



Research Article

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Bollywood's Role in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Study of Environmental Awareness in Hindi Films

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ABSTRACT

Bollywood, as a powerful medium of mass communication, has a significant role in shaping public understanding and attitudes toward environmental challenges and disaster risk reduction (DRR). This research paper explores how Hindi cinema portrays environmental disasters and promotes awareness of climate change, sustainability, and disaster preparedness. By analyzing audience responses from a survey of 146 participants—comprising both rural and urban viewers, the research highlights how Bollywood films contribute to environmental education and behavioral change. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents are interested in social and environmental themes in films and believe that such portrayals enhance awareness, motivate further learning, and can influence public policies and social movements. While Bollywood is increasingly incorporating environmental narratives, the study suggests a need for deeper integration of DRR principles in cinematic storytelling. The paper concludes that Bollywood has the potential to be a catalyst for environmental consciousness and disaster resilience, particularly among youth audiences. However, sustained and intentional efforts from filmmakers, policymakers, and media educators are essential to maximize the medium's educational impact. This research contributes to the broader discourse on media's role in environmental communication and provides recommendations for using popular culture as a tool for public engagement in disaster risk reduction.

Introduction

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) has emerged as a critical global concern in the face of increasing climate-related challenges, including floods, droughts, and other natural calamities. Popular culture, particularly cinema, has a significant impact on shaping public perceptions and awareness regarding social and environmental issues (Solinska-Nowak et al., 2018).

Bollywood, as one of the largest film industries in the world, holds significant cultural sway and influence over millions of viewers in India and beyond. The portrayal of environmental themes and disaster risk reduction (DRR) in Hindi cinema has garnered increasing attention, particularly in the context of rising climate change challenges and environmental degradation. As films are not only a source of entertainment but also a medium for social messaging (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010), they have the potential to shape public perceptions and

awareness regarding critical issues such as climate change, disaster preparedness, and environmental sustainability.

This research paper aims to explore the extent to which Bollywood films address environmental disasters and their integration of DRR principles. By analyzing the narratives, character portrayals, and thematic elements in select films, the study seeks to assess the impact of these cinematic representations on audience awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Furthermore, it will examine how viewers respond to messages of disaster preparedness and the role of Bollywood in influencing public discourse and policy regarding environmental sustainability.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to highlight the interplay between cinema and environmental consciousness, contributing to a broader understanding of how popular culture can drive social change. With a focus on both urban and rural audiences, this research will provide

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valuable insights into the diverse perceptions of environmental themes in Bollywood films, paving the way for future studies on the role of media in promoting disaster risk reduction and sustainable practices. Ultimately, this paper aims to underscore the importance of cinematic storytelling as a tool for fostering a more environmentally aware and resilient society.

This research aims to explore how Hindi films depict environmental issues and contribute to disaster risk reduction. The study will examine whether Bollywood's portrayal of environmental disasters aligns with global DRR strategies and how it influences public consciousness, behavior, and policy discussions related to climate action and disaster mitigation.

Review of Literature

The intersection of cinema and environmental awareness has been explored in several studies that highlight the potential of films to inform and inspire collective action. Research indicates that visual storytelling plays a crucial role in communicating complex environmental issues in an accessible way. Studies on climate change communication through cinema show that films are capable of not only raising awareness but also fostering a sense of urgency and responsibility. However, little research has been conducted specifically on the role of Hindi films in promoting disaster risk reduction strategies. This research builds on the existing literature by focusing on Bollywood's contribution to environmental awareness and DRR, bridging a gap in scholarship related to South Asian popular culture and its role in environmental communication. Anderson in his book titled "Media, Environment, and the Network Society" explores the evolving relationship between media and environmental issues within the context of a networked society. The book provides a theoretical framework on how media, including cinema, can influence public understanding and policy regarding environmental challenges.

Boykoff & Roberts (2007) in their report titled "Media coverage of climate change: Current trends, strengths, weaknesses" highlights how media covers climate change, pointing out both the strengths in raising awareness and the weaknesses in sensationalism and misrepresentation. It provides useful insights into the media's role in shaping environmental discourses, which is applicable to Bollywood's portrayal of climate issues.

Jain (2019) in his paper titled "Bollywood's Environment: Climate Change and Filmic Awareness" analyzes how Bollywood films integrate environmental narratives, specifically focusing on climate change. The study emphasizes the limited but growing trend of environmental awareness in mainstream Hindi cinema, and its potential to affect public perceptions. Similarly, Kaul (2014) in his research paper "Cinema as an Agent of Social Change: Bollywood and Environmental Awareness" argues that Bollywood has the potential to act as a catalyst for social change, particularly through its portrayal of

environmental issues. The paper underscores cinema's role in promoting environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction, with Bollywood as a central case study.

Wilson (2016) discusses the visual representation of climate change in global cinema, including Bollywood, emphasizing how films influence audiences' perceptions of environmental futures. The study underscores the role of cinema as a powerful medium for raising awareness and prompting action on climate-related issues. Similarly, Banerjee (2020) examines how Bollywood addresses environmental concerns such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change through both direct and symbolic cinematic representations. Bhatia (2018) adds to this discourse by exploring the narrative treatment of climate change in Bollywood films, highlighting key movies that depict environmental degradation and evaluating their effectiveness in communicating these issues to a broad audience. In a similar vein, Dutta (2019) focuses on Bollywood's role in enhancing public awareness of environmental challenges, analyzing how successfully the industry portrays ecological themes and the resulting impact on viewers' understanding and engagement.

Gupta and Raj (2021) provide a critical analysis of environmental sustainability themes within Bollywood films, highlighting a recurring pattern where environmental concerns, though present, are often relegated to the background in favor of more commercially appealing elements. Their study suggests that while filmmakers occasionally touch upon important environmental issues, these themes typically lack depth and continuity, reflecting a broader trend of prioritizing entertainment over advocacy. In contrast, Khan (2018) focuses on Bollywood's engagement with social responsibility, particularly in relation to climate change. His research emphasizes the potential of film narratives to raise awareness about environmental issues and influence public discourse by embedding such concerns within popular storylines. Through his analysis, Khan shows how cinematic storytelling can serve as a powerful tool for educating the masses and shaping societal attitudes toward environmental responsibility.

Expanding on the political dimension, Kumar (2016) explores the socio-political framing of environmental messages in Bollywood. His study reveals how films often present environmental challenges through a political lens, reflecting India's complex governance structures, public policies, and social struggles. By situating environmental issues within the broader political landscape, Bollywood films have the potential to engage audiences in critical reflections about systemic change and policy implications. Similarly, Mehta (2020) examines the portrayal of disaster risk reduction in Bollywood, with a specific focus on natural disasters. Her research demonstrates how certain films contribute to public education about disaster

preparedness and resilience, thereby playing a constructive role in shaping community responses to environmental crises. Sah and Kumari (2024) examine the impact of emerging technologies on modern education, emphasizing how digital tools enhance communication, accessibility, and engagement. Although their study focuses on the educational sector, it offers valuable insights into the broader role of technology in shaping public awareness. Their findings suggest that digital platforms can effectively disseminate important information, making them powerful tools for awareness campaigns, including those related to disaster risk reduction. In the context of Bollywood films, their research highlights how the integration of technology (such as streaming services and mobile access) can expand the reach of environmental messaging. This suggests that when Bollywood content is paired with digital platforms, it holds strong potential to educate audiences about disaster preparedness and environmental challenges in an engaging and impactful way.

Rao (2022) further investigates Bollywood's influence on public awareness of climate change, concluding that the industry does have a significant impact on environmental discourse. However, Rao notes a lack of sustained and focused engagement with these issues, pointing to the need for more consistent and in-depth representations in cinema. Singh (2018) offers a narrative analysis of how Bollywood depicts environmental disasters, focusing on the cinematic techniques used to evoke emotional responses and convey urgency. His study highlights the ways in which disaster narratives resonate with Indian audiences and foster a greater understanding of environmental risks. Complementing this, Tiwari (2020) explores the role of Bollywood films in supporting disaster preparedness campaigns across India. Her research underscores how popular cinema can act as a vehicle for public education, not only by spreading awareness but also by motivating communities to take proactive steps in the face of environmental threats. Collectively, these studies reflect a growing academic interest in the intersection of cinema, environment, and public engagement in the Indian context.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse how Bollywood films depict environmental disasters and promote awareness of disaster risk reduction, climate change, and preparedness.
2. To evaluate the impact of these films on public perceptions, behaviours, and their role in influencing policy and social movements related to disaster mitigation.

Research Questions:

1. How do Bollywood films portray environmental disasters and integrate disaster risk reduction

principles while raising awareness about climate change and sustainability?

2. How do audiences respond to messages on disaster preparedness and environmental conservation, and can Bollywood influence policy and social movements related to disaster risk reduction in India?

Research Methodology

A structured survey was conducted to assess how Bollywood films influence public perceptions of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and environmental awareness. The survey targeted two distinct groups: urban and rural audiences, to capture diverse perspectives on the impact of Hindi films in promoting disaster preparedness and environmental sustainability. A sample size of 150 respondents was selected, but data was collected from 146 participants, comprising 63 from urban areas and 83 from rural areas. The participants were chosen using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, education level, and media consumption habits. The survey instrument was a questionnaire consisting solely of close-ended questions. The data collected was analyzed using Excel software. Ethical considerations were carefully followed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly maintained.

Findings & Discussion:

The study is expected to reveal whether Bollywood films contribute significantly to raising awareness about disaster risk reduction. It will explore how these films portray the relationship between climate change, natural disasters, and the human capacity to mitigate risks. The discussion also focusses on the potential for films to influence individual and collective actions toward environmental sustainability.

Table 1 What is your age group

What is your age group?		
	Frequency	Percent
18–24	117	80.1
25–34	27	18.5
35–44	2	1.4
Total	146	100.0

Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data revealed that many respondents (80.1%) fell within the 18–24 age group, accounting for 117 participants. This was followed by the 25–34 age group, which made up 18.5% of the respondents, with 27 individuals. Only a small fraction, 1.4% or 2 respondents, belonged to the 35–44 age group. In total, data was collected from 146 participants, representing 100% of the survey sample. This indicates a predominantly young respondent base, with the vast majority being under the age of 25.

Table 2: Crosstabulation Gender*Place

What is your gender? Where do you live? Crosstabulation				
		Where do you live?		Total
		Rural	Urban	
What is your gender?	Female	64	46	110
	Male	19	17	36
Total		83	63	146

Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data on gender and location revealed that out of the 146 total respondents, most participants were female. Specifically, 64 females (43.8%) resided in rural areas, while 46 females (31.5%) lived in urban areas, making up a total of 110 female respondents (75.3%). In contrast, 19 males (13%) lived in rural areas, and 17 males (11.6%) were from urban areas, resulting in a total of 36 male respondents (24.7%). Overall, the data indicates a higher female participation rate across both rural and urban locations.

Table 3: Education

What is your highest level of education?		
	Frequency	Percent
High school	3	2.1
Ph.D	8	5.5
Postgraduate	83	56.8
Undergraduate	52	35.6
Total	146	100.0

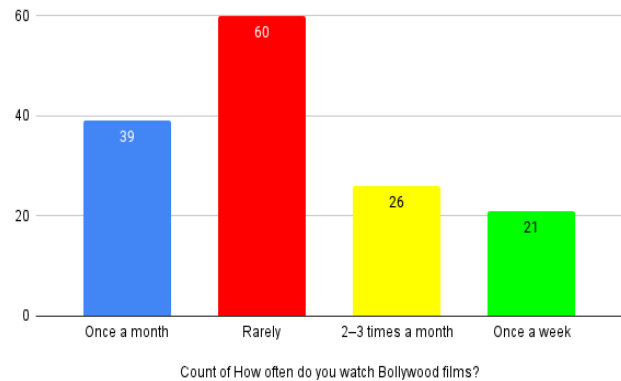
Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data on the respondents' highest level of education 56.8% (83 respondents), completed postgraduate studies. The (52 respondents) who had an undergraduate degree.

A smaller portion of the participants, 5.5% (8 respondents), had attained a Ph.D., while only 2.1% (3 respondents) had a high school education. In total, data was collected from 146 participants, representing 100% of the survey sample. This indicates that a large proportion of the respondents were highly educated, with most having either postgraduate or undergraduate qualifications.

Figure 1: Frequency Bollywood film-watching habits

How often do you watch Bollywood films?

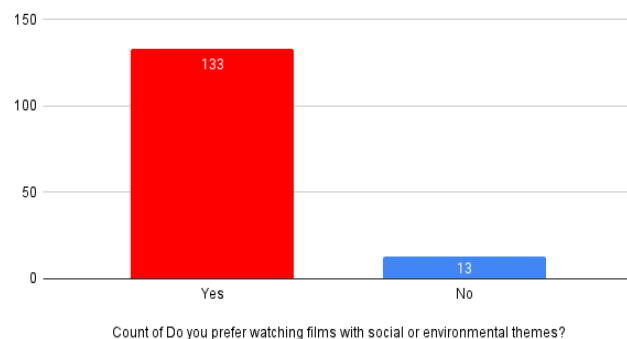


Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data on Bollywood film-watching habits shows that the largest portion of respondents, 41.1% (60 respondents), rarely watch Bollywood films. This is followed by 26.7% (39 respondents) who watch films once a month, and 17.8% (26 respondents) who watch 2–3 times a month. Additionally, 14.4% (21 respondents) reported watching Bollywood films once a week. In total, 146 respondents participated in the survey, representing 100% of the sample. This data indicates a general trend of infrequent film-watching, with the majority watching Bollywood films rarely or monthly.

Figure 2: Preference for films with social or environmental themes

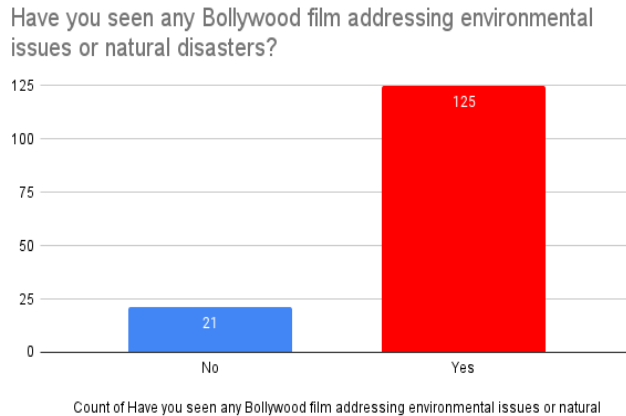
Do you prefer watching films with social or environmental themes?



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data indicates a strong preference for films with social or environmental themes among respondents. A significant majority, 91.1% (133 respondents), expressed that they prefer watching such films, while only 8.9% (13 respondents) indicated otherwise. In total, the survey included 146 participants, representing 100% of the sample. This suggests that there is a clear interest in social or environmentally themed films among the respondents.

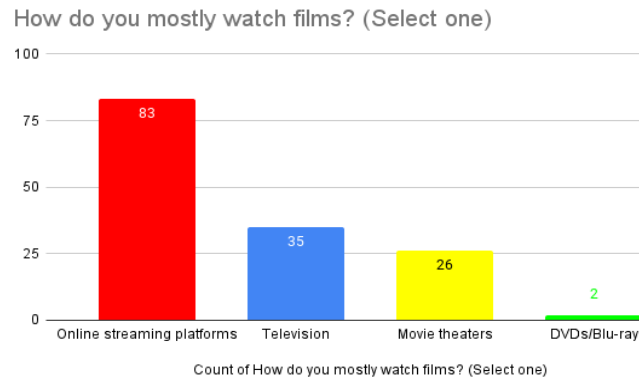
Figure 3: Bollywood film addressing environmental issues or natural disasters



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data shows that a large majority of respondents, 85.6% (125 respondents), have seen a Bollywood film addressing environmental issues or natural disasters. Only 14.4% (21 respondents) indicated that they had not seen such films. In total, 146 participants responded to this question, representing 100% of the sample. This highlights that most of the respondents are familiar with Bollywood films that address environmental or disaster-related themes.

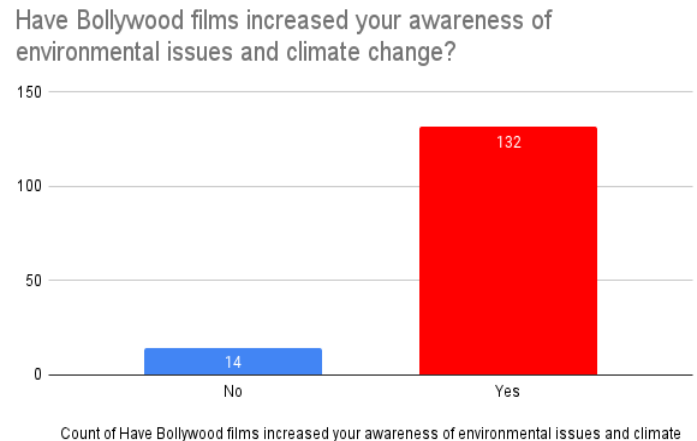
Figure 4: How respondents mostly watch films



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data on how respondents mostly watch films shows that the majority, 56.8% (83 respondents), prefer online streaming platforms. This is followed by 24.0% (35 respondents) who primarily watch films on television, and 17.8% (26 respondents) who prefer movie theaters. A very small portion, 1.4% (2 respondents), watch films using DVDs or Blu-ray. In total, 146 respondents participated, representing 100% of the survey sample. This indicates that online streaming platforms are the dominant method of film consumption among the respondents.

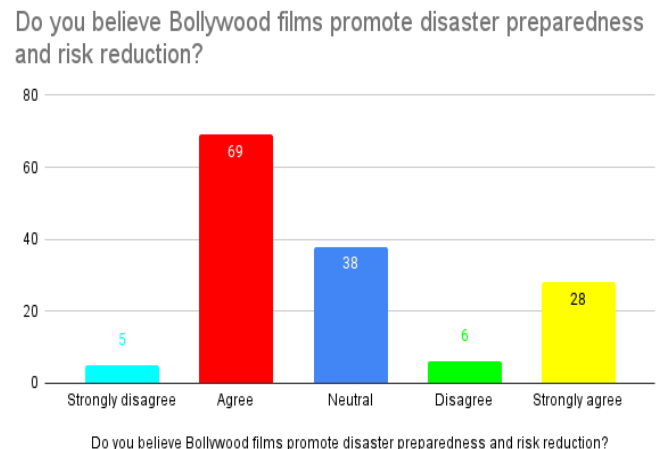
Figure 5: Bollywood films & Awareness



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data shows that many respondents, 90.4% (132 respondents), believe that Bollywood films have increased their awareness of environmental issues and climate change. Only 9.6% (14 respondents) felt that these films did not contribute to their awareness. In total, 146 participants responded to the survey, representing 100% of the sample. This suggests that Bollywood films play a significant role in raising environmental and climate change awareness among the viewers.

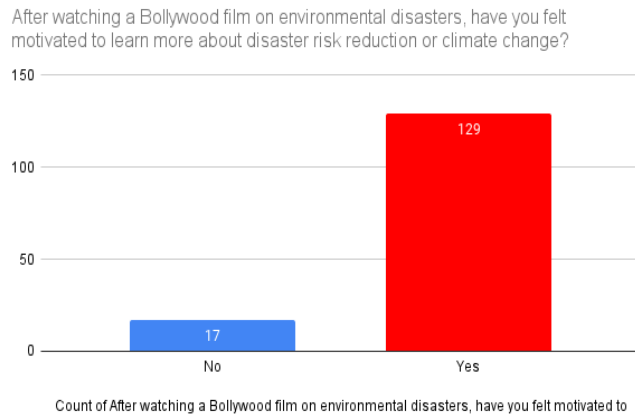
Figure 6: Bollywood films & Preparedness & risk reduction



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data reveals that a significant portion of respondents, 47.3% (69 respondents), agree that Bollywood films promote disaster preparedness and risk reduction, while 19.2% (28 respondents) strongly agree. A neutral stance was taken by 26.0% (38 respondents), indicating mixed opinions. On the other hand, 4.1% (6 respondents) disagreed, and 3.4% (5 respondents) strongly disagreed with this statement. In total, 146 participants completed the survey, representing 100% of the sample. This suggests that while the majority believe Bollywood films promote disaster preparedness, a notable portion remains neutral or uncertain.

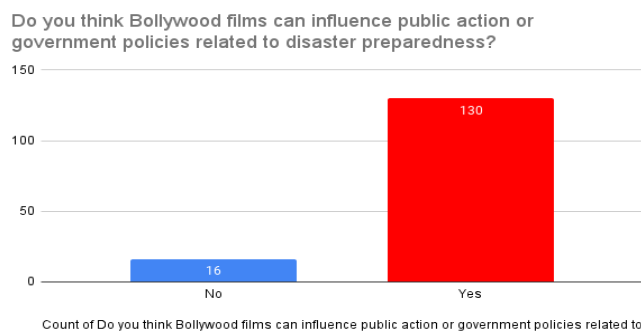
Figure 7: Motivation From Bollywood film



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data indicates that a substantial majority of respondents, 88.4% (129 participants), felt motivated to learn more about disaster risk reduction or climate change after watching a Bollywood film on environmental disasters. In contrast, only 11.6% (17 respondents) reported that they did not feel motivated to seek further information on these topics. In total, 146 participants answered this question, representing 100% of the sample. This suggests that Bollywood films effectively inspire viewers to enhance their knowledge about disaster risk reduction and climate change issues.

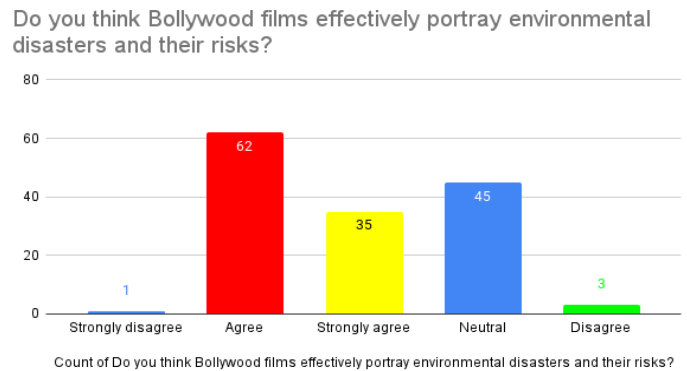
Figure 8: Bollywood films & influence



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data shows that a significant majority of respondents, 89.0% (130 participants), believe that Bollywood films can influence public action or government policies related to disaster preparedness. Conversely, only 11.0% (16 respondents) felt that these films do not have such an influence. With a total of 146 participants responding to this question, representing 100% of the sample, the results indicate a strong perception among viewers that Bollywood films have the potential to impact public and governmental approaches to disaster preparedness.

Figure 9: Bollywood films & Effective portrayal



Source: Compiled by Author

The survey data indicates that a substantial portion of respondents, 42.5% (62 participants), agree that Bollywood films effectively portray environmental disasters and their associated risks, while 24.0% (35 respondents) strongly agree. A significant number of participants, 30.8% (45 respondents), remained neutral on the issue. In contrast, only 2.1% (3 respondents) disagreed, and a minimal 0.7% (1 respondent) strongly disagreed with this statement. With a total of 146 respondents, representing 100% of the sample, the findings suggest that a majority perceive Bollywood films as effective in depicting environmental disasters and their risks.

Conclusion

The findings from this research underscore the significant role that Bollywood films play in shaping public perceptions and awareness regarding environmental issues, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and climate change. The data collected from 146 respondents indicates a strong interest in films that address social and environmental themes, with 91.1% expressing a preference for such content. This suggests that audiences are not only engaged with the entertainment aspect of Bollywood but are also receptive to narratives that highlight critical global challenges.

A noteworthy aspect of the research is the overwhelming recognition among participants that Bollywood films have increased their awareness of environmental issues and climate change, with 85.6% of respondents affirming this

sentiment. This finding highlights the potential of cinema as an educational tool that transcends mere storytelling. By engaging viewers emotionally and intellectually, Bollywood films can foster a deeper understanding of complex issues like climate change and environmental degradation. This aligns with the notion that popular media can serve as a catalyst for social change, encouraging audiences to become more informed and proactive regarding pressing societal issues.

Moreover, the survey reveals a strong belief among participants that Bollywood films can influence public action and government policies related to disaster preparedness, with 89.0% supporting this view. This perception underscores the capacity of films to not only entertain but also to inspire action and drive policy discussions. Given the reach and popularity of Bollywood, filmmakers have a unique opportunity to raise awareness about disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies, potentially affecting real-world change. The emotional engagement fostered by films can prompt viewers to advocate for better disaster management policies and practices, thereby bridging the gap between entertainment and activism.

The data also indicates that a majority of respondents (42.5% agreeing and 24.0% strongly agreeing) believe that Bollywood films effectively portray environmental disasters and their risks. This suggests that filmmakers are succeeding in crafting narratives that resonate with audiences and convey important messages about the implications of environmental neglect and the urgency of disaster preparedness. However, the neutral responses (30.8%) also indicate a need for filmmakers to continually refine their approaches to ensure that the depiction of environmental issues is both accurate and impactful.

Another significant finding is the motivation of respondents to learn more about disaster risk reduction and climate change after watching films addressing these themes. An impressive 88.4% felt inspired to seek further information, which speaks to the potential of cinema to educate and empower audiences. This reflects a growing trend in which media consumption is not merely passive but actively engages viewers in critical discussions about sustainability and disaster management. The capacity of films to spark curiosity and encourage proactive learning is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to promote environmental stewardship and disaster resilience.

Also, the demographic breakdown of the respondents reveals a predominantly young audience, with 80.1% falling within the 18-24 age group. This youth engagement is crucial, as younger generations are often more receptive to new ideas and are likely to become advocates for change. The high level of education among participants also suggests that they possess the analytical skills needed to critically evaluate the messages conveyed through Bollywood films. This combination of youth and education presents a ripe opportunity for filmmakers to develop content that resonates with and mobilizes this

demographic towards environmental action and disaster preparedness.

In conclusion, this research highlights the critical intersection of popular media and environmental awareness, illustrating how Bollywood films can serve as a powerful medium for promoting disaster risk reduction and climate change awareness. The data suggests that audiences not only prefer films that engage with these themes but also recognize their potential to influence public perceptions and inspire action. As filmmakers continue to address pressing environmental issues, they can play a pivotal role in shaping a more informed and proactive society, ultimately contributing to a culture of sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change. By harnessing the emotional and educational power of cinema, Bollywood has the potential to be a transformative force in addressing the challenges of our time.

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions and recommendations for future studies can be made to further explore the relationship between Bollywood films and environmental awareness.

Firstly, future research could expand the sample size and diversity of respondents to include a broader demographic, such as individuals from different cultural backgrounds and geographical locations within India. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various audiences perceive environmental themes in Bollywood films.

Secondly, longitudinal studies could be conducted to assess changes in public awareness and behavior over time, particularly before and after the release of specific films that address environmental issues. This would help to evaluate the long-term impact of cinematic narratives on audience attitudes and actions related to disaster risk reduction and climate change.

Also, qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could complement quantitative surveys. This would allow researchers to gather in-depth insights into viewers' emotional responses and personal interpretations of environmental messages conveyed through films, providing a richer understanding of the film-viewing experience.

Moreover, collaborations with filmmakers could be explored to assess how film production processes incorporate environmental messaging, and the challenges faced in accurately portraying disaster scenarios. This could lead to recommendations for filmmakers on effectively engaging audiences with relevant themes.

Finally, comparative studies examining the impact of Bollywood films against other regional cinema industries or international films on environmental awareness would contribute to a broader understanding of the global influence of cinema in promoting sustainability and disaster preparedness.

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