

THE IMPACT OF CINEMA ON IMPROVING PEOPLE'S QUALITY OF LIFE AND IN INFLUENCING POSITIVE ATTITUDES

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Abstract

Cinema is constellation of moving imageries in the hyponym of entertainment and show business which displays human conditions and portrays natural life-forms by utilizing a wide ranged platform. It has a vast audience and people from diverse cultures, religion, perspectives and stratum are united through films. Cinema is a cluster term that includes films, television shows, theatres, dramas, broadways and an extensive variety of artistic expressions.

This study focuses on examining the impact of cinema on improving people's quality of life and in influencing positive attitudes. The study makes use of Qualitative Methodology.

The methods used to conduct this study were- Phenomenology, Secondary Data, Study of Narratives and In-depth Interviews. The study was analyzed through identification of recurrent themes and thematic analysis of the data.

The results provided significant evidences of how cinema impacts individuals in re-writing their own narratives in lives. The recurrent themes identified in the data inclined towards accounting films as a vital factor in striking chords with different people and in governing them to live an optimistic life.

Most significantly the study also raised an important concern for a film-maker's responsibility to deliver their narratives with righteous portrayals in their display as it is an important price they ought to pay to their audiences for receiving an abundance of recognition and esteem from the masses.

Keywords: Cinema, Narratives, Identification, Empathy, Well-being

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1 Introduction

Cinema is a driving life force in the form of screen and seats which engraves an everlasting impression on people. It embodies life forms and expresses its uniqueness through imagery and emotions. It connects to people and is naturally in tune with psychology in the display of human form and its emotions, behaviors, mental processes and all the characteristic attributes.

Films lay the groundwork for restructuring personal lives by the means of identification with certain characters or based on central themes offered by the narrative. A film can help the Individual offer an insight into the understanding of relationship dynamics and they can re-evaluate their assumptions about forming social bonds. A film's portrayal of expressing feelings can impact the viewers and validate them and encourage them to develop a dialogue about their own emotions and thoughts. Through engaging with these narratives a person can learn to explore their own deeply concealed emotions and unattended feelings and get a chance to learn the mode of expression to put it out there.

The audience encounters fictional and real life stories through a visually powerful lens and sometimes a particular story impacts them on a significant level and helps them outgrow their past traumas and challenges. It is a source of hope and faith in individual's life and one of the most significant reason that contribute to it, is the powerful platform that makes them feel

valued when people of artistic designation come forward to play a life that they aspire to live. It further broadens the perspective of people as cinema and theatre encourage their audiences to develop understanding and empathy towards people of different cultures, religions, beliefs, sects and lifestyles. It paves a way for accepting differences and furthermore building respect amongst different groups of people.

1.1 Inclusivity and Exclusivity of Cinema

The idea of inclusivity and exclusivity in Cinema is articulated and explained very well through the lens of a valuable screenplay - "All About Eve" (1950). The play talks about that there is no book binding that offers any rules for Cinema or Theatre. It is an abstract concept and does not entail that it has to be within the walls of multiplexes or is to be streamed within the boundaries of internet platforms. It includes circus, opera, tribal dances, musicals, broadways and stories from a wide variety of cultures with their own Unique Styles of Narration and their own Medium to Stage it. Thus Cinema is a Spectrum of Art and Life-forms.

For Example:-

The Indian Telugu language movie "RRR" (2022) is a movie that represents the Colonization of India by British People and depicts the spirit of freedom movement; The animated Movie "Coco" (2017) displays Mexican Culture; The Movie "Pather Panchali" (1955) by Satyajit Ray portrays life in Bengali village during that era; The movie "12 Years a Slave" (2013) is a historical drama on Slavery and showcases African-American Freedom Struggles; The Movie "Slumdog Millionaire" (2008) dives deeper into the slums of Mumbai City; The drama series "Crash Landing on You" (2019) is a series that show two people from borders apart, falling in love with each other; The Movie "A Beautiful Mind" (2001) is an American biographical film that dives deep into a mathematician's life and his struggles with schizophrenia and living a beautiful life regardless.

Not everyone will watch all of these movies and not everyone will resonate with each of them. These are certain examples that prove the above mentioned commentary that Cinema is a Spectrum of a Diverse Force and not every work of Cinema is intriguing to everyone but someone, somewhere approves of it and it is that person's Cinema.

1.2 Cinema as a Mode of Representation

The unheard voices of marginalized groups, the discriminated sections of society, people with mental illnesses, people who suffer from terminal health conditions, the LGBTQ+ community, the poverty-stricken people and all the people whose stories are unheard, get a representation through Cinema. The well-directed films and their visuals convey the stories of people who are suffering in silence and who are not paid attention to. The Storyline, the Actors, the Words, the Music, The Camera Effects and the Emotions all play a role in representing the sections of society which otherwise would be caged under the walls of ignorance. For example the movie 'Gully Boy' represents the struggles of people living in the slums of Dharavi, the movie brought into light an altogether different world of RAP Music

that came across to an unprivileged man in those streets and conveyed his story of how he overcome the poverty and fulfilled his dreams.

1.3 Historic Literature in relevance with Cinema as a Significant Concept

A monologue from William Shakespeare's Play "As You Like It" is a literary piece that sees an Individual's Life in resemblance to a Drama enacted out on a Stage.

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts."

Here Shakespeare narrates an Individual's life in a Context of a Stage Play. The Excerpt describes all individuals as actors who come to play their respective parts and different parts at every stage and their role ends with the last stage where one ceases to exist. This Metaphorical Excerpt is repeatedly used in the pretext of enacting a play as living life. The element of this analogy that articulated life and death analogous to entrance and exit in a stage play is when Shakespeare describes the First Stage of life as an Infant with no teeth, little eyesight and undeveloped taste buds in resemblance to the Last Stage where one loses one's teeth, eyesight and sense of taste when coming close to his Death.

Thus bringing to attention the Value of Life while an individual still has it and will eventually lose it all someday to the inevitability of mortal existence. But to control one's actions within the brackets of the first and final act and to live to the fullest until they are alive and meet with their Exits. Hence a literary device portrays theatrical stages of a play as aging in life and coming to terms with one's existence as an important event. This analysis proposes the importance of viewing life through a cinematic lens and thus connecting life with this medium of expression.

2 METHODOLOGY

This research method focuses on describing individual experiences and beliefs and provides an in-depth analysis on the understanding of cinema as a motivating factor in the lives of people. It is not specifically tied to the characteristics of a certain population, therefore Qualitative Methodology is being used. This study provides with a comprehensive exploration of themes that encourages future goals to work in a setting that provides healthy narratives.

2.1 Aim

The aim of this paper is to study the impact of cinema in improving the quality of lives of individuals by providing significant insights and evidences through in-depth analysis and by breaking down to meaningful inferences through the use of recurring themes and their thorough examination. This study focuses on integrating Cinema and the Individual's well-

being and finding examples from movies that influence people to hold onto their hopes and live a life worth living. The concepts that this study will utilize are the ones in which the movie's theme is centered on a person's growth, well-being, overcoming hardships, building faith and finding happiness throughout their journey.

3 Methodology used in collecting the data:

3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of our sensory perception of the world based on how we experience our reality through consciousness of thoughts, emotions and beliefs. It focuses on achieving a deeper understanding of a specific subject matter. It aims to derive pure meaning of the phenomenon and its significance in subjective context. For Example: Exploring the belief patterns of people who claim to have settled for the second best due to their inevitable circumstances. Phenomenology asks the researcher to do away with their pre-conceived notions and study a subject matter with Intention and Truth. It also aims to describe the essence of a phenomenon through analyzing it and interpreting it. It does not believe in quantifying human experiences but rather putting forth its essence in the context of the phenomenon being studied. The experiential component with an intention is a key point to this method.

3.2 Secondary Data

This method makes use of the already existing reliable documents and similar sources of information as the data source. For example – Research Articles and Books. This involves examining written, visual, and auditory documents that exist without any involvement of or instigation by the researcher.

3.3 In-depth Interviews and Narratives

In-depth interviews are conducted with the people to learn about their experiences and perspectives in greater detail. Here a detailed information is provided by the Subject about his/her own experience with the phenomenon being studied. The individuals (subject) talk about a particular movie or a character that inspired their healing journey and had therapeutic effects on them. The weightage is given to the subjective experience of the individual in accounting for the relevance of cinematic forces on promoting a positive attitude towards life. Examples of questions that were asked - "What film has had an everlasting impact on you?"; "Is there any film that has helped you to cope through life, and if so then which one and why?"; "Has a movie ever taught you a lesson which has vitally improved your life, if so then can you please elaborate on that?"; "Is there any fictional character that has infused hope in you, and how did you incorporate it into your own reality?". More series of questions like these were asked based on the responses of participants to acquire more insight.

3.4 Analytical Process used in Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews, secondary data, narratives and inferring through phenomenology are transcribed into words and they were analyzed through the method of "Coding" and

“Thematic Analysis”. The direct quotes from the participants are entitled into codes (Coding) to draw attention to a similar pattern of statements that points towards a theme which is informative for the study. Then the repetitive themes in the data collected are identified and assigned with a title and analyzed (Thematic Analysis). While conducting the interviews each participant is asked with verbal questions with an intent of gaining beneficial insights about the phenomenon they experienced while engaging in the narrative of their description, they are heard through keen attention and their exact words are noted down to form a written verbatim. In some cases the participants have shared poetry written by them which encapsulates their experience, that is also noted down. A pattern is identified through the collection of these written verbatim; which points towards a singular theme, the theme is identified and agreed upon by the participants. The themes are formulated in this manner, step by step through the identification of repetitive patterns and by collating these patterns into a singular theme. These themes are analyzed through referring to the participant’s direct statements (written verbatim) and by also collating it with similar studies that draw relevance from the identified themes which lead to providing significant insights about the propositions advanced under this study.

3.5 Sample Size

The Sample Size of the in-depth Interview is 5.

3.6 Ethics

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation was taken into account while conducting the research. Participant’s agreement to be a part of this study was only attained after a detailed explanation of the research being conducted. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants. Their right to withdraw from the study at any moment was reassured to them. Their anonymity and confidentiality was ensured. The data was collected with integrity and honesty.

4 RESULTS

This chapter initially gives an overview of the movies that were talked about by the participants in the interviews and then steps forward to identify the recurrent themes in the data collected. Then the themes are analyzed step by step by providing participant’s direct quotes that point towards the nature of the identified theme and also by describing similar studies that were conducted which pour in-sight into same themes.

4.1 PLOT DESCRIPTION OF THE FILMS STATED BY THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERVIEW

4.1.1 The movie “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (2013)

The movie is centered around a male protagonist, Walter Mitty; who leads a simple life and wants to escape the boredom of ordinary daily routine tasks. He is shown to have fears yet he continues to fight his fears and tries to make his life a beautiful journey. His challenges, fears

and loneliness caused him to retreat to a world of fascination yet he continues with the best of his efforts to deliver a hard working attempt to improve his life and give his company the diligent endeavor he feels it deserves.

4.1.2 The movie “Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi” (2008)

This movie revolves around a simple man- Surinder, who gets married to a woman- Taani. He feels Taani is uninterested in forming a love bond with him. Taani had a lively spirit in contrast with the serious demeanor of her husband. She had a passion for dance and she enrolls into dancing classes in an attempt to win the final dance competition. Surinder disguises as Raj to get to know more about her and also enrolls into the same dance school. Taani falls in love Raj and does not realize that he is her husband- Surinder under the cool display of Raj. Although she rejects Raj because of her affection towards Surinder, but in her final couple’s dance performance she realizes that Raj is in fact Surinder and has done all the efforts to know her essence. The movie has a happy ending where they both accept each other’s truth and carry the journey of a loving marriage.

4.1.3 The movie “Gia” (1998)

The movie Gia is the real life story of the Model- Gia Carangi. It revolves around a carefree, severely impulsive and a widely misunderstood woman. Her modelling career and personal life falls apart when she finds herself taking refuge in substances during her lows. She slowly gets addicted to ‘Heroin’ which leads to HIV because of sharing an infected syringe. At a time when this chronic illness was inflicted on the world for the first time, Gia found it hard to cope with personal distress and the pains that plagued through her body. Gia could not live long enough and the film used its script from Gia’s words from her personal diary which she left with her lover before her final days; her diary had an entry of a task she wanted to undertake but couldn’t. The task being- She wanted to make a video message for the people who have fallen into the same unfortunate trap of events, to tell them that they can manage their way out and how she sees their potential of recovery as a hundred percent chance. The message was never televised but her diary entry did a faithful job in making the actor (Angelina Jolie) convey this message.

4.1.4 The movie “Taare Zameen Par” (2007)

This movie is about a school boy- Ishaan Awasthi who finds it hard to settle in the confines of classroom walls and loves to venture into his own world. This 8 year old boy (played by the actor ‘Darsheel Safary’) resonates deeply with the world of his imagination, color palettes and animals and finds it hard to be as competent as others kids of his age group. The rest of the students are promising to their educational growth and thus perceived as Normal. Ishaan’s parents decide to send him off to a boarding school in an effort to discipline him. Ishaan goes through tumultuous emotions as he gets bullied by his teachers and classmates in his new school, he feels isolated from the world and slowly becomes silent about his struggles which no one seems to comprehend. Ishaan finds it hard to come up with a healthy way to navigate through the terms and conditions of boarding school. In few days a new teacher, Ram

Shankar Nikumbh (played by ‘Aamir Khan’) gets appointed as a temporary art faculty in his school. Unlike other teachers, Ram lets his students think out of the box and encourages them to dance to their own tunes and pour out their world of imagination into a piece of paper. Ram notes Ishaan’s behavior and makes efforts to know the roots of his problems. He goes through Ishaan’s textbooks in school staff room and realizes a repetitive pattern in Ishaan’s handwriting mistakes; which points towards the symptoms of Dyslexia. Ram psycho-educates his parents about Ishaan’s Learning Disability in a manner that they understand and respect his neurodiversity. He makes them aware of Ishaan’s special talents and how proper attention and care will help him to restore his well-being. Ram goes a step further by explaining that every child has a unique place in this world. Ram successfully restores Ishaan’s confidence in himself with the help of his friend ‘Damodaran’. He gently helps Ishaan to cope up and not let society take away his smile. He poured the spirit of perseverance into him and encouraged him to carry on with his unique world of colorful drawings.

4.1.5 The movie “Matilda” (1996)

This movie revolves around ‘Matilda Wormwood’, the female protagonist who is a child prodigy born into the home of people who don’t see her worth and belittled her from time to time to practice control over her. She finds friends in the books she reads and creates a home within the solace of library. She secretly reads books and achieved a level of knowledge that was much wiser for her age. Even after the evident intelligence Matilda had, she was bullied in her own home and by her school principal. Later she finds acceptance and love in the companionship of her teacher Miss Honey who sees Matilda for all her intelligence, wisdom and good heart. Miss Honey and Matilda both leave behind their past family members who oppressed them and start a beautiful family of their own. The film ends on a resilient note where both the characters leave behind their rough past and look forward to starting a safe and loving future with each other.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES IDENTIFIED IN THE INTERVIEWS

Based on the responses generated from the participants about each movie, a similarity between their answers were noted and five themes were identified. These themes are interpreted through quoting the participants directly and understanding their take on the described themes. Relevant studies are also incorporated into the analysis to thoroughly understand the themes. All participants approved of the themes derived in their interviews. An interpretation of all the recurrent themes identified in the data collected is mentioned below:

4.2.1 Identification

The Interviews conducted noted a theme of Identification amongst the participants. Identification is a process which involves connecting with someone (who may be real or fictionally designed) through acknowledging the similarities between each other. For example, if someone identifies with the feminist ideologies of the historic activist “Maya Angelou”, then it is inferred that they share the similar experiences with the feminist motto

and have similar viewpoints, on account of which they have built their own identity in a close correspondence with “Maya Angelou”. The data gathered in the interviews pointed towards a feeling of familiarity with the fictional characters amongst the participants. The participants expressed their commonalities with the protagonists and thus discussed about how it kept them engaged throughout. In the case of the “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”, the participant expressed how she identified with the lead character.

“I have learning disabilities and due to the traumas I’ve faced in my life, I resonated with his issues of daydreaming and using escapism to cope with daily life challenges. I felt a sense of relief when I watched this film for the first time, it represented my hardships and struggles which were different from the rest of the people around me.”
-Sophie (23 years old, Music Student)

Similarly the participant who stated “Gia” as the movie that played an important part in her healing journey felt like the lead character went through similar circumstances. She faced similar challenges with substance abuse and suicidal tendencies. The protagonist of this film struggles through everyday life and in inhibiting her impulsive tendencies of indulging into substances and experimenting with knives. The participant felt a close connection with these experiences and shared a poem she once wrote to articulate her suffering.

“You tell me drugs and knives are not for me,
I tell you every day only school is not for me
You don’t like when I bleed,
I don’t like when I feel the need
To scratch my skin and drown my body
These walls don’t let me breath, I want to get off
Before they get too tall
Or I get too close
To chauffeur’s knife or the local drug supply
I don’t particularly like the taste of drugs,
But I don’t know how to live in this world.”

-Phoenix (17 years old, Student of 11th Standard)

The poem’s interpretation is very similar to the instances in the life of the fictional characters she identifies with.

Similarly, M. Ott, J., Q. P. Tan, N., & D. Slater, M. (2020) did a research on the topic “Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model”. This study thoroughly investigates the motivating factor in the power of stories on influencing people, learning effective communication and a source of entertainment. The contributors of this study take into account the narrative effects model, mental stimulation, social cognitive theory, imagery model narrative engagement, and the (E-ELM) extended elaboration likelihood model. This study points towards the results that fictional stories can have the power to influence people in formation of their moral stance and broadening their perspectives through engaging with a strong narrative by the means of

identification and other mental processes. The study notes identification as a crucial motivating factor in choosing the narratives and films that are unique to the individual.

The participant who was stated “Taare Zameen Par” as a meaningful movie to them also expressed feeling connected with the protagonist.

“...and I used to feel dumb and inefficient in comparison to everyone around me but this film made me realize that I am also allowed to flourish my unique abilities and lead a fulfilling life.”

-Hope (24 years old, Art Student)

The recurring theme of identification is seen as a vital process in an individual which points towards the likelihood of a person’s potential of exhausting the best out of the narrative and in gathering maximal essence while engaging with the storyline and its characters.

4.2.2 Asserting Interpersonal Relationships

This theme was also seen recurrent in the responses of the participants. Interpersonal relationships refers to the bonds a person shares with their friends, family and the people around them. These bonds help the individual to share happiness, pain and all the experiences in between; thus making life’s hardships easier to cope with. It is said as long as human being has “A shoulder to cry on”, they can withstand any catastrophe. The participants expressed the importance of a support system they learnt through viewing these narratives and the vitality of human bonds. The participant who talked about “Taare Zameen Par” also shared a poem they wrote in 9th Standard which captured their closest bond with a friend, like the film captured the innocent friendship between the characters “Ishaan Awasthi” and “Damodaran”.

“In this world of confusion and destruction,
You tend to get lost in an unknown land
It’s then your best friend who helps you out,
To sail through the frizzy snow to the dusty sand

At times you are cheerful as a happy bird,
Singing in the dawn through lakes and lawn
It’s your best friend who teaches you not to turn arrogant,
And gives you the best advice- Just go on

At times you are pale and morose like a lonely cloud,
Separated from the eternal blue sky
It’s your friend who holds your hands and says –
Your pain is not yours alone it’s equally mine”

-Hope (24 years old, Art Student)

Similarly, Dill-Shackleford, K. E., Vinney, C., & Hopper-Losenicky, K. (2016). conducted a research study on the topic “Connecting the dots between fantasy and reality: The social

psychology of our engagement with fictional narrative and its functional value". This study investigates the influence of fictional narratives on increasing the characteristics of human psychology like empathy, communication skills and reducing the pre-existing prejudices and stigmas. This study coins a term "dual empathy" in which it describe it as level of functioning where the individual process one's own feelings while engaging in a narrative and also understands the emotions that the characters go through. Thus this study talks about relevance of narrative engagement in developing skills like empathy and an understanding of the social support system that serve as an integral component in an individual's functioning.

The participant who expressed "Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi" made her realize the importance of honesty in forming long lasting bonds with each other also disclosed the value of honesty she feels is required to develop these bonds.

".....but a relationship that is based on the foundations of truth lasts longer and no matter what, the truth reveals itself in due time, so why not start off with forming bonds in an honest manner without decorating ourselves."

-Sunshine (16 years old, High School Student)

The recurring effects of cinema on interpersonal domains is demonstrated in this theme and the importance of intimacy, love and care is substantiated in ameliorating the well-being of the individual.

4.2.3 Infusing Resilience

Cinema covers aspects like strength, resilience and courage. It portrays characters who go through dynamic development and equip themselves better to resolve new challenges every day. Resilience is a life skill which enables the ability to 'bounce back' in the face of adversity, turmoil and hardships. The participant who described the movie "Matilda" as a source of their inspiration also expressed the adoration for the lead character ("Matilda Wormwood") in helping her understand Resilience.

"I faced harassment from my family all my life and the voices inside my head told me that I don't deserve love, there is something wrong with me only. I was convinced that I will live a lonely life and the flaws that my family saw in me were all real."

"... I confined in literature and books and reading gave me hope, that there is always a new thing waiting for you, and I have to pull myself together to reach that part of my life, to give my happiness another chance, to give love another try and eventually I did encounter genuine people who love me and see my worth."

-Joy (21 years old, Graduation Student)

Similarly, Eppler, C., & Hutchings, J. (2020) conducted a research based on the topic of "The use of cinematherapy to illustrate systemic resilience". They described the meaning of Resilience as vital. Resilience is not a single step but a journey of every step forward even when everything in the individual's life is pulling them backwards. Its true essence is rising

back from rock bottom over and over again and as long as life demands it. Strength can carry an individual only so far, but resilience is moving forward in life even when there is no evidence of winning except carrying on with mere faith and boundless efforts. If a mirror breaks into pieces, a strong person may collect the pieces and dispose them off; but a resilient person may put the broken pieces back together through gold epoxy because they know the vitality of picking themselves up every time they are torn apart. This is a rhetorical analogy but at its best, this is a way to put a person who created oneself back from nothingness. This study talks about the impact of the Movie “Little Miss Sunshine” on showcasing resilience through a protagonist who is bent by the shackles of adversity and carries to look forward with the help of a support system and belief. This Research gathers the essence of movies to understand the therapeutic journey of client. And also notes the role of movies in understanding the impact of social connectedness for developing resilience and empowering the well-being of the person.

The participant who talked about the film “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”, shared- the way the protagonist pulls through in life has helped her to bounce back.

“He is a simple everyday man who wants adventure but is too afraid, yet he fights his fears and never gives up on himself. He seeks beautiful experiences and lives life to the fullest and I realized I want to start fresh and live a free life like him. I am entranced by beautiful moments and this movie propelled me to carry on and find my own treasures in life.”
-Sophie (23 years old, Music Student)

These narratives fulfilled the job of inculcating characteristics of resilience in the participants. This theme demonstrates how films are essential in equipping individuals with skills like resilience and its importance in sustaining it in a longer run.

4.2.4 Broadening Empathy

Empathy is a skill that attempts to understand someone else’s suffering by stepping into their shoes and seeing life through their lens. This skill demands doing away with one’s pre-conceived notions and stereotypes. The interviews conducted bring into attention that watching films play a vital role in developing empathy among the individuals.

The participant who described “Taare Zameen Par” as the movie that impacted him also pointed towards the heart-warming moments of empathy between the teacher and student, “Ram Shankar Nikumbh” and “Ishaan Awasthi” in the same movie which he holds so dearly.

“...And I feel I understood what a true definition of a teacher is by watching Nikumbh put so many efforts into recognizing Ishaan’s unique strengths and gifts , Nikumbh stepped above the notions of the rest of the care givers and understood Ishaan’s suffering from his own lens without blurring it with common opinions. Nikumbh’s empathy, unconditional love and deep rooted trust in Ishaan helped him discover his light.”
- Hope (24 years old, Art Student)

Similarly, Kaur Bhatia, A. (2022) conducted their research on the topic “Impact of Cinema on Levels of Empathy and Emotion Regulation in Artists and Non-Artists: A Comparative Study”. The study evolves through the inquiry of how cinema is a large platform and has wide influence on people’s mental state. It uses an underlying concept of learning coping mechanisms through film narratives and attempts to study it further. This research study aimed to find the impact of cinema on empathy levels and emotional regulation and a comparative study of it between Artists and Non-Artists. Quantitative Methodology was used with the sample size of 94. (47 participants were Artists and 47 were Non-Artists) The Scales that were used were standardized scales of narrative engagement, interpersonal reactivity and emotion regulation. The results showed a significant correlation between cinema and empathy levels. But there was no significant difference between the participants who were Artists and who were Non-Artists. Thus pointing a little towards that Cinema influences Empathy Levels regardless of people being artistically inclined or not. This studied showcased that cinema has an impact on empathy levels of humans and play a vital role in understanding each other.

Likewise the participant who discussed the film Gia also talked about advancing on her empathy levels while coming to terms with her own disease.

“.....but I learnt to forgive myself about the unhealthy survival patterns I developed when I did not know better. This biographical film about a woman made me question what are the ways I can seek help and improve myself to not fall into the same trap”.

-Phoenix (17 years old, Student of 11th Standard)

Similarly Maheshwari, K. B., & Rathore, S. (2018) conducted a research on the topic “Phases of Empathy: A Movie Review”. The study notes the therapy sessions conducted by Dr. Jahangir Khan who is also called as Jug (played by ‘Shah Rukh Khan’) on his client Kaira (played by ‘Alia Bhatt’). Kaira seeks therapeutic treatment in the midst of collapsing internally and when she meets Dr. Jug her life takes a turn when he addressed her grief and provides her with fundamental requisites of psychotherapy like Unconditional Positive Regard and Empathy. He provides her with examples and equips her with self-strengthening beliefs about herself through the phases of therapy. The key role in Kaira’s healing journey is highlighted by this study, which is the empathy provided to her by Dr. Jug when the rest of the world failed at understanding her.

The participant also expressed how she is open with starting a new chapter in her life after learning to forgive herself and being empathetic with herself.

“It took me a lot of time to realize I am not that bad of a person and my silent battles have made me understand my capacity to fight back. I may have made a few mistakes in past but it came from a place of feeling lost rather than an irresponsible demeanor. I have to have my own back and be gentle with myself so that I have patience when my mind crosses with thoughts of self-doubt and insecurities. I have learned to value my own healing journey just

as much as any other person. I put my well-being into close attention and asked for the help I deserved since a long time”.

-Phoenix (17 years old, Student of 11th Standard)

These films facilitate in increasing individual’s empathy levels, they induced empathy in dealing with others and even practicing it with one’s own self. The thematic analysis of empathy concludes that certain films infuse empathic attitudes which is necessary in forming meaningful connections with the social world and even in determining one’s own well-being.

4.2.5 Amplifying Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation refers to creating an awareness about mental health conditions and providing people with the knowledge of therapy, mental health disorders, coping strategies and treatment plans associated with it. It emphasizes on de-stigmatizing the act of seeking help for emotional and mental well-being. Participants expressed how they took notice of their mental health conditions through the depictions of films. The participant who shared her experience with the movie “Gia” talked about understanding the gravity of her addiction through watching it.

“...mostly I connected with the character’s need to complete themselves with alcohol, cigarettes and pills. It’s like something is missing from deep inside, something I don’t know of. When I watched this movie for the first time it felt so personal and I was confronted with my disease. It made me realize I need to ask for help and seek help in my life before risking it more to meet the bitter consequences.”

-Phoenix (17 years old, Student of 11th Standard)

Likewise, Middleton, C. (2016) researched on the Topic “The Use of Cinematic Devices to Portray Mental Illness” and studies the essence of narratives in delivering heart-felt performances of people suffering with mental illness and encouraging people to create a dialogue about their emotional states. A film is not only a mere tool for entertainment but to it ought to portray the truth in a manner without coloring it. This study takes the example of the movie “Silver Linings Playbook” that resulted in an improved awareness about Bipolar Mood Disorder. These kind of scripts are a device to represent the unheard struggles of people with mental illnesses and convey it through a progressive lens. Cinema is a widely viewed platform and these kind of narratives challenge the stigma associated with mental illnesses and try to portray it in its true light to the audiences. Hence this study depicts the potential of these faithful depictions in bringing about an awareness and a creating a dialogue about mental illnesses.

Another participant who mentioned the film “Matilda” also described her connection with the character’s childhood trauma and seeking help in resolving it.

“...for some people childhood is a sweet memory but for some it is a war and the children who lived through that time are warriors, like me. But I didn’t want to belittle my suffering by concocting it with plain strength, instead I wanted to ask for real help and accept that I

needed a genuine support like Matilda needed Miss Honey to start a loving family. I was ready to seek help and liberate myself from my past. Little by little I was able to restructure my life and resolve my trauma through therapy and genuine connections.”

- Joy (21 years old, Graduation Student)

Thus these narratives help the people to get a healthier understanding about their illnesses and its treatment plans. The extensive reach of cinema helps the individuals in reflecting about their own concerns irrespective of the lack of resources or awareness around them about the subject matter. This theme points towards the domain of collective importance in transmitting imperative and crucial knowledge to the people. It is pivotal in equipping people with progressive mentalities and in raising concerns about the necessary matters.

5 CONCLUSION

The research aimed to find the impact of cinema in improving people's quality of lives and in influencing positive attitudes towards life. The study conducted pointed towards significant evidence of cinema being an important factor in inspiring the development of positive attributes in people's life. The in-depth interviews look at each individual exclusively to understand the importance of films in their own lives. The findings of these interviews point towards the value of films in extensively helping the individual to get a constructive hold of their lives. Thus even if the cinematic value in the lives of people is not quantified in this research paper, it is established that it is crucial in improving the lives of individuals taken into consideration and hence implying the key principle of psychology- Individualism; which entails that every individual is equally important to the system.

A film is a pretext of entertainment under the layers of displaying human conditions. At long last a film is a depiction of various life forms and thus it tries to fill some gap of the barrier between reality and fiction. Even if the movie is set on a fictional timeline, it is discernible that there has been a real interaction between the directors, the actors and the entire team through negotiation and through instructing and guiding each other in the process of entire filmmaking. And by the end of the film's completion it is established by the viewer that the actors could comprehend what the director asked of them and in these moments of reality there is truth, the truth which brings out the honesty in this fictional setting. These prompting virtues are responsible for striking a chord with the hearts of audiences and thus influencing them in a certain way.

The study also discusses the doors and barricades of cinema through providing relevant insights on improving a person's life and also acknowledging that the same narrative may not resonate with other individuals albeit its significance still remains true to that particular individual in the equation however there is also scope for other individuals to attain significant understanding of life that echoes with them through exploration of other narratives.

The theme that is identified in this study is – Identification with the narratives; certain movies set an example in people’s life through identification and instil them with a faith for better future through a display of positive climax scenes in those narratives. This infuses hope in the viewers and points towards the impact of these type films on the audiences that motivated them to carry out their journey irrespective of the hurdles they are confronted with. The studies provided a detailed views of people gaining the courage of restructuring their lives because of being inspired by the film, through the process of identification.

Another theme that is identified in this study is- Asserting interpersonal values in relationships through depictions of loving bonds in films; certain films fulfilled the job of showcasing the importance of love and companionship in one’s life which makes the audiences recognize the significance of having loving bonds in their own lives and helps them to take a step for forming and maintaining these bonds. These films help the audiences to acknowledge healthy interpersonal relationships which in turn also support the individual’s well-being.

Another theme that is identified is - Broadening empathy through connecting with characters onscreen; Empathy is understood as putting oneself in someone else’s skin so as to understand them completely, through movies the audiences are confronted with diverse characters and are presented with life circumstances encompassing them which help the audience develop a fair understanding of these various characters. The audience also learn to empathize with themselves by connecting with similar characters, certain films depict characters with the struggles of their own which are hard to comprehend by the rest of the people around them and by taking refuge in those narratives, they develop empathy for themselves as well. Thus films have an effect on helping the individuals to empathize with others who belong from separate walks of life and also to help individuals to empathize with themselves while encouraging them to treat themselves with kindness.

Another theme that is identified in this study is - Resilience; the usage of films in the representation of strong and resilient characters which helps the audiences to form courageous demeanor and seek inspiration from them when confronted with adverse life events. The visually stimulating display in filmography accompanied by a strong protagonist has a positive impact on its viewers and leads to memorable performances that last with the audiences long after they have left the theater.

And the final theme that is identified in the study is - The role of cinema in amplifying psychoeducation; through writing narratives with a sense of responsibility to the audiences by delivering faithfully and by portraying progressive visions, as their work of imagery will be recorded and will reach out to large numbers of people who are entitled to know the truthful scenario of the world without coloring it with extravaganza or propaganda.

Concluding that cinema plays an important role in shaping our well-being and infusing positive attitudes that are either imposed directly or in-directly and may influence masses of

audiences or only few individuals; yet it still remains vitally important in encouraging positive narratives in life.

5.1 Implications and Future Prospects

This study collects evidences based on improving people's life and developing positive attitude through the utilization of cinema and narratives; the future goal is to shed more light on the duties and obligations of filmmakers as they can put their vast platform into use. It also implies that the future development of narratives must be rooted in realities and not popular stereotypes as it is a large platform which is viewed by a good amount of people. The portrayal of mental illnesses and psychotherapy in filmography must be done through a truthful lens. As this study shows how sensitive humans are to cinematic portrayals, the responsibility to deliver the truth must be taken into account while creating more content. I also encourage more researchers to study on this topic and gather more information to put it into relevant use. More research on this topic will lead to psycho-education and can insinuate a sense of responsibility amongst the people in power to deliver an honest personification of mental health, socio-political scenario and various imperative subjects. Additionally more research on the topic can contribute to more development in the theory of narrative engagement.

5.2 Limitations

This research study does not cover the negative impact and stereotypical depictions of cinema that contribute to ignorant portrayals and reductionist views. The methodology used in collecting data is qualitative, thus the interpretation is subjective and the responses cannot be measured. The research was done in time constraint, however it requires more time frame to gather further data that can bring more relevant insights into the study.

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