

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

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Volume 6 | Issue 2

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2023

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# Psychosocial Impact of OTT Platform on Youth in the Post-Covid Era

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## ABSTRACT

*In India, OTT platforms are starting to run and gain popularity because young people are viewed as social media junkies. Web series have become platforms for promoting alcohol, smoking, tobacco, drugs, and weed without highlighting the negative consequences. Insomnia, melancholy, obesity, and eye disorders are becoming more common among young people. Youth academic achievement has also been impacted by web series. Thus, impacting their psychological health with social life.*

*Second, there is no adequate law, guidelines, or regulations; therefore, the content exhibited on these platforms is uncontrolled. Several petitions have been made in courts trying to limit the information published on these platforms, such as Amazon and Netflix. No rule or authority is in place to pre-screen material on OTT services. In 2021, the Indian government issued new standards called the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, which attempt to control digital media and OTT services but do not address contemporary societal demands.*

**Keywords:** OTT Platform, Web Series, Impact on Youth, E-Learning, Online Streaming.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, young people prefer using the Internet. Because young people are viewed as social media junkies, OTT platforms are swiftly starting to run and gain popularity in India. The television serial lasts for many years, while web series on OTT platforms are brief and feature fresh ideas and inventiveness. It frequently depicts the present condition and has unpredictable stories. Web series are also not time-limited. It is available for viewing at all times and from any location. Because viewers may watch various web series based on their preferences and interests, they are becoming more popular in India.

Over-the-top (OTT) media services are internet streaming platforms that have been quite popular recently. The number of paying users to OTT sites like Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hotstar, and many others increased by 30% due to the closure of theatres due to the Covid 19-led

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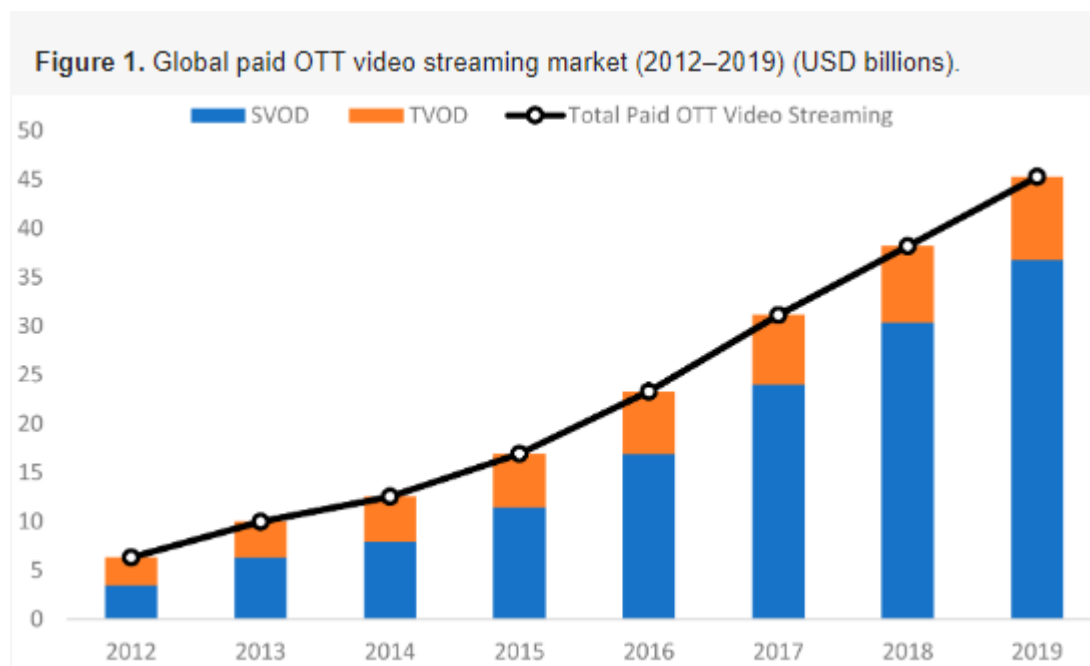
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Lockdown. These platforms are renowned for offering an extensive library of new, different, and original material and unconventional stories for a valid membership.



Source: Lee, Lee, Joo, & Nam, 2021.

The OTT video industry is quickly growing. Online video subscription sales, for example, are predicted to rise from \$12.5 billion in 2014 to \$45.26 billion in 2019, including subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) and transactional video-on-demand (TVOD) services. (In general, SVOD service members pay a monthly subscription (a fixed rate) for access to premium content. TVOD providers charge pay-per-view access to on-demand files or live streaming. SVOD and TVOD are examples of paid OTT services.) (See Figure 1)<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, as of January 2020, Netflix, the global leader in OTT service providers, has 167 million streaming customers. Forecasters expect that by 2025, the number of Netflix streaming service consumers globally will be around 237 million<sup>6</sup>.

Except for being supervised by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) and Information Technology Act, 2000, like all other online material, OTT platforms are not subject to laws or bodies. Like Netflix's self-imposed maturity ratings, these sites have their self-regulation and censoring criteria.

Global television production has seen a significant transformation due to the Internet. Our

<sup>5</sup> Lee, Lee, Joo, & Nam, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> GLOBAL NUMBER OF SVOD SUBSCRIBERS BY SERVICE 2027 STATISTA, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1052770/global-svod-subscriber-count-by-platform/> (last visited Feb 20, 2023).

culture is significantly impacted by web series and streaming entertainment, especially among young people. The internet entertainment market in India has grown considerably during the past several years. This is made feasible by the shifting lifestyles of Indian viewers, the shift in the types of information they consume, and the variety of internet streaming services used to provide the content to them. There has been a significant increase in the number of people visiting websites for content online, as well as in the amount of time spent doing so, due to the advent of faster and less expensive internet services in the form of mobile connections and the widespread availability of broadband services.

Youngsters are more prone to mimic and adapt their behaviour as they can readily relate to what is portrayed on internet platforms and other video material. It then causes several behavioural alterations in young people. Their behaviour and ideas it has a significant and lasting effect. It also has adverse effects, such as how the youths' entire socialisation process has been impacted. Insomnia, melancholy, obesity, and eye disorders are becoming more common among young people. Youth academic achievement has also been affected. Web shows seldom address sexually transmitted illnesses or unintended pregnancies. The web series has become a platform for promoting alcohol, smoking, tobacco, drugs, and weed without highlighting the negative consequences.

An assortment of incidences where the young have committed crimes after being motivated by such platforms' initiatives has lately been reported, demonstrating the profound influence on youth. From kidnapping to murder, the teenagers confessed in police custody that they sought to emulate the crime after viewing the web series.

## **II. NEED FOR AN OTT PLATFORM**

Besides watching web series on different platforms, the OTT platform can also be used for education. The severe Covid-19 epidemic, which prompted the closure of all schools, institutions, and universities across India, only acted as a drive for further adoption of E-learning methodologies. Online learning was considered a solution during the epidemic, but watching how virtual classrooms are now embraced as the norm rather than an alternative to emergency lockdowns is remarkable.

The Indian education system is dynamic, meeting the academic needs of 260 million pupils enrolled in over 1.5 million schools and 27.5 million undergraduate and 4 million postgraduate students studying in over 42000 institutions. As India's population grows alarmingly, it places enormous strain on insufficient resources to provide the quality education that every kid deserves.

Recently, several Ed-Tech platforms have been geared up to address the education challenge and supply what is required using modern technology. Educational OTTs have empowered instructors and students by providing new tools and ways. It has reshaped the education industry, allowing it to break free from the old four-wall classroom paradigm.

Since Internet technology makes OTT platforms possible, India's constantly growing internet user base offers the ideal environment for Ed-tech platforms to function. The number of active Internet users in India is anticipated to rise 45 percent during the following five years, reaching 900 million by 2025. By 2022, it is predicted that the online education sector will be worth USD 18 billion.

#### **(A) Availability and Approachability:**

More than 70% of India's population lives in rural areas, where various constraints directly impact the country's literacy rate. Because OTT education is not physically dependent on the classroom, one of its significant advantages is that customers may obtain quality-driven education from anywhere at any time. An OTT platform allows students to access past information, pause the lecture, and take short notes simultaneously. OTTs in education also help with memory retention and engagement by letting students explore and absorb content more practically.

Many Education OTTs provide courses at far lower costs than many private colleges. They aim to provide education while keeping it affordable and enabling students from lower and middle-income families. Nearly 85% of India's population earns less than Rs. 8 lakhs per year, and the goal of many OTT platforms is to make education affordable rather than a luxury.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, in addition to watching online series and entertainment material on OTT platforms. It can be used for information and may also be utilised for educational purposes, making it available to anybody at any time and location at a low cost and affordable rate and with quick access. Some examples of it are Byjus, Eduncle, etc.

#### **(B) Objectives of the study**

1. To know the need for an OTT platform.
2. To assess the Impact of the OTT platform on youth.
3. To understand the law relating to OTT platforms in India and other countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Bharat Dhiman, The practice of Media Education and media research: A review on five Asian countries *Global Media Journal* (2021), <https://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/the-practice-of-media-education-and-media-research-a-review-on-five-asian-countries.php?aid=90157> (last visited Feb 20, 2023).

4. To identify the advantages and disadvantages of the OTT platform.
5. To make valuable recommendations based on the findings.

### (C) Methodology

The present research is based on secondary data accessible by various agencies and organisations. The current study uses the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the Government of India, newspapers, periodicals, books, numerous journals, research papers, the Internet, and other sources.

### (D) Impact on youth

The younger generation, primarily teens and adults aged 18 to 30, is the primary target audience for web series and other internet streaming material. However, the target demographic is from 30 to 50 years old. These internet video streaming services cater to the 'binge-watch' strategy.

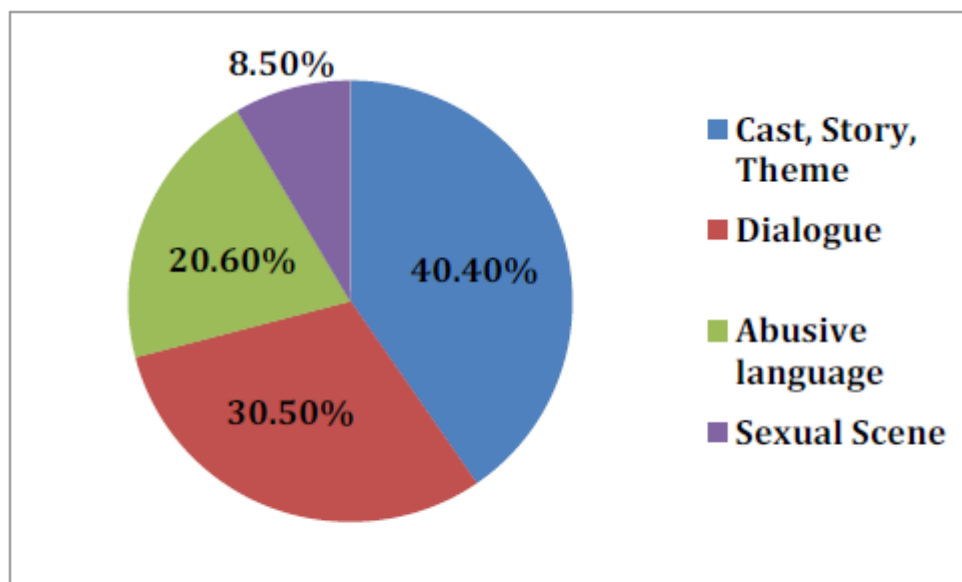


Figure 2 What affect you most to watch the web series?

Source: Dhiman & Malik, n.d.

When asked which components of the web series touched them the most, 40.40 percent said they liked the characters, plot, and premise, while 30.50 percent liked the language and dialogues<sup>8</sup>. 8.50% of those polled approved of the sex scene, while 20.60% approved of the profanity and commented with hidden meanings. Notably, 8.50% of respondents indicated they watched web series because they had sexual material (Figure 2)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> David A. Schweidel & Wendy W. Moe, *Binge Watching and Advertising* Sage Journals (2016), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1509/jm.15.0258> (last visited Feb 20, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Dhiman & Malik, n.d.

Online Streaming Services gave fans to complete TV libraries, resulting in "binge-watching"<sup>10</sup> (For a better understanding, imagine you have decided to sit and watch only one of the online series episodes for a day, which scarcely takes 30 minutes. You find yourself enticed to watch more and more episodes, even though you know you'll be wasting several hours of your day doing so.)," in which fans watch consecutive episodes of a single TV series in one sitting. Shows are now mainly designed for binge-watchers.

Working on this strategy allows these platforms to attract young people searching for pleasure on their smartphones or laptops. Today's television soap operas are monotonous, pointless, and lack innovation; instead, people want drama, humour, action, love & romance, excitement, and other genres delivered to them via online series or episodes.

This material contains excessive harsh language, hostility, vulgarity, and a spirit of rebellion against parents, nation, law, religion, and other social taboos. It deals with innovation and ingenuity, but it also has a solid ability to capture the attention of the youth. Finally, it offers a variety of themes, concepts, and ideas that the Indian youngster may be ignorant of or be inspired by.

They have less time for personal connection because they are addicted to the Internet and online information, which harms their physical and mental growth. It is well known that teenagers are more prone to mimic and adapt other people's behaviour since they can readily relate to what they see on online web programs and other video material. As a result, it causes many behavioural changes in today's youngsters. It not only makes them aggressive in their behaviour and thinking, but it is also likely to impact them with what they have seen regularly, such as smoking, drinking, drugs, nudity, and vulgarity, which are usually portrayed in these online web programs. This leads to the development of various harmful behaviours at a young age.

As a result, because youngsters are sensitive to them, proper control of the OTT platform and other online streaming material is critical. Suitable checks and processes should be implemented to make significant and pertinent material available to society, which benefits young people and stimulates them to strive for their personal and the nation's wealth and health.

### **III. THE LAW RELATING TO THE OTT PLATFORM AND ITS GOVERNANCE**

*"Content streamed via OTT Platforms is not broadcast, that is, it is not intended for public exhibition, but rather for private watching, and hence cannot be controlled under the*

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<sup>10</sup> Peterson Theodore (2016) to binge or not to binge: A qualitative analysis of college students' binge-watching habits. Fla Commun J 44:77-88.

*Cinematographic Act, 1952.*"<sup>11</sup> and thus cannot be regarded similarly to television or cinema. As a result, forming an inter-ministerial committee (IMC) following the recommendations mentioned above is not the ideal option.

Since OTT platforms are now included, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)<sup>12</sup>, a statutory entity under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), may currently be involved in regulating and filtering OTT content. Suppose the CBFC is given the power to control and censor online content. In that case, it will be subject to the same restrictions as cinema and television broadcasts due to "obscenity," "immorality," and "religious emotions," all of which are vague and open-ended terms that restrict creative freedom.

In response to Piyush Goyal's call for the entertainment sector to self-regulate its OTT platforms, which he said may poorly reflect Indian culture, 15 platforms signed a self-regulation agreement drafted by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)<sup>13</sup> to control their streaming material. Content descriptions and maturity ratings would accomplish this. The platforms took this action to prevent censorship. This code has had three revisions, the most recent being in September 2020. However, despite having a comprehensive list of forbidden information, the MIB disregarded the code since there were inadequate channels for grievance resolution.

The Supreme Court issued a Notice to IAMAI and the Centre in November 2020 following the hearing of a petition to regulate OTT platforms. Subsequently, a notification was made public stating that all online curated content providers (OCCPs), including OTT platforms, fall under the purview of the Ministry of Information and Broadcast rather than Meity.

Including OTT under MIB would represent a shift in administrative authority. A transition to a more ministerial MIB would pave the way for the government to draught laws and publish a list of illegal content. The government produced recommendations named Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021,<sup>14</sup> in February 2021, which discuss a three-tier regulating structure for digital news media and OTT platforms.

These requirements for OTT platforms indicate that they must comply with Indian laws, not stream anything that violates India's integrity and sovereignty, ensure the country's security and cordial ties with foreign countries, and not broadcast content that may disrupt public order. The

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<sup>11</sup> Padmanabh Shankar vs Union of India & Ors. (W.P. 6050/2019), 2019 0 ILR(Kar) 4630; 2019 6 KarLJ 603; 2019 0 Supreme (Kar) 812.

<sup>12</sup> It is a statutory body under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, regulating the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952.

<sup>13</sup> Established in 2004, the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) is a not-for-profit industry body and the country's only organization representing the digital services industry.

<sup>14</sup> The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 were notified on February 25, 2021, to replace the 2011 Rules.



platforms have also been wary of different ethnic and religious views and behaviours.

It is necessary to set up a three-tiered conflict resolution mechanism. The platforms themselves will choose a first-tier grievance resolution procedure. The second tier consists of a self-regulatory organisation run by a former Supreme Court, High Court judge, or similarly illustrious person. The third tier will be an inter-ministerial committee (IMC), which the government created as an "oversight mechanism." The Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC)<sup>15</sup> and the TV industries' establishment processes will be the same, including this committee.

The platforms must also contain age ratings for each age group, including "U" or universal ratings.

#### **IV. THE LAW RELATING TO THE OTT PLATFORM AND ITS GOVERNANCE IN DIFFERENT NATIONS<sup>16</sup>**

##### **(A) In the United Kingdom**

In September 2018, the BBC, one of the most well-known media organisations in the UK, criticised the UK government for failing to regulate these OTT platforms. In addition, a statement from the British Board of Film Certification saying they would be working with Netflix was issued since these OTT sites were not subject to formal regulations. This Agreement provides that the Board shall help Netflix establish its ratings for all the content accessible on its website. Furthermore, these OTT sites are now not subject to any strict regulations. The UK government is reportedly working on these measures as well.

##### **(B) In Singapore**

In Singapore, the regulatory authority, IMDA, or the Infocomm Media Development Authority, created a code to oversee these OTT platforms in 2018. The content regulation is straightforward.

Furthermore, according to government standards, the OTT platform will now be required to rate the material offered on their platform and the movies, just as it is done for offline cinemas. Specific instructions have been included in this code for the content available to visitors above the age of 16 or 21, which is the appropriate age.

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<sup>15</sup> Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC), the independent self-regulatory body for non-news general entertainment channels set up by the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF) in June 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Aradhya Singh, REGULATION CODE FOR OTT CONTENT LEGAL SERVICE INDIA - LAW, LAWYERS AND LEGAL RESOURCES, <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-8260-regulation-code-for-ott-content.html> (last visited Feb 19, 2023).

It further states that the platform must ensure that a parental lock option is accessible when the content is available for those aged 16 and up, as well as having an excellent protocol to open such content following age verification for those aged 21 and above. Furthermore, the regulatory authority has notified these OTT platforms while omitting them from the specified code. Moreover, they must adhere to Singapore's existing regulations under the new restrictions.

*Some nations have put up controls on OTT platforms directly or have other legislation to govern OTT platforms, and their content includes Australia, Turkey, Indonesia, Kenya, and Saudi Arabia.*<sup>17</sup>

### **(C) Advantages and Disadvantages of the OTT platform**

#### **a. Advantages:**

1. Convenience: OTT systems enable consumers to watch content on their preferred devices anytime and from any location.
2. Wide variety of content: Movies, TV series, live events, and original material are abundant on OTT platforms.
3. Cost-effective: OTT platforms are frequently less expensive than traditional cable or satellite television subscriptions.
4. Personalization: OTT services are frequently less expensive than traditional cable or satellite TV subscriptions.
5. Accessibility: OTT services may be accessed without regard to geography, allowing one to watch material from many nations.
6. Flexibility: OTT systems include the ability to pause, rewind, or fast-forward material, as well as the option to view it later.

#### **b. Disadvantages:**

1. Internet Connectivity: To work correctly, OTT platforms require a stable and fast internet connection. Users with wrong internet access locations may face buffering or lengthy loading times, making it difficult to watch their favourite material.
2. Subscription Costs: While OTT platforms are often less expensive than traditional cable or satellite TV subscriptions, the expenses can increase if customers subscribe to many providers. For individuals on a low budget, this might be a drawback.

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<sup>17</sup> Vasudha Venugopal, What different countries are doing to regulate content on OTT platforms The Economic Times (2021), <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/what-different-countries-are-doing-to-regulate-content-on-ott-platforms/articleshow/80437858.cms?from=mdr> (last visited Feb 19, 2023).

3. **Limited Content:** While many OTT platforms provide diverse material, they may not have access to all the episodes and movies users want. Users may need to subscribe to various services to watch all the desired material.
4. **Exclusive Content:** Some OTT providers create exclusive material unavailable on other services. This might be inconvenient for consumers who want to view a specific episode or movie without signing up for several services.
5. **Data Privacy:** Some users may be concerned about their privacy on OTT platforms, as these services collect information about their viewing habits and preferences. This data might be used for targeted advertising or sold to third parties, which can be inconvenient for users worried about their privacy.
6. **Technical issues:** OTT platforms may encounter technical challenges like app failures, server errors, or device compatibility concerns. These flaws can aggravate consumers, particularly if they cannot access their preferred material.
7. **Regulating issues:**
  - 1) **Content regulation:** One of the most significant concerns of OTT platforms in India is content control. Concerns have been expressed by the government and the general public regarding the content displayed on these platforms, including sexually explicit content, violence, and religious emotion. The Indian government introduced new guidelines in 2021 called the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, which aim to regulate digital media and OTT services.
  - 2) **Censorship:** Some people have called for censoring material on OTT services. However, this has been a contentious subject, with some claiming that censorship would violate free speech and creative expression.
  - 3) **Taxation:** Taxation is another problem concerning OTT platforms in India. There has been discussion on whether these platforms should be taxed like traditional television channels, and if so, at what rate.
  - 4) **Ownership and control:** Concerns have been expressed in India over the ownership and control of OTT platforms. Some call for greater openness on who owns these platforms and where their financing originates.
  - 5) **Competition and market dominance:** Finally, concerns have been voiced concerning OTT industry competitiveness and market domination. Some believe a few significant

businesses' power might hinder competition and harm consumers.

Overall, OTT platform regulation challenges in India are complicated and multidimensional. There are various perspectives on addressing these challenges, and finding acceptable answers will need continual discourse and debate. Though OTT platforms have numerous benefits, they also have drawbacks that consumers should be informed of before subscribing and safeguarded from.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS**

Based on the findings and consider advantages and disadvantages. Here are some suggestions for doing so:

1. **Improve content quality:** An OTT platform's most significant feature is its content. It is critical to provide high-quality material that is interesting and relevant to users' interests to attract and keep them. Consider investing in original content as well as obtaining film and television rights.
2. **Enhance user experience:** The material provided by an OTT platform is the most significant component of it. High-quality material that is interesting and relevant to their interests is essential to attract and keep users. Consider investing in original material and purchasing existing movies and television series rights.
3. **Increase accessibility:** One platform must be available to many users. This involves making content available on various devices, including smartphones, tablets, and smart TVs. One should consider giving several pricing tiers to make it more accessible to consumers with varying budgets.
4. **Control costs:** While investing in content and technology to strengthen any
5. **OTT platform is critical,** and it is also vital to keep expenses under control. Monitor expenses and search for methods to optimise processes and cut wasteful spending.
6. **Manage your data:** Any OTT platform's data is a significant asset. It may assist one in better understanding user behaviour and preferences and making data-driven decisions regarding content and services. However, managing this data appropriately and maintaining user privacy is critical.
7. **Monitor performance:** Finally, checking one's OTT platform's functioning is critical. This includes monitoring technical performance as well as measuring user engagement and feedback. Use this information to discover areas for improvement and make changes as needed.

8. Content regulation, Certification, and Censorship: Content regulation is one of India's most pressing challenges for OTT services. The government and the general population have voiced concerns over the information published on these sites, which includes sexually explicit content, violence, and religious sentiment. Some have advocated for the censorship of content on OTT platforms. Conversely, censorship has been a divisive issue, with some contending that it violates free speech and creative expression. Platforms must also include age ratings for each age group and "U" or universal ratings.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

It has been demonstrated that web series and online streaming material on OTT platforms greatly influence the Indian young. The web series content featured on internet platforms captures the interest of young people. The content on OTT platforms is violent, sexual, and abusive, causing psychological repercussions among Indian kids. According to the research and the youngsters, they had low levels of rage, aggressiveness, anxiety, and sadness. It will cause severe psychological problems in the youngster if it becomes unmanageable.

Education OTTs, on the other hand, are altering the face of education by raising learning standards and better preparing students for a knowledge-driven world. Millions of students are flocking to Education OTT for good reasons, indicating that online learning is here to stay. So, we may say that we need OTT platforms, but they must be appropriately controlled and managed.

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