

Viewer Reminiscences on Portrayals about Persons with Disability in Indian Cinema

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ABSTRACT This exploratory study uses theme based group discussion, brain storming and focus group techniques on 27 non-disabled multi-lingual college students to evoke their reminiscences on depiction of disability in Indian cinema. The corpus of audio/video recordings were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis by three independent mutually blinded observers for latency, duration or time lag of respondent recall, dominant content or themes, attitudinal valence, perceived cliché and stereotypes about disability in cinema. Response analysis of attributed features for the film characters with disability was undertaken on major themes. The typical 'pity-sympathy' dimension of viewing the 'hero' as protagonist afflicted with mental illness is the most remembered depiction by female respondents. The most frequently evoked images, themes, language and terminology continue to reflect dismal, negative, struggling, anguished or aggrieved stereotype of contemporary cinema representation on persons with disabilities. These findings on commercial Indian movies are discussed with implications and justification for greater in-depth systematic research in this area.