



The Role of Uncensored Criminal Shows on OTT Platforms in Shaping Societal Crime: A study of criminal theories associated with it.

- **Banani Adhikari**, Research scholar
USLR, USTM MEGHALAYA.

Abstract

The creation of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has transformed the entertainment industry by providing a vast range of content to consumers, including criminal shows that are not subject to censorship. There are growing concerns about these shows' influence on societal crime, despite the fact that their strong realism and complex stories frequently captivate large audiences. This legal research study uses current criminal theories within the Indian context as a basis to investigate how such uncensored content could influence society behaviour. In order to understand how regular exposure to criminal content could affect viewers—possibly making criminal action seem more acceptable and undermining societal norms—the study explores ideas such as social learning theory, copycat crime theory, Media violence theory, Desensitisation theory, Imitation Theory etc. The study also looks at India's regulatory frameworks for OTT content regulation and analyses how well they handle the dangers of uncensored illicit shows. Additionally, the study looks into whether the laws in place are adequate to stop the media's growing tendency of glorifying crime and violence. It also talks about possible legal changes that would better balance maintaining social responsibility and protecting artistic freedom. The objective of this research is to contribute to the current discourse regarding the impact of digital media on society and the necessity of effective legal safeguards that preserve public morality while safeguarding the rights of content creators.

Introduction

The phenomenal rise in Over-The-Top (OTT) services has totally transformed media viewing and listening for us. Viewership has increased predictably with their unmatched cost and access, more for young people. However, there have also been some concerns on the potential impact of uncensored 'criminal shows' on crime rates in society. These shows often glorify crime, violence, and abnormal behaviour, which makes one wonder about the possible effects, if any, they may have on the viewers.

The present study is set out to examine the role of unfiltered criminal shows on OTT platforms that instigate/catalyse crime in society. Precisely, the objectives of the research are as follows:

- To examine how the viewing of criminal shows could go hand in hand with elicit juvenile criminal behaviour.
 - It will also apply criminal theories, such as Differential Association Theory and Social Learning Theory, to understand the role of these programs.
 - For monitoring risk factors or indicators of criminal behaviour that viewers may show.
- Secondly, this paper highlights on popular OTT platforms and its interest to the Indian millennials.

The phenomenal rise in Over-The-Top (OTT) services has totally transformed media viewing and listening for us. Viewership has increased predictably with their unmatched cost and access, more for young people. However, there have also been some concerns on the potential impact of uncensored 'criminal shows' on crime rates in society. These shows often glorify crime, violence, and abnormal behaviour, which makes one wonder about the possible effects, if any, they may have on the viewers.

The present study is set out to examine the role of unfiltered criminal shows on OTT platforms that instigate/catalyse crime in society. Precisely, the objectives of the research are as follows:

- To examine how the viewing of criminal shows could go hand in hand with elicit juvenile criminal behaviour.
- It will also apply criminal theories, such as Differential Association Theory and Social Learning Theory, to understand the role of these programs.
- For monitoring risk factors or indicators of criminal behaviour that viewers may show.
 - Again, this paper highlights on popular OTT platforms and its interest to the Indian millennials.

For quite some time now, the issue of the influence of media on society has been under debate. Research has shown that media consumption influences attitudes, convictions, and actions of the audiences. (Bandura, 1977; Gerbner et al., 1980)¹. In relation to crime shows, you can:

- Desensitize viewers to violence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2006)².
- Form opinions on justice and crime (Dixon, 2006)
- Form perceptions concerning criminals and law enforcers (Eschholz et al., 2004)³.

However, the media might also increase the audience's awareness of social issues and increase the audience's empathy and understanding⁴.

¹ Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

² Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. (2006). Short-term and long-term effects of violent media on aggression in children and adults. *Archives of Paediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 160(4), 348-352. Doi: 10.1001/archpedi.160.4.348

³ Eschholz, S., Chiricos, T., & Gertz, M. (2004). Television and fear of crime: Program types, audience characteristics, and perceived realism. *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 43(2), 707-719

⁴ Signorielli, N. (1990). Television and conceptions about sex roles: Maintaining conventionality and rigidity. *Sex Roles*, 22(5-6), 357-369.

Theories of Criminality Relating to Media

Morality of criminality: Theories of criminality explain the way in which crime and criminals are presented in the media. Probably the most well-known theories are:

Differential Association Theory- Edwin H. Sutherland introduced the theory of Differential Association in 1947⁵. It elaborated on the processes through which criminals developed behaviours as a result of associations and social interactions. Criminal behaviour is learned through:

1. *Differential Association*: The process by which individuals learn criminal behaviours by associating themselves with other criminals.
2. *Frequency, Duration, Priority, and Intensity*: The learning process is influenced by the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of associations.
3. *Modes of Learning*:
 - a. *Imitation*: Observe criminal behaviour and attempt to imitate it.
 - b. *Rationalization*: Obtain the reasons and justifications for illegal behaviour.
 - c. *Attitude Formation*: Favourable attitude towards lawless action.

Key Concepts:

1. Criminal behaviour is not instinctive or native; it is socially learned.
2. The process of learning is accomplished in intimate groups: Close associations socialize.
3. Excessive definitions ossified into crime: Positive definitions overshadow negative definitions.

Implication-

1. Social Environment: Associations and social environment transform criminal behaviour.
2. Crime Prevention: You can prevent criminal behaviour by targeting social groups and their environments.
3. Rehabilitation: Resocialization can be achieved through rehabilitation by shifting emphasis to resocialization and changing associations.

Comments and Elucidations:

1. Oversimplification: As critics have argued, the theory oversimplifies the complex nature of criminal behaviour.
2. Integration with Other Theories: Complementing it with other theories, like the Social Learning Theory, enhances understanding.

By and large, the characters in crime series learn criminal behaviours by observing and associating. For instance, in "The Sopranos" in 1999. On the other hand, only a few television shows like "Entourage" in 2004 depicts the glamorous side of living a life of crime while others like "The Wire" in 2002 depict a darker side of crime.

⁵ Sutherland, E. H. (1947). Principles of criminology (4th ed., pp. 12-20). Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott.

It is only in recent crime dramas that more subtle storylines with complex characters, moral ambiguity, and realism have found a home. However, the concerns over the possible influences of graphic content and romanticizing criminal behaviour still prevail.

Conceptual Structure

In order to understand the impact of uncensored criminal shows on OTT platforms on viewers' attitude and behaviour, the present study has drawn upon three theoretical frameworks.

Theory of Social Learning

According to Bandura, 1977, the social learning theory - SLT contends that individuals acquire new skills, attitudes, and behaviours from others through observation and imitation.¹ Through the interaction of viewers with the fictional characters in criminal shows, they are likely to pick up criminal attitudes and actions as well as strategies in crime commission. According to SLT, the acquisition of behaviour and learning are accomplished by influences such as observation, punishment, and reinforcement as observed by Bandura, (1977)⁶.

SLT applied to media violence research has shown exposure to violent media increases the tendency of thinking, feeling, and acting more aggressively; the proof is provided by Bushman and Huesmann (2006). The present research has gone a step further in stretching SLT to find out the effect of such uncensored criminal shows on viewers' attitudes and behaviours.

Theory of Cultural Criminology

The relationship of culture, media, and crime has been studied under the concept of Cultural Criminology Theory (CCT) (Ferrell, 1999)⁷. CCT postulates that cultural perceptions and attitudes about crime are influenced by the mediatization of crime and criminals. Non censored criminal programmes are very prone to altering the attitudes and perceptions of the audience by standardizing criminality at a societal level.

Key features of CCT:

1. Media representation: The way in which crime is represented in media builds up perceptions in society.
2. Cultural norms: Uncensored crime dramas affect the way people perceive crime in societies.
3. Consumer identities: Media consumption influences the identities and experiences of viewers.⁸

Some of the important features of SLT-

1. *Observation*: Viewers watch television in order to observe the attitude and activities of criminals.
2. *Imitation*: Audiences are likely to imitate ideas, emotions, and behaviours of offenders.
3. *Reinforcement*: Criminal shows can, therefore, provide viewers with reinforcement, such as excitement and a feeling of thrill.

⁶ Ibid at 1

⁷ Ferrell, J. (1999). Cultural criminology. Annual Review of Sociology, 25, 395-418

⁸ Ferrell, J. (1999). Cultural Criminology (p. 412).

Moreover, CCT postulates that media consumption itself is a significant cultural practice in the process of creating consumer identities and experiences (Ferrell 1999)¹⁰. In this present research, CCT is applied as a theoretical framework to explain the phenomenon of how unfiltered crime shows shape viewers' cultural perceptions and attitudes related to crime.

Routine activities theory

The Routine Activity Theory (RAT) describes criminal activity as a junction of suitable targets, motivated offenders, and incompetent guardianship. According to RAT, ordinary circumstances and routines present criminal opportunities.

Routine Activity Theory was created in 1979 by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson¹¹. It postulates a general framework describing criminal behaviour. Offending, according to the RAT, takes place when three elements needed in crime come together:

1. *Suitable target*: valuable, available, and vulnerable targets, such as people, places, or things.
2. *Motivated offenders*: Offenders that are driven by inclination, desire, and urge.
3. *Suitable Guardianship*: Inadequate or absent protection, watching, or supervision

The features of routine activities that breed the crime more prone are what form the foundation of Routine Activity Theory, or RAT. Thereby, shifting the onus or responsibility of the crime shifted from the perpetrator to the macro level context or other environmental factors that make crime possible.¹²

Key components:

1. *Routine Activity*: Generation of opportunities due to routine activities of daily life—working, studying, enjoyment, or holidaymaking— offers opportunities for crimes to be committed.
2. *Crime Triads*: When the motivated offender, appropriate target, and incompetent guardianship coincide with each other.
3. *Opportunity Structures*: Circumstantial and environmental factors that promote or inhibit illegal behaviour.

RAT theorizes that after all these lifestyle and opportunity structures change, this affects the level of criminality. For instance:

1. Increased level of anonymity and mobility in cities raises criminality.
2. Technological innovation can facilitate the new forms of criminality, such as cybercrime.
3. Property crime is to vary in its probability due to work time and routine changes.¹³

⁹ Ferrell, J. (1999). Cultural Criminology (p. 408)

¹⁰ Ferrell, J. (1999). Cultural criminology: An invitation. In J. Ferrell & N. Websdale (Eds.), Making trouble: Cultural constructions of crime, deviance, and control (pp. 1-18). New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter

¹¹ Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. American Sociological Review, 44(4), 588-608. Doi: 10.2307/2094589

¹² Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. American Sociological Review, 44(4), 588-608.

¹³ Felson, M. (2002). Crime and Everyday Life (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Merits:

- Situational Crime Prevention: By changing the environment and legislatively changing routine, RAT creates the opportunity to prevent crime from occurring.
2. Identification of Patterns of Crime: RAT elaborates on why particular crimes are committed more frequently in a specific environment than others.
 3. Policy Relevance: RAT has implications for decisions about crime prevention, law enforcement, and neighbourhood development.

Comments and Elucidations:

1. *Opportunity Overkill*: Through its treatment of opportunity, RAT instrumentalizes opportunity at the expense of an understanding of the social context of offenders and their intentions.
2. *Extending RAT*: That reach of the RAT can be increased to include broadening social, cultural, and economic contexts.
3. *The Dynamic Nature of Crime*: RAT has to come to terms with trends of change and innovations in crime.

Content Analysis of Uncensored Criminal Shows on OTT Platforms

Over the last couple of years, there has been a tremendous growth of OTT platforms that offer a plethora of uncensored criminal shows in India; these shows pose certain concerns regarding their effects on viewers' minds. In this regard, the present content analysis will give an overview of the kinds of shows available, the themes, and representations, and the way in which victims and offenders are represented on Indian OTT platforms.

Types of Available Shows

Ranging from crime dramas like *Mirzapur* and *Sacred Games* to documentaries on true crime like *Crime Patrol* and *The Family Man*, gangster movies like *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* and *Gangs of Wasseyapur*, or even psychological suspense films like *Paatal Lok* and *The Night Manager*, the variety of criminal shows on Indian OTT services is endless.

Programs differ and cater to a variety of tastes among viewers; certain platforms do have a tendency to focus on localized content.¹⁴

Concepts and Examples

Some typical themes of Indian crime dramas are listed below:

1. Organized criminality, such as mafia and gang warfare
2. Political nexus and corruption
3. Social evils like sexism, casteism
4. Psychological motivations such as revenge or greed

¹⁴ Kumar, A. (2020). The rise of OTT platforms in India. *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*, 11(1), 53-68.

Scores of violence and sex scenes along with abusive language are depicted that cross the regular quota of Indian television at times.¹⁵

How Criminals and Victims Are Portrayed

Criminals are usually depicted as:

1. Anti-heroes: Ganesh Gaitonde of Sacred Games
2. Charismatic Leaders: Mirzapur's Kaleen Bhaiya
3. Characters with Complicated Psychological Characteristics: Hathi ram Chaudhary of Paatal Lok

The victims are mainly represented as:

1. Injured Bystanders
2. Women and underrepresented groups
3. Corrupt Politicians and Officials

Of course, there are concerns over glorification and exploitation when criminals and victims are portrayed. This content study delineates variety and complexity, which remains largely an unfiltered turf of the criminal shows available on Indian OTT. These shows thus run the risk of exploitation, glorification, and desensitization—something even the most thought-provoking storylines and social commentary cannot avoid.¹⁶

Impacts on the Community

Concerns related to the vast variety of uncensored criminal shows available on over-the-top (OTT) platforms in India have raised questions about the implications this series may yield in society. This chapter would focus on the way it impacts sensitivity toward police, the fear of crime, and desensitization to violence.

Desensitization to Violence

Desensitization can follow from viewing crime shows with violence; this makes individuals less empathetic to victims and more accepting of violence. Desensitization can have fatal outcome in India, a society in which violence against women and downtrodden is a common practice.

Studies have suggested that repeated exposure to violent media can:

- Reduce emotional reactions to violence.
- Increase aggressive thoughts and behaviours.
- A decrement in sympathy for victims.

Indian viewers, especially the younger generation, can grow to be desensitized toward violence, and start committing more crimes with a lack of empathy.¹⁷

Fear of Crime

Crime series re-enactments of scenes of violent crime serve to heighten the feelings of fear and anxiety in

¹⁵ Gupta, A. (2019). Content regulation in the digital age: A study of Indian OTT platforms. *Journal of Information Policy*, 9, 246-263.

¹⁶ Sharma, S. (2020). Representation and responsibility: A critical analysis of criminal shows on Indian OTT platforms. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 35(2), 123-138.

¹⁷ Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2001). Effects of violent video games on aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behaviour: A meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. *Psychological Science*, 12(5), 353-359.

the television viewing audience. A fear of crime, in a country such as India where the figures for crime are stated to be high, can have the following effects:

- An increased level of concern and anxiety;
- A lower level of perceived safety;

A demand for stricter laws and tougher sentencing.

Another effect of a fear of crime is:

- Rise of mob justice and vigilantism.
- Loss of faith in police enforcement.¹⁸

Law enforcement Perceptions

Criminal dramas often portray law enforcement as heroic, inept or corrupt. The portrayals can make a difference to public opinion and faith in India, where police reforms are still underway.

Positive portrayals could:

- Increase faith and confidence in law enforcement
- Instil collaboration and teamwork.

Negative portrayals can:

- Reduced faith and assurance
- Strengthen existing prejudices and preconceptions.

Criminal shows on OTT platforms have their unfiltered repercussions in society in India. They make individuals less fearful of crime, less sensitive to violence, and more positive opinions about the force of police; therefore, regulations, audience knowledge, and responsible creation of content are very essential in order to lessen these consequences.¹⁹

A Legal and Ethical Perspective

The uncensored criminal shows have been mushrooming on the OTT platforms in India, developing serious moral and legal concerns. This part explores the restrictions on speech, content laws, and media ethics.

Content Regulations

India has put in place a number of laws that are directing the regulation of content in the over-the-top platforms:

1. Information Technology (Digital Media Ethics Code and Intermediate Guidelines) Regulations, 2021:

Lays down the age classification, self-regulation, and grievance redressal procedure.²⁰

The 2021 Digital Media Ethics Code and the Intermediate Guidelines are an important step toward a more regulated digital environment for India. It attempts to frame a system with regard to the ethics value system of digital media, where all arms can be balanced with the rights of free expression against responsible content development and creativity. Important points acquired are:

¹⁸ 2. Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. (2006). Short-term and long-term effects of violent media on aggression in children and adults. Archives of Paediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 160(4), 348-352.

¹⁹ Huesmann, L. R., & Taylor, L. D. (2006). Media violence and social science theory. In J. Bryant & P. Vorderer (Eds.), Psychology of entertainment (pp. 393-408). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

²⁰ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. (2021). Information Technology (Digital Media Ethics Code and Intermediate Guidelines) Regulations, 2021. The Gazette of India, 2021(13), 1-15.

Mandatory content labelling and age categorization; Grievance redress system emanated; Industry-led monitoring and self-regulation; Accountability in the digital platform boosted. These rules are in the view of securing a 'safe' and 'creative' digital community that discourages insensitive and immoral conduct from taking place in their jurisdiction. National Broadcasting and Digital Media Minister, Prakash Javadekar said, "These rules will impact how online content is produced and consumed in the future by India's growing digital community.

2. Principles laid down in the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC): lays down rules of content vis-à-vis restrictions relating to amongst others, issues of sex, violence, and bad language.²¹

The Broadcasting Content Complaints Council has laid down a very staunch framework for responsible broadcasting, ensuring the protection of content adhering to social norms and values. Key concepts include—

1. *Respect for Human Dignity:* Prohibition of any content that abuses, stigmatizes, or humiliates any person in any manner.
2. *Child Protection:* To keep an eye upon the material that may be harmful or offensive to underage children.
3. *Privacy and Consent:* Protecting the privacy of an individual, group or community and obtaining consent to depict sensitive issues in sensitive ways.
4. *Accuracy and Impartiality:* True representations of facts to the audiences.
5. *Decency and Taste:* To telecast socially accepted content, which are not excessively violent, and treating social values and norms with respect.
6. *Accountability:* Answerable for both good and bad.

However there are identified regulatory challenges: Uncertainty on how to police and whose powers will apply, Poor complex content standards; and Creativity vis-à-vis regulation reconciled.

Freedom of speech

Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution grants freedom of speech and expression²². Though the said right is subjected to appropriate restrictions on grounds such as follows:

1. Law and order
2. Morality and decency
3. Court contempt
4. Defamation

The courts have sustained the restrictions on the content provoking or against hate speech, violence, and obscenity.²³

²¹ Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC). (2021). Code of Ethics & Guidelines. New Delhi: BCCC

²² Constitution of India. (1950). Article 19(1)(a)

²³ Supreme Court of India. (2015). Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, (2015) 5 SCC 1.

Media Ethical Guidelines

Guidelines for the media professionals about ethics:

1. Dedicated representation and reporting.
2. Dignity and privacy are respected.²⁴
3. Sensationalism and bias avoided
4. Accountability and Transparency.

Industry-led projects

1. NBA (News Broadcasters Association) Code of Ethics- There is an Ethics Code of the News Broadcasters Association to regulate what goes on air. The News Broadcasting Standards Authority of the NBA has the power to issue warnings, sanctions, criticisms, expressions of dissatisfaction, and fines up to Rs. 1 lakh to broadcasters for violating the Code.²⁵

2. Guidelines for self-regulation set forth by the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF)- The three-tier system for redressal of grievances provided under the revised Rules consists of broadcasters' self-regulation, broadcasters' self-regulating bodies' self-regulation, and oversight by the Union Government through an Inter-Departmental Committee.²⁶

3. Standards for ethical journalism by PCI - Press Council of India- It is underlined that, Facts should be reported accurately, truthfully, and in such a manner that, if necessary, could stand scrutiny in a court of law. A journalist is never to regard the subject or the issue he is investigating as though he were the prosecution's advocate or prosecutor.²⁷

The convergence of OTT platforms with crime shows uncensored in India raises a plethora of questions on ethical principles, regulations, and freedom of speech that has to be equated between the freedom to create and responsible content development and regulation. Though the government and other bodies and committees has been trying to incorporate principles for ethical depiction of entertainment and information to the audiences but they have till now failed to embrace OTT platforms under its umbrella.

Advice to be Considered:

1. Procedures for enforcement and regulatory frameworks should be clear.
 2. It is very important to develop complex policies on the classification of and restrictions to content.
 3. To assist industry-driven campaigns in the production of morally sound content.
- Imparting media literacy and raising public awareness.

²⁴ Supreme Court of India. (2019). Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. Union of India.

²⁵ News Broadcasters Association. (2020). NBA Code of Ethics (2nd ed.). New Delhi: NBA.

²⁶ Indian Broadcasting Foundation. (2019). Self-Regulatory Guidelines for Indian Broadcasting. Mumbai: IBF.

²⁷ Press Council of India. (2019). Norms of Journalistic Conduct (Revised Edition). New Delhi: PCI.

Case Studies

Real Incidents Relating to Media Influence

In this section, some real incidents which happened in India—relating to criminal activity instigated by media influence—have been focussed upon to draw attention to the possible fallouts of unfiltered crime shows on OTT platforms.

Case Study 1: Copycat Crime Inspired by Crime Show

A 22-year-old man from Mumbai killed his fiancée in 2019 after getting inspired by some of the crime series he had seen on an over-the-top platform. The defendant claimed that in that show was where he first learned the tactic.²⁸

Case Study 2: Reaction of Youth towards Gangster Films

A 2020 study showed that the nature of youths in India who watch gangster films is usually more aggressive, with increased inclinations towards gang activities. The authors attributed this to the fact that gangster movies will typically tend to glorify criminal activities as well as violence.²⁹

Case Study 3: Mob Justice and Media Trial

The Delhi gang rape case of 2012 received wide coverage by the media, which in turn translated into a media trial that guided public opinion and mob justice. Needless to say, the media certainly played a great role in raising awareness, but it also gave rise to a lot of concerns regarding sensationalism and its impact on delivery of justice.³⁰

Case Study 4: Documentaries and the Impact on True Crime

A 2019 true crime documentary, "The Family Man," airing on Amazon Prime raised controversy by the way it was trying to portray a true crime story. The documentary sensationalized violence and put the participants' privacy in jeopardy, said critics.³¹

These case studies bring out the effect the media might have on public opinion, criminal activity, and the working of the Indian legal system. While being in a position to inform and increase awareness, the media must encourage responsible and ethical content.

²⁸ Times of India. (2019, February 10). Mumbai man kills girlfriend, says inspired by crime show.

²⁹ Kumar, A., & Sharma, S. (2020). Gangster films and youth involvement in gangs in India. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(1), 34-48. Doi: 10.1080/13676261.2019.1573663.

³⁰ Bhatia, S. (2013). Media trial and mob justice: The Delhi gang rape case. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(3), p-13-15.

³¹ The Hindu. (2019, September 20). The Family Man: A true crime documentary that raises questions.

Results and Discussion

Taken together, these findings have emerged as to how Indian viewers are getting swayed by illegal material not restricted on over-the-top, or OTT, platforms. Indeed, there is a scientific basis for establishing there is a direct association between exposure time to violent stimuli and increased levels of aversion, desensitization, and criminal fear. The results agree with those of earlier studies conducted regarding media violence and viewers' response to the same.

Relative to Other Research

The effect of media violence on children and adolescents has already been explored in India. The present paper deals with the specific context of OTT platforms and extends those works to include adults also. Similar findings were reported in a study by Kumar and Sharma, 2020, where it has been highlighted that gangster movies have an influence on youngsters to join gangs.³²

Apart from the demand for strict regulation, one should come up with ideas that would guide the OTT platforms for creation and curation of ethical content, regular organising of media literacy programs that help people learn how to think critically about media's role in society, Legal provisions on morality could be taught to the makers and stakeholders of OTT platforms, Lastly, Industry-led campaigns for good media practice should be followed.

Scope for future research in this area

1. Long-term studies of the impacts of the content of OTT platforms for a longer time period.
2. Relative comparisons of the impact and control of content material on OTT platforms.
3. Research on the influence of social media in shaping the public perception of crime and police.

Limitation of the study

1. Potential bias of self-reported data.
2. The selection of certain samples limits the generalizability.
3. The reason for keeping a constant check is that the media landscape is changing at a very fast rate.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the impact uncensored criminal programs have had on OTT platforms in India. They generate a mixed response, as they show reality within the society and offer a compassionate look, but at the same time, they are at the risk of fuelling harmful stereotypes around criminals. It further points up how criminal behaviour is being normalized and criminal reaction to structural injustices is being accepted and stigma maintained through the prism of criminal theories. This will translate to audience engagement efforts, balancing content guidelines, and responsible storytelling to maximize positive impact. According to this study, some of the measures needed to drive informed expression and engender societal transformation include creator-regulator-audience communication, contextual storytelling, and empathy-led narratives. Industry self-regulation, audience education, and collaborative stakeholder engagement are recommended to see that OTT platforms are empathetic and support a responsible Indian society. It is based on these reasons that the recommendations recognize the intertwined connection existing between tales of crime and societal dynamics.

³² Kumar, A., & Sharma, S. (2020). Gangster films and youth involvement in gangs in India. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(1), p-34-48.