

Review

Reshaping mind and behaviour: Media and its impacts

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India, the land of diverse cultural traditions and rituals, where women were once considered to be 'avatars' of goddesses are now either being victimized by the continual curse of domestic violence, or as a perpetrator of violent criminal activities. The present paper seeks to find from the available literature resources if the mass media actually plays the role of a catalytic source to increase these types of criminal activities and if yes, then how it affects the overall personality and behaviour of the individual who gets affected by this type of external stimuli, that is, mass media.

Key words: Domestic violence, criminal activities, mass media

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the widespread prevalence of media and its impacts are well known. It has been recognized that with the development of information technology, globally, media plays an important role in depiction of women's social and economic status throughout. Media plays a mirror image of the society. Media portrays the social norms, rules, nature, conflicts, cultural issues living patterns and styles prevailed in any society. "Mass communication media in India, like every modern and advanced country, comprises of the radio, the film, the television, the press, publications and advertising besides traditional media" (Sharma, 2005). In this present extract, media and its impacts only in the form of television will be prioritized.

India the land of diverse cultural traditions and rituals where women were once considered to be 'avatars' of goddesses are now either being victimized by the curse of domestic violence, or as a perpetrator of violent criminal activities. In this land where women were once being considered as "the origin of power" are today being dominated and crushed by the overwhelming power of the male society. "The soaring crime rates and violence against women in the country reflects women as weaker sex who are being dominated and exploited" (Ray, 2008). With a special concern to "crime" in general, we would like to give special emphasis on crime against women in India. As per National Crime Records Bureau (2008) data, the crime against women comprising crimes under

the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Social Legislations (SLL) is 17% of the total crime in India. The total IPC crime against women is 9.4% which excludes the percentage of cases reported for rape and dowry deaths that is, 1 and 0.4 % respectively (Table 1). This is an alarming issue with respect to women's safety, security, and position in the society.

In this paper our major concern is to find out the portrayed picaresque of crime and violence in Television and how this greatly affects the mind of the individual, especially women. Television as a source of mass communication is regarded to occupy the personal and the private space in Indian families with special regard to women's domain. As an easy accessible source of entertainment, Television evokes a special interest to a woman, who is a house maker and spend most of the time in her own household.

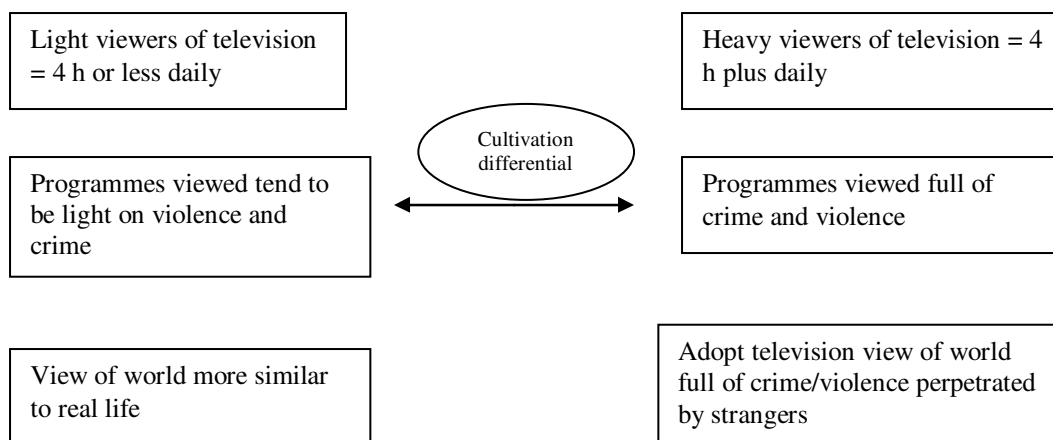
As media plays an important role in the construction of criminality, it thus, had a great impact on the individual's perception and fear of crime and violence. Researches suggest that individuals' knowledge of crime is the direct output if crime occurs in the community or personally being victimized (Howitt, 2002). As, television is the prime concern, media crime news plays a major part in tele-casting violent criminal activities around the globe which some or the other way change our attitudes, knowledge and perception towards crime in general.

Studies suggest that how television viewing do affect our perception and knowledge about crime and violence. Television portrayed the distorted image of crime and violence which fails to capture the real picture of crime (Howitt, 2002). Cultivation theory proposed by Gerbner in 1972 lay emphasis on the cultural transmission with

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Table 1. Crime against women (IPC+SLL) (As per National Crime Records Bureau data, 2008).

Crime heads	Cases reported	Percentage of total IP crimes	Rate of crime	Charge sheeting rate	Conviction rate
Kidnapping and Abduction of women and girls	22939	1.1	2.0	74.1	27.1
Molestation	40413	1.9	3.5	96.1	31.7
Sexual harassment	12214	0.6	1.1	96.8	50.5
Cruelty by husbands and relatives	81344	3.9	7.1	93.7	22.4
Importation of girls	67	0.0	0.0	72.2	12.3
Total crime against women (IPC+SLL)	195856	9.4	17.0	92.5	30.1

**Figure 1.** Cultivation analysis model adopted from Gerbner.

respect to television and mass media viewing in particular. After doing survey on the content analyses of American television, he proposed a framework which depicts the media effects on worldview (Figure 1). According to Gerbner, television viewers who spend more than 4 h are more likely to view programs on crime and violence than the television viewers who spend less than 4 h from their routine activity. Thus, in this view we strongly assert that viewers spending more than 4 h of time in their routine activity are more likely to be the housewives. So, the impacts of the programs on their mind and behaviour will be much more as compared to any light viewers of television.

Researches conducted on the media influences suggest that the violent and brutal acts on television may result in to increase the emotional reactions of the viewer. Further, it has been also suggested that there is an established link between long hours of television exposure to violence and real-life aggression (Thomas et al, 1977). In some recent studies, researchers hypothesized, how the films where the criminal is portrayed as the main protagonist influence the mind of viewers. They have also pointed out the fact that the movies concerning with the said theme gaining more popularity because of the realistic element in them (Bailey, 2000).

Studies suggest that, "Serials are depicting women and

young females involved in conspiracy, premarital, extra-marital, post material illicit affairs, wearing costly, heavy golden, and diamond jewellery, perpetuating their religious fundamentalism, spending time in family feuds, suicidal love affairs, mega parties, palatial houses, luxury cars, sleek mobiles, elegant, make ups, little care about anything else than the individual matters, and at all not even a word about the outside world" (Sharma, 2005).

In Indian context, the female characters like Ashwini kaleskar (who played the character of Jigyasa in *Kasam se*), Kamyia Punjabi who has played many negative roles in serials such as *Astitva...Ek Prem Kahani*, *Banno Main Teri Dulhan* and *Woh Rehne Wali Mehalo ki* are some of the popular serial vamps who successfully left an imprint on viewers mind. Studies suggest that, "these characters are often in contrast and pitted against the ideal ones". (1) On the contrary, there are certain female protagonists in the serial like *Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Kabi Bahu Thi*, *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*, *Kasuati Zindegi Ki*, *Kumkum* etc in which "women's achievement is valued in terms of their responsibility for running a successful household, settling down in matrimonial bliss, bearing children and making them 'ideal' human beings" (Sharma, 2005). Thus, the facts and reviews which have been highlighted in this paper emphasized the effects of long duration of television exposure to the personality and behavioral

changes in any individual especially to pent up real-life aggression. It has also been mentioned that how media changes the perception and fear of crime and violence portrayed in them. According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, individuals learn to behave in an aggressive manner through the process known as behaviour modeling. He argued that individuals learn to behave aggressively from observing others directly or through media and environment. He asserts that, "children and adults acquire attitudes, emotional responses, and new styles of conduct through filmed and televised modeling" (Bandura, 1977)

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