

## **TV Crime Re-enactment Shows and Crime: Perception of Lahore Based Investigation Officers**

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### **Abstract**

The study is conducted to explore the relation of crime re-enactment shows and crime. To collect data ten police investigation Officers were interviewed in order to measure their investigation experiences while conducting such types of crime inquires. Social Learning and Cultivation Theory were applied to explore the effects of crime shows on viewers. Qualitative research design was used and Open ended questions were asked from police Investigation Officers for data collection. The findings showed that most of the officers were in favor of the view that the crime shows are giving new methods and ideas to criminals to commit a crime. However, it was also found that negative minded people are not more vulnerable to learn new techniques from these crime re-enactment shows.

**Keywords:** TV Channels, Crime re-actments Shows, Crime Techniques, Crime Imitation, Social Effect.

### **Introduction**

A few years back, the notion of crime re-enactment shows was relatively distinctive. However, with the passage of time, crime re-enactment programs have become familiarity among the viewers because they fascinate the audience through their stories, production techniques, script, sound and characters. Crime re-enactment shows were also considered as shows which provide new methods to commit crime and encourage youth to imitate these crimes. Nowadays, youth is habitual of watching Television shows. Therefore, watching of crime re-enactment shows psychological affect the young minds and offer a prospect of imitation of crimes represented in these crime re-enactment shows. In Pakistan all Television channels have crime shows on the primetime to increase viewership which may describe a sense of panic among the

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young viewers. The relation of the effect of media is dependent on the content of the programs which is broadcast by TV and is also on the liking and disliking of masses regarding different programs (Plamgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985). Crime re-enactment shows that entertain the audiences by sensationalizing criminals and crime got popularity and good rating in general public. Usually, these stories are based on real crimes in which producers tried explain the procedure of Police, Crime Planning, Reasons of crime, real footages, interviews and the social dilemma behind the crimes (Surette, 2007).

For this study three crime re-enactment shows from three different TV channels were selected. In which “*Griff*” from Express News, “*Jurm Bolta Hai*” from ARY News and “Crime Scene” from Samaa News were explored to know how these shows are representing the crime. These crime re-enactment shows are popular in audience and have top rating and viewership among the category of crime re-enactment shows.

Exposure to violence and crime reenactment shows result in imitation and repetition of the crimes. The purpose of this study is to sort out the impact of these shows on viewers and to find answer to whether these crimes based programs add more to the crime rate or actually provide awareness to the audience.

### **Literature Review**

A study was conducted by Bahadur et al. (2016) in Pakistan in which violent content on media and its effects on minds of youth were examined. 145 students of a university in Faisalabad were surveyed using quantitative techniques and convenient sampling. Results showed that respondents learned new ways of crime by watching the crime reenactment shows and resultantly feelings of insecurity also arose in them. Another study Sunitha & Ranjan (2016) investigated the content of two popular crime shows on Tamil channels in India namely, *Koppiyam* (Raj TV) and *Thadayam* (News7). Various parameters visuals, crime reconstructions, sound effects, music, program placement, logical structure, frame and shot were used to analyze the content. This study showed that the crime presented on TV had a significant impact on people’s perception about a specific crime. In this context Bhatti & Hassan (2014) concluded in their study that violent content on Media penetrate in audience and they start imitation of that content.

Another study, conducted in South East region of USA, surveyed 78 undergraduate students. These students were divided into control and experimental

group. The results were in accordance to previous literature that violence in TV shows especially crime reenactment shows results in aggressive behaviors in individuals. There was seen a clear effect of violent videos on factor of anger (Narvaez & Elsner, 2016).

The crime dramas and reenactment can be traced back long because even before electricity invention, crime stories were a part of myths, folk tales and theatres (Surette, 2007). The reenactment and television crime shows are also contributing to sexual crimes. Sexual media also relates significantly to sexual violence. Not in all situations, reenactment shows, and criminal dramas have an impact on criminal rate. Statistics were collected from data bases of FBI and its German equivalent in US. Crime rates during and after the launch of CSI (popular U.S. TV series that debuted in 2000) were compared. 24 convicted criminals were surveyed and no significant relationship was found between watching forensic dramas or reenactment shows and crime rate (Andreas and Baranowski, 2017).

In a study conducted in India, data was collected from 116 respondents from 4 colleges of Malad, Mumbai. The results showed why the people watch the reenactment shows and reality-based crime shows. Youth of 15-25 years of age were the part of sample. This study revealed how watching a crime-based dramas and shows can contribute to imitation of crimes and learning how a crime can be committed (Bharma & Mistry, 2018).

These types of television crime re-enactment programs have a significant impact on the types of crime an individual commit. A study was conducted in USA on four Television programs series, the analysis of these shows that in urban metropolitans' people learn crime through TV shows and these programs encourage audience to commit different crimes. There was also a significant relationship between sexual crime and TV shows (Levin, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher applied Social Learning and Cultivation Theory, keeping in view the relevancy. Social Learning Theory explains how people learn through observing the violence on TV. It is related to the present research as people who watch crime shows learn various things from these shows and then try to imitate and project them in the society. Cultivation theory emphasizes that people having more exposure to crime shows have more influence of media and they start thinking that

reality shown by the media is the actual reality of their society due to which they feel unsafe themselves and have more fear of crime.

### **Objectives of Study**

- To check the relationship of crime re-enactment shows and crime.
- To explore the perception of investigation officer on relationship of crime re-enactment shows and committing of crimes.
- To check whether imitation of crime pattern in criminal activities becomes the product of these crime shows or not?

### **Research Questions**

- Does the viewership of TV Crime re-enactment show lead to commit crimes?
- Did Investigation officers find any relation between Crime re-enactment shows and Crime during investigation?
- Is there any relation between the TV Crime re-enactment shows and crime and how these programs are leading individuals towards crime?

### **Method**

The study employs qualitative research design. The researcher has chosen interviews as the research method in this particular study and semi-structure Interview Protocol was designed. Population of the study includes 84 police stations and Investigation Officers in Lahore city. The sample of the study was the Investigation Officers from 10 different Police Stations of Lahore that have had highest crime rate in previous year. The sample was chosen using convenient and purposive sampling.

### **Results and Analysis**

Crime re-enactment shows and dramas are becoming a popular television item throughout the world. They are neither for a single age group nor a particular social group that watches these shows. They are popular among all sorts of television viewers. Pakistani channels are also telecasting such shows that are affecting the society, youth and crime rate in different ways. Following is the analysis of interview responses given by the participants regarding their viewpoints on the influence of crime re-enactment shows on society and crime rate.

### **Crime by the youth**

Pakistani youth is exposed to almost all types of media. They also watch crime reenactment shows on different TV channels as they are on air during primetime mainly on weekends. These reality crime shows evoke different kinds of emotions in them.

*Due to fantasy created by media and film industry, the youth of our country wants to get rich in short span of time and crime shows deliver them with the ideas to take short cuts (Interviewee-1).*

The glitz and glamour shown on television crime shows attract the attention of the youth. Without proper counseling and guidance, they get misguided by these crime shows and new ideas of getting advanced mobile phones and other luxuries through short cuts engage their minds which is consequently increasing the crime rate, evident from the responses by multiple participants. *95 % youth is involved in different crimes (Interviewee-4).* Another participant stated *95% youngsters are involved in different complaints registered because the police station is near a university (Interviewee- 8).*

*Professional criminals are mostly associated with different criminal gangs but nowadays, youngsters are imitating what they have seen in crime shows (Interviewee-10).*

Another participant highlights that *excessive information about crime is bad for the children which leads to aggressive behavior in children (Interviewee-9).*

TV violence is a significant factor that develops aggressive behavior in youngsters. Further investigation reveals several theories to correlate the violent crime shows and aggressive behavior of children. Hostile acknowledgement theory talks about development of aggressive behaviors in children, while social information processing theory is another way to investigate behavior development of children with reference to TV crime shows.

### **Impact of crime reenactment shows on different mindsets**

*There are positive and negative minded people in the society but publicity of the crime is still not a good thing. It depends on the type of the viewers. Positive minded and educated people will learn from these crime shows understanding that if they violate law, police will arrest them. However, negative and criminal minded people will try to*

*imitate the same in their real life* (Interviewee-5). This response from a participant sheds light on a very common knowledge that every entity in the world has its advantages along with disadvantages but it depends on how that entity is seen or used by individuals.

*People having weak minds will be afraid after watching crime shows but strong and positive minded people will feel more secure thinking that Police and law enforcement agencies are stronger than criminals for they can arrest them* (Interviewee-3).

*It depends on the mentality of the person watching the show. Positive minded people will be more careful and conscious but criminal and negative minded people will try to get more information as to how Police arrests criminals* (Interviewee-3).

Many studies contradict with these responses and state an otherwise theory that crime shows depict the relationship between prey and predator and this factor attracts the mind of any healthy and normal human being. One of the biggest examples indicating the liking of crime elements is popularity of crime novels among common people.

### **Crime Re-enactment Shows and crime methods**

*Some people after watching these crime shows will be afraid that if they will perform any illegal activity they will be arrested by the Police but on the other side there are many people who will learn new methods of committing a crime* (Interviewee-1).

*These shows are increasing crime rate more than the awareness factor by revealing the investigation process through which criminal minded people come to know how Police investigate and arrest criminal* (Interviewee-2).

*It is obvious that they discuss and watch different shows and movies to learn modern ways of committing crimes and in order to escape from Police* (Interviewee-4).

*Due to multiple cases reported by channels and newspapers now people are already informed about new ways of fraud* (Interviewee-6).

*Repeated exposure to crime shows instigate them to perform crime in order to meet their financial needs* (interviewee-8)

It is clearly evident from the responses that almost all the participants agree upon the fact that the crime reenactment shows are not only feeding the old criminals with new ideas to conduct crime but they are inculcating the ideas of committing crime in those viewers who are by chance criminal minded people or weak minded

people and who can be easily influenced by such shows. These phenomena, negative awareness and imitation of crime, are directly causing the alarming increase in crimes. *These shows exhibit that in order to escape from Police; criminals can use new SIM cards and new mobile phones. These phones can then be thrown away so that Police may not trace them by IMEI number of the mobile phones* (Interviewee-2).

*For criminals, these shows are supposed to give new and modern ideas and way of committing perfect crime and will add more to the crime rate* (Interviewee-4).

The participants also revealed that new technologies, new uses of mobile phones and new methods of conducting crime and frauds are made known through these TV crime shows.

#### **Public awareness through crime shows**

*Mostly educated class of the society get awareness from these shows because of their know-how about the end result of criminal activities and fear of Police but unfortunately some youngsters who have bad company do not learn anything from these shows and ultimately try to imitate the scenes of crime shows* (Interviewee-1).

*Apart from negative impact of these crime shows, these shows also have positive impacts like people are getting information how to remain safe in the society* (Interviewee-6).

*These shows are spreading awareness to very lesser extent but highlighting criminals to larger extent which is not good for the viewers* (Interviewee-4).

It is alarmingly obvious from almost all the responses, from which some are transcribed here that whoever agrees to the positive awareness that people are gaining from crime enactment shows, has also mentioned the negative awareness as well. It can be concluded from the responses that the law enforcement agencies clearly dislike the excessive publicity of the crime cases and despite they agree that to some extent these programs are indeed elevating awareness in common people.

*Due to crime shows parents become more conscious about defense of their children. They started counseling of their children as how to behave in an emergency situation* (Interviewee-2).

A very positive outcome has been gained by these crime shows particularly in the current era when children related crimes are increasing that parents and children are getting aware of increasing risky environment and are educating their children that how to move safely in the society.

### **Crime shows promoting insecurity and mental depression**

*We can say that these crime shows are spreading awareness and public is getting aware instead of getting afraid (Interviewee-8).*

*Media and these crime shows are just presenting negative side of the society and suppressing positive things due to which a sense of fear is spreading among people and they ultimately start thinking that they are living in an unsafe and miserable society (Interviewee-4).*

*If channels will keep on broadcasting these crime shows on daily basis, people will be afraid that society is highly unsafe for them and Police is doing nothing for their protection which will spread an environment of fear in the society (Interviewee-6).*

In the responses above, it can be seen that only one of them is supporting the idea that crime shows on TV provide awareness and don't evoke fear. The rest of the responses strongly comment on how people feel insecure in their surrounding and repetitive showing of violence and negativity in society is affecting their mental health and serenity.

The channels repeat the crime reenactment shows on every available slot and sometimes even telecast them continuously for three to four hours for TRP. Continuous reruns of these reality crime shows affect the human psyche as the mind accepts and believes the things when it sees them again and again. It tremendously affects the human psyche and social behavior and ties. This mental condition is termed as paranoiac state.

### **Crime shows exaggerate for TRP rather than awareness**

*These shows are 50 % related to reality while rest is just based on exaggeration to grab the attention of the audience and to gain ratings (Interviewee-9).*

*Due to repeated doze of these crime shows now public watches these crimes shows just to kill their time and to be entertained (Interviewee-10)*

*These crime shows are mostly different from the reality as well as the working style and investigation process of Police department. Their primary focus is on rating of the channel not on awareness of public (Interviewee-8).*

It can be said, after analyzing the above responses, that majority of the law enforcement agencies and investigation officers are not the big fans of these crime reenactment shows. They think that TV channels telecast them repeatedly just to create sensation which consequently leads to more TRP. It is considered that awareness can be created by one or two programs while channels keep on telecasting such shows repetitively, which highlights that the purpose is to increase the channel rating by attracting viewers' attention through the employment of thrill.

### **Crime shows distorts the image of law enforcement agencies**

*These crime shows are not much close to reality as in these crime shows they show that Police go to a place within a few minutes to arrest criminals without any major resistance, but in reality we have to find the criminals. (Interviewee-6.)*

*Reality is different from the scenes shown in these crime shows as Police have to face many problems before arresting a criminal but these shows present an ideal situation (Interviewee-10).*

*PEMRA must ban these crime shows especially the ones that are spreading false and baseless stories and highlighting the flaws of Police department instead of showing the strength of Police (Interviewee-8).*

The analysis of available responses indicate that the crime reenactment shows are highlighting the crimes and promoting the criminals instead of attracting the viewers' attention to the working of police and to the fact that the criminal mostly get punished in the end. The trust of common people from police department and other law enforcement agencies is weakening due to the unreal depiction of police investigation in crime shows.

In crime shows presented on TV channels, police officers are shown to have very less time to catch the culprit, otherwise the criminal flees. A very fast-paced and easy dramatic process is depicted in these shows where the investigating officers race against time to solve the mystery. It artificially takes viewers behind the scenes of supposedly real-time investigations. While in reality, finding the culprit and then

arresting him/her is not a fast, thrilling and easy work for police. Reality crime shows need serious collaboration between law enforcement agencies and media organizations, so the viewers are shown the correct picture and the approximate real workings of police department instead of the depiction of criminals as smart and clever heroes and police as foolishly running clueless about the situation.

### **Conclusion**

The participants responded that there is a relation between the crime reenactment shows and crime committing. These programs are more focused on crime techniques, glamour and criminals instead of representing the awareness. The participants further showed their reservation regarding the role of police which is almost always diminished in these shows and that lowers the confidence of common people in police and the fear of law in criminals, consequently elevating the crime rate. Participants also indicated the increasing crime rate in youth is because they are learning the short-cut ways through media to achieve their needs. Participants reported that criminals are imitating the crime technique and ways to dodge the law and police. The Investigation Officer who belongs to Muslim Town Police Station, Lahore, stated that these crime shows leave drastic effects on immature and young minds. A criminal named "Mr. Raheel" who was just 20 years old. According to the Investigation Officer, Mr. Raheel has been arrested for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in a year during looting different families on Canal Road, Lahore. Mr. Raheel belongs to a poor family and after watching crime stories on TV he thought this is the easiest way to get money in short span of time but later on he found that reality is quite different from the methods portrayed in these crime shows. It was quite alarming to know from almost 7 out of 10 Investigation Officers, who were interviewed, that it is an approximate of 95% youth that is involved in total FIRs registered in different Police Stations of Lahore. Almost all Investigation Officers who were interviewed had an experience of almost 10-15 years and they had gone through countless criminal investigations. So, their experience was quite helpful for the researcher to have a better understanding regarding the relation of Crime re-enactment shows telecast on Pakistan TV channels and Crime in Lahore.

All in all, as per the responses provided by participants and based on their shared experiences, it can be concluded that crime reenactment shows on different channels are notably increasing the crime rate particularly in youth due to repetitive exposure to crime and crime technique. This conclusion matches with that of Bahadur et al., (2016) who says that crime shows are creating self-security but also insecurity

along with promotion of negativity, representation of criminal techniques for youth to imitate, and the manipulation of actual occurrence to pick up the interest of viewers.

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