

Influence of Media Crime Exposure on Aggression and Violence among Youth

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the relationship between the increased levels of crime media exposure through television and the development of aggressive and violent tendencies in adolescents and adults (ages 15–26 years) living within the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi. A quantitative correlational research design was employed that resulted in data collection via 100 random sample selection (n=100) from youth within the NCR by the use of a Crime Show Exposure Questionnaire and Standardized Aggression Scale that measures physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. The studies conducted to analyze the data included descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, Independent Samples T-Test, and Linear Regression. There was a moderate to high level of exposure to crime shows (M=59.31; SD=9.57) and a moderate level of aggression (M=47.69; SD=10.60) in participants. There was a strong positive correlation between exposure to crime shows and aggression, $r=.66$ ($p < .001$), and this was confirmed by regression analysis, which demonstrated that exposure to crime shows predicts aggression significantly ($\hat{\beta}=.66$, $p < .001$). Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, and Desensitization Theory comprise the foundation of the study. This means that repeated exposure to a sensationalized depiction of violence in crime shows and true crime documentaries would likely lead to the normalizing of aggressive behavior. This research proposes that increased exposure to crime shows is positively correlated with moderate levels of aggressive behavior among youth. Additionally, the study examines both moderating variables (gender and parental mediation) that may affect this effect. This research fills an empirical gap in understanding the impact of media on youth in the unique urban environment of the NCR of Delhi.

Keywords: Crime Shows, Media Influence, Aggression, Youth, NCR, Social Learning Theory, Desensitization

INTRODUCTION

Media has really taken center stage in youth culture across India. With platforms like television and streaming services such as Netflix, Hotstar, and Amazon Prime leading the charge, it's hard to overlook their influence. Among the various genres out there, crime dramas and true-crime documentaries seem to capture the attention of young viewers the most. They combine suspense, moral dilemmas, and a touch of psychological realism, making them quite compelling. However, there's a growing concern that this kind of programming might promote aggressive mindsets or make young people numb to violence. The National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi,

which includes places like Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad, and Ghaziabad, provides a unique backdrop for examining these effects. Youth in this area are bombarded with digital media and face the pressures of urban competition and social stressors.

This paper aims to explore whether regularly watching crime shows correlates with higher levels of aggression among young people in the NCR. The impact of crime shows on NCR youth can be quite troubling. They can spike feelings of fear and anxiety, desensitize viewers to violence, and create a skewed view of crime rates and personal safety. The youth are exposed to crime shows everywhere. Even though these shows are fictional, the message is delivered clearly, there by

How to cite this Article: Diwakar, Diksha and Pandey, Alka (2026). Influence of Media Crime Exposure on Aggression and Violence among Youth. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.*, **13** (1 & 2) : 25-31.

absorbing the youthful audience through the excitement of the show. Because of the extensive viewing of crime shows, youth are experiencing aggressive tendencies an alarming effect.

While some programs might aim to educate, their over-the-top and sensationalized nature can trigger strong emotional and cognitive reactions. This might lead to increased paranoia or a tendency to behave more aggressively, particularly if viewers are exposed for extended periods. In this fast-paced digital age, media not only fills our everyday lives but also reshapes the very fabric of our social and cultural landscape. The powerful influence of media has been a topic of discussion since television made its debut in the 1960s

Literature review:

The rapid proliferation of digital streaming platforms and television crime dramas has transformed the media landscape for youth, particularly in urban centers like the National Capital Region (NCR) of India. Drawing upon Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory and Gerbner's (1969) Cultivation Theory, recent research continues to explore how frequent exposure to sensationalized crime content shapes the cognitive and behavioral patterns of adolescents and young adults. John *et al.* (2020) analyzed role of media in argumentating violence in youth.

Abbas *et al.* (2025) conducted a study on parental perceptions of media violence, finding that children who consumed more violent content exhibited significantly higher levels of physical and verbal aggression. Their research suggests that media does not just mirror reality but actively "fosters learned aggression" by providing behavioral models for solving conflicts. In a similar vein, the researchers (John *et al.*, 2020) investigated how media influences adolescents' violent behavior in India through the lens of the Indian youth population and came to the conclusion that the steady consumption of media that contains violence results in a desensitized emotional response to violent acts as well as an increase in aggression.

Ganesh and Sabu (2025) explored the association between social media usage and aggression among Indian children and adolescents. Their findings revealed a positive relationship between excessive media consumption and aggressive tendencies. Rashmi and Jain (2023) conducted an empirical study investigating the psychological and behavioral effects of Indian OTT crime web series. Their research found that crime-oriented web

series shape how people perceive crime, fear, and social atmosphere, along with the emotional reactions of their audience. Salo *et al.* (2022) found that prolonged exposure to violent media leads to a measurable reduction in emotional reactivity towards real-life victims. This "emotional numbing" makes aggression appear less ethically troubling to the viewer. Recent studies highlight that gender plays a significant role in how crime media is processed. Iqbal *et al.* (2024) found that while both genders experienced increased anger, female participants exhibited higher levels of sensitivity and anxiety, whereas males were more likely to internalize the "procedural" aspects of violence. Current literature strongly supports the hypothesis that crime show exposure is a significant predictor of aggression in youth.

Theoretical background:

Media effects theories explain how exposure to crime related content in popular crime shows can shape attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies among youths, framing aggression, social-cognitive and cultivation pathways that may reinforce perceived norms regarding violence in the NCR. Also exposure to crime shows shapes youth perception of violence, potentially shaping attitudes and behaviors.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, people learn not only through their own experiences but also by observing others. This means that when young viewers watch crime shows, they may pick up behaviors, attitudes, or emotional reactions from the characters on screen. The George Grebner Cultivation Theory (1976) focuses on how long-term exposure to television and media content shapes our perception of reality. It suggests that people who spend a lot of time watching violent or crime-related content may begin to see the world as a more dangerous and threatening place than it actually is. The Funk *et al.* Desensitization Theory (2004) explains how repeated exposure to violence in media can reduce a person's emotional sensitivity toward it. When young viewers watch violent scenes again and again, they may gradually stop feeling shocked, scared, or empathetic toward victims. As a result, violence may begin to seem normal or even exciting. This can lower their emotional response to aggression in real life making them more tolerant of fights, bullying, or abusive behavior.

Finally, the study reveals the principle of social learning theory that encourages people learning imitation and observing. Media effects theories explain how crime

shows and related content can shape attitudes, belief and behavior tendencies among youth framing aggression that may reinforce perceived norms regarding violence in the National Capital Region. Altogether these theories suggests that regularly watching crime shows correlates with higher levels of aggression among young people in the NCR.

Rationale of the study:

The explosion of TV channels and streaming platforms has put crime shows right in front of young people more than ever. These shows love to focus on violence, crime, and people acting out—and they don't hold back. Teenagers and young adults, who are still figuring themselves out, tend to be especially open to what they see on screen. Watching crime dramas over and over can shape how they think about violence, make aggressive behavior seem normal, and mess with how they handle their emotions. Media psychology research, like Social Learning Theory and Cultivation Theory, backs this up: when kids keep seeing violent stuff in the media, they start copying what they see, and their ideas about what's normal can shift. Empirical studies have found a positive association between violent television exposure and aggressive behavior in adolescents. Therefore, the present study is undertaken to examine:

The influence of crime show exposure on aggression and violent tendencies among youth providing empirical evidence that can contribute to academic knowledge and guide practical strategies for promoting healthy media consumption.

Specific objectives:

- To measure the level of aggression and violent tendencies among youth in NCR watching crime shows on regular basis.
- To study gender differences (male vs female) in crime show exposure and aggression levels.

Hypothesis:

- H₁: Higher exposure to crime shows is positively correlated with increased aggression among youth.
- H₂: The relationship between exposure and aggression is assumed to be moderated by gender (Male vs female).

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To study the effect of crime shows exposure on the aggression and violence among youth aged 15-26 years in NCR.

Research Design:

A quantitative, correlational, Experimental studies research design was utilized to examine the influences of crime show exposure on aggression and violence among youth in NCR. A correlational design was considered most appropriate to explore the degree and direction of association between crime exposure and aggression.

Sampling procedure:

There were total (100) samples consisted of youth aged 15–26 years, selected from educational institutions and youth in NCR specifically using random sampling. The total sample size was adequate to perform statistical analysis. The scaling method used here is Likert scale.

Population: Late adolescents and young adults aged 15-26 years

Area: Data will be collected in the city of NCR/ Delhi

Sampling Techniques: The sampling technique used in this research methodology is random sampling. The sample specifically consists of youth aged 15–26 years selected from educational institutions and NCR.

Variables:

Independent Variable:

Variable 1: Exposure to crime shows (Frequency of exposure to crime shows)

Variable 2: Gender (Male vs female)

Dependent Variables:

Variable 1: Aggression (physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility)

Variable 2: Violence (serious aggressive acts)

Measurement tools:

Media Exposure to Crime Shows Questionnaire (MECSQ) :

This is an original questionnaire that was developed to measure the number of times and for how long participants watch crime television shows, as well as the

type of crime show they prefer. It included specific questions related to how many hours people watch crime shows in a week and the types of crime shows they most enjoy. The MECSQ also included total 20 items asking participants to rate how realistic they believe crime shows Are (on a scale of 1-5). A group of experts in psychology and media studied how well the questionnaire measured the frequency, duration, and types of crime shows people watch to determine if what was being measured was valid, or if the information collected would be accurate. The questionnaire achieved high levels of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha value around 0.78).

Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ):

It is a standardized questionnaire created by Buss and Perry that measures levels of aggression using 29 items that cover four areas of aggression:

Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility. Each statement is rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The BPAQ has been shown to have high levels of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha values between 0.72-0.89) as well as construct validity and good convergent validity among culturally diverse samples, including studies with Indian culture.

Statistical Data Analysis:

Statistical Analysis used for the present study includes Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Percentage) Pearson’s correlation, independent samples t-test and Regression analysis. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of central tendency and variability for crime exposure and aggression levels. Correlational method helped in examining the relationship between crime exposure and aggression

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from 100 participants were analyzed by descriptive statistics which were computed to examine the levels of media exposure to crime shows and aggression among the participants. The results are presented in Table 1 which describes the mean and standard deviation of two variables where media exposure results (M=59.31, SD=9.57) and aggression results (M=47.69, SD=10.60). The mean score for media exposure indicates a moderate level to high of exposure to crime-related media content among participants. Similarly, the mean aggression score reflects a moderate

Table 1 : Mean and standard deviation of Media exposure and Aggression

Variable	Mean	SD
Media Exposure	59.31	9.57
Aggression	47.69	10.60

level of aggressive tendencies in the sample.

A Pearson’s correlation analysis was utilized to investigate the association between exposure to crime-related media content and aggression. The analysis demonstrated in Table 2 shows a strong positive relationship ($r = .66, p < .001$) between the level of media exposure and the level of aggression reported. As a result of this analysis, the finding indicates that higher levels of media exposure to crime-related content are associated with higher levels of reported aggression.

Table 2 : Pearson correlation between Media Exposure and Aggression

Variables	Pearson’s r	p-value
Media Exposure to Crime Shows and Aggression	0.66	< .001

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted in order to establish whether or not the level of media exposure could predict the level of aggression. The regression analysis determined that the level of media exposure does significantly predict the level of aggression ($\beta = .66, p < .001$) thus, as the level of media exposure increases, the level of aggression increases.

Table 3 : Linear regression predicting aggression from media exposure

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Constant	4.46	5.05	0.88	0.38
Media Exposure	0.73	0.08	8.65	9.74

An independent samples t-test was conducted in order to evaluate the differences in aggression scores between males and females. The results demonstrated a significant difference in scores for males and females ($t = 1.99, p = .049$). The results of this analysis as shown in table 4 and 5 indicate that the male participants had higher aggression scores than the female participants,

Table 4 : Mean and Standard deviation in gender (male vs female)

Group	Mean	SD
Male	50.47	11.38
Female	46.09	9.97

Table 5 : Independent Samples t-test (Gender T-test)

Gender t	Gender p
1.99	.049

demonstrating that gender is a factor in the expression of aggression.

Discussion and Interpretation:

According to the results of the current study, exposure to violent and crime-related media has a positive effect on people's aggression. It appears that repeated exposure to violent crime-based media will likely lead to increased aggressive thinking and acting in addition to affecting one's emotions. The results support this interpretation of the data because not only was there a relationship between media exposure and aggression, but it was also a major predictor of aggressive behaviour. The gender difference between males and females in relation to their aggression levels follows the view of psychologists and sociologists, who have noted that males tend to show aggression explicitly while females show their aggression through indirect or internalized means. Hypothesis 1 (H_1) stated that higher exposure to crime shows is positively correlated with increased aggression among youth. The results of the Pearson correlation and regression analyses clearly support this hypothesis. A strong positive correlation ($r = .66$, $p < .001$) was observed between crime show exposure and aggression, indicating that individuals who reported higher levels of exposure to crime-related media also demonstrated significantly moderate to higher levels of aggressive tendencies that describes hypothesis is partially accepted. Regression analysis confirmed that media exposure significantly predicted aggression ($\beta = .66$, $p < .001$), suggesting that crime show exposure is not merely associated with aggression but is a meaningful contributing factor.

Analysis of the data according to hypothesis 2 (H_2) supported the conclusion that gender moderates the association between viewing crime-related programming and behaving aggressively. Results from the independent samples t-test indicated that there is a significant difference in levels of aggression between males and females ($t = 1.99$, $p = .049$). Males had higher aggression scores than females. Therefore, results of this analysis support H_2 by indicating that gender has a substantial impact on the way that individuals express and experience aggression.

This research supports the existing literature regarding media violence and aggression. The observation that people exhibit behaviours they learn (e.g., observe and imitate) is based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura). Repeated exposure to crime shows may cause aggression to become accepted and normalized as a legitimate means of solving problems and responding to difficult situations. Research findings of this study align with prior research regarding the relationship between media violence and aggressive behavior. Bandura's Social Learning Theory suggests that observational learning occurs within an individual through observing others, then imitating what they see. If a person repeatedly views violent crime dramas, it may have the effect of desensitizing them to aggression as an acceptable response to resolving conflict. The relationship between exposure to media containing violent content and levels of aggression is well documented in other areas of research. Evidence shows that media violence can increase the likelihood of aggression, through activation of cognitive schemas and emotional arousal resulting from exposure to media violence. Crime dramas often portray violent acts as being justifiable and or a reward for consumers of the content; therefore, regular viewing of this type of programming can lead to a decreased level of concern regarding acts of aggression, as well as an increased acceptance of those acts as being justified or appropriate reactions. The relationship between media exposure and aggressive behaviour demonstrates how environmental factors can play a role in an individual's potential to engage in acts of aggression, and this is especially true given the increasing accessibility to media containing crime-based content (*i.e.*, crime based television programming, streaming services, and social media). The study also identified some differences based on gender and provide additional support for prior research regarding the relationship between aggressive behaviour and biological, social and cultural influences on males, which contributes to elevated levels of aggressive behaviour among males relative to females. More specifically, there are societal expectations that encourage men to exhibit dominant and assertive behaviour, which frequently results in aggressive behaviour. The present study's findings suggest that crime-based media content plays a substantial role in the development of aggressive behaviors among young adults.

Implications of the study:

The findings of the present study provide several important implications. The strong association between media exposure to crime-based content and aggression indicates that young adults who often view crime-based media will likely develop aggressive thought patterns and behaviors as a result of that media exposure. These findings further illustrate the need for students to develop more media awareness and literacy to assist them in critically evaluating and interpreting the violent content depicted in crime-based media. Parents, teachers and educational institutions can assist youth in developing responsible media consumption practices. Additionally, the results indicate that the psychological impact of excessive violence within the media should be taken into account by media content producers and creators. The development of more balanced and responsible portrayals of crime-related media could mitigate the adverse effects on viewers.

Conclusion:

The present study examined the relationship between media exposure to crime shows and aggression among young adults, with special attention to gender differences. The impact that crime related television shows have on young adult aggressive behaviours, along with the consideration of gender differences for these behaviours was evaluated in this study. It is evident that there is a large, positive correlation between crime-related media exposure and aggression. Specifically, individuals who view crime-related media episodes on a regular basis exhibit a greater propensity towards aggression than those who view crime-related media less often than others. This correlation was also validated through the use of a regression analysis that demonstrated that media exposure was a predictor of aggression, thus supporting media exposure as an influence on aggressive behaviour. Males also exhibited a greater propensity towards aggression when compared to females. The findings of the current study further support Social Learning Theory (Bandura) as well as the fact that aggressive behaviours can be learnt and imitated through media, indicating that repeated exposure to crime and violence through media could normalize aggression and lessen emotional sensitivity while impacting how one perceives aggressive behaviors.

This study adds to existing knowledge through the provision of empirical evidence gathered from young

adults within India, an area which has received little attention regarding the relationship between media exposure and aggression. Additionally, this study enhances the view that the media is not only an avenue for entertainment, but also serves as a psychological factor influencing an individual's behaviour.

The importance of media literacy programs, sufficient parental guidance, and responsible viewing practices are highlighted by the findings regarding their practical application. Educational institutions should implement media awareness programs to assist the student population in critically analyzing media content. It is recommended that producers of media exercise responsibility when depicting crime and violence; as well as conduct further research into the long-term effects and additional psychological factors associated with aggression.

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