Case Study

Understanding Psychological Crime Drama: An Analysis of the Netflix's Series *Adolescence*

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Abstract: Web series are transforming the entertainment sector in India and the world. The Internet is a boon for the information technology industry. By circumventing restrictions, online shows are changing the entertainment industry by offering a varied range of fresh content. The web series "*Adolescence*" explores the thoughts of a 13-year-old regarding females, his involvement in criminal activities, and the influence of social media content on him. "Adolescence" is one of the most-watched shows globally on the OTT platform Netflix, used as a case study. The BBC reports that Netflix's series "Adolescence" attracted over 120 million viewers worldwide in its inaugural month of 2025. This series examines adolescent psychology, sexual behaviour, familial relationships, and societal reactions to the murder of a female student who had bullied the protagonist online, despite his continual denial of involvement. Crime occurs as an exceptionally impartial phenomenon, ignoring the victim's age, class, race, social status, etc. The research investigates toxic masculinity, the influence of social media on the accused, and familial involvement in adolescent cognitive development, among other factors. The study also analyses the impact of social media on modern adolescent behaviour, the repercussions of cyberbullying, and the rise of online misogyny. In the contemporary context, adolescents experience accelerated maturation, partly due to the influence of social media and the internet.

Keywords: OTT platform; Web series; Crime; Social media; Adolescent

1. Introduction

1.1. Adolescence

Adolescence represents a pivotal phase in human development, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. The transformations are both physical and psychological, which characterize adolescence. The period of adolescence often embodies a duality of confusion and exploration. The transitional phase usually prompts enquiries regarding autonomy and self-conception; as young individuals develop their identities, they may encounter challenging decisions related to education, social relationships, sexual orientation, and gender identity [1,2].

Many adolescents tend to possess a somewhat self-centred viewpoint on existence, a mindset that typically diminishes as they mature [3]. Individuals frequently centre their attention on their own experiences, operating under the assumption that those around them—whether a close companion or an acquaintance—are equally preoccupied with their presence. They might contend with uncertainties and perceptions of scrutiny. During this developmental phase, familial relationships often take a secondary role to the influence of peer groups, romantic pursuits, and concerns about physical appearance, which adolescents increasingly regard as significant [4].

1.2. *Grooming of a Child*

The act of grooming a child is widely acknowledged as the most prevalent manifestation of sexual grooming. Beyond the pursuit of sexual gratification, the grooming process may or may not encompass a relational dimension, contingent upon the offender's underlying motivations for abuse. Some have posited that sexual grooming bears resemblance to the dynamics of adult courtship [5].

Certain discourses highlight a deficiency in empathy and the challenges faced by offenders in understanding and acknowledging the needs of others, which may render them susceptible to infringing upon others' privacy without regard for the adverse consequences or feelings of remorse [6].

Alongside the power of social media, however, diverse competing forces shape adolescents' development of self and value systems during adolescence, especially the influence of parents and peers. Parents often feel that their influence is small, perceiving teens' egocentric values and poor behavioral choices as the result of "bad influences" from the media and peers. Parental restrictions may even trigger rebellion from the teen [7].

1.3. *Crime Drama and Entertainment*

Crime manifests as a remarkably impartial occurrence, disregarding the victim's age, class, race, social standing, or prior experiences of victimisation. Its emergence is unaffected by the time of day, the day of the week, or the month of the year. It transcends international borders and cultural distinctions, showing no regard for societal norms or ethical principles. Crime manifests in a multitude of forms: encompassing violent offences, sexual transgressions, property crimes, victimless acts, and white-collar offences; extending to terrorist activities, crimes against the state, and those committed by the state; including acts that inflict profound distress as well as those that elude detection; and comprising both resolved cases and those that persist in ambiguity [8-10].

Crime dramas possess an almost limitless ability to provide enjoyment. In addition to the category of critical, counter-traditional cinema, crime content offers a means of escape from the mundanity of everyday existence. They present opportunities to unravel mysteries, to align oneself with formidable and capable protagonists, and to reflect on ethical dilemmas without the need to confront them directly. Their formulaic narratives and archetypal figures, rather than disillusioning viewers, provide the enjoyment of nuanced reinterpretations of the known. They allow us to empathise with the antagonists and embody an aura of sophistication without incurring any consequences [11].

Furthermore, the majority of conventional crime series provide a sense of comfort, suggesting that our societal structures and criminal justice system can be redeemed, notwithstanding their numerous shortcomings.

Crime films present opportunities for engaging nobly in the pursuit of justice, often alongside a compelling and adept protagonist. We possess the ability to unravel perplexing enigmas; furthermore, we can relate to individuals who exhibit remarkable intellect, composure, and achievement. Audiences take pleasure in recognising themselves in these central characters, as well as in the charismatic actors who bring them to life. They also take pleasure in aligning themselves with less conventional characters, such as J.D., the morally

ambiguous seducer portrayed by Brad Pitt in "*Thelma and Louise*", who delightfully vexes Thelma's uncouth spouse, and the skilled young con artist depicted by Leonardo DiCaprio in "Catch Me If You Can" (2002), who successfully evades the FBI for an *extended* period [12].

The majority of individuals endorse some form of societal regulation; crime content has established a niche of emotional engagement that permits a critical stance towards the criminal justice system, the state, and various power structures, allowing viewers to experience, for approximately ninety minutes, the exhilarating sensation of being a valiant dissenter. The antiauthority messages in crime films are articulated through moral, narrative, and cinematic frameworks that may limit or even undermine the critique presented. Consequently, although crime drama frequently challenges societal norms, it simultaneously reinforces mechanisms of social control by presenting these as conventional, uncontroversial, or even beneficial.

In this study, we are discussing how the protagonist Jamie Miller, who is an adolescent and is arrested for murder, is shown CCTV footage of him murdering Katie Leonard, a classmate, and how he was defending his act in the best possible way.

2. Review of Literature

Parental mediation, family communication patterns, or peer mediation can have either a positive or negative influence on the cultivation of altruistic ideals within peer groups and families. Furthermore, familial communication patterns and parental behaviours significantly influence the development of empathy, which in turn impacts altruism and behavioural consequences. Certain parental behaviors, including solicitation and psychological control, have been shown to affect teenagers' prosocial conduct adversely. Values undergo gradual evolution throughout one's life, although adolescence represents a pivotal milestone as individuals start the formation of their personal, institutional, and communal identities [12,13].

The phrase "copycat crime" is used in both popular discourse and scholarly literature to denote imitative criminal behaviour inspired by media. Copycat crime refers to criminal acts motivated by another crime that has been widely reported in the media or depicted in literature or art, whereby the perpetrator integrates elements of the original offence into a new crime. Research indicates that copycat crime often features in offenders' criminal history, with over 25% of offenders acknowledging that media or popular culture influenced their illegal activities [14].

Numerous studies on the relationship between violent media and aggressive behaviour indicate that exposure to violent media may have understated effects on aggressive behaviour and that watching violent media can have an imitative impact on aggressive behaviour. The majority of individuals engage with violent media daily, yet do not replicate the violent imagery they encounter. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that, for specific individuals, exposure to violent media significantly influences the criminal behaviours they exhibit. Engagement with violent media has been shown to foster the phenomenon known as "mean world syndrome," which posits a perception of the world as more hostile and perilous than it truly is. Furthermore, it contributes to the normalisation of violent masculinity within cultural contexts. Even seemingly innocuous news media coverage regarding firearm legislation has been linked to a rise in firearm-related suicides among adolescents [15,16].

The motivations and situational contexts surrounding sexual behaviour and deviance in juveniles may differ significantly from those typically associated with violent or predatory conduct. The latter generally has been examined through the lenses of aggression and self-control deficits, as well as through assertions of achievement or conflicts and territorial disputes among peers. Additionally, frustration or rage has been identified as a catalyst for negative emotions, while the concept of claiming territories has been explored as both practical and symbolic spaces for domination [17,18].

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Social Learning Theory

According to Bandura's social learning theory, people learn from the environment in which they live. Similarly, criminal behavior is acquired through observation of one's environment and interactions with peers. The most effective way to learn about human behaviour is through observation. Observing human behavior guides the actions that will be taken in the future. All aspects of human development—socialization, experience, learning, and observation—are intertwined and contribute to shaping future human behaviour [19].

In the series "Adolescence", the protagonist learns from his environment, acquiring negative behaviors towards girls and women through his interactions with peers and the social media platforms, such as Instagram, with which he engages.

3. Aims and objectives

This study aims to analyse Netflix's series "Adolescence", with a focus on psychological crime series. The study also analyses toxic masculinity, gender-based violence, harmful social media content, the male psyche, cyberbullying, and related topics.

The study explores the psychology of children shown in the web series Adolescence, analyse the impact of social media on child psychology, and comprehend male children's viewpoints towards females and women.

4. Research Methodology

This study examines the online series "Adolescence", produced by Netflix and centered on the psychology of adolescent boys [2]. Comprehensive research, critical evaluation, and analysis were performed on each of the four episodes that comprised the "Adolescence" series. Themes, characters, roles, and other aspects were analysed in great detail. Methods such as content analysis and case studies were employed to provide answers to the research questions.

The following is a list of the primary motives for the use of content analysis in this research, which contributed to the successful, broad generalisation of the material:

1. The series is not like other psychological crime dramas that are often produced.
2. The protagonist is not a well-known person in the world.
3. A psychological crime drama serves as the basis for the series.
4. Unique content

5. Data Analysis

Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham authored the British psychological crime drama "Adolescence", which Philip Barantini directed. The narrative centres on 13-year-old Jamie Miller (Owen Cooper), who is apprehended for the murder of a schoolgirl. Every episode was recorded in a single continuous shot.

Detective Inspector Luke Bascombe and Detective Sergeant Misha Frank search Eddie, Manda, Lisa, and 13-year-old Jamie Miller's home. Jamie is arrested for murder and taken to the station. Jamie emotionally denies guilt and is jailed when his family arrives at the station. Eddie offers to be Jamie's "appropriate adult" during the search and interrogation. Eddie discreetly asks Jamie if he's responsible and trusts his denial. Barlow, Jamie's attorney, arrives and advises him not to discuss the events of last night. In Jamie's formal interview, Bascombe and Frank spread his sexually explicit comments on female models. He is then questioned about his classmate Katie Leonard, who was found dead in a parking lot the night before. Bascombe shows CCTV footage of Jamie fatally stabbing Katie before ending the discussion. Jamie and Eddie cry in the questioning room; Eddie flinches when Jamie touches him before they embrace.

Bascombe and Frank question Jamie and Katie's secondary school classmates three days after the murder to determine Jamie's motive and the whereabouts of the weapon. Katie's best friend Jade is furious about the murder and criticises the cops. She claims Jamie's friend Ryan killed Katie and assaulted him. Ryan initially helps Bascombe and Frank but withdraws after discovering the murder weapon. Adam, Bascombe's alienated son and college student, tells him that Katie labelled James an incel in response to his Instagram comments on models, using a stealth emoji. Bascombe wonders if Jaime was cyberbullied. Ryan flees via a window as Bascombe and Frank face him again, forcing Bascombe to pursue him outside the school. Ryan claims that he and Tommy gave Jamie the knife used to assault Katie, expecting Jamie to use it to force Katie to remove her Instagram remarks. Ryan is arrested for murder plotting. Katie's murder location is decorated with flowers by Eddie**.**

Forensic psychologist Briony Ariston evaluates Jamie's mental fitness in juvenile prison seven months after the murder. Briony tells Jamie that she wants to assess his comprehension of the case's details, not the whole. Jamie struggles for dominance. Briony urges Jamie to question masculinity, gender, and self-identity. Jamie claims that Katie sent a nude photo to an attractive student, who spread it across the school without her approval. Jamie suggested a date because Katie was uncomfortable, and her emotional fragility would increase her likelihood of consenting. She ignored him and commented on Instagram. Jamie's tone alternates between friendly and confrontational throughout the interview. He expresses fury, recognises his wish to kill Katie throughout the confrontation, and unintentionally confesses to murder. Jamie asks Briony whether she feels anything for him after she tells him this is their last session. Jamie's irritation grows as she doesn't respond. Jamie was escorted from the interview room by the security officer, making Briony appear uneasy.

As Jamie awaits trial, the Millers have tried to normalise the 13-month-old murder. Jamie's schoolmates mock Eddie and Adam and spray paint his automobile on his 50th birthday. Eddie takes Manda and Lisa to the movies later that day to cheer them up, but first, they stop by a hardware store to remove the car paint. Eddie is upset when a co-worker

recognises him and awkwardly helps Jamie. Ed buys paint for car repairs. The van vandals are threatened before he throws the paint can into his car in a fit of anger. Jamie admits guilt at home. Eddie and Manda confront Jamie at home for overlooking his radicalization on the internet. Lisa encourages Eddie to stay, knowing their ties to Jamie may have ramifications. While making breakfast, Manda and Lisa want to rent a video. Eddie cries alone on Jamie's bed. He kisses a teddy bear head on the bed and apologizes to Jamie before reuniting with his family.

6. Finding

6.1. OTT Platform

The online content of over-the-top (OTT) platforms is characterized by capacity, flexibility, immediacy, variety, freshness, a youth-centric approach, enhanced customization, user-friendliness, a non-temporal nature, and worldwide accessibility, all of which contribute to their growing appeal in the contemporary world. Small episodic storytelling strategies are characterized by increased audience participation, enhanced engagement, and more entertainment value, resulting in a significant shift of online content. Consumer preferences profoundly impact entertainment selections, which are primarily dictated by content, viewing patterns, spending on services, and the level of convenience provided [1].

6.2. Toxic Masculinity

The web series "Adolescence" talks about toxic masculinity [20]. It is a fictional drama, but it addresses a genuine concern: the increasing connection between online sexism and actual violence perpetrated against women and girls. Anti-women ideologies that undermine women's rights within the manosphere –digital spaces that propagate harmful notions of masculinity, reject feminist principles and foster animosity towards women. Toxic masculinity encompasses male aggression, detrimental masculine norms, and digital sexism. The series depicts the internal struggles of adolescent males: the relentless societal pressure to conform to masculinity, the insecurity stemming from perceived unattractiveness, and the need for feminine approval culminate in radicalization [21–23].

6.3. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying encompasses the utilisation of digital devices, including phones, computers, or online platforms, to perpetrate harassment through the dissemination of misleading messages, the propagation of false rumours, or the unauthorised sharing of personal information. In the "Adolescence" series, the police inspector, tasked with unravelling the complexities surrounding a teenage girl's murder, receives a revelation from his own son regarding a particular subculture among boys who are captivated by the online bullying propagated by the Tates. He elucidates to the officer, his father, that "incels," an abbreviation for "involuntarily celibate," resonate with and align themselves with the Tates' contempt for women. Nonetheless, should an individual attempt to intimidate someone, it is crucial to resist feelings of fear or powerlessness. Instead, one must approach the situation with discernment and seek guidance from parents and educators. Furthermore, it is prudent to exercise caution

when disseminating any images online or divulging personal information to unfamiliar individuals [24].

6.4. Social Media Content

Adolescence explores the fictional consequences of a teenage girl's stabbing, illustrating the detrimental effects of misogynistic influencers, cyberbullying, and online sexism on young individuals. It highlights how these factors distort perceptions and contribute to a significant policy crisis. This series has ignited an international discourse regarding the perils associated with social media. In this series, the progenitor of the offender stated that he imparted to his son the principles of navigating streets and the importance of avoiding interactions with unfamiliar individuals. However, he seldom instructs his son on how to traverse the complexities of the internet. Frequently, a pronounced disparity exists between the idyllic perception parents hold of their children's lives and the reality of their online activities. The program illustrates the phenomenon of young boys being drawn to their mobile devices and computer screens, consuming content that fosters a sense of anger and fear, portraying the world as a bleak and adversarial environment. following their consumption of harmful, misogynistic material readily accessible online [21-24].

Although it might be alluring to categorize the behaviours of men who perpetrate violence against women as purely monstrous, "Adolescence" intricately links the pervasive influence of social media with the increasing normalisation of cultural misogyny. This connection illustrates how effortlessly children like Jamie, the show's protagonist (portrayed by Owen Cooper), can receive perilous and potentially lethal messages regarding their societal roles. The boy utilises his Facebook and Instagram profiles to seek out women to satisfy his sexual urges. The child of a police officer conveys to his father that the sole method to unravel the murder mystery lies in the realm of the internet. The solution to the question of who was responsible for the girl's demise lies within the ongoing discourse among young men, who frequently express their views on women as harsh evaluators, quick to disregard those they deem unworthy of the elite 20 percent of appealing males [22-25].

6.5. Family Role

The father of the accused said he diligently instructs his kids about road crossing and the need to avoid conversations with strangers. However, he hardly instructs his children on how to navigate the internet. There often exists a conspicuous disparity between parents' naively idealised perception of their children's lives and the reality of their internet activities. The father of the accused told the police that he believes that his kid is doing assignments or just communicating with friends. But in reality, his kid was watching pornography, as DS Frank succinctly articulates.

The series emphasized the need for parents to instruct their children on how to properly navigate the internet, address various forms of bullying, and, most importantly, understand and regulate their emotions. Adolescence is a stage that requires guidance and support. Educational institutions can significantly assist teenagers and their guardians by providing training and facilitating open discussions about cyberbullying and internet safety.

6.6. Gender-Based Violence

Adolescence is not just drama; it serves as a profound and unsettling reminder of the perils confronting women and girls in contemporary society. Behind the fanciful narrative exists a grim reality unfolding in the homes, schools, and internet environments of youth across. This reality is influencing teenage males' perceptions of women and girls, leading to a concerning increase in maltreatment. The series addressed the involvement of an adolescent boy in the murder of his female classmate. The guys are subjected to information intended to provoke worries over their capacity to attract women. White males are particularly overwhelmed by pessimistic perceptions on their prospects of college admission, as they contend with a growing demographic of educated women, minorities, and immigrants. The outcome is disaffected and exasperated teenage white boys, along with several young males of colour.

6.7. Filming

Production began in the United Kingdom. Adolescence is characterised by its significant usage of single-take filming. The shooting was meticulously organized through numerous rehearsals, culminating in comprehensive technical run-throughs, during which the director of photography would strategically plan camera motions. Every episode lasts one hour. Episodes were presented as finished in a single take, devoid of edits or the integration of CGI for shot mixing. The episodes were filmed non-sequentially. Every episode of Adolescence is filmed in a continuous format, devoid of any edits. This is not only an impressive technological feat; how does it transition seamlessly from an above-crane shot to an intimate close-up, from a hallway to a vehicle inside, to a playground, without revealing any cuts? However, it provides an immersive and unyielding immediacy to the events. The camera is continuously engaged with the action. We are unable to do so as well. It is not a superficial gimmick but a method of intensifying the pulsating real-time stress. Episode two presents an exceptionally detailed depiction of a state secondary school.

6.8. Location

The filming sites for "Adolescence" included South Kirkby, South Elmsall, and Sheffield in Yorkshire. Minsthorpe Community College in South Elmsall served as the setting for the school sequences. The interior sequences of the police station were filmed on a specially designed set at the Production Park studio facility in South Kirkby, which facilitated the intricacies of single-shot filmmaking.

6.9. Mental health during adolescence

In the adolescence phase, it is common for individuals to experience mild anxiety and various challenges; however, more severe mental health conditions may also manifest during the adolescent years. Intervening at the initial stages of the problem can significantly enhance the likelihood of achieving optimal results. Numerous mental health problems that individuals face in adulthood sometimes originate during adolescence. Nevertheless, adolescents may experience anxiety, sadness, and other types of suffering that are developmentally typical and

may not persist. Determining whether an issue requires clinical intervention may be challenging; nonetheless, when uncertain, consulting a school counsellor or another mental health expert is advisable [26].

7. Conclusions

Adolescence series is a wail of despair and a call to action, combining artistic virtuosity, astonishing performances, and gut-punching force in a deadly combination. It will connect with disturbed adolescents, instill fear in their parents, and leave a lasting impression on spectators. The enquiries it presents are pressing and essential. Offering responses? Indeed, it constitutes the challenging aspect. It is our responsibility to address this urgent problem before further lives are lost. The series began with a 13-year-old boy being arrested for killing a female classmate. He vehemently defended himself against the police, a lawyer, and a psychiatrist after committing the crime, highlighting how our society has conditioned young men and boys to view the women in their lives as inferior. The narrative emphasised the development of child sexuality, physical grooming, and psychological grooming. And how these factors influence the shaping of a child's mindset. Physical grooming entails the incremental sexualisation of the connection between the perpetrator and the victim (Berliner & Conte, 1990). Psychological grooming is used to facilitate this heightened sexualisation.

Contemporary technology have made online platforms accessible for individuals to get knowledge, establish relationships, engage, and exchange data with one another. We must use these forums judiciously for the overall welfare of everyone. At times, we use social media platforms recklessly, whether consciously or unconsciously. Consulting with elders and educators may facilitate the constructive use of these venues.

The social media information to which we are exposed every day is seldom controlled. Narratives of hate speech have proliferated, and cyberbullying often remains inadequately handled. The drama spans four episodes and focuses on a 13-year-old kid accused of killing a classmate. It examines the influence of social media on contemporary teenage conduct, the effects of cyberbullying, and the emergence of online sexism. The series attempted to elucidate that social media exerts several detrimental effects on children and teenagers, including diminished mental and social well-being.

The "Adolescence" series emphasizes the digital ecosystem that influences contemporary youth. It elucidates how social media, particularly online "manosphere" groups, alters the perceptions of susceptible young males.

Multidisciplinary Domains

This research covers the domains: (a) media (b) adolescence issues (c) social media cons (new line) (d) New Media

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration on AI Usage

This manuscript has been prepared without the use of AI tools.

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