



Research Article

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An Empirical Study on Indian Crime Web Series and Its Effects

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ABSTRACT

With the COVID-19 lockdown, the world has entered a new era of communication. Nowadays, everyone, including children, has access to smartphones, computers, tablets, and other devices that are connected to the internet. Web series have become extremely popular as a result of the easy access to OTT platforms made possible by this internet connectivity. Online series are not just becoming more and more popular; they have also been shown to be a form of addiction, as evidenced by the term “binge viewing,” where a viewer cannot stop after watching one episode and ends up watching the entire series. Binge-watching and web series are causing people to have more health and social behavior issues. The following essay attempts to analyze the social and psychological effects of the top five Indian crime web series. A survey of Indian viewers (N = 321) is conducted in addition to a content analysis of these web series, which looks at the qualitative component to provide empirical conclusions about the impact. The papers provide a comparative study as well as the formula for creating the content for these web series. The satisfaction that comes from watching these series has a significant impact on consumers, according to the survey results.

INTRODUCTION

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 fact of the current millennium generation is that everyone engages in binge-watching, very few people watch much television, and they are addicted to apps, the internet, and OTT media platforms (Srivastava, 2019).

Creators and directors of online TV shows often include violent and pornographic content to add originality and make the content more real-time. However, the need for originality is debated. India has a high rate of rape cases,

with Delhi being the rape capital. Online TV shows may encourage sex and violence, as what one sees is what they believe, potentially impacting viewers' perceptions. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2019 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 (DelhiNews, 2021) (Sarda, 2020).

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). According to survey findings, many youngsters

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have displayed signs of anxiety and sadness. Teenagers have access to these web programmes, and several studies have found that they prefer watching on OTT platforms over cable TV and television. These youngsters are experiencing a variety of health and mental concerns as a result, including unfavorable behavioral and mental changes (Matrix, 2014)(Matrix, 2014). (Ahuja, A STUDY OF EFFECTS OF WEB SERIES & STREAMING CONTENT ON INDIAN YOUTH, 2020).

According to predictions, the Indian OTT market will generate \$1.7 billion in revenue by 2023 and will rank sixth in the globe by 2024. As these platforms don't yet have any censorship, there is a continuous discussion about whether we are creating criminals through the promotion of such web shows. 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).

The following research paper makes an effort to identify the socio-physiological effects of these crime series, particularly the crime-based web series on these OTT platforms, on viewers. The research also tries to determine how these web series content affects viewers and what motivates them to watch them.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The following research was conducted to find out the following research questions identified.

1. What are the socio-physiological effects of crime-based web series on viewers?
2. What motivates their consumption on over-the-top media platforms?
3. What are the demographic factors, such as age, gender, and educational background, that influence the effects of Indian crime web series on viewers?
4. What are the social and cultural implications of Indian crime web series in shaping viewers' beliefs, values, and societal norms related to crime and punishment?

Theoretical Framework

First, theories connected to social media and OTT platforms are offered to comprehend their usage while taking into account social and psychological elements. These theories then aided in conducting content analysis and constructing the survey questionnaire.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) The social cognitive theory, which is widely applicable when it comes to choosing which web series to watch, is the first hypothesis that has a big impact. According to the following notion, people can learn a lot by watching what others do, especially when it comes to selecting internet content.

The thesis highlighted that, over time, an individual's moral growth is significantly influenced by their cognitive conduct (Panda & C. Pandey, 2017). The social cognitive theory investigates how and why individuals behave in particular ways on various social platforms. By examining their cognitive reactions, it investigates the social context, past reinforcement, expectations of those people, and expectancies.

People view models or their preferred role models and act in ways consistent with what they see them doing. According to SCT, this behavior is also influenced by the praise or criticism that these role models receive in the content that is being given (Bandura, Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory., 1986) (Bandura, Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication, 2008).

The theory of uses and gratifications (UGT) Since OTT platforms are known for enabling tailored viewing, use and gratification theory is utilized by the media owners of these platforms to determine how the audience is being satiated by a given platform and its media content. For the proposed research, it is essential to comprehend the effects and value of the media. To support their satisfaction with the audience's utility the research has used the most popular and prominent theory of media communication uses and gratification (Chattopadhyay, Web Series and Web Movies and their psycho- sociological impact on netizens in India, 2020).

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). One experiences emotional release such as euphoria, emotional experience of emotions, excitement caused by various themes, etc., which results in the viewers' satisfaction. Another important benefit of viewing these shows is that they serve as stress relievers, providing a small window of escape from reality and loneliness (Sharma, 2019). These series also serve as a catalyst for social engagement, which makes them satisfying in that aspect as well. People are compelled to consume media in this situation, and numerous marketing methods are deployed as a result.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Binge watching is defined in various dictionaries as "watching numerous episodes of a single web series at once" (binge-watching, 2018). The prevalence of binge-watching has grown as a result of online streaming

platforms and web series, and its effects have also become more apparent. These OTT platforms are simple to use because they enable access to web series even in remote and interior places for anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection (Chattopadhyay, Web Series and Web Movies and their psycho- sociological impact on netizens in India, 2020) (Salovaara, 2017).

With the growth of social media use, internet addiction problem has emerged. Although it affects everyone, the youth of the nation have been particularly affected. 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).

The act of binge-watching on any of these platforms frequently begins with the enjoyment that one derives from entertainment and other factors, but as it involves prolonged screen time, it can eventually result in health problems like physical exhaustion and a lack of sleep. In some cases, users also experience withdrawal symptoms, such as distress or, if they stop watching, irritability, procrastination, and, most importantly, a decline in social interaction (Sharma, 2019) (Chattopadhyay, Web Series and Web Movies and their psycho- sociological impact on netizens, 2020).

People appreciate and are particularly interested in crime-themed TV shows, web series, and films. An examination of web series revealed that they even stereotypically depict the protagonist and other characters, like police officers, layers, etc (Viswanathan, Bhatia, & Shah, 2020). To better understand what makes these online series successful, particularly among young people, when it comes to substance and presentation, the material of some crime-based web-series, such the first Netflix original crime web-series, Sacred Games, is analyzed (Honmode, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher's blend of qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches are used to conduct the research described below. The top five complete crime-based web series were subjected to content analysis. The socio-psychological effects of this series on a sample of (n=321) people were examined through a survey, along with their internet usage patterns. The chosen samples came from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and ranged in age from 12 to over 40. People from all over India were picked as the study's sample because it was conducted online.

Many genres, including Crime Thriller, Action Crime, Comedy Crime, Drama Crime, Mystery Crime, etc., apply to crime-based web series. Action and drama-based criminal shows have been seen and reviewed to be violent and feature explicit sex. The top five action and drama-based

Table 1: Web series are from OTT Platforms based on IMDb platform ratings

Name of web-series	IMDb Rating	Category	OTT Platform
Sacred Games	8.6	Action, Crime, Drama	Netflix
Mirzapur	8.4	Action, Crime, Drama	Amazon Prime
Delhi Crime	8.5	Crime, Drama	Netflix
Asur	8.5	Crime, Drama, Mystery	Voot
Criminal Justice	8.1	Crime	Hotstar

web series were given a content analysis, and the results are shown below. The web series chosen for the study are listed in Table 1. These web series are from various OTT Platforms and were chosen based on IMDb platform ratings.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Content Analysis Full Series

Sacred Games: Sacred Games was the first Indian television program on an OTT platform to be broadcast in multiple languages, with content that was not censored. The series featured explicit sex scenes, explicit language, and depictions of crime, violence, and explicit sex. It also explored mafia culture, crime in Bombay, and the connection between crime and children. After censoring discussions, adjustments were made to the series' material. The narrative is compelling and original, but how to appeal to a broad audience remains.

Asur: The next series explores crime and mythology, with serial killing as its central plot device. The series highlights the prevalence of parental abuse in India and how certain syndromes can make criminals or serial killers brilliant. The first episode depicts a boy poisoning his father, but the director keeps it symbolic and within censorship boundaries. The series also explores the brutality of murders, with the protagonist teaching viewers how to inspect a dead corpse. The content is clean, except for a few offensive scenes, which could be offensive if watched by underage viewers. The series aims to provide parental supervision on OTT platforms, but the content may be compromised if the platform restricts access to underage viewers.

Delhi Crime: Delhi Crime, a crime series based on the Nirbhaya Rape Case, depicts a distressing scene of a boy and girl lying naked on a busy road. The show raises concerns about the potential negative impact on children if they see just one of the horrific incidents, comparing it to YouTube, which allows for open and unrestricted video display. The second episode of a Bollywood show featured a terrorist killed by police, highlighting the prevalence of shootings and killings in Bollywood. Episode three highlighted the harsh realities of police officers using drugs on duty. The show's final scenes were left hanging,

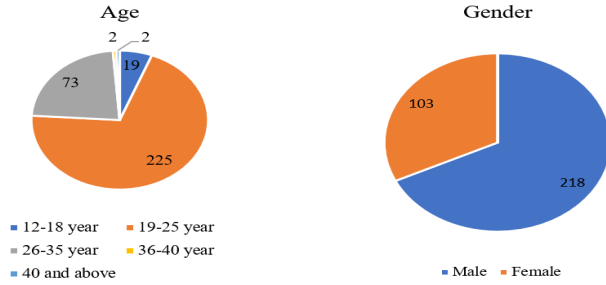


Figure 1: Demographics Age and Gender

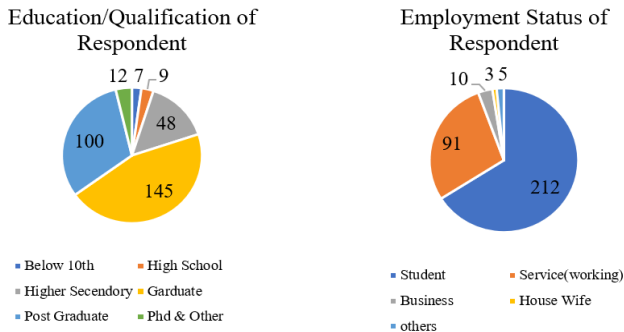


Figure 2: Demographics Employment Status and Educational Qualifications

promoting binge watching. The discovery of illegal goods and the harsh response of a victim girl during questioning raise concerns about censorship and the potential for atrocities to be inspired by persuasive visual media. The series is predictable, but some viewers should mute some senses.

Mirzapur: Mirzapur is a series that portrays the mafia culture of Mirzapur, India, focusing on the dominance of Gundas, or criminals, in society. The series includes profanity, open-air alcohol drinking, and violence, but adheres to Indian legal broadcasting regulations and ethics codes. The content is realistic and often leads to people becoming less sensitive to violent crimes. The series uses filthy language and excessive violence, but not frequently as in sacred games.

Criminal justice: The crime series revolves around a taxi driver who becomes involved in a woman’s murder after a one-night affair. The show features intense violence, including sexual assault, forced feeding, psychological abuse, and mental torture. The plot is imaginative but also contains explicit sexual content. The second season includes domestic abuse and sexual assault. The STC theory suggests explicit drug use may have misinformed viewers.

Survey: The study involved 320 male participants, with 70.1% aged 19–25. The most interested age group was students (66%), followed by service or working class (28.1%), businesses (3.1%), and housewives (0.9%). The

Table 2: Chi-Square Demographics Part A

Chi-Square	Gender
Ques. 1	.004*
Ques. 3	.000*
Ques. 4	.022*

majority of respondents were graduates (45.2%), followed by postgraduates (100), higher secondary students (48), Ph.D. holders, and those with less than a 10th-grade education. The findings were categorized by gender to better understand perspectives.

Looking into Table 1 showing the significance level of Part A of the questionnaire, shows that out of seven questions asked only three questions showed a significance level and that to only with the age i.e. age showed a significance level (p=0.004) with the question when asked do you watch web series with your friend and family 136 (42.4%) of 320 respondents gave that response. I watch some online series with friends, but not all of them. 103 (32.1%) responded “No,” while 62 (19.3%) No, but I send my friends links to online movies and web series, and just 20 (6.2%) of them claimed they always watch web series with friends, indicating that most people prefer to watch them with friends and family. Out of 225 replies from people in the 19 to 25 age range, 100 of them said they preferred to watch a few web series with friends, while 64 said they preferred to watch them alone. This indicates that people in this age range prefer to watch these crime dramas either alone or with their friends. The same trend was seen among respondents aged 25 to 35; out of 73 responses, 31 said they liked to watch a movie with friends, while 27 said they wanted to watch it alone. When asked if people really want to see more violence, question number three likewise revealed a high level of significance, with a (p=0.000) with age. Overall, 106 people (33%) chose strongly agree, 88 people (27.4%) chose agree, 57 people (17.8%) chose neutral, and 78 people (21.8%) chose disagree. According to the statistics, people think that greater violence is something that people desire to see. Focusing at the age group 19-25, out of 225 replies, 131 chose strongly agree or agree, implying that this age group believes that everyone wants to see greater violence. Even the age group of 26 to 35 out of 73 (48%) fell into the strongly agree and agree categories. Ages below 12 and above 35 shared this belief as well. They demonstrate the widespread belief that everyone enjoys watching violence. The answer to question three, “Has binge-watching ever hindered your performance in exams or other key works?” had a significance of (p=0.22) with age. 93(29%) said yes, 129(40.2%) responded no, 31(9.7%) responded can’t say and 68(21.2%) responded occasionally. Demonstrate how watching these crime web series affects the viewers’ health. Age group 19–25 out of



Table 3: Impact Of web series -Part B: Chi-Square

Chi-Square	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Internet uses time
Q.8	.000*	0.362	0.142	.000*	.010*
Q.9	.000*	.020*	0.142	0.518	0.203
Q.10	.001*	0.391	0.103	0.362	.020*
Q.11	0.104	0.424	0.103	0.107	.000*
Q.12	.052*	0.229	0.132	0.61	0.597
Q.13	0.841	.001*	0.454	0.531	0.307
Q.14	0.078	0.078	0.071	0.204	0.738
Q.15	0.263	0.72	0.679	0.269	0.618
Q.16	.023*	0.271	0.341	0.331	.009*
Q.17	0.209	0.577	0.161	.026*	0.584

225 replies in the yes category, with a cumulative total of 117 choosing these options, indicates that these series are raising youths' fear of crime. Even 31 of 73 replies from people ages 21 to 35 collectively said "yes," and sometimes this pattern was shared by people ages 19 and older and people over the age of 35.

Examining table 2's Chi-square significant value for Part-B of the survey, this was determined by estimating the effect of crime-based web series. While questions 14–15 did not demonstrate any level of importance, questions 8–13 and 16–17 did, depending on the demographics. Demographics like age ($p=0.000$), employment ($p=0.000$), and internet usage time demonstrated a high level of importance when the question of whether watching a web series improves people's mood was posed. According to the demographics, 144 people (44.0%) agree that watching web series improves their mood, 55 people (17.1%) strongly agree, 87 people (27.1%) responded in a neutral manner, just 22 people (6.9%) disagree, and 13 people (4% strongly disagree). Most people believe that these series improve mood.

When asked in questioned Q.9 whether it makes consumers feel better that they have dedicated their time ($n=321$), Following neutral 90 (28%) and agreed responses of 120(37.4%) and 47(14.6%) strongly agree responses. Age and gender were very significant ($p=0.000$ and $p=0.020$, respectively) in Table 2. 42% of females chose the following, compared to 56.22% of men who combined their choices of strongly agree and agree. When asked if they felt they had learned anything from viewing these shows, 118 (36.8%) agreed, 64 (19.9% strongly agreed, and 89 (27.7%) gave a neutral response. Age and internet usage time had significant significance levels ($p=0.001$ and $p=0.020$, respectively). The following question revealed high level of relevance with demography internet usage time ($p=0.000$) when asked how many of them feel entertained. A huge answer of 152 (47.4%) opted to agree

and 83 (25.9%) opted highly agree.

When questioned about how the vocabulary of the web series affected their responses and whether they used the same terminology, strongly disagree and disagree were only expressed by 64 (20%) respondents, while 105 (32.7%) agreed, 62 (20.2%) strongly agreed, and 87 (27.1%) replied neutrally. The following indicated high level of significance with age ($p=0.052$). In addition, when asked if they believe they have higher moral standards than the contestants on the show, 154 respondents (47.7%) indicated that they strongly agree and agree. Based on gender, the following query demonstrated significance $p= (0.001)$ Males made up 49.3% of this category, while females made up 45.63%.

The study found a significant relationship between age and internet usage time when respondents were asked about ideal men and women in crime series. 48% agreed, 27.4% neutral, and 27% disagreed. The employment demographics also showed significance, with 43% agreeing and 22.7% disagreeing, indicating students are particularly addicted to watching these webseries. Finally, Figure 4's Internet usage time, which only includes 38 respondents out of 321 who have only 3 hours or more of internet usage, also demonstrates how the amount of time spent online has increased, particularly during pandemics.

DISCUSSIONS

The study shows that men prefer criminal web series over women, with young people aged 19-36 watching these content, primarily college students and working adults. The majority prefer watching alone, with graphic sex content and bad language being the main reasons. The IMDb rating also indicates the popularity of these series, which negatively impacts people's health, with binge-watchers using the internet for three to ten hours daily.

The Indian drama Sacred Games, produced on OTT platforms, contains explicit sex content, drug use, foul language, and violence. The content is controversial despite being produced with broadcasting standards and ethics in mind. The coarse language used in these web series can impact viewers' real-life behavior and contribute to antisocial issues. The response rate for the villains in the series is low, suggesting that they serve as role models for viewers, reinforcing negative behavior and contributing to crime rates in undeveloped areas. The delicate line between adoring and using criminals as heroes is also a concern.

According to data, these web series are highly addictive and are linked to binge-watching because all of the episodes are accessible, which increases internet usage time and other aspects like health issues, etc. When all of these web series episodes are available, people tend to binge watch them all in one sitting, making them addictive and eventually causing a host of social and psychological issues.

CONCLUSION

OTT platforms can unite civilizations and communicate ideas effectively, influencing society through films, television, and other media. However, content producers face ethical challenges in glorifying crime and normalizing violence. They should consider the target audience and the potential vulnerability of certain demographics, such as young or impressionable viewers. Responsible storytelling and warnings or disclaimers can be used to mitigate negative effects. Factors like religion, cultural beliefs, age, gender, family structure, online time, and economic status significantly influence how content is perceived. Parents struggle to monitor inappropriate language and violent content. Content producers can use media to raise awareness about crime, justice, and social responsibility. Regulators may need to review and update regulations to limit the depiction of criminal behavior and explicit material.

Collaboration with platforms and content producers to enforce age verification measures and promote media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible viewing of crime-related content may be necessary. The glamorization of criminal behavior in crime web series can negatively impact societal attitudes and behaviors, necessitating education, community involvement, and support systems to mitigate these effects. Crime web series can spark public debates about media accountability, entertainment's impact on societal values, and media literacy. These discussions may encourage morally and socially responsible media content, especially on OTT platforms and the internet. Research shows explicit content can impact viewers, but good episodes can still receive high ratings. To address these issues, policymakers, content creators, and society must collaborate.

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