



AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF UNRESTRAINED MEDIA EXPOSURE ON ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract

This research paper discusses the rising incidences of adolescent behaviour in India due to the surge in technological advancement with emphasis on the unrestrained media exposure in the recent years. Here, we have tried to explore that whether unrestrained media is one of the contributing factors leading to adolescent behavior or there are other factors responsible for such type of behavior.

Keywords: *Unrestrained Media, Peer Influence, Internet and Smartphones, Social Networking, Behavioural Impact on adolescents*

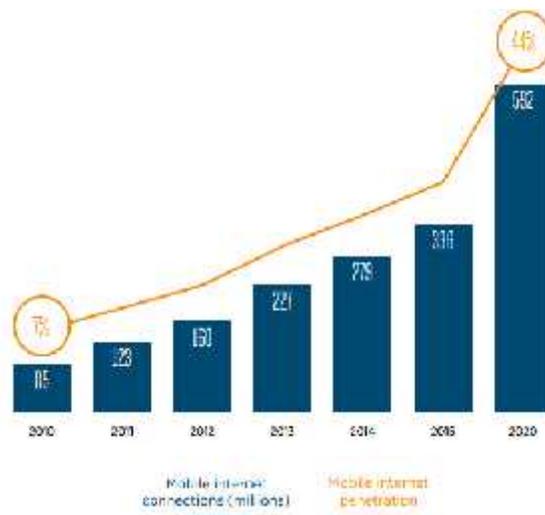
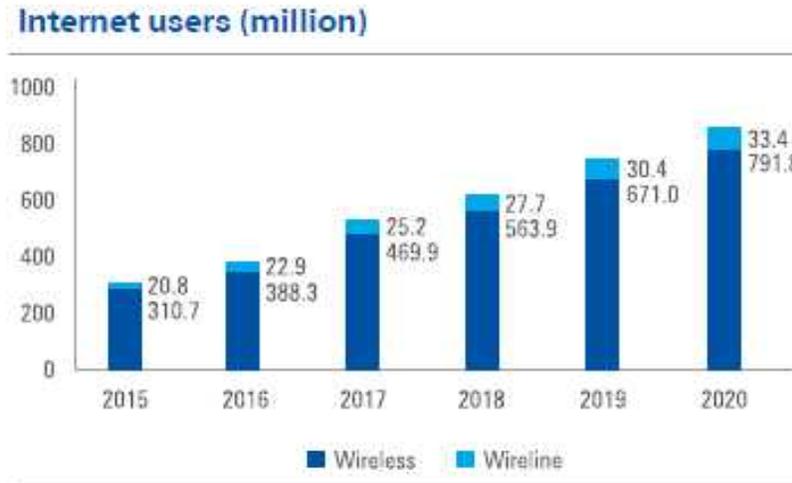
Introduction

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 networks distant communities too. New mediums which disseminate and carry communication such as Internet, smart phones and other digital devices like DVD, pen drives have made communication much faster and often real time. At present the number and reach of media in India is growing at an unprecedented pace. Films, television, Internet, mobile phones, laptop computers, tablets; all have been witnessing tremendous growth. Being the world's largest producer of feature films, India as an average produces over 1200 films a year in more than 25 languages. In 2013-14, it produced a total of 1966 feature films in 36 Indian languages. As compared to that Hollywood produces an average of only 500 films per year. By 2019, the revenue collection of Indian films is expected to touch INR 204 billion and achieve the compound growth rate of (CAGR) of nearly 10%. It shows the growing popularity and reach of Indian cinema over the years. The Indian Media and Entertainment (M&E) Industry, one of the most vibrant and exciting industries in the world, has a tremendous impact on the lives of people especially teenagers and youth who often try to emulate the lifestyle, action and emotions shown in the films. The impact of Govt.'s "Digital India" and "Smart City" initiatives are set to exponentially increase the internet penetration revolutionizing our life style in a broader way. Presently we are going through a phase of rapid and sustained technological innovation which will permanently change the way people access and consume content.

In a way, television has become an easy substitute for cinema in terms of entertainment. It has long glamourized serials, reality shows, fashion and lifestyle channels and cinema besides news, sports and other genres. Indian television industry has not looked back since the advent of satellite TV, cable operated network and now Direct to Home (DTH) technology. The revolution started with the beginning of the satellite television in January 1991 introduced by Transnational Satellite Broadcaster with reception of CNN. This revolutionized the market. Soon local entrepreneurs set up Dishes to receive signals and delivered them through Cable network and the Indian TV market was flooded with private channels like Zee TV, Star TV, Sun TV and many more. In 2004, DTH TV or Direct to Home TV was launched in US and after few years Satellite TV was boomed in India. At present Satellite TV market I have formidable players like Dish TV, Tata Sky, Big TV, Airtel Digital and many more. The Direct to Home Service of Satellite TV got popularity Because of the quality pictures, strong signals and above all - availability of more channels of entertainment, smart features like rewinding, recording facility the penetration and viewership of television has increased manifold. The country which was dependent on a single government broadcaster Doordarshan for decades now enjoys five basic types of television in India which include broadcast or "over-the-air" television, unencrypted satellite or "free-to-air", Direct-to-Home (DTH), cable television, and IPTV. Television has become the most preferred and easily accessible source of entertainment.

India is world's second biggest user of mobile phones after China. It is estimated that there are around 944 million mobile connections in India. Of the total internet base of 331 million subscribers, there are 200 million mobile internet users including 3G and 4G users is 140 million in Indian context. The user base is estimated to be over 140 million in India. (KPMG, 2016).

It is observed that in 2015 there are about 180 million Smartphone's in India, predominantly Android-based with camera and other features. The number of wireless internet users in India is likely to cross 790 million by 2020 (KPMG Analysis) with more than 60% of users accessing the internet through mobile phones(AMA Report, 2016). 3G and 4G subscribers would increase 40% of the current base. (Crisil, 2015)



KPMG in India Analysis, 2016

World over media proliferation and communication revolution have acquired new dimensions due to Internet. It has also impacted the Indian society in more ways than one and has become one of the fastest growing media with 19% penetration. As per the KPMG report 2016, for many low income prepaid mobile users who spend at least INR 100/month on recharging, their first experience is not emailing or web browsing but WhatsApp to connect to friends and family, or to a peer group.

For adolescents, the first App is more likely to be Facebook, and many start by using it over free Wi-Fi in their institute and later make a group that is using actually data-heavy apps- on campus Wi-Fi. (KPMG, 2016) 44% of internet users in India use WhatsApp and 53% use Facebook everyday (AC Neilson report, 2015). The sharing of media among adolescents in a WhatsApp group is a powerful driver of media consumption as well as makes easier to share media in one shot to 50 to 100 people in a group. The most fascinating thing about these online platforms is that they are transitioning into complete communities in chat groups where users can share a variety of things within the app ecosystem.

The impact of Govt's "Digital India" initiative would increase the mobile penetration revolutionizing economy and our way of life. Social networking Apps like Instagram and Snapchat, which focus on taking and sharing photographs, are rapidly gaining favour particularly among the adolescents. Music and video streaming are extremely popular with numbers showing YouTube to be the most popular destination. Statistically, the consumption of video content online has risen from 49-66 percent over the last year.

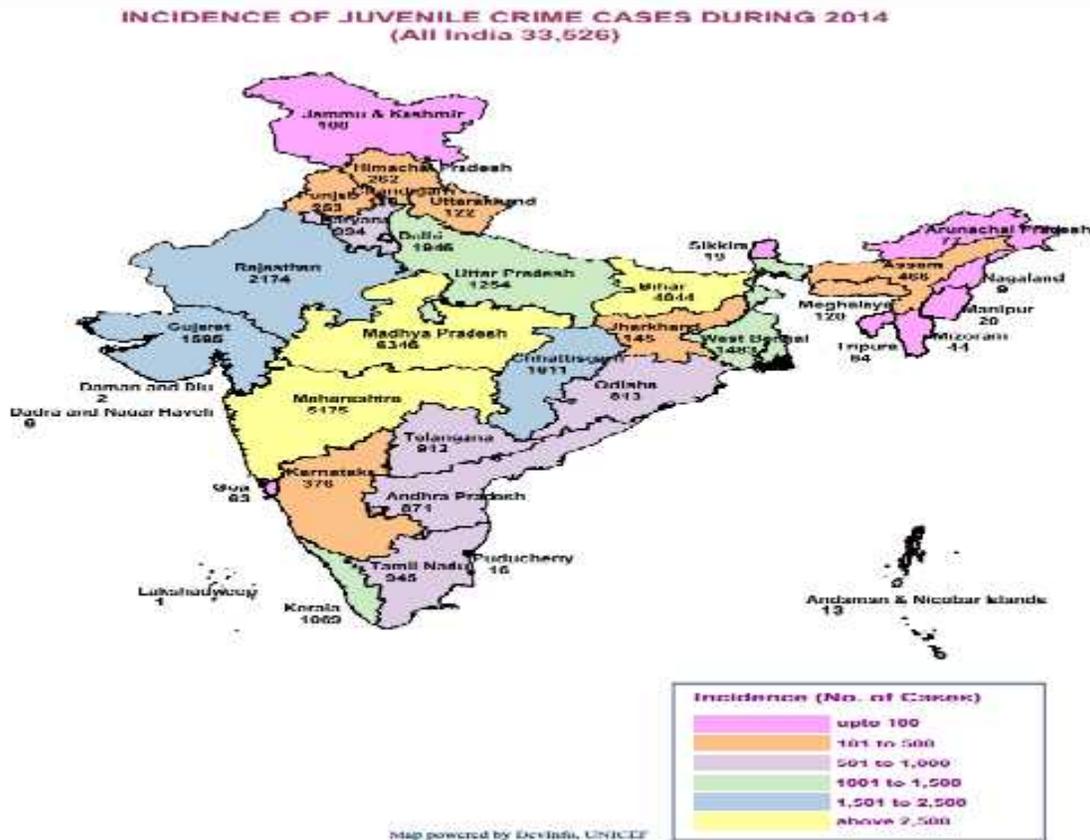
In this backdrop, there is a growing debate doing rounds about the social and behavioral impact of media on society with emphasis on adolescent population. More particularly, when it comes to the rising acts of serious crime and overall intimidating criminal behaviour in the society, it's often attributed to the impact of media on the young and teenage population besides others. The rising occurrence of teenagers' involvement in grievous crimes in India in the recent years is a cause of concern. According to a report published in The Times of India, Mumbai (Feb. 14, 2014) there was an alarming

hundred percent increase in the cases of rape committed by the juvenile. While its occurrence was 11 in 2012, it rose to astounding 28 reported cases during the first ten months of 2013. The cases of molestation and harassment also had hundred percent increase during the same period. In Mumbai there was 15% rise in registered juvenile crimes during 2012 and the first 10 months of 2013. In 2012,700 cases were registered against the teenage children, but by January – October 2013 it rose to 802 which shows a constant rise in their involvement in crime.(NCRB, 2014) The case which shook nation's sensibility and made it rally for the crime against women was the 2012 Nirbhaya case of Delhi. It not only brought to the national limelight the rising grievous crimes against women including rape and murder, but also the shocking involvement of a teenager in the crime who was not only an accomplice but also the cruelest perpetrator.

According to India's National Crime Bureau report 2014, total number of cognizable crime in 2014 was 18, 43,862 in mega cities comprising 6, 16,639 cases registered under IPC. The number of cases registered under various sections of IPC crimes against juveniles (in conflict with law) have increased by 5.7% over 2013 as 31,725 cases under IPC crimes were registered which increased to 33,526 in 2014. In 2014, the major juvenile crimes under various Sections of Indian Penal Code included cases of theft (20.0%), rape (5.9%) and grievous hurt and assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (4.7%). These four crime heads have together accounted for 39.7% of total IPC cases (33,526) of juveniles in conflict with law.

1.2 State-wise distribution of cases registered against juveniles under various sections of IPC: Madhya Pradesh (6,346 cases), Maharashtra (5,175 cases), Bihar (4,044 cases), Rajasthan (2,174 cases), Delhi (1,946 cases), Chhattisgarh (1,611 cases) and Gujarat (1,595 cases) have reported high incidence of cases registered against juvenile under various sections of IPC. These seven States taken together have accounted for 68.3% of total cases of juveniles in conflict with law in the country. A total of 121 cases and 94 cases registered against juveniles under murder in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh respectively during 2014. The highest cases of rape registered against juveniles in the country was reported from Madhya Pradesh (434 cases) followed by Maharashtra (208 cases), Uttar Pradesh (176 cases) and Rajasthan (149 cases) which was 21.8%, 10.5%, 8.8%, 8.1% and 7.5% of total rape cases registered against juveniles respectively in the country. Among UTs, 120 cases of rape registered against juveniles were reported in Delhi during the year 2014 (NCRB, 2014).

Chart 1.7 All India statistics on Juvenile crimes



Source: NCRB Report 2014



Media and crime is not only an ongoing debate in India and elsewhere, it's a social concern as well. It has acquired importance in the Indian context because explicit and unrestrained content disseminated primarily through mediums like films, television and Internet depicting sex, violence, crime and pornography are proliferating in the society. The electronic devices and technologies are now easily available to all including the teenagers. The nature of modern electronic devices such as smart phones, laptops, personal computers make such contents easily accessible and often the lack of parental and societal control exposes the teenagers to images and acts which influence their mind at an early age. According to Pendyala and Sinha (2010) there're 42 million pornographic websites, which is 12% of the total websites. There're 420 million pornographic pages on the Internet. The daily pornographic search engine requests are 68 million which 25% of search engine requests is. Most interestingly 42.7% Internet users view pornography. Of course, a large chunk of this comprises of the teenagers too. Bholey (2014) says that the question is not whether such explicit contents of sex and violence influence minds and particularly the impressionable minds. Because unless they influence why people watch such contents? The real question is whether such exposures through media are responsible for criminal behavior and if yes, to what an extent? Apart from sex and violence media generates far more informative, entertaining and socially meaningful contents too. As such, whether unrestrained media content and its exposure the only factor to induce and encourage the impressionable mind of the teenagers need to be investigated in the Indian context.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

We are living in an age where media are ubiquitous. They have become our source of information, business, entertainment and interaction. So its exposure is all around. The impact of such intense and pervasive interaction with media on the social and psychological behaviour of young people needs careful investigation. Describing the interaction between media and adolescents Nevins (2004) writes:

“Adolescence is a time of extensive cognitive, emotional, physical, and moral development. These biological and psychosocial changes have a double affect on adolescents' relationship with mass media. They affect how adolescents approach the media, as well as how they are affected by the media.”

Although scientific studies have established the influence of media on adolescents' behaviors like smoking, drinking and the occurrence of obesity etc. relatively less studies have been carried out to examine their relationship which have deeper social consequences such as early sexual initiation, violence, aggression and criminal behaviour of the adolescent in India. The studies in related areas so far have examined the relationship in a cross-sectional manner. As a result, they do not allow inferences to be drawn on the basis of causal connection between behavioral change and the role of unrestrained exposure to media. Some of the studies though indicate that unrestrained media exposure can increase early sexual behavior. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate whether the unrestrained exposure of media influences the behaviour of the adolescent and is there a causal relationship between the rising incidences of crime among the adolescent and media in India. The study becomes all the more important in the post-Nirbhaya incident in which the main perpetrator of crime was an adolescent.

Methodology

Given the nature of the study it was felt that only selected adolescent male respondents could be interviewed. Hence, a purposive sampling was drawn confined to specific type of respondents who could provide the desired information within the defined parameters. Accordingly only school going adolescents in the age group of 16-18 were selected from across five cities of India namely Ahmedabad, Jammu, Srinagar, Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow. Since the study is confined to see the causal relationship between the impact of unrestrained media content and the rising incidence of crime among the adolescent, it remains confined to the male respondents. Approximately 700 respondents belonging to the five cities mentioned above studying in both government and public schools were approached for survey during December 2015 to March 2016. 646 forms were filled up by the respondents out of which 606 were found complete in all respect.

H1: Unrestrained Media Exposure Leads to Change in Adolescent Behaviour

Regression:

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.023403
R Square	0.000548
Adjusted R Square	-0.00111
Standard Error	0.643778
Observations	606



Here the value of R square is .0005 which implies that 0.05% of the variance in adolescent behavior has been explained by variation in unrestrained media exposure.

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	1.925569	0.182881883	10.52903	6.46E-24	1.566407	2.284731	1.566407	2.284731
X Variable 1	0.045204	0.078572678	0.575318	0.565291	-0.1091	0.199513	-0.1091	0.199513

If unrestrained media behavior increases by 1 hour, the rate of crime among adolescents increases by 0.04%

Anova

Anova	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	0.137179286	0.137179	0.330991	0.565291
Residual	604	250.3281672	0.414451		
Total	605	250.4653465			

We may accept the Hypothesis that there is change in adolescent behavior due to unrestrained media exposure which may encourage the adolescent to commit crime.

As per the theoretical perspectives of media’s impact one perspective focuses on the structural power of media to influence thought (Bandura, 1986) and the other perspective focuses on choosing the kind of media to consume (Blumler & Katz, 1974). According to the other structurally based Cognitive Social Learning theory, states that people imitate behaviors of others if they see that those behaviors either lead to reward or lack of punishment theory.

Representation of a specific behavior is more likely when the behavior is attractive and resonates with the person viewing it. Modeling also increases when the viewed behavior is similar to the viewer’s current behavior, is simple for him or her to emulate, is prevalent in what they see and hear, and has some functional value. Therefore, this would support the structural influence of media, in that case if teenagers see attitudes and behaviors being rewarded in any films or any form of media (and if the behaviors are attractive and easily imitated), adolescents are more likely to emulate these same attitudes and behaviors.

According to the Cultivation theory that supports the perspective that mediated values shape the societal values. In this theory, media reflect certain aspects of society more strongly than other aspects and thus create a false reality that is based in the real world.

Through the images teenagers view and icons they may emulate, they work to define their self concept and identities (Kellner, 1995). Many other theorists have also viewed adolescence as the crucial time period where identity formation is concentrated (Lloyd, 2002). Therefore, adolescents use media more than ever during this time period (from a uses and gratifications perspective) with goals of identity construction and maintenance.

This test implies that if unrestrained media exposure increases by 1 hour, the crime rate is likely to increase by .4% The hypothesis that unrestrained media exposure leads to change in adolescent’s behavior is thus again substantiated.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the study unrestrained media exposure leads to the behaviour change of the adolescents depends upon the relationship of the teenagers with media, it’s consumption which are the major source of enrichment and short term pleasure contributing to the cognitive and behavioral development and inspiring the adolescents to the world of fantasy and imagination. Today, media has become an object of critical concern because of its varied variety in programming, gaming and application based characters and other money spinning products.

The media, especially, the Internet and social networking sites such as Facebook and Whatsaap etc. symbolizes the possibility for on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device or Smartphone, as well as interactive user feedback, participation, and community formation around the media content. Presently media remains less persistent than traditional forms, especially television and music, in part because digital platforms have extended the reach of traditional media. But the balance is shifting, and the new studies are happening to explore that new forms of media are already influencing adolescents ‘attitudes and behavior, both positively and negatively. The Social Science experts are actively engaged in this rapidly developing media landscape, identifying potential links between media content and adolescent



behavior, exploring ways to harness new media's power to promote and develop programs to give parents the skills they need to effectively channel their children's media use.

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