Positive Media Fostering Children And Adolescents Well Being

Dr. Nidhi Chadha, *Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology*

Goswami Ganesh Dutta, *S.D. College, Sector -32, Chandigarh*

Abstract

The ensuing paper addresses an emerging trend witnessed in the present day movies and cinema i.e. can positive media psychology can encourage happiness enhancing behaviours? It is quite a known fact that media was traditionally considered as mere entertainment; psychologically speaking an emphasis was laid just on the hedonic aspect but today, a paradigm shift is seen with the upcoming movies which comprises of eudaimonic motivation. Parents would not like their children to see television and movies often as they would not study or learn inappropriate behaviour. To attend this question, the researcher's replies *with an overview of Indian Hindi movies that focus on positivity, life goals and motivation and also it can be asserted that it continues to have a great impact on the psyche of children and adolescents thus may serve as a promising area of study in human psychology. Therefore, this qualitative research aims to explore popular Hindi movies that thematically explore that media can induce emotions that contribute to well-being.*

Keywords: Positive Media, Hindi cinema, Well being, Happiness

Introduction

'The influence in India of films is greater than newspapers and books'

Jawaharlal Nehru

At the very outset, the line stated above reflects that watching films can boost children and adolescents well being; rejecting the notion that films can just be a bane (like propagating aggression, violence, love, romance) for such population. Studies have been conducted in the early years to examine the effects of movies on children and adolescents, and have emphasized on the harmful media effects only. Therefore, the researcher wants to humbly contribute to the existing literature in a quite positive and poised way.

Movies provide an excellent vehicle for educational purposes. Literature shows that teaching with movies has been adopted in a variety of subjects. For example, publications exist on the educational use of movies in psychology (Paddock, Terranova, & Giles, 2001) and counselor education (Higgins & Dermer, 2001). Recently, positive psychologists report that movies help providing role models, identifying and reinforcing strengths, facilitating communication and building hope (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Since a movie is an audio-visual platform, where characters can be related to, in terms of their actions, dialogue and behaviour thus making it a powerful tool. A significant benefit of movies is that they offer both affective and cognitive experiences. Also, it has been found that individuals learn new, novel, and abstract concepts more easily when presented in both verbal and visual form (Salomon, 1979).

Movies today can be viewed at Cinema's, on DVD's and Internet. An imperative query of this study lays in the fact that can we hold close the power and popularity of films to the enrichment and enhancement of young people's lives? The answer to this question is affirmative. This present study is hopeful as firstly, it is meant especially for young people as watching movies is not considered a task rather enjoyment and fun. Teaching method here simply is not teaching at all, on the contrary, it is a simple concept proposed way back by Albert Bandura i.e. observational learning. Direct reinforcement is not essential for learning; just by observing others actions and behaviours one feels motivated, inspired and want to imitate them. Secondly, movies is a medium which constitute the best

art form as it incorporates thoughts, emotions, instincts, and motives — and their impact on behavior (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Thirdly, this study also paves way towards if an intervention can be planned in future for the same.

Looking at the history, our attention for this study is captured by the positive ideology embedded by the humanistic psychologists and the newly christened approach of positive psychology. Quite recently, psychologists started focusing on prevention rather than etiology and so researchers discovered human strengths such as courage, future mindedness, optimism, interpersonal skill, faith, work, ethics, hope, honesty, perseverance and the capacity for flow and insight (Seligman & Csikszentmihlyi, 2000). In addition, initially focus was driven by the success of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), in generating a collection of reliable assessment strategies. Today, however, the rationale has taken a paradigm shift to a project named the Values in Action project (VIA) coordinated by Peterson and Seligman (2004), a group of researchers sought out a common set of human qualities universally regarded as positive values (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009). Therefore, this study which is a qualitative research aims to explore popular Hindi movies and explore whether individuals can identify themselves with it. Furthermore, whether their existing character strengths and well-being is augmented or developed through viewing these films.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) proposed advantages of movies. These include

- Accessibility- refers to the fact that clients with limited language skills may find it easier to watch a film than to concentrate through a book.
- Availability- to the authors that a film assignment can ripple through a family affecting family members who are not in therapy.
- Curiosity-is triggered when the selected movie for an assignment is sufficiently removed from the problem in order to stimulate creative thought.
- Familiarity- we are already accustomed to the practice of measuring ourselves and situations to similar situations in films.
- Rapport- a deep therapeutic alliance is created when a film can be used as a common experience between client and therapist.

Methodology

The researcher in the present study probed into the famous Hindi movies told by the participants based on themes like inspiration, motivation, sports, education, empathy and how viewing such acts through enactment in movies affect children and adolescents well being and pave way towards health promoting behaviour. The tools used for the current study is the list of movies presented below.

Sample

A total of fifty children and adolescents from Chandigarh were targeted for the study and a list of questions (informal interview) was asked from them; questions attached in Appendix at the end. To be more precise, the inclusion criterion for the sample of the study was as follows:

- Age would range from (10-13) years for children and (18-21) years for adolescents.
- Participants from intact families and urban middle class were included.
- Participants not having any medical history were incorporated for the study.

Results and Discussion

It is important to acknowledge how the participants of the study (children and adolescents) felt for the Hindi movies that can be called as positive media. Also how psychological theories elucidate the positive after affect of watching them displaying prosocial behaviour, kindness etc.

- ❖ **Movies based on Education:** Taarein Zameen Par (2007), 3 Idiots (2009), I Am Kalam (2010), Nil Baatein Sannata (2015), Chalk n Duster (2016), Hindi Medium (2017)

- ❖ **Movies based on Inspiration/Motivation:** Jo Jeeta Wahin Sikander (1992), Guru (2007), Udaan (2010), Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara (2011), English Vinglish (2012), Bhajrangi Bahijaan (2015)

- ❖ **Movies based on Sports:** Chak De India! (2007), Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013), Mary Kom (2014), Dangal (2016), Sultan (2016), M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story (2016)

- ❖ **Movies based on the spirit of Patriotism:** Lagaan (2001), The Legend of Bhagat Singh (2002), Swades, We the People (2004), Rang de Basanti (2006), Airlift (2016)

- ❖ **Movies based on the Defence Services:** Border (1997), Lakshya (2004), Tango Charlie (2005), Neerja (2016), The Ghazi Attack (2017), Uri: The Surgical Strike (2019)

Social Cognitive Theory and *Entertainment-Education Theory* (Bandura, 2004; Mares & Woodard, 2005; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). On responding to the researcher's questions, children and adolescents reported that they get inspired to live meaningful life based on virtuous actions by movie characters—because these characters can be important role models for them (Bandura, 2004; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). They told movies often portray characters that can be related emotionally; for this *Broaden-and-Build Theory on Positive Emotions* by Fredrickson's states that positive emotions broaden individuals' thought–action repertoires, which then build skills and resources that subsequently increase well-being (e.g. Cohn & Fredrickson, 2006; Fredrickson, 2003). Further, participants who experienced positive emotions were more likely to be creative, inventive, focus on the "big picture" and, in doing so, built resources that supported coping and thriving in life (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2006; Fredrickson, 2003).

Further, answers from the participants suggested to consider *eudaimonic motivations* (to see purpose/ meaning in life) and *moral elevation* (warm, uplifting feeling) that they experience when witnessing unexpected acts of human compassion or virtue (Haidt, 2000). Therefore, it can be said that media characters displaying prosocial behaviours and acts of kindness, compassion can also evoke this mechanism. *Kohlberg's stages of moral development*, middle childhood is an important phase of life as most children then move from the preconventional level to the conventional level. An individual at the conventional level is living up to what is expected by others, for whom "being good" is important (Kohlberg, 1976) and this behavior is also more often grounded in genuine feelings of empathy.

Immersion into a character in a movie increases empathy, and allows the viewer to live the experiences of the character without having to experience the real-life consequences. Indeed, Niemiec, (2012d) introduced the term *Cinematic Elevation* which refers to the ability of movies to promote altruism, such that a viewer is inspired to perform acts to improve the welfare of others after watching a portrayal of virtue, goodness, and/or character strength. *Cinematic admiration,* another term refers to the ability of movies to promote self-improvement, or goal setting. Positive psychologist Niemiec, (2012d) found that this admiration occurs when a person observes excellence of character or skill, resulting in motivation to improve the self and pursue goals. Participants highly believed in it. The results of the study in terms of Hindi movies reported by the participants helped form the 'theme for the movies' i.e. Education, Inspiration, Motivation, Sports, Patriotism and Defence Services which clearly indicate their interest and involvement in matters that concern their well being, mental health and growth in life.

Lastly, to put in simple words, Niemiec & Wedding, (2014) indicated these following *four criterias* are of utmost importance for an optimal positive psychology film and a rationale which justifies augmentation to well being and meaning in life.

- A character displays (at least) one of the 24 strengths in the VIA Classification.
- The character faces obstacles, adversity, struggle or conflict while expressing the strength.
- The character overcomes obstacles or builds/maintains the strength.
- The film overall is inspiring, uplifting in tone or mood, or reflects the human condition.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study can be used to define criteria for choosing movies and as an implication into traditional therapeutic process. The need of the hour is to look for ways that can maximize the advantage of positive attributes and minimize its negative features. This paper is a shift towards changing the "mean-world syndrome" towards a "kind-world syndrome" by perceiving cinema and movies as not judgemental, aggression, negativity rather as a tool that can foster kindness, compassion, prosocial behaviour and generosity indirectly. Therefore, when such characteristics and roles are seen by today's generation, process of identification gets into action and so does their behaviour.

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Appendix

It is important that children and adolescents address the following given issues in order to identify one's strengths, character, emotions, motive, goal, meaning and prosocial behaviour.

- Describe what (strengths, virtues and weakness) you identify in the character from the movie?

- Would you like to be like any hero or character of the movie and why?

- Give examples from your own life where you can relate with the character?

- Describe any motivating, inspiring moment or moments from the movie?

- What message do you perceive from the movie?