



# Coaching as New Education System: A Thematic Content Analysis of Web Series 'Kota Factory'

<sup>1</sup>Aarzoo Sharma and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Manoj Dayal

<sup>1</sup>UGC- Junior Research Fellow, <sup>2</sup>Senior Professor

Department of Communication Management and Technology, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar, India

## Authors Note

**Correspondence to:** Aarzoo Sharma, Department of Communication management and Technology, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar-125001, India

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## Abstract

These days OTT platforms have come up as alternative media which are managing to portray everyday life stories of all strata of society. Television and movies seemed lacking in the capability of showcasing the vivid aspects of common man. Media is considered as a channel of infotainment. Media not only display the norms and beliefs of societies but also influence in shaping them. The present web series selected for the study is portraying students' life who are aspiring for IIT and AIIMES (one of the premier institutes of India). The researchers have employed thematic content analysis to sketch the portrait of education system in general and coaching system in particular in the web series 'Kota factory' season one and season two. How is youth of students engaged in the pressure of career selection and how do they go through the lacunae of education system of school and coaching is portrayed by the characters. How do students go through the burden of engineered self expectations, family and societal pressure in career selection, peer pressure and gender stereotypes in education? How do pedagogy flaws, nominal role of school education is dealt by the students in getting aspired career?

**Keywords:** OTT, education system, coaching system, pedagogy, pressure, web series, thematic content analysis

Mass media is a tool to spread information on various issues like development, education, environment and climate change, gender stereotypes, socio-eco- political issues to masses. In a democratic country, media plays an essential role in working and strengthening of the democracy. It act as a bridge between general public and governing bodies. With the advent of digital media, it has become even more easy to voice the issues in no time and collecting responses of the targeted audience. Along with television and films, OTT platforms are portraying different issues and problems in the society. The portrayal of specific issues has major impact in understanding of that issue in the society. OTT platforms like Youtube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee5 etc. are streaming content which is being liked and related by the audience at a large extent.

Sankar (2021) studied the consumer behavior of parents who strive to reduce dissonance while selecting a particular coaching class for preparation for JEE exams and the tools which are used by the coaching industries to influence the decision of students and parents. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is used by the coaching industry by offering scholarships and conducting entrance examinations. Singh et al. (2011) noted that in the time of the competitive market, small and medium coaching classes can be benefited from service marketing, advertising and promotion, market research, and other management principles that can sway public opinion in the favor of marketers. Alluring them in the name of packages that one gets after completing the course acts as a primary stimulator to attract millions of students as probable customers of coaching classes.

Kotler (2014) explained IMC is "the concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications to deliver a clear, consistent message about the organisation and its products. Almost all coaching classes through their website, billboards and newspaper ads position themselves consistently as the must-attend classes to realise any kid's educational aspirations in middle school. The concept of aspirational marketing is utilised in these IMC efforts where it is made clear that coaching classes are the panacea for all educational needs and opens the door to big-dollar packages. The advertising appeals used to invoke the aspirations are very strong".

Choudhury et al. (2021) verified that the coaching industry is accessible only to the selected students based on their economic status. Therefore, economic fortune is the key factor in determining whether the student will attend the coaching.

## Literature Review

Gupta (2012) found that females have no choice while selecting an educational institution. In the case of women, parents play a significant role in selecting educational institutes which are often determined by their proximity to the home and marriage-related concerns. Mukhopadhyay et al. (1994) analysed that marriage and career options are interrelated for women. The groom prefers a financially independent bride who can go to work and help reduce the cost of living in urban areas. However, the choice of colleges for women is made according to proximity and it is the reason that women tend to focus on state-level engineering exams like UPTU. Apart from this, male-dominated colleges are avoided by women due to reputational, social, and marriage-related risks. The exploratory study conducted by Gautam (2015) on female students indicated that subject selection in higher education is influenced by the parents and school. Female safety, attached hostel with institutions, the reputation of the college, 'marriageability', and single-sex institutes were the key factors for determining the subject for women. Lower middle class and lower class males and females suffer equally due to lack of resources but the females are on the more disadvantageous side relative to males. Das and Desai (2003) stated that even when women get educated the same thing does not ensure female participation in the workplace. Sahni and Shankar (2011) described that increases in growth do not ensure development. Similarly, education for females does not ensure inclusiveness. It was accepted in the study that the condition of women has improved from pre-independence times. But female inclusiveness remains an issue unsettled.

The socio-economic status of the students is vital in determining their performance in competitive examinations. Kumar (2016) noted that 80% of students who were able to clear the IIT-Advanced exams had done their schooling from only three boards in the country i.e. CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), Punjab State Board, and Andhra Pradesh Board. Therefore, students doing their schooling from other state boards are in a disadvantageous position in relation to those students who come from affluent backgrounds and have access to good boards and coaching institutes. It is suggested that the curriculum of all state boards can be made at par with each other to raise the quality of education and ensure equality within the country (Kumar, 2016). This will ensure that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds skip the hefty fees of coaching institutes and rely on state boards to clear competitive exams.

Kaur (2021) while discussing the role of parents in the success of students outline that educated mothers have to sacrifice their career to raise children. Globalisation and modernisation have changed the way of living for parents but the intergenerational aspirations that the children will take their name forward in society remained untouched (Croll, 2006). Parents see their success in the success of their children and financially independent parents seek social recognition through their children.

Mishra and Singh's (2017) study on the coaching institutes of Kota has concluded that the choice of coming to Kota for the study is influenced by parents, peers, and coaching class. The disparity is noticed between the students and high performers who are taken care in holistic way by coaching institutes to save their business. While other students do not get quality teaching. Moreover, the lack of reasonable accommodation adds to the misery of students who are preparing for competitive examinations. Mishra and Singh (2017) noticed that there is no counselling in the majority of coaching and a lack of extracurricular activities increases the pressure on students which leads to a rise in the suicide rate.

Sharma (2018) remarked that teacher education is as important as school education. Without teacher education, curriculum creation and implementation can not match the essence of documents created for the revival of school pedagogy by policymakers. The gap between school education and society can be filled only with effective teacher education. Ørberg (2018) has argued that due to improper implementation of curriculum, shadow education has emerged in India where coaching industries are filling the gap left by school education. This kind of system is seen to be benefiting only financially well-off students. And a particular place gets famous for such education like Kota has become the epicenter for JEE exams. Punjabi (2019) find the same thing that private coaching is more strategic and effective than school education. The researcher observed that private coaching has tried to imitate the evaluation procedure of formal schooling like phase-wise examination. And due to the upper hand in teaching the fundamentals of physics, chemistry, and mathematics in school education, has created an alternate system of education in the country. Even the teachers from formal schooling have left their job to pursue high-paying careers in the private coaching industry. Punjabi (2019) suggests that the school needs to upgrade its human resources and revive its teaching curriculum to ensure that the education remains enough for cracking any competitive examination.

## Objectives

The present paper has applied thematic content analysis to examine how Indian education system is represented in the widely viewed and appreciated web series 'Kota factory'.

Specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore characteristics of Indian education system portrayed on Indian web series.
2. To examine distinct patterns and themes of Indian education system vis-a-vis coaching trend.

## Research Methodology

We reviewed numerous articles which showed that the commonly used method for analysing film and web series content was qualitative thematic analysis. In the present study, Indian education system is understood through

portrayal of the same by the method of qualitative thematic content analysis. The education system of India and how it affects students and society as a whole is represented in the web series 'Kota factory', season one and season two. For the purpose of studying this representation for this research paper, the above discussed method found to be appropriate. According to Braun and Clarke(2012) thematic analysis is defined as "identifying a research problem systematically and organising the problem to give insights into the observed patterns of meanings of themes." Thematic content analysis start with familiarisation of content, generation of coding, identifying themes in the content, review themes, defining themes and report writing".

All the episodes of the web series 'Kota factory' season one and season two were watched to familiarise with the content showed. After that a table of codes was formulated based on the characteristics of Indian education system. In the next phase, codes were grouped to arrive on themes that emerged from the data or content of web series. Commonly found patterns made into four themes that were defined and literature was reviewed in accordance of it. The data was analysed and presented in these themes through dialogues, storyline, camera, and characters. This way by identifying themes and patterns interpretation of the meaning in the portrayal was reported.

Based on patterns shown in the web series, the table below is drawn out for characteristics of Indian education system.

Table 1. Characteristics of Indian education system

Business
Economic pressure
Lack of regulatory frameworks
High coaching fees
Disinformation and marketing
Rat race in career selection
Inferiority complex in children
High self expectations
High external expectations
Pressure of family and society
Anxiousness in students
Peer pressure
Frustration and stress
One design fit for all method of teaching
Lack of research based education design
Pedagogy flaws
Lack of teacher training mechanism
Gender stereotypes
Gender inequality in discipline choice
Lack of sexual education
Friends and career
Lack of Career selection counselling

The table will be used as codes in qualitative thematic content analysis of the portrayal of education system in India in the selected web series.



## Analysis and Discussion

Kota factory is an Indian web series created by Saurabh Khanna and directed by Raghav Subbu streamed its season one on OTT service "The viral fever" on YouTube in 2019 and streamed season two of this series on OTT platforms Netflix in 2021. TVF or viral fever is targeting younger generation of the country for issue selection and audience selection. This web series has chosen monochrome settings to create effect of realism and mundane and boring life of IIT aspirants. How are the students isolated from the rest of the world and are busy in same daily routines for years? The story revolves around an 16 year old IIT aspirant Vaibhav Pandey, who had came from Itarsi to Kota for the dream career of getting into premier engineering institute. At the very opening of the series, bird eye view angle showed the city is crowded with buildings of coaching classes and hostels, justifying the title of the series. Creative cinematography, sound design along with long shots and close up shots encompassing pain, happiness, mundaneness, frustration, anxiety, confusion and all sort of emotions played aptly by the characters bring immersive experience to the audiences.

Media and content showed on it create an considerable amount of impact on understanding of various issues and subjects. Therefore qualitative content analysis of content is matter of investigation to know the perception of society and audiences on that subjects.

### 1. Commercialisation of education

Education is building block of any country and if education become a business , the whole purpose of the education is lost. India has thousands of coaching centers offering IIT entrance coachings and Kota city of Rajsthan has become hub of this business. This web series is inspired by IIT aspirants and it has portrayed coaching system and student life from a close lens. This series has posed many questions before education system. Like why do students need coaching at all? Why are schools not able to provide education needed to get into premier institutes of India? Do schools play just nominal role to be eligible to sit in IIT entrance exam or AIIMES entrance exam. What coaching have that schools do not have? Is coaching the only thing they need to get into their dream career and school is secondary or just give marksheets on the piece of paper which does not count in IIT entrance. When Vaibhav's father along with Vaibhav went to Prodigy classes after being rejected by Maheswari classes( largest brand in the city), he asked:

Textual evidence 1

Vaibhav's Father: Which school is better?

Office boy: What does it matter. We have tied up with all three. Do not need to go.

The close observation of the director is seen in the eyes and dialogues of the characters in this series. The millions of students give this exam every year to complete their marketed and advertised dream of IIT or AIIMES. But this poses a question before teachers, students and parents; Are all students same? Are all students have required aptitude, skills or characteristics of becoming an engineer or doctor. Do we as a developing society need engineers and doctors only. Why society has this attitude if someone is IITian or AIIMESian is the only successful person? Then except rankers and who qualify in IIT or AIIMES, what rest of the students do in the coaching classes. Do they run the coaching business of billions.

When Jeetu bhiya ( fame teacher of Kota city) asked Vaibhav that if he knows for whom this whole coaching material is designed, meant the same.

Textual evidence 2

Jeetu bhiya: Do you know this all Kota, this all coaching, material, Daily practice problem sheets, ready reckoner are designed for whom?

Vaibhav: For students (in low pitch and low volume)

Jeetu bhiya: For RANKERS ( in high pitch and high volume) And we are not. We only copy. Then what is for us? Fees? (emphasised). The rankers get facilitated from fees of students like you and people like us make a living out of it.

According to CRISIL(Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited) coaching industry worth 702 billion business by 2021 and growing at a rate of 13 percent every year. Coaching industry is one of largest businesses in India and now with the advent of digital technologies and internet availability, it is growing even more faster without any cap by the government. Coaching classes are converting into schools, colleges and universities to expand their businesses even more that too with enormous tuition fees. This reality is captured and displayed by the characters in the series very well with use of humor and satire.

### Textual evidence 3

Jeetu Sir: Your brother-in-law would not let you leave . He still wants to open Prodigy international school, Engineering college and universities. And he will need someone over there who can give salaries to people.

## 2. Pressure Continuum

In the process of advertising, marketing and selling this dream to the students and to the parents a series of pressure is shown on the lives of aspirants. This pressure ranges from self created pressure to pressure created by peers to pressure created by family and then society as a whole.

### a. Personal frustration

False and engineered dream of engineering become a living death for the students. They try their best to cope up with the syllabus, teachers, teaching methods and their critical age issues. But an unmanageable mess is created in the students' lives who are not meant to be in engineering. Personal frustrations and havoc in their studies let them do even more wrong things like drugs, alcohol, depression and social media mania. Their critical years of career and personality development are put in vain due to the rat race in which they run. Frustrations and pressure on them is portrayed by the characters in satirical and realistic way.

Textual evidence from the third episode of season one series, in the faculty change scenes is given:

Uday: "Batla should be changed.

Infact, every teacher in this coaching should be changed. No, no, no. This coaching industry should change. Exam pattern, Syllabus, Currículum, pedagogy should change. IIT should change. This whole education system should change. And for that, patriarchy should change"

(Uday is friend of protagonist Vaibhav Pandey who also had came to crack IIT entrance in Kota)

### b. Peer Pressure

Teenage is the age where major transitions occur in students' life whether physically or mentally. They want to experience new things and explore all around. At this time proper communication with them become utmost important. At home or at school, if they do not get a communication channel, they become vulnerable and can harm themselves or their studies. At last they tend to turn to their immature friends for seeking advice. They unnecessarily imitate what they watch in films without knowing pros and cons of the action. They feel obliged to do the same what their friends are doing even if they were not likely to do that.

## Textual evidence 1

Shivangi: Oh mature guy!

Is she invisible to you? You two like each other, but you won't admit it. You are in the same class, but keep on ignoring each other. You have complicated everything for no reason. So, let's decide what you are going to do next nine months. Do you want to stalk each other and keep track of what other person is doing? Or do you want to date each other? If you do, then there's a cafe. Go and have a talk.

(Shivangi is girlfriend of Uday and friend of Revati who is love interest of Vaibhav)

## c. Parents and Societal pressure

Every student who is taking coaching to get into IIT or AIIMES is not there because they themselves want to do that. But still they take toll for years in pressure and some may feel themselves as failure for their life time or they commit suicide in shame and disgust. IIT is engineered as a dream in the minds of parents and society through marketing and advertising tactics as much that they link it with their proud and ego.

## Textual evidence 2

When Vaibhav meets Piyush( his friend from Itarsi) to take help to cope up with routine problems and study pressure.

Piyush: "Then I had to leave Maheswari and I am doing individual coaching now.(Crying) ...How could I tell you."

"*Papa ne purey itarsi m dhol pit diya h ki m Maheswari m hu*".(My father has told to everyone living in Itarsi that I am in Maheswari Classes)

All Itarsi think that I would definitely get into IIT.

## Textual evidence 3

Varnali: When we aim big, then entire neighborhood and family got to know about it. And when it is not achieved, the aunts start gossiping.

(Varnali is a student studying in Jitu Sir's new coaching classes)

Family and society measures every individual in one scale neglecting individuality of children and compare their success.

## Textual evidence 4

Sushrut: But no, everyone provoked me(crying). They said "If that dimwit can get into IIT then you will definitely clear. And I fool, get provoked. I thought as I did class ten, I will clear IIT too".

(Sushrut is Vaibhav's friend of Maheswari classes)

Even if students recognise that they are not made for it or they can not do it. They are forced by parents as they belong to affluent background and it is the matter of their prestige now.

## Textual evidence 5

Uday: I am not able to do that dear. I am unable to concentrate. I can't sit for six-six hours like you all. Then what I do. You tell Meena what I do. Tell me. Shall I leap to death, hang or run away. I can't go back too my friend. What people will say. What happened; Could not get selected in IIT?

(Uday's father is a government officer who wants him to get into IIT as it is the matter of their respect.)

The only solution of all your problems is portrayed as this single exam. The success in life will be decided by only one entrance. Primarily, males in Indian society are moved in this pressure by this exam. This increases pressure as their whole masculinity comes into question.

#### Textual evidence 6

Maheswari Sir: Where will you make it in life, how grand your home is going to be, how beautiful your wife will be, will your children visit Europe or their grandparents in vacations? Will you drive SUV, Sedan or Hatchback, all will be decided by this exam..(pause)... And I strongly believe there are only successful men in this world and unsuccessful..(pause)...are not men.

### 3. Gender stereotypes in Education

Why Indian parents think "doctor if daughter and engineer if son". Not only in counselling of students but there is big lack of counselling of parents in choosing career of their children and this is portrayed in the series aptly. Female participation in engineering field is restricted by their family just because of their gender. As a result of it, male members of the society tend to think, women are originally weak in engineering aptitude.

#### Textual evidence 1

Meena: She solve P.C. doubts

Vaibhav: Why you solve only Physics, Chemistry not maths. Your maths would be weak, isn't it?

Shivangi: "I was strongest in Maths and weak in biology". But my father is an IITian So, doing Biology. He himself is IITian no, So he knows the reality of IIT. How can he send his only daughter among highly thirsty testosterone engineers? He would not be able to see meiosis?

Another stereotype is portrayed in the form of humor and quite effectively. Colour distinction is associated with females, so this could be the reason that they are very good in arts, chemistry lab work, cooking and other stuffs which are not manly.

#### Textual evidence 2

Vaibhav: They don't even name the colours simply. It's not green. It's apple green. It's not red. It's crimson red. Not pink; hot pink. That's why only girls are good at chemistry. (In frustration and anger of not getting chemistry)

Further, episodes confirm that there is gender stereotype and females see no role model to excel in this field. If more and more number of mentors will be female, more number of females will connect with them and take their personal doubts. Need of filling the gender gap in so called prestigious entrance exam and education is being told here towards the dream of "Education for all".

#### Textual evidence 3

Sarika mam: Why me?

Jeetu Sir: Girl students will get more confidence. We make girl sit in the front. But still they feel out of the place. When even they talk about IITians. It's like, "He does this. This is how he studies".

### 4. Pedagogy flaws in education

Justifying with the title word 'factory', students are shown filled in the classroom like sheep and donkeys one over the another in the coaching class. Teachers can never engage with the students in the learning



process(Pandey and Sharma, 2022). Teachers teaching there have signed their contract and they have nothing to do with the learning of the students rather demotivating and doubts suppressing attitude is displayed.

#### Textual evidence 1

Parminder Sir: How many have done third? It's very easy question. We shall solve it orally. It's a shame, if you use your pen. Answer is.. 'B'.

O God! How easy. Time waste. Even more basic one. Answer is 'C'. If you get wrong, get yourself checked.

#### Conclusion

The web series taken for study hit the most important aspects of youth in terms of career selection and friendships. The complete series is shot into black and white and it dived deep into the nitty gritty and lacunae of coaching and education and its effects on people. This was the first attempt by contemporary media platform to showcase lives of one of the most prestigious institutes aspirants and education system in such detail. This web series builds a discourse among students, parents, teachers, policy makers and government about improvement of education system by understanding real problems of students. All the characters in this series tried their best to portray the details of coaching industry and their lives in microscopic lens. It can be concluded after thematic analysis that IIT is an engineered dream not the real dream of many of the students. But students have to live under pressure to get into someone else dream. But this poses a serious question that even if they manage to get into IIT or AIIMES, will they get success in their lives? Education system is not designed for the education takers and by the educators but by the businesses along with that students' success is also not defined by their own. Educators, government, parents and students need to think scientifically, rationally and logically rather than being a part of rat race. Researchers need to give practical solutions to advance the curriculum, education and hence the nation.

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