

BLOCK 4
**MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR**



UNIT 8 STEREOTYPING IN MEDIA: GENDER, POLITICS AND ETHNICITY*

Structure

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Learning Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to,

- explain what is meant by stereotypes,
- discuss the role of media in formation of stereotypes,
- describe politics in media representation, and
- critically evaluate the stereotypical representation in media.

8.0 INTRODUCTION

India in the 21st century, is fast becoming a country where the internet, television and cell phones are ubiquitous. These have penetrated the villages and small towns in India with only a few remote places left untouched. In the

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past few decades, the media has increasingly become an important agent of socialization. One way in which the media affects our worldviews is through perpetuating and reinforcing stereotypes. The characters we see on television and other media are often very straightforward and stereotypical. Depictions of straightforward characters make it easy both for the producers to illustrate their stories as well as the audiences to understand them. These depictions however perpetuate and maintain stereotypes.

A stereotype is a simplistic and generalized representation of a social group that ignores diversity. It often has both positive and negative attributes about the group members and leads to certain expectations regarding them. These stereotypes however may also change with time if contradictory information is provided. For e.g., based on his past experiences, a man may have the stereotypic belief that women do not make good leaders. While working on a job, he meets a young woman. His initial impression of her based on the available stereotype leads to the expectation that the young woman will not be a good leader. After interacting with her, he may soon realize that the stereotypic belief is not so accurate and that the young woman in fact has good leadership qualities. The man may then consider revising his stereotype of women. In some cases, however, the stereotype may remain unchanged as the young woman is seen as an exception. This may result in bias and prejudice which is manifested in negative feelings towards women including emotions, such as contempt or pity.

Thus, in this Unit we will consider such stereotypes in media, effects of stereotypes representation in media and politics in media representation.

8.1 STEREOTYPES IN MEDIA

Every day we hear several media messages that convey what it means to be a member of a social group such as belonging to a gender, caste race etc. These media representations influence the way we perceive ourselves and the world in which we live. One of the primary tools for understanding media representations is *content analysis*. This involves systematically studying the content to identify patterns. However, the method involves a lot of challenges such as analyzing thousands of print pages and digging deep into archives of radio, television and other media. With the use of sophisticated computer softwares, we are now able to carry out more in-depth analysis and increase our understanding about media representations.

Research using tools such as content analysis shows that the media is filled with stereotypic images of women, ethnic groups, older adults, people with disability and many other groups. These media representations vary along two dimensions. The first dimension relates to *quantity of representation* (underrepresentation/overrepresentation) while the second relates to the *quality of representation* (positive/negative). Both these dimensions are influenced by a number of factors such as cultural, social, economic and

political that vary across time and space. For e.g., historically certain groups like the homosexuals, have been grossly underrepresented in the media and even when they were represented their images were very negative. However, their representations have increased in the media and now they are presented in more positive ways in the media.

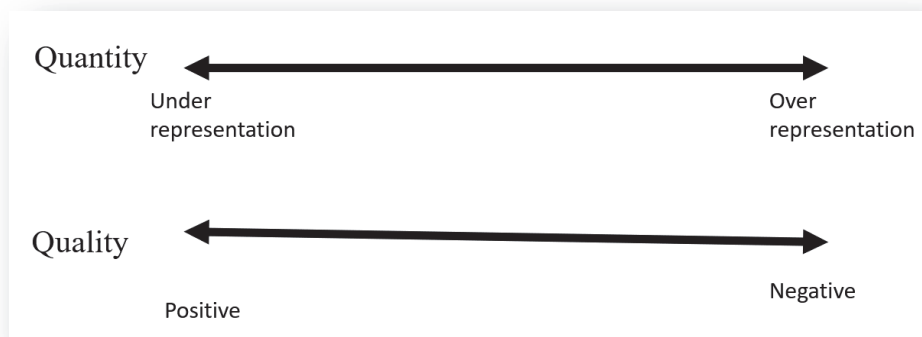


Figure 8.1 The two dimensions of media representation

Both the quality and quantity of representations can be understood in terms of various theoretical perspectives that examine ‘what’ and ‘how’ images will be presented to the public. One perspective is the gatekeeping theory which focuses on ‘what’ will be presented to the public. The theory states that the media act as gatekeepers and decide what will be covered and what will be ignored. Another perspective i.e., the agenda setting theory states that the media sets the agenda by concentrating on selective issues only. Consequently, the public perceives these issues as more important than others. In one study by Bloemraad and Hamlin (2015), the visibility of Vietnamese and Indian-origin communities in four regional North American newspapers was examined. The study found no link between demographic patterns in the region and media coverage of certain groups.

The question of ‘how’ the groups will be represented in the media can be understood in terms of the frame theory. The theory emphasizes words and other symbols that are used to present certain perspectives and thereby mould public opinion. For example, if certain groups are presented as threats to the society, then public opinion will become very negative and public policies will be formulated to deal with these threats. These frames are affected by a number of variables but especially the political viewpoint of the media. Bleich et al., (2015) analyzed the different representations of Muslims between right-leaning and left-leaning British newspapers. The researchers observed that there were more negative portrayals in right-wing papers compared to left-wing papers. This theory will be taken up in more detail in later sections.

8.1.1 Gender Stereotypes

The Indian society is predominantly patriarchal. Men hold primary power and women are at the bottom of the social ladder. Men's stereotypes are

represented by an 'agentic' cluster that contains features like independence, strength, and self-assurance. Stereotypes about women's qualities are represented by a 'communal' cluster that contains features like emotional, helpful, and compassionate features (e.g., Eagly and Steffen, 1984). Eagly and Mladinic (1994) have noted that communal features in the stereotypes associated with women suit them for domestic responsibilities and lower status roles, whereas the stereotypes associated with men are associated with high-status roles.

Media have played a key influence in the perpetuation and reinforcement of the above- mentioned stereotypes. There are two underlying patterns that are visible with respect to gender stereotypes in the media (Oliver, Hoeweet al., 2014):

- 1) The first pattern is that female characters continue to be underrepresented in contrast to male characters (Smith & Granados, 2009, as cited in, Oliver and Raney, 2014). According to the content analysis study done on US TV (Gunter, 1995), there were only 20 to 35 per cent of characters who were females during the 1950s to 1970s. By the mid-1980s, however, there were more women in leading roles, but still there were twice as many men on screen. Things seemed to have remained the same during current times as women continue to be marginalized in the media. Moreover, although these studies have been carried out in western countries but several Indian reports also reveal the same trends. A 2021 UN study assessed gender inequality in Indian media by analyzing newspapers, TV and digital media outlets for a one-year period between August 2019 and July 2020. There were some notable findings: only one in every five panellists in English prime time debates was a woman; gender representation on English prime time TV had declined from 2019 to 2020; and three out of every four news stories were written by a male (UN Women, 2021).

Box 8.1 Increasing Representation of Women in Media

50:50 The Equality Project

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/5050>

The 50:50 Project was launched in 2017 by BBC to address women's underrepresentation in the media. When the project initially began, men dominated interviews and were often shown as expert contributors. However, due to the project there was a gradual shift in this scenario as women's representation in BBC and its partner institutions showed an increase. At the BBC, the target of having 50% representation of women was achieved as the number increased to 50% women contributors in March 2021, from 36% when they first started in 2017. This increase in representation of women in media has been achieved by BBC and its partner institutions in several ways. For e.g., many of the media have increased female interviewees, have more equal contributions by men and women as experts and also developed media

content that is more relevant and interesting for women. This has ensured that women's perspectives can also be seen and heard in the media. The Project has now been broadened to include other underrepresented groups including people from diverse cultures and people with disability.

- 2) The second pattern that emerges are the stereotypical representations of female characters in the media. In these representations women are usually shown in domestic roles and are appreciated for looking young, and attractive. Jain and Pareek (2018) observed that out of 30 TV serials that aired from 1990-2016 and 14 old and new TV advertisements, the majority of depictions of women were of them doing household chores. Jain and Pareek give examples of films before the 1990s, like *Dahej* (1950), and *Pati Parmeshwar* (1988) where women were depicted as submissive wives who sacrificed for their own families. This is also true for Indian TV serials where women characters are usually limited to the domestic sphere. The split between the 'good' woman and the 'bad' woman is also very apparent in these serials where the 'good' are those who show love, concern, nurturance, and emotional support while the 'bad' are those who show anger, and are conniving.

Laura Mulvey's gaze theory (1975) has argued that in a patriarchal society, the male gaze determines what will appeal to men especially heterosexual men and this then determines the cinematic content. Bollywood movies depict 'item number' songs where women are shown as sexual objects wearing skimpy clothes and are objects of pleasure for the male gaze. More recently, the male gaze has been replaced by the female gaze where the males have shed their clothes for the voyeuristic pleasure of the female. But these are rare instances in the Indian media.

What is the result of these media representations of women? The stories that are depicted in the media display the male perspective while women are silenced and remain invisible. Stories of women that talk about sexual harassment, restrictions of mobility, and limited educational and employment opportunities do not make it to the front pages but instead are pushed to the middle or last few pages.

Furthermore, as young girls and women aspire to have media hyped 'ideal' bodies, there are others in the media who show that such aspirations can be very easily achieved through the various products that they advertise to the consumers. The result is a never-ending quest to buy such products that often fall short of their promises. Furthermore, there is often a complete dissatisfaction with one's bodies and with one's selves resulting in eating disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia as well as unhealthy eating habits that have become prevalent in our society.

There are other implications of the negative stereotypes that are portrayed in the media. Members of marginalized social groups such as women are usually aware of these stereotypes and realize that others may evaluate them negatively on the basis of these stereotypes. Such awareness can result in 'stereotype threat' which occurs when members of a stereotyped group underperform to conform to the negative stereotypes. Stereotype threat has consequences in several domains including academic performance and leadership. It has been observed that when women get aware of the stereotypical belief that women do not perform as well as men in certain areas (such as maths) then they tend to underperform in these areas. Similarly, one of the most deleterious consequence of stereotype threat in the area of leadership for women, is reduced motivation and engagement.

While on the one hand, the majority of the media present women in terms of the stereotypes but the media also informs us about women who are strong, independent, have leadership qualities and who break the stereotypes. Stories about female foeticide, atrocities towards women, lack of opportunities and many other such stories are also reported by responsible journalists. However, such stories remain few and in the minority.

Historically the focus has been on women and how they are represented in the media. However, more recently the media representation of men and masculinities is also being analyzed. Men's views of what it means to be a man and manhood are also constructed by the social environment where the media is a dominant social force. One of the most influential theories in this context is **Connell's theory of masculinity** (1995) which states that there are multiple masculinities which vary across time and socio-cultural contexts and that these exist in a hierarchy. For e.g., within the same culture, some masculinities may encourage men to be strong and aggressive while others encourage men to be soft and emotionally responsive. These masculinities have consequences not only for men but also for women, children and society as a whole. In her theory of masculinity, Connell describes 'hegemonic' masculinity (Connell, 1995) which is based on the idea that some of the masculinities become culturally dominant while other masculinities become subordinated. The men who perform the culturally dominant masculinities are idealized and are accorded high social status and control in that culture (Connell, 1987). Although it may vary according to context, but in most societies this kind of masculinity manifests itself in the "hypermasculine ideal" of aggression, toughness, callous sexual attitudes towards women and lack of emotional expressiveness. Such images are very frequently seen in cartoons, films, TV serials, advertisements and other media. When images of such hypermasculine men are seen in the media, it gives an impression to the audience that these are the only acceptable behaviours for men and that other emotional expressions such as crying are feminine and indicate weakness. Moreover, when men are unable to reach the standards shown on the media, they may experience shame and low self-esteem.



Figure 8.2 Stereotypes associated with women and men

The above discussion shows a general trend that media representations of men focus on agentic roles, whereas women are primarily valued for their communal roles that emphasize domestic roles, sexuality and appearance. The media also presents the hegemonic or dominant group as being characterized by the hypermasculine ideal. Others such as women, gays, or queer individuals are often marginalized. Media representations are often considered the norm for media audiences. This has a host of implications for the way we view ourselves and others in society. It can lead to issues such as body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem in the individual. There is evidence that stereotyped media images can result in stereotype threat causing the stereotyped group to underperform. Although the majority of media content still shows these stereotypes, there are at least a few media that have begun to show diversity and non-stereotypical characters. Moreover, the media has also started providing a space for various groups to contest the stereotypical images and affirm a new identity. Such counter stereotypes or positive media representations can bring about a change in the negative stereotypes.

8.1.2 Caste and Ethnic Stereotypes

The diversity of India is reflected in its numerous languages, religions, castes and ethnic cultures. However, this diversity is often not reflected in the Indian media. Let us take the example of our castes. Several marginalized caste groups are either absent in the Indian media or have been reported from the lens of the privileged and upper caste. In this context, the Dalits represent an oppressed group in the Indian society who have been shown in stereotypical ways in the Indian media.

According to a study by Oxfam India (2019), on print media, people from the upper caste hold majority of newspaper leadership positions. In addition, the survey showed that only 10 out of the 972 articles featured on the cover page of the magazines were related to caste issues. This underrepresentation of Dalits in leadership positions results in stories being represented from the viewpoint of the upper caste. Kumar and Subramani (2014) observed that almost 80 percent of the respondents who accessed Dalit websites and blogs,

regarded the mainstream media as negatively biased in relation to Dalit-related issues.

Historically, Dalits were shown as a homogeneous group, dark skinned, with impure bodies, illiterates, and as passive victims in the Indian media. Such images however are changing mainly due to the new media such as social media platforms, online forums and websites which have now become pervasive in our lives. These new media are distinctive from the earlier media in that they are highly interactive, often providing a space for discussions between diverse groups of people from all around the world. Thakur (2019) observed that Dalits are now able to use the new media in myriad ways: to shatter negative stereotypes, to express a sense of pride, to create mobilization against caste discrimination and to express resistance to the dominant caste narrative. The author notes that Dalit online users are now able to use several Indian languages on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to present a distinct worldview and this has helped them to a large extent in expressing their diverse identities.

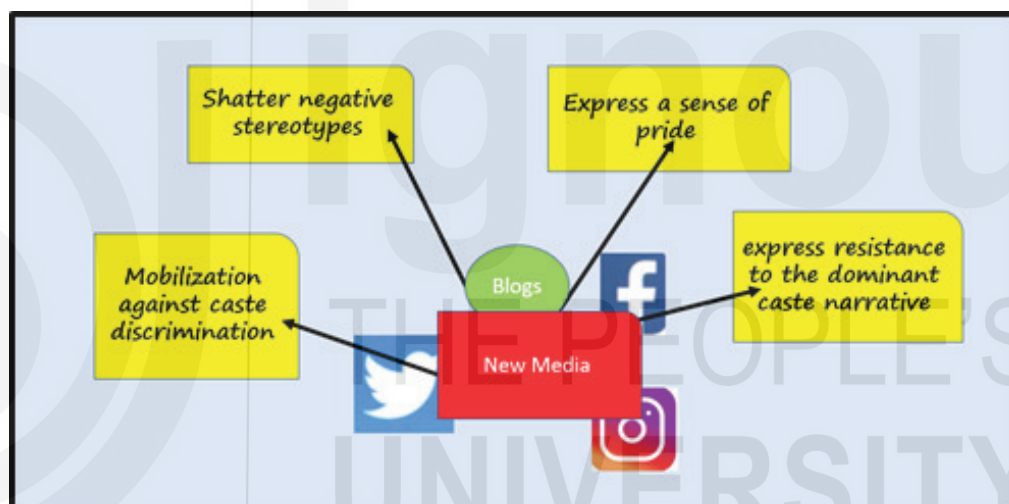


Figure 8.3 Use of new media by caste groups

In addition to caste stereotyping there is also stereotyping of ethnic minorities. Several ethnic minorities across the world have also been portrayed in very simplistic terms. Studies of portrayals of ethnic minority groups in the US, shown that such groups are underrepresented and shown in stereotypical ways just like many of the marginalized groups in our society. For e.g., a lot of research has focussed on the portrayals of African-Americans on American television. Historically, they have been underrepresented in the American media and were given only a small range of roles, often negative and were shown as aggressive or dangerous. However, after the 1980s their representation in TV increased but they are still not depicted in major roles or in dramas and shown more in comic roles. Other studies have analyzed commentaries by sports commentators for African-American and White athletes. In one study (Rada, 1997), it was noted that sports commentators were more likely to make remarks pertaining

to the cognitive abilities of Whites while in the case of African-Americans these remarks were related to their physical abilities.

American media has also been criticized for ignoring several groups that are practically invisible compared to their actual population in America. Prominent among these are groups such as African, Arab, Asian, Latin, and Native Americans. Most of this research has been carried out in western contexts (especially American) but this lack of diversity may well be true of many countries including India. However, this trend is slowly changing as in the last few decades diversity in the media is increasing.

8.1.3 Stereotypes of Elderly

Another group which is misrepresented in the media is the elderly. India is mainly a collectivistic society where the joint family system is quite prevalent and different generations reside together in the same household. One of the core values of Indian culture is respect and care for the older adults. India is also diverse and this is reflected in cultural, social, economic, political and many other factors that have a significant impact on the elderly. The result of this diversity is that some elderly may be in a position to voice their opinion and be visible in the media while others who are at a disadvantage may remain marginalized. Nevertheless, the media is responsible for propagating at least some negative stereotypes towards older adults.

A small but significant body of research in the Indian context indicates that the older adults are represented in small numbers relative to their proportion of the actual population in the Indian media and this is especially true for elderly women (Harwood and Roy, 1999). Even when they are presented, they are rarely portrayed in major roles and remain marginalized. Most of the media content is made for the young audiences while it ignores the elderly and their issues. This gives a signal to the society that issues of the elderly are unimportant, uninteresting and not newsworthy.

Studies across the world indicate the presence of similar negative stereotypes that emphasize old age and physical dependency (Wilińska and Cedersund 2010). Such negative stereotypes result in 'ageism' that is expressed as prejudice and discrimination towards the elderly. This can negatively impact the wellbeing of older people and limit their capacities (Levy et al. 2002).

However, it should also be noted that media images of older adults in recent years have changed and become quite positive. In a literature review on images of older characters in Western and Asian media, Bai (2014) observed that although earlier images were mainly negative, more recent TV advertising depicts positive images. A longitudinal study between 1950s to 1990s found that the most commonly depicted media images of elderly people in U.S. television commercials were that of "the perfect grandparent," "the adventurous golden ager," or "the productive golden ager" (Miller et al.

2004, as cited in Bai 2014). In another comparative study between American and India, it was found that in both cultures, older people were depicted in a positive manner and were shown as active, happy, and healthy (Harwood and Roy, 2006 as cited in Bai 2014). Research in other cultures such as Korea, has found that unlike the American media, the elderly are more likely to play an important role in Korean TV commercials. They also have a higher chance of being portrayed positively in Korean media, indicating that the advertising content is affected by cultural values (Lee et al., 2006, cited in Bai 2014).

Box 8.2 Case Study of ‘Olivio’ Advertising Campaign in U.K. Media, 1995-2003

Vrees et al., (2006) analyzed media representations of older people in print advertisements for *Olivio margarine* between the period 1995 to 2003. In 1995, Unilever, a multinational food business, introduced Olivio as a "healthy food" in the UK market which was an olive oil-based margarine. The data revealed that in the early stages of the campaign, standard stereotyped imagery of the elderly was used but this soon gave way to more experimental images that featured “healthy, fit, active, modern and even sexual older people” (Vrees, et al., p.18). The authors proposed a continuum in which traditional stereotypical images gave way to more modern images of the elderly. Four distinct phases of the advertising campaign have been discussed by the authors.

The first phase of advertising which began in 1995, was mostly educational, informing viewers about the benefits of a Mediterranean diet, that included olive oil. Media representations of the elderly pictured longevity and a healthy, active life. Thus, the elderly were shown positively and defied the negative stereotypes often seen in the media. The second part continued the earlier educational approach regarding health benefits of a Mediterranean diet but now multigenerational families were depicted hinting to a long life if olive oil is included in the diet. Older adults were depicted in positive roles as grandparents who were shown as passing on their secrets of longevity to the next generation. The third phase focused on elderly people being engaged in youthful activities such as driving a sports car or doing yoga. An important aspect of these ads was that they were now not shown in the traditional extended family setup but were seen as enjoying life. In the fourth phase, the change in media representations of the elderly was even more apparent. Not only were older adults shown in youthful activities but the ad also showed romantic relationships and sexual attractions. Such images of the older adults had never been depicted in the earlier ads.

Source: Vrees, Y.B., Harwood, J., Williams, A., Ylänne-McEwen, V., Wadleigh, P. M., & Thimm, C. (2006). The Portrayal of Older Adults in Advertising: A Cross-National Review. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 25, 264-282.

8.1.4 Stereotypes of People with Mental Health Disorders

This group is portrayed negatively due to mental illness. Characters with mental problems in the media are frequently shown as far more violent than their real-life counterparts (Diefenbach, 1997). They are also typically depicted as helpless, frail, or otherwise unable to manage their own life (Coverdale, Nairn, & Claasen, 2002). This has resulted in the belief in the general population that persons with psychiatric disorders are uncontrollable and dangerous and should be feared and avoided.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are stereotypes? What is the role that the media plays in their formation?

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- 2) Analyze different media (e.g., TV, print, social media etc.) to understand the stereotypical depictions of social groups.

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- 3) Critically evaluate Connell's theory of masculinity and discuss how relevant is it in today's world.

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8.2 CLARK'S STAGES OF MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY GROUPS

The discussion so far shows that media portrayals of different groups are characterized by a range of stereotypes. These media representations do not remain static but change with changing contexts. Clark (1969) suggested that media depictions of minority, especially on television go through four stages. The first stage is 'non-recognition' when the minority is not acknowledged by the mainstream media and is almost invisible. The second stage is 'ridicule' when the group is shown on TV, but derogatory stereotypical media images are used to portray them. In these images they are shown as silly, evil, stupid or as lazy. The primary intent of these representations is to increase the self-esteem of the dominant group. When, the minority group

protests against these representations then we move to the third stage i.e., of ‘regulation’ when the group is represented in limited, socially acceptable roles such as police officers, teachers, soldiers etc. The fourth stage is ‘respect’ when the group is presented in both positive and negative roles and their depictions are the same as the dominant groups.

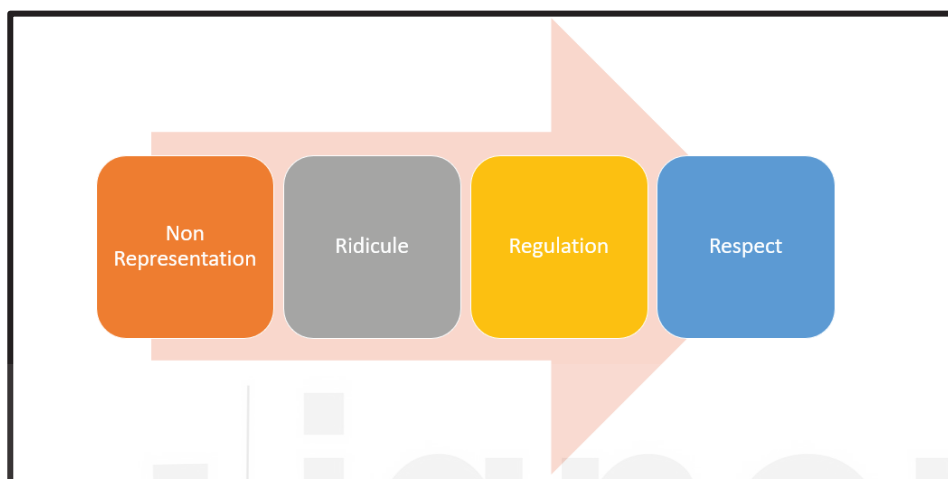


Figure 8.4 Clark's Stages of Media Representation of Minority Groups

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Apply Clark's stages of media representation to the depictions of the backward classes in Indian movies.

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8.3 EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPICAL PRESENTATIONS IN MEDIA: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Stereotypes are harmful because they tend to ignore the uniqueness and diversity of individuals. Some of the stereotypes that we see on the media are the only way we come to know about certain groups. These stereotypes may be very negative and hence may justify our fear, limited interactions and even the injustice meted out to these groups by the society. It may also lead to changes in the way we see our own selves and others. Cultivation, media priming, and social cognitive theory are three prominent theories that examine how attitudes, and behaviours of viewers are impacted due to exposure to stereotypical media content.

Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002) holds that long-term exposure to media affects the way viewers perceive the world. According to the cultivation hypothesis, the more individuals watch television, the more likely they will construct reality in a way that is similar to media depictions. At least some research is consistent with this theory as it shows that heavy viewers often have more stereotypical perceptions with respect to women, racial minorities, elderly and those with mental illnesses.

Another approach to understand the impact of media stereotyping is through the **media priming theory** (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). ‘Priming’ is the effect of some preceding stimulus on the judgment of a subsequent stimulus without the person having any conscious awareness of the preceding stimulus. Media messages can act as a prime and colour the way the viewer thinks about subsequent messages. Media priming research has often been conducted in the context of African-Americans who are portrayed in the media as threatening, aggressive or as criminals. One experiment observed that exposure to a newspaper report about a violent incident (media prime) later led to higher dispositional ratings on aggression for African-Americans criminal suspects, but not for white criminal suspects (Johnson et al., 1997). The study was able to show that any judgment about violent crimes is influenced by the already existing stereotype of the "violent black male" in the minds of the viewers.

According to the **social cognitive theory** (Bandura, 1986), given certain conditions, viewers will imitate the behaviours that they see in the media so that some images are modelled more frequently than the others. For e.g., adolescent females may selectively attend to thin models who are repeatedly depicted in the media. Such models are shown to get all the male attention and are perceived as beautiful. Female adolescents who watch such images may become critical of their bodies and may want to become thin. In their quest to become thin they may develop eating disorders. Stice and Shaw (1994) observed that there was a significant correlation between reading magazines and college females’ eating disorder symptoms. However, this may not always be the case as people also have many opportunities to observe parents, peers, teachers and others who may promote healthy life styles. Thus, people may get influenced by the images that they see in the media but the influence of other socialization factors cannot be ignored.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) How does cultivation theory examines the impact of exposure to stereotypical media content on attitudes and behaviours of viewers?

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- 2) What is media priming? Take an example from real life to explain the concept.

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- 3) Critically evaluate the social cognitive theory as it is applied to media.

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8.4 POLITICS IN MEDIA REPRESENTATION

This section will focus on two issues that are related to politics in the media. The first is related to how the media is being controlled by political and related forces. Although many of us may think that the media are independent and they report events in an unbiased and fair manner but in fact, this is not true. The media presents only certain events to the audiences while other issues are relegated to the background. What will be covered by the media is influenced by a number of factors including social, cultural, economic and political. ‘Media Capture’ will focus on this issue. The second issue of ‘News Framing’ is related to how the media presents a particular perspective to the audience thereby shaping public opinion as well as determining the political and policy response to the issue.

8.4.1 Media Capture

Journalists and other news personnel are under incredible pressures to cover specific stories and present them in certain ways. Herman and Chomsky (1988) proposed the model of “manufacturing consent”. According to this model, a few powerful elite individuals or corporations act as gatekeepers to filter information that will reach the public. The model emphasizes “five filters” that include ownership, advertising, powerful sources of mass media news (e.g., government sources, big business corporation), flak and war on terrorism.

‘Media capture’ refers to a threat to the freedom of press wherein media are subtly controlled “either directly by governments or by vested interests networked with politics.” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013, p. 41). Media capture can take several forms. Media ownership by big corporations or by the government is one way of directly controlling the media content. In India, the majority of the leading media organisations are owned by enormous conglomerates that invest in a wide range of industries. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, an Italian media tycoon used his media holdings to launch his

political career and became the Prime Minister of the country several times (Durante and Knight 2009). Eraslan and Özertürk (2018) have noted that politicians can also control coverage by selectively granting access to journalists.

Even when they are not directly controlling the media, governments and big corporations are a source of advertising revenue on which the media depend for their survival. This is also true for India, where media houses have very close relationships with big corporations who are a source of huge advertising revenue. Similarly, media houses have close relationships with several public-sector companies who place advertisements in their media. If the stories in the media portray a negative picture of the advertisers or if they are in disagreement with their editorial policies then these advertisers may threaten to stop advertising in their media.

Even social media companies such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter which seem to provide free services are actually selling our browsing history and related data to advertisers. Several of the social media have also been accused of bias in their reports, spreading fake news, inciting violence and influencing voter behaviour. Many governments around the world have responded to this by tightening controls on the social media. The social media on the other hand have also responded by sometimes defending themselves, formulating policies to reduce media capture, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy, trying to be transparent in their reports and showing commitment to having open public conversations about these issues.

8.4.2 News Framing

After the media personnel have decided what will be presented to the audience, different frames can be constructed through the language, symbols, and affective tone of the presentation etc thereby highlighting certain aspects of the issues and downplaying others. 'Framing' involves making subtle changes in the content so that it promotes a particular perspective of the event. This in turns moulds the attitudes and opinions of the target audience.

De Vreese (2005) differentiates between internal and external factors that affect frame building. Internal factors refer to the editorial policies and news values, while external factors refer to the different stakeholders such as the elites that may comprise of politicians, members of large corporates and owners of media organization. Besides the elites, interest groups and social movements also influence that affect frame building. These frames influence the way information is processed, as well as the attitude and behaviours of the audience (De Vreese, 2005).

Several researchers have identified important frames in the news that influence the public's interpretation of news. For example, Iyengar (1991) differentiated an episodic frame from a thematic frame. While the former focuses on an individual and a specific event, the latter focuses on social issues rather than on a single event. Newspapers regularly report events

depicting violence against women including rapes, domestic violence, sexual abuse etc. Research shows that there is a tendency of the media to use episodic framing to report such events. In these frames the focus is on disconnected individual events occurring at specific places and times with an emphasis on sensationalist elements of the story. Such episodic frames ignore the larger social issues related to gender-based violence such as the patriarchal structures of the society. A vast body of research suggests that newspapers focus on the method of violence rather than cover the offenders' histories of violence, giving an impression that the audience is more interested to know how men kill their partners rather than the reasons behind it (Sweeney, 2012). Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff (2008) state that the media has a 'murder centric' focus so that murder by intimate partners takes precedence over other forms of violence against women, especially psychological abuse. It is important to note here that the former is considered more newsworthy by the media but statistically is less probable than the latter.

Other researchers have focussed on commonly used frames that are given below (Neuman et al., 1992 as cited in Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000):

- 1) Human Interest Frame: This frame tries to capture the interest of the target audience by personalizing the news. It does so by presenting a story of specific persons involved in the issue, giving the story an emotional angle to it and thereby generating empathy or sympathy.
- 2) Conflict Frame: This frame tries to focus on disagreements or conflicts between parties, individuals or groups.
- 3) Morality/Religious frame: The news frame centres on issues of morality, religion or social prescriptions.
- 4) Economic Frame: Here the focus is to present an issue in terms of its economic or financial outcomes.
- 5) Responsibility Frame: This frame attributes responsibility for the cause or solution of a problem to either the government, individual or group.

Box 8.3 Examples of different frames

- 1) Human Interest Frame: "In Pune, 36-week premature infant beats severe post-Covid syndrome." (September 2, 2021, Times of India)
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/85847685.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
- 2) Conflict Frame: "It's like a war: Scenes inside an India hospital desperate for oxygen." (April 28, 2021, Business Standard)
https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/it-s-like-a-war-scenes-inside-an-india-hospital-desperate-for-oxygen-121042800140_1.html
- 3) Morality/Religious frame: "Coronavirus fear": "People across religious lines come together, offer prayers in Patna." (March, 17, 2021, The New Indian express)

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/mar/17/coronavirus-fear-people-across-religious-lines-come-together-offer-prayers-in-patna-2117789.html>

- 4) Economic Frame: “Stocks fall as more states impose Covid restrictions.” (April, 20, 2021, Hindustan Times)

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/business/stocks-fall-as-more-states-impose-covid-restrictions-101618874546400.html>

- 5) Responsibility Frame: “Explained: What we know about the origins of COVID-19.” (May 28, 2021, The Indian Express)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-we-know-about-the-origins-of-covid-19-7333788/>

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What are the main issues in the politics of media representation?

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- 2) What is ‘media capture’? Describe the various ways in which it takes place.

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- 3) Explain framing theory and the different news frames that are used by media. Cite real life examples of news frames from different newspapers.

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8.5 SUMMARY

Let us review what we have learnt in this unit.

- The media misrepresents several groups by depicting them through stereotypical images.
- Women continue to be underrepresented in the media. Moreover, they are usually shown in domestic roles and are appreciated for looking young, and attractive. Men’s views of what it means to be a man and manhood are also constructed by the media. The “hypermasculine ideal”

of aggression, toughness, callous sexual attitudes towards women and lack of emotional expressiveness are frequently seen in media.

- Several marginalized caste groups are either ignored or reported through the eyes of the privileged and upper castes in Indian media. However, new media such as social media platforms, online forums, and websites are being used by the marginalized castes to transform such images.
- Studies of portrayals of African Americans on American television show that historically they were given only a small range of roles, often negative and were shown as aggressive or dangerous. However, after the 1980s their representation in TV increased but they are still not depicted in major roles or in dramas and shown more in comic roles.
- The majority of media content is geared toward young people, whereas the elderly and their concerns are mostly ignored. Cultural elements have a significant part in these depictions. In Indian media, older adults are shown in a more positive light, and they are frequently depicted as active, joyful, and healthy.
- In the media, characters with mental illnesses are usually depicted as significantly more violent than their real-life counterparts, weak, feeble, or otherwise incapable of managing their own lives.
- Clark (1969) suggested that media depictions of minority, especially on television, go through four stages which include 'non-recognition', 'ridicule', 'regulation' and 'respect'.
- Cultivation, media priming, and social cognitive theory are three popular theories that look at how stereotyped content in the media affects viewers' attitudes and behaviours.
- Media capture refers to a threat to the freedom of press wherein media are subtly controlled by governments or by vested interests networked with politics.
- Framing involves making subtle changes in the content so that it promotes a particular perspective of the event. This in turn moulds the attitudes and opinions of the target audience. Several researchers have identified important frames in the news that influence the public's interpretation of news.

8.6 KEYWORDS

Ageism This refers to the prejudice against individuals on the basis of their age especially prejudice towards the elderly.

Episodic vs. Thematic News Frames Episodic news frames focus on an individual and a specific event, while thematic frames focus on social issues.

Hegemonic Masculinity. This is a concept given in Connell's theory which recognizes that there are multiple masculinities across different contexts and that some of the masculinities become culturally dominant while other masculinities become subordinated. The men who perform the culturally dominant masculinities are idealized and are accorded high social status and control in that culture.

Hypermasculine Ideal This is an exaggerated representation of hegemonic masculinity that overemphasizes ideals such as aggression, toughness, callous sexual attitudes towards women and lack of emotional expressiveness.

Stereotype Threat This occurs when members of a stereotyped group underperform to conform to the negative stereotypes because they fear that they will be judged by them.

Stereotypes A stereotype is a generalized belief of a social category that often has both positive or negative attributes about the members of the group.

8.7 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Which of the following method is used for examining media stereotypes?
 - a) Surveys
 - b) Field experiments
 - c) Content analysis studies
 - d) Simulated studies
- 2) Which of the following holds that long-term exposure to television affects how the viewers construct the world so that it looks similar to what is portrayed on television?
 - a) Agenda setting
 - b) Constructionism
 - c) Cultivation
 - d) Gatekeeping
- 3) Research on media stereotypes shows which of the following?
 - a) Men outnumber women in media representations
 - b) Women appear to have limited number of occupational roles
 - c) Male characters are more likely to be shown in leadership roles
 - d) All of the above
- 4) Stories that tug at the viewers' heartstrings contain which frame?
 - a) Human interest
 - b) Economic frame

- c) Morality
- d) Conflict
- 5) Are gender stereotypes more negatively portrayed for females as compared to males? Discuss citing suitable research.
- 6) How do stereotypes portrayed in media effect a viewers' attitudes and behaviours?
- 7) What is meant by 'politics in media representation'?
- 8) Are the media portrayals always fair and unbiased? If no, then why?
- 9) Distinguish between episodic and thematic frames. Give examples for each from the current news.
- 10) Discuss how the new media is being used by several marginalized groups to change their stereotypes depicted in the media.

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8.9 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

**Stereotyping in
Media: Gender,
Politics and
Ethnicity**

- Indian ads further gender stereotypes, shows study - The Hindu
- (444) Media Representation | Media in Minutes | Episode 7 - YouTube
- Media Policy in India: A Political Shop | CMDS (ceu.edu)
- What Exactly is Media Representation Anyway? - Arab Film and Media Institute (AFMI) (arabfilminstitute.org)

Answers to Review Questions (1 - 4)

(1) c (2) c (3) d (4) a



UNIT 9 MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF CRIME*

Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Relationship between Crime and Media
 - 9.1.1 Crime Representations in Media
 - 9.1.2 Crime in Media as A Social Construction
 - 9.1.3 Reasons for Increase in Crime-Based Content
 - 9.1.4 Concerns with Crime Media
- 9.2 Cybercrime
 - 9.2.1 Classification of Cyber Crime
 - 9.2.2 Motives behind Cybercrime
 - 9.2.3 Target Group
 - 9.2.4 Characteristics of An Offender
 - 9.2.5 Cybercrime in India
 - 9.2.6 Factors Affecting Cybercrime and Cybersecurity
 - 9.2.7 Cyber Law
 - 9.2.8 Preventing Cybercrime
- 9.3 Media Violence Effects and Violent Crime
 - 9.3.1 Theories of Media Violence
 - 9.3.2 Strategies to Reduce Violence Caused by Media
- 9.4 Summary
- 9.5 Keywords
- 9.6 Review Questions
- 9.7 References and Suggested Reading
- 9.8 References for Images
- 9.9 Additional Online Resources

Learning objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- describe how crime is represented in media;
- know what is cybercrime and its types;

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- develop an awareness of the cyber laws in India; and
- relate media violence with crime.

9.0 INTRODUCTION

A social problem that knows no borders, national or international is crime. It is a cause of concern for governments across the world because it not just effects the victim or the target of crime but also affects the entire nation socially, economically and psychologically. The National Crime Records Bureau of India (2019) reports 51,6,172 cognizable crimes comprising 32,25,701 Indian Penal Code Crimes and 19,30,471 Special & Local Laws Crime. A 1.6 percent increase in registration of cases from 2018 was observed with 28,918 murders; 1,05,037 cases of kidnapping and abduction; 4,05,861 crimes against women; 1,48,185 crimes against children, 27,696 of crime against senior citizens and the list goes on. For all possible sections of the population, crime has shown a rising trend only.

A powerful tool that is omnipresent and impacts not just the economy but also the psyche of the people is mass media of communication. Broadcast Audience Research Council, (BARC) India revealed that TV viewership grew by 9% in India in 2020. Non-Prime Time (NPT) Viewership for General Entertainment Channels (GEC), News and Kids, grew by 16%, 26% and 31% respectively in 2020 compared to 2019 (TV viewership in India grew by 9% in 2020: BARC, 2021).

So, let us now explore the relationship between crime and media. This Unit will also focus on cybercrimes and cyber laws of India. Finally, we will discuss media violence and ways to reduce violence caused by media.

9.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRIME AND MEDIA

Media has become the defining characteristic of our contemporary social lives. It plays a key role in presenting us the knowledge of crime in terms of the statistics related to crime, type of crimes prevalent, people at risk and appropriate responses since we lack personal experience in this domain usually. Hence, it becomes important to critically explore the representations created by media forms like television, newspapers, magazines, radio, internet, mobile phones, satellite cable and digital television. Media representations of crime may be repulsive for some while attractive to others, may be disturbing or exciting while frightening or evoking anger in others (Greer, 2009).

9.1.1 Crime Representations in Media

- **Crime news-** It is a consequence of a complicated amalgamation of selection, processing and prioritizing processes that emerge through the

conversations between journalists, editors, their working conditions, the wider environment and news sources like police, politicians, victim organisations or interested parties. Since crime reporting is expensive and demands effort, the commercial interests of the parties involved like the news channels or newspaper editors want to maximise the efficiency and cost effectiveness. In the process, the authenticity of the crime material gets compromised. Recent times have seen very few events, criminal or otherwise, as worthy of media attention. For instance, interpersonal crimes of sex and violence are presented more dramatically than property and white-collar offences. Crimes become more “worthy” if they involve famous celebrities or notable people (Rojek, 2001). In their presentation being visually and linguistically charged, it invokes emotions of empathy, disdain or shock personally (Greer, 2009). For instance, the availability of an image or a video footage of the crime decides whether it will be broadcasted or dropped, giving the crime victim or the offender an iconic status. With the newspaper having a limited arena or readership and a distance from the reader, the television or other digital platforms makes the crime much closer to the consumer. This also is responsible for influencing the content and nature of crime news reporting (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007).

- **Crime dramas-** Crime is believed to be a significant and extremely common source of entertainment in the media with the popularity of crime and justice related entertainment knowing no bounds (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011). Entertainment crime media is a form of escapism and the television industry especially glorifies impossible crimes, fights and adventures by people with extraordinary abilities. New media technologies in addition have made crime content accessible at the click of a button. Unlimited internet and electronic gadgets becoming increasingly affordable now makes crime entertainment content being viewed in remote corners of the world. Many movies and television series across the world have revolved around the theme of police, detectives, heist, and gangster stories. Even the love stories especially in the Hindi film industry glorify the “don”. By not just taking mainstream actors but also by justifying the actions of the protagonist who is committing the crime, they try to evoke the emotion of sympathy, sadness and pity for the criminal. Whether it be Hindi movies like *Dhoom*, *Gangster*, *Once upon a time in Mumbai* or *Gangs of Wasseyapur* the popularity of these movies can be easily gauged from their box office returns in hundreds of crores. Even if one looks at the West, the most trending and awaited TV series on a popular OTT platform is *Money Heist*, a bank robbery-based drama that has become a worldwide phenomenon amongst youngsters.

9.1.2 Crime in Media as a Social Construction

Media constructs the reality and articulates dominant values of the society to public. The concept of media hegemony or media bias by Gramsci (1971) refers to the dominance of a certain way of life and how it is diffused through the public. Media is believed to privilege the ideologies of the powerful

sectors like those in authority and influential positions as well as major capitalist economic interests (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994).

Crime in media gets represented socially through:

- bureaucratic decisions that determine which events to report and how to report them. Thus, no news is “value free” (Jeffres, 1986)
- viewers constructing their own reality in the way they understand and interpret the news (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004)

9.1.3 Reasons for Increase in Crime-Based Content

The major reasons behind there being a remarkable increase in crime-based content in the media includes:

- Entertainment crime media is a form of escapism and the television industry especially glorifies impossible crimes, fights and adventure by people with extraordinary abilities (Surette & Gardiner-Bess, 2014)
- Increase in voyeurism and entertainment consciousness of audiences with rise in visual, intrusive and technologically capable media (Surette & Otto, 2002)
- Increase in the number of surveillance cameras showing live crimes
- Crime related content available instantly and globally
- More individualised television viewing experience
- Television being a shared arena and requiring less specialised skill for viewers to decode events
- Reproduction of dominant political ideology
- Various organizational pressures

9.1.4 Concerns with Crime Media

Apart from the awareness that media generate by reporting crimes and putting the pressure on the administrative system to tackle it, it raises many concerns as well, since the accessibility has become easier through internet. The concerns include:

- Impact on jurors through the media trials
- Rise of fear of crime in consumers
- Creation of an image of degraded view of society
- Stimulating crime through ideas than just reporting it
- Availability of options to record content is available such that it can be viewed subsequently as well as repeatedly as per one’s discretion

- Impact on vulnerable communities like women, people with mental illness and minorities
- Portrayal of police, often in a negative manner
- Stereotyping in terms of images of an “ideal victim” as helpless and innocent while the “ideal criminal” as lacking essential human qualities
- Distortion of public opinion
- Real life violence as a consequence of media representations of violence

Check Your Progress 1

1) How is crime represented in media?

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2) What are the probable reasons for increasing crime-based content in media?

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9.2 CYBERCRIME

In the times of print media, the circulation of a crime committed was slow. But with the advancement of technology, it has become easier to trigger a crime in one country with a crime committed in another country. Digital interactive media through internet and electronic games has been an addition to the traditional print, sound and visual media.

Sussman and Heuston (1995) (in Sarmah, Sarmah, & Baruah, 2017) were the first to propose the term “cybercrime” with it being a collection of acts or conducts. Also called cyber-dependent crimes, they are offences that can only be carried out with the help of a computer/ laptop, computer network or other forms of information communications technology. It includes spreading viruses or malware, hacking and distributed denial of service attacks (UN manual on prevention and control of computer related crime, 1995). Some definitions of cyber crime also include copyright infringement (Krone, 2005) as well as child pornography with cyber stalking (Zeviar- Geese, 1997). Hence, the computer or device can be the agent, facilitator or target of crime (Gordon & Ford, 2006). The uniqueness about the cyber crime is that it does not require the victim and offender to come into direct contact. They operate from miles away, in countries where cyber crime laws may be weak or non-existent, that reduces chances of detection and persecution (Sarmah, Sarmah, & Baruah, 2017).

The digital transformation of televisions has had some transforming effects in producing and distributing context of the industry with respect to the genre, aesthetics, technique and content in the context of the narrative as well as with regards to social, cultural and ideological dimensions in the context of the audience (Deniz, 2021). Also, with the use of e-commerce websites like *Amazon* and *Flipkart*, rampant use of food delivery apps like *Swiggy* and *Zomato* and India getting digitalised first after the demonetisation in 2016 and then COVID-19 in 2020, our bank accounts, card numbers are easily on the networks. The narrowed customised searches that are suggested to us by one search that we might have done in the past means how we are easily at the mercy of technology!

Cybercrime in the present day and age has become more novel because of the commercially risky narrative created by the digital content that creates public support for the people committing illegal acts. An internet user may download a virus if they believe the email has come from a known source or a respected organisation. Some malicious files appear to be known products that tricks the users to open them. An offender may also call people and pretend to be an IT support person, obtain passwords and OTPs leading to money frauds. Cybercrime may occur through illegal intrusion into computer networks like hacking. It is an unauthorised use of or access into computer or network resources done to gather personal data and deface websites. This occurs through the spam or junk mails that are sent to many recipients around the world. It may also happen through disruption or downgrading of computer functionality and network space like malwares. Malwares are malicious softwares that spread between computer and disrupts their operations (Kirwan & Power, 2012). It may delete files, cause the system to crash and result in stealing of personal data. It could exist in the form of viruses, worms, Trojans and spywares that come in the form of adwares.

Cybercrime has evolved over time in many ways as represented in Figure 9.1

Years	Types of Attacks
1997	Cyber crimes and viruses initiated, that includes Morris Code Worm and other.
2004	Malicious code, Torjan, Advanced worm etc.
2007	Identifying theif, Phishing etc.
2010	DNS Attack, Rise of Botnets, SQL attacks etc.
2013	Social Engineering DOS Attack, BotNets, Malicious Emalis, Ransomware attack etc.
Present	Banking Malware, Keylogger, Bitcoin wallet, Phone hijacking, Anroid hack, Cyber warfare etc.

Figure 9.1 The evolution of cybercrime in recent years

9.2.1 Classification of Cyber Crime

According to Sarmah, Sarmah, and Baruah (2017), cybercrime can occur in multiple forms that include:

- 1) **Cybercrime against an individual-** committed by cyber criminals against a person like,
 - Email spoofing- forging an email header wherein the message appears as if received from a source other than the actual source which appears to be known or legitimate
 - Spamming- junk email or mass message that reaches through spam bots which crawl the internet in search of email addresses
 - Cyber defamation- harms the reputation of the person in the eyes of others through cyber space
 - Internet relay chat- rooms in which many people worldwide chat together and discuss techniques to hack, hold meetings or where paedophiles allure small children. They become places for extortions, sexual harassment and threats.
 - Phishing- attackers gain login or account information by pretending to be reputable individuals or IT support
- 2) **Cybercrime against property-** includes vandalism of computers as well as intellectual crimes of copyright, patents and trademark. They include,
 - Software piracy- unauthorised copying
 - Copyright infringement- use of copyright materials like music, software or text
 - Trademark infringement- unauthorised use of service mark or trademark
- 3) **Cyber crime against organisation** they include,
 - Unauthorised changing or deleting data
 - Unauthorised reading or copying confidential information
 - Attacking the servers, overwhelming the victim's resources to make it difficult for them to use it
 - Many emails are sent to an email address to flood the mailbox called email bombing
 - Attacking the online database to seize customer information like bank and credit card details called *salami attack*. The hacker draws

small amounts of money over time which goes undetected or for which no complaint is filed

4) Cyber crime against society- it includes

- Forgery- making false document, signature, currency or revenue stamp
- Web jacking- a fake website is created which when clicked on leads to victim to clicking another link and getting redirected to the fake page which buys time to get access and control over the victim's system.

9.2.2 Motives Behind Cybercrimes

People committing cybercrime could be motivated by different reasons like:

- personal profit or financial gain like accessing bank accounts
- form of protest or criminal damage like website defacement
- to satisfy intellectual curiosity
- for revenge
- establishing respect and power amongst online communities
- to counter boredom

9.2.3 Target Group

The people who are usually the victims of cybercrime are:

- younger people and men who use internet
- mobile phone and smartphone users
- users of public wi-fi system

9.2.4 Characteristics of an Offender

The people committing cybercrime have also been profiled by many researchers. Rogers (2000) concludes that these people could be:

- Script kiddies- people with limited skills and experience who depend on tools developed by others
- Cyber punks- people who have the intention to attack and vandalise
- Internals- people who are insiders and have a privileged access or who are dissatisfied employees
- Coders- who are very skilled in computer programming
- Old guard hackers- who do not have a criminal intent and skills but want to find system vulnerabilities
- Professional criminals
- Cyber terrorists

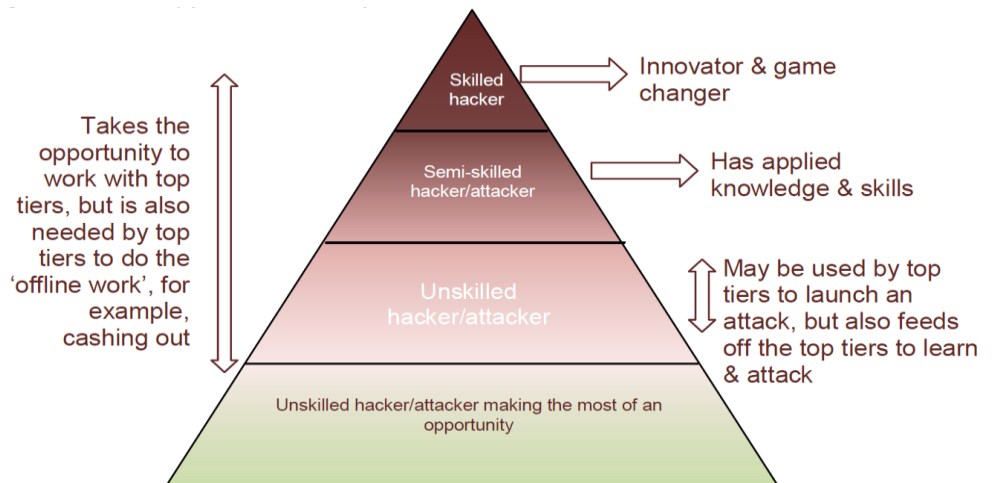


Figure 9.2 Levels of skills of a cyber attacker (Holt, 2013)

9.2.5 Cybercrime in India

Case Vignette

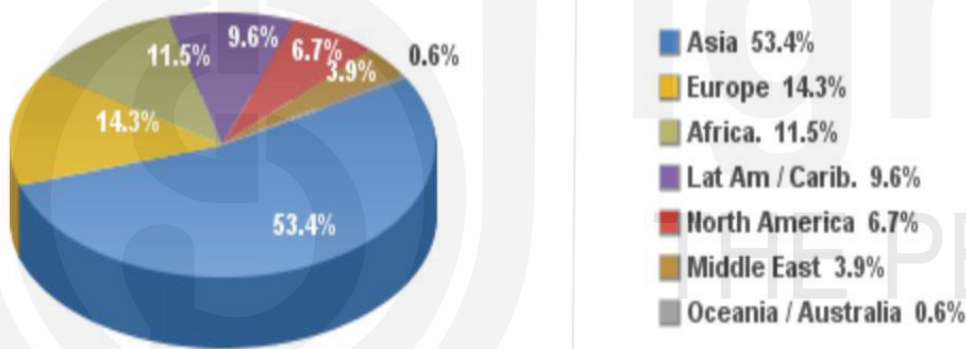
A hacker by the name Srikrishna hacked the portal of centre for e-governance and funds amounting Rs10.5 crore and Rs 1.05 crore was diverted to the bank accounts under the name of an NGO Uday Grama Vikash Sanstha, Nagpur and proprietorship Nimmi Enterprises, Bulanshahr, UP. Later the Nagpur NGO "layered" the funds into the bank accounts of various vendors and traders in the guise of business transactions without actual purchase or sale of goods by the NGO. Nimmi Enterprises as well layered the funds into the bank accounts of various vendors and persons in the guise of business transactions and

As per the NCRB (2019), a total of 44,546 cases were registered under Cyber Crimes, showing a huge increase of 63.5% in registration in 2019 compared to 2018 (27,248 cases). Crime rate under this category increased from 2.0 in 2018 to 3.3 in 2019. During 2019, 60.4% of cyber-crime cases registered were for the motive of fraud (26,891 out of 44,546 cases) followed by sexual exploitation with 5.1% (2,266 cases) and causing disrepute with 4.2% (1,874 cases). KPMG in its Cybercrime Survey Report (2014), states that 89% Indian organisations have considered cybercrime as a "major threat". The Norton Cybercrime Report (2011) reported 30 million Indians having been victims of cybercrime, costing the Indian economy \$7.6 billion a year. It is estimated that 10% cybercrimes reported in India out of which only 2% are actually registered. The conviction rate was about 2% only (Kshetri, 2013).

With the digitalisation of India, the aim is to transform the society into the information society where the internet would be used to conduct sensitive transactions and store data on the cloud. For instance, the very ambitious Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has been a project that requires resident to have biometric IDs so as to obtain government benefits.

The 12-digit aadhaar number requiring collection of 10 fingerprints, iris scans, name, date of birth, address will be hosted in the e-Governance cloud platform. Many scholars have discussed how this can make India more prone to cybercrimes in the coming future. Despite such concerns and while the world seems to be accepting the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (effective from 1st July, 2004), the first international multilateral treaty that encourages international cooperation to deal with cyber crimes by harmonising the national laws by a criminal policy across border, India is yet to sign it (Iqbal & Beigh, 2017). With the nuclearisation of Indian families, the elderly are left by themselves and hence are more vulnerable to fraud in cyber space (Chokkanathan, Natarajan and Mohanty, 2011). The life savings crucial for medical treatment for twilight years of one's life can impact them immensely.

Internet Users Distribution in the World - 2021



Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

Basis: 5,168,780,607 Internet users in March 31, 2021

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9.2.6 Factors Affecting Cybercrime and Cybersecurity

While parents may experience pride in showing how their toddlers can operate mobiles and laptops by themselves, this is a predecessor to addiction for gadgets in the future. The gadgets are increasingly more available to adolescents now and are also prone to misuse. This could give rise to cyber crime issues too (Padmavathy, 2018). According to Kshetri (2016), cybercrime and security issues especially in developing economies like India, can be explained with the help of the following factors:

- **Economic and social characteristics of a developing economy-** low levels of income and education lead to poor human development, high unemployment, high income inequality and weak democratic institutions.
- **Political and economic institutions-** Government lacks technological sophistication, law enforcement manpower and accurate criminal database.

- **Culture or informal institutions-** cybercrime is not considered a stigma. There is lack of guilt, remorse and an ethical sense among cybercriminals. Call centres employees consider it disrespectful to undergo security checks. Password sharing is a very common practice.
- **Human capital-** lack of cybersecurity related manpower and cybersecurity orientation of Internet users; low demand of cyber specialists and over reliance on basic security systems like anti virus softwares.
- **Technology-** less acceptance of cyber security related technology; underdeveloped cybersecurity system; low-cost technology; lack of indigenous technology and patents related to cyber security; computers using crime prone technologies and low investment in Research and Development.

9.2.7 Cyber law

The Information Technology Act of India (2000) deals with digital crimes or cybercrimes and e-commerce. Based on the UN Model Law on Electronic Commerce, 1996 (UNCITRAL Model), it includes:

- Email considered as valid and legal form of communication
- Legal validity of digital signatures
- Issue of digital certificates to new businesses and companies
- Allows government to issue notices on internet through e-governance
- Communication between companies or between companies and government can be done through internet
- Cyber crime of any kind is punishable

9.2.8 Preventing Cybercrime

While the cyber law exists, one must be cautious of the frauds happening around through technology and our increasing dependence on it. Hence, the ways to prevent oneself from falling victim to a cybercrime as per Raskar and Pol (2019) can be considered useful. They are:

- Updating the computers regularly
- Setting strong passwords
- Not using the same password for every service used online
- Changing passwords regularly
- Protecting the computer with security software
- Being careful in sharing personal information online
- Being cautious of any strange emails
- Not responding to email messages asking for personal information
- Paying attention to privacy policies on websites

- Guarding one's email address
- Reviewing bank and credit card statements regularly
- Supervised use of electronic gadgets with adolescents
- Ensuring informed use of social media and awareness of basic security of internet as well as gadgets especially in children and adolescents

Check Your Progress 2

1) Define cybercrime.

.....

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.....

2) List the characteristics of an offender of cybercrime.

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9.3 MEDIA VIOLENCE EFFECTS AND VIOLENT CRIME

Colorado mass shooting incidence on 20 July 2012 that happened during the screening of the movie *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises* is an unforgettable incidence. The convict James E. Holmes came in wearing a ballistics helmet, bulletproof vest, bulletproof leggings, a gas mask and gloves. He detonated multiple smoke bombs before shooting the unsuspecting crowd of hundreds of attendees. 10 died at the scene, while 2 died at local hospitals. 70 were injured. Within a few minutes after the incidence, Holmes was arrested. He stated that he was 'The Joker', the villain in the second instalment of the "Batman" movie trilogy, "The Dark Knight." Investigations found large quantities of ammunition at his home (Jacobo, 2017). In a similar case reported in the US state of Maryland, a 28-year-old male threatened to shoot a former employer while comparing himself to the "Joker" when police took him into custody (Gorman 2012). Inspired by the Hindi movie *Special 26*, a gang of 5 people disguised themselves as CBI officials and robbed Rs 36 lakh, jewellery and foreign currency from a doctor's house in Northwest Delhi (27 March, 2021).

There have been increasing concerns regarding media in the form of comic books, music, television and movies leading to rebellion, violence and moral degradation (Ferguson, 2009). With the popularity of video games like PUBG and other such kinds along with internet, further evidence of

Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment discussion for social learning-based influence on aggression may get reinforced.

9.3.1 Theories of Media Violence

Since the mechanism by which media influences people to act aggressively brings in human cognitive processes within it, it is important to understand how theorists have understood the relationship between media and violence. The following approaches help provide some perspective:

- **Social learning approaches-** this theory proposes that individuals imitate what they observe. For instance, the Social Learning Model of Aggression (Bandura, 1977), the General Aggression Model (Bushman & Anderson, 2002) talk about the people developing violent media cognitive scripts as a result of watching violent media. So, in real life settings, they would tend to respond with hostility, is a proposition made by these theories.
- **Catharsis models-** aggression according to these models is believed to be a biological drive requiring manifestation (Lorenz, 1963). Media violence hence provides an outlet for releasing these aggressive drives. According to this model then, people consuming violent media should be expected to become less aggressive which is definitely a difficult proposition to accept.
- **Catalyst model-** since the research evidence linking media violence to violent crime is unclear, Ferguson et al., (2008) proposed that there is an interaction between biological and external forces of aggression. Genetics along with physical abuse may for instance result in an antisocial personality. Environmental stressors are basically catalysts for violence as they do not cause but stimulate specific violent acts in an individual who is already predisposed to violent behaviour.

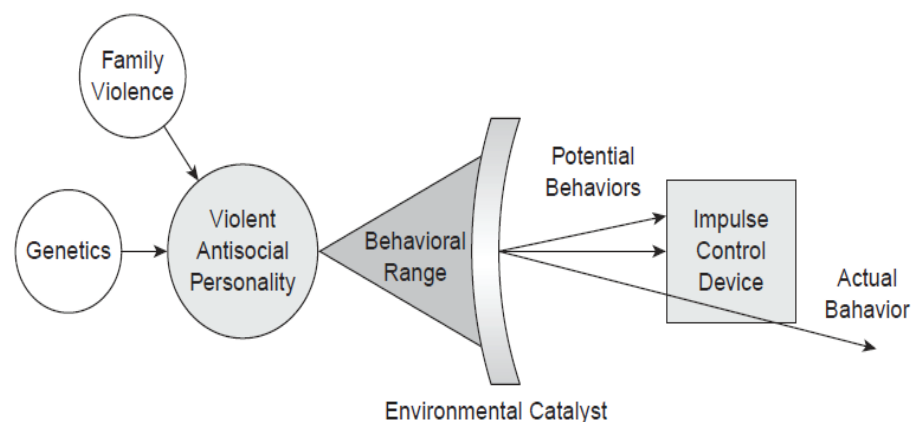


Figure 9.3 Catalyst model of violence (Ferguson et al., 2008)

On the other hand, media violence is neither a cause nor a stimulant but is actually a stylistic catalyst since individuals who decide to act aggressively

may sometimes do so in a way similar to what they have seen in media. In the absence of media influence, these individuals would still act violently but in a slightly different way.

9.3.2 Strategies to Reduce Violence Caused by Media

It is essential to recognise that media does have a significant impact on the thought processes and behaviours of the individuals. Our increasing reliance on media for our day-to-day life purposes will not let us distant ourselves from the media. A responsible media is what is required along with individual, familial and social efforts in monitoring and regulating aggressive behaviour. Some of the measures include:

- Public debate and talks between politicians, producers and teachers.
- Development of professional codes of conduct and self-discipline for producers.
- Innovative forms of media education to create competent and critical media users.

Media has become an integral part of the lives of people across the lifespan. While India was already moving towards the smartphone age, COVID-19 accelerated the pace by online teaching- learning and work-from-home conditions. With electronic devices in the hands of the youngest of the children to the oldest of the individual, we are bound to scroll through and access content that was earlier not so easily available. With the OTT platforms surpassing the confines of the television, staying at home has resulted in consuming or “bingeing” upon one series after another. Along with the social learning caused due to media exposure; the socio-economic-political scenario of our country has an equal role to play. Unemployment, poverty, aspirations and jealousy are few of the many factors that are resulting in frustration, displacement of aggression and violence resulting in crime in various forms including cybercrime.

It is important the society takes up the responsibility of the way technological advancement is resulting in detrimental effects on human behaviour and work towards a critical reception available in visual and audio-visual content.

Check Your Progress 3

1) How does catharsis model explain media violence?

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.....

2) Suggest measures to reduce violence caused by media.

.....
.....

9.4 SUMMARY

Let us review what we have learnt in this unit.

- Crime is a social problem that has a strong relationship with media. Thus, it becomes important to critically explore the representations created by media forms like television, newspapers, magazines, radio, internet, mobile phones, satellite, cable and digital television.
- Crime representation in media is through crime news and crime dramas. Crime in media is socially constructed through bureaucratic decisions of 'what' to report and 'how' to report. The viewers also construct their own reality in the way they understand and interpret it.
- Over the period of time, crime-based content in media has increased and now with ease in accessibility through internet, it has raised major concerns.
- With the advent of technology, offences are being carried out with the help of computer, laptop, and other devices. This is known as cybercrime. Cybercrime can be against an individual, organisation, society, or property. In India, the rate of cybercrime has increased by 63.5%.
- In a developing country like India, various reasons like economic, social, cultural, etc have been forwarded for the rise in cybercrimes. The Information Technology Act of India (2000) deals with the cybercrimes.
- Different theories like social learning approaches, catharsis model, and catalyst model have been posited to explain the relationship between media and violence.
- It is important for the media to play a responsible role in reducing violence caused by media.

9.5 KEYWORDS

Copyright Infringement A form of cybercrime involving use of copyright materials like music, software or text

Cybercrime Offences that can only be carried out with the help of a computer/ laptop, computer network or other forms of information communications technology

Cyber Punks People who commit cybercrime who have the intention to attack and vandalise

Email Spoofing A form of cybercrime involving forging of an email header wherein the message appears as if received from a source other than the actual source which appears to be known or legitimate

Internals People who commit cybercrime and are insiders having a privileged access or who are dissatisfied employees

OTT It stands for “Over The Top” which is a means of providing television and film content over the internet at the request and to suit the requirements of the individual consumer. It implies that a content provider is going over the top of existing internet services

Phishing A form of cybercrime wherein attackers gain login or account information by pretending to be reputable individuals or IT support

Web Jacking A form of cybercrime involving creation of a fake website which when clicked on leads to victim to clicking another link and getting redirected to the fake page which buys time to get access and control over the victim’s system

Script Kiddies People who commit cybercrime having limited skills and experience who depend on tools developed by others

9.6 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Crime representations in the media occur through
 - a) Crime news and crime dramas
 - b) Reality TV shows
 - c) Crime Patrol
 - d) Movies
- 2) _____ decisions determine the nature of reporting of events on media channels.
 - a) Internal
 - b) Bureaucratic
 - c) Management
 - d) Governmental
- 3) The phenomenon of declaring the accused as a convict even before the Court had given its judgment through the widespread coverage of the guilt of the accused and imposing a certain perception about him, regardless of any of the verdict given by the court of law is called:
 - a) Public trial
 - b) Newspaper based trial
 - c) Media trial
 - d) None of the above
- 4) The term “cybercrime” was proposed by:
 - a) Sussman & Heuston
 - b) Sarmah, Sarmah, and Baruah
 - c) Ferguson

- d) Holt
- 5) Cyber defamation is a type of cybercrime against
 - a) Individual
 - b) Property
 - c) Organisation
 - d) Society
- 6) Forgery is a form of cybercrime against
 - a) Individuals
 - b) Property
 - c) Organisation
 - d) Society
- 7) The international multilateral treaty that encourages international cooperation to deal with cyber crimes by harmonising the national laws by a criminal policy across border not yet signed by India is
 - a) US Convention on Cybercrime
 - b) Budapest Convention on Cybercrime
 - c) UN Convention on Cybercrime
 - d) Indian Convention on Cybercrime
- 8) Indian law also includes an Act to deal with digital crimes. This is called the:
 - a) Technology Act
 - b) Computer Act
 - c) Information Technology Act of India
 - d) UN Model Law on Electronic Commerce
- 9) General Aggression Model discusses the role of _____ scripts that are a consequence of watching violent media
 - a) Behavioural
 - b) Aggressive
 - c) Unconscious
 - d) Cognitive
- 10) Catalyst model proposes that media is neither a cause or a stimulant but a _____ catalyst that provides a way for individuals to act violently
 - a) Enhancing
 - b) Potential
 - c) Stylistic
 - d) None of the above

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9.9 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- (11) The human face of cybercrime. Identifying targets, victims, and their coping mechanisms | Request PDF (researchgate.net)
- (11) (PDF) Media made criminality: The representation of crime in the mass media (researchgate.net)
- rios_mediaeffectscime-style.pdf (harvard.edu)

Answers to Review Questions (1-10)

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (c) 4. (a) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (c) 9. (d) 10. (c)

UNIT 10 MEDIA AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*

Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Media Use in Different Age Groups
- 10.2 Negative influence of Media on Human Development
 - 10.2.1 Engagement in Risky Behaviour
 - 10.2.2 Media and its link to Mental Health of People
 - 10.2.3 Sedentary Behaviour and impact on Sleep
 - 10.2.4 Bullying and Suicide
 - 10.2.5 Media Violence
- 10.3 Positive Influence of Media on human development
 - 10.2.1 Support and Sense of Belongingness
 - 10.2.2 Media and Well Being
- 10.4 Summary
- 10.5 Keywords
- 10.6 Review Questions
- 10.7 References and Suggested Reading
- 10.8 Additional Online Resources

Learning Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the role media plays during different developmental phases,
- elucidate the negative impact of media on human development,
- explain the relation between social media and mental health issues,
- discuss the positive side of media on human development,
- explain the relationship between social media use and quality of life, self-development, and body image, and
- identify the role of parents, educators and school in promoting media literacy

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Media landscape has changed dramatically over the past few decades. The explosive growth of Internet, media platforms and social media applications

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has given rise to a new digital media culture. It is an empowering platform and seems to play an important role in impacting our culture, economy and our overall view of the world. Our engagement with various forms of social media has increased overtime which comes with both benefits and risks for human growth and development. The social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc. are different from traditional media, such as newspaper, radio, books and television. Even though traditional and non-traditional platforms are not absolutely distinct, for instance, newspaper and TV channels have their accounts on social media where they try to connect with the masses by establishing a conversation, sharing their opinion, asking for others' opinion, as well as building a relationship with people. But an important thing to note here would be that different forms of social media have different points of focus, for example, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and, other such platforms focus on enhanced communication and social connection by offering multiple daily opportunities to connect with friends, colleagues, and people with shared interests. Anyone on social media platform can publish and access information easily and they can produce, share their content on their individual platform.

10.1 MEDIA USE IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

In this Unit, the focus will be on effect of media across various age-groups, and its positive and negative influence on human development.

Media is an empowering platform and plays an important role in our development as individuals, as a culture, as an economy and our overall view of the world. Nonetheless, the content on media platforms has evolved radically which also raises certain concerns. Development never happens in isolation, whether it is macro or micro in nature, thus development in media is also bidirectional. Due to changes in technology and media, human life has become more complex and fast-paced than earlier and this has led researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to investigate how these changes may be influencing human development. Studies mention that it is negatively impacting the trust and comfort in each other and is turning us into inconsiderate, selfish and antisocial people by switching the physical support and emotional needs we once gained from each other. Excessive exposure to media has resulted in increased hostility, aggression and decreased feelings of empathy towards others (Greitemeyer, 2011).

In the last few years, number of users and the time spent on media has increased, especially in the case of children. Box 10.1 gives an overview of the media platforms used by children. Nasir and colleagues (2018) mentioned that in India, about 243 million people are actively using social media and the numbers are growing steadily. Anderson and Jiang (2019) mentioned that Facebook and YouTube dominated the social media landscape. Most of the teens (13 to 17 years) mentioned using Facebook than YouTube, Instagram

and Snapchat, according to Pew Research Centre survey (conducted Jan. 8 to Feb. 7, 2019), regardless of their demographic characteristics. These popular platforms (Facebook and YouTube) are still the most widely consumed media application by people in United States (Auxier and Anderson, 2021).

Box 10.1 Media Lives Across Childhood

Children's use and interaction with media devices and services, split by age.

Children's interaction with media devices:

Most of the children between the **age group of 3-4** years, watch television for almost 14 hours a week. The time spent on **Television is decreasing** but kids between the age group of 3-4 years, watch TV programmes through **over the top television services (Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc.)**. They watch cartoons, prank videos and funny videos on YouTube.

Most of the children **aged 5-15 years** use a mobile phone, laptop or a tablet to go online. In addition to OTT, television services, **YouTube is becoming a popular platform** for viewing content. Studies mention that consuming content is becoming a private activity as many children view content on their phone or tablet. TV set appears to be of decreasing importance and its usage is limited to programmes such as sports, live sports channel, World cup, or for other popular channels. The **attitude towards the content** on these platforms was mentioned as age appropriate by the children (**age group 12-15**) as they also watch content which is designed for children of their age, younger children than them, or generally aimed at everyone.

Watching **vloggers on YouTube** is becoming popular among the children of age group **12-15 years**. Most of the children felt inspired by vloggers as felt that it increases their creativity and gives them motivation to try different things.

Facebook is the most preferred social media application and messaging application used by children in the age group of 12-15 years. But in the last few years, there has been a shift in social media platform as **Instagram** is trending among children. Most of them have a social media profile on both the applications. Very few mentioned having a profile on Snapchat.

Research indicates that children (**age group 12-15**) feel **negatively pressured** to look glamorous, beautiful and pretty on social media platform when they post their photos. The negative pressure was felt by girls more than boys. They also use filters to make their face 'look pretty and beautiful' so that the photos can look "picture perfect". The children are aware that most of the content on social media is not real and curated. Some of them felt that there is a need to control the hurtful messages and comments that other people mention online as it lowers an individual's self-esteem and leads to sadness. Lastly, they mentioned that **social media is not all bad, it also has positive effects** as it makes them feel closer to their friends. They feel happy and supported by their friends online when they are having a bad day or time.

The time spent on **online gaming** has increased for children between of 12-15 years by 1.5 hours. Boys (16 hours) were found to spend more time in online gaming than girls (9 hours). It also has a strong social element which provides the user online with a chat feature which increases networking aspect of the platform by messaging other children, even outside of their social networks.

Apart from these, other platforms that are also used by people are Instagram, and LinkedIn (Pew Research Centre, 2021). Very few people in the US mentioned using media applications such as Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp and TikTok. A recent survey by Pew research centre revealed that Instagram (71%) and Snapchat (65%) usage was high among teenagers and young adults and very few participants mentioned using TikTok (Auxier and

Anderson, 2021). But the social media usage of young adults, teens and children is worrisome due to the number of hours it is being consumed by them (i.e., social networking sites, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tumblr) causing mental health issues and various physical problems (Chinapaw et al., 2011). Hruska and Maresova (2020) found that 88% of 18 to 29-year-old individuals used social media platforms/application (compared to 78% to 37% of older age groups) as compared to traditional media, and they spend more time (averaging over 3 hours daily) on social media than older adults.

In the last few years, the number of preadolescents and adolescents using the social media and the various 'over the top' (OTT) television platforms (such as like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video) has amplified. This can potentially impact the cognitive, social and emotional development of the child. Box 10.2 mentions media effects on the cognitive development of children in detail.

Box 10.2 Media and Cognitive Development

The media platforms, including books, radio, movies, television, and digital devices such as tablets, computers, and video games, have both **negative and positive impact on the cognitive development of children**.

The cognitive impact of media such as television use on **infants and toddlers** (children less than 3 years old) is associated with the amount of exposure, the content presented on the video, and the social context of viewing. Usually the impact of media has been found to be negative for children below 2 years of age as they cannot pay overt attention to programs and cannot even comprehend them. The background television or video viewing can distract the children from the age of 12 months to 24 months from their toy play and reduce the quality of language development and the parent-child interactions.

The **parental use and engagement with interactive media** such as television, video devices, and smartphones etc., has also been shown to reduce the quality and quantity of parent-child interaction. This has shown to impact the cognitive skills, language development, and executive functioning of the child.

Both **pre-school and older children** can learn from educational videos on television and other interactive media devices as they have shown to influence child knowledge by impacting their vocabulary, behaviour, and academic knowledge. But, it has also been found that children above the age of 6 years watch entertainment channels which has resulted in displacement of behaviours such as book reading, physical activity, executive functioning, concentration and social interaction. There is also evidence that violent computer games and violent video content can influence antisocial and aggressive behaviour in children. But playing interactive video games have been shown to found positive results such as higher concentration, focus, processing, visual spatial memory and representational skill.

Some recommendation for parents are that they should **limit television exposure** for children before the age of 2 years as television and video content viewing during this age can impact language development, cognitive, social and executive functioning of the child. Additionally, parents should be psycho-educated on the negative impact of media on children. They should also limit their media use in front of children so that this behaviour is not modelled by children. Clinicians mention that parents should avoid heavy media viewing of children as it replaces the reading behaviour.

Source: Anderson, D. R., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2017). Digital screen media and cognitive development. *Pediatrics*, 140(Supplement 2), S57-S61.

A lot of parents use technology incredibly well, feel comfortable, and capable with the programs and venues they find online. But a gap still exists between youth and their parents in terms of knowledge, technical skill and efficiency. Hence, similar to any powerful advancement and innovation in society (such as digital media and social media in the 21st century), there will be both opposing and creative features for the community. The influence of traditional, digital media and social networking sites have had a significant impact on human across lifespan. So, the online lives are an extension of our offline lives and there is also a dark side to media, which should be recognized. The next section discusses the negative impact of media on human development.

10.2 NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

As discussed, the popularity of media applications and social networking sites have increased impulsively during the last few years. It has gained a lot of criticism from scholars due to a variety of reasons. Some of them are being discussed here:

10.2.1. Engagement in Risky Behaviour

There is a need to understand the relationship of media and engagement in risky behaviours among young people as this population has a behavioural manifestation of sensation seeking. Even though in the last few years due to parental monitoring, the risky behaviours, such as excessive alcohol and drug intake has reduced but social media has displaced those behaviours by providing a novel context where it is being expressed now. Subrahmanyam and Colleagues (2006) mentioned that people who are prone to risk taking, use social media more frequently as it is an area to satisfy and express their risk-taking needs. The *social construction model* (Subrahmanyam et al., 2006) mentions that people use, follow and co-construct communities online where they influence and get influenced by other people who align with their development needs, and thus they are driven to them. These platforms satisfy their needs for risky behaviour as they can easily display any behaviour online and get approval and positive feedback from others. They can also seek information about risky behaviours, meet other people and engage in risky behaviours offline.

Another model, *The Facebook influence model* (Moreno & Whitehill, 2014) suggests that social media intensifies peer influence process, which then influences the perception and behaviour of an individual. This mechanism happens as the interaction of the individual with social media users influence their perception over the discussion of similar risk behaviours and opinions. Then they imitate the risk behaviours as they feel reinforced and rewarded by social media networks. Thus, social media use exposes an individual to pro risk-taking behaviour through the content posted by their friends, and other

social media users. Although the risky-content posted online might not be large in numbers but according to this model, content on risky behaviours have better influence, popularity, and power in the social media platforms due to the publicity, widespread availability, and reward system of this content.

Strasburger (2007) proposed “*super peer*” *theory* which explained that media acts as super peer by exerting great amount of influence and pressure on people to engage in risky behaviour which are portrayed by social media as “normal”. Social media strengthens peer influences as opposed to traditional media or offline accounts as they provide reinforcement in the forms of ‘likes’, comments, and wider exposure to networks outside their own friend circle. Hence, rewarding their risky behaviour and intensifying other development predictors of risky behaviour such as vaping, and trick videos etc., which are portrayed by social media as exciting and pleasurable.

Social media platforms also provide anonymity, inconspicuousness, perceived lack of consequences, and lack of monitoring from an adult which makes it easier for individuals to engage in risky behaviour (Vannucci et al., 2020). It is a platform where they can express their views and ideas, facilitate engagement, have the freedom to express their identity, and display aspects of themselves that they would not typically share in the real world. It provides adolescence an opportunity to present their current sense of identity, aspects of identity, and their idealised-self online, which is often engagement in and display of risky behaviours (Eleuteri, Saladino, & Verrastro, 2017).

10.2.2 Media and its link to Mental Health of People

Teenagers and young adults are the most active social media users with 91% using the internet for various social media activities, such as entertainment, networking with others or to gain knowledge (Glazzard & Stones, 2019). Even though social media is extraordinarily popular, but it is still very difficult to understand why people use social media. Researchers have pointed that platforms on social media activate *intrinsic reward system* of the brain which works in the same way as the powerful primary rewards of our body works- for instance, food and sex (Strickland, 2014). Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) highlighted that *the need to belong and a need for self-presentation* also act as a primary motivation to use social media platforms.

Strickland (2014) discussed that people of different age groups use social media for different purposes such as young adults focus on connecting with those already present in their lives, but middle-aged and older generation focus on connecting with people who share similar interest.

The knowledge that young adults and teenagers are such avid users of social media is frightening to comprehend as studies indicate that they are particularly prone to experiencing *depression*. Social media reduces the amount of time spent with family and friends as people prefer using social

media applications rather than face to face interaction, this has reduced communication, enjoyment, and connectedness, along with increasing levels of loneliness and distraction (Twenge, 2019). It has been found that the time spent on social media has a significant impact on levels of anxiety and also has a got a role to play in increasing symptoms of depression. Seeking acceptance and staying connected with friends is an important demand of today which is being fulfilled by social media application. However, the constant engagement demanded by social media creates a factor of self-awareness or self-judgment eventually, that may trigger depression in some people. Thus, people suffer **loneliness and sadness** when they disengage from social media and this leads to *Facebook depression* (Fernández, 2011). This depression is not just limited to Facebook but refers to the impact of social networking sites causing mental health problems. These individuals are at risk for social isolation and sometimes turn to risky Internet websites and blogs for 'help' that may promote advices which may not be suitable such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, aggressive and self-destructive behaviors. Inactive and meaningless browsing on social media has been shown to be particularly harmful to well-being as it is positively correlated to a depressed mood (Seabrook et al., 2016). In addition, individuals who spent more than two hours online per day are considerably more likely to have **suicidal risk factors** (Twenge et al., 2016).

Literature suggests that usage of networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram can increase negative life comparisons since it is a more image driven platform. This leads to unhealthy lifestyle as people compare their life and appearance with other models and influencers in television, social media applications and advertisements impacting their confidence and self-esteem (Seabrook et al., 2016). People also start following unhealthy diet patterns and crash diet to achieve similar perfect body to that of the models in television, TV series, and social media users, causing body image concerns. The constant need to project an unrealistic and unachievable perception of self within the social network is a major cause of depression and anxiety. The social anxiety or stress is associated with trying to project a perfect and ideal self at all times. The stress from constantly trying to project an image of excellence, career, perfect marriage, etc. leads to excessive release of the stress hormone cortisol, causing depression and anxiety. Excessive release of cortisol also damages the digestion process and gastrointestinal tract (gut), which opens the door to an immuno-inflammatory response in the body and brain, leading to depression and anxiety. Additionally, another reason for **stress and anxiety** is the constant alertness for new social media messages, and notifications which also releases the stress hormone cortisol and impacts the instinctive fight and flight responses, which is the same in animals as being continuous alert for predators.

Another reason for mental health issues due to media is the **false perceptions**, where social media reflects the way, we want to be perceived rather than showing the real and honest world of who we actually are. A new medical

term has been created out of this constant connectivity, which is called a ***Phantom vibration syndrome***, defined as perceived vibration from a cell phone that is not vibrating, has been reported to occur with large number of people (Rothberg et al., 2010). It is an indicator of the anxiety that cell phones elicit in those who are obsessed with checking in on their social media and messages. Another study found that younger generations are checking their phone, and social media application after every one hour or fifteen minutes which eventually leads to stress and anxiety when they cannot access their email or social network sites (Seabrook et al., 2016).

Social media, movies, films, Vloggers, Bloggers, and television series etc. promotes putting up a facade that highlights all the fun, excitement and success we seem to enjoy but tells very little about the way people are struggling in their everyday lives. Thus, to fit in the false world of media, humans try to portray perfectly happy and trendy facades because that's what people want the world to see rather than the real picture. People who spent time scrolling through social media, foster ***a sense of discontentment and insecurity***. When we see others achieving more than us, it can lead to low self-esteem and even lack of self-worth as media images, video, movies and online posts ***exposes the falseness of social media***. The growing recognition that media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook etc. depict the unrealistic version of humans giving rise to the debate of false perception vs reality movement. This is a form of online social activism where people post pictures, videos and images of themselves side-by-side, where one picture depicts an ideal 'media' version that is 'perfectly lit' and posed to show their best-self, and another more realistic version with more natural pose (one which depicts the flaws of the person). The comparison shows how camera and body angle, lighting, posturing in a particular way can intensely change perceived weight and appearance. Thus, the movement reminds that it is not okay to compare oneself, as content on media is not always true or is fake at times. It propagates the idea that no one is perfect, and that it is normal to have flaws such as stretch marks, tummy, acne, marks and other so called bodily flaws. Box 10.3 provides more information on the effect of media on body image issues.

Box 10.3 Media and Body Image issues

Technology has made astonishing advances in the past decade but it may become a reason for depression and low self-esteem. It serves as a platform for social comparison due to the idolization of celebrities with perfect bodies and glamorous looks, making people vulnerable to body image issues. Thus, the unrealistic and unattainable portrayals of beauty can lower self-esteem and cause a lot of issues, some of which are being discussed here.

Media is an important factor in causing ***body dissatisfaction*** as individuals are compelled to evaluate themselves by comparing their body image with others. ***Social comparison theory*** explains how media may affect people's perceptions of their body image and their self-esteem. Media shapes beauty ideals by showing certain body sizes as beautiful and desirable. Users scroll through media platforms and look at the images of models and peers whose looks they admire and want to mimic. Teenagers, young adults and children think of these pictures as inspirational, that embody some type of idealized body image. Thus, they are constantly reminded of what they should look like, as they compare themselves with others

in order to gauge their relative standing. When people see models, influencers or friends feel that they are more physically attractive than themselves, it is referred to as an upward appearance comparison. This process can result in body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann and Brown, 2018).

Another complication that arises with poor self-esteem and poor body image is ***eating disorders, abnormal eating, and excessive exercise habits***. High school girls are very much affected by the media and how images in magazines, television, movies and media encourage body dissatisfaction and a desire to lose weight. ***Overexposure to media*** which focuses on weight loss, degrading overweight characters, underweight actresses, and overly muscular actors, are not ideal as they can be to their heightened impressionable. Messages in media especially advertisement that 'if you don't look like this, you are not considered attractive' can eventually lead to feelings of low self-worth, which is proved to be correlated with engaging in abnormal eating patterns. Recent studies mention that for most of the females with body image disturbances, dissatisfaction with their shape stems from a desire to be thinner. The effect of the thin-ideal as portrayed on media platforms leads to negative implications for the self-evaluation and experience of the body for an individual. Three concepts have been found to be especially significant which influences the thin-ideal media on body image, including awareness of the thin ideal, internalization of the thin ideal and perceived pressures to be thin.

Another mechanism which explains how media exposure comes to affect body dissatisfaction and other body-related outcomes is ***objectification theory***. Objectification theory postulates that when people especially women and girls are consistently objectified or valued predominately for their sex appeal and physical appearance, it can result in self-objectification (Bell et al., 2018). This process is a result of women internalising and evaluating themselves with a perspective which can lead to body dissatisfaction and appearance related anxieties. Moreover, studies have indicated that exposure to objectifying content in the media (e.g. television, advertisements, magazines, music videos, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram etc.) leads to self-objectification and negative impacts for body image (Bell et al., 2018). Many popular social media outlets like Instagram are based on image and video driven content, thus adolescents, teenagers, and children who use social media will come across objectifying content that reinforces the importance of bodily appearance. Also, unlike traditional forms of media (e.g. television, music videos, magazines), social media platforms allow users to create their own content and receive reinforcement from others in the form of comments, shares, followers and likes. So, the content they post is for the audience and their liking, therefore the chance it may represent a form of self-objectification increase. It is possible that engaging in photo behaviour on social media platforms including looking at photos and taking and posting selfies, is associated with increase in body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, and other negative appearance-related outcomes.

Source: Opara, I., & Santos, N. (2019). A Conceptual Framework Exploring Social Media, Eating Disorders, and Body Dissatisfaction Among Latina Adolescents. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 41(3), 363-377.

Social media is also causing confusion between the concept of our weak ties (people who might be useful in referring us to a good dentist or helping us find a job) and our strong ties (those we're very close). The digital connection is worrisome as it is difficult for people to make distinction between genuine friends, acquaintances, and friends met online etc. This is leading to blurred boundaries between different relationships that people have with each other. Thus, in the digital socialisation process users are spending more time maintaining relationships with people, which eventually they do not really care about (Abi-Jaoude, 2020). This is ***affecting social relationships*** by allowing for the illusion of companionship without fulfilling the demands of friendship.

Moreover, the constant monitoring of people events and activities on social media can lead to negative relationship outcomes such as online and offline relational and personal life intrusion. There is loss of privacy as the interaction with people and the networking with strangers on social media platforms are visible to other followers/people on social media, which eventually impacts personal confidentiality. Moreover, excessive use of social media leads to negative interpersonal competency as it becomes difficult to initiate offline relationships. This means that the more a person uses social media, the tougher it is for them to initiate new relationships offline. Studies mention that misusing social media platforms can lead to negative societal consequences such as social isolation, distrust in relationships, infidelity, lack of social cohesion, and divorce (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2017). Social media also magnifies problems, including anxiety, and stress from defriending and blocking, or people finding their significant other talking to someone else leading to trust related issues. This also leads to **“phubbing”** which is defined as the act of snubbing someone in a social setting by concentrating on one’s phone instead of talking to the person directly (Aagaard, 2020). The increase in cell phone and social media platform usage has increased the occurrence of phubbing which has eventually brought a significant change in human interaction with each other.

The blurred boundaries of the online and offline relationship are **affecting the family relationship**. The rules of interaction with online peers had several negative effects on daily life such as compromising the function of offline relationships, which is also increasing the potential for Internet and social media addictions. The blurred boundaries in online and offline relationships have grown to become so interconnected that whatever we do in either of those relationships impacts the other relationship. Hertlein (2012) mentioned that the excessive use of media decreased quality in their offline relationships, reported decreased commitment in their relationships, and had more frequent conflicts with their friends, family and partners. Media not only impacts our relationships with others, they also **impact our relationship with ourselves** and the way we observe the world around us. The misuse and excessive use of social networking sites significantly affects the lives of adolescents by negatively impacting their personal, and psycho-social well-being.

Another social phenomenon being exacerbated by social media is what researchers are calling **fear of missing out**, the psychological need to be mentally connected with others, and being updated about what their friends, users, networks are doing. This is impacting people’s self-control as it is leading to *decreased cognitive appraisal* (which is the inability to evaluate ones’ mental or emotional state) and *increased emotional suppression* (suppressing one’s emotions which often leads to a build-up of anxiety, pressure and stress). Various studies have concluded that people who use social media excessively experience high anxiety when they are separated

from them and with time it is getting difficult to separate people from their mobile phones (Dhir et al., 2018).

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is the difference between traditional media and non-traditional media platforms?

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- 2) How do children use social media?

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- 3) What is phubbing and mention its impact on people?

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- 4) How does media lead to engagement of risky behaviours?

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10.2.3 Sedentary Behaviour and impact on Sleep

Sedentary behaviours are characterised by activities that involve sitting, lying down while watching television (TV), using computers/smartphones, passive recreation and playing video games which negatively impacts the **Metabolic Equivalent Total** (MET) energy expenditure. These behaviours are associated with negative health consequences such as increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality, and a range of impaired psychological health. Engagement with media platforms further encourage different sorts of sedentary behaviours, for example, a person uses

one's mobile or tablet by watching Netflix, Amazon Prime, or using social media than utilizing time for some other purpose. Children devote more time to electronic media such as television, videogames and Internet than any other activity (Chinapaw, 2011). Children and young adults' media consumption dominate their lives, taking up to 6 hours, 40 minutes, of which only 2.5 hours were spent watching television content, and children who have access to mobile phone, use it for an average of 4.5 hours daily, excluding talking and texting (Barnett, 2018). These sedentary behaviours, like those encouraged by media use, have been linked to physical health risks like Type II diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and metabolic syndrome. There is a connection between sedentary behaviors and mental health risk as studies provide evidence that high levels of sedentary behaviour (for example, TV watching and computer use) have an increased risk of developing a depressive and/or anxiety disorder. People who use time in sedentary behaviour have less time for face-to-face social interaction and bodily activity, which is considered important for good physical and mental well-being. The *social withdrawal hypothesis* explains the association between increasing sedentary behaviours and increasing risk of depression, stress and anxiety by proposing that the more frequently people watch TV, use computer/internet, or social media, the further they displace themselves from face to face or social interaction, which in turn increases their risk of mental illnesses. This also further leads to the breakdown of social support or communication networks which may lead to increased risk of loneliness, sadness and isolation (Seabrook et al., 2016).

Media is also disrupting the natural **circadian rhythm** (or the 24-hour biological clock that controls our sleep cycle) as our sleep cycle is interrupted by TV, over the top television services (Netflix, Prime, etc.), laptop, mobile, and social media applications. The mobile devices, computer screens and TV screens are used to view media sites that emit high levels of blue light which disrupts our healthy sleep cycles. The artificial light exposure by these devices after sunset signals 'daytime' to our brain which shifts our sleep cycle. As a result, many people get decouple from the 24- hour day to which our body has evolved over the time as they are engaged in checking email, phone, Instagram, watching video on YouTube, television, with hardly a clue that it is the middle of the solar night. This happens as the blue light suppresses melatonin, (or the brain's sleepy chemical), thus making it difficult for people to sleep. The melatonin suppressing blue light is present in our TVs, computer screens and mobile devices, thus browsing media before bedtime or when the person is trying to sleep, disturbs the quality of sleep. Moreover, low quality or less sleep perpetrated by the blue light found in the screens can have a negative effect on one's mental health as good quality sleep is important to good mental health, just as good mental health is essential for good quality sleep (Bhat et al., 2018). Box 10.4 provides an interesting cross section study on the effect of social networking sites on the quality of life.

Box 10.4 Cross-sectional study: Effect of Social Networking sites on the Quality of Life

Social media is becoming a very important part of human interaction but there is a need to understand that it adversely affects the quality of life of humans. It is steadily penetrating in the lives of college going students impacting their physical, mental, and spiritual health. This vulnerable and curious population of students is transitioning into the next phase (from school to college) of their life and studies have tried understanding the impact of social media on their quality of life. It's a concept that points towards an individual's overall well-being and life satisfaction in the context of culture and value systems and about goals, opportunities, and standard. Saini et al (2020) studied 220 college going students from the age of 18-21 in Chandigarh, India to study the prevalence of use of social networking sites and its effect on the quality of life. The data was collected using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire which was modified from Young's Internet usage questionnaire. The results suggested that there was no relation between the physical and social health problems among daily and non-daily users of the social media. It was also observed that home was a preferred place of using social media and students avoided logging into their accounts during the school or college hours. They accessed social media cautiously depending upon the pocket money for paying the carrier service charges. They were also able to handle stress related to relationship and work well than the non-users of social media as some people prefer anonymity so they could vent out their feelings in front of their peers and feel better. Thus, this study indicates that social media can reach a state where it embarks on the existing state of health but with continuous and critical evaluation and observation of the changing developments.

Source: Saini, N., Sangwan, G., Verma, M., Kohli, A., Kaur, M., & Lakshmi, P. V. M. (2020). Effect of social networking sites on the quality of life of college students: A Cross-Sectional Study from a City in North India. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2020.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is the connection between media and body image issues?

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- 2) What is Fear of Missing Out?

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- 3) Elaborate super peer theory.

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- 4) How does media effect our sleep cycle?

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10.2.4 Bullying and Suicide

The harassment and victimization of people online has received an increasing level of scrutiny as it is linked to a number of mental health risks. The pervasiveness of technological advancement has expanded the scope of cyberbullying to such an extent that it is becoming a critical issue today. With the increased accessibility of social media, websites, chat rooms, and email, online harassment, online bullying is becoming even more prevalent. Online bullying impacts people of all ages and they tend to experience depression, anxiety, anger, and isolation, along with an increase in suicidal thoughts in certain cases. There are two types of motivation behind online bullying; one of them is to obtain a goal or resource which is called *proactive aggression*, and the other is when a person reacts to a provocation or retaliation, that is called *reactive aggression*. Studies mention that both of these forms of aggression are used in cyber bullying. For example: if an individual said something mean and posted something bad about a person, and then the other person retaliated aggressively in return by posting something mean, then both individuals have essentially engaged in aggressive behaviour and have also been the victim of such online harassment behaviour. Another explanation for motivation of online bullying could be both internal and external in nature. Internal motivation for cyberbullying mostly includes redirecting feelings, payback, making themselves feel better, jealousy, dullness, and seeking approval, whereas external motivation mostly consists of targeting people who are vulnerable and weak (Adebayo et al., 2020). This becomes a *vicious cycle of online aggression*, impacting the other person mentally, including the very concerning observations of connections between online harassment and suicidal tendencies.

Studies have explored the relation between *cyberbullying and suicidal ideation*, especially in the case of increased use of social media and screen time. Social media and its effect on suicide, and self-harm related behaviour is particularly worrying. It is a topic of growing concern among people as they can access upsetting and distressing content online that *promotes self-harm* and which eventually becomes 'normal'. It has been found that due to actual suicide occurrences or suicide related information accessible on social media, there has been an increase in suicide-related behaviour. A person with no prior suicidal ideation or thoughts of suicide may suddenly become motivated, as they would like to copy another person or case that they have either seen or heard on different social media platforms in order to alleviate themselves from their ongoing problems. This is called as "*Werther Effect*" (Popoola et al., 2020). The popular cases of suicide in press, especially celebrity suicide cases have popularized the incidence of suicide among common masses. Recent studies have mentioned that it has now become very crucial that proper guidelines be followed so that Werther Effect is reduced among people after the reporting of suicide of celebrity cases (Popoola et al., 2020).

10.2.5 Media Violence

Studies indicate that most of the media content contains violence which is often underestimated, glamorized, or portrayed as humorous. Most of the sources of entertainment media, and video games, requires the most active participation of consumers. In contrast to the submissive viewing of violent content that occurs with television, film, and music videos, violent video game players are reinforced for implementing violent strategies. Similar to televised violence, violence in video games is presented as acceptable, without any negative consequence. Studies have found relationship between media violence and psychopathology, including internalizing disorders and emotional disorder. Children and adolescents who reported a liking for violent television scored higher in overall aggressive and violent behaviour compared to those who preferred less violent programs.

Experimental studies also provide evidence for a causal role for television and movie violence in increasing aggression. One of the well-known studies in this area is the classic research by Bandura and colleagues where children were exposed to a film in which the main character was engaged in hostile and aggressive behaviour against a plastic Bobo doll- punching bag. Later it was noted that children who were shown this video were more hostile and aggressive during their own play with a similar doll than the children who were not exposed to the violent modelling (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961). Research since then has corroborated the finding that children can learn aggressive behaviour from television and movie role models. This has been understood as observational learning.

Similar effects were also found in adolescents and young adults. It was concluded that people who viewed violent sexual movies were more likely to administer severe punishment to another person who had angered them than were men who had viewed a non-violent sexual film or a neutral film (Patel, 2021). The results in the area of music and songs are surprisingly similar to those found for other types of media violence. It has been found that listening to violent lyrics or watching violent scenes set to music can increase aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. There is some concern that children, teenagers and adolescents who prefer certain types of music, such as rap and heavy metal, are more prone to more violent based on the high violence content in the lyrics of these songs. Moreover, the combination of sexual content mixed with violence in music videos is also problematic, exposing individuals to high risk behavior.

10.3 POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Till now we have discussed the negative impact of media on human development but the subsequent section would provide information on the **benefits of media**. Current research provides evidence that media also

prevents and addresses mental health issues. The use of media to form online digital communities with people from different cultures, background, gender etc., with whom we share similar features and opinions can be extremely powerful. Some of these aspects are being discussed in the following section:

10.3.1 Support and Sense of Belongingness

Media helps in reducing isolation and increasing a sense of belonging by representing people from different social, cultural and minority group who otherwise may not get a chance to share their views and opinions. People from minority groups who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) are able to become “global citizens,” thus reducing isolation. Participating in online platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and twitter gives them an opportunity to meet with others who share their identities, to gain mutual support, emotional support and most important to gain a feeling of solidarity. Followers and members of various social media communities can talk, discuss and share ideas, hobbies, challenges or interests, broadening affiliations without fear of being judged or dehumanized. They have the opportunity to create an intellectual, emotional and tangible support system that can extend into real life situations and challenges. Moreover, these platforms can also support people to become resilient to adverse situations which can eventually help them staying mentally healthy. Staying connected with friends, relatives, followers, etc. also offer benefits. Others could be:

- 1) Raising money for charity events and volunteering for local events which helps in **community engagement**.
- 2) Sharing of artistic and creative posts, images and videos which help in **self- development** and **enhancement** of the individual.
- 3) **Self-development** from the creation of blogs, post, videos, and images.
- 4) **Expanding connection with people** from different backgrounds help in increased discourse about personal and global issues.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Explain “media violence.”

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- 2) What are the effects of social networking on the quality of life?

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3) What is the impact of online bullying?

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4) How does media help in promoting a sense of belongingness?

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10.3.2 Media and Well Being

Media has a role to play in the *overall well-being and emotional support* of an individual, especially through the noted appreciation on the media platforms that offer the use of emotional support choices, in the form of likes, and comments. It also provides people with the opportunity of developing a sense of identity by allowing people to choose what they wish to share with others and helping them through social networks. The sense of social support, emotional support, and mental support that media offers, has a positive impact on overall well-being as people gain a *greater sense of purpose in life*, increased levels of contentment, improved psychological health, and be provided with a sense that one is loved, wanted, listened to, supported and encouraged. Thus, this helps in uplifting the mood of people and decrease hopelessness, sadness and loneliness. It promotes positive mood and a positive state of mind in people who find it difficult to connect offline. Social media platforms have the ability to raise awareness, connect with people across the world, and share moments of beauty, achievements, etc. that can be *personally empowering and uplifting*. It provides them with an opportunity to connect with others in an arrangement that may be more comfortable, thus helping them in forming an identity in which they have control of other's perceptions of them. Moreover, media provides an *opportunity for self-disclosure*, which can have positive impacts for those looking to enhance interpersonal relationships, find support and make meaning out of suffering or challenges. Recent researches have identified key domains of media's impact on development which are summarised below:

- 1) Media has helped in **promoting proactive approaches** to issues of risk and safety that empower people of all age groups, develop their resilience and support their emotional and mental wellbeing.
- 2) Media has created new spaces such as chat rooms, online groups and pages for people's **civic and political engagement**. It has opened new engagement and community building opportunities for diverse forms of participation, self-expression as well as it is creatively addressing social issues.

- 3) It has also helped in **building supportive networks** and groups for financial, personal, and physical wellbeing of people. This has been empowering as it leads to positive consumption of media which is especially helping children and young adults.
- 4) There are **noteworthy opportunities for the exploration** such as recreational spaces, online games, webinars, conferences and new leisure areas online (cooking channels, vloggers, etc) which provide opportunities for learning, creativity, identity exploration, identity formation, forming new connections, relaxation and stress relief.

Lastly, Box 10.5 mentions some recommendations that can be used by schools, educators, parents and caregivers to guide children, and young adults about the psychological effects of media.

Box 10.5 Combating Media's Effects: The role of parents, educators and school

Parents and schools have critical role in keeping children safe and providing them with information so that they are safe and behave responsibly while using interactive media. Parents should monitor their children's use of media, and be attentive regarding the quality of content they are viewing. Educators and peers are also responsible for helping people understand the adverse effects of social media on physical, emotional and mental health. It is important to spread **social media literacy**. This means to make people aware of the misleading and false content on media platforms, to help them in overcoming or avoiding cyber bullying and any other such activities. This will help the users to correctly evaluate the accuracy of online content which would reduce the credibility of misleading media content and messages. This would help users to identify indicators of problematic content and subsequently reducing body ideal internalization and appearance comparison behaviors.

Knowledge about protective coping strategies while on social media can help in building self-esteem. For example, the unsolicited body and appearance related content can lead to body dissatisfaction. Thus, **protective filtering** technique which is selectively internalising messages that promotes positive body image and rejecting unhealthy body related information can be used. School and parents can use real examples of how media filters and edit photos and promote unrealistic appearance related standards which are actually different from real images.

Schools and educators can build **workshops on content such as digital resilience** so that young people, parents, and other people can join such workshops and gain knowledge on how to respond to distressing content. This can teach people to question false news and cross-examine content for accuracy, harassment, exploitation, racism, abuse and discrimination. This promotes digital literacy and people can learn to report abuse and perpetrators.

Educators should teach people how they can **maintain a secure social media account** and they can use interactive media responsibly. Given the prevalence of fake online news and content, schools should have a social media workshops and curriculum to critically evaluate content that appears online so that they understand the harmful effects of some content. Schools also play a critical role in educating and guiding by providing them with guidelines and detrimental effects of media on mental health, physical health, sleep, academics, and quality of life.

Parents caregivers also need to be **role models** as they cannot expect their child to establish the skills of using media responsibly if they are not prepared to demonstrate these skills themselves. Thus, they should promote healthy online behaviours. They also need to develop knowledge of the risk and benefits of media and support the child effectively. They should talk to their child regarding what constitutes **appropriate use of internet and media**. Additionally, they can establish some rules with children to protect them from

potential harm, if necessary. For example: not using phone during family time, limiting the amount of screen time etc. It will be more effective if children are also involved in discussion with their significant others of what constitutes appropriate media and internet use.

Source: Kim, A., Moravec, P. L., & Dennis, A. R. (2019). Combating fake news on social media with source ratings: The effects of user and expert reputation ratings. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 36(3), 931-968.

Schreurs, L., & Vandenbosch, L. (2021). Introducing the Social Media Literacy (SMILE) model with the case of the positivity bias on social media. *Journal of Children and Media*, 15(3), 320-337.

10.4 SUMMARY

Let us review what we have learnt in this unit.

- Media is a tool for socialisation, networking, keeping connected with friends, exchanging ideas, and gain knowledge but it can also have a detrimental influence on people of all age groups.
- Media can result in a lot of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and body image concerns, self-harm and increase the risk of suicide.
- Media also promotes engagement in risk taking behaviour and thrill-seeking behaviour which may be suggestive of vulnerability in both the online and offline world.
- Online bullying and harassment is very common on social media platforms which can take place by sending offensive, rude, hurtful comments, posting false and mean things on internet on purpose to abuse and offend the other person.
- Media can be beneficial as it helps to raise the emotional support, self-esteem of people and increase their sense of belonging.
- There are also opportunities for people online such as sharing positive content, building fund-raisers, community engagement, finding people of similar ideas, increased social support, reducing social anxiety, and helps in forming interpersonal relationship which reduces social isolation.
- It is useful for people experiencing stigma or marginalized group for self and identity development by finding online support and sharing their opinions.

10.5 KEYWORDS

Media It is defined as the means of communication channels such as television, radio, cinema, photography and advertising.

Social Media It is an internet-based technology that is used to connect, share and facilitate ideas, opinions, and thoughts.

Phubbing It is the act of ignoring people around us and giving attention and being involved in your phone.

Social Media Literacy It refers to consciously manage the flow of information and actively participating in determining the harmful and positive aspects of social media.

Self-esteem One's appraisal of the value or worth of the self

Body Image Dissatisfaction A person's negative thought and feeling regarding his or her own body which can be related to weight dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, appearance comparison, self-objectification, and thin ideal internalization.

Fear Of Missing Out It is an uneasy feeling that causes anxiety that other people are living a happy life and from which one is absent.

Thin Ideal Perception Perception created by media that people who endorse and strive for a physique that is lean with low body fat and a narrow waist are beautiful.

Sense of Belongingness It is a psychological and emotional need to be connected as a member of a group.

10.6 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How does media effect the mental health of people?
- 2) What is Phantom Vibration Syndrome?
- 3) How is social media affecting our ties with close friends and family members?
- 4) Mention the psychological mechanism through which we form poor body image which leads to body dissatisfaction.
- 5) What is cyber bullying and the motivation behind it?
- 6) What are the impacts of cyber bullying?
- 7) What is Werther effect?
- 8) What are the benefits of media in development?
- 9) How does media promote emotional support?
- 10) How can school promote media literacy?
- 11) Elaborate on the role of parents and caregivers in helping their child understand the harmful effects of media.

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10.8 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- Ted talk: The effects of social media on the mental health of people: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJQGHIBqBcA>
- Eating Disorders and Social Media: [https:// www. youtube.com /watch?v=gWF8CY6jW6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWF8CY6jW6s)
- Social Media and Mental Health: [https:// www. youtube.com /watch?v=9ZfzafKFjs8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZfzafKFjs8)
- Media Literacy - The Power (and Responsibility) of Information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sX7EMTjMf6k>
- Media and its impact on human development: [https:// www .youtube.com/ watch?v=6oLe2stRSbw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oLe2stRSbw)



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