



## Juvenile delinquency: Role of mass media

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### Abstract

The influence of Media on the psychological development of children is profound. With the advent of communication technology in recent times, a child's exposure to different forms of Mass Media has been manifold. It is in these early years, when the child is likely prone to develop criminal behaviour. Media through its different platforms is creating so much influence especially in instilling violent thoughts in these young minds and desensitising which in turn have led to Juvenile Delinquent behaviour. It is thereby important to see the role of Mass Media as a contributing factor towards this delinquent behaviour. Modern form of Mass Media esp. the Internet in today's times has brought a wind of change and creates the maximum impact in enhancing delinquent behaviour.

**Keywords:** mass media, juvenile delinquency

### Introduction

*"Guns don't kill people, picture tubes do. Or at least that seems to be the message behind the clangour of current alarms about television violence."*

Between 2000 BC and A.D. 44, the ancient Egyptians entertained themselves with plays re-enacting the murder of their God Osiris-and the spectacle, history tells us, led to a number of copycat killings. The ancient Romans were given to lethal spectator sports as well, and in 380 B.C. Saint Augustine lamented that his society was addicted to gladiator games and "drunk with the fascination of bloodshed."

Violence has always played a role in entertainment. But there's, a growing consensus that, in recent years something about media violence has changed. Research indicates that media violence has not just increased in quantity; but also become much more graphic, much more sexual and much more sadistic.

Explicit pictures of slow-motion bullets exploding from people's chests, and dead bodies surrounded by pools of blood, are now commonplace fare. Millions of viewer's especially children across the world watch female World wrestling Entertainment where wrestlers try to pull each other's hair and rip each other off. And one of the top-selling video games in the world, Grand Theft Auto, is programmed so players can beat prostitutes to death with baseball bats after having sex with them.

The mass media refer to television, movies, music, video games, print media, sports, and the Internet. All of these have considerable influence over attitudes and behaviour especially among those under the age of 18. In recent times mass media plays a very vital role in affecting our lives. With the changing times and needs everyday technology has something new to offer to us. And so it becomes very important to study the role

of mass media as a contributing factor towards affecting minds especially young minds.

Kids today live in a media culture where they are constantly exposed to violence in movies and television, video games and music. Violence has always played a role in entertainment, but in recent years dramatic changes have taken place. Research shows that media violence among children has increased by manifold. Children especially till the age of seven or eight are at a stage of development that does not equip them to distinguish reality from fantasy. Moreover, with the advent of 24- hour satellite channels, there is a constant stream of images of violence or sexual behaviour that may have an undesirable impact on young children.

Apart from this Mass Media also affects the Socialization among children and young adults. This is the reason why mass media socialization is leading to Juvenile Delinquency. Children easily get affected by what they see and understand. Plus they have not attained the level of maturity to understand the seriousness of offence. That is why 2008 onwards the percentage of juvenile offenders has increased by almost 25% due to media as a contributing factor. But why invoke the media in this context? Because it is clear that, taken together, mass media technologies, institutions, professionals, norms and practices constitute one of the fundamental forces now shaping the lives of individuals and the fate of people and nations. To be sure, media influence is not evenly distributed in space or time and varies with circumstance. But, overall, mass media influence is significant, and increasingly so, and as a result the media constitute a major human resource whose potential to help prevent and moderate social violence begs to be discussed, evaluated, and, where appropriate, mobilised.

News coverage in all media groups, although in different ways, does contribute to the fear of crime in society and the idea that repressive measures are needed. The fact that this fear of crime is also caused by news coverage is

acknowledged, but neither journalists nor politicians are able or willing to change this. Not surprisingly, the mass media are a controversial agent of socialization because of how much they influence attitudes and behaviour. Because we live in a society that seems to crave violence, it is no surprise that these different forms of mass media cater to the desires of the public by producing violent television shows, movies, music, video games, and overzealously cover violent incidents.

Apart from this the increasing trend of social networking sites, applications on the internet and dangerous games have led to increase in criminal tendency among kids. Exposure to media violence also increases a child's desire to see more violence in real life and in entertainment, influencing them to view violence as an acceptable way to handle conflicts.

Thus, in the light of the above statements it becomes very essential to understand this correlation between the Juvenile Delinquency and the role of media.

In this Article the Author wants to Study the Effects of Mass Media as a contributing factor towards Juvenile Delinquency and the objectives which the Author would like to deal with are-

- To understand the correlation between violent content and its influence on Juveniles.
- To more specifically analyse the role of Internet as a growing and modern form of Mass media in enhancing delinquent acts among juveniles.

### **Correlation between Violent Content and Juvenile Delinquency**

A correlation is when two things generally go together, such as when kids who watch violence on TV also demonstrate violence in real life. Compare a correlation to a causal effect, which is when we can say for sure that one thing causes another. In the case of media violence, we can't say for sure that it causes violence in kids, only that it seems to go along with violence. According to Juvenile Justice Act 2000 "A Juvenile is the person who has not completed 18 years of age and hence Juvenile Delinquency refers to antisocial or illegal behaviour by children. There are many reasons like family environment, mental disorder, social disorganization etc. because of which a child commits crime and when a child repeatedly commits a crime he is known as Juvenile delinquent."

The behavioural and qualifying condition for referral to Juvenile courts also vary from State to State. In India the Juveniles are kept in special homes and are not punishable like adults. The reason behind not treating them as criminals is because we follow reformatory theory.

In the late 20th century, mass media could be classified into eight mass media industries: books, the Internet, magazines, movies, newspapers, radio, recordings, and television. The explosion of digital communication technology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries made prominent the question: what forms of media should be classified as "mass media"? For example, it is controversial whether to include cell phones, computer games (such as MMORPGs), and video games in the definition. In the 2000s, a classification called the "seven mass media" became popular. In order of introduction, they are: Print (books, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, etc.) from the late 15th century Recordings

(gramophone records, magnetic tapes, cassettes, cartridges, CDs, and DVDs) from the late 19th century Cinema from about 1900 Radio from about 1910, Television from about 1950, Internet from about 1990. Mobile phones from about 2000.

The role of Mass media keeps on changing with the changing times. The audience is also turning diverse and demanding diverse content. The directors, the content writers and the game developers are also coming up with such content which is beneficial to their profit margin. Children are like clay and they easily get moulded into what they see. When we talk about violent content, we mean violent content shown on newspapers, television, and internet and so on. Violence looks attractive especially to children facing problems of broken homes, depression and attention seeking issues. Such children are likely to get attracted towards crime and become delinquents.

The excessive exposure to violence not only desensitizes us as a society, but for those in under the age of 18, these influences seem to have a number of serious effects. Some of the effects include: Aggressive behaviour: media violence teaches children to be more aggressive so they tend to be less sensitive to pain and suffering; Fearful attitudes: Media violence causes children to be more fearful of the world around them; and Cold blooded: media violence desensitizes children to real-life and fantasy violence, making it seem a normal part of everyday life. Exposure to media violence also increase a child's desire to see more violence in real life and in entertainment, influencing them to view violence as an acceptable way to handle conflicts.

Other studies link excessive exposure to media violence to health problems, alcohol and tobacco usage, sexual activities, poor school results etc. These studies show that the effects of excessive exposure include: decreased physical activity, which Leads to obesity and other health problems; photic seizures; insomnia; a Decreased attention span; impaired school performance; decreased family communication; increased sexual activity, which may lead to teen pregnancy and Sexually transmitted diseases; and an increased usage of alcohol and tobacco.

Children ages 8 to 18 spend, on average, 44.5 hours per week (equivalent to 6.5 hours Daily) in front a computer, watching television, or playing video games; by the time a Child reaches age 18, he or she will have witnessed on television alone, with average Viewing time, over 200,000 acts of violence, which include 40,000 acts of murder (Mulimani 2009). Children will view more than 100,000 acts of violence, including

8,000 acts of murder, by their first day in junior high school. Given the frequency of Exposure to violence, children's violence and delinquency should not be surprising.

All media violence is not equal in its effects. However, the violence portrayed in Cartoons is usually presented in a humourous fashion (67 % of the time) and is less likely to depict long term consequences (5 % of the time). Considering that the Average pre-schooler watches mostly cartoons, this poses a greater risk for younger Children because they have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality.

Therefore, they are more likely to imitate the violence they

have seen. Re-searchers indicate that parents can be effective in reducing the negative effects of violent media Content. Some of this can occur by parental understanding and utilization of television.

Other suggestions include watching television with one's child to permit Discussion difficult issues, turn the television off if the program is unacceptable, limit the time and type of programs watched, screen programs beforehand, and explain the Differences between fantasy and reality. The single factor most closely associated with Aggressive behaviour in children was watching violence on television.

Also when you talk about Television, today there are shows like Khatron ke khiladi, Bigg boss, Roadies which show stunts and using bad words, and are found to be popular among the youth. Newspapers also sometimes portray contents which are obscene, like Times paper used to have daily picture of one model in order to increase its buyers. Thereby rapes by juveniles are also increasing like we saw in Nirbhaya's case. Movies such as Krissh, Dabang, Singham also had caused to a lot of kids imitating that and leading to violence. No longer we have good children centric shows like we used to have in olden times. Mass media has become more profit centric. Violence is easy to learn. And today's video games like Dead space2, Mortal Kombat etc which are instilling and teaching kids to use guns and delve to violent activities. The popular serials like Aahat, savdhaan India also the show like WWF is creating violence. So definitely the content matters a lot. And the techniques which these juveniles learn are mostly from these movies. There are certain magazines too which have obscene content. Kids have become desensitized the socialization has reduced. Shows, papers everywhere there is violence. This is leading to spread of negativity. Analysis from a study shows that violent media consumption as well as various forms of non-empathetic parental behaviour led to slightly more violent delinquency and to considerably more violence-approving normative beliefs. As Children advance into teen years evidence for violent acts in relation to violent media becomes less consistent. Although most scholars caution that this decline cannot be attributed to a causal effect, they conclude that this observation argues against causal harmful effects for media violence. Juvenile delinquency thus has a deep correlation with violent Media since a lot of inspiration of doing violent acts comes from there.

### **Role of Internet as a Growing and Modern form of Mass media in enhancing Delinquent acts among Juveniles**

The role of internet as a modern form of mass media is noteworthy. Internet is like a spider's web and it's a trap. Everything is available online. Online is forever. There are social - networking sites, cyber trespass, applications, porn sites, fake accounts etc. which is just a trap. Kids don't know the repercussions'. There is hacking, greed, over-usage cyber - crimes, cyber bullying and stealing. There are viruses all across which are sent through various links. Also there are porn links which children easily access and this incites them towards rape. Also recently The Blue Whale game or Blue Whale Challenge is believed to be a suicide game wherein a group of administrators or a certain curator gives a participant a task to complete daily for a period of 50 days and the final of which is the participant committing suicide. Participants are

expected to share photos of the challenges/tasks completed by them.

The only way a teen would get hooked to self-harm, isolation and ultimately suicide is if they were already going through some form of depressive episode. Additionally, they would only seek validation online if they looking to escape from the real world due to some issues. Pokemon GO on the other3 side, may have taken the world by storm, but in reports of the first fatal incident related to the craze, experts warned the game was taking tech into hazardous new terrain. The Geographical mapping feature in Pokémon Go is leading people in areas that they should be avoiding and the nature of the game creates distractions so that people are not paying any attention to where they are. "There is certainly a concern about players getting so engrossed in the game, that they put themselves in dangerous situations." Internet has become so vast that it almost covers everything. Parental guidance plays a very crucial role here. Also it is said that there are various anonymous chat sites, which trap kids into it. Kids may also harbour the illusion that their actions online are anonymous, that "nobody will ever know," that their posts boasting of their illegal behaviour are truly private, or even that nothing that happens in the cyber world is "real." They may dehumanize the people on the other end of that network link and think of mistreating them as the same as doing it to a software construct in a game. Internet crimes are popular among juveniles as compared to other forms of crimes. Internet is an easy way to commit frauds and this is the age of cyber - crimes. And these perpetrators target kids.

### **Conclusion**

*"Children are like wet cement whatever falls on them makes an impression." "A child is a beam of sunlight from the Infinite and Eternal, with possibilities of virtue and vice, but as yet unstained." "Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven." "The soul is healed by being with children."*

The role of Mass Media in facilitating various delinquent acts among the kids is undoubtedly there. The forms and facets are growing day by day. Juvenile Delinquency is a serious issue the society is facing. The traditional forms of committing crimes have surpassed and now Internet has created a whirl of change and brought a revolution. Also socialization of Mass Media has become a problem and this issue is something which needs to be addressed.

In some cases, education may be enough; most young people don't know the intricacies of the law nor understand the severity of the possible consequences. For some less serious juvenile offenders, the behaviour might change simply in the course of growing up. Teaching children ethics and morality in general will go a long way toward alleviating problems such as cyber bullying and cyber vandalism; they need to learn empathy and how to put themselves in the place of the victims.

Also moral science education, parental discussions, counselling, child lock safety, are some remedial measures. Juvenile cyber delinquency can only be explained by integrated theory of criminology. Juvenile with strong social

bonds and part of conventional peer groups are less probable to commit cyber related offences. On the other hand, the juveniles with weak social bonds are more probable to commit cyber delinquency because of the social isolation and connection to delinquent peers.

We should not brand children as criminals for their relatively minor deviant behaviour. If we do so, we will create generation where criminality will become the norm. We need widespread educational initiatives to reduce drastically increasing juvenile crimes. It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. Thus from various researches and findings a definite correlation and impact between mass media and juvenile delinquency is established.

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