

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON MEDIA CONTENT ON DEVELOPING VIOLENT TENDENCIES AMONG YOUTH

Urmila Nirmal¹, Ruchika Dwivedi², Dr Geetika Saxena³

¹Student B.Sc. (H) Forensic Science

²Assistant Professor Department of Forensic Science, JECRC University, Jaipur

³ Assistant Professor Department of Forensic Science, JECRC University, Jaipur

Abstract

The review study aims to give importance to the media content which is exposed to the larger section of our society that is youth (in Indian scenario), teenagers and children which are very prone to get influenced by what they see on screens and get influenced by every piece of it. The study includes the researches and review articles of last 10 years from 2015 to 2025 from legitimate sources. This paper inculcating the impact of violence shown on screen to the people, it analyzes the psychological impact of media by analyzing the psychological theories and how media effect people in many ways, which we don't even think, but it influences and affect us subconsciously very well. The media content term means violent cinema, OTT (Over the top) content, cartoons and news media violence, obviously media content is a broad term, but here the study combines these media content only. As we know, that cinema, and other forms of content is influencing people from generations, because the first film released in India was Raja Harishchandra which was a silent movie in 1913, from that time onwards, cinema's impact on people's psychology, society, cultural norms and shaping the perspectives of people, it upholds a great power and it is considered as the 7th art, which is the newest form of art. Till now its craze and its power too influence generations is still prevalent to a larger section of society. Next, we talk about OTT (Over the top) media which refers to media delivered via internet, its emergence and use for entertainment was increase in the COVID times, where people were forced to live at their homes and get quarantine. From the last 5 years, its demand and content production developed to many folds and the intriguing part in OTT it is way more unfiltered than cinema, it shows aggression, violence, abusive language, sexual content, nudity way more openly than cinema. It is easily accessible because almost everyone occupies mobile phones, if we discuss the data about India, it has reached 1.1 billion active mobile connections, with a digital penetration rate of 52% of the population. The reason behind stating the fact is to show the power of media and its influence. The problem lies in the unfiltered content, which affect the masses. Cartoon are as always children's favorite and small children of age, are influenced by cartoon very well and just imagine, if they are watching any kind of violence and forms of aggression, in these contents, then it can affect their brain and how they see world, their perception subconsciously will affect. After that there are some movies and OTT content and their impact on people and also, crime committed by people influenced by cinema mentioned also. At the end we will figure out some precautionary ways and rules and regulations by which censorship can be done, on these contents.

Keywords: Violence, Media, OTT, Cinema, Crime, Psychology, impact etc.

INTRODUCTION

India has the highest population of youth in the world; it is the workforce for our nation. As we all know that children, teenager and the young people below the age of 25 are more susceptible and influenced by what they see and perceive. In this digital era, the entertainment industry has flourished to every extent and influenced us so well, that we can't even imagine. This vast media includes predominantly old school Cinema, tele shows, now especially after COVID OTT (over the top) platforms gained immense popularity among people of all ages, and it is so easy to access, with just an internet connection and mobile, that's all it takes. If we talk about children then they love to watch stuffs like cartoon and nowadays, children of age 14-15 also have access to mobile and internet so they can watch anything they want, and they are exposed to those contents also which are age restricted. Right from the inception, humanity has always been discovering ways of recreations, and cinema is one such discovery. (Sundar et al., 2025) Influence can be in both ways, either in positive way or in negative way. A person name Jean-Luc Goddard stated that "Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world". Since from the 1950s cinema has been an eternal part of our life, society, cultural norms, lifestyle, individualism etc. It affects every horizon of our life. The content shown in such a powerful medium should be critically analyzed because it has the power to influence the masses. Literature consistently highlights that audio-visual media exert a stronger psychological influence than print media, as repeated visual exposure leaves lasting impression on viewers, particularly children and adolescents (McQuail, 2014; Healy, 2014)

From theoretical standpoint, Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura (1977) provides a foundational explanation for media influence, suggesting that individuals especially children learn behavior through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Several studies indicate that repeated exposure to violent films, television serials, cartoons and web series may normalize aggression and encourage imitation of deviant

behavior. (Anderson et al., 2003; Hassan et al., 2009) This concern is heightened in children, who often struggle to distinguish between fantasy and reality and may emulate media characters they admire. (Krish, 2006; Nair, 2018)

Another significant framework is Cultivation Theory, advanced by Gerbner (2018), which posits that long-term exposure to media violence cultivates a distorted perception of reality, commonly referred to as the “mean world syndrome” Empirical research supports the view that frequent consumption of violent news, crime serials, and web-based content increases fear, mistrust, anxiety, and insecurity, leading individuals to perceive the world as more dangerous than it actually is (Zulfiqar, 2021; Tylka et al., 2023). Neuropsychological studies further suggest that excessive exposure to violent media may alter emotional regulation and prefrontal control mechanisms, contributing to aggression and desensitization. (Anderson, Gentile & Buckley, 2008)

The rise of OTT platforms and reality television has intensified scholarly concern due to their minimal censorship, binge-watching culture, and emphasis on conflict, voyeurism and sensationalism (Ahuja, 2020; Verma, 2020). OTT contents shows abusive languages, explicit sexual contents, gore, violence, abuse, drug abuse, assaults everything is unfiltered, They state that they want to maintain the originality, but at what cost.

Reality shows such as Bigg Boss and crime-centric web series are argued to promote emotional manipulation, aggressive interactions, and normalization of violence for entertainment. These realistic shows build the tendencies of voyeurism and sadism in human beings.

The American Psychiatric Association and other related organizations conclude that “entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviors, particularly in children and the data point overwhelmingly to a casual connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children.”

The General Aggression Model, which is a comprehensive, integrative, framework for understanding aggression. It includes inputs and modifiers and the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental and biological perspective that how the aggressive personality build up and how it affects later on in life and also state the factors which influence it.

Movies like Animal portrays character, having very unrealistic and higher levels of aggression, blood bath murders, gore, killings, and no legal consequences, and the audience is appreciating such movies, which is shown by the box office numbers, the male showing the neanderthal alpha male character, toxic masculinity traits, which can lead to increase in aggressive behavior, normalization of violence because at the end, film is not showing any sort of legal consequences of such act. Now, the point is that not every person had guns, bodyguards and they will went outside and kill people mercilessly, but the impact will showcase in their behaviors where they can show their power and dominance. People who are less in power, or small age, or heightened aggression even on a small provocation. They can show dominance on their respective partners etc. this is just one scenario there are many more like that.

Children and teenagers are mostly susceptible and vulnerable to such contents, from a small age if children are heavy viewers, and constantly watching such shows, it not only impacts them psychologically by either instilling fears in them or making them irritating, aggressive in long run. But also, make their eyesight weaker, impact shows on their academics also. It creates a habit of watching, and in such tender age the child didn't realizes that how it affected their lifestyle, brain wiring and all.

At the end, the result focuses, on regulating and weaker the effects of violence -based media. In case of children, by parental guidance, environmental support and age restricted contents should not be shown to children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Neelam Mishra, a Delhi-based psychologist, Bollywood films and films in general are capable of motivating crimes “The basic phenomena of human psychology says that people choose and follow whatever makes their image come across as powerful.” It shows that humans have tendency to admire or relate to those characters which are powerful in nature it can be both hero and villain in the move. The basic core intent of cinema is to entertain people. Eventually this medium doesn't want audience to learn, the sole purpose is for entertainment. But this audio-visual medium makes larger impact on people as compared to reading. According to criminologists, all films about crime and its impact on society fall into category of crime films. Films have a greater impact to manoeuvre the audience's mind and makes all the things wrong appear to be right.

According to last 4-5 years trend violence has increased to another level in the Indian Entertainment Industry and also world-wide. This motivates producers and directors to create more content like this. Merriam Webster (2020) defined violence as use of physical force to injure, abuse, damage or destroy.

(Krug et al., 2002) found that the World Health Organization has divided the violence into three broad categories:

- Self-directed violence
- Interpersonal violence
- Collective violence

These three categories were farther elaborated into four types of violence.

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Emotional

Crime thrillers appeals audiences, directors like Sriram Raghvan, Anurag Kashyap, and Ram Gopal Verma these are the people who directed iconic films like Gangs of Wasseyapur, Raman Raghav 2.0, Black Friday, Johnny Gaddar, and Satya in India's film industry.

A recent film 'Animal' was in trend and its all around in news, the reason is the central concept of this movie was violence, the protagonists path is characterized by his ability to use physical aggressiveness. It reinforces toxic masculinity, including traits of hyper-aggression, emotional suppression, preference of using violence to settle disputes with others. Normalization of hostile behaviors, depiction of violence without any legal consequences. From psychological perspective if a person see wrong actions repetitively and on the screens all these actions are justified then subconsciously our brain approves it and think that particular action is correct and acceptable, which in reality is not. (Sreeranjini& Vikas, 2024)

Similarly, Kabir Singh, where Shahid Kapoor plays the lead character role, a person who is confident, controlling in relationships, authoritative, not so professional person, alcohol and drug abuse, no respect of the female, no consent taken from female respondent before kissing, when she was with her family in her wedding function. It idealizes stalking and coercion.(Pawaiya& Tiwari, 2025)

The film Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar has raised an important question that how much violence is truly necessary in storytelling? Is there really need of excessive brutality, it may take audience to always be on the edge that what happens next but in reality it emotionally drained the audience's mind. Violence is not limited to terrorism or geopolitics, it manifests in everyday life, rash driving, noise pollution from schools and religious centres, endlessly blowing horns, road rage, environmental destruction, corruption and social insensitivity. The movie's impact on national level can be seen as by watching and getting information about such content. It may endanger the life of spies or agents which are under covert operations in different countries. (Garhwal Post, 2026) Akshay Kumar's movie Special 26 (2013) where Akshay Kumar and his teammates, fraudulently poses themselves as Income tax officers and conducted raids on those prominent people and politicians, who occupy undeclared money. Now, because the money is undeclared the victim of such acts will not file complaint in police. This movie is based on the real-life incident occurred in 1987 by Opera House Heist at Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri (TBZ) Jewellers at their Mumbai branch. There are many cases reported of people conducting fraud raids and looted money, gold, jewellery etc. One prominent case was of robbers posed themselves as CBI officers and raided on Muthoot Finance at Hyderabad Branch and took 40 kgs of gold with CCTV cameras to destroy the evidences. (Ali M, 2023)

Darr movie starrer Shahrukh Khan, Juhi Chawla and Sunny Deol as main leads. In this main lead was obsessed with Juhi and he stalks her and completely obsessed with her, befriends with her fiancé and later on kidnapped her. There are many cases where a person's love turned into obsession, when the girl is not interested in the person and rejected the proposal it hurts the so-called masculinity, male ego which leads to criminal acts like kidnapping, violence, forceful actions, throwing acid etc.

Lets also understand the Pan India movies, first is Leo (2023) which was directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, in this movie lead role played by Vijay who performs dual role. The film containintensely raw and violent scenes, which are majorly graphically designed, abusive language, violent scenes and many more. The question arises that is it necessary to show extreme violence to make a movie hit or loved by the audience.British Board of Film Classification has issued an 18+ rating, that this movie is not suitable for those who are under 18. But it has got U/A certification. But still these contents are not for faint hearted persons.

S.No.	Movie Name	Its Impact
1.	Darr	Obsession for love, stalking, kidnapping
2.	Kabir Singh	Aggression, misconduct and misbehavior towards woman and her family, drug abuse, toxic masculinity
3.	Special 26	Money heist, robbed undeclared money from politicians, businessman etc.
4.	Animal	Violence, dominance, no legal implications lead to mental acceptance, blurring of ethical boundaries, misconduct towards women.
5.	KGF: Chapter 2 (2022)	Brutal violence, dominance, glorification of violence, ruthlessness as a sign of strength
6.	Leo (2023)	Violence, gruesome fights, normalization
7.	Salaar (2023)	No moral grounding, graphic violence, high octane action
8.	Jailer (2023)	Graphic violence, no real world consequences

S. No	Movie Name	Its Content
1.	The Joker	Killing, murders, people enjoyed it when the joker murdered.
2.	The good nurse	Story of American serial killer Charles Cullen who has 16 years of nursing career before being arrested in 2003
3.	Zodiac	American mystery thriller film, serial killer terrorize people, taunting police with letters, bloodstained clothes, ciphers mailed to newspaper etc.

4.	The Girl Next door	Brutal rape, torture, inhumane treatment, kidnapping, gore violence etc.
5.	Concrete	Raped 400 times, tortured held captive, inhumane treatment, gore, violence etc

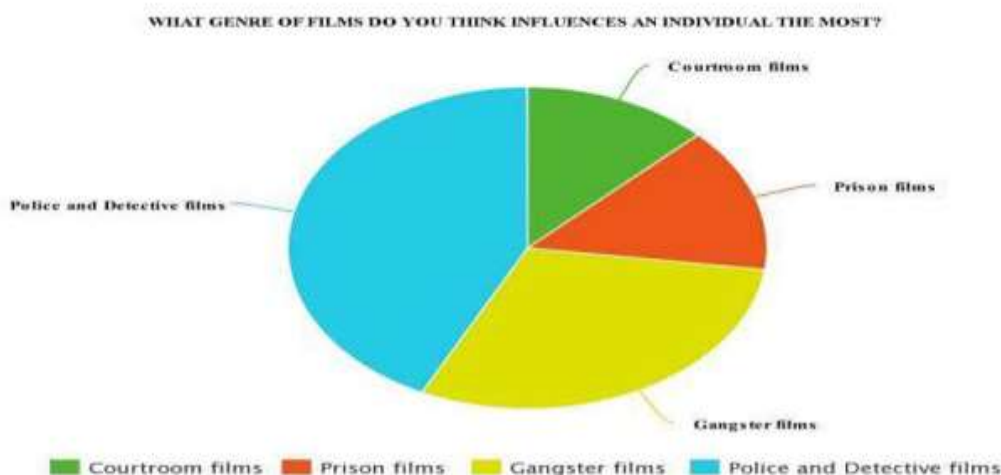
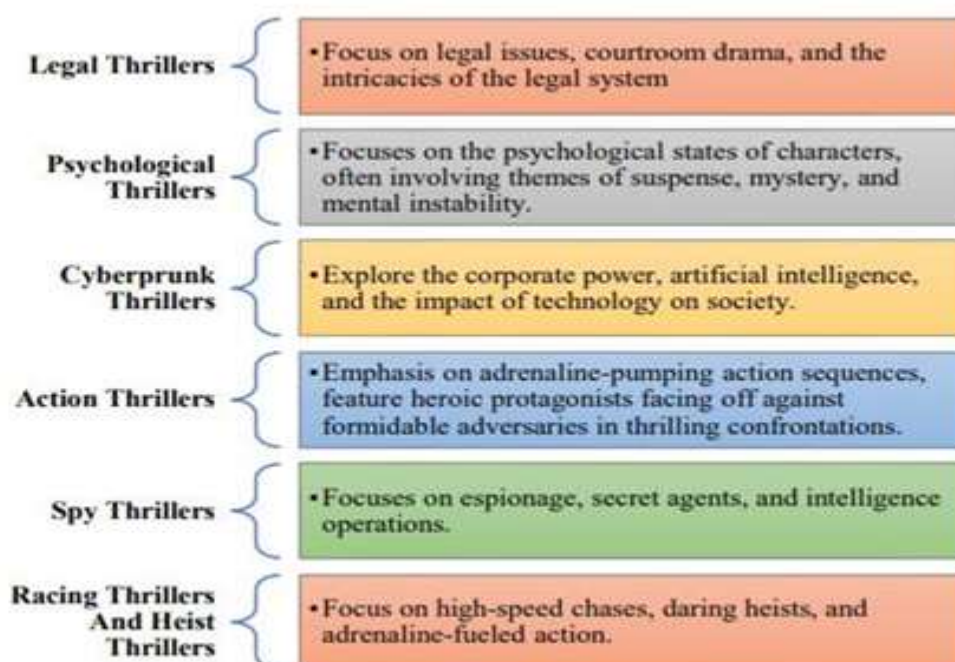


Figure 2 - Genre of films that influences an individual the most

Source - Muraleedharan, Moideen B and Suryakanthi (2023)



OTT (Over the top) Platform

After the era of movies, circuses, plays, television, cable companies, etc., the new type of entertainment is over-the-top media platforms. Major OTT players like Netflix, Disney Hotstar, Amazon Prime, MX Player, VOOT, ALT Balaji, Zee 5 and many others are the new forms of entertainment that people are choosing in this internet-based era, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and movie theatres have become prohibitively expensive to visit (Suman, 2021). The rise of OTT platform tends to increase in the times of COVID, where people are forced to live at their homes and quarantine themselves and watch tv and online content. The cherry on the cake of OTT platforms is they provide original content without any censorship. But they have to follow the rule of self-

conduct and self-regulation. The OTT platforms has signed for self-regulation code of conduct for best practices and controlled censorship under IMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India). After complaints and protests. Ministry for Information and Broadcast, will came forward to keep a check on these OTT and internet based entertainment platforms. The culture of web series started the habit of binge watching in the viewers. Binge watching is defined in various dictionaries as “watching numerous episodes of a single web series at once” (binge-watching, 2018). A report suggested that on an average, Indian viewers spend approximately eight hours 29 minutes watching online video content, which is far more than the global trend of six hours and 45 minutes. This clearly showcases the popularity of online video content, which mainly consists of web series, episodes, short films, entertaining videos and more. According to research on how young people and children access these web series, all they need is an internet connection and a smartphone, laptop, tablet, or personal computer, among other devices. One in three present teenagers, or about 31.9%, will develop an anxiety condition by the time they are 18 years old, according to research on the effects of the COVID-19 scenario in which all children were required to stay at home (Drillinger, 2021). These platforms are not just sources of entertainment but these are also serve as stress relievers, providing a small window of escape from reality and loneliness (Sharma, 2019). Two beliefs concerning media users are the foundation of the use and gratification theory. First off, it actively engages media consumers in their choice of material. People do not use media in a passive way, according to this perspective. People choose their material with interest and motivation. Second, people are conscious of the factors influencing their selection of particular media. They use their understanding of the motivation to choose media that will help them meet their unique wants and needs. A Study of web series & streaming content effects on Indian youth, 2020. Series like Delhi Crimes where they are portraying the story of Nirbhaya, depicts the story of rape victims of 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder, which commonly known as Nirbhaya case. Now, in the series Delhi crimes, starting of the scene showcasing two adults lying naked on the roads of Delhi. Sensitive portrayal of real life incidents, everything seems so real. There are always two sides of coin, in one side film has raw original flavour showing the severity of such cases, portrayal of raw incidents. On the other hand, give incentives to criminals and horrifying for people to watch. It forces us to think how cruel the world can be. Specifically about Delhi National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2019 data shows that at an average of 88 rape cases are filed in India, with 62.4 being the rate of crime against women statistics.

Delhi is renowned as the rape capital, where a woman is raped every five hours for 10 minutes (Delhi News, 2021) (Sarda, 2020).

The Indian government has announced a three-tiered system of regulation under the IT act called the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code for 2021, where such platforms are proposed to be monitored to ensure that the implementation of things like parental control etc., is made so that these platforms can be controlled under Indian Legal system 2024. (Samota, 2021).

Numerous studies in this area show that they have a high level of addiction to social media, OTT platforms, and other applications and that this addiction has negative effects on their real-world social lives, their academic performance, their self-esteem, their attention span, and many other issues (Kumar & Mondal, 2018).

A study was done on large group of people including age from less than 12 to more than 35 years. Mostly, people prefer to see violence and are comfortable to watch it. Some of them watch such content with friends and families. But the people with age group 19 to 25 mostly prefer to watch in alone. The question asked to them is if binge watching affect their academics. Majority of them accepts that yes, it impacts their academics but still they are addicted to it and binge watch such contents. (Rashmi & Jain, 2023)

S. No.	OTT web series	Its content
1.	Sacred Games	The series is about prevalence of mafia culture and crime in Bombay. It has explicit sex scenes, depiction of crime, violence, etc.
2.	Mirzapur	It shows the mafia culture in Mirzapur, India. The dominance of criminals and gundas in society. The content shows alcohol consumption, filthy language, violence. But it follows legal code of conduct
3.	Criminal Justice	The story tells about a taxi driver who has one night stand with a woman and kill her. Content shows gore violence, sexual assault, psychological abuse, mental torture, Drug abuse etc.
4.	Asur	Crime and mythology genre. Serial killings, with scene investigations, brutality of murders, the criminal has psychological syndrome.
5.	Delhi Crimes	Based on Nirbhaya gangrape, starting of this series show boy and girl naked on the road, drug abuse by police, brutal encounters and killings, illegal goods and harsh behavior with victim while questioning.
6.	Dexter	Dexter Morgan, who lives a double life as a forensic blood spatter analyst for the Miami Metro Police Department while secretly acting as a vigilante serial killer. It shows the darker aspect of human nature. The series explore the internal struggle of Dexter as he reconciles his dark urges with his desire to maintain a resemblance of normalcy in his life.

Violent media's effect on Children

According to Healy (2014), the impact of television is more on children because they are more impressionable and vulnerable than adults. There are number of violent television shows which displays and depict aggressive behaviors such as hitting, raping or even killing. Culture and the media are some of the factors that affect the way teenagers dress, talk, walk or even the type of music or food they want. (Kadiri and Muhammed 2021) Televisions maybe a socializing force but it intervenes in complex ways with other forces in a child's life to determine the patterns of socialization for that child (Kadiri and Muhammed 2021)

Gortmaker (2021) defines television habit as the average viewing time individuals give to the television set. He adds that television viewing patterns may impact positively or negatively on an individual's cognitive developing. Viewing television programs for one to two hours daily, on the average, may enhance an individual's cognitive skill development, while a habit of three hours or more of television viewing of general audience programs may reduce the time an individual would spend engaging verbally and socially with family members and significant others, which is perquisite for effective cognitive skill development.

The interconnection between early childhood development and television begins at the start of life. Those who watch more than three hours per day are more likely to have behavioral problems such as stealing or fighting than those who watch television for less than an hour per day, making exposure to television one of the most enduring, powerful and consistent experiences of childhood. The more hours a child views rapid-fire television, the more likely he will have attention challenges late in life (Swanson, 2022)

The number of opinions, images, and attitudes that viewers tend to form when watching television will have a direct influence on how the viewer perceives the real world.

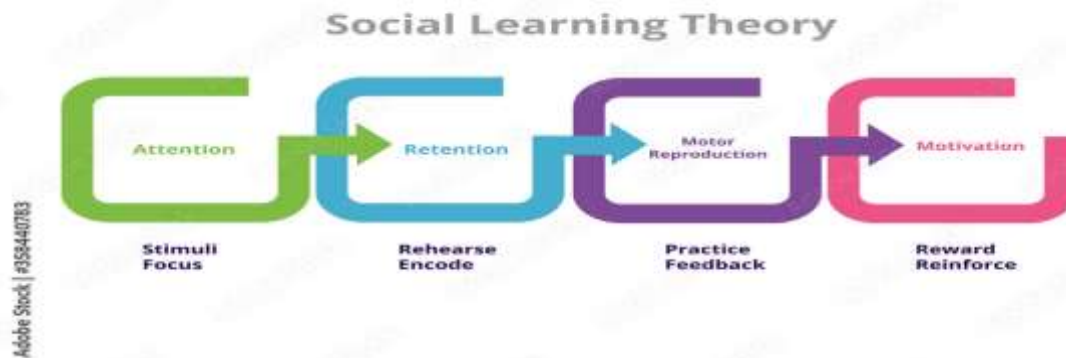
One of the reasons the effects of television violence may be so powerful is that aggression and television violence feed off each other. This reciprocal relationship between television violence and aggression can create a vicious circle. (Bushman and Huesmann, 2001)

The combination of extensive exposure to violence and identification with aggressive characters is a particularly potent predictor of subsequent aggression respond to aggressive television programs with higher levels of aggression than they would under neutral conditions.

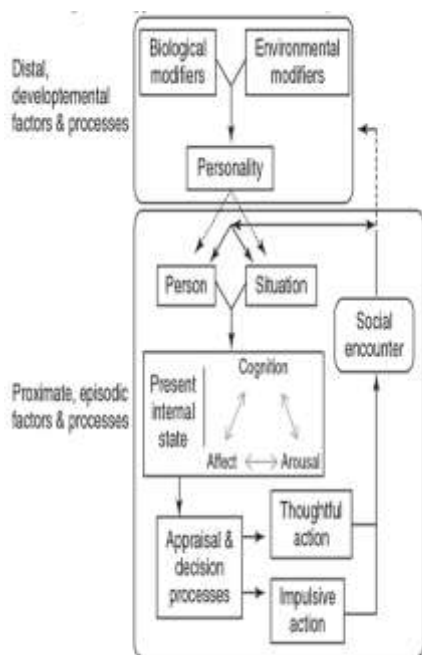
A study done on reality tv shows like Bigg Boss, of its psychological and societal impact and somewhere how it desensitize people, and somewhere normalizing anti-social behaviors in society or in public. The phenomenon of reality TV, exemplified by "Bigg Boss," an adaptation of the 1999 Dutch show "Big Brother," (Baric-Selmic Snjezana, 2017) represents a significant shift in television content and audience engagement over the past two decades. Basically this is a reality show where people are chosen and put it into an environment separated from the real world and put them on 24-hour surveillance of CCTV cameras. The heavy viewers who watch these type of shows constantly, they appreciate the fights, violence and aggression, which heightens their emotions in that surrounding, these sort of reactions and stuffs like that are unacceptable or anti-social in real world scenario. The longitudinal studies on such viewers show that they are so much invested in these contents, such people prefer to live in isolation and their screen time increases, real world relationships affected because they are always consumed with that content. When viewers regularly watching manipulative, aggressive or deceitful behavior, the show suggests that such actions are acceptable in society, after longer period of time they may start to mimic these behaviours, impacting their interpersonal relations. The psychological impacts include, heightened irritability, emotional volatility, and stress. It emphasis on sadism and voyeurism, "Bigg Boss," by design, encourages viewers to derive pleasure from the discomfort and conflict experienced by participants, fostering a voyeuristic culture where invasive scrutiny and enjoyment of personal strife are not only accepted but celebrated. This endorsement of voyeurism and everyday sadism in entertainment reflects a broader societal desensitization to invasive and aggressive behaviours, raising ethical concerns about the content mainstream media chooses to amplify. (Dasari, 2024)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. **Social Learning Theory**-This theory was given by Albert Bandura in 2002. This theory is a bridge between traditional learning theory and the cognitive approach. It emphasizes on the importance of imitation, modeling and reinforcement in the learning process. The thesis highlighted that, over time, an individual's moral growth is significantly influenced by their cognitive conduct (Panda & C. Pandey, 2017).

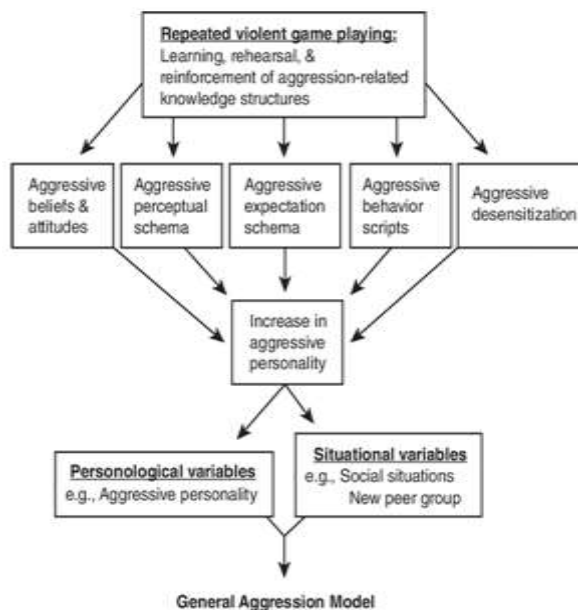


2. **Cultivation Theory-** It argues that the more time people spend “living” in the television world, the more likely they are to believe the social reality portrayed on television or any kind of entertainment source. (Gerbner et al., 1980)
3. **Mean world syndrome-** It is a term coined by George Gerrbnerr (2012) to describe a phenomenon whereby violence-related television makes viewers believe that the world is more dangerous than it actually is.
4. **Priming Theory-** It argues that media effects depend on the preconceptions that are already stored in human memory. (Berkowitz, 1984)
5. **Two – step flow theory-** It argues that media effects are indirect rather than direct and established through the personal influence of opinion leaders. (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948)
6. **Knowledge gap theory-** It discusses on how mass media can increase the gap in knowledge between those of higher and lower socioeconomic status. (Tichenor et al., 1970)
7. **Agenda-setting theory-** It describes how news media can influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)
8. **Uses and gratification theory-** Attempts to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. (Katz et al., 1973, Rosengren, 1974)
9. **Elaboration and Likelihood Model-** It explains how mediated stimuli are processed (via either the central or peripheral route) and how this processing influences attitude formation or change. (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
10. **Framing as a theory of media effects-**It discusses that how the media draw attention to certain topics and place them within a field of meaning (i.e., frame), which in turn influences audience perceptions. (Entman 1993, Scheufele 1999)
11. **Limited capacity model-** It analyzes how people’s limited capacity for information processing affects their memory of, and engagement with, mediated messages. (Lang, 2000)
12. **Reinforcing spiral theory-**This theory argues that factors close to one’s identity act as both a predictor and an outcome of media use. (Slater, 2007)
13. **General Aggression Model-**This model shows the relationship between media effects and aggressive human behavior. It is a social learning model of aggression. This model is divided into two parts of processes one is proximate processes and the second one is distal processes. The proximate processes has two input factors they are Situation and person factors respectively. The situational factors are the ones that individual is currently interacting with and are also related to the probability of development of an aggressive behaviour as an immediate response to the situation for example exposure to violent media (Anderson et al., 2003). The person variable has a significant role because it plays a role in moderating the effect of violent media and aggression. For example, Markey and Scherer (2009) revealed that exposure to violent video games was related to more aggressive affect and cognitions for participants that had high levels of psychoticism trait as compared to the participants with low psychoticism. Basically, a person with inherently or by parental or social conditioning have high levels of aggression or psychoticism will affect more with the violent media content as compared to people



The individual interaction with aggression related situational variables forms a base and serves as a single learning trial. This learning trial includes the learning, rehearsal, and reinforcement of any kind of aggressive-related knowledge structures and the continued exposure to such situation and stimuli thus evokes aggressive feelings, thoughts and behaviour that ultimately leads to a well-practiced knowledge structure used in making decision involving aggression. (Anderson & Carnegie, 2004)

with low levels of aggression and psychoticism. The distal processes in GAM predict the after effect of person after continued exposure to such violence-based contents. It may influence the development of an individual's personality as aggressive personality. There are two types of modifiers which influence the level of aggression in personality of a person. These are biological modifiers and environmental modifiers. The biological modifiers influence the probability of aggression (Raine, Brennan, Farrington, & Mednick, 1997) while they also interact with the environmental modifiers in order to influence aggressive personality (Anderson and Carnegie 2004).



Impact of violent media content

1. **Desensitization Effect**-Desensitization is a word used to describe the ways in which watching acts of violence reduces viewer's responsiveness (Bushman & Huesmann, 2016). For instance, research by Kadiri and Muhammed (2021) has shown that young children are aroused by aggressive scenes on television and as a result, show higher levels of emotion than when they watch passive programmes. The arousal diminishes with repeated exposure to television and the violence no longer affects them. When people are no longer aroused by violence they become less responsive to human suffering and may not be quick to help or may not intervene during an emergency. According to Suler (2015), this reduces normal inhibitions about behaving in certain anti social ways, and may lead to inability to exert conscious control over human behaviour. Similarly, Tabetha (2020) argues that children who watch a model rewarded for performing violently in the media are more likely to experience a desensitization effect and behave in a similar manner.
2. **Arousal**-Media representation of violence can arouse the person who watches the content, and it can impact in short term aggressive behaviour. Now, in this scenario, the excitation stimulus which arise from watching a violent content can transfer to a real-life situations, which can lead more aggressive responses to provocation.
3. **Mimicry**-Our brain has mirror neurons, which helps in mimic things and acts whatever we observe on the screen or surrounding. Children including teens have the tendency to mimic. As children witness violent behaviour, they may be prone to mimic it, potentially leading to the normalization of aggression (Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005).
4. **Priming**-Priming means exposure to violence-based media contents can build up aggressive concepts in the brain, which makes aggressive behaviours and patterns more likely and suitable. The brain associate with external stimulus (violence-based media contents) and subconsciously inclined towards violent behaviour.
5. **Long-term Effects**-The long-term exposure to violent media contents, does not only show short term aggressive effects, but also have long-term and long-lasting consequences. The media is not the whole and sole reason for developing violence and aggression, in the individual, but it is an undeniable fact, that yes cinema, ott, television these sources definitely influence the people and it is integral part of our society.

Thus, we see that all the attributes derived above leads to alteration in the audience behaviour in terms of inclination of tendencies towards aggression and violence (Anderson et al., 2003, Anderson, 2016, Huesmann, 2007).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researches are acquired from various legitimate sites such as Google scholar, academia, research gate, international journals etc. These researches are filtered on the basis of depiction of violent content on different sources like television, cinema, Over the Top Platforms, violent cartoons, news media etc. Its impact on people, including children and teens specially. Research papers and review papers included from the year span of 2015 to 2025.

RESULTS

The findings of this critical review reveal consistent patterns regarding the influence of violent media content on psychological, emotional, and behavioral outcomes, particularly among children, adolescents, and young adults. Across studies reviewed from 2015 to 2025, violent media exposure—across cinema, television, OTT platforms, cartoons, and reality television—was repeatedly associated with increased aggressive cognition, emotional desensitization, fear perception, and normalization of antisocial behavior.

A dominant result emerging from the literature is the **desensitization effect**, wherein repeated exposure to violent imagery reduces emotional responsiveness to violence and human suffering. Studies indicate that frequent viewers of violent content demonstrate reduced empathy, diminished emotional arousal, and greater tolerance toward aggressive behavior. This effect was particularly evident among younger audiences who consume violent cartoons, crime-based web series, and action-heavy cinema.

Another significant finding relates to **social learning and imitation**. Research grounded in Social Learning Theory consistently reported that individuals—especially children and adolescents—tend to imitate behaviors exhibited by admired media characters, particularly when such behaviors are rewarded or shown without legal or moral consequences. Films and OTT series portraying protagonists engaging in extreme violence, dominance, or coercive masculinity were found to reinforce aggressive scripts and normalize unethical conduct.

The review also highlights the role of **arousal and priming mechanisms**, wherein violent media content increases physiological arousal and activates aggressive cognitive schemas. Short-term exposure was linked to heightened irritability and aggressive responses, while long-term exposure contributed to the internalization of aggressive norms. This pattern aligns with findings from studies applying the General Aggression Model (GAM). Furthermore, the analysis reveals that **OTT platforms present heightened risks** due to minimal censorship, binge-watching culture, and graphic realism. Crime-centric web series, reality shows, and true-crime adaptations were frequently associated with anxiety, fear perception, voyeuristic tendencies, and emotional exhaustion among viewers. Several studies also reported negative impacts on academic performance, attention span, and social relationships, particularly among young adults aged 18–25.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the effects of violent media are **not uniform**. Individual differences such as personality traits, existing aggression levels, family environment, and parental mediation significantly moderate media effects. Viewers with higher baseline aggression or psychological vulnerability exhibited stronger negative outcomes compared to those with protective social environments.

DISCUSSION

The results of this review support and extend existing theoretical frameworks explaining media violence effects. Consistent with **Social Learning Theory (Bandura)**, the reviewed literature demonstrates that violent behaviors portrayed by influential characters function as behavioral models, especially when these behaviors are justified, glorified, or left unpunished. Indian cinema and OTT content frequently depict protagonists whose aggressive actions are framed as heroic or necessary, thereby reinforcing imitation and moral disengagement.

The findings also strongly align with **Cultivation Theory**, which posits that prolonged exposure to mediated violence cultivates distorted perceptions of reality. The reviewed studies indicate that heavy consumers of crime-based media are more likely to perceive the world as unsafe, hostile, and threatening—an outcome described as the **mean world syndrome**. This effect was particularly evident in audiences exposed to violent news coverage, crime dramas, and realistic OTT portrayals.

From the perspective of the **General Aggression Model**, violent media acts as a situational input that interacts with personal factors to influence aggressive affect, cognition, and arousal. Repeated exposure contributes to the development of aggressive personality traits over time, particularly when reinforced by environmental and biological modifiers. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that individuals with higher psychoticism or pre-existing aggression are more susceptible to these effects.

The discussion also highlights ethical concerns surrounding contemporary media production. The normalization of graphic violence, toxic masculinity, voyeurism, and emotional manipulation—particularly in reality television and OTT series—raises questions about responsible content creation. While artistic freedom remains essential,

the absence of visible legal or moral consequences within narratives may contribute to ethical blurring and desensitization among viewers.

Importantly, the findings emphasize that media violence should not be viewed as a **sole causal factor** in aggressive behavior. Rather, it functions as a **contributing and reinforcing influence** within a broader socio-psychological ecosystem. Parental guidance, media literacy, age-appropriate content regulation, and individual resilience emerge as crucial moderating factors capable of mitigating harmful effects.

Overall, the results underscore the need for balanced regulation, strengthened media literacy initiatives, and ethically informed content production. The study contributes to existing scholarship by synthesizing theoretical and empirical evidence within the Indian media context while reinforcing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding media-induced aggression.

LIMITATIONS

The study is majorly India centric and rely on secondary sources, restricting direct empirical observation. This highlights the need for primary research designs. The research adopts a narrative review approach, which allows theoretical depth but limits replicability and quantitative evaluation of effect sizes. Future studies may employ systematic reviews or meta-analytical method to generate statistically robust conclusions. This study also lacks longitudinal studies to support the long term effects of violence content.

CONCLUSION

This review of literature highlights the complex and multifaceted relationship between violent media content and its psychological, behavioral, and social implications, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children and adolescents. While media serves as a powerful tool for information dissemination, entertainment, and creative expression, the ethical responsibilities associated with crime reporting and violent content portrayal remain critical.

From a policy perspective, the practice of **police releasing official crime statements to the public** plays a vital role in transparency and public awareness. However, the literature indicates that law enforcement agencies consciously withhold sensitive and confidential information to prevent misinformation, panic, and interference with investigations. This selective disclosure reflects an ethical balance between the public's right to information and the necessity of safeguarding investigative integrity and individual privacy.

In the context of visual media, the **Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)** emerges as a key regulatory authority responsible for monitoring and certifying films in India. Its guidelines aim to prevent the glorification of violence, protect women's dignity, and uphold societal values while maintaining artistic freedom. Although the CBFC categorizes films under U, UA, A, and S certifications based on content sensitivity, several studies suggest inconsistencies in enforcement, particularly concerning violent portrayals. This underscores the need for stricter implementation and periodic review of certification standards in light of evolving media formats, especially OTT platforms.

The literature further emphasizes the **critical role of parental guidance and involvement** in moderating the effects of violent media exposure. While media violence may influence behavior, its impact is significantly shaped by individual temperament, family environment, and upbringing. Active parental supervision, open communication, and contextual explanation of media content are repeatedly identified as protective factors that can mitigate negative psychological outcomes.

Closely linked to this is the importance of **age-appropriate content consumption**. Despite established certification systems and parental control mechanisms, violations remain common, as evidenced by instances where children are exposed to adult-rated films. Such exposure has been associated with fear responses, anxiety, desensitization, and long-term aggressive tendencies. Ensuring strict adherence to age restrictions—both in cinemas and digital platforms—is essential to protect young viewers' psychological well-being.

Finally, the review highlights the growing need for **media literacy programs and open communication**. Educating children, adolescents, and parents to critically analyze media content enables viewers to distinguish between fictional narratives and real-world consequences. Media literacy, combined with dialogue at family, educational, and societal levels, can empower audiences to engage responsibly with media rather than passively absorbing harmful narratives.

In conclusion, the literature collectively suggests that addressing the effects of violent media requires a **multi-stakeholder approach** involving regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies, content creators, parents, educators, and policymakers. Ethical regulation, responsible storytelling, informed parenting, and media literacy together form the foundation for minimizing the adverse impacts of violent media while preserving its constructive potential in society.

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