



Impact of OTT Thriller Recommendations on Students

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of Over-the-Top streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney Plus Hotstar has significantly transformed media consumption patterns among young audiences. Algorithm driven recommendation systems on these platforms play a crucial role in shaping user choices by continuously suggesting similar types of content, often encouraging passive and repetitive viewing habits. This study aims to examine the influence of OTT recommendation systems on viewing behaviour and genre preference among university students, with a particular focus on thriller content. It investigates whether frequent exposure to recommended content is associated with increased binge-watching tendencies and a preference for similar genres over time. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study, targeting students. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire assessing OTT usage patterns, reliance on platform recommendations, frequency of content consumption, and genre preferences.

Out of 81 total respondents, 55 students are regular consumer of thriller content. The analysis revealed that while platform recommendations heavily drive what students watch. Watching intense thrillers every single day actually makes students less sensitive to the content and leads to lower changes. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into how algorithm driven recommendations shape viewing habits, potentially leading to repetitive content consumption and reduced diversity in media choices among students in the OTT environment.

Keywords: OTT Platforms, Recommendation Algorithms, Binge Watching, Thriller Content, Students, Media Consumption



BACKGROUND

The rise of digital streaming has drastically shifted how young adults spend their free time. While the main goal of such media is to entertain, diving into dark and unsettling topics like crime and betrayal can have a real impact on a viewer's emotional state. Through smart recommendation systems, streaming platforms constantly push content based on what you have already watched. This creates a loop where viewers consume the exact same genres repeatedly. Thrillers are known for their dark, suspenseful plots that are full of tension and unpredictable twists. Streaming platforms make such shows easy to watch through autoplay and homepage suggestions, resulting in rise of questions on how this content affects the everyday behaviour and attitude of students. Some media theories suggest that viewers can build a psychological wall to protect themselves from negative emotions while watching fiction. However, it is important to understand that extensive and prolonged exposure to such content can impact students to adapt and incorporate such attitude into their real-world behaviour. The study is to find if they start copying character dialogues, shifting their personal attitudes, or reacting more sharply to everyday situations. It also explores the direct impact of streaming recommendations on students, looking closely at how their age and how often they watch the thriller content.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a descriptive and correlational study that relies on a quantitative questionnaire survey. The overall consumption rates were studied; how behaviour changes based on age and viewing frequency, and specific behavioural trends among people who actively watch thrillers.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Consuming recommended thriller content on streaming platforms has a significant behavioural impact on students.
- **H0:** Consuming recommended thriller content on streaming platforms has no significant behavioural impact on students.

Participants

The research uses a non-probability snowball sampling technique to gather data. The target



population was university students and young adults. A total of 81 responses were collected, and a study was done on a specific subset of 55 participants who actively watch thriller content.

Inclusion Criteria

Students or young adults and who actively consume content on streaming.

Exclusion Criteria

Anyone who does not use these platforms or who falls well outside the student age.

Method and Procedure

The data was collected using a structured online google form with 29 itemed questionnaires. The participants were asked to select the genres they watch so that a clear identification of thriller content viewers could be done. It included a specific subset of 8 questions to measure behavioural changes (like copying dialogue or noticing attitude shifts) using Likert Scale. The responses were averaged to create a Mean Impact Score out of 5.0 to measure exactly how much the content impacted their behaviour and attitude. The survey was distributed digitally, and all instructions were clearly provided at the start of the form.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The raw survey data was collected, processed in Microsoft Excel and statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. In order to meet the objectives of this study, a systematic series of statistical procedures was applied in a smooth and logical order. Initially, descriptive statistics involving frequencies and cross-tabulations were utilized to establish the overall genre preferences and specific thriller consumption rates across different age demographics. Following which a composite metric termed the Mean Impact Score was developed to accurately quantify how the content affected the students. This score was calculated by taking the mathematical average of the responses from the eight specific behavioural questions, all of which were measured on a standard five-point Likert scale. This single unified metric allowed for a clear, direct comparison of the overall behavioural impact against the various viewing frequencies reported by the participants. Finally, Pearson's Chi-Square Test of Independence was employed to determine whether specific behavioural adaptations, such as discussing intense scenes with peers or internalizing attitude changes, held a statistically significant relationship with the age of the viewers.



RESULT:

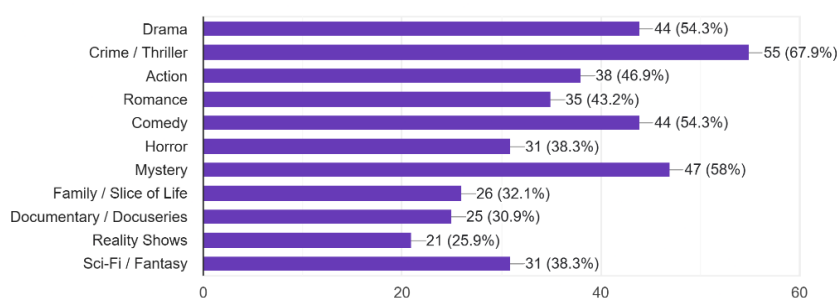
Age Group	Number of Thriller Watchers	Mean Impact Score (out of 5.0)	Level of Behavioural Impact
18-22	29	3.03	Moderate
23-27	21	3.27	High
28-35	3	2.96	Moderate
35+	2	2.38	Low

- Overall Mean Impact Score: 3.09 out of 5.0
- Final Overall Impact Rate: 61.9 percent

The data shows a clear and moderately high impact on students. With an impact rate of nearly 62 percent, it is obvious that these algorithm driven recommendations do more than just entertain. They actively shape how the majority of these students think, speak, and interact with the world around them.

Out of the total sample of 81 university respondents, the genre preference is heavily skewed toward crime and thriller content are:

What type of content do you usually watch on OTT platforms?
81 responses





- **Watches Thriller Content:** 55 students (67.9%)
- **Watches Other Content Primarily:** 26 students (32.1%)
- **Rate: 6.8 out of 10** students watch thriller content.

To understand the distribution of this consumption, the data was cross-tabulated by age group.

Age Group	Watches Thriller Content	Watches Other Content	Total in Age Group	Percentage Watching Thriller
18-22	29	15	44	65.9%
23-27	21	9	30	70.0%
28-35	3	2	5	60.0%
35+	2	0	2	100.0%*

(Note: The 35+ category has a very small sample size).

OTT recommendation algorithms are highly successful in pushing thriller content to the student demographic, successfully capturing nearly 70% of the audience. The **23-27 age group** holds the highest proportional viewership, indicating that young adults navigating their mid-twenties are the most naturally drawn to dark, fast-paced, and intense storylines i.e. nearly 7 out of every 10 students consumes thriller content on OTT platforms.

Table: Mean Impact Score by Frequency (N = 55)

Frequency of Watching Thriller Content	Number of Respondents	Mean Impact Score (out of 5.0)
I binge watch!	3	3.38
Once a week	14	3.28
Frequently in a week	19	3.09
Sometimes (Once in 2-3 days)	16	3.06
Everyday	3	2.75

The data provides a conclusive **"No"** to the premise that everyday viewing causes the highest impact. Among students who watch thrillers, those who watch *Everyday* report the lowest impact score (2.75). Conversely, those who *Binge watch* (3.38) or watch *Once a week* (3.28)



display the highest levels of adaptation, such as using dialogue styles from shows in real life or noticing changes in their attitude.

This highlights a clear **desensitization effect**. Chronic, daily exposure to the intense and suspenseful themes of thriller content normalizes the psychological triggers for the viewer, reducing their outward reactions over time. In contrast, moderated or highly concentrated viewing (once a week or bingeing a specific series) leaves a sharper psychological imprint.

Age Group	Number of Thriller Watchers	Mean Impact Score (out of 5.0)	Level of Impact
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23-27	21	3.27	High
28-35	3	2.96	Moderate
35+	2	2.38	Low

The **23-27 age group** is definitively the most impacted by the thriller content they consume, showing the highest propensity to adapt their real-world attitude to the media they watch.

To uncover specific trends, Pearson's Chi-Square Test of Independence was applied against the 'Age' variable across all 8 individual impact questions for the 55 thriller watchers.

Impact Question	Chi-Square Value	p-value	Significant? (p < 0.05)
1. Use phrases/dialogue styles?	12.047	0.442	No
2. Way of speaking adapted to tone?	14.175	0.290	No
3. Reacting more sharply in situations?	12.649	0.395	No
4. Notice changes in attitude?	15.905	0.196	No
5. Imagine real-life situations like scenes?	13.630	0.325	No
6. Discuss thriller scenes/characters with friends?	21.779	0.040	Yes
7. Popular shows influence how people behave?	8.065	0.780	No
8. Notice trends among students?	7.514	0.822	No



For internal psychological shifts (e.g., attitude changes, reacting sharply, imagining real-life scenarios), the p-values were strictly greater than 0.05. This indicates that the internal psychological impact of thriller content affects all students universally, regardless of their age. However, one highly significant finding emerged regarding outward behaviour: **Discussing thriller scenes with friends ($p = 0.040$)**. The data proves that the *social* manifestation of watching thrillers is heavily dictated by age. Younger demographics (18-27) are significantly more likely to vocalize and discuss the intense themes with peers, effectively using OTT thriller content as a form of social currency, whereas older students internalize the content without discussing it.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on the targeted analysis of the dataset, the following key findings were established regarding the impact of OTT thriller recommendations on students:

1. **High Attraction Rate:** Algorithm-driven recommendation systems on OTT platforms are highly effective at capturing the student demographic, with nearly 68% (6.8 out of 10) of surveyed students actively consuming thriller and crime content.
2. **The Desensitization Effect:** Viewing frequency has an inverse relationship with impact at the extreme end. Everyday viewers of thriller content exhibit the lowest changes (2.75 out of 5.0), indicating emotional and psychological desensitization. Conversely, binge-watchers and weekly viewers retain higher levels of adaptation.
3. **Peak Vulnerability in Mid-Twenties:** Among those who watch thrillers, the 23-27 age demographic is the most impacted (scoring 3.27 out of 5.0), displaying the highest likelihood of mimicking show.
4. **Age-Dependent Social Discussion:** While the internal psychological impact of thrillers is relatively uniform across all ages, the outward social expression is not. Younger students are statistically ($p = 0.040$) more likely to discuss dark and intense themes with their peers, making the genre a staple of their social interactions.
5. **Substantial Overall Impact:** The final impact rate for students consuming thriller content sits at 61.9% (3.09 out of 5.0), confirming that OTT algorithms actively shape real-world student's attitude and behaviour.



CONCLUSION

The rapid expansion of OTT platforms and their algorithm-driven recommendation systems play a crucial role in guiding user choices, often encouraging repetitive viewership. This study aimed to examine how this continuous algorithmic push of intense thriller content impacts the university students.

The findings confirm that OTT platforms do not merely serve as a source of passive entertainment; they actively shape the media diets and subsequent real-world attitude of the student's demographic with nearly 70% of students regularly consuming recommended thriller content, the genre's dark, fast-paced themes have established a deep footprint, particularly among the 23-27 age group.

Interestingly, the study uncovered a notable desensitization effect: while moderated weekly viewing or binge-watching leaves a sharp psychological imprint on the students, prompting them to adopt character dialogues and attitudes. Chronic daily exposure dulls this behavioural mimicry by a significant rate. Furthermore, while the internal psychological shifts caused by intense media affect all ages equally, the outward social discussion of these themes is highly prevalent among younger students, transforming isolated viewing habits into shared social experience.

Ultimately, this research provides vital insights into how algorithm-driven recommendations potentially reduce diversity in media choices and foster environments where intense genres continuously influence student. Future studies should consider longitudinal approaches to track how these algorithmic loops condition emotional and psychological resilience over extended periods.

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