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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reality Crime Shows - sowing better or vulnerable mindset among the people: A case study of Meghalaya.

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Abstract

Reality crime shows are the most popular T.V serials which are increasing its popularity at an alarming rate in India. Comparing recent times the Crime shows had never been so good on Indian television. The programming pattern of each reality crime shows in every channel is slowly incorporating more shows that involve sensational stories of crime and murder. Dramatised portrayal of real life cases and sensational crime stories from police files has evoked the audience interest. More than a dozen of these kinds of reality crime shows are running on various channels and the audience are relating to crime next door.

The understanding of this topic is to analyse the mindset of distinction of wrong and right in people due to the influence of reality crime shows. Media in today's world plays a key role in changing and raising the consciousness of the people. This sudden change has set to embark the society through culminating the values and norms of justice or is just invoking negativity.

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Introduction:-

Programmes like Crime Patrol (Sony T.V), Gumrah- End of Innocence (Channel V), Savdhaan India, India Fight's Back (Life O.K.), Webbed (M.TV), Halla Bol (Bindass), Heroes (Channel V) and so on, which has played an important role in seeking consensus for developing people's mind and thought and also for social workers in establishing consciousness, on the other hand has it just enhanced criminal minds to implement new ideas for committing crimes.

Today's society is fascinated with crime and justice, from films, books, newspapers, magazines, television broadcasts, to everyday conversations, one is constantly engaged in crime "talk". The mass media plays an important role in the construction of criminality and the criminal justice system. The public's perception of victims, criminals, deviants, and law enforcement officials is largely determined by their portrayal in the mass media. Research indicates that the majority of public knowledge about crime and justice is derived from the media (Roberts and Doob, 1990; Surette, 1998). Therefore, it is imperative to examine the effects that the mass media have on attitudes toward crime and justice.

Cultivation Theory, (television shapes concept of social reality)

Cultivation theory (sometimes referred to as the cultivation hypothesis or cultivation analysis) was an approach developed by Professor George Gerbner, dean of Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. He began the 'Cultural Indicators' research project in the mid- 1960s, to study whether and how watching television may influence viewers' ideas of what the everyday life is like. Cultural research is in the

'effects' tradition. Cultivation theorists argue that television has long-term effects which are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant.

Cultivation theory in its most basic form, suggests that television is responsible for shaping, or 'cultivating viewers' conceptions of social reality. The combined effect of massive television exposure by viewers over time subtly shapes the perception of social reality for individuals and ultimately, for our culture as a whole. Gerbner argues that the mass media cultivate attitudes and values which are already present in a culture; the media maintain and propagate these values amongst members of a culture, thus binding it together. He has argued that television tends to cultivate middle-of-the-road political perspectives. Gerbner called this effect 'mainstreaming'. Cultivation theorists distinguished between 'first order' effects (general beliefs about the everyday world, such as about the prevalence of violence) and 'second order effects' (specific attitudes, such as to law and order or to personal safety). There is also a distinction between two groups of television viewers: the heavy viewers and the light viewers. The focus is on 'heavy viewers', people who watch a lot of television are likely to be more influenced by the ways in which the world is framed by television programs than are individuals who watch less, especially regarding topics of which the viewer has little first-hand experience. Light viewers may have more sources of information than heavy viewers. 'Resonance' describes the intensified effect on the audience when what people see on television is what they have experienced in life. This double dose of the televised message tends to amplify the cultivation effect.

In conclusion it can be said that Cultivation Research looks at the mass media as a socializing agent and investigates whether television viewers come to believe the television version of reality the more they watch it.

Early perspectives on media and society

The twentieth century can plausibly be described as the 'first age of mass media'. It was also marked by alternating wonder and alarm at the influence of the mass media. Despite the enormous changes in media institutions and technology and in society in itself, and also the rise of a 'science of communication', the terms of public debate about the potential social significance of 'the media' seem to have changed remarkably little. A description of the issues which emerged during the first two or three decades of the twentieth century is of more than just historical interest, and early thinking provides a point of reference for understanding the present. Three sets of ideas were of particular importance from the outset. One concerned the question of the *power* of the means of communication; a second the question of social *integration* or disintegration that they might cause; and the third the question of public *enlightenment*, which they might either promote or diminish.

The power of mass media

A belief in the power of mass media was initially based on the observation of their great reach and apparent impact, especially in relation to the new popular newspaper press. According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) newspaper circulation in the USA peaked in 1910, although it happened a good deal later in Europe and other parts of the world. The popular press was mainly funded by commercial advertising, its content was characterized by sensational news stories, and its control was often concentrated in the hands of powerful press 'barons'. The First World War saw the mobilization of press and films in most of Europe and the United States for the nationalist war aims of contending states. The results seemed to leave little doubt of the potency of media influence on the 'masses', when effectively managed and directed.

This impression was yet further reinforced by what happened in the Soviet Union and later in Nazi Germany, where the media were pressed into the service of propaganda on behalf of ruling party elites. The use of news and entertainment media by the allies in the Second World War removed any doubts about their propagandist value. Before the century was half way on its course, there was already a strongly held and soundly based view that mass publicity was effective in shaping opinion and influencing behaviour. It could also have effects on international relations and alliances. The conditions for effective media power have generally included a national media industry capable of reaching most of the population, a degree of consensus in the message disseminated (whatever its direction) and some measure of credibility and trust in the media on the part of audiences.

Communication and social integration

Social theorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's were very conscious of the 'great transformation' which was taking place, as slower, traditional and communal ways gave way to fast-paced, secular, urban living and to a great expansion in the scale of social activities. Many of the themes of European and North American sociology

reflect this collective self-consciousness of the problems of change from small-scale to large-scale and from rural to urban societies. The social theory of the time posited a need for new forms of integration in the face of the problems caused by industrialization and urbanization. Crime, prostitution, poverty, and dependency were associated with the increasing anonymity, isolation and uncertainty of modern life.

Mass communication as a mass educator

The spirit of the early twentieth century (modern and forward-looking) supported a third set of ideas about mass communication- that the media could be a potent force for enlightenment, supplementing and continuing the new institutions of universal schooling, public libraries and popular education. Political and social reformers saw a positive potential in the media, taken as a whole, and the media also saw themselves as, on balance, making a contribution to progress by spreading information and ideas, exposing political corruption and also providing much harmless enjoyment for ordinary people. In many countries, journalists were becoming more professional and adopting codes of ethics and good practice.

Media- Organizational Activities: Gatekeeping and Selection

The term 'gatekeeping' has been widely used as a metaphor to describe the process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions regarding whether or not to allow a particular news report to pass through the 'gates' of the news medium into the news channels. However the idea of gatekeeping has a much wider potential application since it can apply to the work of literary agents and publishers, and to many kinds of editorial and production work in print and television. It applies to decisions about distribution and marketing of existing media products.

Purpose of the present study-

This study is designed to understand the mindset of the people in Shillong and their perception towards reality and the impact of watching reality crime shows. It is important to understand the new era of transmitting knowledge to the people and the respond people have towards it, as technology has both positive and negative impact in one's life. Is it seen that there is a sudden augment of these reality shows which intends to pass the message of awareness among the masses especially to the youths as it is seen that crime against youth is elevating day by day due to several reasons. Shillong's crime rate is elevating day by day and more at the level of the youths.

Objectives of the study-

1. To study the impact of social reality shows on the people of Shillong
2. To understand the mindset of people and their perception towards these reality crime shows.
3. To make a comparative study on the positive and negative aspect and comprehend the social reality

Terms used:-

Media- The word media comes from the Latin plural of medium. Media literacy involves the ability to analyse and the messages we see on television, radio, the internet, films, advertisements, magazines and other forms of media and maximize the benefits derived from them.

Rise of Television- "television can do most communication chores far better than print or uni-dimensional radio. It is better than any other medium....." By Walter Cromkite in his book, "TV Covers the Action".

Review of related literature:-

1. The article debates on whether reality based crime shows on television are building a better society or are they instilling fear in venerable minds. Sushant Singh, who anchors Savdhhaan India argues, "I took up the show (Savdhhaan India) as any work and my only condition was that I can't do something like India's Most Wanted kind of a thing where there is lot of shouting and sensationalisation. However, some people believe exposing vulnerable minds to such details of criminal incidents can cause harm to the psyche and instill fear in them. Sushant reacts animatedly to such views, "Gita, Quran and Bible have been there for centuries. Have all of us become saints after reading the good books? No. So, the argument that crime shows on TV will prove to be fodder for the criminal mind is not justifiable." To get a better understanding of the impact of reality-based crime shows on TV, Sandy Dias Andrade was approached, Psychologist & Director, Andrade says, "Such shows basically breathe fear in people, especially in vulnerable minds like kids and youngsters. A long exposure to crime instills fear of an unsafe society. As for the crime-prone minds, they would anyways pick up stuff to suit their interest. But a repeated exposure to crime is certainly not healthy, especially for kids."

2. By The Shillong Times; Films, TV shows influencing child crimes? February 12th, 2012:- Media literacy for kids is one way out, suggests child psychiatrist Samir Parikh. "Our education system needs to spread media literacy among kids and infuse life skills into them so that they can differentiate between reality and fiction. There's no other way out," (Parikh told IANS). When children watch and observe violence, they start developing a tendency towards being aggressive, they get desensitised to aggression, they can have a tendency to imitate, and their perception of reality can also tend to get distorted... they start believing that killing and abusing is not a big deal, and that's where the problem begins," . According to Parikh, there are a few key effects that watching violence on screen can have on children.

The Chennai-based boy, who stabbed his teacher to death as he was upset at being repeatedly reprimanded by her for not doing well in studies, reportedly told police during questioning that he had recently seen Agneepath and was influenced by the hero who takes revenge on those who falsely implicate his father.

Vipul Shah of Optimystix, producer of crime-based show Crime Patrol admits content providers need to exercise caution with the level of aggression and violence shown on screen. "Broadcasters, who are a part of any show, should check the age factor before venturing into new shows. It's not ethical to show everything and anything for the sake of ratings," (Shah told IANS). "Parents also play a big role in a child's personality development. They must notice any behavioral changes on a child's mind while watching shows or movies. By following all these, we can make a better society and put a stop to such incidents,"

3. By Ananya. S. Guha, The Shillong Times; What's Wrong with Amour? February 7th, 2013. The writer is a film director who reveals the idea of Hindi film's image of the woman who is always harassed and the hero a macho man who is portrait a pivotal role. The films depict a picture of hidden crudity which can evoke lust in people and can change the mindset. This Bollywood erotica have created a male dominated, sex starved society with prurient taste.
4. By The Hindu, November 21st 2013, 'We hope you never need to use this app' this is part of the update that appears on your touch screen the moment you install Channel V's VithU, an emergency safety app designed for women. After installation, a power button appears on the phone. On tapping the button twice, a message: 'I am in danger. I need help. Please follow my location,' along with your location details will reach pre-loaded contacts. The Delhi and Bombay rape incidents acted as a trigger for coming up with the app, says Prem Kamath, GM and channel head, Channel V.
5. Angela K.P. Chan and Vanessa M.S. Chan, tells that, the study reports a two-stage research on how newspaper reporting of crime influence public's perception. The first stage measures the amount of space and prominence given to crime, particularly sex and violent crime in three most circulated daily newspapers in Hong Kong. The second stage of the study was a questionnaire survey of the relationship between 1) newspaper reporting of crime and fear of crime and 2) newspaper reporting of crime and attitudes toward police efficiency on releasing crime information to public. Differences were found between newspapers: newspapers classified as "sensational" carried proportionally more crime reports and reported crimes in a relatively sensational style than the newspaper that classified as "non-sensational". Consistent results indicated that sensational newspapers tended to influence public's perception of fear of crime and attitude towards police more negatively than non-sensational type of newspaper.
6. Kenneth Dowler, tells that, media consumption and public attitudes towards crime and justice: The relationship between fear of crimes, punitive attitudes, and perceived police effectiveness. By, Department of Criminal Justice California State University at Bakersfield. Further public knowledge of crime and justice is largely derived from the media. The paper examines the influence of media consumption on fear of crime, punitive attitudes and perceived police effectiveness. This research contributes to the literature by expanding knowledge on the relationship between fear of crime and media consumption. This study also contributes to limited research on the media's influence on punitive attitudes, while providing a much-needed analysis of the relationship between media consumption and satisfaction with the police. Employing OLS regression, the results indicate that respondents who are regular viewers of crime drama are more likely to fear crime. However, the relationship is weak. Furthermore, the results indicate that gender, education, income, age, perceived neighborhood problems and police effectiveness are statistically related to fear of crime. In addition, fear of crime, income, marital status, race, and education are statistically related to punitive attitudes. Finally, age, fear of crime, race, and perceived neighborhood problems are statistically related to perceived police effectiveness.

Understanding reality crime shows in the context of people's perception:-

The analysis of this topic was aided by hundred respondents, who shared their views and ideas on the particular issue. These respondents were chosen randomly between the age group of 30 to 50. The reason behind choosing this age group is, their maturity level, their level of understanding, the lifestyle and also the analytical capacity, which more or less same. The information were collected through discussion, questions and focus group discussion (FGD). The analysis of these hundred respondents are given below;

About fifty three respondents shared their vision with a very positive way. According to them these shows made them;

1. It aware people' basic rights, laws and regulations of the country. It focuses on the basic rights of the citizen, importance of FIR, etc.
2. It also makes people careful about the signs before a crime may occur and at the same time it is helping people to act in a mature way.
3. It has helped to understand a particular situation where people take undue advantage of their position and the system as a whole.
4. It is bringing the awareness about the different types of crimes happening around us.
5. These shows also help us in finding a way to fight against the crimes in best possible way.
6. These are also teaching us about how to cope with the after effects of any trauma.
7. It has positively influenced people's humanitarian behaviour. Recently people have developed the mentality of using their resources in an efficient manner and also help others in need.
8. these shows portrays a platform for sensitizing people regarding factual stories and also leverages a sense of comfort for viewers who have experienced such immoral acts in their life.
9. It has triggers a voice to fight against injustice.
10. It shows that police also carry forwards their duties and it restores confidence among common people.
11. It has proved that killing someone is not a solution of a problem.
12. Some of these shows have bring light to different social issues which are still prevailing in many parts of the country and these plays very important role in women empowerment, eradicating child labour, alcohol and drugs and many such issues.
13. Many reality TV shows have encouraged donations and acts of social welfare from the common people and with the influence of these they got positive response many a time.
14. These respondents also felt that it is easier for parents to inform their children regarding such sensitive issues which are frequently hampering to our society.

Another thirty four responds responded in a very negative way, according to them these shows might;

1. Instills a sense of fear if the actual stories projected wrongly.
2. Give new ideas to people for committing or organising crimes.
3. Has negative Impact on The youngsters as everything they see on the TV affects their mind. They see these reality shows on TV and they find it cool and think it is okay to behave in the same way.
4. In one way or another, these shows have been a contributing factor in increased violence among the population. Since they are liked by most of the viewers. Watching them, the audience also acts the same. Sometimes, most criminal minds derive their plan of the crime by watching the reality shows, trying to cover the tracks by watching the crime shows.
5. have made its audience depress; especially the young ones who believe that they are the shortcut to fame and money. In order to attain both of them in a short time, they give everything to get into one. When failed, they get into depression and often begin thinking that they are no good

The rest of the thirteen responds replied neither positively nor negatively, they have responded in a very neutral way, they do not find it extremely positive nor they feel these are reflecting a very negative impression upon people, according to them;

1. These reality shows have both the good and the evil in them.
2. In one hand it creates awareness about the types of crime and problems going on in the society and on another, it gives way to violence in the mind of people.
3. The reality crime show's stories may or may not be based on accurate life stories as the actual names, place, time all these informations are never reviled in these kind of shows.
4. Broadcasting such stories on television has elevated the T.R.P (television rating programme) for makers of such shows and acts as an eye-opener for criminals to cultivate on the plans of crimes.

Conclusion:-

Thus today's society is fascinated with crime and justice, from films, books, newspapers, magazines, television broadcasts, to everyday conversations, one is constantly engaged in crime "talk" and mass media play an important role in the construction of criminality and the criminal justice system. The public's perception of victims, criminals, deviants, and law enforcement officials is largely determined by their portrayal in the mass media and this plays a vital role in everyone's life.

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