Understanding The Use of Film Therapy as Stress Relief towards Viewer's Emotional Effect

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Abstract

The field of media communication is one of the broader fields due to the range of things that can be found within it. The movie industry is one of the sectors that is closely tied to and also derives from the media communication branch. Many groups around the world, including the Malaysian community, love watching movies and dramas at home or in the theatre as a way to decompress. This is due to the fact that viewing dramas and movies has evolved into a stress-relieving hobby. With adults being the only exception, movies are the most generally accessible and simply understood kind of entertainment in cinema, and they have a significant impact on audience behaviour, especially that of teenagers and young children. The film also has elements that may affect a viewer's psychology in addition to their emotional responses to it. Psychology is one of the only subjects that requires us to observe and participate in a variety of actions and illusions in order to learn. However, how the material is presented inside the movie itself also plays a part in this. The aim of this study is to understand the idea of therapeutic films and how effective they are in reducing viewers' stress in Malaysia. This study also determined whether or not using movie therapy may help people better manage their stress. The qualitative method of conducting in-depth interviews was used to collect information for this study. Five subject matter expert individuals in the field of film participated in interviews. These interviews served the objective of gathering their opinions on the emotional impact that dramas and films had on viewers. The findings from the interviews conclude that the utilization of therapeutic films to assist in lowering levels of stress among audiences in Malaysia is successful.

Keywords*: Film narrative, mental health, film therapy, emotional effect*

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Memahami Kesan Penggunaan Terapi Filem untuk Melegakan Stres terhadap Emosi Penonton

Abstrak

Bidang komunikasi media merupakan salah satu bidang yang lebih luas disebabkan oleh pelbagai perkara yang boleh dijumpai di dalamnya. Industri filem adalah salah satu sektor yang erat hubungannya dengan dan juga berasal dari cawangan komunikasi media. Banyak kumpulan di seluruh dunia, termasuk komuniti Malaysia, suka menonton filem dan drama di rumah atau di teater sebagai cara untuk mengurangkan tekanan. Ini disebabkan oleh kenyataan bahawa menonton drama dan filem telah berkembang menjadi hobi untuk mengurangkan tekanan. Dengan dewasa menjadi pengecualian, filem adalah jenis hiburan yang paling mudah diakses dan difahami secara umum di dalam pawagam, dan ia mempunyai kesan yang besar terhadap tingkah laku penonton, terutamanya remaja dan kanak-kanak muda. Filem juga mempunyai elemen-elemen yang boleh mempengaruhi psikologi penonton selain daripada respons emosi mereka terhadapnya. Psikologi adalah salah satu subjek yang mengharuskan kita untuk mengamati dan mengambil bahagian dalam pelbagai tindakan dan ilusi untuk belajar. Walau bagaimanapun, cara bahan itu disampaikan dalam filem itu sendiri juga memainkan peranan dalam hal ini. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk memahami konsep filem terapi dan sejauh mana keberkesanannya dalam mengurangkan tekanan penonton di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga menentukan sama ada menggunakan terapi filem dapat membantu orang menguruskan tekanan dengan lebih baik. Kaedah kualitatif dalam menjalankan temu bual mendalam digunakan untuk mengumpul maklumat bagi kajian ini. Lima individu pakar dalam bidang filem telah mengambil bahagian dalam temu bual. Temu bual ini bertujuan untuk mengumpulkan pendapat mereka mengenai impak emosi yang drama dan filem miliki terhadap penonton. Hasil kajian menyimpulkan bahawa penggunaan filem sebagai bahan terapi berjaya membantu mengurangkan tahap stres di kalangan penonton di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: *Naratif filem, kesihatan mental, terapi filem, kesan emosi*

Introduction

Films are the most readily available and understandable sources of entertainment and have major influence on the behaviours of the audiences, which may comprise of group of teenagers, children and adults. Film also contains elements that can affect a person's psychology and emotions. Psychology is among the unique arts, where we need to learn through attention, movements and illusions. However, it also depends on the style of delivery in a film itself. Film should be a tool that will make people aware of something. Films and movies produced must also be a reflection of the thinking of society or the mentality of society. Films can be viewed on two aspects, namely its nature and its existence. Films are a medium that is popular and has an influence. Therefore, the researcher views films as an apt research material. Film is an art form in narrative delivery that has principles and styles. Each resulting form has its own developmental pattern from the beginning to the end of a film that includes roles such as mise-en scene, editing shots, sound in narrative formation and visual style film. Thus, film is able to convey messages and effects through structure and style.

Theater, performing arts and visual arts have been used as sources of relief since the times of the ancient Greek (Wu, 2008), therefore film is an entertainment medium that is able to be utilized as a therapy tool to reduce one's stress. Film and cinema therapy have gained recognition as a psychological tool for healing (O'Bryan, 2023). Films and movies can be used as a psychological tool for different purposes, because of the intensity that is in terms of storytelling, character and scenarios are assembled in a short period of time. Films enable creators to materialize stories and fairy tales into visual consumption in which we can take advantage of the cognitive effects of watching movies to formulate theories about learning and creativity, among others, and to promote the idea of various intelligences. Through this approach, the researcher takes the opportunity to study how watching films can reduce the pressure in an audience through use of narrative structure, information delivery, sound, genre selection and also visual styles that are implicated in a film.

Film is not only part of the medium of communication but is also one of the mediums to spread public awareness on issues. In this regard, it can be referred to in the writing of R. Mangala & Thara, (2009) which states that one of the functions of films in India is to provide awareness to the audience of the importance of maintaining mental health, the causes and ways of how to prevent mental problems through watching movies (Mangala & Thara, 2009).

Background of the Study

The majority of humans' everyday lives are guided by emotions: humans pursue what they believe will make them happy and avoid what would make them miserable. Emotions, on the other hand, are little known in the neurological area as compared to mobility, sensory capacity, and cognitive ability, possibly making meaningful evaluations more challenging. Emotion, according to Robert Levenson, is a short-term physiological psychological phenomenon that serves as an effective adaptation mechanism in response to changing environmental demands (Levenson, 2011). Emotions are a collection of bodily and neurological reactions that include visceral (or "gut") experiences, face and body expressions, and shifting attention and thinking.

These responses are normally highly beneficial, and the mind and body's initial methods coincide with the scenario that arises. Emotions are processed by the brain in a series of phases. First, the material should be assessed and assigned an emotional value. This process is frequently quite quick and may occur outside of a human's awareness. However, early emotional reactions are influenced by a variety of personal biases and circumstances. Humans can recognize and feel those feelings. They may need to moderate their emotional expression depending on the social environment. For instance, there are instances when they want to express their rage or contempt but need to remain calm. The brain has a number of distinct mechanisms that relate inputs to emotional values. Because emotions frequently lead one to action, this system is also closely linked to motivation. Emotional systems do not exist in isolation; they interact and impact one another. The dopaminergic reward system, which includes the region of the ventral and the nucleus of accumbent, is the first system to be assessed.

This structure is located in the brain's middle and lower regions, at the level of the eye and, to a lesser extent, the temple. The system incentivizes and rewards us for repeating something that feels "good." The amygdalae circuit is used in the second system. In each temporal lobe, there are two nerve clusters roughly the size of almonds. Anger, fear, and violence are primarily mediated through this. Emotions are also influenced by other structures, such as the insula. Insula (meaning cave) is a part of the brain located on the side of the brain, nestled

below the frontal and temporal folds. The anterior region contributes to the solidification of the disgust reaction. Emotions must be regulated at times, especially when it comes to mental health. The mental health of a person will worsen as a result of uncontrollable emotions. As a result, research has shown that cinema therapy can assist a person in lowering stress (Niemiec, R. M., & Wedding, D, 2014)

Problem Statement

This topic is rarely explored in Malaysia. The majority of the research focuses on the study of narrative and specific components presented in films. As a result, the researcher investigates the psychological influence of the audience's emotions in making a film a medium of entertainment that may assist people de-stress after a long day at work or study. More than one million Malaysians have been put under stress as a result of job losses and other factors since the Covid-19 epidemic rocked the world, including Malaysia (Berita Harian, 2021). Students likewise are not immune to the mental stress brought on by the changing educational system due to the pandemic. Learning through Online Discover Learning (ODL) has a number of drawbacks in terms of efficiency, facilities, internet speed, and other duties that a student must deal with when learning from home. A person could suffer emotional upheaval, disruptions in thinking processes, and physical symptoms when they are stressed. Based on data from July 2021, when the Covid-19 epidemic was suppressing and limiting the lifestyles and quality of lives of Malaysians, as many as 638 suicides were reported in 2021 compared to 262 cases for the same period in 2020. The comparison of these two years indicated an increase of suicide in Malaysia by 143 percent or 1.4 times more (Astro Awani, 2021)

First, the researcher views that a person’s emotional wellbeing or lack thereof highly connects with their mental state – if there is a problem with the person's emotions, and then there would be a problem with their mental state. If stress is not managed, it would continue to escalate, which would lead to negative impact on the individual's physical health. One of the reasons for emotional stress is due to the enormous responsibility such as having high commitment, daily needs that must be provided, and multitude of other reasons to contribute to an individual’s stress and emotional problem, especially during the critical time of Covid-19 pandemic. At yearend of 2019, many people face challenges in surviving because of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of people have lost their jobs and sources of income. On top of the dire situation, as the governments around the world imposed a period of movement control, many people experienced stress due to being confined in their homes. Movement control witnessed the routines and habits of an individual become so self-impaired that one felt compelled to do something that exceeds their own limits and skills, which them became another factor that contributed to the additional stress. In addition, a considerable percentage of people reported feeling stressed as a consequence of difficulties in their relationships and the relationships of others around them. Environment and interpersonal connections are two of the most important factors that have a role in the development of stress in an individual. As a result, this circumstance needs to be rectified so that it does not continue to be a factor in the number of people experiencing mental health issues in Malaysia.

Due to the problems identified previously, the researcher aims to explore if film therapy may help the audience cope with their stress, and further analyze the relationship between emotional effects and genre chosen by the audience. The researcher applies qualitative approach to acquire findings for this study by analyzing and understanding the concept, opinions and experience of the selected Informants, besides that, to support the Informants’ statements, reading and observation through interviews was used in this study to collect qualitative and subjective findings to fulfil the study's results. Findings were gathered through

interviews with selected experts in film study and psychology such as a Lecturer or psychologist. The researcher selects the Informants through purposing sampling in order to determine if film therapy might impact the audience emotions when coping with stress while facing an extreme day, particularly during the last academic season. This study is similarly carried out to continue a previous study of binge- watching when the motion control command was carried out.

The previous study's results explained that the factor of people falling into movie watching addiction is due to filling free time. Upon further investigation, the researcher realizes that the studies conducted in Malaysian setting on film therapy as a stress-relief are limited. This demonstrates that, in comparison to other countries, Malaysian researchers do not undertake nearly as many relevant studies. This is also a consideration in the study's design. As a result, in this study, the researcher aims to examine the link between audience emotions by investigating the influence of viewing a movie on stress reduction among Malaysian audience.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guide the study;
RO 1: To explore the emotional experience by viewers when watching movies
RO 2: To examine the relation between film narrative to emotional effects.
RO 3: To uncover what kind of genre movies that can promote positive emotions for a viewer.

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to develop the finding based on research objectives which includes;
RQ 1: What type of emotional experience that viewer's feel while watching movies?
RQ 2: What are the advantages of watching movies for viewers during stress?
RQ 3: What makes watching movies can create a positive emotion?

Literature Review

Film therapy has been demonstrated to be useful in lowering stress in previous research. Cinema therapy is a creative, therapeutic intervention utilized by film therapists as a symbolic instrument to foster self-exploration of healing and personal development, according to Zhe Wu (2008). While Niemiec and Wedding (2014) claim that films are more than social critiques and that they genuinely inform us about the human condition, the fact is that films may be very useful in therapy.

Previous Studies

Tan, Spackman and Bezdek (2007) have conducted the study on regarding viewers interpretations of film characters emotions. The study observed the effects of presenting film music before or after a character is shown. During the course of the study, 177 undergraduates watched film clips that featured music played either before or after a scene that focused on a single character. The facial expressions of the characters in the movie were either emotionless or restrained, while the music in the movie conveyed happiness, despair, fear, and fury. In general, Informants had a tendency to interpret the emotions of the characters in ways that were congruent with the particular emotion that was represented in

the music. This finding provides support for both forward and backward affective priming effects.

The findings of Boltz, Schulkind, and Kantra (1991) concerning the function of music in foreshadowing are supported by their data (Boltz, Schulkind & Kantra, 1991) (Williamson & Kang, 2012) (Herget, 2021). In film music study, the impacts of music on a previous scene do not appear to have been established to this point, as far as we are aware. According to the results of their study, the presence of music does not have to be timed in sync with the images being shown on screen for it to have an effect on the viewers' perceptions of the film's subject matter.

Emotional Gratification of Viewers Reaction

Emotions are sometimes thought to be at the center of media entertainment, whether it takes the shape of films, novels, television shows, music videos, or computer games. Audiences in the entertainment industry want to laugh, be kept on the edge of their seats, or be moved to tears. In the subject of media psychology, there is a wealth of research that not only confirms the central role of affect in media entertainment, but also gives theoretical reasons for why emotional experiences may be desired and rewarding for media consumers (Bartsch, 2012).

Emotion in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a psychosocial intervention that tries to alleviate the symptoms of a variety of mental illnesses, notably depression and anxiety disorders. CBT focuses on confronting and modifying cognitive distortions (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes) and behaviours, as well as enhancing emotional regulation and developing personal coping mechanisms to address present issues. CBT is based on a combination of basic behavioural and cognitive psychology principles. It differs from traditional techniques to psychotherapy, such as psychoanalysis, in which the therapist searches for the unconscious meaning behind the behaviours before making a diagnosis. CBT, on the other hand, is a "problem-focused" and "action-oriented" type of therapy, which means it's utilized to address specific issues associated to a diagnosed mental disease (Dolan, 2002).

The Effectiveness of Movie Genre to Reduce Stress Level

The movie is well-known among the public. The film or cinema can be used as a learning tool or as part of a guidance and counselling service. The word "media" comes from the Latin word "media," which means "middle," "intermediate," or "introduction." Film is a medium through which educators can offer or convey information. The school counsellor can use this DVD to provide traditional or group guidance services (Alizadeh, Turkestani, Oohadi & Rezveh, 2019).

Methodology

The qualitative data gathering approach is adapted in this study, which is often utilized in social science deep research. The qualitative technique focuses on how the researcher conducts the research as well as what the researcher investigates in terms of subjectivity. It's described as a research method that focuses on proposing meaning and interpretation (Morgan, 2013).

The researcher employes a qualitative research method in this study. In the social sciences, the qualitative research approach is designed to allow researchers to explore social and

cultural phenomena by observing people's feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and beliefs (Mohajan, 2018). For this research, method of in-depth interview is employed to explore and understand the effectiveness of watching film to reduce stress. The criteria of the Informants' selection are expert individuals who have been involved in the film industry for more than a decade.

The researcher selects a total of five individuals as Informants for this study. The modest quantity that was chosen was done so for the purpose of ensuring that the data collected is more authentic and has a lesser danger of being repetitious. In this study, the analysis of the data was carried out by means of the thematic analysis. The topic sheet and the coding sheet were utilized in order to determine the validity and the reliability of the data. A thematic analysis is an approach to data analysis that looks for recurring themes and patterns in the data. One of the benefits of thematic analysis is that it is a flexible method that can be used both for explorative research and for studies where the notion of the pattern of each topic will be uncovered (Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. 2015). The research objectives that have been specified serve as the basis for the identification of the themes.

For the purpose of gathering data, this study carries out in-depth interview sessions. During the interviews, five knowledgeable, experienced or expert individuals from the film industry have participated; of whom comprised of a lecturer, film director, producer and script writer with more than 33 years of professional experience in the film industry (Informant 1); a content director and producer with more than 10 years of professional experience in the film industry (Informant 2); an independent filmmaker and editor with 10 years of professional experience in the film industry (Informant 3); a movie and drama director with 15 years of professional experience in the film industry (Informant 4); and a script writer with more than 30 years of professional experience in the field of film and entertainment (Informant 5).

Findings

The findings of the interviews that were carried out revealed six overarching themes derived from the findings of this research. The themes One and Two answered the study's first research objective, while the themes Three and Four answered the second research objective of this study. Themes Five and Six have answered the third research objective of this study. The following is a discussion of each theme:

The emotional experience by viewers when watching movies:
Theme One: The Message Interpreting towards Film Visualization

When questioned about how the audience interprets the message in relation to the film's visuals, four out of five Informants are in agreement that each individual has their own experience based on what they assume. The emotional experience is different for everyone because of the different ways in which they react to the circumstance. The movie or video is designed to have an effect on the audio, for example, four of the respondents except Informant 5 state that:

"As a director's experience, emotions are considered as 'frames of references' and play a significant part in the development of a story. Since every filmmaker comes from a distinct background, their choice to direct will be based on their individual frame of references." – Informant 1

"I firmly concur. since everyone has their own personal fantasies. Unlike the norm, their life has been significantly different because to the film it has offered, which helps people more freely enjoy the fulfilment of their wishes." – Informant 2

"We must realize that film therapy may not be appropriate for people with severe mental illness. However, it might be beneficial for individuals who are merely anxious due to their current circumstances, such as being overworked, as watching a movie allows them to temporarily divert their attention from the difficulties they are currently experiencing." – Informant 3

"The sights offered are spiritual food for a person; it has advantages and disadvantages, in my opinion. If something is emotionally charged and the audience is experiencing emotional difficulties, one of two things could happen: either the patient's feelings will improve or they will decrease." – Informant 4

Therefore, from these findings, each viewer has their own emotional experience when they watch a movie. It can be concluded that their experience depends on the acceptance of what they watch and interpret. For example, if a person is in a sad or depressed state and they choose to watch a sad movie and have conflict in a story, the probability for them to feel the stronger pressure is higher, but there are also a few who can reduce their stress by watching the movie. This was stated by Informant 4:
"A person's reaction to seeing a movie depends on how they interpret the visual message that the movie is trying to get through. For instance, if the plot revolves on the same life narrative that the audience is experiencing. Making judgments based on what they observe can be beneficial. If they notice something positive, it must be positive; if they hear something negative, their decision must likewise be negative." – Informant 4

Tan, E.S. (2018) claims that one of the ways in which movies entertain the imagination is by imitating the psychological function. A scene in a movie may reflect like perceptions, like thoughts, like streams of connections, and like emotions, or it may demonstrate subjectivity in a more generic sense. The movies also conjure up a universe of their own making, one that is distinct from the actual world as it seems in our everyday lives. To create an experience that is liberated from the perceptual limits of actual life, involve the viewer in actively changing reality according to the needs of their own soul. According to Munsterberg in J.Blitter, (2016) takes a sophisticated approach to the question of how much of a response to a film is automatic. This is the spectator's option depending on their interest in which concepts from memory and the imagination to match images given on screen, and these ideas are the felts that serve as our subjective supplements.

Theme Two: The Importance of Film Therapy in the Prevention of Stress

By the purpose of this study, the Informants were asked regarding the importance of film therapy in the prevention of stress. Most of the Informants have agreed that film is a medium that has been used to prevent stress and they explain by giving an Indian country as an example. There is stated by Informant 1, Informant 3 and Informant 5:
"This effect on one's feelings has been around from the dawn of time, back in the days when Charlie Chaplin was performing. In days gone by, going to the movies was a common way for people to relax and let their minds wander. Individuals in India, as well as people in other third-world nations, for example, go to the movies rather frequently in order to unwind and release the tension that they suffer on a daily basis. For instance, the vast majority of people living in poverty in India are willing to spend money for the sole purpose of going to the

movies. because watching movies can help them relax a little bit when they are exhausted from working during the day." – Informant 1

"According to my friend observation while he having a shooting in India, the culture of the people there, who, de-stress by going to the movies at least once a week in order to maintain a healthy balance in their lives" – Informant 3

"Watching a movie is in and of itself a form of entertainment, and when viewed through the lens of amusement, it undoubtedly also functions as a means of relieving tension. On the basis of these observations In India, people make going to the movies a cultural tradition as a means of relieving mental strain and letting off some of the pressure they experience in their daily lives. This is due to the fact that when we watch movies, not only are we mentally and emotionally relaxed, but our bodies are as well. The narrative of a movie will become our primary concern, and we will consider it a success if it caters to the preferences of the audience." – Informant 5

The following statement demonstrates rather conclusively that many people in Indian society, particularly those in the lower middle class, look to the cinema as a place where they may relax and let off steam; in fact, they have made going to the movies something of a cultural norm in their society. This is reinforced by the development and advancement that has been made in the film industry in India, which is quickly developing. In order for the Indian people to be able to compete successfully on a worldwide scale, they have made the film industry into one of the primary economic sources of their country.

Over the course of more than 3,500 years, India has maintained a continuity in its respect for its arts and literature. Its legacy in the visual, literary, and performing arts has been kept alive by the artists who work in these fields as well as the audiences that support them. *Seeta*, which was shown in Venice in 1934, and *Sant Tukaram*, which was shown in 1936, were two of the first Indian films to be recognized on a worldwide level. In the early days of Indian cinema, the city of Bombay served as the epicenter of activity. On the other hand, as the number of films made in regional languages increased, production of films also began in Calcutta and Madras. The Indian film business is one of a kind in the global cinema industry since it produces films in a variety of languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarati, Bengali, and so on. This is possible because Indian states are home to a diverse range of ethnic groups (Mittal. A, 1995).

The relation between film narrative to emotional effects:
Theme Three: Relationship Between Film Narrative and Emotional Effects

Generally, we know that film narrative is a part of storyline for each film that has been produce. When a film has their own storyline, it will be involving the emotion in other to deliver their message to the audience. By questioning this question, the Informants agree there has relationship between film narrative and emotional effects. For instance, the five Informants have shared their opinion as per below:

"Films that depict violent acts, such as homicide, rape, and other such acts, might elicit adverse responses from viewers if they are shown to target populations who are not emotionally equipped to deal with such content. As a result of this, we offer viewing classes in the industry of filmmaking to ensure that it is suitable for viewers of varying ages (U, P13, P18). Follow these steps if you want to prevent the emotional upheaval from occurring. It is feared that if a child watches a movie that is not appropriate for them, their curiosity will increase through the film, leading them to believe, for example, that they want to try to kill,

that they want to be the superhero that they see, that they can jump off buildings, and so forth, until they do so without considering the effects on themselves. This is a very real concern." – Informant 1

"In my opinion, because they are constantly turned into stories and shared with others, emotions have a life beyond the situation that immediately causes them. They aid us in remembering our feelings and helping us express, understand, and share them. Our ability to manage our own emotions and the reactions of others are both influenced by the film stories. In the study of emotions and narrative, it is possible to highlight the capacity of oral narration to include a variety of fleeting and personal viewpoints." – Informant 2

The Informant 3, Informant 4 and Informant 5 expressed the belief that everyone who watches a movie usually involves themselves in the plot.
"When someone watches a movie indirectly, they think they are in the movie. I know that when I watch a movie, I will put myself in that situation and try to make it fit with my own life. From here, the feelings will be shared, and the message will get across." – Informant 3

"How a person feels about a movie depends on how they understand what the movie is trying to show them. For example, if the story is about the same kind of life that the audience is living. It can be helpful for people to make decisions based on what they see. If they see something good, their decision must also be good. If they hear something bad, their decision must also be bad." –Informant 4

"Everyone's "point of view" is different. Since everyone has a different point of view, the messages they get are different depending on how they think. In terms of emotions, the goal of making and putting together a film is to show the audience something that will make them feel something." –Informant 5

The degree to which a person is emotionally invested in a narrative film is, in the end, largely dependent on their personal level of acceptance; there is no objective method for judging this. According to Norbert Willey's theory from 2003 regarding the emotions of film spectators, it is beneficial to start with a description of these emotions. The feelings evoked by art are difficult to put into words in Feagin, (1997) and Gilmore, (2020). It is usual practice to define emotions as internal mental states that are brought on by an evaluation of external occurrences, individuals, or things in Ortony, Clore & Collins, (2022). It is often held that people's emotions have an effect on what they pay attention to and remember, Dolan, (2002). This is because emotions induce psychological responses, which give a new dimension to the experience (Kensinger, 2009). It is common knowledge that one of the most powerful ways to influence people's views, intentions, and behaviours is by appealing to the emotions they experience in reaction to persuasive messaging (Dunlop et al, 2008).

Theme Four: The Influence of Narrative of Story and Character Behaviour towards Decision Making by the Audience

Next, all Informants were asked about the influence of narrative of story and character towards decision making that would be doing by the audience who are watching a movie. Two of Informant has agreed the narrative of the story and the character would influence the audience to help them doing a decision making in their life. This situation is existed because of some of the audience is use film as a reference. For instance, the Informant said:
"Psychologically, you can unwind, lift your spirits, and cement your partnership. If the writing and delivery of the film are effective and believable, it also affects social and cultural perceptions of emotions." – Informant 2

"In a different way, I also think that some people use movies as their guides. We all live our own lives, which may be different from what the characters and plots of movies are doing. However, from this visual, audience can actually get the inspiring vibes from the film to use in their own lives." – Informant 4

In addition, some films, such as those classified as inspirational, are produced with the intention of persuading audiences to adopt a more upbeat attitude or to experience an increase in their sense of self-worth. Other films, on the other hand, are produced to inspire audiences to think more positively about themselves and their future choices. An example of this would be the Netflix original film "Sa Balik Baju," which was directed by Afiza Asram (2021). The features of a narrative that is comprised of six interrelated stories about women who are attempting to navigate the terrain of social media. These videos demonstrate the truth of the negative impact that social media influencers may have on our way of life while at the same time focusing on how social media can be a useful tool for people like the protagonist of the story.

Movie genres that can promote positive emotions for a viewer:
Theme Five: The Movie Genre That Has Been Preferred by the Audience

During the course of the conversation on the type of film that the audience enjoys seeing the most, three of the Informants came to the conclusion that a good genre would be something light, such as comedy, romantic comedy, or horror comedy. The Informant expressed as follows:
"To relieve tension, the majority of viewers in Malaysia choose to watch comedies and light-hearted genre films." – Informant 1

"A comedy is the best genre for cope with stress, because they have the connection between this genre and "Happy hormones," which are memories of happy relationships closer to the audience." – Informant 2

"Some of them enjoy romantic comedies, while perhaps half would rather watch horror or action films." – Informant 5

However, Informants 3 and 4 are also offering their thoughts on the topic, and they feel that not just light genres are capable of handling audience stress, as they explain as follows:
"Each genre has its own strengths, which depend on how well it is liked and what the audience likes. Different types of music can be helpful. It depends on what is going on." – Informant 3
"This is explained by the fact that genre fragmentation promotes fantasizing and fulfilment. In accordance with the post-watch triggers. The screenplay being viewed affects memory." – Informant 4

Movie watching is an activity that has been regarded for a long time as merely a leisure to be enjoyed whenever one has some spare time away from the duties of everyday life. One might feel less stressed after seeing a comedy film, especially if it's a good one. Previous studies have indicated that laughter can lower the levels of stress hormones in the body, such as cortisol and adrenaline. This is due to the fact that laughter releases endorphins, which counteract the effects of stress hormones (Yim,J. 2016). Having said that, going to the movies that tackle difficult subjects could provide the audience with an experience that stimulates their mental process. Watching a film can be beneficial for educating and broadening one's

perspective, whether the audience member's goal is to gain a deeper comprehension of a contemporary societal issue or to stimulate discussion about an alternative viewpoint.

Theme Six: The Effectiveness of Film Therapy for Mental Health

This question has been asked regarding the effectiveness of film therapy for mental health. Some of Informant are answered that, Malaysia is also provide this therapy to help mild mental disorder to cope with their problem. There is an Informant state:
"Movies are a synthesis of various visual, aural, and other aspects. If its stance in favor of audio-only movies is unsuccessful. Indirectly, the soundtrack of the film has a big effect. The movie actually helps people a lot and, for a while, serves as a panacea for them, whether or not they are conscious of it. People will laugh and grin back, especially when viewing a comedy movie. As is well known, various of psychological studies have demonstrated that a person's mood can be improved by laughing and smiling" – Informant 1

"My friend's aunt got Alzheimer's in her late 60s. Because of her interest to P-Ramlee's films, P-Ramlee's movie being played on time made her happy and relieved. If not watching, he will be gloomy and refuse to eat, drink, or complete everyday chores. In the darkness, the aunt said. As she felt the people surrounding her were her siblings before she got married. So, this therapy keeps her positive and depressed-free." – Informant 2

The Informant 3 is also giving his thought by his psychological knowledge;
"Most medical practitioners use film to treat patients by ensuring the film is appropriate for their condition. Professionals may recommend motivational movies to suicidal depressed patients. Images of life adventures may influence their brains. But if the movie isn't under control, the impact will be worse. Because movies can influence decision-making. Depends on the movie." – Informant 3

As a result, it is clear that medical professionals have also turned to cinema therapy as a means of providing assistance to the patients in their care. According to Sacilotto, E., et al., (2022), the statement has been validated by prior research. Cinema or video therapy (film therapy) are occasionally utilized as a part of psychotherapy (Sacilotto et al., 2022). This method of treatment may involve the therapist introducing the patients to a fictional character who is going through feelings that are similar to those that they are experiencing. It may also enable the patients to look at their condition from a different perspective, which may provide them with new strategies to cope with it. A therapist may decide to show the patient a film or video from the entertainment industry that is connected to the difficulties the patient is experiencing. If a person is having issues in their romantic relationship, they can be given the assignment to see a movie that deals with a similar topic. In addition to this, therapeutic exercises are provided for the patients to complete either before or after viewing.

On the basis of this conclusion, the theory that has considerable bearing on this research is the Narrative theory, which states that all of the participants agree that narrative or tales have a very great impact on the emotional impact that they have on an audience. The narratives in a film serve as a medium or conveyance in imparting an emotional impact to the audience, and are therefore able to modify the mood of the audience as well as assist in reducing the viewer's rate of stress. The terms "immersion" and "belief revision" are used to define "narrative transportation." In theory, narrative does not simply include conveying a story; rather, it is also connected to sounds that might influence the feelings of the audience. The impact of these emotional shifts is what will bring about a change in the disposition of each observer. As this mood evolves into joy for each viewer and happy hormones such as

endorphins are successfully secreted, it indirectly lessens the amount of stress that an individual is experiencing in their own life.

The Narrative Effect Towards Audience Emotion

The data presented above is any indication, all of the Informants believe that the storytelling of a film has an impact on its audience. A person's emotional depth is proportional to their level of self-acceptance. Certain scenes in a film or play may have an emotional impact on the person's emotional and mental requirements. One of the rare methods of communication that requires us to learn through seeing movements and optical illusions is psychologically-focused films. The premise of a film is vital, but the characters and personalities that actors bring to those roles are what really make or break a drama.

It is possible to evoke emotion from viewers by crafting a story that's engaging and well-executed. Putting together a complex narrative can aid in the analysis of situations and the selection of appropriate responses. Movies have long been recognized as a stress-busting tool by researchers. It's common practice to employ film as a form of treatment for depression in several parts of the world.

Research Limitations

Every research project comes with a set of obstacles that the researchers need to overcome. However, in spite of all of the limitations and difficulties, the investigation's final results are inarguably valuable. This is the case even though so many things failed to go as planned. During the time that this research was being carried out, there were not many constraints. As a result of the great distance that separates the researcher and the people being interviewed for this study, the initial phase of the research project's proposal involved the use of online meeting platforms for the interviews. Due to issues with travel and scheduling, all of the interview sessions with Informants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were carried out through an online platform. The in-depth interview sessions were conducted through an online meeting platform, *Google Meet*. As per mention above this research are rarely explored in Malaysia, and the researches that had been done were more commonly focused on a particular movie or drama as a case study.

The past researchers conducted their researches to investigate the effect of audience emotion towards certain movie that had been selected. In contrast to the previous studies, this qualitative study focuses more on the application of the film therapy itself, specifically on whether or not it helps audience members lessen the amount of emotional stress they are experiencing and how it is able to do so. However, in this study, the researcher has placed a limit on where the results of this study were, dating from the individual perspective of the filmmaker or the art itself. This limitation is due to the fact that the researcher has personally experienced in producing the film and received feedback while they were producing it.

Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

The bad perception of having unstable emotions is something that might be brought on by stress. Everyone who struggles with stress is powerless to find a solution, even though the issue at hand is rather straightforward. In addition, people who are sad frequently have feelings of anxiety and are easily stressed out by insignificant concerns. They develop into someone who thinks too much about things. This circumstance has the potential to make a person irritable, which will only develop more severe if it is not managed or cared for appropriately. People who suffer from autism spectrum disorder (ASD) syndrome have been

treated using cinema therapy as a form of psychotherapy in at least one of the research projects that have been carried out so far. This condition is a form of heterogeneous neurodevelopmental disorder that is defined by chronic difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and a limited and stereotypical pattern of interests. Patients with ASD not only physically but also emotionally suffer from their condition. They are considered less gregarious and more challenging to engage in conversation with, Reilly, C. (2009). According to Sabatino and Anna (2021) the efficacy of therapeutic movies relies in helping people enhance their social flexibility through the use of visual psychology and also the impression of noises that create an impression on people's emotions when they are making judgements (Sabatino, Anna C, 2021). The researcher adopted the study as part of the technique employed in offering ideas for the development of therapeutic film strategies for those who experience emotional damage as a result of the findings of the research. The primary focuses of this tactic are on the three most important aspects of narrative filmmaking, sound impression and cinematography.

Few recommendations can be offered to future researchers who might develop studies on a topic that is comparable to this qualitative study, as one way in which the comprehension of the study problem may be improved. The sample that future researchers use can begin with switching from an expert in the film industry to actual members of the audience in order to acquire a more accurate reflection of those individuals' perspectives and perceptions. Future research can also increase their sample by concentrating on the age range of the Informant in order to discover how opinions vary depending on age range.

This study also suggests that future research widen the topic of the research by focusing on the mental influence of atypical age ranges towards teenagers. This recommendation is made as a result of the findings of this study. In addition, the subject of the research was recommended by this study to be expanded beyond the scope of what was covered in this study. In this particular research project, both qualitative technique and thematic analysis were utilized. In the future, it will be beneficial for researchers to take a mix-method strategy, which mixes qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, in order to achieve better results and obtain a wider range of information.

In conclusion, it is abundantly obvious that the utilization of therapeutic films to assist in lowering levels of stress among audiences in Malaysia is successful. When confronted with the inflationary issues that are occurring in Malaysia, the majority of Malaysians choose to unwind by watching a movie or drama as their activity of choice, regardless of the platform they use (Harian Metro, 2020). According to the findings of the research, the extent to which an individual is able to accept him or herself influences the range of emotional experiences that person has. There are components in a movie or drama that have the potential to influence the psychological and emotional requirements of an individual. The use of films with an emphasis on psychological impacts is one of the singular modes of communication that requires us to get knowledge through the observation of motions and illusions. In addition to the narrative of the film itself, the key factors that have a significant impact on the audience's emotional response are the characters and characters that actors bring into a film and drama.

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