



CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INDIAN SHOWS ON OTT PLATFORMS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The advent of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms has transformed the landscape of entertainment consumption, offering viewers unprecedented access to a myriad of content. Within this digital realm, Indian web series have gained substantial popularity, exploring diverse themes and narratives. This research delves into the psychological implications of content in Indian shows available on major OTT platforms which are extremely popular among all age groups including adolescents, with a specific focus on themes of violence, sexual content, tobacco depiction, drug abuse, and foul language. The main characters which become the role models for the youth consuming these shows influence the young minds in a very negative way. Through a meticulous content analysis, ten web series from each of the prominent OTT platforms, namely Netflix, Disney+Hotstar, and Prime Video, were selected for examination. Drawing from established literature, the paper discusses the potential ramifications of exposure to violence, sexual content, tobacco depiction, drug abuse, and foul language on viewers, particularly adolescents and children, who are in their formative years and are highly susceptible to observational learning. The findings of this research offer valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of media consumption, emphasizing the importance of critical engagement and media literacy among viewers.

INTRODUCTION

OTT stands for “Over the Top” and refers to any streaming service that provides content over the internet. OTT is a widely used type of mass media that plays a key role in shaping perceptions, forming views, and reinforcing dominant cultural norms. These days, over-the top (OTT) content has quickly taken the place of entertainment. One of the primary benefits of OTT platforms is the variety of viewing possibilities they provide. Viewers may access over-the-top (OTT) material from any internet-connected device, including computers, smartphones, tablets, and smart TVs, in contrast to traditional TV. This allows them to watch their favourite films and shows whenever they want.

Earlier, there was censorship in Indian cinema, and as a result, morals, ethics, and decency were maintained, allowing individuals to watch movies with their families. However, we can't say the same for the OTT platform these days. There is no censorship, the privacy policy is not rigorously followed, and several provocative and foul languages are used. The movies contain a lot of violence and sexual content. Watching movies with family members is becoming harder these days, or people feel uncomfortable doing it since web series use vulgarity and offensive language.

India leads the world in the duration of time Indian teens spend using OTT platforms, with an average of 8 hours 29 minutes each day, compared to the worldwide average of 6 hours 45 minutes. Our culture is being profoundly impacted by web series and streaming contents, particularly among young people. In the idea of presenting the real world authentically, many online series exaggerates violence, vulgar language, and sexual content while frequently compromising morals, which have an adverse impact on viewer's mental health.

Binge-Watching

The act of watching several TV shows in short period of time is known as binge-watching. It enables users to begin watching TV shows whenever they want and to stop them anytime, they want. TV network is no longer impose to viewers that they have to wait a week to see a new episode of a show. When a young person enters early adulthood, they are still developing their own identity. A young person's autonomy at this period of life may lead to the development of risky behaviour as it is determined by psychological aspects (personality) and sociocultural autonomy (Arnett, 2000; Trempala, 2011). One example of such risky behaviour is binge-watching excessively. The frantic release of emotional tension and a desire of pleasure are hallmarks of binge-watching behaviours in young people.

The present literature and the research cited therein on the factors that influence binge watching behaviour indicates psychosocial theories that highlight the significance of satisfying demands as a source of motivation for the binge-watching behaviour (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). According to the concept of uses and satisfaction, viewers have their own objectives and demands, and they utilize media like television and the internet to find methods to fulfil them (Rubin, 2008; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). The way that viewers utilize these platforms suggests that people are seeking satisfaction for five needs: escape from the stress of daily life, identification with characters, pleasure, establishing social connection, and knowledge or education. OTT platforms like Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hot star, and others have made it easier for a consumer to spend the time amusingly and to relax in stressful situation.

Violence

Globally, violence motivated by aggression poses a significant threat, contributing substantially to disease and mortality rates. Recent research suggests a proliferation of thriller web series catering to this trend, adversely impacting the mental well-being of young individuals and exacerbating societal anger, animosity, and violence (Rajendram et al., 2023). A study examining the content of frequently binge-watched original online TV shows found an average of 5.9 violent incidents per hour, characterized by explicit, serious, graphic, and intentional portrayals, with limited justification for such violence.

With violence prevailing as a dominant theme, the landscape of over-the-top (OTT) media has shifted away from narrative-driven fiction. Presently, narratives revolving around terrorist activities, murder inquiries, and crime sagas dominate, captivating audiences with their authenticity and adrenaline-inducing allure (Verma, 2021). According to the National Television Violence Study (NTVS), violence is defined as "any explicit portrayal of a credible threat of physical force or its actual application, with the intention to cause physical harm to living beings or groups thereof."

Sexual Content

Adolescent's concept of gender is greatly influenced by modern technology, which places greater emphasis on an individual's exterior attributes than their internal characteristics. According to S.J. Baran (Baran, 1976), the media serves as a teacher for many individuals who are not particularly conscious of their sexuality. Both men and women are objects in the media, but women are objectified more than men are. Males and females are represented in the media in sexual roles that provide pleasure and visual delight. Objectification is a significant factor in a consumer's lives. When men and women consume content that depicts them as sex objects, it negatively affects them and alters their perceptions of the other sex as nothing more than sex objects. Consumer behaviour has changed, and this has been observed in many settings, including offices, public spaces, and academic institutions.

Sexual objectification is the treatment of a person as a body, or the experience of being treated as a body that is primarily offered as an item for the entertainment of men or frequently for the consumption of masculine appearance (Fredrick, & Roberts, 1997). When a woman's body or certain bodily parts are singled out and separated from her as a unique person, and she is fundamentally perceived as an actual object of male sexual desire, this is known as sexual objectification (Bartky, 1990). Male exposure to sexually explicit information through web series was highly associated with demeaning remarks about unattractive women, sexual objectification, and lack of empathy. Furthermore, there was no apparent association between the exposure of female viewers to sexually explicit web series content and the objectification of men.

Many studies have already been conducted on Hindi film, including how it functions and the cultural context in which it is set. However, very few of these studies focus on the objectification of women in the real world. Women were portrayed in the media in every era, but they were mostly restricted to the traditional, patriarchal framework of Indian society.

According to a recent survey, the majority of youths who have had sexual experience wish they had waited longer to have sex; additional data shows that early sexual engagement is associated with a higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases and unintended births. The paediatrics has suggested that precocious teenage sex may be influenced by how sex is portrayed on entertainment television (TV).

Substance Use

Numerous studies have found that the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs (ATODs) is often shown in the web series. Studies indicate that exposure to these kinds of pictures in the media might impact viewer's attitudes and actions related to substance abuse, with young people being especially susceptible to these web series. Cinema, stars, TV, and even social media influencers by name have the power to shape public opinion, direct and shape conversational narratives, and eventually even change people's perceptions. Similarly, the media may appear to promote substance use, shame those who are battling a substance use problem, or accurately portray addiction, depending on the viewpoint of the viewer.

The social learning theory given by Albert Bandura helps us to comprehend how actors model their views after the people who receive these messages. This theory's author claims that reaching for drugs is a result of emulating similar behaviour patterns seen in significant people for a particular person. The social learning theory helps us understand aberrant behaviour by pinpointing the root reasons for it. The person takes up and models these behaviours in him or herself by watching the behaviour of significant people in their surroundings.

Initiation and usage of drugs are mostly predicted by comparable factors throughout global regions. Low parental support, deficiency in social problem-solving abilities, peer pressure, upbringing in a dysfunctional home (poverty, ineffective education, crime, and addiction), early tobacco exposure influencing the start of marijuana experimentation, low religiosity, a weak social support network, low economic status, weakened family relationships and lack of parental control, pop culture idols promoting casual attitudes towards drugs, and the ignorance of the risks associated with their use are the most frequently mentioned.

Vulgar Language

Language is a very essential component of society, because it is the centre of interactions between people in every community, regardless of place and time. There is a reciprocal link between language and interaction, language shapes social interaction and social interaction shapes language. Vulgar language is often defined as speech that is said by someone using coarse or obscene terms. Vulgar language is considered impolite and taboo in communication.

In the current scenario, the use of foul language on OTT platforms that are in public view needs to be taken seriously. Aside from the genre, the material on OTT platforms nowadays uses abusive language both visually and verbally (Gupta, 2023). Their use of foul language, which is accessible to kids, has a huge negative psychological effect on them. There need to be stringent regulations on the use of vulgar language, including bad and profanity words.

The fact that over-the-top (OTT) platforms are not bound by the same laws as regular TV networks is one of the reasons foul language has become increasingly common there. OTT platforms are not restricted by the same broadcasting rules and restrictions that apply to TV networks, allowing them to create and distribute content in whatever way they see suitable.

Tobacco depiction

Mass media aims to create and distribute information. It has connected societies all over the world and eventually transformed into a component of the global virtual society with the development of the internet. Web series show more realistic topics and portray reality with a sharp realism that features individuals smoking cigarettes and using drugs in situations that are disturbingly similar to real life. These kinds of entertainment frequently have an unconscious impact on our personalities as a result of the specific genre or characters we see (Wong, 2012).

The societal acceptance of tobacco use encourages its usage, and in this regard, over-the-top (OTT) platforms have a significant influence on public opinion. Research from several nations has demonstrated that watching web series depicting tobacco use raises the likelihood that teenagers would start using tobacco products. According to Indian research, adolescents aged 12 to 16 who were exposed to high levels of tobacco content in web series had double the chances of ever using tobacco as those who were exposed to low levels of tobacco content. Several international experimental investigations have demonstrated that smoking scenes in web series cause people to change their opinions in favour of smoking, which is consistent with the findings of this research.

Impact on Youth

Adolescents are highly susceptible to the influences of their environment and are adept at absorbing information, making any web series or internet streaming content they consume likely to impact them significantly. Moreover, teenagers often find themselves strongly influenced by their personalities, which can shape their behaviors. They may adopt offensive language and exhibit a decline in decency, respect, and moral values derived from their cultural upbringing as a result of these influences. Notably, rates of youth smoking and alcohol consumption are on the rise, with web series serving as a primary source of entertainment over other forms of physical activity. Consequently, issues such as obesity, depression, and eye ailments are prevalent among young people.

According to the cultivation theory pioneered by George Gerbner and Larry Gross, television holds significant sway over a wide audience by repeatedly portraying certain social phenomena, thereby shaping viewers' perceptions of reality. However, the depictions presented on television often diverge from actual reality. Gerbner et al. assert that television primarily aims to reinforce existing social norms and discourage societal change. While the theory's proponents do not argue that frequent exposure to certain phenomena will directly influence viewers to emulate characters on screen, they suggest that such exposure cultivates and sustains awareness of these behaviors within the social sphere.

Binge-watching, the practice of continuously watching web series without breaks, has detrimental effects on one's health. Individuals often devote excessive time to binge watching, neglecting their daily responsibilities such as attending classes or fulfilling work commitments. Health issues associated with binge-watching include blurred vision, dry and irritated eyes, fatigue, and diminished concentration. This behavior underscores consumers' addiction to virtual content, frequently resulting in disruptions to their personal lives. These disruptions manifest in antisocial behavior, heightened emotional sensitivity, and disrupted sleep patterns, leading to various health complications among predominantly young binge watchers (Dhanuka; Bohra, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study analyses how Indian shows on OTT platforms depict the deterioration of society using unobtrusive methods. Common themes are identified from the dialogue and visual content. Content analysis, which examines non-interactive data that is independent of the research, was utilized to analyse the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011:228). The analysis was conducted on the dialogue and the visuals of thirty web series of Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and Netflix. Only the most popular thirty web series with more than 7.5 ratings on IMDB were analysed. The content was heard and watched for every web series that was compiled into the dataset. After analysing the scenes and the language, few overarching themes became clear. The purpose of this study was to analyse in depth the content depicted in Hindi web series which are extremely popular among all age groups including adolescents.

Table 1: The 30 web series selected for analysis over a span of last 8 years representing the social and cultural contexts of last decade.

Web Series	Year	OTT Platform	Ratings
Mirzapur	2018	Prime Video	8.5/10
Breathe	2018	Prime Video	8.3/10
Hostel Daze	2019	Prime Video	8.5/10
The Family Man	2019	Prime Video	8.7/10
Made In Heaven	2019	Prime Video	8.2/10
Pataal Lok	2020	Prime Video	8.1/10
Panchayat	2020	Prime Video	8.9/10
Bandish Bandits	2020	Prime Video	8.6/10
Mumbai Diaries	2021	Prime Video	8.6/10
Farzi	2023	Prime Video	8.4/10
Criminal Justice	2019	Disney+ Hotstar	8.1/10
City of Dreams	2019	Disney+ Hotstar	7.7/10
Special Ops	2020	Disney+ Hotstar	8.6/10
Aarya	2020	Disney+ Hotstar	7.7/10
November Story	2021	Disney+ Hotstar	7.6/10
Grahan	2021	Disney+ Hotstar	8.3/10
Human	2022	Disney+ Hotstar	7.8/10
Saas, Bahu aur Flamingo	2023	Disney+ Hotstar	7.7/10
Taaza Khabar	2023	Disney+ Hotstar	8.1/10
The Freelancer	2023	Disney+ Hotstar	8.1/10

Little Things	2016	Netflix	8.2/10
Sacred Games	2018	Netflix	8.5/10
Kota Factory	2019	Netflix	9.0/10
Delhi Crime	2019	Netflix	8.5/10
Aranyak	2021	Netflix	7.8/10
Decoupled	2021	Netflix	7.9/10
Cat	2022	Netflix	8.2/10
Khakhee	2022	Netflix	8.2/10
Guns and Gulaabs	2023	Netflix	7.7/10
Trial by Fire	2023	Netflix	7.7/10

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

From the Collection, Coding and Analysis of the data, the five major themes emerged. The following results will highlight how the deterioration of society is depicted in the themes of these Indian shows on OTT platform.

Table 2: The Coding of the Selected Web Series

Web Series	Code
Mumbai Diaries	WS 1
Hostel Daze	WS 2
Pataal Lok	WS 3
Farzi	WS 4
Mirzapur	WS 5
The Family Man	WS 6
Made In Heaven	WS 7
Panchayat	WS 8
Breathe	WS 9
Bandish Bandits	WS 10
Criminal Justice	WS 11
Special Ops	WS 12
Saas, Bahu aur Flamingo	WS 13
November Story	WS 14
City of Dreams	WS 15
Aarya	WS 16
Taaza Khabar	WS 17
Grahan	WS 18
The Freelancer	WS 19
Human	WS 20
Kota Factory	WS 21
Aranyak	WS 22

Sacred Games	WS 23
Decoupled	WS 24
Delhi Crime	WS 25
Guns and Gulaabs	WS 26
Trial by Fire	WS 27
Cat	WS 28
Little Things	WS 29
Khakhee	WS 30

Table 3: The Five Themes which emerged after the Analysis of the Visual content of the data

Major Themes	Web Series Code
Violence	WS 1, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 6, WS 7, WS 8, WS 9, WS 11, WS 12, WS 13, WS 14, WS 15, WS 16, WS 17, WS 18, WS 19, WS 20, WS 22, WS 23, WS 26, WS 28, WS 30
Sexual Content	WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 6, WS 7, WS 9, WS 10, WS 13, WS 15, WS 16, WS 17, WS 19, WS 18, WS 20, WS 22, WS 23, WS 24, WS 25, WS 28, WS 29, WS 30
Substance Use	WS 1, WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 6, WS 7, WS 8, WS 9, WS 10, WS 11, WS 13, WS 15, WS 16, WS 20, WS 22, WS 28
Foul Language	WS 1, WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 6, WS 7, WS 8, WS 9, WS 10, WS 11, WS 12, WS 13, WS 14, WS 15, WS 16, WS 17, WS 18, WS 19, WS 20, WS 21, WS 22, WS 23, WS 24, WS 25, WS 26, WS 27, WS 28, WS 29, WS 30
Tobacco Depiction	WS 1, WS 2, WS 3, WS 4, WS 5, WS 6, WS 7, WS 8, WS 9, WS 10, WS 13, WS 19, WS 20, WS 21, WS 23, WS 24, WS 26, WS 27, WS 28, WS 30

Mumbai Diaries

"Mumbai Diaries" is a medical thriller web series set in the bustling metropolis of Mumbai, India. Released on 9 September 2021, drawing inspiration from the harrowing events of the 2008 Mumbai Attack and the catastrophic Maharashtra floods of 2005. Set against the backdrop of a terrorist onslaught that rattles Mumbai, the series unfolds amidst widespread pandemonium, devastation, and loss of life. Explosions, gunfire, and scenes of frenzied chaos vividly depict the brutality endured by civilians ensnared in the midst of conflict. Furthermore, the depiction of characters engaging in behaviors such as tobacco and alcohol consumption. The pervasive use of profanity among central characters potentially exert a detrimental influence on impressionable viewers, particularly the youth.

Hostel Daze

"Hostel Daze," a comedy-drama web series created by TVF (The Viral Fever) and released on December 13, 2019, centers on the lives of students inhabiting an Indian engineering college hostel. The show fearlessly confronts themes surrounding sexuality, employing various forms of explicit language such as slang, swearing, cursing, and discussions about sex. Moreover, "Hostel Daze" does not shy away from portraying alcohol consumption, with one character depicted mixing alcohol into chai, and the characters are also depicted partaking in the use of marijuana

and cigarettes. These portrayals may influence young viewers to emulate such behaviors in their quest for social acceptance, as depicted within the series.

Pataal Lok

"Pataal Lok" is a gripping crime thriller web series premiered on 15 May 2020 and created by Clean Slate Filmz. The storyline revolves around Hathi Ram Chaudhary (played by Jaideep Ahlawat), a disgraced police officer assigned to investigate an assassination attempt on a prominent journalist. Throughout the series, characters are depicted engaging in smoking cigarettes and using offensive language, including profanity. Scenes of violence are prevalent, ranging from gun violence and torture to murder and physical confrontations. Additionally, the series includes scenes with explicit sexual content, including references to sexual assault, nudity, and sexual activity.

Farzi

"Farzi" is a darkly comedic crime thriller television series created by D2R Films and premiered on 10 February, 2023. The narrative revolves around Sunny, portrayed by Shahid Kapoor, an artist disillusioned by the socioeconomic disparities in India. The series showcases intense confrontations, with characters engaging in physical altercations and wielding weapons such as knives and firearms. Dialogue is replete with profanity and explicit language, often alluding to sexual activity. Furthermore, there are portrayals of characters consuming alcohol and tobacco, alongside instances where the protagonist is depicted using drugs.

Mirzapur

"Mirzapur" is a crime thriller web series that premiered on November 15, 2018, produced by Excel Entertainment. The central storyline revolves around two prominent families: the Tripathis and the Pandits, locked in a fierce battle for supremacy over Mirzapur's underworld. It is characterized by its stark portrayal of graphic violence, with each scene laden with brutality, including beheadings, murders, dismemberment, and gunfire. Female characters are also immersed in this violent environment, while profanity and abusive language are prevalent throughout the dialogues. Moreover, the show features explicit sexual content, including instances of BDSM, alongside heavy drug and alcohol consumption, adding further layers to its gritty depiction of the underworld.

The Family Man

"The Family Man" is an action-drama web series premiered on 19 September 2019 and created by D2R Films. The show revolves around Srikant Tiwari, played by Manoj Bajpayee, who leads a double life as a middle-class man with a seemingly mundane job in a government intelligence agency while also being a highly skilled intelligence officer tasked with thwarting terrorist threats. The show explores Srikant's efforts to protect the nation from terrorist threats, often depicted through intense action sequences involving fistfights, gunfights, bombings, and graphic scenes, such as the dismemberment of a character's body. The series features frequent use of profanity, and the main character, Srikant, is depicted as a heavy smoker and drinker. Additionally, there are implicit depictions of sexual content, including intimate discussions among characters.

Made In Heaven

"Made in Heaven" is an Indian drama web series premiered on Amazon Prime Video in March. The series follows the lives of Tara Khanna (played by Sobhita Dhulipala) and Karan Mehra (played by Arjun Mathur), two wedding planners based in Delhi who run the upscale wedding planning agency "Made in Heaven." The series portrays instances of domestic violence encompassing physical abuse, emotional manipulation, and controlling behaviour within marital relationships. It includes intimate scenes and conversations exploring themes of sexuality, desires, and consent. The show features intense sexual encounters, both heterosexual and homosexual. Characters frequently use

abusive language, and occasional scenes depict them consuming alcohol and smoking during social gatherings and parties.

Panchayat

"Panchayat" is a comedy-drama web series created by TVF (The Viral Fever) and premiered on 8 March 2019. The series follows the story of Abhishek Tripathi, played by Jitendra Kumar, a young man who reluctantly takes up a job as the secretary of a panchayat office in a remote village in Uttar Pradesh after failing to secure a more lucrative job in the city. Throughout the storyline, conflicts and arguments among characters are prevalent, depicting the complexities of interpersonal relations. Additionally, instances of verbal disputes are depicted, occasionally accompanied by the use of Hindi expletives in various episodes. The portrayal of tobacco and alcohol consumption is sporadic, with scenes illustrating the consumption of alcohol by a group of central characters.

Breathe

"Breathe" is a psychological crime thriller web series created by Abundantia Entertainment and premiered on 26 January, 2018. The story revolves around a series of mysterious deaths of organ donors with interconnected backgrounds. Throughout the series, viewers encounter scenes that evoke intense emotions and may disturb some individuals. These sequences encompass confrontations, physical altercations, and instances of peril. Additionally, the series occasionally depicts sexuality and intimacy including suggestive dialogue and imagery such as a character holding a sex toy. Alcohol consumption is prevalent across multiple episodes, while drug use is depicted in a singular instance. Furthermore, the series incorporates instances of foul language, including profanity and strong language, employed by characters in various contexts.

Bandish Bandits

"Bandish Bandits" is a musical drama web series premiered on Amazon Prime Video in August 2020 and created by Still and Still Moving Pictures. Set in Rajasthan, the series revolves around the lives of two protagonists, Radhe Rathore (played by Ritwik Bhowmik) and Tamanna Sharma (played by Shreya Chaudhry), who come from contrasting musical backgrounds. Notably, the series contains implicit sexual and kissing scenes, as well as depictions of substance use and tobacco. Furthermore, characters in the series employ many Indian profanities and the use of strong language, including the portrayal of the character Arghya, played by Ritwik Bhowmik, engaging in smoking cigarettes, and various scenes featuring alcohol consumption.

Criminal Justice

"Criminal Justice" is a crime thriller web series adapted from the British television series of the same name. Created by BBC Studios India and Applause Entertainment, it premiered on Hotstar in April 2019. The story follows Aditya Sharma, played by Vikrant Massey, a young cab driver who finds himself embroiled in a nightmare after a one-night stand with a passenger ends in her murder. Violence is a significant component of the storyline reflecting the gritty and intense essence of the crime thriller genre. The series depicts physical altercations, including fights, assaults, and instances of domestic violence. Furthermore, it includes elements of sexual content, such as implied sexual activity, discussions regarding sexuality, and allusions to sexual violence, notably within a murder case storyline.

Moreover, "Criminal Justice" portrays characters engaging in drugs-related activities, encompassing the buying, selling, and consumption of drugs, often depicting the usage of drug pills. Additionally, tobacco usage, exemplified through cigarette smoking, is prevalent throughout the series. Furthermore, characters utilize profanity and strong language in various contexts.

Special Ops

"Special Ops" is an espionage thriller web series created by Friday Storytellers, premiering on March 17, 2020. The narrative centers on Himmat Singh, portrayed by Kay Kay Menon, a senior operative within India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the nation's external intelligence agency. The series prominently features violence, including gun battles, hand-to-hand combat, explosions, and other action-oriented sequences. Realistic portrayals of combat involve characters being shot and scenes of bloodshed, along with depictions of harsh treatment during interrogations. Furthermore, the dialogue in the series includes profanity, vulgar language, and strong expressions, even in domestic settings.

Saas, Bahu aur Flamingo

"Saas, Bahu Aur Flamingo" is an Indian Hindi-language crime drama television series created by Maddock Films and premiered on Disney+ Hotstar on May 5, 2023. The plot revolves around Savitri, the influential leader of a significant criminal syndicate operating in the lawless Borderlands. The narrative delves into the underworld of crime and drug abuse, portraying the harsh realities of these environments. The series depicts scenes of intense violence, including physical confrontations and shootings, as well as intimate encounters, suggestive dialogue, and sexual situations. Additionally, viewers should expect instances of strong language, swearing, and offensive dialogue. Characters in the series are depicted using tobacco products and alcohol.

November Story

"November Story" is a crime thriller web series released in 20 May 2021. The storyline revolves around a crime novelist named Anuradha Ganesan (played by Tamannah Bhatia) who gets embroiled in a series of unexpected events after her Alzheimer's-afflicted father, Ganesan (played by GM Kumar), is accused of committing a murder. The series features numerous violent scenes, including graphic depictions of blood and gore in autopsy and post mortem settings, as well as physical altercations and crime scenes. Additionally, nudity is depicted during autopsy scenes and characters are shown using coarse language throughout.

City of Dreams

"City of Dreams" is an Indian political thriller web series created by Applause Entertainment and Kukunoor Movies. Set in Mumbai, the series revolves around the Gaikwad family, a powerful political dynasty grappling with internal strife and external threats. The series is marked by numerous instances of sexual content, including scenes, references, and implied sexual encounters, alongside depictions of violence such as shootings, threats, and physical altercations. Moreover, the series extensively features profanity in Hindi, and portrays widespread usage of alcohol and drugs.

Aarya

"Aarya" is a crime drama web series created by Ram Madhvani Films and Endemol Shine Group, based on the Dutch drama series "Penzoa.". The series follows the titular character Aarya Sareen, played by Sushmita Sen, a loving wife and mother who becomes embroiled in the criminal underworld after her husband, Tej Sareen, is assassinated. Within the criminal underworld depicted in the narrative, various forms of violence are portrayed, including physical altercations, shootings, and confrontations. Additionally, instances of drug abuse are depicted, with characters engaging in smoking and substance consumption, including instances of underage characters partaking, leading to dire consequences such as overdose. Throughout the storyline, both Hindi and English profanities are utilized by characters of varying ages, contributing to the raw authenticity of the dialogue. Moreover, the series features numerous instances of sexual content, ranging from scenes depicting sexual encounters to references and implied situations.

Taaza Khabar

"Taaza Khabar" is an engaging Indian miniseries that blends fantasy, comedy, and thriller elements, created by BB Ki Vines. The series follows the story of Vasya (portrayed by Bhuvan Bam), a compassionate yet impoverished man residing in the slums. The series includes several scenes set in a brothel, exploring its multifaceted ramifications. Moreover, occasional physical altercations and verbal conflicts among characters are depicted. The incorporation of innuendos, coarse language, and vulgar dialogue may elicit discomfort for some viewers, particularly when watching with family.

Grahan

"Grahan" is a web series that delves into the murky depths of crime and mystery released on 24 June 2021 and created by Jar Pictures. Set in the backdrop of Rishikesh, the spiritual capital of India, the series shatters the town's facade of tranquillity as a series of shocking murders rocks the community. The series includes depictions of intense violence, encompassing mob violence, sexual violence, arson, and targeted attacks based on religious affiliation. Additionally, scenes depict vandalism, property destruction, fires, firearms, and physical altercations. The language used in the series is robust and frequent in certain episodes.

The Freelancer

"The Freelancer" is an action-packed thriller web series that premiered on September 1, 2023, and was created by Friday Storytellers. The story follows Avinash Kamath (portrayed by Mohit Raina), a former law enforcement officer who transitions into the role of a mercenary. The series vividly portrays scenes of violence, including physical altercations, killings, and instances of violence against women, including a forced sex scene. Intense action sequences featuring gun battles, explosions, and hand-to-hand combat are prevalent, making it potentially unsuitable for younger audiences. Characters in the series frequently use coarse language and are depicted smoking cigarettes and cigars.

Human

"Human" is a medical thriller web series that premiered in January 2022. The series delves into the murky depths of the medical field, revealing the intricate connections between pharmaceutical companies, prominent private hospitals, and government officials. These entities exploit economically disadvantaged individuals by involving them in dangerous drug trials. In addition, the series depicts characters such as Dr. Gauri Nath (portrayed by Shefali Shah) and Mangu (played by Vishal Jethwa) smoking. Furthermore, "Human" contains explicit sexual content, including intimate scenes, and features coarse language, including profanity and strong vocabulary. The portrayal of violence in the series is particularly intense and realistic, placing characters in physical jeopardy, emotional distress, and profound moral dilemmas.

Kota Factory

"Kota Factory" is an Indian web series that premiered on the online platform TVF (The Viral Fever) in April 2019. It quickly gained popularity and critical acclaim for its unique storyline and realistic portrayal of the coaching industry in Kota, Rajasthan, which is known for preparing students for competitive entrance exams to prestigious engineering colleges in India. Notably, the series includes instances of coarse language and portrays characters, such as Jeetu Bhaiya (played by Jitendra Kumar), engaging in smoking.

Aranyak

"Aranyak" is a mystery thriller web series that premiered on Netflix in 10 December 2022 and created by Ramesh Sippy Entertainment and Roy Kapur Films. The show is set in a fictional hill station called Manali and revolves around a female police officer named Kasturi Dogra, played by Raveena Tandon. The depiction of violence, including murder and assault, as well as a graphic scene of rape, is integral to the storyline. The characters engage in coarse language, with protagonist Kasturi Dogra herself prone to strong language use. Notably, the series acknowledges drug use, with one of the more intriguing characters, Mahadev (played by Ashutosh Rana), being Kasturi's father-in-law who frequently appears under the influence.

Sacred Games

"Sacred Games", a web television series adapted from Vikram Chandra's 2006 novel of the same name. It is premiered on 6 July 2018 by Phantom Films and Reliance Entertainment. Within show, graphic scenes of violence, encompassing shootings, stabbings, beatings, and other forms of physical violence, are prominently depicted. The dialogue includes strong language, replete with profanity and explicit language, while drug abuse is showcased, with characters depicted consuming substances such as cocaine, heroin, and others. Additionally, tobacco use is pervasive throughout, with characters frequently seen smoking cigarettes and cigars. Sexual content, comprising nudity, sexual dialogue, and depictions of sexual acts, is also present. The series portrays consensual sexual encounters alongside instances of sexual violence and exploitation.

Decoupled

"Decoupled" is a comedy-drama web series that premiered on Netflix in 17 December 2021. The show revolves around the life of a newly separated couple, Arya Iyer (played by R. Madhavan) and Devika (played by Surveen Chawla), who navigate the ups and downs of their individual lives post-divorce. The series delves into various facets of relationships and individual struggles, often incorporating intimate scenes and discussions pertaining to sexuality. Such moments may encompass physical intimacy, dialogues concerning sexual preferences, and depictions of romantic interactions. Additionally, characters are depicted engaging in alcohol consumption and the use of substances such as drugs, while smoking is portrayed as a casual habit with minimal emphasis. Foul language, including swearing and vulgar expressions, is integrated into the dialogue to add authenticity and depth to the narrative.

Delhi Crimes

"Delhi Crime" is an Indian crime drama web series based on the real-life events surrounding the notorious 2012 Delhi gang-rape case, also known as the Nirbhaya case. The series premiered on Netflix in March 2019 by Ivanhoe Productions, FilmKaravan and Poor Man's Productions. The series delves into the aftermath of the brutal assault on a woman, depicting scenes of her deceased body bearing bruises, blood, and injuries, which may prove distressing for viewers, particularly younger audiences. Throughout the series, there is the use of strong language, alongside verbal descriptions detailing the injuries inflicted as a consequence of sexual violence.

Guns and Gulaabs

"Guns & Gulaabs", a Netflix black comedy crime thriller by Raj & DK, throws together a bored, honest cop, Arjun (Dulquer Salmaan), seeking a thrill in the cartel-run town of Gulaabgunj, and a lovelorn mechanic, Paana Tipu (Rajkumar Rao), son of a gangster. As these unlikely heroes navigate the chaos of a massive opium deal and clashing gangs, the series blends dark humor with the grit of the criminal underworld, making for a quirky and entertaining watch. The series contains shootouts, fights, and threats and some scenes show blood splatter. The series will likely have instances of swearing and strong language and characters are shown smoking.

Trial by Fire

“Trial by Fire” is a crime drama television series that delves into the tragic events surrounding the Uphaar Cinema fire premiered on 13 January 2023 by Endemol Shine India and House of Talkies. The narrative centers on the challenging yet resilient journey of two grieving parents, Neelam Krishnamoorthy and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy, who tragically lost their children in the devastating blaze at the Uphaar Cinema in Delhi. Characters within the series are depicted engaging in smoking and using profane language, while scenes featuring deceased bodies are also present. The central tragedy of the narrative revolves around the protagonist's loss of their children in the fire, a storyline that may evoke strong emotional reactions, particularly for viewers who have experienced similar personal losses.

Cat

“Cat” is a crime thriller streaming television series released on December 9, 2022 by Movie Tunnel Production and Jelly Bean Entertainment. The plot revolves around Gurnam Singh (Randeep Hooda), a former CAT (CounterTerrorism Agent) for the police during the Insurgency of the 1990s in Punjab. The series boldly confronts themes of violence and brutality, reflecting the protagonist's haunting past entangled in separatist crimes and violence. Drug-related narratives are central to the plot, with Gurnam's brother ensnared in drug dealing activities and a character depicted as orchestrating an illicit drug syndicate. The portrayal includes scenes of physical intimacy, while characters are frequently depicted smoking and employing profane language and slang in their dialogues, contributing to the gritty realism of the narrative.

Little Things

"Little Things" is a popular Indian web series that originally premiered on YouTube and later moved to Netflix. Released on 25 October 2016 by Dice Media, the series revolves around the everyday lives and relationship dynamics of a young couple, Dhruv and Kavya, portrayed by Dhruv Sehgal and Mithila Palkar, respectively. The show navigates mature topics pertaining to relationships, personal evolution, and the multifaceted nature of modern urban living. The characters occasionally engage in drinking and employ foul language and colloquialisms.

Khakhee

"Khakee: The Bihar Chapter" is an Indian crime thriller web series that premiered on Netflix in November 25, 2022 by Friday Storytellers. The series revolves around the story of a group of police officers who are tasked with solving complex criminal cases and maintaining law and order in their city. The depiction of violence in the series is stark and gripping, encompassing physical altercations, gun battles, and confrontations, including a scene featuring the instant demise of over ten individuals due to gunfire. Furthermore, the narrative explores the intricacies of interpersonal relationships among characters. Characters within the series are depicted using tobacco, as well as engaging in the use of profanity and abusive language.

DISCUSSION

The examination of Indian shows on OTT platforms through a psychological lens offers valuable insights into the dynamics of media consumption and its impact on audience perceptions and behaviors. Across the sampled web series from Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, and Prime Video, a recurring pattern emerges regarding the portrayal of violence, sexual content, tobacco depiction, drug abuse, and foul language. These themes are not only prevalent but also depicted with varying degrees of intensity and context, reflecting the diverse storytelling approaches adopted by content creators. The prevalence of these themes raises concerns about their potential influence on audience attitudes and behaviors, particularly among vulnerable demographics such as children and adolescents. Furthermore, the emerging trend among adolescents of binge-watching web series amplifies these concerns. This behavior carries with

it a range of negative consequences that can impact individuals' well-being. Firstly, binge-watching often leads to a sedentary lifestyle, as individuals spend extended periods sitting and watching screens without engaging in physical activity. This lack of movement contributes to health issues such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and musculoskeletal problems. Mentally, it can have detrimental effects, particularly on individuals' psychological health. Excessive screen time can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as individuals become immersed in fictional worlds and detached from reality. Moreover, binge-watching can impair cognitive function and attention span, as the constant stream of stimuli overwhelms the brain's capacity to process information effectively. This can lead to difficulties in concentration, memory problems, and decreased productivity in daily tasks.

The purpose of this study was to analyse in depth the content depicted in Hindi web series which are extremely popular among all age groups including adolescents. Research has consistently shown that exposure to media violence can desensitize individuals to real-life aggression, leading to an increased acceptance of violence as a means of conflict resolution. Similarly, the normalization of substance abuse and tobacco consumption in media can contribute to the glamorization and trivialization of these behaviors, potentially influencing audience attitudes and experimentation, particularly among impressionable viewers. Moreover, the depiction of explicit sexual content and foul language can shape societal norms and perceptions of acceptability. By portraying certain behaviors as commonplace or desirable, media content may inadvertently reinforce harmful stereotypes and attitudes, perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards, toxic masculinity, and gender-based violence. Additionally, the normalization of foul language in everyday discourse, as depicted in Indian web series, may desensitize viewers to the impact of derogatory language, contributing to a coarsening of public discourse and interpersonal interactions.

As such, the findings of this research underscore the importance of responsible content creation and consumption in the digital age. Content creators, platform providers, and regulatory bodies must collaborate to establish ethical guidelines and standards that prioritize audience welfare while preserving creative freedom. Additionally, efforts to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among viewers are essential to empower individuals to navigate the complex landscape of OTT content and make informed choices about their media consumption habits. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can work towards fostering a media environment that fosters positive social norms and enhances audience well-being.

IMPLICATIONS

The major concern of the researcher is the impact of this negative content (violence, sexual content, foul language, drug abuse, and tobacco depiction) on the minds of adolescents and children. These critical developmental stages render them particularly susceptible to observational learning, whereby they often look up to and emulate main characters from media content. However, the concern arises from the fact that these young individuals may replicate behaviours exhibited by these characters without fully comprehending the real world repercussions. Consequently, there exists a significant risk that such imitation could lead to adverse outcomes in their lives.

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