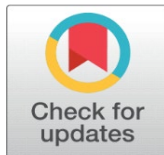


# INFLUENCE OF CHANGING PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN HINDI CINEMA ON YOUTH'S PROGRESSIVE GENDER ATTITUDES

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the impact of evolving portrayals of women in Hindi cinema on the progressive gender attitudes of contemporary youth. In recent decades, Hindi cinema has increasingly shifted from portraying women primarily in conventional and submissive positions to presenting them in more forward-thinking and active roles. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of these alterations in cinematic portrayals on the perceptions and attitudes of young individuals towards gender equality. Through the use of a mixed-methods methodology including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study examines the relationship between film depictions and changes in gender attitudes among young people. Empirical evidence suggests that favourable depictions of women in contemporary Hindi film are linked to more progressive gender perspectives among young people, underscoring the capacity of media to influence society standards and behaviours.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Bollywood, Women, Gender Portrayals, Stereotypes

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hindi cinema also known as 'bollywood' has always exerted a substantial influence on the formation and portrayal of social standards and values in India. Women in Hindi cinema have always been shown in clichéd positions, highlighting conventional qualities such as submissiveness, domesticity, and passivity (Nair, 2006). Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a significant change in these depictions, as films have progressively shown women as resilient, self-reliant, and complex persons (Sarkar, 2018).

The evolving portrayals of women in Hindi cinema have sparked debates on their possible impact on society perceptions, especially among the younger generation, who avidly consume popular media. Given the growing number of women in progressive roles in modern films, it is important to analyse the potential

impact of these depictions on the gender attitudes and views of gender roles among young people.

This study investigates the assertion that the changing depictions of women in Hindi cinema play a role in fostering the growth of more progressive gender perspectives among young people. This study utilises current research and adopts a mixed-methods methodology to evaluate the correlation between film content and the attitudes of young people.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hindi cinema has undergone significant transformations in its portrayal of women over the decades, reflecting and influencing societal changes in India. Early depictions often confined women to traditional roles as homemakers and mothers in a patriarchal society (Agarwal, 2014).

Early studies, such as those by Nair (2006), suggest that women were largely depicted in passive and traditional roles, reinforcing societal stereotypes and norms. This representation, according to Nair, contributed to the perpetuation of patriarchal values within Indian society.

However, contemporary Bollywood films increasingly portray women as independent, confident, and career-oriented individuals (Agarwal, 2014; Ahluwalia Orora, 2021). This shift is attributed to modernization, economic liberalization, and changing social structures (Ayob, 2009). The evolution of female characters ranges from preservers of tradition in the 1970s and 1980s to the emergence of the "new"

Sarkar (2018) documents a growing trend of strong, independent female characters who challenge traditional gender roles and advocate for personal agency. This shift aligns with broader socio-cultural changes in India, where gender equality and women's empowerment have become more prominent issues.

Research by Kumar and Bhatia (2020) explores the impact of modern cinema on societal attitudes, suggesting that films with progressive gender portrayals can positively influence viewers' attitudes towards gender equality. Their findings indicate that exposure to such films correlates with increased support for gender equality and more progressive views on gender roles.

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Study by Singh (2021) caution that while films may portray progressive images, the extent to which these portrayals influence real-world attitudes is complex and influenced by various factors beyond media consumption.

**Research Gap:** A lot of study has been done on how female characters have changed over time in Hindi films and how they have affected culture as a whole. However, there is still an enormous void in our knowledge when it comes to how these changes have affected young people's views on gender issues today. Most studies that have been done so far have looked at changes in how men and women are portrayed and what those changes mean for culture. However, few have looked into how these changes directly affect young people's views on gender equality (Nair, 2006; Sarkar, 2018). This oversight makes it harder for us to figure out how changes in certain film elements might be linked to changes in the views of young people who watch a lot of popular media. This study aims to fill in these gaps by

looking at how recent modern Hindi cinema show gender roles and how young people feel about them.

### Objectives

- 1) To evaluate the impact of contemporary portrayals of women in Hindi cinema on the gender attitudes of young people.
- 2) To analyze the relationship between exposure to progressive film portrayals and shifts in youth perceptions of gender roles and equality.
- 3) To investigate the influence of diverse female representations in hindi cinema on youth's views on women in leadership and professional roles.

### Research Methodology

- 1) Research Design: A quantitative research design was utilized to collect data at a single point in time.
- 2) Sampling Technique: The target population for this study comprised persons aged 18-37 years. A convenience sampling technique was used. Total 320 responses have been received from the youngsters in Delhi NCR.
- 3) Data Collection: A survey using close-ended structured questionnaire was administered using online survey platforms.

## 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Table 1**

| Table 1: Age |                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Details      | Frequency (N=280) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 18-20 years  | 20                | The majority of respondents (64.3%) are between 21-26 years old, followed by 27-32 years (35.7%). A smaller proportion are aged 18-20 (7.1%) and 32-36 years (7.1%). This distribution indicates a predominance of younger individuals, likely reflecting the typical career stage of those choosing journalism. |
| 21-26 years  | 180               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 27-32 years  | 100               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 32-36 years  | 20                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Table 2**

| Table 2: Gender |                   |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Details         | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                            |
| Male            | 100               | The overwhelming majority of respondents are female (68.8%), with males constituting 31.3% and no responses from other genders or those who prefer not to disclose. |
| Female          | 220               |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Other           | 0                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |

**Table 3**

| Table 3: How often do you watch Hindi films? |                   |          |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Details                                      | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis |

|         |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daily   | 40  | The most common frequency is monthly (37.5%), followed by weekly (25%), rarely (25%), and daily (12.5%). This distribution shows a varied engagement with Hindi films, with a notable proportion watching them monthly. |
| Weekly  | 80  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Monthly | 120 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Rarely  | 80  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Table 4****Table 4: Does portrayal of women in Hindi cinema influences your perception of how women should behave in society?**

| Details | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes     | 80                | A majority of respondents (62.5%) feel that portrayal in Hindi cinema does not influence their perception of women's societal roles, while 25% believe it does. A small portion (12.5%) is uncertain, suggesting that most view the media portrayal of women as not significantly impacting their societal views. |
| No      | 200               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| May be  | 40                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

**Table 5****Table 5: Do you agree that Hindi films often depict men as strong and dominant and women as submissive and dependent?**

| Details           | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 100               | A majority of respondents (62.5%) feel that portrayal in Hindi cinema does not influence their perception of women's societal roles, while 25% believe it does. A small portion (12.5%) is uncertain, suggesting that most view the media portrayal of women as not significantly impacting their societal views. |
| Agree             | 200               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Neutral           | 20                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Disagree          | 20                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

**Table 6****Table 6: Has your perception of women's roles in society become more progressive after watching recent Hindi films?**

| Details | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes     | 155               | It shows that a majority of respondents (48.4%) feel their perception of women's roles in society has become more progressive after watching recent Hindi films. In contrast, 26.6% believe it has not changed, while 25% are uncertain. This indicates that recent Hindi films have had a significant, though not overwhelming, influence on shifting perceptions towards more progressive views on women's roles. |
| No      | 85                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| May be  | 80                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**Table 7****Table 7: Do you think that the changing portrayal of women in Hindi films has influenced your attitudes towards women in leadership roles?**

| Details | Frequency (N=320) | Analysis |
|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Yes     | 200               |          |

|        |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No     | 60 | It shows that a majority of respondents (48.4%) feel their perception of women's roles in society has become more progressive after watching recent Hindi films. In contrast, 26.6% believe it has not changed, while 25% are uncertain. This indicates that recent Hindi films have had a significant, though not overwhelming, influence on shifting perceptions towards more progressive views on women's roles. |
| May be | 60 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**Table 8****Table 8: Do you agree that modern Hindi cinema portrays women as equally competent as men in handling challenges?**

| Details           | Frequency<br>(N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 20                   | Most respondents (43.8%) agree that modern Hindi cinema portrays women as competent, with 6.3% strongly agreeing. However, a notable portion is neutral (31.3%), and 25% disagree or strongly disagree, reflecting mixed views on gender equality in portrayals. |
| Agree             | 140                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Neutral           | 100                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Disagree          | 60                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Strongly Disagree | 20                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Table 9****Table 9: Do you feel that the evolving portrayal of women in Hindi films has reduced gender stereotypes in your mind?**

| Details | Frequency<br>(N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes     | 140                  | A substantial proportion (43.8%) feels that evolving portrayals have reduced gender stereotypes, while 37.5% do not, and 18.8% are unsure. This indicates a significant but not overwhelming impact on reducing stereotypes. |
| No      | 120                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| May be  | 60                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

**Table 10****Table 10: Do you think that the depiction of women in progressive roles in Hindi films affects your expectations of gender roles in your personal life?**

| Details | Frequency<br>(N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes     | 120                  | Responses are divided, with 37.5% agreeing, 43.8% disagreeing, and 18.8% unsure. This suggests that while some respondents feel that progressive portrayals influence their personal expectations, a majority do not perceive a direct impact. |
| No      | 140                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| May be  | 60                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Table 11****Table 11: Do you believe that the changing roles of women in Hindi cinema reflect the real changes in society?**

| Details | Frequency<br>(N=320) | Analysis |
|---------|----------------------|----------|
| Yes     | 186                  |          |

|        |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No     | 14  | Table 11 shows that a significant majority of respondents (58.1%) believe that the changing roles of women in Hindi cinema reflect real changes in society. In contrast, a small minority (4.4%) do not believe this is the case, and 37.5% are uncertain. This indicates a strong perception that cinematic portrayals of women are in sync with societal progress, though there remains some skepticism and uncertainty among a substantial portion of respondents. |
| May be | 120 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**Table 12**

**Table 12: Do you think that the more diverse portrayals of women in Hindi cinema have encouraged challenge traditional gender norms?**

| Details | Frequency<br>(N=320) | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes     | 200                  | A significant majority (62.5%) believe that diverse portrayals have encouraged challenge traditional gender norms. This reflects a positive impact of representations on personal attitudes towards gender norms. |
| No      | 100                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| May be  | 20                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that over the past three decades, Hindi cinema has evolved significantly, with contemporary portrayals increasingly reflecting more progressive views on women's roles. Despite the varied engagement levels with Hindi films among respondents, a substantial proportion feel that recent portrayals have positively influenced their views on gender roles, aligning with real societal changes and challenging traditional norms. This reflects a notable shift towards recognizing women as competent and influential, though individual impacts on personal gender expectations vary. The data demonstrates a clear correlation between exposure to progressive film portrayals and a shift towards more progressive attitudes among young people, highlighting the role of media in shaping gender perceptions and contributing to broader societal changes.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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