

## **IMPACT OF FILM AND OTHER SOCIALNARRATIVES ON STUDENTS**

**Debaleena Ghatak**

Institute of Engineering and Management, Kolkata

**ABSTRACT**

*Nowadays films occupy a significant portion of the media products consumed by people. In Russia, cinema is being considered as a means of individual and social transformation, which makes a contribution to the formation of the Russian audience's outlook, including their attitudes towards topical social issues. At the same time, the question of the effectiveness of films' impact remains an open question in psychological science. According to the empirical orientation of our approach to the study of mass media influence, our goal was to obtain new data on the positive impact of films based on specific experimental research. The task was to identify changes in the attitudes of young people, as the most active viewers, towards topical social issues after watching a specifically selected film. Using a psychosomatic technique that included 25 scales designed to identify attitudes towards elderly people, respondents evaluated their various characteristics before and after watching films. Using a number of characteristics related to the motivational, emotional and cognitive spheres, significant changes were revealed. At the same time, significant differences were found in assessments of the elderly between undergraduate students and postgraduate students. After watching films, postgraduate students' attitudes towards elderly people changed in a positive way, while undergraduate students' negative assessments only worsened. The revealed opposite trends can be explained by individual differences of respondents, which include age, educational status as an indicator of individual psychological characteristics, the experience of interaction with elderly people and, as a result, attitudes towards elderly people at the time before watching movies. The finding that previous attitudes mediate the impact of the film complements the ideas of the contribution of individual differences to media effects. Most of the changes detected immediately after watching the movie did not remain over time. A single movie*

*viewing did not have a lasting effect on viewers' attitudes, and it suggests the further task of identifying mechanisms of the sustainability of changes.*

## **Keywords**

psychology of cinema, influence of mass media, impact of films, attitudes, attitudes towards elderly people, social narratives, podcasts

## **INTRODUCTION**

With the development of information technology, a person's immersion in the field of mass media is steadily increasing. A significant portion of consumed media products is occupied by cinema. According to sociological surveys, going to the cinema is the most popular way of spending leisure time in Russia and many other countries of the world today, audiences of cinemas are growing, the core of which are 18-24 years olds, as well as the frequency of visits, it is commonly seen that many people at least visit the cinema once a month. In the present scenario where the world is facing a crisis in this pandemic situation, web platforms and OTT platforms like Netflix, Bittorrent, Amazon Prime, Voot, Disney+Hotstar, Airtel Xstream etc. have grown very rapidly. In the situation where everything is done digitally starting from online shopping, buying necessary items, health checkups to education, jobs etc. It is no wonder that students tend to get more engaged in watching movies which are often beyond their age or are always do not have appropriate content for watching, the opportunities and frequency of Internet viewings is expanding, while interest in TV shows is also increasing. The importance of the role that cinema plays in many countries is also confirmed by the close attention currently being paid to the development of the cinema industry: the priority topics of state financing are defined (e.g., "Law and order: the heroes of modern society in the fight against crime terror, extremism and corruption", "On the continuity of military generations, on the successors of military traditions", "Images, patterns of behavior

and creative motivation of our contemporary—a man of labor, in the military or a scientist"), while state programs are being launched to open new cinema theatres in small towns. Cinema becomes a “tool for broadcasting state ideology to the masses”, and is also being considered as a “means of individual and social transformation”. As a result, films are expected to form beliefs, influence opinions and change attitudes, including towards topical social issues.

However, the question of the efficiency of films remains open in psychology. In general, this is a key issue for mass communication research: how much emotion, cognition and behavior are changed under the influence of mass media [4, 5]. There are various concepts about this: from “theories of a minimal effect” to “theories of a strong effect”. Thus, for example, cultivation theory considers that mass communication contributes to the assimilation of commonly accepted values, norms and forms of behavior and a meta-analysis of studies leads to the conclusion that there is a relationship between the broadcast mass media image of reality and people's attitudes towards it. Despite criticisms, cultivation theory is currently being developed. On the other hand, supporters of the opposite viewpoint point out the weak effects of mass communication, caused, for example, by the fact that people are becoming more and more subject of their mass media activity as a result of a wider variety of sources of information now and expanding their choices.

## **2. Effect of films and social narratives on other students**

It seems difficult to identify a single mechanism of mass media impact on the human psyche and behavior and to obtain an unambiguous answer to the question about its efficiency. This is due to the interconnection of various factors that mediate the influence of mass media (personal experience, realistic content, depth of identification with heroes, personality traits, etc. as well as those factors that constantly impact persons besides those in the media.

Therefore, our thoughts and ideas about this issue are largely based on empirical research data, and are not limited to one theory. When referring to research of cinema, we can find data on the diverse effects of film exposure. It should be noted that the effectiveness of the impact is determined by what it is directed at: it is more difficult to change human behavior than to influence opinions or attitudes. In this regard, there is still a debatable problem on the influence of the media on the aggressive behavior of people. This research focuses on the potential of pro-social, "humanistic" impact of films and their effectiveness in solving topical social issues. The studies reveal the influence of films on people's beliefs and opinions, stereotypes and attitudes. Movies can have a significant impact on gender and ethnic stereotypes, change attitudes towards certain groups of people and cause newly formed opinions on various issues. For example, HIV films contributed to sympathy to people living with HIV, TV series with transgender characters contributed to positive attitudes towards transgender persons; the portrayal of mental disorders in movies had an effect on people's knowledge about and attitudes toward the mentally ill. Also, viewing an empathy-arousing film about immigrants induced more positive attitudes towards them, and watching a movie offering a positive depiction of gay men reduced homophobia. Other films influenced people's attitude towards smoking and their intentions to quit, while a series with a positive donation message helped viewers to make decisions about their own donation. It has been shown that emotional involvement in viewing, evaluated using surveys drawing on theories of social learning and social representations, increases the effectiveness of influence; immersion in narrative, that correlates with the need for cognition, and is characterized by a shift of focus from the real world to the depicted one, explains the power of impact within the framework of transportation theory.

### **3. Opinion of people on Films**

Society is reflected in movies and in turn movies influence society by changes in representations, challenging audience's morals and transforming viewers' opinions. Despite the huge impact film has on today's generation, people still think that film is not a form of art, wanting to work in the film industry is stupid and getting a degree/studying film studies or production is a waste of time and is disrespected in schools/universities. A prime example of how influential film can be is after I finished a viewing of 'The Danish Girl' (Hooper, 2016) with a transgender friend, she decided to change her name to Lily as that was the name of the first transgender person who has changed her life, for the better, ever since. Another example is 2013's 'Blackfish' documentary (Cowperthwaite), which caused huge controversy on social medias over SeaWorld's killer whales and has resulted in the stock price of Tilikum's home park declining by 60% since the film was released. This amplifies the power of film whether it influences a personal or mass response. Not only is film influential but it is a source of entertainment and escapism. Film combines music, stories and pictures all in one and it's a way to forget the real world for 120 minutes or so but at the same time can give audiences a reality check.

### **4. Importance of Movies in our Daily Life**

Movies can create awareness about the importance of education, art, sports and politics and can also warn us about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and other criminal activities. It also brings us to understand more about other cultures, the atrocity of living homeless, and the countries that are in constant battle with war and terrorism. All these movie genres help awaken our sense of responsibility and empathy towards such situations. These socially enlightening movies help us understand the world and influence our thought process in a positive way and help us try to do our bit in order to be of some help to humanity for example helping/donating to charities. In addition, films make our imaginations run wild. After finishing a movie, we think about the characters and the story and develop it further, maybe

even thinking about what the characters would be doing after the movie finished. This develops our creativity and leads to writers producing Fanfiction and artists producing Fan art and sharing it with social media sites. A good movie can entertain, educate, and inspire the viewer in many ways. Think of the impact that songs have on people, for example. They can make us think. They can make us compassionate. They can inspire us to help others and to do good to and for humanity. Romantic movies, on the other hand, can remind us why love is important and why it is worth fighting for. They make us cry and laugh at our own romantic flaws. Crime and action TV shows also warn us about the dangers of criminal activities, terrorism, and war. In some cases, movies can even awaken a sense of empathy in people who have never experienced war firsthand. They may help us feel responsible for our brothers and sisters living in war-torn countries even as much as we've never been there ourselves. Of particular note for the localization industry, movies mirror culture.

## 5. Conclusion

Audiovisual input and output devices are used in abundance these days. Now more than ever, everyone is watching videos. Because of this, the film industry is arguably one of the most influential sectors of modern society. Sitcoms and comedy show make us laugh, psychological thrillers help us see the world from new perspectives, and historical films help us understand where we've come from as a people. Every video and every film can reflect society and transform opinions. The power of audiovisuals has been manifested and exploited politically, socially, and economically throughout history. Leaders such as Adolf Hitler, for example, successfully used films as propaganda tools during World War II. Unfortunate facts like these show the raw power of film — an immense power that has even caused revolutions. As technology keeps growing, political and economic leaders have utilized cinema in changing and shaping people's outlooks either for their own benefit or for the benefit of the people. Quality translations are also readily available and extremely affordable for everyone these days, which makes it easy for filmmakers to reach their target audiences from all corners of

the world in their mother tongue. Given the recent events with the spread of the novel corona virus and various governmental policies for national lockdown across the world, Netflix has experienced a spike in user demand for streaming. In fact, Netflix and other major streaming channels, have cut their bandwidth usage to prevent network congestion. Besides mirroring our diverse cultures, the film has for a long time been shaping our beliefs and values. A good example is when people copy fashion trends from movie stars and musicians. It is also common these days to find societies using figures of speech that are inspired by the film industry. At the very least, film solidifies selected cultural beliefs and renders some redundant.

## 6. References:

1. Zizek, S. Cinema Guide of Pervert. Movie. Philosophy. Ideology; Gonzo: Yekaterinburg, Russia, 2019; ISBN 978-5-904-577-56-8.
2. Kashani, T. Movies Change Lives: Pedagogy of Constructive Humanistic Transformation through Cinema; Peter Lang Publishing Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 2016; ISBN 978-1-4331-2773-1.
3. Kubrak, T.A. The problem of information and psychological security in cinema discourse. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya* 2016, 9, 8. Available online: <http://psystudy.ru> (accessed on: 27.02.2019).
4. Harris, R. Psychology of Mass Communications; Prime-Eurosign: St. Petersburg, Russia, 2002.
5. Bryant, J.; Thompson, S. Basics of Media Exposure; Williams: Moscow, Russia, 2004; ISBN 5-8459-0597-4.





