television, books and magazines, and starting to admire youth instead of age. (Business Times, 17/9/85).

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But is this a valid perception of the influence of media on youth culture? Countless studies have been conducted on the effects of the media on children and youth but the scholars are still not in agreement on their findings.

Is the acceptance, for instance, of externally-originated popular music necessarily a rejection of indigenous popular music? Observational data point out that in India, young people may go to discos in the latest outfits and dance to the current hits, but once home, are just as equally comfortable in listening to classical Indian music.

And yet, in June 1985, the Malaysian Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry banned "The Scorpions", the West German heavy metal group, from performing in Kuala Lumpur. The government felt that rock performances did not portray positive values. A spokesman for the Ministry said the rock band's act ran counter to Malaysian cultural and moral values. (The Straits Times, 13/6/85).

Is the donning of outlandish get-ups like blazingly-colourful fashions and multi-tinted punk hairstyles necessarily an adoption of the cultural context of rebellion in the West and transplanted in the Third World? A not so recent dissection of the issue over Singapore television does not think so.

Are these manifestations of youth culture a part of the process of cultural enrichment where external values and experiences are added to native values and experiences? Does

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the dominant communication flow from the West really threaten cultural diversity, possibly leading to the development of a world youth culture? Or does this only constitute juxtaposition, not imposition, of cultures? And is the West the only source of this flow?

For instance, in Indonesia the authorities gave up the fight to stamp out breakdancing and even scheduled national and regional championships in Jogjakarta, Central Java. Antara News Agency reported that in December 1984, "police used teargas to break up a breakdance festival in Jakarta, following complaints by parents and school administrators that the American-inspired fad was a dangerous form of cultural pollution". The craze was revived, however, "when Mr Sardono Kusuno, Head of the Jakarta Art Institute's Dance Academy, told Parliament that breakdancing was similar to traditional dances of the Irian Jayan, Nias, and Dayak minorities and should not be discouraged". (The Straits Times, 14/5/85).

To explore and understand some of the above issues and questions, the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre decided to undertake a small exploratory study on "Mass Media and Teen Culture in Singapore" - with particular focus on the media habits of young people and media influence on them. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a teen culture in Singapore? What are the manifestations/indicators of this culture? Do the mass media influence this youth culture?

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2. How and to what extent do the newspapers, magazines, radio, television and cinema influence Singaporean teen-agers.
3. What is the degree of influence of these media compared to that of other channels/agents of socialization such as peers, parents, school and the community?

Specifically, the study aimed at meeting the following objectives :

1. To find out if there is teen culture in Singapore and to determine its various indicators.
2. To determine the influence of the mass media on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of young Singaporeans.
3. To determine the influence of peers, parents, school, church and the community on teen attitudes and behaviour, compared to the influence of the mass media.

The study hypothesised the following :

1. There is a teen culture in Singapore which manifests itself in specific fields such as fashion, taste in music, food, etc.
2. The teenagers of Singapore read the newspapers less than they read magazines, particularly those that carry items on music, fashion and romance.

3. They listen to the radio, but mostly for music entertainment, not news.
4. They watch television more than they use the other mass media.
5. Exposure to these mass media influences the teenagers' perceptions, attitudes and behaviour.
6. Peer influence is stronger than the influence of the media, parents, school, church and the community.

#### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The study is basically exploratory in design. To generate data for the study, AMIC utilized two research methods : in-depth interviews and a sample survey. The in-depth interviews covered a small group of adult key informants purposively sampled for the study. These adult informants were representatives of agencies and institutions engaged in youth-oriented programmes. They were interviewed for their perceptions of teen culture in Singapore and the possible influence of the mass media on teen-age attitudes and behaviour. The survey covered a group of teen-agers between the ages of 13 and 19 years selected through coincidental random sampling.

Data-gathering instruments used were an interview guide for the in-depth interviews, and a questionnaire for the survey. The eight main questions in the interview guide allowed for sub-questions to be asked for probing further into the responses of the respondents. The survey questionnaire consisted mainly of close-ended, multiple-choice questions and attitude differential scales.

The in-depth interviews were conducted between April and June 1986; the survey was done in June and July 1986. Data from the interviews were processed qualitatively. Data gathered from the survey were fed to a computer, analysed in terms of raw figures, frequencies and percentages, and cross-tabulated to determine some indicators of relationship.

For purpose of this presentation, however, only the sample survey will be discussed. The interviews will be treated in a separate paper.

#### **SAMPLE SURVEY FINDINGS**

This section of the paper describes some of the major findings of the sample survey of teen-agers in Singapore. It must be emphasized here that the sample is by no means fully representative of the entire teen-age population of the island-republic; the respondents have, in the main, been drawn from the school-going group.

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A total of 180 teen-agers were surveyed in different schools and shopping centres, using a modified coincidental random sampling scheme. Five of the 180 respondents were disqualified for age and for incompletely returned questionnaires.

Socio-demographic characteristics. The sample eventually analysed consisted of a total of 175 respondents, 96 (54.9%) of which belonged to the 13-15 age bracket, while 79 (45.1%) belonged to the 16-19 age group [Table 1 (a)]. Of the total, 84 (48%) were males, and 91 (52%) were females [Table 1(b)].

The great majority, 144 (82.3%) were currently in secondary school; 21 (12%) have completed their "O" levels, and were currently in pre-university, or polytechnic studies; 9 (5.1%) were doing primary; and 1 (0.6%) just completed the "A" levels [Table 1 (c)].

Of the sample, 123 (70.3%) are of ethnic Chinese origin; 28 (16%) Malay; 15 (8.6%) Indian; and nine (5.1%) of other ethnic groups [Table 1 (d)]. This distribution corresponds roughly to the racial distribution in Singapore. Of the total respondents, 60 (34.3%) practise Chinese Buddhism or Taoism; 46 (26.3%) are Christians; 29 (16.6%) are Muslims; 28 (16%) are "free thinkers" or practise "other" religions; and seven (4%) are Hindus. Four (2.3%) respondents claimed to be "atheists" while one (0.6%) gave no response to this query [Table 1 (e)].

The teen-age sample comes from a broad range of socio-economic strata; the data seem to suggest, however, that the majority comes from the middle class.

Youth interests. The respondents were shown a list of activities perceived to be of interest to many teen-agers. They were asked to choose which activities were important to them. Multiple responses were allowed.

Rating the highest number of responses was "being with friends" - 145 (82.9%) followed by "listening to music" - 135 (77.1%) [See Tables 2.1 (a) & 2.1 (b)]. These findings support the observation that peer groups and music are important activities of teen-age culture.

Third highest number of responses was for "studies" - 131 (74.9%). This may be indicative of the nature of the Singaporean educational system which pressure - motivates students to excel in school in order to secure places in more prestigious academic institutions, or later, in the highly competitive National University of Singapore. It is interesting to note that "career" was also rated important by 90 (51.4%) respondents.

"Being with family" ranked fourth with 127 (72.6%) responses. This may indicate a still strong family orientation among the sample.

"Sports" ranked fifth and rated 121 (69.1%) responses, indicating a healthy interest in physical fitness among teen-agers. This is also understandable in the light of teen-agers' acknowledged desire to look physically appealing during adolescence.

Specifically, swimming rated highest among sports activities preferred by the teen-age respondents - 113 (64.6%). It was followed by jogging, 99 (56.6%); football, 61 (34.9%); squash, 49 (28%); and basketball 41 (23.4%) [Table 2.2].

Sports is encouraged and reinforced officially by the Singapore Government; the government provides very good sports facilities throughout the island.

Teen-agers generally have an interest in clothes, in keeping with the adolescent desire to look good. Another 113 (64.6%) respondents said "my clothes and appearance" are important. Contrary to the stereotype image that the "Centrepont Kids"\* may present - majority, 140 (80%) of the respondents prefer "casual, ordinary clothes". Presumably, however, some of those in the group of 180 may also include those belonging to the group of 78 (44.6%) who like "trendy clothes". Forty-eight (27.4%) said they like "brand-name clothes" while 33 (18.9%) said they would prefer "ready-to-wear" apparel [Table 2.3].

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\* A group of Singaporean teen-agers who used to hang around the Centrepont Shopping Centre; easily identifiable by their colorful hairstyles and outlandish costumes.

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The clothing stores patronized by the respondent teen-agers show a predominantly middle class orientation. Metro was cited by 90 (51.4%) respondents; followed by Isetan, 73 (41.7%); Yaohan, 51 (29.1%); Top 11/Community Market Shops, 43 (24.6%); 06/Heshe, 38 (21.7%), Esprit, 28 (16%); Emporium/Daimara, 26 (14.9%), Tang's, 24 (13.7%); AA/BB/Marusho, 17 (9.7%) and Parkway Parade Shops, 12 (6.9%) [Table 2.3 (a)].

Only 71 (40.6%) of the respondents said "eating out" is important to them. However, when food preference was asked of the respondents, more specified their likes in food : 125 responses (71.4%) were for hawker food; a near-equal 126 (72%) responses were for American-type fast food [Table 2.4]. The data seems to indicate that where it comes to food, Singaporean teenagers do not discriminate between local and Western-type food.

Media-related activities rated high interest among the respondents. "Reading newspapers" yielded 119 (68%) responses; "watching TV", 115 (65.7%); "watching films", 101 (57.7%); "listening to radio", 96 (54.9%); and "watching videos", 83 (47.4%) [Table 2.1 (b)]. These findings seem to corroborate observations that Singapore teen-agers have high media exposure.

It is interesting to note that the activity "social and political affairs" yielded only 43 (24.6%) responses. This finding calls to mind a recent observation made by Mr Rajaratnam, Senior Minister in the Prime Ministers' Office - that young people in Singapore are not interested in politics.

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The teen respondents were asked for their music preferences. Rather expectedly, "Western pop music" emerged with the highest number of responses - 143 (81.7%), followed by "Cantonese pop music," at 135 (77.1%). The data also show 40 (22.9%) responses for "Japanese pop music", 22 (12.6%) for "Malay pop music" and 10 (5.7%) for "Indian pop music" [Table 2.5]. These findings seem to reinforce the perception that Western-oriented music seems to have gained a large following among Singapore teen-agers.

They also seem to indicate a natural tendency to relate to music from one's ethnic background, albeit superficially. The number of responses more or less corresponds to the racial distribution in the sample.

A small number also likes "Western classical music" - 41 (23.4%); only 15 (8.6%) indicated a liking for "traditional, ethnic music". Twenty-eight respondents (16%) said they also liked "other music".

The data support the general observation that teen-agers like dancing. A total of 117 (66.9%) respondents said they like dancing; 99 (56.6%) respondents specified "disco dances" as their main preferences [Tables 2.6 & 2.6 (a)].

Media habits. A major portion of the questions focused on how and why the teen-age sample used the various mass media. Following are the more salient findings.

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Newspapers. Out of the 175 total respondents, 172 (98.3%) read the newspapers, and 135 (77.1%) read daily [Table 3.1 (a)].

What newspapers do they read? Of the total respondents, 152 (86.9%) read the Straits Times; 42 (24%) read the Chinese language Lian He Zao Bao; 28 (16%) the Malay language Berita Harian; and 18 (10.3%), other newspapers [Table 3.1 (b)].

Why do they read? A total of 132 respondents (75.4%) read "for news of Singapore",; 127 (72.6%) "for news of the world"; 117 (66.9%) "to check on TV and cinema events"; and 88 (50.3%) read "for news of Asia" [Table 3.1 (d)].

What particular newspaper sections are the teen-agers most interested in? The comics section had the highest number of responses, 116 (66.3%), followed by home news, 107 (61.1%); the teens section,\* 104 (59.4%); radio/TV section, 99 (56.6%); world news, 93 (53.1%); neighbouring countries, 56 (32%); other sports section, 51 (29.1%); football news, 42 (24%), racing section, 11 (6.3%); and business section, 5 (2.9%) [Table 3.1 (c)].

The above findings seem to indicate that contrary to some belief, Singapore teen-agers are newspaper readers, and that on balance, they read both for news and information, as well as for entertainment and diversion.

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\* A regular weekly feature of The Straits Times.

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Magazines. One hundred thirty ~~nine~~<sup>six</sup> respondents or ~~79.4%~~<sup>77.8%</sup> of the total sample said they read magazines. Of the total sample, 68 (38.9%) read magazines 1-3 days a week; 44 (25.1%) read every Sunday; 14 (8%) read 4-6 days a week; and only 10 (5.7%) read daily [Table 3.2 (a)].

What type of magazines do the sample teenagers read? The highest number of responses, 74 (42.3%) recorded was for popular music magazines, followed closely by comics magazines at 73 (41.7%). Other magazines and the number of responses : local entertainment magazines, 63 (36%); Western fashion magazines, 57 (32.6%); sports magazines, 52 (29.7%); and local fashion magazines, 45 (25.7%). News magazines were cited in only 31 (17.7%) responses. Lower frequencies of response were tallied for interior design, hobbycraft, technical, car, and other magazines [Table 3.2 (b)].

Why do teeners read these magazines? A total of 105 (60%) respondents said they read "for entertainment;" 71 (40.6%) "for the latest news about movie/singing idols;" 56 (32%) "for fashion and style ideas;" and 54 (30.9%) "for information about hobbies and interests." Only 20 (11.4%) responses were recorded for the reason "for General Pager assignments;" 10 (5.7%) responses were "for other reasons." [Table 3.2 (c)]

The data seem to suggest that teen-agers regard magazines principally as a source of entertainment or diversion.

Radio. How does the sample regard radio? A total of 148 (84.6%) said they listen to radio; frequency of radio varies but nearly half of the sample, 84 (48%) tuned in daily. Thirty (17.1%) respondents listened 1-3 days a week and 27 (15.4%) said they listen only on Sundays [Table 3.3 (a)].

Which stations do they listen to? Majority, 141 (80.6%) tuned in to SBC, the (Singapore Broadcasting Corporation; 47 (26.9%) to BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation; and 10 (5.7%) listened to RTM (Radio-Television Malaysia) [Table 3.3 (b)].

Forty respondents (22.9%) also tuned in to short-wave foreign stations.

What programmes do they like? Majority, 143 (81.7%) said they listen to music programmes; 113 (64.6%) to Western pop music programmes 91 (52%) to disco music programmes, 71 (40.6%) to rock music, and 59 (33.7%) to local pop music [Table 3.3 (c)(i)]. A total of 49 (28%) said they tune in to talk shows; and 47 (26.9%) to news and current affairs programmes. Less than 25% listened to other programmes such as sports, drama, and religious programmes [Table 3.3 (c)].

A total of 161 (92%) respondents also listened to audio cassettes and records, primarily music [Table 3.4].

Majority, 125 (71.4%) listened to English language programmes; 53 (30.3%) to Chinese; 25 (14.3%) to Malay; and 9 (5.1%) to Tamil programmes [Table 3.3 (e)].

The data seem to indicate that Singapore teen-agers regard radio mainly as an entertainment medium, not as a source of news. This gains more credence when the reasons for listening to radio are considered : 130 (74.3%) respondents said they tune to radio for entertainment; an equal number of respondents, 54 (30.9%) said they listen to radio for news about Singapore, and for news about the world. Only 33 (18.9%) said they listen to radio for Asian news [Table 3.3 (d)].

Television. If the data is anything to go by, it would seem like Singaporean teeners are avid TV watchers; 171 respondents (97.7%) said they watch TV and 137 (78.3%) said they watch daily [Table 3.5 (a)].

What programmes do they watch? Mainly entertainment fare : 114 (65.1%) said they watch Western situation comedies; 107 (61.1%) films; and 104 (59.4%), Western music video programmes [Table 3.5 (b)].

These findings support their stated reasons for viewing TV programmes; 156 (89.1%) said they watch for entertainment, and 88 (50.3%) watch to see their favourite stars in action.

Only 69 (39.4%) of the respondents said they watch news and current affairs programme. However, on a discepanant note, 82 (46.9%) also said they would watch TV to catch up with the latest news on Singapore, and 79 (45.1%) would watch for the latest world news [Table 3.5 (c)].

Majority, 150 (85.7%) like to watch programmes in English; 80 (45.7%) watch Chinese, 21 (12%) Malay, and 7 (4%) Tamil programmes [Table 3.5 (d)].

It is interesting to know that majority, 146 (83.4%), discuss the programme they have seen with their friends. Only 81 (46.3%) discuss programmes with their family. [Table 3.5 (e)].

Video. Many teen-agers are also video watchers but not as avid as they are TV watchers. The highest number of respondents, 66 (37.7%) said they only watched video on weekends, and 47 (26.9%) watched 1-3 days a week. Only 14 (8%) said they watched video daily [Table 3.6 (a)].

What video movies click with the teen-agers? Among the sample teen-agers, comedies had the highest response, 109 (62.3%), followed by horror movies, 99 (56.5%). Third was Western action/adventure movies, 83 (47.4%) while kung-fu movies reached fourth, 80 (45.7%) [Table 3.6 (b)].

Cinema. A total of 111 (63.4%) respondents said they go to the cinema but frequency of going varied across the sample; 79 (45.1%) said they watched at least once a month; 32 (18.3%) said they went to the movies at least once a week. A considerable number, 62 (35.4%) said they never or rarely went to the cinema [Table 3.7 (a)].

It is interesting that the movie preferences of the sample, on video and on wide-screen cinema, nearly coincide : comedies rated 112 (70.3%) responses; horror movies, 99 (56.6%); and Western action/adventure movies 84 (48%) [Table 3.7 (b)].

It seems fairly evident from the data that the sample prefer escapist, fantasy-oriented movies, and that like radio and television, video and cinema are primarily used as media for diversion or entertainment. As 120 (68.6%) of the sample said, they go to the cinema "to be entertained," and 68 (38.9%) "to see my favourite stars in action." [Table 3.7 (c)]

Being entertained seems to include watching movies with friends; 123 (70.3%) respondents said they go to the cinema with their friends. Only 35 (20%) said they go to the cinema with their parents [Table 3.7 (d)].

A total of 47 (26.9%) respondents said they go to the cinema with their boy or girl friend [Table 3.7 (d)]. This coincides with 40 (22.9%) responses indicating that some teenagers like going to the cinema "to have a date with my boy/girl friend." [Table 3.7 (e)]

Media importance and media use. Data from responses to the questions on youth interests were cross-tabulated with the data on actual media habits. Out of 119 respondents who said that reading newspapers is important to them, 118 (99.2%) said that they actually read newspapers. Of 96 teen-agers who said that radio listening is important; 93 (96.9%) responded that they actually listened [Table 4.1].

A total of 115 respondents said that watching TV is important to them; of this number, 113 (98.3%) said that they actually watched TV. Of the 83 respondents who said that watching videos is important, 79 (95.2%) said that they actually watched videos. A total of 101 respondents said that watching cinema is important, but more respondents, 111 (109.9%) said they watched the movies of at least once a month [Table 4.1].

Likewise data on utilization of various media were cross-tabulated. For example, 172 respondents who said that they read newspapers, 138 (80.2%) also read magazines; 147 (85.5%) also listened to radio; 159 (92.4%) also listened to cassettes; 139 (80.8%) also watched TV; 139 (80.8%) also watched video movies; and 111 (64.5%) also watched cinema films [Table 4.2]. The same cross-tabulation procedures were done for reading magazines, listening to radio, watching TV, video movies and cinema; the results were fairly similar.

The findings seem to indicate that the teen-age sample has high interest in media, and actually use them. They also suggest that the teen-agers have a consistently high simultaneous utilization of the different media : those who use the print media also use the electronic media.

Media influence. To determine some indicators of media influence, the sample teeners were asked to respond to a number of statements and opinion/attitude questions relating to messages and behaviour portrayed in the media.

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A total of 140 (80%) respondents said they watched TV shows like "Family Ties" and "The Cosby Show" where one often sees young people discussing and arguing with their parents and other elders; 94 (53.7%) of the respondents said they approved of such behaviour. However, when asked if in their own life they could relate to adults in a similar way as the young people in the above shows, only 68 (38.9%) gave a definite yes; a near equal 69 (39.4%) said no. The others were unsure. [Table 5.1]]

The sample teen-agers seem to credit the media with the power to help them become aware of and understand the forces that shape and influence their lives, such as laws, rules and regulations, and authority; 141 (80.6%) respondents said that reading newspapers or watching TV helps them to understand life-shaping external forces [Table 5.2].

Majority of the sample, 124 (70.9%) said they sometimes wish they could be like the characters they see in films or on TV; 105 (60%) of the respondents do not believe that films and TV are a world of make believe and have nothing to do with real life situations [Table 5.3]. Majority of the sample, in fact 143 (81.7%), felt that the mass media contained a lot of useful information which helps them to cope with everyday life. [Table 5.4 (a)].

Many among the sample respondents, 83 (47.4%), admit that they are still inexperienced to make the right decisions for themselves and are therefore keen to accept guidance from adults [Table 5.4 (a)]. Unfortunately, however, majority <sup>of</sup> 108

(61.7%) of the respondents felt that the media often seem to contain more understanding for young people than the adults they know [Table 5.4 (b)].

The data seem to indicate that the sample teen-agers perceive the media as a potential source of role models and guidelines for some aspects of daily life. Could these findings be indicative of lack of access to parents and/or other elders who can provide guidance to the young such that teen-agers will want to turn to the media for understanding and support? Could these findings be indicative of lack of, or inadequate, parent-child communication in Singapore where both parents are generally working and out of the house all day?

Where it comes to more specific problems [See Table 5.5], the sample teeners would only turn to their parents for help and advice, in terms of money problems, as 137 (78.3%) respondents said, and problems with siblings, 101 (57.7%). In cases of other difficulties, the teen-agers would generally turn to their friends for assistance, as in school problems, 128 (73.1%); job problems, 63 (36%); boy/girl problems, 128 (73.1%); problems with parents, 114 (65.1%); and problems with friends, 77 (44%). The media, school and other community institutions rated low responses.

The data seem to reinforce the idea of stronger peer influence over young people in adolescence; particularly in areas of day-to-day behaviour. The media appear to be less influential as only few respondents said they would turn to media advice columns in relation to such problems.

Media use and media influence. Data on some media habits were cross-tabulated with those relating to influence. The more interesting findings follow.

Of 172 TV watchers, 140 (81.4%) watch such shows as "Family Ties" and "The Cosby Shows;" and 94 (54.7%) approve of the teen-age characters behaviour in the shows [Table 5.1].

Of 141 respondents who said that the media help them to understand life-shaping external forces, 139 (98.6%) are newspaper readers; 115 (81.6%) are magazine readers; 122 (86.5%) are radio listeners; 129 (91.5%) are cassette users; 139 (79.4%) are TV watchers; 115 (81.6%) are video movie watchers; and 88 (62.4%) are cinema-goers [Table 6.1].

Of these 141 respondents also, 89 (63.1%) said they do not agree that films and TV are a make-believe world and therefore not applicable to real life; 121 (85.8%) in fact, claim that the media contain a lot of helpful and useful information to help them cope with daily life. In addition, 92 (65.2%) felt that the media showed more understanding toward the young than real-life adults they know [Table 6.2].

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS : IMPLICATIONS**

Following is a summary of the major findings of the study. Since the study was exploratory, no attempt will be made here to draw definite conclusions. Rather some implications will be presented.

1. The data suggest that the sample teen-agers belong to a culture of young people interested in friends,

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music, clothes, physical fitness and sports - typical interests of adolescents worldwide - but with many still placing high value on family. This finding may imply a desire or need among the sample among teen-agers, perhaps even among Singaporean teen-agers in general for family orientation, in light of the dual employment of most Singaporean parents and the social problems that it has created, among them the "latchkey kids."\*

2. The data indicate a high interest in, and a high exposure to the mass media among the sample teen-agers : they read newspapers and magazines, listen to radio and audio cassettes, and watch television, video and the movies, albeit in varying levels of frequency.

If the sample is taken to be representative of at least a great portion of Singaporean teen-agers, the finding may imply therefore that Singaporean teenagers are likely to be highly exposed to the various mass media.

3. The data imply that teen-agers use the various media as sources of both information and entertainment. The teen-agers included in the sample read the newspapers, for news and information, as well as

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\* Children who have their own keys to their flats; they usually arrive home from school with their parents still at work; and they generally take care of themselves.

for entertainment and diversion. However, they regard magazines, radio, television, video and cinema, primarily as sources of entertainment.

4. The data imply that the media reinforce interest in some aspects of youth culture, particularly music. The findings show that popular music magazines had the highest patronage among the sample, and radio music programmes were the most listened to.
5. The data imply that Western popular music has gained a strong foothold in the radio listening habits of teen-age Singaporeans.
6. The English language seems to have gained wide acceptance and currency among Singapore teen-agers as the language they prefer for their media. The findings on the language preference for both print and electronic media seem to bear this out.
7. The findings imply that Singaporean teen-agers consider the mass media as influential in their lives : majority of the sample agree with some of the teen-age behaviours seen on TV even as these are set in a different cultural background; they feel that the mass media can provide role models and help them understand the forces that shape their lives; and that they sometimes wish they could be like the characters they see in films or on TV.

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8. The findings likewise imply that the media enjoy high credibility among Singapore teen-agers. Majority of the sample thought that the mass media contained a lot of useful information which helps them to cope with daily life; they do not believe that films and TV are a make-believe world.
9. There is some data indicating that teen-agers are keen to accept advice and guidance from adults but that they do get these in real life. It is saddening that majority of the respondents felt that the media were more sympathetic to young people than adults they know.
10. While the data indicate that the mass media exert some potentially considerable influence on teen-agers, they also indicate that where actual life problems are concerned, they turn mainly to "warm bodies" - persons who can provide them with direct, face-to-face and hopefully quick answers to their problems. Friends seem to rank highest as sources of advice and support in most problem areas; parents seem to be consulted mainly in times of money worries or sibling problems. The media, school and other community resources/institutions do not seem to figure much in a teen-ager's scheme of problem solving.

11. The findings, in the main, seem to support the hypotheses laid out at the start of the study. Except, of course, for that on newspaper readership. Contrary to expectations, Singaporean teeners do read newspapers.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As was stated earlier, this study was mainly exploratory and will necessitate follow-up research. Perhaps the following can be further explored :

1. replication of the exploratory study, with some modification in the survey questionnaire and expansion of the sample to include other youth groups.
2. more probing study on the comparative influence of mass media vis-a-vis interpersonal sources/ channels of communication in the area of teen-age value and behaviour formation.
3. study on the uses of the various mass media published/broadcast in ethnic languages.
4. qualitative studies on the video/cinema film preferences of Singapore teen-agers; e.g., why the high preference for comedies and horror movies?
5. qualitative research on teen-agers' perceptions of mass media as more sympathetic to youth, than adults are.

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6. research on the concept of reality in films and on TV among Singapore teen-agers.
7. testing in the Singapore context of hypotheses related to the "uses and gratification approach," "the agenda setting function," and "the cultural norms theory" in relation to young people's use of mass media.

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**TABLE I : SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS****Table 1(a): AGE OF RESPONDENTS**

<u>AGE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
13-15 years	96	54.9
16-19 years	<u>79</u>	<u>45.1</u>
	<u>175</u>	<u>100.0</u>

**Table 1(b): SEX OF RESPONDENTS**

<u>SEX</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Male	84	48.0
Female	<u>91</u>	<u>52.0</u>
	<u>175</u>	<u>100.0</u>

**Table 1(c): HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
In primary school	9	5.1
In secondary school	144	82.3
'O'Levels/In Pre-U or Polytechnic	21	12.0
'A'Levels	<u>1</u>	<u>0.6</u>
	<u>175</u>	<u>100.0</u>

**Table 1(d): ETHNIC BACKGROUND**

<u>ETHNIC GROUP</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Chinese	123	70.3
Malay	28	16.0
Indian	15	8.6
Others	<u>9</u>	<u>5.1</u>
	<u>175</u>	<u>100.0</u>

**Table 1(e): RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION**

<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
No answer	1	0.6
Chinese Religionist	60	34.3
Christian	46	26.3
Muslim	29	16.6
Hindu	7	4.0
Freethinkers & others	28	16.0
No religion	<u>4</u>	<u>2.3</u>
	<u>175</u>	<u>100.0</u>

*round off  
figures pls*

TABLE 2 : YOUTH INTERESTS

Table 2.1(a): GENERAL ACTIVITIES IMPORTANT TO TEENAGERS

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Sports	121	69.1 4
Studies	131	74.9 2
Boy/girl relationship	66	37.7
Being with own family	127	72.6 3
Being with friends	145	82.9 1
Career	90	51.4
Dancing	74	42.3
Eating out	71	40.6 -
Clothes and appearance	113	64.6 5
Others	48	27.4

*Grade 12*

Table 2.1(b): MEDIA-RELATED ACTIVITIES IMPORTANT TO TEENAGERS

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Listening to music	135	77.1 1
Reading books	96	54.9
<u>Social &amp; Political affairs</u>	43	24.6 !
Watching films	101	57.7
Watching TV	115	65.7
Watching videos	83	47.4
Reading newspapers	119	68.0 2
Listening to radio	96	54.9

*Grade 12*

Table 2.2: SPORTS ACTIVITIES OF TEENAGERS

<u>SPORT</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Swimming	113	64.6
Jogging	99	56.6 ?
Football	61	34.9
Squash	49	28.0
Basketball	41	23.4
Martial arts	35	20.0
Aerobics	34	19.4
Badminton	33	18.9
Volleyball	22	12.6
Gym workouts	14	8.0
Tennis	14	8.0
Wind surfing	12	6.9
Gymnastics	10	5.7
Cycling	9	5.1
Others	32	18.3

Table 2.3: CLOTHING PREFERENCE

<u>TYPE OF CLOTHES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Casual ordinary	140	80.0
Trendy fashion	78	44.6
Brand name clothes	48	27.4
Ready-to-wear	33	18.9
Others	7	4.0

Table 2.3(a): PATRONAGE OF CLOTHING STORES

<u>STORE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Metro	90	51.4
Isetan	73	41.7
Yaohan	51	29.1
Top 100/Community market & shops	43	24.6
OG/Heshe	38	21.7
Esprit	28	16.0
Emporium/Daimaru	26	14.9
Tang's	24	13.7
AA/BB Fashion/ Marusho	17	9.7
Parkway Parade	12	6.9

Table 2.4: FOOD PREFERENCE

<u>TYPE OF FOOD</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
American fast food	126	72.0
Hawker food	125	71.4
Others	15	8.6

Table 2.5: MUSIC PREFERENCES

<u>TYPE OF MUSIC</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Western pop music	143	81.7
Japanese pop music	40	22.9
Cantonese pop music	60	34.3
Malay pop music	22	12.6
Indian pop music	10	5.7
Western classical music	41	23.4
Traditional (Chinese, Malay, or Indian) music	15	8.6
Others	28	16.0

corresponds to racial distribution in sample

Table 2.6: NUMBER OF TEENAGERS WHO LIKE DANCING

RESPONSES	NUMBER	%
No answer	1	0.6
Yes	117	66.9
No	57	32.6
	173	100.0

Should ask:  
Do you dance

Table 2.6(a): DANCE PREFERENCE

TYPE OF DANCE	NUMBER	RELATIVE %
Disco	99	56.6
Rock 'n' roll	33	18.9
Traditional	12	6.9
Ballroom	27	15.4
Others	14	8.0

TABLE 3 : MEDIA HABITS

### 3.1 NEWSPAPERS

Table 3.1(a) : NUMBER OF NEWSPAPER READERS & FREQUENCY OF READING NEWSPAPERS

FREQUENCY	NUMBER	%
Sundays only	11	6.3
1-3 days/week	11	6.3
4-6 days/week	15	8.6
Daily	135	77.1
	---	----
Readers	172	98.3
Non-readers	3	1.7
	---	----
	175	100.0
	===	=====

Table 3.1(b) : NAME OF NEWSPAPERS READ

NEWSPAPERS	NUMBER	%
Straits Times	152	86.9
Lian He Zao Bao	42	24.0
Berita Harian	28	16.0
Others	18	10.3

Table 3.1(c) : SECTIONS OF INTEREST

<u>SECTIONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Home news	107	61.1
World news	93	53.1
Business/financial	5	2.9
News of neighbouring countries	56	32.0
Football	42	24.0
Racing	11	6.3
Other sports	51	29.1
TEENS section	104	59.4
Radio/TV section	99	56.6
Comics	116	66.3
Movie page	93	53.1
Others	8	4.6

Table 3.1(d): REASONS FOR READING NEWSPAPERS

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
For lack of other things to do	71	40.6
To check TV/cinema events	117	66.9
For news of Singapore	132	75.4
For news of Asia	88	50.3
For news of the World	127	72.6
To read about food & fashion	64	36.6
For the latest in TEENS	87	49.7
For a school assignment	18	10.3

### 3.2 MAGAZINES

Table 3.2(a): NUMBER OF MAGAZINE READERS  
& FREQUENCY OF READING MAGAZINES

<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Sundays only	44	25.1
1-3 days/week	68	38.9
4-6 days/week	14	8.0
Daily	10	5.7
	---	-----
Readers	136	77.8
Non-readers	37	21.1
No answer	2	1.1
	---	-----
	175	100.0
	===	=====

Table 3.2(b): TYPE OF MAGAZINES PREFERRED

<u>MAGAZINES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Japanese fashion	14	8.0
Western fashion	57	32.6
Electronics	7	4.0
Japanese entertainment	9	5.1
Local entertainment	63	36.0
Sports	52	29.7
News	31	17.7
Local fashion	45	25.7
Hobby craft	21	12.0
Interior design	29	16.6
Technical mags/journals	6	3.4
Popular music	74	42.3
Comics	73	41.7
Car/motorbike	20	11.4
Others	22	12.6

Table 3.2(c): REASONS FOR READING MAGAZINES

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
For latest news of favourite movie/singing idols	71	40.6
For entertainment	105	60.0
For fashion & style ideas	56	32.0
For information about hobbies & fields of interest	54	30.9
To research General Paper assignments	20	11.4
Others	10	5.7

### 3.3 RADIO

Table 3.3(a): NUMBER OF RADIO LISTENERS  
& FREQUENCY OF LISTENING TO RADIO

<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Sundays only	27	15.4
1-3 days/week	30	17.1
4-6 days/week	9	5.1
Daily	84	48.0
-----	-----	-----
Listeners	150	85.6
Non-listeners	21	12.0
No answer	4	2.3
-----	-----	-----
	175	100.0
====	====	====

Table 3.3(b): STATION PREFERENCE

<u>STATION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Singapore Broadcasting Corporation	141	80.6
Radio-Television Malaysia	10	5.7
British Broadcasting Corporation	47	26.9
Others	8	4.6

*free in 2 m  
else  
2x plus 6.6*

Table 3.3(c): PROGRAMMES OF INTEREST

<u>PROGRAMMES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
News & current affairs	47	26.9
Music	143	81.7
Talk shows	49	28.0
Drama	28	16.0
Educational	29	16.6
Sports	35	20.0
Religion	15	8.6
Others	5	2.9

Table 3.3(c)(i): PREFERENCE IN RADIO MUSIC PROGRAMMES

<u>PROGRAMME</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Western pop music	113	64.6
Disco music	91	52.0
Rock music	71	40.0
Local pop music (Malay, Chinese, Indian)	59	33.7
Western classical music	31	17.7
Traditional music (Malay, Chinese, Indian)	13	7.4

Table 3.3(d): REASONS FOR LISTENING TO RADIO

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
For Singapore news	54	30.9
For Asian news	33	18.9
For world News	54	30.9
For entertainment	130	74.3
To learn something	65	37.1
Others	5	2.9

Table 3.3(e): LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

<u>LANGUAGE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
English	125	71.4
Chinese	53	30.3
Malay	25	14.3
Tamil	9	5.1
Others	3	1.7

### 3.4 MUSIC CASSETTES/RECORDS

Table 3.4(a): NUMBER OF TEENAGERS WHO LISTEN TO CASSETTES/RECORDS

<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
No answer	3	1.7
Yes	161	92.0
No	11	6.3
	175	100.0

Table 3.4(b): PREFERENCE OF MUSIC MEDIUM

<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Cassette/records	78	44.6
Radio	13	7.4
Same	70	40.0

### 3.5 TELEVISION

Table 3.5(a): NUMBER OF TV VIEWERS  
& FREQUENCY OF WATCHING TV

<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Weekends only	14	8.0
1-3 days/week	12	6.9
4-6 days/week	9	5.1
Daily	137	78.3
Viewers	172	98.3
Non-viewers	2	1.1
No answer	1	0.6
	175	100.0
	===	=====

Table 3.5(b): PROGRAMMES OF INTEREST

<u>PROGRAMMES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
News - current affairs	69	39.4
Local musical variety	70	40.0
Western music videos	104	59.4
Western soap operas/mini series	57	32.6
Western comedies	114	65.1
Local soap operas/mini series	48	27.4
Local comedies	55	31.4
Films	107	61.1
Sports	76	43.4
Educational programmes	56	32.0

Table 3.5(c): REASONS FOR WATCHING TELEVISION

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Nothing else to do	64	36.6
For entertainment	156	89.1
To see favourite stars in action	88	50.3
To watch commercials	17	9.7
For style & fashion ideas	50	28.6
For latest news about Singapore	82	46.9
For latest Asian news	57	32.6
For latest world news	79	45.1

} merge these categories  
if result is to be  
meaningful

Table 3.5(d): LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

<u>LANGUAGE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
English	150	85.7
Chinese	80	45.7
Malay	21	12.0
Tamil	7	4.0
Others	5	2.9

Table 3.5(e): TV VIEWING COMPANIONS

<u>COMPANIONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Alone	81	46.3
Family	156	89.1
Friends	35	20.0



Table 3.5(f): DISCUSSION OF PROGRAMMES

<u>DISCUSS WITH:</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Family	81	46.3
Friends	146	83.4
Others	25	14.3



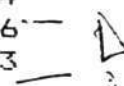
### 3.6 VIDEO MOVIES

Table 3.6(a): NUMBER OF VIDEO VIEWERS  
& FREQUENCY OF WATCHING VIDEOS

<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Weekends only	66	37.7
1-3 days/week	47	26.9
4-6 days/week	11	6.3
Daily	14	8.0
Viewers	138	78.9
Non-viewers	33	18.9
No answer	4	2.3
	175	100.0
	===	=====

Table 3.6(b) : TYPE OF VIDEO MOVIES PREFERRED

<u>VIDEO MOVIES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Western love stories	54	30.9
Hong Kong love stories	47	26.9
Hindi/Tamil movies	14	8.0
Kung Fu movies	80	45.7
Western action/adventure	83	47.4
Horror	99	56.6
Comedies	109	62.3



### 3.6 CINEMA

Table 3.7(a): FREQUENCY OF CINEMA PATRONAGE

<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
No answer	2	1.1
Never or rarely	62	35.4
Once a week or more	79	45.1
Once a month or more	32	18.3
	175	100.0

Table 3.7(b): TYPE OF MOVIES PREFERRED

<u>MOVIES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Western love stories	61	34.9
Hong Kong love stories	32	18.3
Hindi/Tamil movies	9	5.1
Western action/adventure	84	48.0
Horror	99	56.6
Comedies	112	64.0

Table 3.7(c): REASONS FOR GOING TO THE CINEMA

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
To see favourite stars in action	68	38.9
For a date	40	22.9
To see the latest fashions	16	9.1
For a General Paper assignment	1	0.6
For entertainment	120	68.6

Table 3.7(d): COMPANIONS FOR WATCHING MOVIES

<u>COMPANIONS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RELATIVE %</u>
Friends	123	70.3
Boy/girlfriend	47	26.9
Parents	35	20.0
Alone	29	16.6
Teachers	5	2.9
Others	3	1.7

TABLE 4 : MEDIA IMPORTANCE AND MEDIA USE

Table 4.1: MEDIA INTEREST AGAINST PROFESSED MEDIA USAGE AGAINST ACTUAL MEDIA USAGE

<u>MEDIA</u>	<u>INTEREST</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>PROFESSED</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>%</u>
Newspapers	119	68.0	172	98.3	118	67.4
Magazines/ books	96	54.9	136	77.8	79	45.1
Radio	96	54.9	150	85.6	93	53.1
Cassettes/ records	135	77.1	161	92.0	130	74.3
Television	115	65.7	172	98.3	113	64.6
Video movies	83	47.4	138	78.9	79	45.1
Cinema	101	57.7	111	63.4	79	45.1

**Table 4.2: UTILIZATION OF MEDIA: NEWSPAPER AGAINST OTHER MEDIA**

<u>NEWSPAPERS</u>	<u>MAGS</u>	<u>RADIO</u>	<u>CASSETTES</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>VIDEOS</u>	<u>CINEMA</u>
172	138	147	159	169	139	
% of 172	80.2	85.5	92.4	98.3	80.8	

**TABLE 5 : MEDIA INFLUENCE**

**Table 5.1: RESPONSE TO FAMILY-TYPE SHOWS & APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF BEHAVIOUR IN SHOWS & ABILITY TO RELATE TO ADULTS**

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>WATCH SHOWS?</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>DIS/APPROVE</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>RELATE?</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	140	80.0	94	53.7	68	38.9
No	34	19.4	44	25.1	69	39.4

**Table 5.2: MEDIA HELPS TO EXPLAIN LIFE-SHAPING EXTERNAL FORCES**

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
No answer/do not know	2	1.1
Yes	141	80.6
No	32	18.3
	---	-----
	175	100.0
	===	=====

**Table 5.3: WISH TO BE FILM/TV CHARACTER VS. FILMS AND TV ARE A WORLD OF MAKE-BELIEVE**

<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>WISH</u>	<u>REL. %</u>	<u>MAKE-BELIEVE</u>	<u>REL. %</u>
Yes	124	70.9	27	15.4
No	47	26.9	105	60.0

**Table 5.4(a): MEDIA IS HELPFUL VS. GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG FROM ADULTS**

<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>HELPFUL</u>	<u>REL. %</u>	<u>GUIDANCE</u>	<u>REL. %</u>
Yes	143	81.7	83	47.4
No	13	7.4	44	25.1
No answer/do not know/maybe	19	10.9	48	27.4

Table 5.4(b): MEDIA - MORE UNDERSTANDING THAN ADULTS IN REAL LIFE

<u>RESPONSES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
No answer/do not know	49	28.0
Yes	108	61.7
No	18	10.3
	---	----
	175	100.0
	===	=====

Table 5.5: COPING WITH PROBLEMS: SOURCES OF HELP AND ADVICE

[See last page]

TABLE 6 : MEDIA USE AND MEDIA INFLUENCE

Table 6.1: UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE-SHAPING FORCES VS. MEDIA USAGE

<u>NO.</u>	<u>U-STAND</u>	<u>N-PAPERS</u>	<u>MAGS</u>	<u>RADIO</u>	<u>CASSETTES</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>MOVIES</u>	<u>CINEMA</u>
141	(80.6)	139	115	122	129	139	115	88
% of 141		98.6	81.6	86.5	91.5	79.4	81.6	62.4

Table 6.2: UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE-SHAPING FORCES VS. MEDIA OPINION

<u>NO.</u>	<u>U-STAND</u>	<u>MAKE-B</u>	<u>HELPFUL</u>	<u>ADULTS</u>
141	(80.6)	89	121	92
% of 141		63.1%	85.8%	65.2%

**Table 5.5 : Coping with Problems : Sources of Help & Advice**

	Parents	Friends	Teachers	Boy / girl friend	Newspaper / magazine advice columns	Counselling service like SOS	I would try to do what I think people I see in films or on TV or read about would do in similar situations	Others
a) Problems at school	68 (38.9)	128 (73.1)	63 (36.0)	38 (2.7)	5 (2.9)	1 (0.6)	18 (10.3)	21 (12.0)
b) Problems at your job	52 (29.7)	63 (36.0)	6 (3.4)	15 (8.6)	8 (4.6)	2 (1.1)	8 (4.6)	16 (9.1)
c) Money problems	137 (78.3)	62 (35.4)	5 (2.9)	20 (11.4)	4 (2.3)	3 (1.7)	7 (4.0)	19 (10.9)
d) Problems relating to person of the opposite sex	31 (17.7)	128 (73.1)	10 (5.7)	31 (17.7)	12 (6.9)	6 (3.4)	13 (7.4)	12 (6.9)
e) Problems in getting on with parents	25 (14.3)	114 (65.1)	26 (14.9)	32 (18.3)	12 (6.9)	8 (4.6)	13 (7.4)	27 (15.4)
f) Problems in getting on with friends	62 (35.4)	77 (44.0)	24 (13.7)	36 (20.6)	12 (6.9)	5 (2.9)	18 (10.3)	28 (16.0)
g) Problems in getting on with brothers and sisters	101 (57.7)	86 (49.1)	11 (6.3)	26 (14.9)	8 (4.6)	4 (2.3)	10 (5.7)	24 (13.7)