



UNRESTRAINED MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON ADOLESCENTS' BEHAVIOUR: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper discusses the growing prevalence of Adolescent behavior in India in the recent years amongst boys in the age group of 16- 18 years. It tries to explore the reasons contributing to the increase in adolescent behaviour in India and more particularly the impact of unrestrained media content which has increased due to technological advancement, peer interaction, lack of parental control etc. Media and Adolescent behavior is not only an ongoing debate for years but it's a cause of social concern which has not come to any conclusion inspite of ongoing research, Govt. and NGO machinery working day and night. Sociologists, Psychologists and media researchers are doing their best to prevent and reduce the impact of unrestrained media content through enhanced practice, constant research and evaluation. The aim of this paper is to explore the extent and nature of the unrestrained media content on the adolescent behavior.

Objective. *To explore the relationship between unrestrained media content and adolescent behavior between the age group of 16-18 years amongst boys.*

Keywords: *Media, Internet addiction, Adolescent Behaviour, Peer and Sibling, Violence and Aggressiveness.*

Introduction

The study of adolescent behavior developed prominence in 1990 due to technological advancements, mobile services etc., It became quite evident that the majority of morbidity and mortality during the second decade of life is behavioral in nature. The term *adolescent behavior* has been used to link a number of potentially risk taking behaviours such as substance use, risky sexual behaviour, homicide and suicidal behavior, reckless driving, delinquency and crime. In India, slight information is known about the number of adolescents exposed to unrestrained media, although several studies have attempted to measure adolescents exposure to violence. The adolescents are exposed to unrestrained media in their homes, movies, TV, Music video, games and social peer to peer process. Such exposure causes significant social, psychological, emotional and mental harm when they enter into adulthood. More than 60% of the adolescents are exposed to unrestrained content either directly or indirectly by learning the violent acts from close friends, neighbor or siblings (Finkelhor et al., 2009). Adolescents in the United States, between the age group of 16 to 18 were more than twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes as the population as a whole (Baum, 2005) Recent events, most prominently the school murders, rape in a moving bus and a continuous increase in the crimes by the adolescents have drawn attention to the volatile confluence of culture and psychology. It has become essential for social scientists to understand the function of unrestrained media exposure on adolescents in order to diagnose and treat behavioral problems as well as to prevent further tragedies and disorders in the personality of the adolescents.

"Unrestrained media" in a simple term is the 'hardcore content' that is surrounded by myriad collection of media content that differs in purpose, scope, method, and cultural context. Unrestrained Media includes all forms of information, sexually oriented images and pornographic content in the form of videos and images that are easily and irrelevantly accessed on the internet. This type of "hardcore content" is easily and freely available depicting obsession, fascination and most prominently aggressive behavior to which the young generation has easy access to. But movies and music video depicting such content are available while streaming through various websites and they can easily be downloaded and consumed for a longer period and can be shared through smart phones and other web based applications. Surprisingly there is no standard age, verification necessary before such material can be consumed, and consequently, few websites take some precautions to ban children from getting entry inside.

The problem is not limited to unrestrained content but also includes adolescent's easy access to such content in the form of videos, games, rap and rock songs and its application in their behavior and performance. There are no restrictions over its broadcast on cable and satellite channels and does not have any jurisdiction over the internet. Even the daily soaps, comedic and music video programs may feature unrestrained content that are not appropriate for adolescents. After consuming such content, they take it upon themselves to produce their own media. Adolescents are developing aggressive/sexual desires and want to experiment. Just as late night partying, dating leads to early sexual experimentation to which they are not prepared for. They are using internet connected smart phones, SMS and MMS now named as 'sexting', emails and most exceptional



social networking. They use applications for sending explicit pictures via MMS and generally do not bother how these images are harmful and damaging to one's reputation.

As the children enter the age of adolescence, develop approach and thinking about the world like how it works and they are so mesmerized about the media content from dawn to night. The pictures, images and sounds they hear are being embossed virtually from beginning. There is an urgent need to begin to address the media presentations of violence, senseless killing, and merged sex and violence in the media as we are at risk for even greater proliferation of such images and the inclination of more and more adolescent population to their influence.

Now a day's both the parents being working should be attentive about their children consuming the violent, images contained in modern video games. As game display technology has improved dramatically the violent graphics accompanying games have become quite realistic and gruesome and may be quite inappropriate for adolescents to view. Parents should be aware of the types of programmes/games their children want to play and the kind of games they want to play on and off line and consider withholding games that are not age-appropriate.

Cinema, television, evening news broadcast and the publication media are filled with the images of women as victims, sufferers and the targets of stalking, anger, hatred, or revenge. These depictions shown in the media are often linked to sex, aggressive behavior and violence. The whole societal setup is flooded with such images, which are portrayed as normal but in reality the picture is quite opposite.

These illustrations of violent behaviors, including stalking, are sensationalized. Violence and sex frequently are merged, obscuring the fact that they are mutually exclusive behaviors that are inappropriately bound together.

Theoretical Considerations

The adolescent behavior model seeks to explain a broader range of distinctive behaviours ranging from unrestrained media consumption to homicide, to violent and nonviolent content incorporated in the model. From the earlier research findings it is observed that both violence and aggressive behavior has a predictive relationship in the development of antisocial behavior.

As used here adolescent behavior is a subject matter to be influenced from a variety of forces. The same principles, factors or processes that influence one behavior should predict other behaviors and a search for universal factors, mechanism or processes that predict all behaviors.

Hirschi (1990) have proposed a general theory which attributes adolescent behaviour to a single theoretical construct such as low self-control. Observational theory by Bandura (1977) stated that the process of attention and retention are the core of learning from viewing. Once the information is stored in the memory, it can endure even in the absence of any behavioural manifestation until individual or environmental processes lead to its expression. The Information processing theory by Huesmann (1986) proposed that Television content contributes to children's cognitive script, learned patterns of actions, ones' own behaviour, consequences of that behavior and acceptable forms of social problem solving etc. Adolescents who are constantly exposed to media consider it a realistic reflection of the world and are likely to incorporate and act on its messages.

Thus, post 1990s, there has been tremendous growth of media in India both in terms of kind and reach. Media is now multifunctional; it communicates, entertains and more importantly networks distant communities too. New mediums such as internet, smart phones and other digital devices such as DVD have made communication far faster and often real time. At present the number and reach of media in India is growing at an unprecedented pace. The number of telephone subscribers in India increased from 962.63 million at the end of October, 2014 to 964.20 million at the end of November, 2014, thereby showing a monthly growth rate of 0.16%. The urban subscription declined from 570.58 million at the end of October, 2014 to 568.72 million at the end of November, 2014 whereas the rural subscription increased from 392.05 million to 395.48 million during the same period. The monthly growth rates of urban and rural subscription were -0.33% and 0.87% respectively. (TRAI, Report 2015).

There is a growing concern about whether this is excessive and, if so, whether it amounts to an addiction. The introduction of digital media and faster networking has become part of our everyday life. Due to these changes, we have engaged ourselves in knowledge production, creative expression and communication. The early years in the development of digital technology, computers, window-based media and digital media have become common place and persistent now a day' shaving taken up by a wide range of individuals and institutions. Digital media have escaped the boundaries of professional and formal practice, and the academic, governmental, and industry homes that initially fostered their development. Now they have been taken up by diverse populations and non-institutionalized practices, including the peer activities of youth. Although specific



forms of technology uptake are highly diverse, a generation is growing up in an era where digital media are part of the taken-for-granted social and cultural fabric of learning, play, and social communication. Using social media web sites is among the most common activity of today's adolescents and young community. The introduction of new digital tools and networks are engaged in an unprecedented exploration of language, games, social interaction, problem solving and self-directed actions that lead to diverse forms of learning. (Flanagin, Metzger & Miriam, 2008) These diverse forms of learning are reflected in expressions of identity, how people express independence and creativity, and in their ability to learn, exercise judgment, and think systematically.

Any website that allows social interaction is considered a social media site, including social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter; gaming sites and virtual worlds, video sites such as YouTube; and blogs. (O' Keeffe, Clarke, 2011) Engaging in various forms of social media is a routine activity that research has shown to benefit children and adolescents by enhancing communication, social connection, and even technical skills. Social media sites such as Facebook and MySpace offer multiple daily opportunities for connecting with friends, classmates, and people with shared interests.

G. Stanley Hall's contributions.

The scientific study of adolescence began more than a century ago with the work of Stanley Hall as a means of deepening an understanding of human development. Beginning in the 1880's, hall articulated a theory that "enfeebled" ego. Anna Freud (daughter of Sigmund Freud) described Adolescence as pubertal maturation that entails recapitulation of infantile sexuality. This leads to the resurgence of sexual impulses accompanied by a reawakening of Oedipal desires that lay dormant during earlier period. She hypothesized that adolescence differs from earlier conflict in terms of the defense mechanisms that adolescents bring to bear on their unruly instincts. These mechanisms are prominent during adolescence and both cognitive and emotional development gain full control over their impulses. (Smetana, 2010).

According to Hall (1904), the adolescent period is defined as "storm and stress" is full of contradictions and wide swings in mood and emotions, thoughts, feelings, and actions oscillate between humility and conceit, goodness and temptation, and happiness and sadness. One moment, the adolescent may be nasty to a peer, yet in the next moment be extremely nice to him/her. At one time he may want to be left alone, but shortly thereafter desire to cling to somebody. Hall views adolescence as a turbulent time charged with conflict a perspective labeled the storm and stress view of adolescence.

Defense mechanisms

The psychodynamic theory in psychology discuss about "defense mechanisms," meaning how we behave or think to better protect or "defend" ourselves. Defense mechanisms are also distancing ourselves from people, unpleasant thoughts, feelings or outlook and behaviours.

They are further categorized as primitive, meaning the less effective it works for a person over the long-term. However, more primitive defense mechanisms are usually very effective short-term, and hence are favored by many people and children especially. The adults who don't learn better ways of coping with stress, strain or traumatic events in their lives will often resort to such primitive defense mechanisms as well. (wordpress.com/ psychology).

Most defense mechanisms are fairly cataleptic meaning we are not even aware sometimes that what we are using at what moment. Some types of psychotherapy can help a person become aware of what defense mechanisms they are using, how effective they are, and how to use less primitive and more effective mechanisms in the future.

Regression- departing to a behavior of an earlier age during stressful times and trying to try to recall protection.

Denial-refusal - Trying to accept feelings and experiences that cause nervousness.

Repression - To block those feelings and experiences from consciousness that cause anxiety or nervousness.

Sublimation - To guide disturbing sexual or aggressive impulses into 'acceptable' activities such as learning, working, exercise and leisure.

Projection- Attributing one's own objectionable feelings and motivation to another person.

Asceticism - To engage in more constructive activities to hold back negative desires.

While media especially online media use is an essential part of the everyday life of adolescents, there are a number of risks associated with social media use, specifically, negative effects on health, cyberbullying, texting sexting, dangers of sexual solicitation, and exposure to problematic and illegal content and privacy violations. The risks that adolescents face online are similar to those faced offline. However, the risk profile for the use of various types of social media depends on the type of risk, a adolescent's use of the media and the psychological composition. It is important to note that adolescents' are mostly at



risk and often engage themselves in precarious behaviors offline and also have difficulties in other parts of their lives (Berkman, 2010).

Television is another type of media that has been increasingly popular for programming (KFF, 2002). Unfortunately, products advertised during youth-oriented programming. In fact, young people especially males see more commercials for clothes or any other product. Furthermore, several television shows portray forms of violent behavior as glamorous and powerful with little or no end result.

It is expected to observe information in the media pertaining to drugs, alcohol, and smoking. Alcoholic advertisements are frequently placed during youth-oriented television programs and in magazines. (CAMY, 2005) Furthermore, many “chartbuster” movies and popular television programs featuring youth brigade depict individuals using and/or abusing alcohol, tobacco, and drugs and sexual exploitation. The characters depicted are usually the rebellious or defiant roles in movies and television. Adolescents are more prone to identify with them since, during this stage of development; they are typically “impressed by individuals who take risks”.

Cases

A qualitative analysis through semi-structured interview is being presented in the form of 15 Case Studies. To get a holistic perspective qualitative research is a proven method. It's an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences (Creswell, 1994). It involves describing, explaining and interpreting the collected data. Hence, this research also applied qualitative method in the form of semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this semi-structured interview was to find answer to questions in a more detailed and qualitative fashion which could help interpret the quantitative data more accurately. Since the questions required to be asked for this research were personal and psychological in nature, a personal semi structured interview was considered an effective method to get the right insight. Since some adolescents did not openly like to admit or share their feelings and opinions a method of discreet interaction to explore their mind was considered a useful method. Qualitative analysis is also an established effective method which helps understand how social experience is created and emphasizes the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. By most of the social scientists, the qualitative forms of inquiry are considered to be more practically investigating approach, with a clear perspective on how to research a psycho-social problem.

Qualitative Research Analysis

The case studies presented here seek to qualitatively analyze some of the important questions by means of personal interview to find answer to the main problem whether unrestrained media access and exposure alters adolescents' behavior. Since the nature of the research questions were also personal to a large extent and with limited options of choices were given, it could have been rather difficult to find the right answer. Therefore, it also required a qualitative method to explore the mind of the adolescents and find the answer and further analyze them with the quantitative results. Hence, these case studies.

Data Collection

The primary data in this study was based on in-depth interview with adolescents 16-18 years of age studying in the Govt. and public schools presented as 15 case studies. For this purpose, personal in-depth interviews were conducted among the adolescent students from Ahmedabad, Delhi, Lucknow, Jammu & Kashmir and Mumbai. In addition to this the survey was conducted through personally administered questionnaire.

The qualitative procedure to support methodology was done in order to provide a current snapshot of the adolescent behaviour, this protocol involved data collection through a comprehensive questionnaire administered across all Public and Govt. institutions with a requisite sample allocation to garner current comparative opinions on issues ranging from most favoured media, favoured content, time spent, psychological impact of the content, parental control, govt. policy besides the rest.

Scope of the Study

- To Study the impact of unrestrained Media exposure on Adolescent behavior.
- Examine the way adolescents relate to the different kinds of media usage as well as assess observable phenomenon.
- Enumerate the usage patterns and arrive at peculiarities and associations
- Investigate awareness about Unrestrained Media content in regard to exposure, content and privacy implications

Qualitative Samples (Case Studies)

Table 1.1

States Covered	No. of Respondents
Ahmedabad	15
Jammu & Srinagar	4
Delhi	2
Lucknow	2
Mumbai	2
Total	15

The analysis in Table 1.1 indicated that for qualitative analysis a total of 15 respondents were chosen for in-depth interviews. Detailed discussions were being done in order to extract as much as information to support the research and come to certain conclusion.

Table 1.2: Access to Internet

Access to Internet	CITY				
	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Lucknow	Jammu & Srinagar	Mumbai
Yes	98.7	99.0	98.0	94.0	96.0
No	1.0	1.0	2.0	6.0	2.0
No Response	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0

Table 1.3 Programmes Like to Follow on Internet

Programmes Like to Follow on Internet	CITY				
	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Lucknow	Jammu & Srinagar	Mumbai
Entertainment					
1	56.9	45.0	56.0	38.0	50.0
2	32.4	52.0	26.0	45.0	38.0
3	5.9	2.0	18.0	13.0	8.0
4	3.9	1.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
No Response	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 1.4 Places of Internet Access

Places of Internet	CITY				
	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Lucknow	Jammu & Srinagar	Mumbai
Home	88.6	87.0	86.0	82.0	90.0
Cyber cafe	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
Friend's place	6.2	12.0	10.0	11.0	10.0
Free wifi zones	3.9	1.0	4.0	6.0	0.0
No response	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 1.4 indicated that nearly 90% of the respondents have Internet access at home followed by friend's place. Further, access to computers and the Internet has expanded dramatically over the last few decades, and the ways adolescents' handle devices such as Smartphone's, computer's or laptops, music player's etc has increase manifold which is a clear indication that they have at least one electronic gadget at home to access freely.

Table 1.5 Influences of Crime, Violence and Pornography

How do the Scenes of Crime, Violence And Pornography In Media Influence them?	CITY				
	Ahmedabad	Delhi	Lucknow	Jammu and Srinagar	Mumbai
They Entertain	11.1	19.0	26.0	18.0	22.0
They Excite	14.4	11.0	12.0	8.0	16.0
They Annoy	22.5	11.0	16.0	15.0	8.0



They Encourage to do the Same	52.6	59.0	50.0	56.0	58.0
No Response	0.7	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0

Table 1.5 indicated that more than 55% respondents across the five cities feel that they get influenced by crime, Violence and Pornographic content shown in media. This is very well supported by many theorists that watching violent media content often make a person behave in an aggressive or violent way. This kind of content reveals that if people behaved violently in reel life could mean that adolescents' do not get a realistic understanding of what happens in real life.

Conclusion

The relationship between media and crime is a highly contested one. There're strong arguments for and against this assumption which are also quite partisan most of the times. One of the arguments given by the supporters of media is that criminal behaviour and acts of crime predate the advent of media. Another argument is that media communicates all kinds of content ranging from education, science, technology, religious messages, morality and so on. As such, why should media be subjected to a stereotypical identity which causes suspicion antipathy? There's yet another view which holds the changing socio-cultural-economic dimension of Indian society responsible for the rising incidences of crime more than the unrestrained content of media. On the other hand, the arguments which try to fix media's responsibility towards crime and unwanted behaviour are no less powerful. We live in an era when the portrayal of crime is often presented by the media not as a matter of shock but as sensation. Besides crime, media is also held responsible for being insensitive towards cultural values, ethics and moral order. It neither practices self-regulation and restraint nor likes to have any outer control. Hence, indiscriminate and often disproportionate portrayal of violence, crime, sensuality, pornography through cinema, TV serials, internet have grown out of proportion. Unrestrained access to media through host of public and personal devices ranging from movie theatre to laptop, personal computer, tablets and mobile phones have provided numerous low-cost and at times free access to violent and sleazy contents to everybody including the adolescents. Easy access and abundance of such contents is a matter of concern more particularly when we try to see it in the context of India's massive adolescent population which has almost unrestrained access to internet and other sources. The KPMG Report 2015 indicates that the internet users in India are 388.3 million in 2016 which is likely to grow to 791.8 million by 2020. A large proportion of this user comprises of the adolescents. The adolescents are increasingly struggling with compulsive Internet use (CIU) and compulsive behaviors related to unrestrained or explicit media content, pornography and criminal behavior. The analysis of the survey data conducted in this study under the analysis of quantitative data also supports the fact and reveals that more than 55% respondents feel that the acts of crime, violence and pornography influence their behaviour.

This study is quite relevant for a country like India which is going through the transitional phase where modernity and traditional outlook and systems are conflicting with each other. Media, which so far was a source of information and empowerment has become an unrestrained monster which offers all kind of images and information indiscriminately. The slightest suggestion of outside control on media and its content meets massive opposition. It also reflects in the analysis of the quantitative data presented earlier where the respondents viewed against any kind of outside control on media. Study by Rosen (2011) also states that nowadays many adolescents including children have never known a life without technology. "To them, the smart phone, the Internet, laptops and gaming apps everything technological are not 'tools' at all – they simply are. Just as we don't think about the existence of air, they don't question the existence of technology and media. They expect technology to be there, and they expect it to do whatever they want it to do. For them WWW doesn't stand for World Wide Web; it stands for "Whatever, Whenever, Wherever". The negative impact of online Social networking is that it provides a platform for communication and helps remain in touch anywhere in the world without knowing the consequences. So, it can be said that it helps in widening the adolescents' social relationship and share their personal experience with their friends.

Recommendations

The nexus between crime and the portrayal of violence and obscenity in media needs a much wider investigation. This study was primarily meant to look into the psychological impact of crime, violence and obscenity depicted by unrestrained media on adolescents' behaviour. Since, it was confined to the psychological aspects more than the acts of crime per say, its sample did not include delinquent adolescents. Thus, the inferences drawn from this study may only indicate the strong possibility of such contents alluring or encouraging the adolescents towards committing acts of crime. Nevertheless, the rising incidences of crime committed by the adolescent needs to be investigated thoroughly from different perspectives including that of media and its impact on the impressionable mind of the adolescents. Therefore, it may be recommended that:

1. A wider investigation must be carried out to get the larger picture
2. The investigation should be conducted on all-India basis with a bigger sample size



3. To investigate whether unrestrained media access and content actually lead the adolescents to crime, a separate study involving delinquent adolescents should be carried out
4. Any further study in this area should also take into account the socio-cultural-economic factors as well
5. The efficacy of stringent self-regulation regime by media vis a vis government control should be thoroughly investigated

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