

Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to respond to this question how addiction has been represented in movies after revolution. **Method:** To answer this question, the researcher analyzed 33 movies made from 1981 to 2011 whose main characters have been addicts through content analysis. **Results:** The results showed that the addicts in the movies under study were mainly male, single, widowed or divorced, and majority of them were educated and held academic degrees. As well, heroin use has been represented in movies more frequently than other types of narcotics, addicts' personal home and their friends' home have been the most important places for drug use, and friends have been displayed to be the most important suppliers of narcotics and stimulus to the initiation of drug use. On the other hand, divorce and child selling have constituted the most frequent drug-related injuries; and family and friends have been highlighted as the most important causes of addiction in these movies. **Conclusion:** The results showed that movies represented one type of "popular addiction study" which partially overlaps with academic addiction study.

Keywords

Representation, Addiction, Movie, Popular Addiction Study

Addiction Representation Methods in Iranian Cinema

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Introduction

Today, popular media such as movies and television series are the main aspects of everyday life in recent modernity. These media have been not only the main source of information for more than half a century, but also they have played a vital role in shaping the people's beliefs about their surrounding world (Bennett, 2007: 119). As Stevenson (1995) states to speak about the recent modern culture means to speak of media cultures. Theorists believe that the visual and textual representations in the mass media are very important to man and, accordingly, they have formulated their analyses of these representations in the framework of representation theory (Mehdizadeh, 2008; Bennet, 2007; Storey, 2006; Baudrillard, 2010; Duvineu, 2000; Wolf, 1988; Huaco, 1982; Sterinatey; 2001; Ravedrad, 2003). In accordance with this approach, the media represent our conception of fundamental social, economic, and political issues and shape the ways we reflect upon these issues. According to representation theory, mass media such as movies do not reflect the social reality, but social realities are created in terms of narrative structure and, in a better word, they are constructed. Mass media, through what Baudrillard (2010) refers to as "hyperreality", attempt to create a new reality and affect everyday life. Thus, theorists of cultural studies conceive of cultural and media representation not as neutral and impartial but as integrated with power relations for the production and diffusion of preferred meanings in society in order to sustain and strengthen social inequalities; therefore, they consider representation ideological (Mehdizadeh, 2008). Ideological nature of representation can be realized in the cultural and media representations of issues, such as narcotics, as well as in representations of human subjects, such as addicts.

In this context, researchers have attempted to analyze the dimensions of media representations about crime and social pathologies such as narcotic addiction. According to their argumentation, mass media define social issues and convert them to texts and provide ideas about narcotics, nature of addiction, morality, criminality, consumers, drug traffickers and manufacturers, organized crime, law enforcement, judicial justice, and penalty. According to these researchers, articles and media texts that define and symmetrize social problems also propose some ideas about such issues and shape the available perceptions about appropriate ways to formally and informally modify the issues (Boyd & Carter, 2010). Based on this analytical approach, Reinerman & Duskin (1999) refer to the process of objectification which is related to illegal drugs in news stories; news stories and photos separate individuals and events from their social context and consider addicts as the individuals who act frantically under their dependence on drugs and, consequently, they cannot observe morality. In the same way, they cannot practically actualize their best interests. This form of news reports exert the worst possible effects. The evaluation of newspaper stories and photos allows us to determine who are the claim-makers about drugs

and analyze the content and features of these claims about the way drugs are taken. Also, these analyses are very important in understanding how some of the ideas and beliefs about drugs and drug use prevail and also they raise awareness about policy and legal changes (Boyd & Carter, 2010).

In this broad theoretical framework, social pathologists and criminologists believe that movies, i.e. one of the most overriding modern media, are an important cultural resource for understanding the nature and causes of social deviance and crime. They approve of special explanations of crime and deviance and show national (and even international) discussions about the causes of social deviance and crime to viewers. Movies get close to popular explanations relating to criminology and, then, they again return the explanations to the mass audience after the embodiment of them (Rafter, 2006; Obrien, Tzanelli, Yar & Penna, 2005; Tezanelli, Yar & O'Brien, 2005; King, 1999; Brown, 2003; Chermak, 2002; Jenkins, 1994; Campbell, 2005).

Rafter (2006) considers criminal movies and other mass media as a platform for criminological studies and believes that they seek to explain crime and criminal offenses through the representation of criminological representations to the audience. He names the discourse dominant over criminal movies "popular criminology". Popular criminology is a discourse upon crime which is found not only in the movies, but it is also found on the Internet, television, newspapers, stories, and rap music heroes. According to Rafter, popular criminology is different from academic criminology because it does not claim to enjoy any experimental accuracy and theoretical validity. In the field of criminology, criminal movies cover a broader scope. Popular criminology audience outnumbers criminology audience and it assumes higher social importance. Academic criminology cannot provide a wide range of criminological considerations. Nevertheless, Rafter argues that these two types of criminology complement each other, so that each of them has its own way of understanding crime. Rafter (2007) sees criminology as an umbrella term which covers both academic and popular criminology and sees no contradiction between these two types of criminology.

Based on this theoretical argumentation, this paper attempts to examine the representation of substance abuse and addicts in Iranian movies. The issue of drug addiction has always been one of the subjects in the worldwide cinema and has been the axis of films. Some of the best films of world cinema history have addressed this subject either in the text or on the margins. In Iranian cinema, the subject of drug addiction has also been one of the old subjects and addicts have always constituted popular movie characters before and after the revolution. The story of one of the most popular films before the Revolution entitled "Deer" revolves around addiction and an addicted character. Similarly, numerous films after the revolution have placed the subject of addiction the axis of their story. Due to the acute problem of addiction, this subject, especially in recent years, has been broadly reflected in films such as *Dulcimer*, *Boutique*, *Mainline*,

Candle in the Wind, Mom's Guest, House on the Water, This Woman does not Speak, Friday's Soldiers, and Boss. In these films, either the subject of addiction has been the central theme of the story, or one of its main characters has been an addict. They have differently addressed addiction and have ascribed different social and personality characteristics to the addicts. Various explanations of the problem of drug abuse and addiction have been provided and, sometimes, contradictory statements about addiction and addicts have been offered. Indeed, it seems that the films representative of addiction spread particular culture and cultural policy on the issue and highlight specific issues about drug addiction.

Taking these considerations into account, the current research is classified under the field of cultural studies and cinematic sociology which sociologically analyses different aspects of the representation of addiction in Iranian films. The main question of this study is that how the issues pertaining to addicts have been represented in the post-revolutionary Iranian cinema and what types of explanation about addiction have been provided.

Method

In this research project, "content analysis" was employed to examine the representation of substance abuse and addiction in films. In this way, a reverse questionnaire was constructed based on categorized variables in the design conceptualization and, accordingly, the films were content analyzed.

In the process of film analysis, the unit of analysis or the enumeration of each of the variables was "scene". Scene is defined as a set of profiles which occurs in one place at a time. Thus, each of the activities and places occupied by addicted characters in a film, or any other research variable, was counted based on unit of analysis. In the next step, research data were analyzed by SPSS software after the content analysis of films.

Face validity was used to evaluate the validation of the questionnaire. In this case, a movie was analyzed by three judges and the results were compared with the results obtained by the researcher from the same movie. With this method, the shortcomings of the questionnaire were obviated and, if needed, operational definitions were presented more accurately for the main research content analysis. The results indicated 85% agreement between the raters' evaluation; therefore, the questionnaire enjoyed acceptable validity. All the films on screen in the post-revolutionary Iranian cinema that reflected a kind of addiction constituted the study population. Due to the limited number of films made about addiction and addicts, census method was used, that is, the whole movies made about addiction from 1979 to 2011 were content analyzed. Thus, 33 relevant films were identified and analyzed. These films include: Black Way, plectrum, Tuba, Rose Flower, In Captivity, Shelterless, Cloudy House, Night Breaker, Looting, Passengers, Chrysanthemum Flowers, High School, Blades and Silk, The Fifth Rider of Fate, Bait, Blue Scarf, Sunglasses, Ripper, Mainline, Boutique, Candle in the Wind, Story of Paria, House on the Water, Dance on

Fire, Dulcimer, Tales of Hearts, Heal, Mom's Guest, Aquarium, Night, Summoned, Friday's Soldiers, and Boss.

Results

The research results and findings on representation methods of drug addiction in the post-revolutionary Iranian cinema can be divided into four categories, as follows: a) Demographic characteristics of the addicts playing the leading roles in the movies under study: According to the research data, 52 addicts have played leading roles wherein, 75% were male and 25% were female. Among the movies under study, it was found that male addicts were not present in 6 movies while female addicts did not play any role in 21 movies. These results indicate the strong presence of male addicts in movies compared to female addicts. In addition, male addicts constituted most of the leading roles. From among the total of 33 films under study, male addicts played leading roles in 23 films while female addicts played leading roles in 10 films. On the other hand, 31-40-year age group has taken 28.7% of the addicts playing leading roles which is the highest age frequency. This percentage is followed by 26.31% that is related to 21-30 age groups. However, the lowest frequency belongs to the age group below 20 years that constitutes 8.77% of the leading roles. As well, the highest age frequency of male leading roles belonged to 31-40 age group, that is, 33.3%; however, it lay in 21-30 group for females. No female addict under 20 was observed in any of the movies under study while 12.8% of the male addicts were aged below 20. Data on marital status showed that 46.51%, 32.55%, and 20.94% of the addicts playing leading roles were single, married, and widowed or divorced, respectively. In terms of socio-economic class, the results revealed that only the socio-economic status of 31 addicts playing leading roles out of the total of 52 ones had been clearly determined. Out of these 31 characters, 30.76%, 22.58%, and 15.38% lay in low, high, and middle social classes, respectively. Also, 25.8% of the addicts playing leading roles in these movies held high school diploma, 41.93% of them held a university degree and 22.57% had a degree lower than high school diploma or were illiterate. Therefore, a significant majority of addicts having the leading roles in movies were educated. Data on occupational status showed that 28.84% of the addicts playing leading roles were employed, 53.84% were unemployed, 1.92% were students, and 15.38% had unknown employment status. b) The situation of narcotic drug use in the films under study: From among the 33 films, 9 of them showed the first drug use by addicts while the remaining 24 films did not. In these 9 films, five films represented the first drug use under friends' offers, three films represented it under conditions of coercion and force of others, and one film represented a situation wherein the addict tried it for the first time in order to make his wife stop it. In terms of drug use dosage, the results showed that there was no clear

scene of drug use in six films while it was not so in the remaining 27 films. In the following table, the type of substance and its percentage have been reported.

Table 1: The type of substance taken by addicts in the films under study

<i>Type of substance</i>	<i>No. of scenes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Opium	24	26.3
Crack	3	3.2
Crystal	5	5.4
Heroin	34	37.3
Psychotropic pills	13	14.2
Cannabis	1	1.1
Morphine	6	6.5
Other	5	5.4

As seen in the table 1, there were the number of 91 scenes of drug use in all the films under study, which is equivalent to 2.7 scenes in each film on average. In this regard, heroin took the most frequently used substance with 34 scenes (37.3%) and opium succeeded it with 24 scenes (26.3%). Psychotropic pills, morphine, crystal, and crack were placed in the following orders.

Table 2: Preparation of substance by addicts playing leading roles

<i>Preparation of substance</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Friends	47	52.2
Street sellers	16	17.8
Traffickers	11	12.3
Spouse	7	7.8
Father	3	3.3
Addict as a seller	3	3.3
Abroad	1	1.1
Prison officer	1	1.1
Prison cellmate	1	1.1
Total	90	100

The preparation of substance by addicts has been presented in the table 2.

As presented in the table 2, 90 scenes have been represented the way the addicts prepared substance where “friends” has taken up the highest frequency tantamount to 52.2%. In other words, more than half of the addicts playing leading roles prepared narcotic substances through their friends.

Places where substance was taken have been shown in the following table.

Table 3: Places where substance was taken

<i>Places of taking substance</i>	<i>No. of scenes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Addict's private home	24	26.3
Friends' place	21	23.07
Parties	21	23.07
Desolate places	7	7.69
Street	3	3.29

<i>Places of taking substance</i>	<i>No. of scenes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Car	5	5.49
Public baths for men	1	1.09
Hospital	1	1.09
Public Toilet	2	2.19
Prison	3	3.29
Relatives' home	1	1.09
Other	2	2.19
Total	91	100

As seen in Table 3, addict's private home has taken up the highest frequency of drug use with 24 times (26.3%).

c) The display of social problems imposed on drug users in the films under study: In this study, social problems related to families of addicts in movies were examined as an indicator in the explanation of addiction in films. Type of social problems related to families of addicts in movies has been demonstrated in the table below.

Table 4: Type of social problems related to families of addicts in movies

<i>Type of the problem</i>	<i>Frequency of Films</i>	
	<i>Before Addiction</i>	<i>After addiction</i>
Poverty	2	8
Drug trafficking	2	4
Divorce	2	5
Illegal sexual relationship	0	1
Spouse Betrayal	0	2
Familial disorder	2	5
Suicide	1	0
Child selling	0	1
Unemployment	0	2
Domestic violence	0	4
Theft	0	1
Cooperation with traffickers	0	1
Homelessness	0	2
Prostitution	0	1
no social problems for families	24	12

In this study, different types of social problems imposed on the addicts themselves were also investigated. The results showed that none of the films displayed the addicts' social problems before addiction. Rather, the display of addicts' lives had been closely intertwined with social problems. Types of social problems imposed upon the addicts playing leading roles have been shown in table 5 below.

Table 5: Type of social problems related to the addicts with leading roles in movies

<i>Type of the problem</i>	<i>Frequency of Films</i>	
	<i>Before Addiction</i>	<i>After Addiction</i>
Poverty	0	7
Drug trafficking	0	8
Divorce	0	1
Illegal sexual relationship	0	1
Familial disorder	0	1
Suicide	0	1
Child selling	0	5
Unemployment	0	1
Domestic violence	0	4
Theft	0	4
Cooperation with traffickers	0	2
Homelessness	0	3
Prostitution	0	4
Murder	0	1
Drinking alcohol	0	1
Imprisonment	0	2
no social problems for families	33	8

d) The explanation of addiction in the films under study: In this piece of research, it has been attempted to investigate the reasons enumerated in the films for addiction. The causes of addiction have been presented in the following table according to the dialogues in the movies.

Table 6: The causes of addiction according to the dialogues in movies

<i>Causes of Drug Addiction</i>	<i>Frequency based on the No. of films</i>
Parental Addiction	4
Parental divorce	3
Rejection from family	2
Unemployment	1
Poverty	5
Political system	2
Imperialism	2
Improper child training	2
Psychological Problems	4
Group of friends	7
Marriage or inappropriate love	4
Migration from villages to cities	1
Intergenerational conflict	1
Conflict between tradition and modernity	1

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the representation of addiction in movies after revolution. This purpose has been proposed in the framework of representation theory, based on which the movies construct realities and social issues such as addiction during their narration and shape the ways we reflect upon these issues.

The theoretical assumption of the present study has been founded upon the idea that the movies provide the audience with a kind of popular knowledge about social problems such as addiction and raise some views on their causes. The present study confirms this assumption. Iranian films, studied here, disclose some underlying information such as age and sex composition, social class, educational and occupational status of the addicts and also provide different information about the prevalent narcotics, the ways of preparing substances, places of drug use, etc. These films, mostly, illustrate social problems related to addicts and their families, and have tried to explain how people get addicted during their narration. In summary, the results indicate that more men have been significantly more involved in the films than women. Film addicts were often single, widowed or divorced, and most of them were educated and held a university degree. As well, heroin was represented in movies more frequently than other types of narcotics, and addicts' personal home and their friends' home were the most important places for drug use. Also, friends were displayed to be the most important suppliers of narcotics and stimulus to the initiation of drug use. On the other hand, divorce and child selling constituted the most frequent drug-related injuries; and family and friends were highlighted as the most important causes of addiction in these movies. In addition, psychological factors such as poor child training and inappropriate love have been emphasized as factors effective in addiction. However, Iranian films have formulated a kind of a discourse on the issue of drug addiction during their narration. In this discourse, some of the issues have been demonstrated more prominently while some others have been attended less. During the highlight of these representations, ideological bias has also been at play. The fact that the addicts in these movies have been from educated middle class to upper class or their family and friends have been pictured as the most effective factors in addiction is indicative of an ideological orientation. This ideological bias, especially in the movies made in the first decade of the Revolution is more conspicuously evident. For instance, imperialism and King's evil regime have been introduced as the agents of addiction and addicts are viewed as the creatures who have descended into a subhuman in such films as "Blades and Silk", "The Fifth Rider of Fate", "Looting", and "Mercenaries". The discourse of films on addiction has also undergone changes in several decades after the Revolution. The films of the eighties have introduced sociological issues as the major origin of addiction and

imperialism is no longer highlighted as the cause of addiction. In the eighties, addicts have been illustrated as human rather than non-human in films. The human who have turned sick by drug use and should be treated. This representation method of addiction is significant in the framework of Rafter's theories (2006, 2007). Rafter believes that criminal movies provide some kind of "popular criminology" that overlaps with academic criminology. Accordingly, it can be argued that movies provide one type of "popular addiction study" in their representation of addiction which overlaps with academic criminology on occasion and sometimes differs from it.

Difference and overlap of popular addiction study in films with academic addiction study are realized more in the explanation method of addiction and the social problems of addicts and their families. Field surveys on the issue of addiction usually enumerate such sociological factors as unemployment, poverty, social anomie, and industrialization effective in addiction and movies put such factors as group of friends and family at the center of attention; therefore, movies represent the issue of addiction differently from the perspective of field surveys and academic studies. On the other hand, Iranian films raise awareness about the environment of drug use and methods of substance preparation during their narration. In this regard, they provide a sound source for raising scientific hypotheses. The feature of popular addiction study in films is converted into a complement to academic addiction study. Academic studies are rarely informative on places of drug use and methods of drug preparation, but movies can provide such information. However, in line with Rafter, it should be mentioned that the best films around addiction are the ones that challenge the public understanding about addiction and present more scientific explanations about addiction. The total of Iranian films made about addiction mostly lack rich scientific explanations. Principal film production entails film makers to have expert advisors of addiction studies with them. It is hoped that this study will be contributive in this direction.

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