

Beyond the Screen: The Impact of Violence and Sexuality in Indian Films on Youth

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Abstract

This research paper examines the impact of violence and sexuality in Indian films and web series on young people, focusing on those aged 17 to 21. The paper analyses young people's perceptions of the portrayal of violence, sexuality, and explicit content in these media formats using qualitative approaches such as a Google survey and one-on-one interviews. The study assesses how these portrayals influence their understanding of social norms, relationships, and behaviour through examining responses to a set of targeted questions. Furthermore, the study explores the relationship between video content and real-world attitudes, actions, and perceptions, taking into account both the positive and negative consequences of exposure. Given the growing importance of Indian cinema and online platforms in shaping contemporary youth culture, this study investigates the complex relationship between media consumption and young perspectives of violence, sexuality, and morality. The findings aim to provide insights on the overall impact of consumption of media for young people's developing identities, societal values, and behavioural patterns, adding to the continuing discussion about the role of media in modern society.

1. Introduction

Indian cinema has a long and diverse history of storytelling, ranging from ancient cultural epics to contemporary action-packed thrillers. Over the years, it has grown into a strong medium of entertainment and creativity, reflecting the complex and constantly evolving fabric of Indian society. With the quick expansion of the digital era, access to films, web series, and online video clips has increased enormously, particularly among young people, who may now engage with a diverse range of content from both traditional and modern media sources. This unthinkable amount of access has resulted in increased exposure to a wide range of topics, including difficult and sometimes contentious issues like violence, sexuality, and ethical dilemmas. The portrayal of such themes in the media frequently provokes discussions and concerns regarding potential effects on real-world behaviour and attitudes. Given the media's ability to shape perceptions, there is rising worry about how these portrayals may impact young people's thoughts and behaviour, especially since youth are usually considered as the leaders of social change and development. As the most sensitive group in society, they are most vulnerable to the creativity, pictures, and narratives given by various forms of entertainment media. The portrayal of violence and sexuality, in particular, raises concerns about how much these portrayals influence young people's perceptions of relationships, social standards, and morals.

In light of this, the study aims to investigate how Indian films, which are typically distinguished by their strong and, at times, disputed depictions of violence and sex, influence the behaviour, perceptions, and attitudes of young people aged 17 to 21. The study is based on an in-depth investigation of responses

obtained from interaction with this age group, with emphasis on their film and media consumption, as well as their perceptions of how this content affects their real-world behaviour. The study aims to explore the extent to which these films and web series may impact the youth's values, social perspectives, and attitudes about critical societal issues by studying their reactions to media portrayals.

2. Research Method

The study is based on qualitative data gathered through interactions with a sample of young people aged 17 to 21. To achieve a broad and thorough understanding of young attitudes, participants were drawn from all kinds of backgrounds, covering urban, semi-urban, and rural locations. The questions posed to the participants were carefully structured to obtain their viewing preferences, including the types of films and web series they love. In addition, the study allowed them to express their views and feelings openly about violent and explicit content, notably violence and sexuality.

By studying these responses, the study intended to discover potential concerns about the negative effects of such material, as well as whether access to these themes could lead to changes in attitudes or behaviours. Through these interactions, the study not only obtained about the youth's media consumption patterns, but also about their understanding and perceptions of the potential consequences of engaging with sexually explicit material.

The following questions were asked to the participants through Google Survey form and one on one basis.

- Gender: Male, Female
- Urban, Semi urban or Rural: Participants were asked to identify as urban or rural residents.
- How often do you watch films, web series, or film/entertainment clips?
Which subjects in Hindi films do you find most interesting? (Select all that apply.)
 - Violence and crime (e.g., murder, revenge, law enforcement)
 - Romance and sexuality (e.g. love stories, sexual relationships)
 - Mental health struggles (e.g. anxiety, depression, addiction)
 - Family issues (e.g., divorce, sibling rivalry, inheritance)
- Do you favour movies with explicit content, such as strong language, nudity, or graphic violence?
- Do you believe that the portrayal of violence and sex in films can influence real-life behaviour?
- How essential are topics like sex and violence in the films you see?
Would you like to express your thoughts briefly on this subject?

3. Findings

- Frequency of media consumption: The majority of participants (70.9%) reported watching films, web series or film clips on a frequent basis, with many claiming to watch at least 2-3 films or web series episodes per week. Urban youth had greater access to digital platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube, whereas rural youth mostly viewed films on television or through online streaming services when available.
- Themes of Interest: The most popular topics chosen by participants for their interest were Violence and crime (80%). However, subjects such as violence, crime, and thrillers received high ratings. Notably, films with strong narratives about familial connections or societal issues like as gender and class were shown interest by youngsters (Less than 20%).

- Preference for explicit content: A large proportion of teenagers (about 71.4%) showed a preference for films with explicit content, such as strong language, nudity, and graphic violence. Some respondents stated that these characteristics enhanced the film's "realism" and were necessary for storytelling, particularly in modern or urban settings.
- Influence of sex and violence of real life behaviour: 38.5 % of participants agreed that media material have direct influence when asked whether they thought that how violence and sex were portrayed in movies affected their behaviour in real life. While 50% believe, it may have some impact but it depends upon an individual. Many, particularly young men, voiced worries about the normalization of aggressive behaviour. According to a number of female responders, the violence and sexuality shown in the films might be the reason of increase in the incidents that are happening around us.
- The importance of themes such as sex and violence: When asked about the importance of topics such as sex and violence in the films they watch, the majority of urban respondents believed that they were essential for modern storytelling and reflected real-world situations. However, 24% of the respondents, especially girls, were more likely to express discomfort with such content, emphasizing the cultural and moral implications for youth. Some respondents also stated that they preferred films that dealt with such topics deliberately, stating that while violence and sex are part of reality, their depiction needs to be done in the modern day era. 11% responders argued that they were able to distinguish between factual and fictitious material and that they were thus less inclined to copy what they saw in movies.
- Personal views of participants on the impact of sex and violence: Several people shared their personal views on the subject. Many people noted that while violence and sex can influence views, it ultimately depends on how these themes are portrayed. Some people believe that films should present a balanced perspective that criticizes undesirable behaviours rather than glorifies them. Others argued that films might be utilized to raise important social issues without focusing on violence or sexual material.

Findings imply that the impact of movies on young people and their content have a complex relationship. Although most participants agreed that movies may have an impact on behaviour, the degree of that impact differed depending on the persons' ability for evaluation and interpretation of the content that they consume. Young people in cities, who are typically more exposed to international media, were more matured and saw that content as essential part of the theme of the content but youngsters in the rural area who were watching that content were only watching to enjoy the content or a particular scene. That is a matter of concern. Many expressed concern about how violence and sex are portrayed as beautiful or normal, with many respondents worried that if these behaviours are not well monitored, younger audiences may follow them. But there was also an understanding that movies are a mirror of society and that artistically handling topics like sexuality and violence could help people become more aware of social issues.

Conclusion

Although movies can be an effective means of introspection and education, filmmakers should be aware of the ideas they convey in order to strike a balance between social responsibility and amusement. Some movies use sexual and violent content to draw attention to important social concerns including gender inequity, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. In such cases, Filmmakers should encourage vital

discussions and offer insights on how society should deal with these problems by illustrating their effects through social media. This will create an awareness of the topic and youngsters would have a right perspective while watching such scenes. Film makers should address issues like consent, respect for one another, and emotional connection in an effort to depict more realistic and healthy relationships through social media. Young viewers may gain a more positive perspective on relationships and sexuality as a result of these representations.

Young audiences can create groups who critically analyse the impacts of violence or the effects of objectifying women in the films.

Further research is needed to determine the long-term consequences of such content on teenage behaviour, as well as the role of media literacy in assisting young people in understanding complex portrayals of violence and sexuality in films.

References

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