

## A STUDY OF MEDIA VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON YOUTH IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** *Violence in Indian society is a growing concern. We are all constantly reminded of its presence by the media. Media constantly report news about individual violent crimes. Media also serve the programmes and serials based on violent behaviour and their exposure to the people is promoting violent behaviour. The problem of violence in our culture has many apparent causes, including poverty, breakdown of the joint family, and shift away from traditional morality to the situational pluralism and the mass media. The exposure to certain violent portrayals can lead to positive or pro-social effects. The effects of exposure to media violence may be immediate and long term. Exposure to violence portrayals in the media can lead to subsequent viewers' aggression through dis-inhibition. Long term effects of exposure to media violence are more difficult to measure than the immediate effects. Exposure to violent portrayals in the media increases subsequent viewers' aggression. Youth constitute most vulnerable group to the influence of media. As youth are facing problems of identity, freedom, physical and emotional changes, they are more vulnerable to exploitation. The impacts of media on culture, social institution, inter- personal relationship etc has been well realized. The cultural value among youth is changing rapidly and market oriented, media driven western influence has affected India youth. Against this backdrop, present paper purports to examine the media violence and also assess its impact of behaviour of youth in selected cities of India.*

### INTRODUCTION

Youth is considered as the major potential human resource of any nation. The future of a country depends upon youth and therefore, they need right direction and opportunities for development in order to get the productive results. Youth in India constitute about 40 percent of the population. Youth in India are in transition phase and they are being affected by the modern social and economic forces. Increasingly large numbers of young have a high level of unemployment. Even the employment opportunities in public sector are declining and thus, youth are struggling to find suitable employment in the growing competition in globalize era. Many youth lost their jobs due to closer of industrial unit, shrinking in public sector employment, drastic reduction in expenditure on social sector and restructuring of economic. There is also growing disparity in growth of employment opportunities to provide productive employment for the increasing youth labor force. Policy induced disasters particularly the positive discrimination in education and employment to the weaker section of society has been perceived as resulting in increased stress on the youth belonging the upper caste and communities. The youth are also facing the burden of poverty, diseases and unemployment.

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facing problems of identity, freedom, physical and emotional changes, they are more vulnerable to exploitation. The impacts of media on culture, social institution, interpersonal relationship etc has been well realized. The cultural value among youth is changing rapidly and market oriented, media driven western influence has affected India youth. The consumerism culture is also being promoted by the market forces through media driven strategies. The electronic media especially television has undergone a face left as drastic changes in information and communication technology have changed the life style and working of the youth. It is sometimes argued that the mode and nature of violence has changed recently with the impact of media. It is also believed that the electronic media particularly television and internet sources have become the potential devices for propagating violence. The horror, action films and episodes of various serial clearly demonstrate the use of weapons, plots of committing crimes and sex which have wider impact on youth. The action and story of different action film as well as episodes of the serials also influence emotionally the youth. The media violence may be characterized from boarder categories. The first type of media violence is heroic violence. Second type of violence is called happy violence, which is generally funny and humorous to children. The third type of violence is unpunished violence, generally many media programmes the villain is punish it the end of the program. The last category of violence is painless violence. It has been observe that young and youth are more interested in aggressive television programmes. As youth are more vulnerable and prone to exploitation by the antisocial elements as well as politicians, therefore, it is imperative to understand the impact of media violence on youth and suggest the measures for addressing the adverse impact on media violence. It is a fact that aggressiveness of young generation is expressed in violence. Due to hectic life schedule and increasing working hours, the social relationships of the young generation is minimizing day by day. We are more depended on media, as only source of information without actually being in touch with our neighbourhood and society. It is assumed that young people are becoming violent and aggressive because they watch similar behaviour on screen.

It is well accepted that mass media has crucial role in the process of social change. Television among all the mass media has a unique place and has enormous potential for inducing change. However, the affects of television are not without any loop hole. The adverse and negative impact of television has been well documented. Introduction of television in the family has also adversely affected activities outside the family. It has been well observed that the introduction of television in the home has forced the family members to change and readjust their outside activities so that they do not interfere in their watching some interesting television programmes. Commercials shown on television also influence the children and they pursue their parents to buy items, particularly advertised on television. Similarly, the negative effects of foreign transmission and serials and programmes based on foreign theme on the family as a whole are reported which are promoting materialism and obscenity. The television programmes are also promoting a culture of antithetical to women. Besides television programmes are promoting the western culture with exposure of action and violent behaviour.

The impact of mass media on society remains beyond doubt. Its power allows us to reflect upon the role that these media play in fulfilling our communication needs. While the impact of print media has been contingent upon the levels of literacy and ability of readers to understand the contents, broadcast media may have a higher impact in some societies given its ability to transcend the barriers of literacy. Depiction of violence in media has many dimensions. Reportage deals with violence in conflict situations, terrorist attacks and communal violence. When the print and audio media through reportage deal with incidents and events involving violent behaviour, visual media television and cinema provide visuals that are graphic and dynamic. Media violence is rationalized on the assumption that viewers experience catharsis and hence violence, whether relevant or not to the story line, has a legitimate presence on the screen. The problem of media violence is not so acute but the manner in which it is presented, superficial, distorted and exploitative is causing concern. The youth populations have severe pressure such as lack of perspective, the fear of unemployment or homelessness as well as the necessity to succeed in economic terms leaves a little room for the fulfilment of the emotional needs of youth. The youth are becoming frustrated from the existing politico-administrative system and growing corruption. They are being exploited by the political persons for the sake of political interest. Their exposure to media violence is growing and it is causing concern since they become more vulnerable for violent behaviour and committing crimes.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Youth is considered as the major potential human resource of any nation. The future of a country depends upon youth and therefore, they need right direction and opportunities for development in order to get the productive results. Youth in India constitute about 40 percent of the population. Youth in India are in transition phase and they are being affected by the modern social and economic forces. Increasingly large numbers of young have a high level of unemployment. Even the employment opportunities in public sector are declining and thus, youth are struggling to find suitable employment in the growing competition in globalize era. Many youth lost their jobs due to closer of industrial unit, shrinking in public sector employment, drastic reduction in expenditure on social sector and restructuring of economic. There is also growing disparity in growth of employment opportunities to provide productive employment for the increasing youth labour force. Policy induced disasters particularly the positive discrimination in education and employment to the weaker section of society has been perceived as resulting in increased stress on the youth belonging the upper caste and communities. The youth are also facing the burden of poverty, diseases and unemployment.

In recent years, most countries in the world have been going through major economic, social and political changes that have had influence on the lives of young people. The scope of youth research in Asia is broad and varied. There is a fundamental problem about the defining themes and perspectives pertaining to different issues of development and change in the context of culture, political system, social development and traditions (Rajendran and Paul, 2005). Youth research in Asia does not have strict

boundaries, theories or themes for conducting youth studies rather it has emphasized on some of the pertinent youth issues, which have significant relevance for young people and have implications for policy, plan implementation and research. Youth values refer to believes that something is important, worthwhile, good and desirable for the youth to strive for (Ngai, 2007). Youth culture can be defined as young people's ways of living, behaviour and activities in the context of the wider cultures whereas youth sub-cultures are the specific forms of youth culture expression in terms of lifestyles and behaviours (Ngai, 2007). Youth identity is marked by developmental changes in various areas such as biological, social, psychological and cognitive development, and is affected by the changes in peer relations and friendship, family relationships and school institutions. It can also be shaped by neighbourhood characteristics, family's socio-economic status and ethnicity. The issue of identify comes into focus of the youth because they have experienced wider interaction with people, school, work and society and a changing relationship with family. The problem of unemployment for the youth in the phase of economic restructuring and global economy has been well realized by the policy makers and the development activists. Age, education, training, experience and cultural context become the determinant factors for the success of obtaining a job. In the recent years, advancement of computer technology and popularity of information technology centre among young people demonstrate increasingly influence on the youth's life and development. Helves Helena (2005) has pointed out that the internet offers youth tremendous opportunities to explore new ideas, visit foreign lands, meet other young people, and participate in challenging activities.

Youth development refers to the increase of youth's capacity and adaptability in terms of a transition from an ego-centric orientation to socio-tropic orientation (Rosenberg, Ward, and Chilton, 1988). Important youth development outcomes are realization of potential, skills, social wellbeing, civic responsibility, volunteerism and transcendence (Cheung, Ngai, 2004). It is believed that youth can advance positive development through participation in youth programmes, volunteering, community-based services, school-based services, intervention programmes, mentoring programmes, training programmes, etc. Youth participation has become an important research theme among academics and youth researchers in recent years. Youth participation promotes youth's opportunity to be involved in youth activities, policy consultation, service planning and implementation (Ngai, 2007). Youth empowerment is an important theme in youth research. Youth empowerment may have different meanings to different people and different fields. However, the key focus should be on the position of opportunities and support for young people to learn and acquire knowledge and skills to manage their own affairs, to solve their own problems, and participate in decisions and programmes that affect them.

Social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since society began. Human beings have always sought to live in social environments. The proliferation of social networking sites and their pervasion in everyday practices is affecting how modern Indian youth societies manage their social networks. To a significant extent, Social networking sites have shifted social networking to the Internet. In less than five years,

these sites have grown from a niche online activity into a phenomenon through which tens of millions of internet users are connected, both in their leisure time, and at work. There are various factors which have prompted us to consider the implications of these technologies for policy-making. One of these is the willingness of users to embrace social networking sites as a means of communication and social networking in everyday life. The increasing dependence on technology for basic communication also highlights the importance of analyzing how social networking sites are affecting daily processes. Sites like Face book, Whatsapp and LinkedIn are influencing the way users establish, maintain and cultivate a range of social relationships, from close friendships to casual acquaintances. There has been significant interest and concern about the risks of online social networking because of access to personal information and the anonymity that the system allows. A number of public cases of bullying and identity theft have put this issue in the public arena. In the survey participants were asked whether they have ever had a bad social networking experience. No doubt that social networking's sites have great impact on the Indian youth it has lot of challenges which we have to face (Patil, 2014).

Media today has also taken the role of not only an informant but a norm giver. It would be an oversimplification to Judge. Media as a homogenous whole therefore it needs closer scrutiny to examine how it presents violence and how it impacts people's value system (James, 1995). It is very hard to tell what these artefacts and myths mean from a position outside the cultural community that has grown up around them. All we can see are the symbols; we cannot really get at the meanings that are attached to them without opening. Some kind of conversation with the people who are using those symbols, are consuming those stories, and who are deploying those media. Indian children and youth watch and play violent foreign video games with titles in English also with image, which are foreign; some of these are translated in local language.

A number of research studies and surveys have been conducted on media violence and its impact on society and culture. However, there is dearth of empirical data, literature and research findings that deal with media violence and its impact on the behaviour of youth. Concerns about media violence are far from new. Indeed beliefs that popular culture may be to blame for society's ills can be traced back to St Augustine and Plato. In families parents have always reprimanded children for indiscretion in their media habits. However as Pearson (1983, 1984) has observed such concerns have been well documented since the sixteenth century when "Popular songs too often presented criminals as heroes" (Burke, 1978). Mankeker (1999) has discussed the theoretical perspective of media violence while screening culture and politics. She has also reviewed womanhood and nation in modern India in the context of changing culture and information technology particularly transmission of television programmes. A study by Centre for Advocacy and Research, New Delhi (2005) has also attempted to assess the impact of media violence on children. The study has highlighted the theoretical perspective of media violence and its accessibility, exposure and impact on children. Bandura (1961) became interested in imitation and especially the way in which younger people may copy aggressive models. Bandura found, as other researchers have since, that most children (upto 88%) readily imitate the aggressive models (Bandura, 1994).

Perhaps more impressively, even eight months later, young people may still retain 40% of the behaviours observed and are able to reproduce them when invited to do so (Hicks, 1965). The research of Leonard Berkowitz (1984) was conducted on university students and concluded that that aggressive thoughts could also be triggered by aggressive films, which "...can prime other semantically related thoughts, heightening the chances that viewers will have other aggressive ideas in this period...." Another approach to violence and the media is found in the work of Eysenck and Nias (1978) who argue that recurrent representations of violence in the media desensitize audiences to violent behaviour and actions. Indeed, there is by now a long tradition of studies that have discussed children and media like television. Neil Postman (1986) argue that excessive TV-viewing stunts cognitive growth, creates shortened attention spans, and habituates youth to fragmented, segmented, and imagistic cultural experiences and that thus television and other electronic media are a social problem for children. Shohini Ghosh (2007) has maintained both studies, indict a wide range of screen activities as 'acts of violence' and assume that exposures most necessarily result in violent or aggression behaviour this is according to her oversimplification. In a later study, Atkin, Greenberg, Korzenny, and McDermott (1979) found that heavy television violence viewers were more likely to choose physical and verbal aggressive responses to solve hypothetical interpersonal conflict situations; fully 45 percent of the heavy violence viewers chose physical/verbal aggressive responses versus 21 percent of the low violence viewers who did so. Similarly, Walker and Morley found that adolescents who reported enjoying television violence were more likely to hold attitudes and values favourable to behaving aggressively in conflict situations. McIntyre and Teevan (1972) reported an even larger study of 2270 adolescents, again in the Maryland area. Their research measured a variety of television viewing habits and various delinquent activities and concluded that preference for violent television programmes was related to serious aggressive delinquent acts, but not to petty delinquency. McIntyre and Teevan found that boys were more delinquent than girls, while black and lower socio-economic groups contributed most to the overall deviancy. Although various studies lend support to this idea, perhaps the most elegant test of this hypothesis is provided by Lynn, Hampson and Agahi (1989) in a large study carried out in Northern Ireland. The results were quite striking: there was no evidence at all that the amount of viewing television violence had any effect on aggression. However, enjoyment of television violence was correlated with aggression. Shailendra (2009) found a general consensus that violence for the protection of the state is justified and revolutionaries are heroes. In terms of media responses most felt that it showed psychological and emotional violence. Altruism as reason to justify violence is seen more acceptable while a few did mention that one could justify violence to protect one's kith and kin.

## **OBJECTIVE AND METHODS**

Present paper is based on a major research study , supported by ICSSR, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India. The paper aims at examining the media violence and its impact on youth in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, West

Bengal, Tripura, Karnataka, and Gujarat. Lucknow, Delhi, Kolkata, Agartala, Bangalore and Ahmadabad were selected for the survey. Both institutional (students perusing their studies in universities/ colleges) and non institutional (Youth out of the university / college campus) were selected for field survey. In order to conduct the study, probability sampling procedure has adopted for the selection of target population from the universe. In the selected cities Central University, State University, Private University, Technical and Special University were represented in the sample of the study. Several academic institutions and colleges affiliated with these universities were also included in the sample. In each selected district, 150 youth students pursuing higher education in different educational and academic institutions affiliated with different universities will be randomly selected for the field survey. The overall, 1500 youths were covered in the sample of the study. For purpose of field survey, interview schedules were developed. The inferences and results from field data were drawn out through use SPSS.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

- More than half of the respondents were male. About 2/3<sup>rd</sup> respondents were from metropolitan and urban centres. About 3/4<sup>th</sup> respondents were Hindus while proportion of respondents from Christian community was found significant. About 57 per cent respondents were from General Caste. However, more than 3/4<sup>th</sup> respondents in Tripura were from Scheduled Tribes communities. More than half of the respondents were localities.
- Less than 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents were from the age group of 22-25 years while about 28 per cent respondents were from the age group of 18-21 years. More than 3/4<sup>th</sup> respondents were unmarried however, more than 1/4<sup>th</sup> respondents in West Bengal and Gujarat were found married. About 2/3<sup>rd</sup> respondents were from nuclear families. The main family occupation was reported to be private service, government service, business and agriculture. About half of the respondents reported that their annual family income is less than Rs. 2 lakhs.
- About 61 per cent respondents reported that they are pursuing their education. However, about 28 per cent respondents were graduates and postgraduates. About 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents were non-institutional youth while about 57 respondents were found pursuing their undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Less than 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents currently pursuing their education were found enrolled in state universities while about 31 per cent youth were found enrolled in Central Universities. About 58 per cent respondents were found enrolled in government institutions while more than 1/4<sup>th</sup> respondents were enrolled in private institutions. They were mainly enrolled in the subject of social sciences/ humanities, commerce and management.
- About 28 per cent respondents were found employed. They were found employed in both formal and informal sectors. Most of them were in full time job. More than half of the respondents who are currently pursuing higher education revealed that they are participating in student politics. About 17 per cent respondents further reported that they were in election fray of students union.

- Most of respondents reported that they have smart phones while about 58 per cent respondents have laptop and about 1/4<sup>th</sup> respondents own desk top computers.
- More than half of the respondents own television and have subscribed various channels. Most of respondents revealed that they have account on social networking sites. They use social networking sites through their mobile phones. More than half of the respondents revealed that they regularly operate their account on social media. The accessibility and exposure of social media was reported comparatively higher among institutional youth. About 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents admitted that they are regularly watching television programmes.
- The main purpose of operating social media account was reported to be interaction with friends/relatives, communication, sharing of photos and sharing of views while main purpose of watching television programmes was reported to be knowledge, time pass and recreation.
- The content of electronic media as per order of preference was reported to be news, political events, fiction/movies, sports, serials, debates, crime reports and reality shows. A large proportion of respondents further revealed that they are watching television programme which contains a large input of violence. These programmes include Savdhan India, CID, Crime Petrol, Netflix, etc. About 1/4<sup>th</sup> respondents further revealed that they enjoy to watch reality shows while about 29 per cent respondents enjoyed action/crime/horror programmes. A large proportion of respondents reported that they preferred to watch movie with contain high inputs of violence such as Bahubali, Bahubali Beginning, Singham and Body Guard.
- About 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents admitted that they circulate /receive provoking messages on social media. About 19 per cent respondents reported that they take very much interest in action based programmes. About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> respondents reported that they occasionally neglect other programmes in comparison to action based programmes while about 1/5<sup>th</sup> respondents admitted that they frequently and \always neglect other programmes in comparison to action based programmes. About 2/3<sup>rd</sup> respondents were found much and very much passionate in watching their favorite serials /programmes.
- The television channels depict violence through dramatic adaptation of crime stories, coverage of violent activities, crime segments and violence related coverage. Most of the respondents admitted that youth are generally attracted towards violence. They further reported that media programmes having violent contents are making young generation insensitive towards their social responsibly and duties.
- Most of respondents blame media for increasing violence behavior among young generation. However, about 3/4<sup>th</sup> respondents admitted that media makes an impact on their behavior. About 2/5<sup>th</sup> respondents were of the view that news channels are also propagating violence.
- Television programmes are enhancing violent activities through action movies, action serials, violent projections and crime news. Fight, physical enforcement, sexual violence

and arms use are some of the main kinds of violence being depicted in television programmes.

- Less than half of the respondents reported that they receive complaints regarding their aggressiveness after watching violent programmes. Majority of the respondents were of the views that media is promoting violence academic institutions to some extent. Drug abuse/addiction, political influence, student politics, media violence and disintegration of families are some of the main reasons for violent behavior among youth.
- More than 3/4<sup>th</sup> respondents reported that media makes an impact on their behavior. However, about 46 per cent respondents reported that the effect of media violence is much and too much.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

- We need a broader definition of violence. Violence is a violation of a character's physical or emotional well being. Thus, it should include the key elements both intentionality and harm. The following acts of violence may be included in the broader definition of media violence: (a) level of act, (b) type of act, (c) intentionality, (d) degree of harm to the victims, (e) type of harm, (f) level of openness, (g) level of reality and (h) level of humors. We need to understand more about how the public defines violence. Similarly, it is more important to know that how we perceive media violence and their effects in the changing socio-cultural value system.
- We need to develop a broader view of effects of exposure to media violence. Exposure to media violence has many effects, both immediately and over the long term. Thus, we need to use effects terms more consistently. Empirical results can be communicated much more efficiently. We need to understand more about how programmers make their decisions. The producers and directors of the TV programmes are being influenced by the market trends which are more demand oriented. Thus, the content and theme of TV programmes may not be easily changed.
- We need to use multiple measures of prevalence of media violence. We also need to construct samples representing the entire TV landscape rather than limiting a few television programmes. The physical and living environment also influence the youth in their access and exposure to media violence. Thus, creation of conducive environment is of paramount importance.
- Socio-economic conditions in which youth grew up are more important than the media. Media is a combination of culture, belief, values and reflection of socio-economic conditions of society. Centralized control and censorship are not efficient and do not meet the criteria of democratic societies and therefore, three major strategies in this regard may be considered: (a) public debate and common ground talks between politicians, producers, parents and teachers should be encouraged; (b) development of professional codes of conduct and self discipline for producers is imperative; (c) innovative forms of media education to create competent and critical media users are crucial.

- Besides the creative roles media professionals, non-government organizations in general and non-formal educational agents with a global perspective can play an important role in reducing the negative impact of media on youths and society.
- It is imperative to learn about the impact of violence on society and particularly on youth. Sharing of information and other empirical findings with young population may help in understanding the relevance and magnitude of the issue to them and mitigating the media violence.
- Creating a safe environment is important. Families should feel that they are living in safe environment. Care and protection to young population are the first steps of the family. Parents should provide emotional security and teach values and virtue to young population in their homes.
- Parents should limit the amount of media exposure in their homes. The average young person sees entirely too much violence on TV and at the movies. Thus, limiting the media exposure will also ensure reducing the media violence. A close watch by the parents on the quality and quantity of media inputs to their young children is also important to reduce the negative impact of media on the psychology of youth.
- The parents may encourage their young children and youth for watching TV programmes and movies based on socio-cultural values such as purity, beauty, truth, right, honorable, excellent and praiseworthy. The episodes based on historical and mythological theme may also promote socio-cultural values among the youth and thus, they may be diverted from devoting their time in watching sex and violence based TV programmes. These must be done within the broad secular framework of the Indian constitution promoting scientific temper and condemning superstition.
- Parents should join the company of youth and young for watching TV. Discussions with youth during the telecast of the programmes should be encouraged by parents. The plots and actions of the programmes provide a natural context for discussion and teach important principles about relationship and violence. Thus, the creative and positive discussion based on plots and actions of the TV programmes may ignore the consequences of media violence.
- The faith and trust should be developed among youth. Youth at the early age instinctively trust their parents. As youth grow, parents should work to develop their young's trust in them and create positive thinking among youth and divert them from watching sex and violence based TV programmes.
- Efforts should be made to create an effective mechanism by which the growth percolates to the most deserving sections of the society. Every individual should have easy access to essential requirements and comforts necessary for leading a peaceful and comfortable life.
- The parents should expose children to traditional arts and music programmes often. They should be put to music/dance classes at least for some time. In all the schools and colleges, there should be dance and music classes. Music and dance competition should

be organized more at school levels. These would create interest among the youths for classical music, dance and other folk forms. These have not only functional value but they develop in the youth a genuine appreciation for art and culture.

- There should be regulation on the social media. The contents of social media should be checked while spam, aggressive and violent contents of media coverage should be discouraged by the internet service providers. The accessibility to specific sites in Google search should be denied while there may be limitation of timings for watching specific internet sites.
- There should be strict regulation on telecasting of programmes, serials and action based movies. The television programmes having large violent content should be telecasted in late hours so that young are not affected by media violence. The programmes may also be regulated by censorship by national authority.

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