

Influence of Reality-Based Television Shows on Adolescent Viewers: Empirical evidence

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Abstract

Reality television is boon in 21st century being one of the important players in connecting the world. Reality shows based on different activities have become a household brand in terms of television viewing.

The present study aimed at finding the influence of reality-based television shows on adolescent viewers from two perspectives – one is in creating awareness about crime in society and other is in sharing new ways of crime to viewers with criminal mentality.

Descriptive and hypothesis – testing research design it adopted in this study. Data is collected from 440 respondents of Delhi through well designed questionnaire using convenient sampling technique. Data analysis is done with SPSS 21 and results revealed that there are significant and positive influence of reality-based crime show on creating awareness and sharing new ways of crime to viewers too. The strong positive influence in creating awareness about crimes in society while moderate influence reported in case of new ways of crime to criminal minded viewers.

Parents are recommended to educate their children about good and bad part of reality-based shows.

Keywords: *Reality Television, Reality-Based Shows, Creating awareness, new ways of crime, Adolescent Viewers*

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Introduction

Television (TV) is attributed with one of the important players in political – economic and social reforms (Straubhaa, 2007). In 21st century, the role of Reality television is not only changed television but one of the agents of change. It covers all aspects of people from romance to religion worldwide (Deller and Deller, 2019). Reality shows based on different activities have become a household brand in terms of television viewing. On different television (TV) channels, there is at the least one or two shows based on real crime and criminal activities running in a prime-time slot. It has revealed that the channel producers felt that there is huge demand for the criminal content-based television shows.

Yadava and Reddy (1988) conducted in-depth interview with different Indian families and revealed that the main purpose of TV is to provide entertainment to the viewers whereas such study provided that there are two variants that exhibits the family perception towards TV viewing. First variant of families displayed a very healthy and positive interaction between family members while watching TV whereas the second variants of families were completely different. These viewers were seemingly more attached to the characters on TV with emotional front and completely detached from their own family members.

There are all four-age groups of television viewers - kids, youngsters and teenagers, adults, senior citizens. Every viewer has a different mindset, not even a single human has a thought processor like that of other human. These shows highly influence the teenagers or Adolescents because this age group is ready to explore the new world as they are out of the safety cocoons that their parents have created for them so far, and then they look out for everything that is unknown to them. It can be through many mediums like cell phones, TV, Internet, magazines etc. When these shows are viewed by adolescents, they either learn to take precaution or learn to fight back the crimes or learn to conduct the crime. It is imperative to study the influence of reality-based television shows on viewers.

Literature review

1.1 Influences of reality-based crime show of televisions on creating awareness

Wright and Huston (1983) argued that the habitual viewers who believe that television is socially realistic are likely to believe that the information in entertainment programming is useful and applicable in real world. Abrol, Khan and Shrivastva (1993) conducted interview with 754 children and their mother in India and revealed that in television viewing the critical factor is education of parents for making it learning platform. It emphasised on the role of adult co-viewers in case children for positive outcome and fruitful learning of television viewing. It has been revealed through the concept of script theory that people exposure to electronic media developed content is have high association in guiding behaviour and in developing perception towards society (Huesmann, 1998; Huesmann & Eron, 1986). Oliver (1998) found that infest viewing and greater delight of reality-supported crime suggest have narrated to tenure punitive attitudes.

Anuradha and Bharathi (2001) revealed that there is significant difference in children depending on the amount of time watching television, and negative reinforcement and

consequences being practiced by the parents. It emphasized that disciplinary practices of parents are having significant impact on academic performance of children. The role of television and different crime-based shows have created awareness among people as they are now well informed on the separate types of crimes (Lilley, 2003). Police effectiveness, apprehension of criminals and punitive attitudes are most important facets of public attitudes toward crime and justice (Dowler, 2003). Gunter and McAleer (2005) remarked that television may influence the friendliness and affectionate behaviour in children. Hemmermeister, Brock, Winterstein and Page (2005) revealed that female viewers are more susceptible to change in attitudes depending upon the content of reality-based television shows than male viewers. Viewers learn new ways to tackle difficult and strange situations and seek answers to their problems through reality television content (Hill, 2007).

Hayes-Smith and Levett (2011) specified a distinct interaction between the level of forensic evidence and crime show viewing in that those who watched crime shows were more likely to favour the defence than those who did not in some evidence conditions. Police effectiveness, the worry of crime and punitive attitudes are fundamental points of public attitudes towards crime and justice in the US (Surette, 2014). Nassar, Seido and Zain (2015) established that there is significant influence of content of television shows on behaviour of viewers. Sharma and Agarwal (2015) reported that there is positive impact of Reality Shows on personality of adolescent in Lucknow district of Uttar Pradesh. It is concluded that reality-based television shows have positive impact on viewers as it provides knowledge, makes emotionally strong, makes bold and confidence, motivates to participate, exposes to unknown talents and improves communication. Tiwari (2016) reported that there is strong influence of reality shows on television on viewers specially on youths. So, the concept of reality shows should not alter the moral values and sentiments. It should be based on sharing knowledge, culture and customary practices. Our brains want to understand the gruesome and bizarre motivation behind the violence and learn about the darkness of a criminal act (Smith, 2018). It is important to study the influences of reality-based television on creating awareness about different types of crime in society.

1.2 Influences of reality-based crime show of televisions on viewers in new ways of crime

The main reason behind the anti-social behavior of children is the prolonged exposure to TV and other media contents (violent content) all these analyses are based on different long-term researches, passive experimental studies and observational analyses (Josephson, 1987; Huesmann, 1999).

Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, and Eron (2003) revealed that viewing vicious content on TV resulted in a game changer and resulted into unfolded the aggression in later years. Cato and Carpentier (2010) reported that there is significant difference in young women watching reality television programs and traditional female towards sexual empowerment views and former one is having high endorsement towards it. Such unhealthy behaviors results in Juvenile Delinquency which can be attributed to being a victim of childhood abuse that has led to an adolescent being disturbed and behaving adversely in the long term as well (Knox, Burkhart and Hunter, 2011). A positive connection was found for overall, combined risk taking, as well as its underlying magnitude namely: mannerisms that showcase risk taking

capacity, attitudes that are positive for criminal inducing and then there are different types of media-video games, movies, advertising, TV, music and other addictions such as smoking, drinking, rash driving, sexual influence etc. (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, Vogrinic, & Sauer, 2011). There is substantial proof of an adolescents behavior with respect to the viewing of media and its contribution with effects in potentially dangerous behavior ranged from disturbed behavior, including offensive, self-shaming disorder, mal nutrition, physically active at a very young age, and tobacco and alcohol use (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011). Fischer, Krueger, Asal, Aydin, & Vingilis, (2012) gave compiled manifesto that probably the reason for unhealthy behavior of the viewers specifically the Adolescents is due to regular viewing of such crime shows. It is concluded that spending more time viewing TV content (crime based) than doing day-to-day activity which induces the traits of being antisocial and showcasing rage and ill mannerism (Coyne, Padilla-Walker, Howard, 2013).

Excessive watching of television during childhood appears significantly in a criminal conviction, personality disorder with aggressive behavior tenets (Robertson, McAnally and Hancox, 2013). There is an aggregated research registered that about 25% of respondents reported that they have been influenced by crime shows and have imitated them into their behavior. Moreover, there has been an adequate number of offenders (mostly youth) who portrayed the Imitation crime behavior as their major behavioural pattern (Surette, 2013). Ybarra, Strasburger and Mitchell (2014) had conducted their experimental study taking data from 1058 youth who falls under the umbrella category of adolescence in the national, online Growing up with Media study. The most common answer by the respondents was that they have felt that at times their behavior is the imitation of what they have seen on TV.

Media and prolonged behavioural observations have seen many debatable discussions focusing upon development of an adolescent. There have been substantial paperwork and analytical work done on this subject out of which most of the work have talked about media being the probable source of analysing social learning and conclude that this analysis helps in envisioning the literacy skills learnt over different types of media (Möller, Krahé, Busching & Krause, 2012; Ahn, 2013; Prot, Gentile, Anderson, Suzuki, Swing, Lim, Lam, 2014; Wiedeman, Black, Dolle, Finney & Coker, 2015). Based on evidences in literature, it imperative to study the influence of reality-based crime shows in sharing new ways of crime to viewers.

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

This study is aimed at following two objectives –

- a. To find the present level of effectiveness of reality-based crime shows, creating awareness about crime in society and new ways of crimes.
- b. To find the impact of reality-based crime shows on creating awareness about crime to viewers.
- c. To find the impact of reality-based crime shows on new techniques of crime to viewers.

Proposed alternate hypothesis –

H₁: The level of effectiveness of reality-based crime shows is above average.

H₂: The level of creating awareness about crime in society is above average.

H₃: The level of new ways of crimes to viewers is below average.

H₄: There is significant impact of reality-based crime shows on creating awareness about crime on viewers.

H₅: There is significant impact of reality-based crime shows on new techniques of crime to viewers.

3.2 Research design – Descriptive and hypotheses testing

3.3 Sample and data collection

This study adopted a cross-sectional design, used a questionnaire to record the responses of 440 participants from Delhi in India. The data is collected through online mode, send questionnaires through email, and posting on the social media platform. An attempt was taken to contact more than 600 participants; of them, 500 were agreed to take part in this survey. However, 440 participants completed the questionnaire. Thus, the response rate was 73.33%. The response was collected on a five-point liker scale (5 = Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree) questionnaire, which was designed followed a thorough literature review and social observation before primary data collection. The pilot study was conducted for testing of questionnaires on 60 participants (10% of targeted participants). After pilot testing, some are rectified, language is simplified for some, deleted inappropriate questions, added the relevant questions. Finally, in this study, the revised questionnaire in the final data collection.

3.4 Statistical analysis

This study used SPSS of 21 versions for data analysis. One sample t-test, correlation and regression are used apart from reliability and sample description.

3.5 Instruments

3.5.1 Effectiveness of reality-based crimeshow

Reality-based crimeshow is the first construct of the present study and taken as an independent variable. This construct includes 16 items. The content of the items covers: the entertainment aspect, the duty of the responsible citizen, preparedness to face an unseen situation, promotion of alertness, and highlight the problems of the criminal justice system.

3.5.2 Crime-show awareness

This study took crime-show awareness (CSA) as dependent variable. It consists of 12 items. These items are related to expanding awareness about crimes, knowledge, nature of the crime, used technology, source of crime, available helping resources, and adult behaviours.

3.5.3 New ways of crimes

Crime-show novelty is the third construct of the study, and it is taken as dependent variable. This construct comprised 16 items. These items enquired about the loopholes of legal procedures and advanced technology to come out from the criminal justice system.

Data analysis and results

This section covers data analysis using SPSS 21. It starts with sample description followed by reliability of instruments then descriptive and regression analysis to test proposed alternate hypotheses.

4.1 Sample description

Table 1. Sample descriptive of respondents

Demographic factors	Class	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	36	8.2	8.2
	Male	404	91.8	100.0
	Total	440	100.0	
Age Group	9-12 years	213	48.4	48.4
	13-17 years	227	51.6	100.0
	Total	440	100.0	
Education	Up to 10	76	17.3	17.3
	10+2	103	23.4	40.7
	Undergraduate	136	30.9	71.6
	Postgraduate	125	28.4	100.0
	Total	440	100.0	

Table 1 represents that majority of respondents are male, slightly higher number in the age group of 13-17 years, highest number of respondents are students of undergraduate followed by postgraduate then 10+2 while least numbers are up to 10th class.

4.2 Reliability Analysis – It is conducted to test the reliability of instruments used in this study.

Table 2. Reliability Results

S.N.	Name of the Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Effectiveness of reality-based Crime shows	16	.815
2	Creating Awareness to innocent	12	.814
3	New ideas of crime to criminal	09	.719

The value of Cronbach is above .7 (Table 2) which is above the recommended value of reliability. So, it is inferred that instruments used in this study are reliable and having high internal consistency.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

One sample test is conducted to test the present level of study variables to test proposed alternate hypothesis.

Table 3. One sample statistic

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reality Based Crime Shows	440	3.611	.630	.036
Creating Awareness	440	3.718	.631	.039
New Ways of Crime	440	3.426	.637	.034

Table 3 represents that highest mean is reported for creating awareness followed by reality-based crime shows then new ways of crime.

Table 4. One-sample test

Variables	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Reality Based Crime Shows	20.352	439	.000	.611	.5527	.6709
Creating Awareness	23.888	439	.000	.718	.6596	.7779
New Ways of Crime	14.020	439	.000	.426	.3665	.4860

Table 4 represents that the value of p is less than .05 for all three variables with test value of 3. It means mean of all three variables are significantly above average. Thereby, H1 and H2 is accepted while H3 is rejected.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is conducted to test the relationship among study variables and also the support few proposed hypotheses of this study.

Table 5. Correlation results

Variables		RBCS	CA	NWC
Reality Based Crime Shows	Pearson Correlation	1	.835**	.615**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	440	440	440
Creating Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.835**	1	.625**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	440	440	440
New Ways of Crime	Pearson Correlation	.615**	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	440	440	440

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 5, it is interpreted that there are significant and positive association among study variables.

4.5 Regression analysis

Regression analysis it conducted to find the impact of reality-based crime shows.

4.5.1 Impact of reality-based crime shows on creating awareness about crime

Reality-based crime show is independent variable while creating awareness is dependent variable.

Table 6. Model Summary of Reality based crime show and creating awareness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.835 ^a	.696	.696	.34815
a. Predictors: (Constant), RBCS				

From table 6, it is reported that the value of correlation coefficient is .835 and p value is less than .05 (table 7). It is interpreted that there is significant and positive impact of reality-based crime show on creating awareness about crime to viewers. The adjusted r square value is .696, it means 69.6% of variability in independent variable is explained by dependent variable remaining 30.4% is unexplained or attributed to other factors.

Table 7. Anova results of reality-based crime show and creating awareness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.780	1	121.780	1004.717	.000 ^b
	Residual	53.089	438	.121		
	Total	174.869	439			
a. Dependent Variable: Creating Awareness						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reality Based Crime Show						

From 7, it is inferred that reality-based crime show is predictor of creating awareness.

Table 8. Coefficient results of reality-based crime show and creating awareness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.702	.097		7.266	.000
	RBCS	.835	.026	.835	31.697	.000
a. Dependent Variable: CA						

From table 8, it is interpreted that there is significant positive and strong impact of reality-based crime show on creating awareness about crime to viewers. Thereby, proposed alternate hypothesis H4 is accepted.

4.5.2 Impact of reality-based crime shows on news ideas of crime to criminals

Reality-based crime show is independent variable while creating awareness is dependent variable.

Table 9. Model Summary of Reality based crime show and creating awareness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.615 ^a	.378	.376	.50365
a. Predictors: (Constant), RBCS				

From table 9, it is reported that the value of correlation coefficient is .835 and p value is less than .05 (table 10). It is interpreted that there is significant and positive impact of reality-based crime show on creating awareness about crime to viewers. The adjusted r square value is .696, it means 69.6% of variability in independent variable is explained by dependent variable remaining 30.4% is unexplained or attributed to other factors.

Table 10. Anova results of reality-based crime show and creating awareness

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	67.441	1	67.441	265.866	.000 ^b
	Residual	111.105	438	.254		
	Total	178.546	439			
a. Dependent Variable: NWC						
b. Predictors: (Constant), RBCS						

From 7, it is inferred that reality-based crime show is predictor of creating awareness.

Table 11. Coefficient results of reality-based crime show and creating awareness

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.181	.140		8.452	.000
	RBCS	.622	.038	.615	16.305	.000
a. Dependent Variable: NWC						

From table 11, it is interpreted that there is significant positive and strong impact of reality-based crime show on creating awareness about crime to viewers. Thereby, proposed alternate hypothesis H5 is accepted.

Conclusions

With advent of reality television, there is significant changes in viewers as individual and as member of family and society. The paper discussed the influences of reality-based television shows on viewers from two perspectives – punitive and negative. The supports and evidences in secondary literature has revealed that both types of influences are there. As per the studies and researches carried out by few experts, there have been some positive outcomes that are beyond explanation, in spite of this, this obsessive passion for true crime stories being about few good things as well. Like people are becoming more aware for their safety and security and their families as well. Making sure to create a safe and healthy environment

by learning how the crimes can be committed is one of things that can be counted under the positive umbrella. Making the kids aware about “don’t be talking to a stranger” concept.

Regular viewing of the violated content can cause disruption to the mental state of an individual. The individual starts exhibiting apprehensive hallucinated behavior which in turn portrays disavowed complications, credit goes to true crime viewing habits.

All these behavioural aspects contribute to a person starting to feel caged, like he/she being continuously watched or stalked. Which ruins many things from the person all lifestyle to relationships where that person starts avoiding public gathering just because they start to assume that something bad might happen or some stranger might get over friendly or some other unexplainable thing.

Sharma and Agarwal (2015) highlighted that reality shows present in holistic way but it is up to individual that how and what he/she learn from that.

5.1 Recommendations

It is highly advisable to have a behavioural check-up in different set of periods so as to understand what is and how much some habits are affecting our persona and mental well-being, especially if the habits comprise large parts of reading and watching the portrayal of true crime events. At times, the obsession becomes so heightened that there are mood swings ranging from highly upbeat mood to melancholy in next second. Viewing crime-based reality shows for an out stretched lengthy duration has adverse impact on body as watching these shows induces stress which can raise the negativity and raises the depressive emotions altogether.

On a positive side, it’s not necessarily the situation with everyone who view crime stories as every human being has different level of withholding the content that they watch or read. It is recommended in medical terms that if at any point, you start feeling the content taking a toll on your mental and physical health, it’s time to change the subject that you watch and switch to more positivity content. Abrol, Khan and Shrivastva (1993) suggested that parents need to be educated and sensitized for television viewing of their children.

It might get to a point where an individual is engulfed in an unknown fear because that person is scared of nightmares and might be, they are being stalked or followed if they go outside. Anuradha and Bharathi (2001) suggested that parents have to be educated about the negative influence of television and media. Parents must understand their role as they have power to make changes in the home. Accordingly, they can educate their kids about punitive and negative influences of television.

Based on the study of Tiwari (2016), it is recommended to producers for conceptualizing the reality show on, “information, science, sports and spiritual along with the entertainment and celebrity factor”. Based on the finding of Squire and Christine (2003) which revealed that interactive television is better platform for teaching learning than traditional classroom. It can be recommended to producers of reality-based shows to plan such activities for the purpose of education and knowledge sharing.

5.2 Limitations and Future scopes

Qualitative approach is one limitation of this study. It is aimed at only two perspectives – punitive and negative influences of reality-based television shows. The last thirty years research papers are searched and reviewed 40 articles only with few exceptions.

So, it is suggested that quantitative approach to be followed along with qualitative approach in future scope of the study. It also creates opportunities for future research with other topical and relevant variables in terms of reality-based television shows.

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