Women Representation in Bollywood Films

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Introduction

- Bollywood, a commonly used name to encompass Hindi Cinema, grossed 183 billion rupees in the year 2020. With such a big and rapidly modernizing industry, the lack of women in production and acting roles is a problem found in industries worldwide
- Largely, societal roles combined with patriarchal attitudes have left most women characters silently in the background or serving roles to further the male characters.
- Recently there has been an ever-increasing presence of female directors. This project seeks to evaluate how those women directors present their women characters; it asks if they reinforce or subvert expectations.
- The purpose of this study is to determine quantitatively how women characters are illustrated in those Bollywood films directed by a woman.

Methods

To gather data, we watched Bollywood films and recorded information on the female characters through Qualtrics surveys regarding their representation in the film.

We count and compare the number of male and female speaking characters in the film and then determined whether the film passed the Bechdel test.

We use film coding to collect information about the female characters' demographics, representation, behavior, relationships with other women, and role in the film.

We then compare the data between researchers, to discuss any variation or discrepancies.

Once a consensus had been reached on the character information, the data was made into various charts and graphs for analysis.

Conclusion

Out of the films analyzed so far, we have found that even when a Bollywood film has a female director, there is still a disparity between the representation of male and female characters. Leading male roles are more likely to be the protagonists of the films than the leading female roles. There are often large gaps between the number of male and female characters, with 3 to 4 times as many male characters as there are female. However, these are the preliminary findings only after completing about a quarter of total films.

Some Results

- Our results demonstrate that lighter skin tone characters are more likely to receive verbal and non-verbal references to attractiveness (See Figure 1)
- Younger characters are more likely to wear more revealing clothing and show more culturally taboo bare skin (See Figure 2)
- **In terms of representation of skin and who is attractive, women directors seem not to go against cultural expectations**
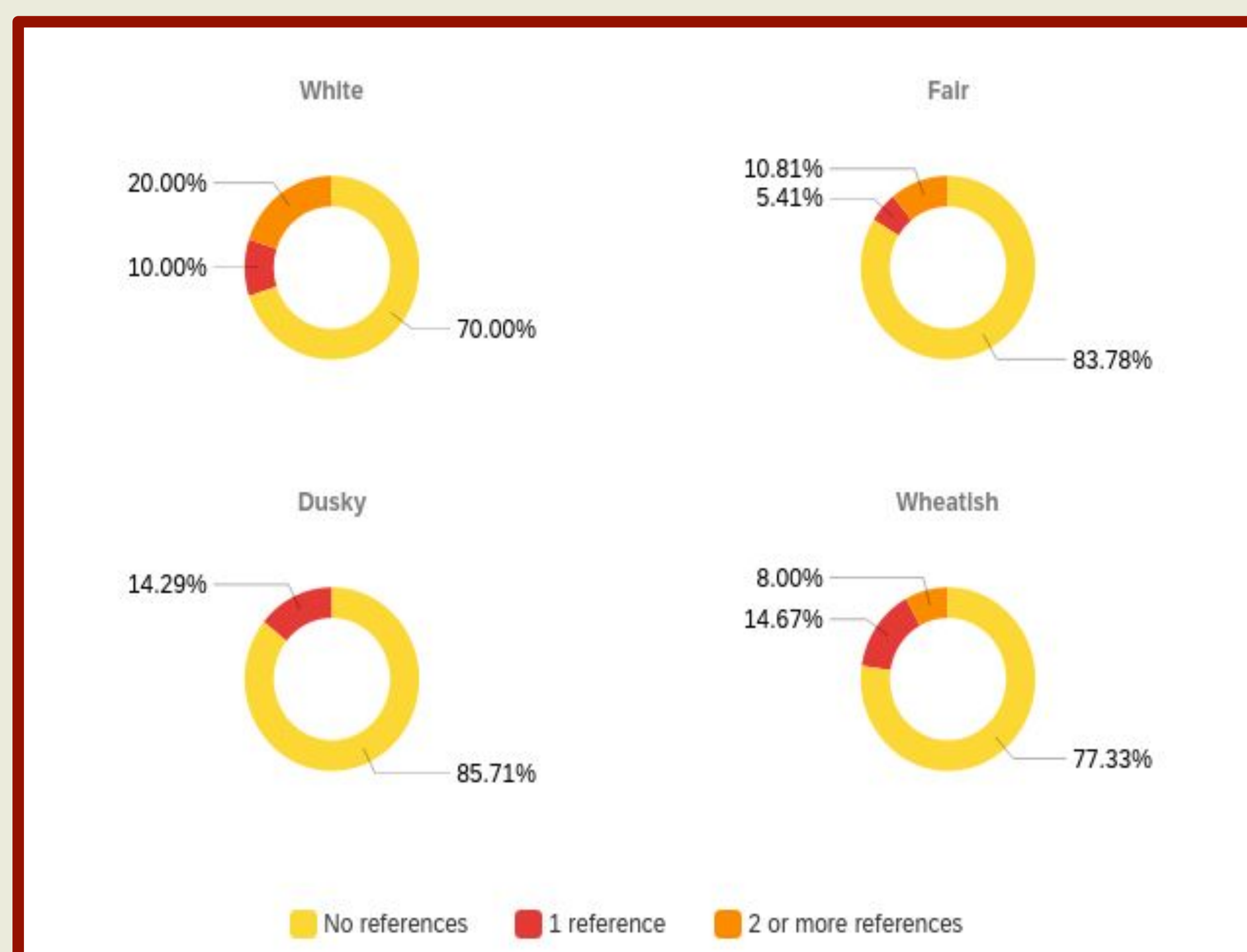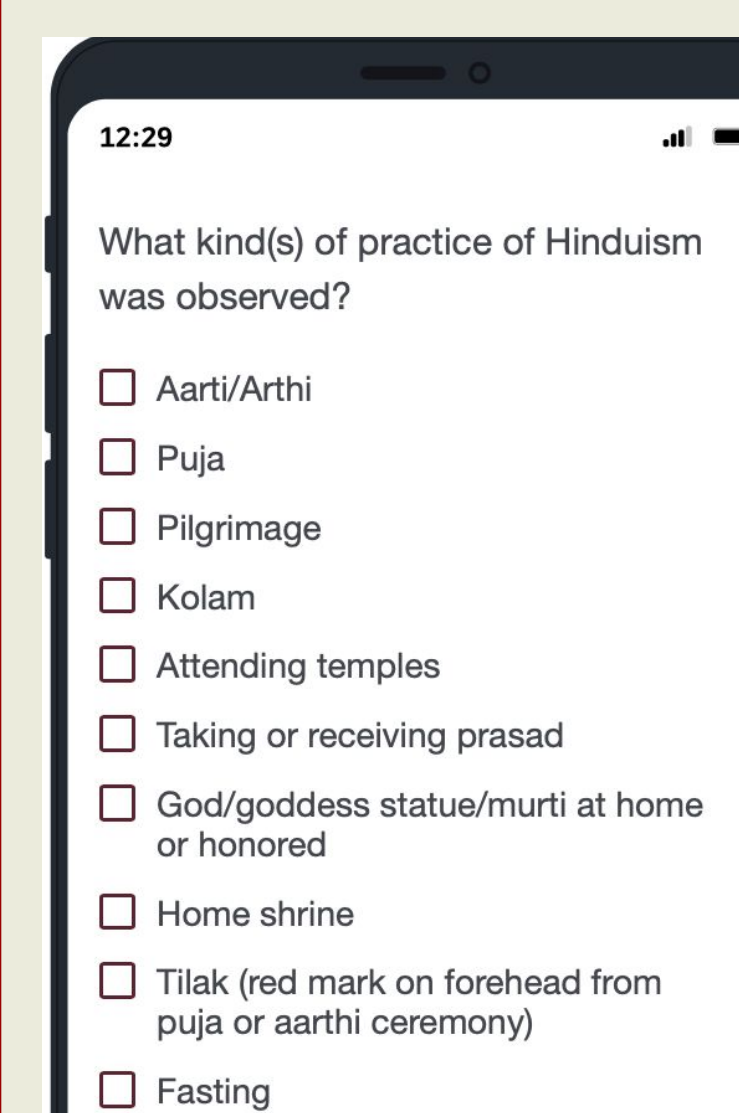
Results

Figure 1. References to Attractiveness according to Skin Color

Figure 2. Presentation of Bare Skin according to Age

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