Modern Movies and Violence: Influence of Movies on Youth

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Abstract

Quite a good number of research has been conducted across the world, including India and Pakistan, to find out the influence of modern movies on different age groups. Youth has been focused on in Pakistan with reference to movies' impact on youth behaviours. After social media growth, the movie-watching trend has shifted from cinema to smart devices. Thus, this study was mainly conducted to examine modern movies' influence on university students' youth behaviour. Violent movies and aggression, sexually explicit movies and sexual behavior, alcohol and drugs in movies and stuff use, romantic movies and interpersonal relationships, and comedy movies and behavior were viewed critically. Hence, five research questions were developed in this study based on the identified research gap. The study responds to the proposed research questions; the survey method was formulated with a 636-sample size, using a simple random sampling technique to answer the designed research question for this study. Data on the influence of modern movies on youth behavior were collected and analyzed. The findings suggest that modern movies influence youth in all six parameters. This study recommends, on the basis of findings, that the government should enhance the capacity of the censor boards and give them more power to decide, based on merit and quality work, that movies and their scripts should bring some positive content and thoughts to enlighten youth and sensor where necessary for building a peaceful society.

Keywords: Impact of movies; Violence in movies; Comedy movies; Romantic movies; Explicit content; Youth.

1. Introduction

Movies can be defined as the electronic signals for moving pictures, still images, and electronic signs of images that are accompanied by anomalous and powerful sound and whose content is employed for instruction, amusement, and other purposes. The movie is the best multi-media tool. This is a very delicate method of informing the general public. This can be a great tool to compare, clarify, and

collect their data. The movie dramatically impacts how the world was created and developed. A person heavily impacted by movies strives to form opinions that greatly impact society (Kethan & Basha, 2023). Cinema is considered a major source of social transformation and knowledge nowadays. This is a critical research aspect in the mass media and communication field: how emotions and behavior change after watching movies (Kashani, 2016; Sanborn, 2018).

Everybody consumes movies in his life. It is not easy to imagine life without them. Most of us easily and without time-bound consume movies, including children, adolescents, and adults. The impact of movies on youth is significant, especially in modern movies (Naeem, 2020). There is sufficient research on the effects of movies on adolescents, but more needs to be done on undergraduate university students watching movies. The impact of modern movies on undergraduate university students needs to be explored (Pahore et al., 2021). Researchers (Kubrak, 2012; Wasylkiw, 2012) have researched undergrads assessing the impact of old comedy movies. According to research done in Russia, youth aged 18 and above very frequently go to the cinema to watch moves and enjoy theatre every month (Kubrak, 2012).

This research evaluates the influence of movies on youth based on parameters: violence, romance, pornography, alcohol and drugs, and comedy movies. Since sex and violence are two of the prime elements in movies that encourage movie consumers to engage in movie watching. The horror film genre widely propagates the presence of violence and the ominous mood that typically accompanies movies. Themes about superheroes, super-humans, aliens, and the paranormal attracted moviegoers' interest while frequently exposing them to violent and occasionally sexual themes. Films like King Kong and Dracula from the 1930s onward and well-known franchises like Fright Night, Halloween, and Nightmare on Elm Street from the 1980s had sexual and violent themes (Gunter, 2018). It has become a familiar axiom in filmmaking that drawing audiences in with plenty of sex and violence works well. There is no denying that the explicitness and volume of violent and sexual content have both increased over time. The violence is shown in increasingly graphic detail to portray greater realism, especially when movies recreate actual historical occurrences. All age groups have unrestricted access to sexual and violent portrayals in popular culture.

Additionally, overt portrayals that expose what is typically private, intimate behaviour to the public are considered normal. Critics of the potentially harmful consequences of such portrayals raise concerns about the development of a variety of ideas about sex that might encourage increased promiscuity in society, which is no longer limited to niche industries as pre-internet pornography formerly was. The amount of sex, violence, and language in movies is rising, according to studies. This observation was supported by one study's rigorous content analysis of Hollywood films released between 1992 and 2003 (Thompson, 2004). Media content production in T.V. dramas, films and romantic documentaries is typically based on romantic scenes and the disposal of sexual relationships; hence, this kind of media content appeals to consumers (Johnson, 2009).

According to studies, viewers' enjoyment of violent movies or television depends on their personalities and pre-existing mood states. It has been discovered that angry people favour violent movies (Boyanowsky, 2016). People who are terrified by violent acts in their community may choose to watch movies with plot concepts that closely mimic those incidents as a way of coping. Pre-viewing activities that encourage people to think violently or sexually can get them more receptive to films with comparable themes (Coyne, 2016). Violence in media is a growing concern in the more spread digital age. In 2018, for example, U.S. President Trump told reporters that he was 'hearing more and more people say the level of violence on digital media is shaping young people's thoughts', and the following year (in the wake of a spate of horrific mass shootings) the President opined, 'We must stop the glorification of violence in our society. This includes the commonplace, gruesome,

grisly video games (Griffin, 2022). Hollywood was accused of delivering impressionable youth into a career of crime by depicting mobsters as glamorous and exciting, and in both America and Europe, many gangster movies were either censored or banned outright (Osgerby, 2021). Youth who watch sexually explicit media are more likely to overestimate their peers' sexual behaviour, feel unsatisfied with their lack of sexual engagement, and support harmful stereotypes of men as sex-driven and women as sex objects. The study discovered data to support a link between increased viewing of sexual television content and earlier initiation of sexual behaviour. A year-long study also indicated that youth who watched much sex-oriented television were more likely to engage in sexual conduct than those who watched less of it. According to social cognitive theory, people might intentionally watch how media portrays behaviours in romantic relationships to get ideas for how they might conduct themselves in their relationships. Television has become a common source of socialization and everyday information for a heterogeneous population (Johnson, 2009).

The parameter of substance use is also timely research since university students are more independent and adults to choose their lifestyle. Students' views toward risk-taking and academics may be influenced by films that depict university life. According to social psychology theories (Ajzen, 1991) and (Arria, 2008), attitudes matter because they can influence behaviour. The term "attitude" refers to the positive or negative assessment of an action and reflects the views about the nature and importance of the results of the conduct. For instance, a college student who thinks getting drunk leads to good things is more likely to drink till they are drunk than someone who has a bad attitude. As a result, any conduct may be significantly influenced by attitudes. In the U.S. alone, 62 per cent of college students (young adults) consume alcohol (Drugabuse.gov, 2018).

The reason for assessing the impact of comedy movies is that research indicates that 85% of viewers watch comedy movies, and research (Nguyen, 2015) indicates that 71% of viewers watch comedy movies. Thus, on the ground discussed research studies literature review, this study has developed the following research questions:

2. Research Questions
1. Do pornographic movies significantly affect the sexual behaviours of university undergrads in Pakistan?
2. Do violent movies affect aggression in youth?
3. Does the portrayal of alcohol and drugs encourage youth to consume these substances?
4. Does exposure to comedy influence the behaviour of youth?

3. Literature Review
3.1 Sexual Behavior Impact
Approximately 75% of television programming in developed countries, including the United States, contains sexual content (lamb, 2019). Various research studies have affirmed that most movies nowadays contain sexual disposition in the content, and this kind of content easily influences youth behaviour (AmyBleakley, 2012; Lamb, 2019; & Nalkur, 2010). media messages on sex and relationships can shape Youth behaviour even though they consume, engage with, and create their media (Eyal, 2017). Despite their significance and the high level of youth viewing, relatively few studies have examined the prevalence of the sexualization of girls and women in feature films, according to a review of studies from 2000 to 2017 (Monique, Entertainment media's role in the sexual socialization of Western youth: A review of research from 2000-2017, 2019). in addition, past studies have pointed out that exposure to sexual content media like magazines and periodicals, movies, dramas, and musical albums has increased the tendency to look for a girlfriend or have sex

(J., 2002; Wright, 2016). Furthermore, the authors focused on the that pornography and sexually open substances are now simply available, particularly online (Ward, 2016).

3.2 Romantic Movies and Interpersonal Relationships
The fundamental theme of the stories and songs broadcast in entertainment media is romance, which regularly occupies youths' minds. Certain quantitative studies on youth love relationships and media have recently proven a connection between the use of romantic media and romantic attitudes (Vaterlaus, 2017). Among efforts to study the influence of visual media on sexual behaviour is a study of 300 school girls in Pune, which found a strong correlation between their T.V. watching habits and involvement with boys. The common understanding of girls' tendency to like romantic movies is further confirmed through research (Driesmans, 2016). Research has highlighted the importance of romantic relationship experiences for teenage development. Relationships within the family, forming one's identity (such as romantic self-concept and gender role identification), and close relationships with peers, for instance, may all be impacted by love encounters (Furman, 2003). On average, youth spend more than twice as much free time with peers as their parents or other adults. The time spent with their peers is constant throughout adolescence, from pre-adolescent to late-adolescent, which will likely affect their lives and choices (Furman, 2003).

3.3 Drugs and Alcohol in Movies
Exposure to alcohol consumption in movies encourages youth to adopt similar habits of alcohal drinking (Sargent, 2006). It is observed that if youth and children are exposed to entertainment movies which portray alcohol, tobacco, and other materials of a similar nature, it enhances the tendency to adopt similar attitudes (Stoolmiller, 2012). different studies on alcohol and tobacco consumption attitudes among youth have been carried out in various countries and predicted that if the youth is consuming/watching movies which show the hero/heroine is addicted to alcohol and other substances are frequently used, then there is more possibility of adopting similar habits of coping their heroes (Alhabash et al., 2022; El-Khoury et al., 2019; Waylen, 2015; Stern, 2013). According to past studies, role models in the media and film industry who are having alcohol in different scenes have positively changed the habits of youth, and youth has been directly influenced by peers (Strasburger, 2010).

According to the research evaluating the top 200 movies since 1983, movies showed health hazards from the use of cannabis (8%), non-injected illicit drugs (7%), alcohol intoxication (32%) (Gunasekera, Sex and Drugs in Popular Movies: An Analysis of the top 200 Films, 2017). An American study concluded that youth who are prone to alcohol and engage in sexual relations are more likely to consume media content and movies than normal youth. (Klein, 1993). The recent National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign content analysis found that most popular movies depicted alcohol and smoking, and many depicted illicit drug use (Gunasekera, 2017). It has been affirmed that teenagers and youth spend more time watching romantic, entertainment and tragic movies, which has affected their mental and physical health (Roberts, 2000).

3.4 Violence in Movies and Youth Behaviour
Bandura is the founder of Social Learning Theory. This theory explains youth behaviour and how people learn from direct and indirect media exposure. Social learning theory predicts that watching movies and television dramas or programs has social and antisocial effects on media consumers. The theory further highlights that watching violent movies and violent content exposure can build similar behaviour to its consumers in real life. People use media for their social learning in both positive and

negative ways. Past studies pointed out that there is more probability of showing criminal and violent behaviour in society after watching violent content either in movies or T.V. dramas (Bandura, 1961 & Lazar, 2017). In 1972, U.S. Surgeon General Jesse Steinfeld testified before Congress that "the overwhelming consensus and the unanimous Scientific Advisory Committee's report indicates that televised violence, indeed, does hurt certain members of our society". The 1982 NIMH report reinforced this conclusion, and professional organizations took a similar position in viewing media violence as a severe threat to public health because it stimulates violent behaviour by youth. By the early 1990s, most researchers in the field had arrived at a consensus that the effect of media violence on aggressive and violent behaviour was real, causal, and significant (Huesmann, 1986). Indeed, six medical and public-health professional organizations held a Congressional Public Health Summit on July 26, 2000, and issued a Joint Statement on the Impact of Entertainment Violence. This statement noted that "entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviour". The body of research on T.V. violence continues to grow, both in-depth and in breadth.

In addition, due to advancements in the entertainment industry, a variety of entertainment media content has been used. Hence, it has paved the way for the advancement of media research. Due to new technology and an excess of new to common people, children, youth, and especially university students are exposed to violence. It is necessary to study new media and violence through the lenses of existing theory and new research.

3.5 Comedy Movies and Peer Interaction
It should not be surprising that academics from many fields are becoming more interested in the many features of comedy movies, given that reports indicate that in the U.S. and Australia, this film genre draws a sizable audience to cinema (Lazar, No laughing matter: film advisory boards' evaluations of award-considered comedies, 2017). Comedy movies are the favourite media content consumed in the 21st century after having access to new media and innovative technology. These movies and content provide a common platform for youth to interact and communicate. Studies by psychologists have demonstrated that individuals ranking low on cheerfulness profited considerably when they heard a virtual companion laughing while watching comedies, compared to their counterparts, who were high on this trait (Hofmann, 2015). Comedies are an important genre that serves youth as a source of their identity and name-building and helps them gain insights into their world (Lazar, 2017).

4. Research Methodology
4.1 Research Design
The study adopted a descriptive survey design to study the relationship between modern movies and their influence on youth behaviours in Pakistan. The study was initiated in a well-known semi-government university at the local and national levels. Research survey items were adapted (Udofia, 2017). An online questionnaire was distributed among youth at Sindh University through social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. The youth age in Pakistan is 15 to 29 (Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan, 2018); however, internationally, it is 15 to 24 (Youth). Since the survey was conducted on university undergraduate students, the age was 17 to 24 years, hence aligning with the international standards of youth age.

4.2 Area of Study
Pakistan has 64% of the population aged below 30 (World Population Dashboard Pakistan), which makes up nearly two-thirds of the total population of 207.8 million, while 29% are between 15 and 29

years old. This survey was spread throughout the universities of Sindh province in Pakistan through faculty contacts and a student-to-student approach.

4.3 Population of the Study

The target audience was limited to undergraduate students aged between 17 and 25. The Sindh population of this age group is 47,854,510 (Sindh Province in Pakistan, 2023). According to the Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Method (Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Method, 2017), the sample size is more than enough. A total of 644 sample responses were collected. Due to incomplete data in some entries, 8 entries were discarded, hence making it 636 fully filled.

Demographically, 400 respondents were male, while 236 were female. Age-wise, the maximum number of respondents was 19, at 223, and the lowest number in the age group was 24. The rest of the age group, as shown in the graph, was younger.
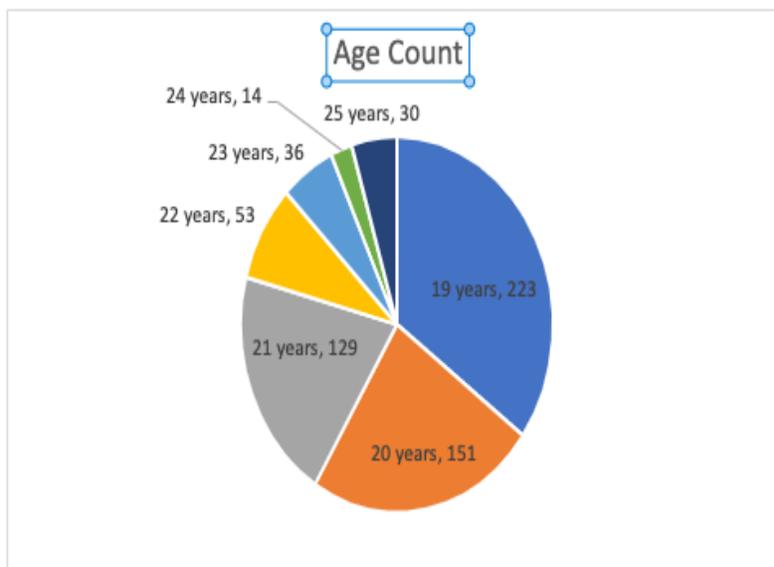
4.4 Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections: A, B, C, D, E, and F. Section A contained four items related to Violence in Movies, B was about alcohol and drugs in the movies with five items, section C was Romantic movies with four items whereas D was about Pornographic in movies having five items, while E was about musical video containing four items, and F, comedy movies comprising three items, the last section was sought for demographic information. The intention behind keeping the demographic questions in the end was to keep the respondents engaged and not feel bored with questions at the start. The instrument was scored according to the Likert format and weighted as 5 points. Likert scale was developed in 1932 as part of Rensis Likert's doctoral dissertation (Likert, 1932). The original Likert scale included five symmetrical and balanced points. Most recently, Preston and Colman (2000) examined the respondent preferences from the perspectives of "ease of use", "quick to use", and "express feelings adequately". Results prove that scales of five points, ten points and seven- points scored highest in respect of "ease of use" (Taherdoost, 2019). Therefore, data was elicited from respondents to respond under Strongly Agree (S.A.), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SDA), and option: I am not sure. A Pilot test was conducted in one classroom of the Media & Communication Department of Sukkur IBA University.

5. Data Analysis
Research Question 1
Do violent movies affect aggression in youth?

S/No	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	INS	Total
1	Watching violent movies can encourage aggression in youth.	224	272	108	39	6	636
2	Youth who watch action movies may try to experiment on others.	123	272	194	40	7	636
3	Most violent movies fail to show the true human consequences of tragic actions.	152	306	142	22	14	636
4	There is a need for government agencies to control reducing the level of violence in movies.	147	249	168	57	15	636

Looking at agree and strongly agree responses as one, nearly 500 out of 636 respondents say violent movies encourage aggression. Nearly 400 say watching may trigger experimenting violence. More than 450 say movies fail to show the natural consequences of violent actions. Moreover, almost 400 viewers say the government should control the violence shown in movies.

Research Question 2
Does the portrayal of alcohol and drugs encourage youth to consume these?

S/No	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	INS	Total
5	Youth who watch movies showing drugs and alcohol may likely take up the habit of consuming these.	179	272	120	55	10	636
6	Movie producers are not doing enough to advertise against the hazards of drugs and alcohol.	252	233	120	26	5	636
7	Youth who watch their heroes taking alcoholic drinks may consider it as a sign of heroism.	187	252	126	58	10	636
8	Youth these days have relatively low knowledge of the hazards of alcohol and drugs.	144	278	134	69	11	636
9	Most Parents do not consider it necessary to warn their youth when alcohol and drugs are shown in the movies.	198	274	117	39	7	636

More than 500 out of 636 agree or strongly agree to the first question. Around 500 say movie producers are not doing enough to show the hazards of drugs and alcohol. More than 400 say taking

alcohol may show signs of heroism in movies. More than 400 respondents believe youth have low knowledge of the hazards of drugs and alcohol. More than 470 say parents do not warn their youth about drugs and alcohol when shown in movies.

Research Question 3

Is there any relationship between exposure to romance movies and interpersonal relationships with peers of the opposite sex in youth?

S/No	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	INS	Total
10	I feel comfortable watching Romantic Movies in Public.	179	170	340	0	12	636
11	Students who watch romantic movies most of the time quickly establish romantic alliances with the opposite gender.	165	296	162	0	13	636
12	Girls like Romantic movies more than Boys do.	151	228	235	0	22	636
13	Students who watch many Romantic movies Do not feel shy in the presence of the opposite gender.	135	259	228	0	14	636

Respondents are equally divided about feeling comfortable watching romantic movies in public; 340 disagree, while almost the same number, 349, agree. More than 450 respondents say watching romantic movies bolsters their romantic alliance. More respondents believe that girls like romantic movies more. Almost 400 respondents believe that students who watch romantic movies don't feel shy in the presence of the opposite gender. From the results, we infer a positive relationship between watching romantic movies and interpersonal relationships in the youth of Pakistan.

Research Question 4

Do pornographic movies significantly affect the sexual behaviours of youth in Pakistan?

S/No	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	INS	Total
14	Most students have access to pornographic movies.	266	236	85	36	13	636
15	Viewing pornographic movies can be a source of distraction and affect student's studies.	283	212	98	29	14	636
16	Pornographic movies increase sexual urges.	259	218	112	29	18	636
17	Students who watch such movies are involved in premarital affairs.	192	257	135	35	17	636
18	Pornographic movies induce masturbation.	231	240	110	33	22	636

The number of undergraduate students who have access to pornographic movies is extravagantly high as 502. Moreover, almost the same number of students believe that consuming such content causes distractions in their studies. 470 plus and 450 students say such movies increase libido and involvement in premarital affairs. Four hundred seventy students say watching such movies induces masturbation.

Research Question 5

Is there any relationship between exposure to comedy and peer interaction among youth?

S/No	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	I'm not sure	Total
19	Youth who watch more comedy movies have a good sense of humour.	293	239	74	22	8	636
20	Youth who spend more time watching comedy are very easygoing.	131	247	179	63	16	636

More than 530 students believe comedy movies positively affect their sense of humour. Three hundred seventy (370) believe youth are easygoing and watch more comedy, while almost 40% of respondents believe otherwise.

6. Discussion

Understanding which industry movies youth watch is important. Hence, the responses were recorded to check what industry movies they watch more often. Four industry options were given, accepting multiple options—Hollywood, Bollywood, Lollywood, and Asian (Korean, Chinese, Japanese, etc.).
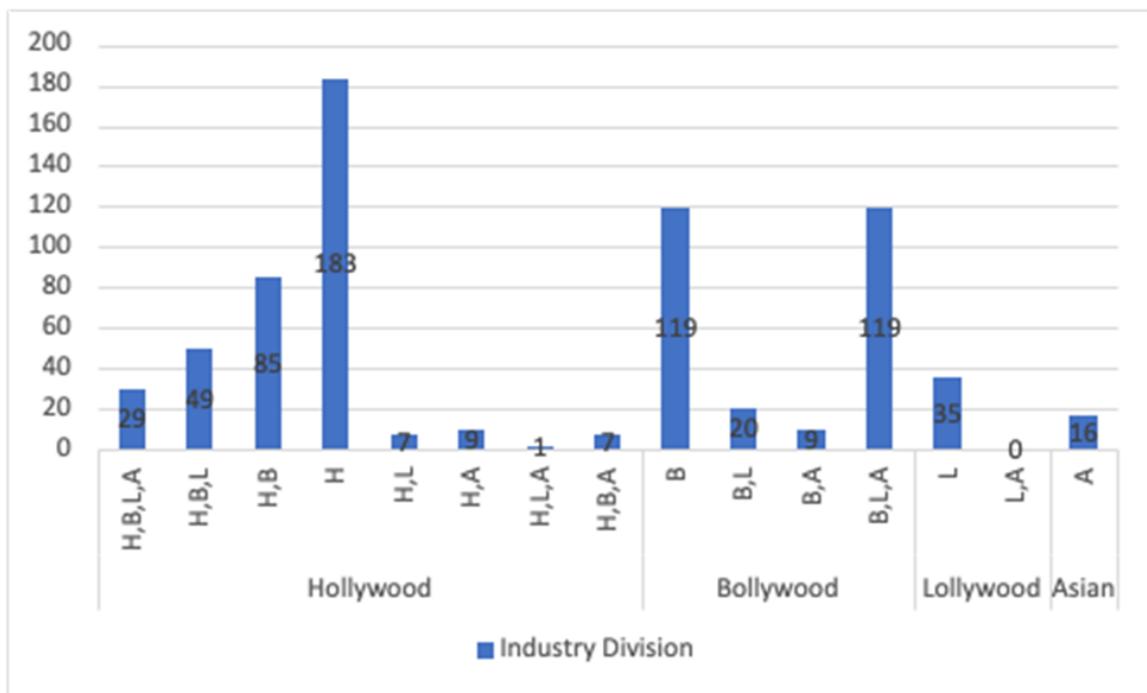
It can be inferred from responses on items 1-4 that violence in movies does affect youth in Pakistan. A significant number of respondents, 500, believe watching violent movies induces aggression in youth. The youth of Pakistan also believe that watching triggers violence in others. They also agree and strongly agree that the government should control the violence shown in movies, and they think movie producers fail to do so. More than 450 respondents agree or strongly agree that most movies fail to show the actual consequences of violence. From items 5-9, we infer that 78% of respondents believe watching drugs and alcohol in movies encourages youth to consume these. 70 to 71% agree that watching tends them to consume substances and seeing heroes in movies further encourages them. 74 to 76 per cent agree that movie makers are failing to control showing substances and alcohol, and parents are also not guiding them over it. In the questions from 10-13, findings suggest that watching romantic films and having interpersonal relationships are positively correlated in Pakistani youth. Almost 400 to 460 respondents agree or strongly agree that watching romantic movies makes them lose their shyness before the opposite sex, and it creates easiness in making alliances with each other. Questions from 14-18 about sexually explicit content, the result suggests that consuming explicit content is harmful and causes students' academic failure and distraction. It further confirms that watching such content is the source of self-abuse and premarital affairs. More than 50 per cent believe these videos derail them from academic objectives. More than 60 per cent say these videos give a false impression of life. However, around 40% do not believe so. These questions give close to mid number of choices, where respondents are close to equal number of agree and disagree. Questions 19-20 about watching comedy suggest that youth (530 respondents) who watch more comedy videos have a good sense of humour. The question of whether watching affects their behaviour is not supported much. Three hundred seventy (370) respondents think young people are easygoing and spend more time watching comedies, but almost 40% disagree.

A study conducted by WHO (2003) noted that "movies have created a yearning for romance" and that to be labelled "boyfriend" or girlfriend" implies "popularity, modernity and coolness".

7. Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, university youth have considerable influence from movies on both covert and overt conduct. The numerous technological advancements that have improved people's access to movies in recent years have amplified this influence. Youth who are emotionally unstable may develop undesirable tendencies as a result of inappropriate movie and video exposure, which could work against them. It may affect their behaviour, peer interaction, and academic achievements. Although movies are primarily for amusement, they can be a source of leisurely learning if properly restricted or regulated. For this to be achievable, it may be necessary for the government, parents, and university counsellors to each play a different part in keeping them from being exposed to harmful movie and video influences.

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