



The Dynamics of Broadcasting Law and Reality TV in India: Legal and Ethical Challenges

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Abstract

In India, television reality programs have become a popular genre thanks to its relevant themes and lively content. But their quick expansion has spurred discussions about moral behavior, the effects on society, and legal issues. With an emphasis on reality television, this essay critically evaluates India's broadcasting laws and regulations, assessing how well they handle issues with participant exploitation, content manipulation, and cultural deterioration. The paper explores the legal framework that governs broadcasting in India, including the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) and the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. It draws attention to the shortcomings of current legislation, which is vague in addressing the subtleties of reality programs and results in problems like manufactured narratives, participant psychological suffering, and transgressions of decency standards. These difficulties are highlighted by case studies of well-known programs like Bigg Boss, Indian Idol, and Roadies, which offer insights into the sociocultural ramifications of such programming. The study also identifies areas for improvement by contrasting India's broadcasting laws with international regulatory standards. Among the recommendations are the introduction of specific rules for reality television, the reinforcement of self-control systems, and the encouragement of media literacy among audiences. Reforming broadcasting laws in the digital age is essential, according to the report, which promotes a balanced strategy that protects the public interest, participant welfare, and creative freedom. By emphasizing the necessity of strong controls in India's changing media landscape, this study seeks to advance the conversation on media ethics and policy.

Key Words: Broadcasting Law, Reality TV, Ethical Challenges, Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian television industry, driven by its reach and cultural diversity, has evolved into a powerful medium of entertainment and information. Reality TV, characterized by unscripted content featuring ordinary people or celebrities, has emerged as a dominant genre. Shows like *Bigg Boss*, *Indian Idol*, and *Roadies* have garnered massive viewership, but they also face criticism for sensationalism, exploitation, and ethical lapses. This paper seeks to analyze the broadcasting laws and policies regulating these shows, evaluate their adequacy, and suggest improvements to address emerging challenges.¹

India is a multicultural nation. There are 850 different languages and dialects that Indians can use to express themselves. There are several socio cultural areas, and each one has unique insights about its people, religion, lifestyles, customs, patterns of behavior, cuisine, and fashion, among other things. One of the most fascinating and difficult aspects for the media and communications moguls has been Indian diversity.²

The media and entertainment sector has seen a number of trends. From the time before independence to the present, the Indian media business has undergone significant change. The invention of the press, radio, television, satellite television, and now the internet is some of the significant turning points in this journey. These sites have all been producing material for India's diverse population. Reality shows are one of the newest trends in programming that Indian young are attempting to catch up with.³

Television broadcasting in India has undergone a transformative journey since the inception of *Doordarshan* in 1959. From state-controlled programming to the liberalized, multi-channel landscape of today, the medium has emerged as a cornerstone of Indian society. Among the many genres of television content, reality shows have become particularly popular, offering a blend of entertainment, competition, and drama. Shows like *Bigg Boss*, *Indian Idol*, and *Roadies* have captured the imagination of millions, creating a distinct space in the entertainment ecosystem⁴.

Reality shows are often celebrated for their relatability and ability to discover hidden talent. However, they have also sparked criticism for their sensationalism, ethical lapses, and potential negative impact on participants and society. Concerns range from scripted content misrepresented as reality to the exploitation of participants especially minors and the promotion of stereotypes or questionable behaviour. These issues raise questions about the adequacy of the laws and policies governing such programs in India.⁵

¹ Kohli-Khandekar, Vanita. 2010. "The Indian Media Business." 2nd ed. Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt.

² Divan, Madhavi Goradia. 2010. "Facets of Media Law." Lucknow: Eastern Book Company. P23

³ Trivedi, Darshan Ashwin. "Television Reality Shows and Their Influence on Youth in Gujarat with Respect to The Broadcasting Code of Conduct Between Years 2006 - 2011." Gujarat National Law University, Doctor of Philosophy, thesis, 2016, gnlu.ac.in/Content/gnlu/pdf/phd-programme/1-DARSHAN-ASHWIN-TRIVEDISYNOPSIS.pdf.

⁴ KPMG in India. 2016. "The Future: Now Streaming". Mumbai: FICCI-KPMG. Accessed August 12, 2016. [h<ps://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2016/04/The-Future-now-streaming.pdf](https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2016/04/The-Future-now-streaming.pdf) p25

⁵ Sinha, Mona. 2013. "Reality television in India and Emerging Narratives of the Contemporary Indian Woman." Accessed March 9, 2013. <http://www.interdisciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/sinhaspaper>.



The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and self-regulatory organizations like the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) are examples of the legal framework governing broadcasting in India that was created for a conventional media environment. However, a rigorous re-evaluation of existing standards is required due to the particular difficulties presented by reality television, which range from participant welfare to the wider societal impact.⁶

This paper aims to analyze the broadcasting laws and policies in India through the lens of reality television shows, exploring regulatory gaps, ethical concerns, and the socio cultural impact of such programming. By studying case examples and comparing India's approach with international practices, the paper seeks to propose actionable recommendations for fostering a more balanced and accountable broadcasting environment.

2. BROADCASTING IN INDIA

Television broadcasting in India began with the launch of *Doordarshan* in 1959, marking a new era of state-controlled media focused on education, information, and cultural preservation. For decades, *Doordarshan* held a monopoly, with limited programming designed to cater to rural and urban audiences alike. The economic liberalization of the 1990s dramatically transformed this landscape. The advent of satellite television, deregulation of the broadcasting sector, and the entry of private players ushered in a multichannel era that catered to diverse tastes and preferences.⁷

The 1990s and 2000s saw the emergence of privately owned channels, such as Zee TV, Star Plus, and Sony Entertainment Television, offering a mix of news, entertainment, and niche programming. This period also witnessed the growth of regional channels, catering to India's linguistically and culturally diverse population. With increased competition, broadcasters turned to innovative formats, including reality TV, to capture viewership.⁸

India now boasts over 900 television channels, including a significant number of entertainment, news, and regional language channels. The rise of over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hotstar has further diversified content consumption. Reality shows, due to their appeal across demographics, have become a staple of television programming, blending entertainment with viewer participation through interactive formats.⁸

Reality television, as a genre, represents a unique challenge to existing regulations. Unlike scripted programming, it often blurs the lines between fact and fiction, requiring nuanced oversight. Issues such as the portrayal of violence, obscenity, and exploitation of participants remain inadequately addressed under current laws, necessitating a critical review of the regulatory framework. The evolution of broadcasting in India demonstrates the need for dynamic policies that keep pace with technological advancements and changing audience preferences.

⁶ Gupta, Ankit. 2014. "The Dialects and Languages of India". Accessed February, p16. 2016. <http://www.desiblitiz.com/content/dialects-languages-india>

⁷ Kumar, Keval J. 2013. "Mass Communication in India." Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, p36 ⁸ Laughey, Dan. 2008. "Key Themes in Media Theory." Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

⁸ Kohli-Khandekar, Vanita. 2010. "The Indian Media Business." 2nd ed. Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt., p98.

Reality television, as a significant component of contemporary programming, serves as a litmus test for the effectiveness of India's broadcasting laws and policies.⁹

3. LEGAL AND REGULATORY PROVISIONS FOR BROADCASTING

The Indian Telegraph Act of 1885, which has been in effect for 123 years, was the legal basis for the government's monopoly of the broadcast business. This monopoly lasted until the 1990s, when satellite television was introduced for the first time. In accordance with the Act, the Central Government is the sole authority in India that is authorized to construct, provide maintenance for, and operate telegraphs. In accordance with the Act and its subsequent changes, the term "telegraph" is defined in a broad sense to include the vast majority of modern communication devices, irrespective of the technology that underpins them. According to the pronouncements of the courts, the term "telegraph" embraces a wide range of technologies, including wireless, mobile, video, television, radio, and telephone. The broadcasting sector in India operates under a combination of constitutional provisions, statutory laws, and self-regulatory mechanisms. While these frameworks aim to ensure responsible content dissemination, the unique challenges posed by reality television, such as ethical lapses, participant welfare, and sensationalism, often highlight regulatory gaps. Broadcasting in India is governed by a mix of constitutional provisions, statutory laws, and self-regulation.¹⁰

Broadcasters are entitled to the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a). permits media organizations to freely produce and distribute material by guaranteeing the right to freedom of speech and expression. This freedom is subject to reasonable limitations under Article 19(2), which take morality and public decency into account. Imposes reasonable restrictions on this freedom in the interests of decency, morality, public order, and national security. These provisions set the balance between creative freedom and societal responsibility, a critical consideration in the context of reality TV shows¹¹.

A number of laws pertaining to content control, licensing, and digital improvements form the foundation of India's statutory framework for broadcasting. Although these regulations regulate broadcasting in general, their application to reality television reveals a number of difficulties and shortcomings.¹²

4. CABLE TELEVISION NETWORKS (REGULATION) ACT, 1995

The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 was enacted by the Government of India to regulate the operation of cable television networks across the country.¹³ The Act's primary aim is

⁹ Praveen Swami, "Public Service Broadcasting?", *Frontline*, Vol 14, No 23, November 15-28, 1997

¹⁰ Vikram Raghavan, *Communications Law in India*, New Delhi: Lexis Nexis Butterworths, 2007

¹¹ Article 19(1) in Constitution of India, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1142233/>

¹² Garg, Rachit. "An analysis of The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 - iPleaders." *iPleaders*, 10 Apr. 2023, blog.ipleaders.in/an-analysis-of-the-cable-television-networks-regulation-act-1995.

¹³ "Changes in Cable Television Network Rules." *Drishti IAS*, www.drishtiias.com/daily-news-analysis/changesin-cable-television-network-rules.

to ensure that the content broadcasted via cable networks adheres to established norms and does not harm public decency, morality, or security. All cable television operators must register with the government to operate legally.¹⁴ Unregistered cable networks are deemed illegal under this Act. The Act prohibits the transmission of programs that are obscene, defamatory, or likely to incite violence or disrupt public order. Cable operators are required to ensure that their content complies with the Programme Code and Advertising Code, as outlined in the rules. Only channels permitted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting can be relayed. Pirated channels or unauthorized retransmissions are strictly prohibited. The government can prohibit the transmission or re-transmission of any cable service in public interest, national security, or to maintain public order. Authorities can seize equipment of operators found violating the provisions of the Act. Violations of the Act attract penalties, including fines and imprisonment. Repeat offenses may result in harsher penalties, including cancellation of the operator's license. The Act was later amended to support the transition to digital cable TV services, ensuring better quality and more channels for consumers. In order to handle new technologies and issues, such as the digitization of cable services and the regulation of Direct-to-Home (DTH) services, the Act has been amended. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, which strikes a balance between the need for responsible content regulation and freedom of expression, continues to be a key piece of legislation managing India's broadcast media landscape.

5. Cinematograph act, 1952

The Cinematograph Act, which was passed in 1952 and regulates the certification, display, and control of films in India. Achieving a balance between creative freedom and public order, morality, and decency is the goal of this idea. In order to comply with the Act, films must first be certified before being shown to the public.¹⁵ The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), which is more widely known as the "Censor Board," is the organization that is accountable for evaluating and officially certifying films. The following are the four categories that films fall into: "U" Universal, appropriate for audience members of all ages. Parental supervision is obligatory for youngsters who are younger than 12 years old. "A" This content is only intended for adults who are at least 18 years old. "R" A restricted audience, such as professionals, is the target demographic for this product. "S" Constitute a danger to the public order, morality, or decency. Incite criminal activity, put national security at risk, or interfere with cordial relations with other nations. Obscene, defamatory, or seditious content may be contained within the content. In accordance with the recommendations made by the CBFC, films may be certified subject to revisions or cuts. Films that have not been certified are not allowed to be shown in public. Punishments, such as monetary fines and even jail time, may be imposed for such violations. The Act allows for the formation of advisory panels that will provide assistance to the CBFC. These

¹⁴ Garg, Rachit. "An analysis of The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 - iPleaders." iPleaders, 10 Apr. 2023, blog.ipleaders.in/an-analysis-of-the-cable-television-networks-regulation-act-1995.

¹⁵ Keerthana, S. "CABLE TELEVISION NETWORK (REGULATION) ACT, 1995." Jus Scriptum, 23 June 2024, www.jusscriptumlaw.com/post/cable-television-network-regulation-act-1995.

panels will ensure that cultural and regional perspectives from a variety of backgrounds are represented¹⁶. The federal government has the ability to: Command the CBFC to re-evaluate a film that has been certified. The suspension or revocation of film certifications should be considered necessary in the interest of the public. The exhibition of films that have not been approved, the making of changes without authorization, or the falsification of film certifications can result in serious consequences, such as jail and monetary fines. Multiple amendments have been made to the Act in order to accommodate different cultural standards, technological breakthroughs, and industry practices that have evolved over time. Particularly noteworthy is the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023, which increased the severity of penalties for piracy and changed the certification procedure in order to address concerns over the freedom of creative expression.¹⁷ In order to regulate the Indian film business, the Cinematograph Act of 1952 plays a significant role. This act strikes a balance between protecting creative expression and ensuring that films adhere to societal and cultural norms to ensure that the industry is regulated effectively. In addition to this, it safeguards viewers, particularly notably vulnerable groups such as children, from potentially dangerous information.¹⁸

6. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACT, 2000

Regulates content on digital platforms, including OTT services where reality shows are often streamed. Sections 66A (now struck down) and 67 penalize obscene or offensive content in electronic form. The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) is a foundational legislation in India governing cyber activities, electronic commerce, and digital content. Over time, it has been extended to regulate the rapidly evolving Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms that distribute digital content like movies, web series, and shows over the internet. Although the Act does not explicitly mention OTT platforms, several provisions and subsequent amendments or rules impact their functioning.¹⁹

- [i] **Intermediary Status:** OTT platforms are classified as intermediaries under the IT Act. As intermediaries, they must comply with specific due diligence requirements to avoid liability for user-generated or hosted content.
- [ii] **Information Technology (Digital Media Ethics Code and Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2021:** In order to expressly govern OTT platforms and digital media, certain regulations were introduced under the IT Act. Age Restrictions and Content Classification: Content must be categorized as U, U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A. Parental locks and age verification systems for pornographic material are examples of access control techniques that OTT platforms must offer.

¹⁶ Pragya Paliwal, Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 decriminalized, Ministry of Information & Broadcast (5th October 2023 5.03 pm), <https://pib.gov.in>.

¹⁷ Shiv Cable TV system v. State of Rajasthan (1993) 2 SCC 476.

¹⁸ Keerthana, S. "CABLE TELEVISION NETWORK (REGULATION) ACT, 1995." Jus Scriptum, 23 June 2024, www.jusscriptumlaw.com/post/cable-television-network-regulation-act-1995.

¹⁹ Ministry of information and broadcasting v. M/S Gemini TV. Pvt. Ltd. (2004) 5 SCC 714.

- [iii] **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** OTT platforms are required to appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO). Users can file complaints about content, and the GRO must resolve them within 15 days.
- [iv] **Three-Tier Regulatory Framework:** Level I: Self-regulation by the platform, involving adherence to a code of ethics. Level II: Oversight by an industry selfregulatory body. Level III: Government oversight via an inter-departmental committee that can examine complaints and recommend actions like content modification or removal.
- [v] **Content Liability:** Platforms must ensure that their content does not:
 - Violate public decency or morality.
 - Promote violence or hatred.
 - Endanger national security or public order.

Non-compliance can result in takedown notices and penalties. Section 69A of the IT Act: The government can block access to content on OTT platforms if it is deemed a threat to:

- Sovereignty and integrity of India.
- Defence and security of the state.
- Friendly relations with foreign states.
- Public order or to prevent incitement of offenses.
- Content takedown requests are issued in line with these provisions.

Penalties and Compliance: Non-compliance with the IT Act or its rules can lead to penalties, including fines and imprisonment for platform officials. Repeated violations may lead to blocking the platform itself.²⁰

The OTT industry has expressed concerns about over-regulation stifling creative freedom. Lack of clear guidelines on certain aspects of content regulation creates confusion. Implementation and monitoring require significant resources, raising concerns about consistency. The legal environment for over-the-top (OTT) platforms in India is significantly shaped by the IT Act, 2000 and the 2021 regulations. It addresses the particular difficulties presented by digital media material while attempting to find a balance between permitting artistic expression and safeguarding the public interest.²¹

7. THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS), 2023

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) functions in a more comprehensive framework that is provided by the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill, 2023. The goal of this measure is to

²⁰ Legal Service India. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. www.legalserviceindia.com/helpline/cable.htm.

²¹ Ramanuj. "How to Register Cyber Crime Complaint With Cyber Cell of Police - Online Complaint Procedure." iPleaders, 28 Jan. 2022, blog.ipleaders.in/how-to-register-cyber-crime-complaint-with-cyber-cell-of-policeonline-complaint-procedure.

completely control the broadcasting industry, guaranteeing just and equal content distribution and encouraging openness in media businesses' business practices. Nevertheless, the measure mostly concentrates on legal structures and falls short in addressing the subtleties of media manipulation and digital disinformation²². Supporting independent and investigative journalism can counterbalance the spread of misinformation. Providing financial and legal protections for journalists can ensure that truthful and critical reporting continues unabated. With the rise of OTT platforms, 24/7 news channels, and social media, the BNS provides a framework to prevent misuse of broadcasting rights. It ensures accountability while balancing freedom of the press with public order and decency.²³ The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita thus aims to create a robust legal foundation for regulating media broadcasting in India, addressing modern challenges while upholding constitutional freedoms.

8. THE CABLE TELEVISION NETWORKS (REGULATION) ACT, 1995

In order to control the activities and programming of cable television networks in India, the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 was passed. It dealt with the quick and unchecked growth of cable TV networks, which raised issues with social cohesion, national interest, and program quality. Regulation of Content: To ensure that programs broadcasted via cable networks adhere to ethical and legal standards, promoting decency, morality, and public interest. To prevent unregistered and unauthorized operators from running cable networks. To address the "haphazard mushrooming" of cable networks that lacked oversight, leading to issues like piracy and unregulated content dissemination.

District magistrates, sub-divisional magistrates, and police commissioners are designated as 'authorised officers' under the Act. These officers ensure compliance with the Programme Code and take action against violations, such as banning objectionable content or penalizing operators.²⁴ It is unlawful to operate a cable television network without being registered under this Act. Registration helps maintain a database of operators and ensures accountability in their operations.²⁵ Cable operators must transmit channels in an encrypted format through a Digital Addressable System (DAS) when directed by the Central Government.²⁶ Violations of the Act,

²² Section 294 of The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023: Sale, etc., of obscene books, etc. – (1) For the purposes of sub-section (2), a book, pamphlet, paper, writing, drawing, painting, representation, figure or any other object, including display of any content in electronic form shall be deemed to be obscene if it is lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest or if its effect, or (where it comprises two or more distinct items) the effect of any one of its items, is, if taken as a whole, such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it.

²³ Section 296 of The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023: Obscene acts and songs: – "Whoever, to the annoyance of others, – (a) does any obscene act in any public place; or (b) sings, recites or utters any obscene song, ballad or words, in or near any public place, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both".

²⁴ Section 2 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

²⁵ Section 3 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

²⁶ Section 4A of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

such as broadcasting unregistered channels or contravening content regulations, are punishable. Penalties include fines and imprisonment, depending on the severity of the violation²⁷. Authorised officers have the power to prohibit the transmission of programs that: Promote disharmony or feelings of enmity between religious, racial, linguistic, or regional groups. Incite hatred, ill-will, or unrest. This section ensures that content aired does not disrupt public harmony or national integrity.²⁸ The Parliament can prohibit the operation of cable networks in situations where public interest or national security is at stake. This section provides the highest authority to intervene and take decisive action against networks violating the Act.²⁹ The Act ensures that cable content adheres to a defined code of ethics and legal standards. Provisions like Sections 19 and 20 protect societal harmony by prohibiting content that could disrupt peace or incite violence. By mandating encrypted transmissions (Section 4A), the Act supports the transition to digital broadcasting, improving content delivery and combating piracy. Registration (Section 3) and penalties (Section 16) bring accountability to cable operators, ensuring better compliance with laws. This Act has been pivotal in managing the rapid growth of the cable television industry, ensuring that it operates responsibly and aligns with the interests of society and the nation.

9. TV REALITY SHOWS: LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Despite being branded as unscripted, many reality shows are criticized for being heavily scripted to boost TRPs. Television reality shows, characterized by their unscripted content and appeal to public emotions, have become a significant form of entertainment globally. However, these shows often raise legal and ethical concerns due to their nature, production methods, and impact on participants and viewers.

10. CONTENT REGULATION

- Reality shows sometimes feature obscene, violent, or inappropriate content, violating the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and Programme Code standards³⁰.
- Shows featuring children may breach child protection laws, such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, or violate child labor regulations.
- Participants often sign contracts with confidentiality clauses and unfair terms, leading to disputes over payment, exploitation, or rights violations.
- The use of hidden cameras, personal revelations, or public airing of private disputes can lead to breaches of privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and other laws like the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- Publicly airing conflicts or derogatory remarks may lead to defamation suits against the producers or participants.

²⁷ Section 16 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

²⁸ Section 19 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

²⁹ Section 20 of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

³⁰ Union Of India Ministry of Information v. Board of Control For Cricket In Indi, Decisoned on 22 August, 2017, available at- <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/39373148/>

- Unauthorized adaptations of foreign reality show formats may lead to intellectual property disputes under Copyright Act, 1957.
- False claims about the authenticity of content or manipulating results of competitions can be challenged under Consumer Protection Act, 2019 or Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 for cheating or fraud.

11. ETHICAL ISSUES

- Producers often exploit participants emotionally or physically by creating stressful environments for higher TRPs (Television Rating Points). Vulnerable individuals, such as children or marginalized groups, are particularly at risk.³¹
- Shows are often edited to create artificial drama, misrepresenting facts and influencing public perception. Participants may face severe mental health challenges due to public scrutiny, competition pressure, and post-show rejection.
- Viewers, especially impressionable audiences, may be negatively influenced by unhealthy or aggressive behaviors portrayed on-screen.
- Reality shows sometimes promote stereotypes, ridicule cultural practices, or foster divisive attitudes.
- Excessive focus on voyeuristic content and conflict-driven narratives can harm societal values and encourage voyeurism among viewers.

12. CASE STUDIES

- **Bigg Boss:** Known for its controversial content and interpersonal drama, Bigg Boss has faced numerous complaints for violating decency norms.
- **Indian Idol:** While celebrated for discovering talent, the show has been criticized for emotional manipulation during auditions and contestant backstories.
- **Roadies:** A mix of adventure and interpersonal conflict, Roadies has been accused of promoting toxic behavior and glorifying aggression.

13. CONCLUSION

Television reality shows have redefined entertainment in India but come with significant ethical and legal challenges. A robust regulatory framework, coupled with selfregulation and media literacy, is essential to safeguard public interest while fostering creative freedom. As media consumption evolves, so must the policies that govern it, ensuring a harmonious relationship between content creators and viewers.

This paper critically examines the intersection of broadcasting law and reality television in India, focusing on the genre's rapid rise and the complex legal and ethical challenges it presents. Reality TV, characterized by its blend of competition, entertainment, and emotional narratives, has become a staple in Indian media. Shows like *Bigg Boss*, *Indian Idol*, and *Roadies* have captured

³¹ Shiv Cable TV System v. The State of Rajasthan and Ors., AIR 1993 (Raj.)197

widespread attention but are frequently criticized for sensationalism, exploitation, and questionable ethical practices.

The study begins by exploring the evolution of television broadcasting in India, from the state-controlled Doordarshan era to the diverse, liberalized, and multi-channel landscape of today. It delves into the specific legal frameworks that govern broadcasting, including the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and self-regulatory mechanisms like the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC). The analysis identifies significant regulatory gaps, particularly in addressing issues unique to reality TV, such as manipulated content, exploitation of participants, and violations of societal norms.

The paper also highlights key ethical concerns, such as the psychological impact on participants, the promotion of stereotypes, and the influence of aggressive or voyeuristic content on viewers. Case studies of popular shows illustrate these issues, shedding light on the sociocultural implications of reality programming. These include introducing specific regulations for reality television, enhancing participant welfare, promoting media literacy, and fostering a balanced approach that respects both creative freedom and public interest. By addressing the unique challenges posed by reality TV, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on media ethics and policy, emphasizing the need for a dynamic and adaptive regulatory framework in India's evolving media landscape.

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