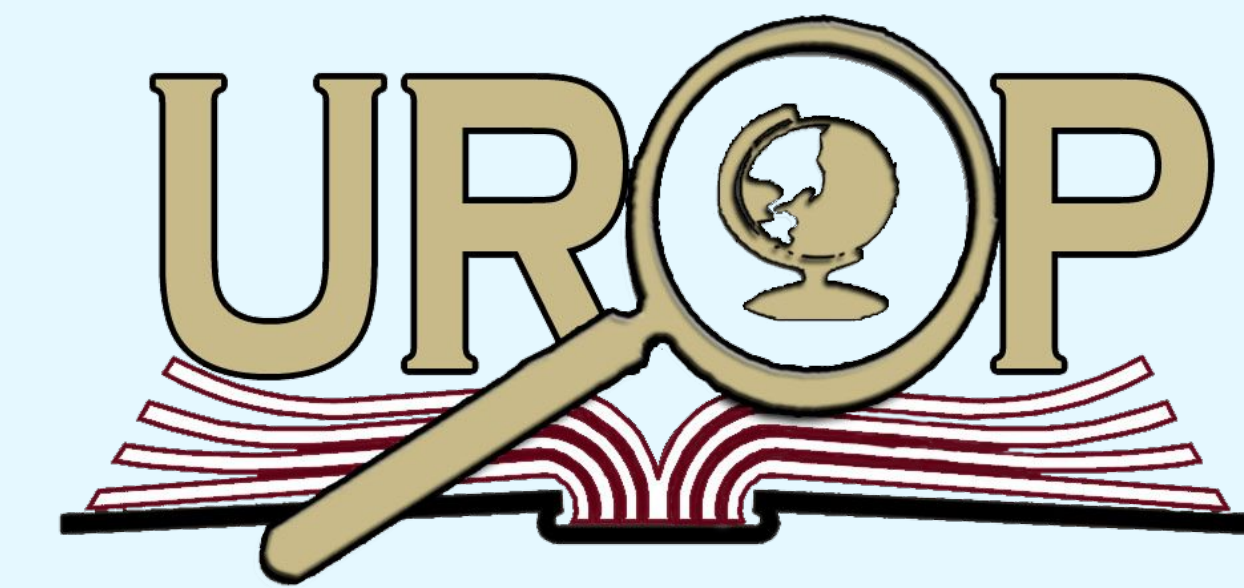




Representation of Women in Female-Directed Bollywood Films

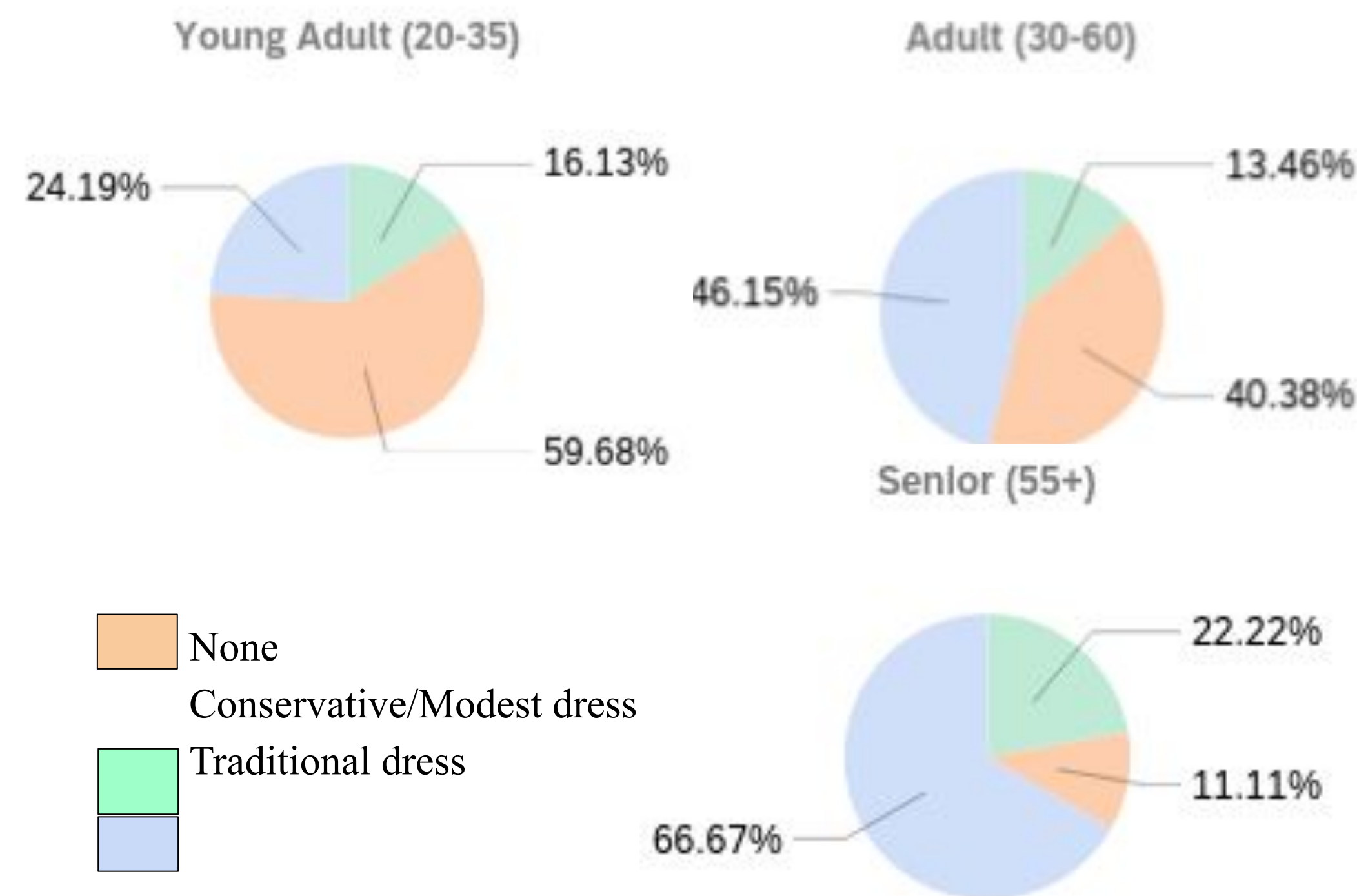


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Introduction:

The production side of Bollywood has historically been a male-dominated industry, with few opportunities for female directors to enter the field. Bollywood continues to exist as an easily accessible industry and large source of female representation, depicting the roles women in India face. When looking into the culture and lifestyle of women in India, it is necessary to have a greater understanding of the gender roles the film industry perpetuates. Those who manage to break the glass ceiling generally have familial connections, with their work continuing to cater to the male gaze. Throughout this project, we analyzed facets of female representation in a multitude of female-directed Bollywood films. We looked at multiple films, such as *Luck By Chance*, *Death in the Gunj*, and *Sir: Is Love Enough?*, decoding the relationships between females, the articles of clothing they're presented in, and the behaviors the women exhibit throughout the film.

Modesty by age



Note: Age plays a role modesty level of clothing women in Bollywood wear. In young adults, the majority show no form of conservative or traditional dress. In adults, the majority wear traditional dress, followed by no form of modest dress. Seniors most frequently wore traditional dress, followed by conservative clothing.

Methods:

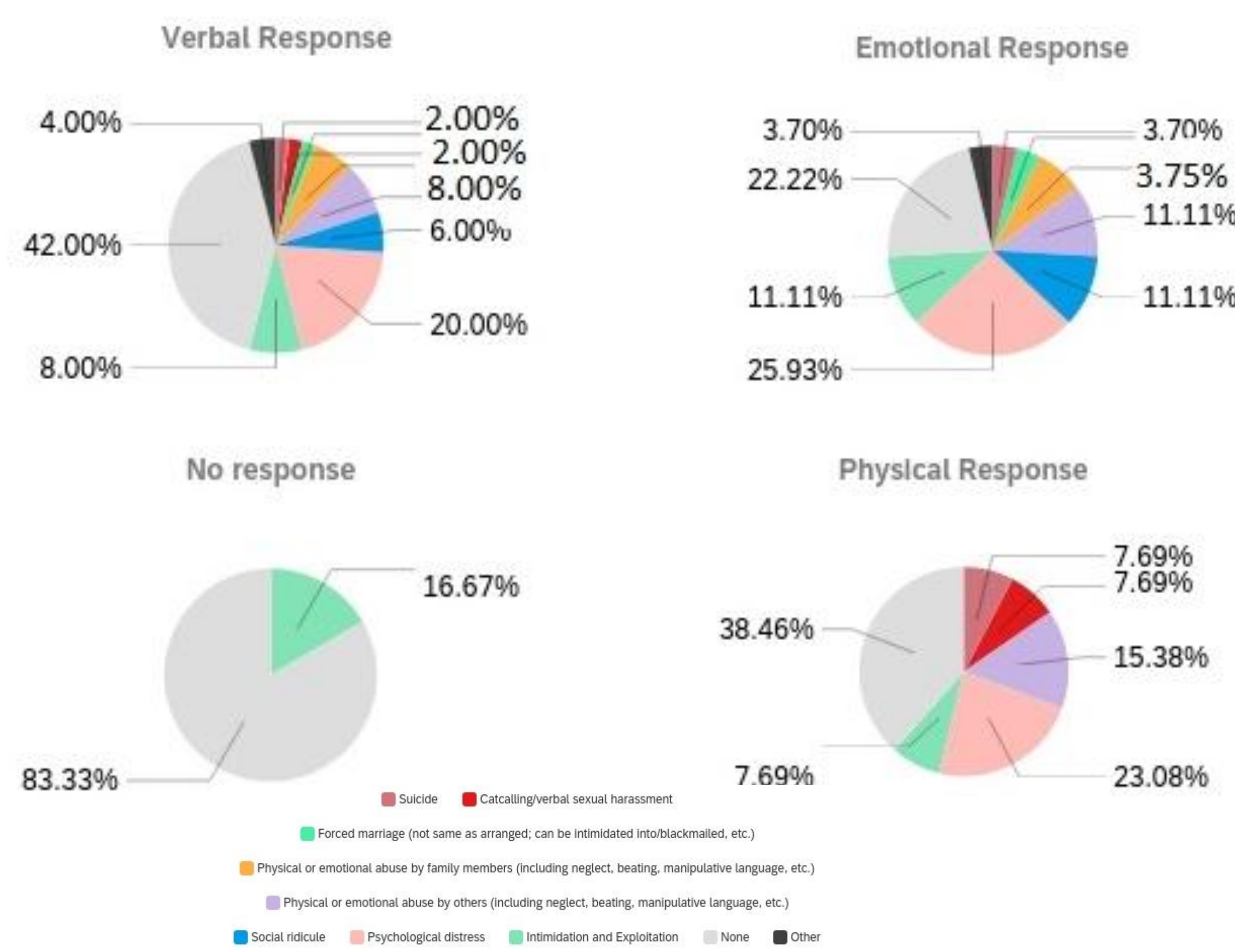
We began each film analysis by determining how many male and female speakers occur throughout the film, then gathered data on each female speaker. We looked at clothing worn throughout the film, as this gives an indication of how in-touch the character is with the conservative and cultural values of the area. We categorized the behavior they exhibited throughout the film, noting when they engaged in taboo actions, what types of trauma they experienced and their reactions, and how they interacted with other female characters. After analyzing each character, we looked over the data as a group to discuss what we found, reviewing the film where we found discrepancies and discussing any major points around the character we felt were affected by the direction of the movie.

Discussion

To understand the reality and intricacies of life within India, looking into Bollywood cinema and the factors of industry are vital (Dwyer, Rachel. 2010). Given the current social context, the violation of gender roles within films can lead to repercussions regarding the overall success of films (Khan, Subuhi, and Taylor, Laramie D. 2018). In an effort to understand the gender roles women in India face, our research focuses on an array of female directed films from India, analyzing the behavior and actions of each female character. Throughout the analysis, we found that the interactions and behaviors exhibited on screen were minimally changed with female direction to the film. As each film was still being produced for Bollywood, directors needed to maintain the cultural and gender roles placed on them by their society.

Rather than finding main effects or large differences throughout the films, we found smaller interactions throughout the films between character qualities and behaviors. In the film *English Vinglish*, we found examples of the main character, Shashi, breaking gender norms in smaller ways such as working outside the home as an entrepreneur. She was depicted with a multitude of supportive, positive female relationships throughout the film. When looking at the association between experienced traumas and responses to confrontation, we see a wide range of associations. In those who experienced psychological distress, there appeared to be a more frequent response to confrontation. We see an increase in physical responses with those who dealt with physical or emotional abuse by family, however, those who experienced physical or emotional abuse by others appeared to primarily have verbal or emotional responses. When looking at the taboo behavior, there is a decline in taboo behavior with seniors. This could be due to the expectations of older women gender role following more strict gender roles.

Association between Confrontation Responses and Experienced Traumas



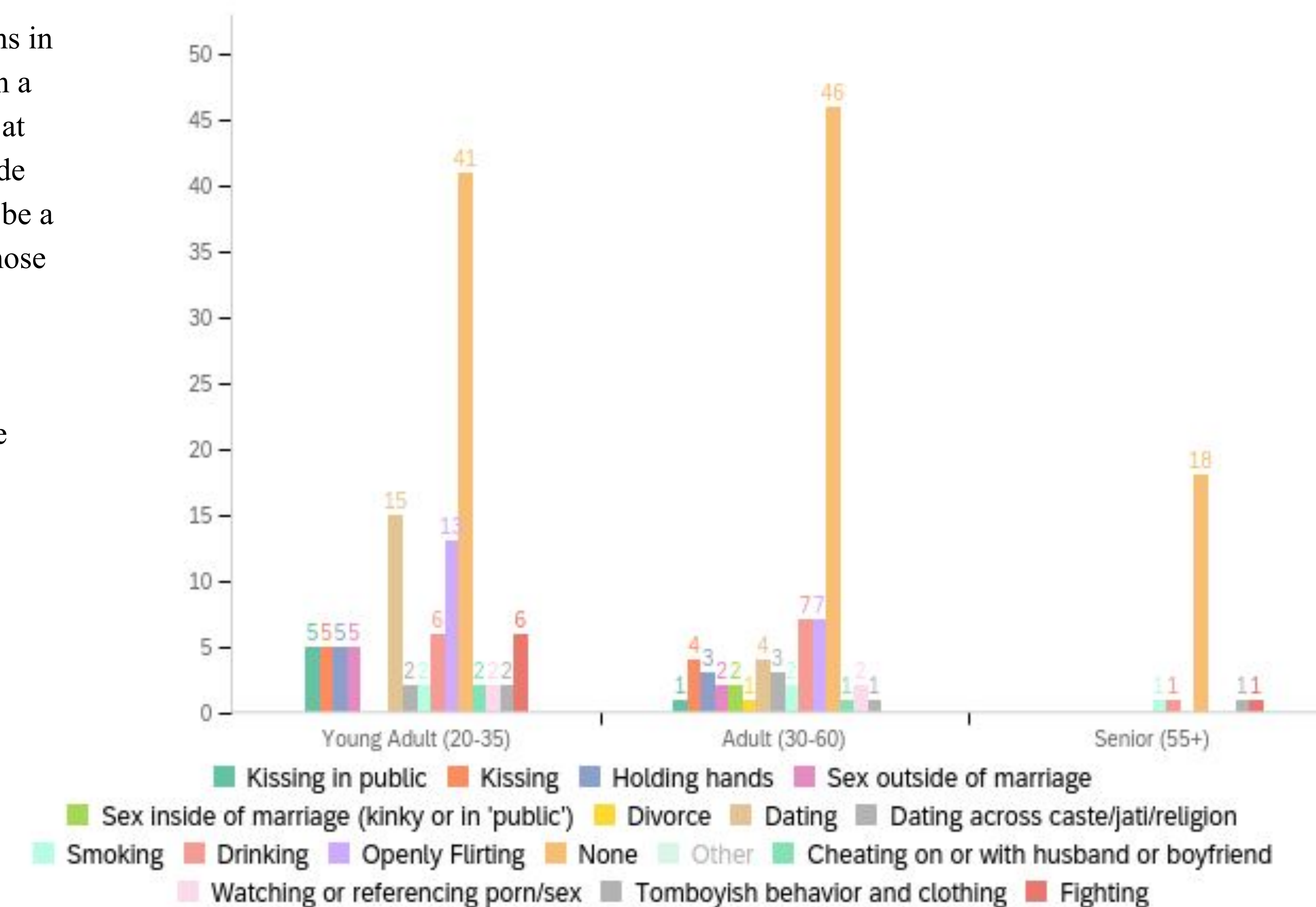
Note: Those who experienced psychological distress are linked with each type of response to confrontation. There appears to be more variety in the trauma experienced with those who responded to confrontation with a verbal response.

Preliminary Results and Future Directions

In each film we analyzed, there was an unequal ratio of male to female speakers. While the majority of films passed the Bechdel test, we found that significantly fewer films presented women as the primary protagonist within the film. Thus far in the research, seven of the films had male protagonist, while four had a female protagonist.

One potential route for future researchers could be to analyze male speakers as well. With that data, they could run a variety of tests on the results, determining the correlation between gender and certain behaviors within the film.

Taboo Behavior According to Age



Note: Within the young adults, we see high levels of dating and openly flirting. In the Adults, we continue seeing high levels of openly flirting as well as drinking. In the young adults, we see the highest levels of taboo behavior in young adults, and the lowest taboo behavior in seniors.

References

Dwyer, Rachel. "Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Modern India." *Asian Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2010, pp. 381-398, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03068374.2010.508231>.
 Khan, Subuhi, and Laramie D Taylor. "Gender Policing in Mainstream Hindi Cinema: A Decade of Central Female Characters in Top-Grossing Bollywood Movies." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 12, 2018, pp. 3641-3662, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/8701/2448>.