

Impact of Crime Shows on Behavior of Television Viewers in Pakistan: A Survey Study of Lahore City

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Abstract

The current study investigates the impacts of television crime shows on the attitude of viewers. The researcher employed a quantitative approach and the survey method is used to collect the data. A structured questionnaire with close-ended research items was circulated among 100 respondents chosen through stratified sampling in Lahore because Lahore is the capital city with a heterogeneous population. The respondents were university students below the age of 25 years. The findings of the study revealed that people feel fearful, vulnerable, and insecure after watching crime shows. These shows increase overthinking and aggression among the viewers. This study depicts that crime shows play a pivotal role to develop criminality in society. These crime shows tend to develop criminal minds to fulfil their needs through illegitimate means. The social construction of criminality is more prevalent than the representation of safety and security in these crime shows. The Cultivation Theory is applied to investigate the influence of television crime shows on heavy viewers as well as light viewers.

Keywords: Crime Shows, Criminality, Cultivation Theory, Safety & Security

Introduction

In the medium of television, technically the crime shows are defined in terms of “Procedural”. Such shows represent a program in which a crime issue is presented. After the introduction of that crime, the complete procedure is explained and in the end, the solution is presented. The entire process is based on the happenings of criminal activities. Crime is presented in the form of a drama or film. In most of the crime shows, criminals are caught by the police officer at the end. The whole crime scene is presented in the form of re-enactment. Crime related television shows are very popular among Pakistani people. People do not only watch crime shows but they learn new ideas and opinions about the crime. It is verified by the different signs that crime shows tend to develop the negative attitude of the viewers (Ficher, 2012). There is some evidences available that demonstrates the converse practices of childhood or childhood conflicts may lead to extensive negative effects on attitude and behavior (Konex, 2011).

Violence can be seen in a community in all aspects of culture, such as families, neighbouring nations, educational, political, and institutions. These factors play a major role in the development of an individual's behavior. Both economic and social influences also raise the risk of misbehaviour for children. Furthermore, the variables called socioeconomic variables can drive young people into risky behavior. For instance, different dysfunctional family environments are evaluated as key factors in behavioral problems (Swing, 2012).

Television has become an implausible invention in mass media, as TV is a teacher, entertainer, reporter, mentor, and leader of the audience. In this age of globalization, everything can be found on television whether its education, news, entertainment, and world politics. However, most of the content aired on television is based on fiction instead of showing a true picture of the real world. The producers, who produce fictional content, usually are least concerned about the impact of such content on viewers, additionally when they are asked about the justification and rationale behind such content, they express to having no relationship between fictional and the real world rather they

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believe people want to watch such content on television screens (Brock, Strange, & Green, 2002). Politically motivated content like crime shows, however, always create a fictional world full of fear and insecurity in the minds of viewers (Mutz, & Nir, 2010). Accordingly, television, the major medium of mass media, has occupied a high proportion of leisure time of the public i.e., usually citizens like to watch television 25 hours per week, besides spending time on listening to radio, reading newspapers, magazines, and periodicals (Livingstone, 1996). It is believed that television has become the major source of social construction of the behavior of masses (Gerbner 1976, Bandura 1986, Hearold 1986, etc.).

Most of the crime shows cause re-enactment and they signify the diverse cultural context. In democratic societies, state institutions desire to be received by the public they serve as their protectors. Even if the state institutions use coercive force as dramatized in crime shows should also be taken as laws and regulations to curb crime (Valerie & Jared, 2011), with addition to this, the institutions are also eager their actions i.e., scrutiny and accountability should also be accepted by the public as legitimate (Tyler, 1994; Hough, 2003). However, the crime shows probably have negative effects on the behavior of the viewers. The viewers learned socio-psychological and antisocial behavior from different programs and shows aired on television. So, it can be narrated that crime programs build up and form the opinion about crime, criminals, and society. It has been empirically analyzed that those who show fewer negative reactions emotionally are more likely to be aggressive than those who show negative reactions (Kirwil & Huesmann, 2003).

Watching television crime programs have more impact on the behavior to be aggressive (Anderson & Bushman, 2002a). Nowadays, television crime programs have captured the interests of the public. In most of the crime shows, it has been shown that how people get involved in crime and how the criminals can be rounded up. There is a relationship between watching television crime shows and the overestimation of being a victim of crime among regular viewers (Dowler, 2003). The major focus of the cultivation theory in this regard is all about the fear of crime. Cultivation has an impact on the viewers through the televised crime show and it is nonfictional (Grabe & Drew, 2007). Many studies have shown that viewing crime shows predicts fear of crime (Eschholz, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2003; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004).

Psychological risk factors and neurodevelopment such as poor academic results and lower IQ levels are also the consequences of anti-social behavior, which can be the product of watching crime and criminal activities at television (Blazei, Iacono, & Krueger, 2006). A perception is built through the crime shows that anybody who is outside from the comfort zone has the intention to harm them (Comstock & Paik, 1991).

The fictional style of these shows draws an illusionary world that constructs a paranoiac stage for the viewers that lead society to overestimate and misjudge the happening of crime. It directly affects the socio-psychological ties. The representation of the crime shows has more effect on the viewers who watch them as active high viewers; it creates a perception of threat and fear and the people started to think that society is bad and full of criminals (Baker ET al.1983). The content of crime shows reflects the violence that makes society more fearful and dangerous (Anderson et al., 2003). Crime based shows on television are very popular in the people of Pakistan.

In a Society, violence may be found in every field of society like in homes, neighboring countries, educational, political, and institutions. These factors play a great role in the behavior development of an individual. These economic and societal factors also increase the chances of misbehavior. Moreover, the factors named socioeconomic factors can lead people towards dangerous behavior. By considering this it is vital to investigate the role of crime shows with violent content in influencing Pakistani youth's behavior and perception (Rehman, 2017).

Literature Review

Crime shows are a new type of program in Pakistan's television media. Crime shows are simply defined as a program or drama in which investigation of a crime is shown. Research conducted in Portugal in 2012 studied the role of TV heroes in violent TV shows and the reality perceived after watching such heroes and violent programs in the form of aggression of both kinds i.e., verbal, and physical. In Pakistan, different crime shows are produced with some variations like the re-enactment of a crime scene. The main purpose of such shows is to explain the criminal activities of real life. There are many effects of these crime shows like undesirable behavior in viewers.

Technically the crime shows are referred in terms of “procedural”. The procedural means in which a criminal case is presented and the whole procedure of the crime explained and in the end the solution of the crime is also presented. The whole process is based on the activities related to the crime and the criminals. At the end of the crime shows the police officials arrest the culprit. The crime scene is the re-enactment of the crime in crime shows. There were a few popular crimes shows in Pakistan as well as Indian TV are Shabbir tou Dekhay Ga (Express-News), Wardaat (Samaa) and Aisa Karega Taou Marega (Express-News), Meri Kahani Meri Zubani (Samee), and Crime Patrol (Sony TV). These crime shows grab the viewers’ attention because they contain catchy storyline (Rehman, 2017).

Miller (2014) argued that the factors of risk play an imperative role in the development of antisocial behavior; crime, criminal arrests, violence whether domestic or psychological and child abuse are the outcomes. An extensive literature has been produced in various contexts ranges from violent and aggressive behavior, use of drugs, and the ratio of use of drugs and crime.

McCall (2007) stated that crime has remained a chief component of American news with addition to entertainment media, however, the percentage of news coverage of crime shows increased to a great extent. Generally, the content presented in crime shows or the topics related to crimes attract the creeds of newsworthiness, i.e., drama, emotion, feelings, sensationalism, and thrill, and such actions are easily available and used by police during crime nabbing activities.

Doyle (2006) revealed that most of the genres of crime-related shows, violence is presented as argued by the early researchers of cultivation who assumed heavy television viewing resulted in creating a ‘mean world’ view. A lot of research studies showed that cultivation researches have argued and compared the content of television like crime dramas and television news with a special focus on the method or production of crime content.

Haridakis and Rubin (2003) revealed that most of the people usually liked to watch violent content or crime shows for an amusement or entertainment while considering the content as an enjoyable one, relaxing program, and a soothing experience rather than mere seeking information about the event, to learn anything. According to them, crime shows having aggression contained what they termed ‘amusement’.

Jonathan and Gabriel (2000) concluded that heavy viewing of crime shows on television has pushed various research scholars, politicians, and educators to express their concerns about crime shows aired on television screens. They believed such shows produced a negative impact on viewers of crime shows.

Eschholz (2002) argued that around 2 percent reviews of television expressed their fear of crime and suggest that scholars should find out the ways about the content of television programs and various types of interpretations by the audience about such programs. So, the body of the knowledge has revealed that the scholars were interested in exploring various streams of this social phenomenon as crime, criminality, and criminals were common elements of each society across the globe.

Theoretical Framework

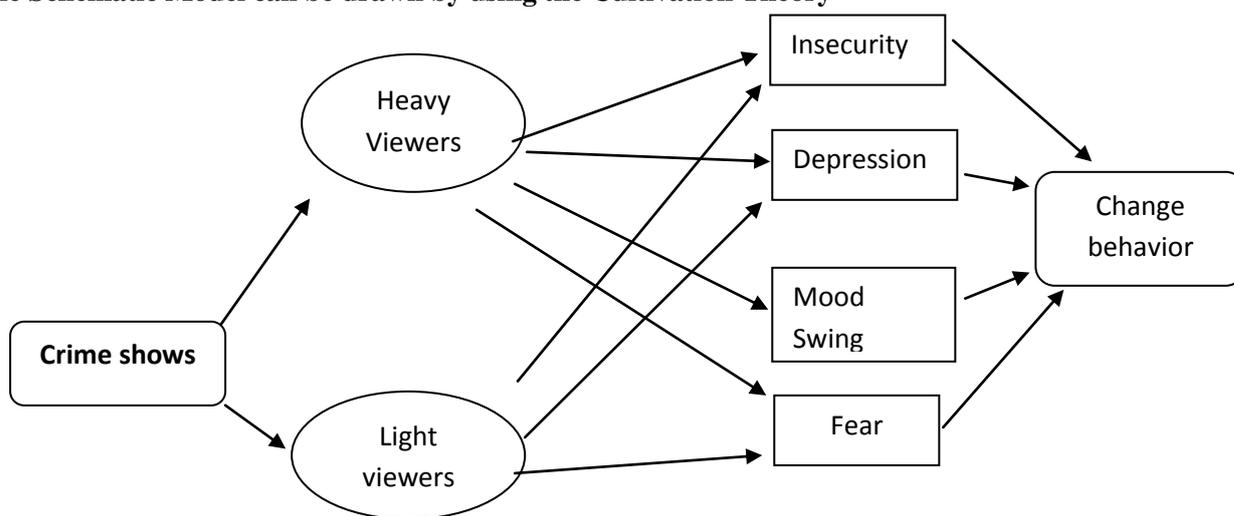
Cultivation Theory examines the television role, importance, and effect in people’s life. The same perspective is applied in the context of crime shows; it produces different ways of narrating crime stories that create the message to learn about the crime and the circumstances. An extensive body of literature on cultivation effects revealed the regular viewing of television for a large period usually cultivates emblematic representations of force that encourages armed forces including the police (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). It can be argued that television cultivates thoughts of a world from where common citizens feel insecure and demand safety. So, the viewers are encouraged to render their liberty for individual safety. Thus, Cultivation Theory assisted the individuals to explicitly think about the effects of television crime shows on the minds of the citizens of a state (Doob& MacDonald, 1979; Hirsch, 1980).

It is human nature that people learn from the stories through those they trust. The television develops the image of trust among the masses by arguing that these crime stories were based on realities. These crime stories are full of emotions, sentiments, and sympathetic approach. The major function of television is to stabilize the norms, values, traditions, civilizations, morals, laws, beliefs, and principles; it also focuses on the cultural resistance and confrontation to bring change (Gerbner, 1986. Another assumption, television is the most effective form of media. Gerbner et al. (1986) narrated that television has the power to influence the socio-economic trends and individual’s

perception. Most of the research studies show that cultivation theory is the best to analyze and examine the impact of all kinds of television shows. It was emerged to investigate and examine the American violent culture on television now this theory is applied in all the social science fields. The cultivation theory is applied because crime shows tend to influence the attitude and behavior of the viewers for a longer period.

In the recent study, it has been found that heavy viewers of crime programs have been influenced negatively at large. They started to perceive themselves as vulnerable and weak. The image of society becomes negative and they think that people are bad and criminals. This is just because of the active viewership of crime shows.

The Schematic Model can be drawn by using the Cultivation Theory



This schematic model represents that crime shows influence the behavior of both heavy and light viewers as described by the cultivation theory. The light viewers have fewer impacts of crime, but they are also affected and their behavior changes, but heavy viewers are affected more by watching the crime shows. There are tendencies to develop the negative behavior after watching crime shows.

Research Methodology

This study underhand falls in the positivistic paradigm which advocates the quantitative methods. This paradigm links the viewership of television crime shows and the development of the attitude of the viewers. The research design is co-relational for quantitative. In this study, the influence of the effects is being measured so the co-relation design is used. There would be a causal relation between television crime shows and viewers attitudes. The tool for the quantitative approach would be a questionnaire for collecting the data. During the data collection, it has also asked about how much time the respondents spend to watch the crime shows and the frequency is also observed.

The universe for the proposed would be the university students from Lahore and the population would be the public sector universities. The Lahore would be chosen because it is the city of education. The people from all Pakistan come to Lahore for higher education. The public sector universities would have been taken because the students at those universities belong to the different regions and classes as well. The sample size would be taken based on the proportional allocation method. A stratified random sampling method would be used for the quantitative method. The strata would be developed based on different faculties. The student's age 19-25 would be included and the rest would be excluded. The quantitative data would be analyzed using regression analysis. Regression analysis would be used to measure the relationship between the television crime shows and the behavior of the viewers.

Findings and Analysis

The sample size is 100 university students from Lahore and the age bracket of the participants is 19-25 years. It has been developed 8 different strata's following their degree program. Every stratum consists of 25 participants. The list of the strata is given below

1. BS Sociology
2. BS Mass communication

3. MSC Criminology
4. MSC International Relations

The close-ended questionnaire is adopted to collect the data. There are 25 items of the questionnaire. The findings of the study say as:

From the strata 1, 15 correspondents use to watch the crime shows regularly. They normally watch Indian crime shows. There are 8 respondents among 25 who have the least interest to watch crime shows but they watch seldom. Two participants have never watched crime shows in their lives.

Out of 15, 12 participants described that their mood got swing after watching crime shows and they feel insecure and unprotected. But they enjoy watching the way of investigation of police and the role of forensic to investigate the crime. The story of those shows makes them feel vulnerable and many time helplessness. Three out of 15 have said that they just watch and get entertain. There is no effect on their behavior of such stories. The other 8 respondents who have less interest to watch crime shows have narrated that they never bother about it. Whenever they watch, they just take it as fun and not more than that. They simply enjoy watching something on television. They have not used their emotions during the shows. They consider it all entertainment and nothing. So, it is found that after watching crime shows, the more tendencies developed in people to develop negative behavior.

Strata2, 13 participants like to watch crime shows daily. Five out of 25 have not any interest to watch crime shows regularly with intension and seven participants declined to watch crime shows. The participants who like to watch crime shows have different opinions regarding their mood swings and the development of negative attitudes. Out of 13, 8 were in the favor that after watching crime shows their level of depression increases and they feel bad about the people who are in their surroundings. These participants were felt that crime shows create fear and mess in society. After watching crime shows, anxiety develops, and this anxiety leads their attitude towards negativity about the others. A sense of insecurity is the outcome of crime shows. Five participants have different views, according to them; crime shows create a sense of security and present the precautionary measures to protect from the criminal activities. Somehow, it also creates fear but the role of police in crime shows reflects that somebody is there to protect us.

In strata 3, the participants were from the academic background of criminology, 19 out of 25 were in the favor that crime shows on different TV channels have the potential to create unrest in viewers. The participants were the regular viewers of television crime shows and they have narrated that after watching these shows, their thoughts swing and become negative about the people around them. They started to think negatively about relationships and sense of trust deficit developed in them. They also gave their narrative that crime shows can be the cause of depression and frustration most of the time. The content present in the crime shows reflect the mirror of society. It is meant that most society is bad, and the individuals are always in search of cheating, fraud, and malpractices. The role of police in the crime shows is like a hero but, it is the opposite. These respondents like to crime shows for entertainment, but this entertainment has become their habit and this habit is creating a negative attitude about the other.

Six out of 25, were the passive viewers of the crime shows so they do not have any interests that what is showing on television crime programs, they just entertain and forget about the story. They also watch the crime shows because the area of study is a crime, so they just get to know what is going on in society and which kind of crimes are prevalent. They also want to know which kind of people commits crimes and what the factors behind committing those crimes are. In strata 4, the participants are the students of international relations. Fifteen out of 25 persons watch the crime shows regularly. They have different opinions about the effects of crime programs on the attitude of viewers. These participants were in the favor that crime shows develop the criminal mind-sets and criminal thinking pattern. Due to these crime shows, they started to observe the people with negative goggles. The correspondents narrated that crime shows play a pivotal role to swing their moods and feelings. They realized after watching crime shows that society is full of criminals and crime is a very common phenomenon. After viewing these programs, they feel insecure and vulnerable. The level of stress, anxiety, and depression increases but they have the habit to watch them so they cannot avoid these shows.

Ten out of 25 were not regular viewers of crime shows but they watch randomly. Six out of those ten were in the favor that crime shows develop the tendency to commit the crime, but it all depends on the circumstances. They also expressed that these crime programs must plot in such a way

that people learn how to be deviant and how to cheat most appropriately. These also shows stimuli the feeling but again if we take the interests. Four out of those ten have the idea that crime shows are just for entertainment and time pass.

Discussion

It has been analyzed that crime is a learned attitude. It has many forms and it varies as well. The representation of crime on the television fascinates people and particularly those who have already criminal thinking patterns. In the recent study, 62% of the participants were in the favor that crime shows on television create a negative attitude. According to the cultivation theory, these viewers watch crime shows regularly and on a priority basis. They are the heavy viewers, so the viewership of such programs cultivates the thoughts and ideas which affect the attitude of viewers negatively and destructively. These shows have different frequencies to construct the thoughts of the masses. The elements which have shown in these programs are fear, mystery, suspense, insecurity, stress, depression, and mood swing. These components play an inevitable role to develop a negative attitude towards society. The crime shows create fear among the people and they began to think that individuals and society are not good, and they can harm anytime. Mystery and suspense are also important ingredients of crime shows and they affect the feelings and emotions of the viewers. Viewers cannot neglect their impact and they feel frightened and scared. So, the mystery and suspense also create the negative attitude of the viewers.

According to the 62% of participants, these crime shows develop a sense of insecurity and vulnerability. They have a sound impact the on minds of the viewers. The viewers started to consider themselves unsafe and insecure because they have watched that most of the people around them have a criminal thinking style so they can harm them easily. It is a common perception among people, those who watch crime shows frequently have seen more depressed and stressed. They got aggressive, violent, cruel, vicious, and forceful on small things. This shows that crime shows have negative effects on the attitude of viewers.

Twenty-nine percent of the participants watch crime shows seldom. They have also their opinions about these programs. They have narrated that crime shows have an impact on the viewer's attitude. They do not watch crime programs regularly but whenever we watch, they develop our thoughts differently. These crime stories have the power to attract and grab the attention of the people, so they have had negative as well as positive effects on us. Negative effects are prevalent like mood swings, anxiety, and frustration. All these create constituents to develop negative behavior. Overthinking and aggression are also increased after watching crime shows. The negative behavior in the sense that viewers started to realize that most of the people are criminals and society is not so good to live. In other words, these crime programs establish negative thoughts that lead to negative behavior. Nine percent of participants have never watched crime shows because they do not have any interest in it.

Conclusion

The study set out to explore how the television crime shows negatively affect viewer's behavior. The study is quantitative, and the results of the study show that heavy viewers of crime shows have been more influenced by these programs. The variables used to measure the effects of crime shows are included insecurity, depression, mood swing, and fear. The 'crime shows' is an independent variable and the rest are dependent variables. The results showed that 62% of participants are heavy viewers and they have admitted that crime shows have impacted their behavior negatively in many prospects i.e. after watching crime shows they feel a sense of insecurity, fearful, depressed and there is more probability to swing their moods. After watching crime programs, they get themselves involve in the story and scenes for a long time and it takes hours to get back to the normal mode. The perception after this study is that people feel unprotected and they consider the society as bad. The lack of trust in people is another outcome. The crime shows develop another perception that police are good enough to deal with the crimes but, this perception would become nullified when the people must deal with them. So ultimately the sense of insecurity increases after watching crime shows. 29 % of participants were the light viewers of the crime shows but are also affected by these shows. They also feel fear after watching the crime stories and dramas on television. In nutshell, the crime shows affect the viewers negatively.

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