

Censorship focusing on Children

(GS Paper IV, Media)

Context:

- An increasing number of studies have been warning against the possibilities of harmful impacts of some aspects of the contents of popular films and TV programmes on children and adolescents.
- More recently such concerns have been voiced also in the context of video games.

Overall impact:

- The impact of depiction of sex and violence in the context of Hindi and other Indian language films has often been discussed in the context of censorship. However, there is a need to look at this issue in the wider context of its **overall impact and relate it to other changes in society**.
- Further, there is a **need to examine this issue** in the context of not just popular feature films but also **in the context of TV programmes, short films, videos, and clips**.
- Moreover, as some of the most important research has been conducted in the USA and Europe, there is need to look them also, not confining ourselves just to the much fewer studies available on Hindi cinema and other Indian language films.



Observations made by researches:

- A report issued by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, while drawing attention to the high violence content of TV programmes, stated that **hundreds of studies of effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that due to excessive exposure children may:**

- a) become 'immune' or numb to the horrors of violence,
- b) begin to accept violence as a means to solve problems,
- c) imitate the violence they observe on TV, and
- d) identify with certain characters, victims and victimizers.

Behavioral aspects:

- Extensive viewing of television violence by children, causes **greater aggressiveness**. Sometimes watching a single violent programme can increase aggressiveness. Programmes that show more realistic, frequently repeated violence as well as unpunished violence are likely to be imitated more.
- Children with emotional, behavioral and learning problems, or who are more impulsive, may come under greater influence.
- Research by psychologists revealed that **children who watched many hours of violence on TV** when they were in elementary school went on to **show higher levels of aggressive behavior** when they became teenager.

Empathy & Social behaviour:

- Following their life further, the researchers found that when they grew into adults, they were **more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for criminal acts**.
- The evidence strongly suggests that exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition and aggressive affect and for **decreased empathy and pro-social behavior**.

Sexual exposure:

- The relations among early movie sexual exposure (MSE), sexual debut and risky sexual behavior in adulthood were examined in a longitudinal study of US adolescents.
- Analyses showed that MSE predicted age of sexual debut, both directly and indirectly through changes in sensation seeking. MSE also predicted engagement in risky sexual behavior both directly and indirectly via early sexual debut.
- These researchers suggest that MSE may promote sexual risk-taking both by modifying sexual behavior and by accelerating the normal rise in sensation seeking during adolescence.

Role of media violence:

- Media violence poses a threat to public health in as much as it leads to an increase in real world violence and aggression.
- Research shows that fictional television and film violence contribute to both a short-term and long-term increase in aggression and violence in young viewers. Television news violence also contributes to increased violence, principally in the imitative suicides and aggressions.
- Clearly these studies point to the need for a lot of caution with respect to the unintentional but nevertheless serious adverse impacts of cinema, TV and videos, particularly on adolescents, children and impressionable sections of viewers.

Horror:

- In the case of horror, much longer impacts of films have been noted, continuing for several years. These films can increase the risk of **disturbed sleep, anxiety, and obsession**.
- In a study, while nearly 52 per cent youth said that they suffered such impacts immediately after seeing such films, 25 per cent also reported a stretching 'impact' in the sense that some of these adverse effects continued even after several years.

Conclusion:

- Some of the adverse effects, particularly in the context of violence have also been noticed in the content of several cartoon films and the super-heroes created by them in the world of children. Hence there is reason for caution in this context, too.
- Television shapes the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of children and adolescents and strongly influences their perception of reality.

- The high impact of television is neither recognized by children nor adults; they estimate that the media affect all others except themselves.