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B. ALIYEV,

*Doctor of Sciences in Psychology, Professor,
corresponding member of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences,
Head of Psychology Department of Baku State University (Azerbaijan)*

A. TÜRKMEN,

*PhD in Psychology,
Doctoral of Pedagogy Department of Baku State University
(Azerbaijan)*

THE ROLE OF ARTISTIC PERCEPTION IN IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENTS

This article describes the creation, implementation and evaluation of a program intended to improve self-esteem in Turkish adolescents. It details a pilot group in which various aspects of self-esteem (body image, autonomy, confidence, positive friendships) were addressed. This was accomplished by using the stimulus of film clips (Banker Bilo and Zugurt Aga) to depict the theme of four week.

Key words: Comedy Films, GroupTherapy, Self-Esteem, Turkish Adolescents.

Today's adolescents are exposed to large amounts of media input on a regular basis, and their receptivity to it makes the use of films an attractive addition to therapeutic treatment for this population. The use of films in treatment is growing due to the therapeutic benefits it can bring [21]. Schulenberg suggested that these benefits include cost effectiveness; ability to reach groups of diverse backgrounds; accessibility, availability and familiarity of films; and the ability to use films to create rapport between client and therapist.

Psychoanalysis and film

During the beginning stages of film, psychoanalysts studied movies to understand the interest in the medium and have since found a strong connection between movies, psychiatry, thought and emotions. Psychoanalyst Glen O. Gabbard (1997) made new connections between film and psychoanalytic perspectives. He discussed how dreamwork relates to film and applies the analysis of character to cinema.

He claimed that when people study cinema, they study themselves. French film theorist Christian Metz (1975–1982) applied Lacanian psychoanalysis to the viewer's connection to the film and described the cinema screen as the *other mirror*.

Film in the clinical setting

Using films in a clinical setting may be practical in Solomon's practice but as technology becomes more readily available, having clients make small movies may become even more engaging. Another tool that has come on the market that may help in the use of making films for clinical practice is the iPhone's video camera feature and the iPhone/iPad editing application. One can now not only make films but also broadcast them on the Web on *YouTube* if one wants to include viewers to help share their final productions and, in the process, possibly feel as if they are connecting to more people. Media studies scholar Greg Singh (2009) stated that whether one

sees the films uploaded onto *YouTube* from a personal phone, DVD/BluRay, or any other recent or future technology, what is important is «the form the engagement with film takes».

Ethical issues must be considered when dealing with broadcasting the client's own personal therapeutic work, but the work in itself may be beneficial without an external audience. Adolescents as well as adults are usually receptive to movies and are also at times resistant to therapy; therefore, using films as a way of helping clients to engage in therapy may be a way of communicating how effective therapy can be by moving the client past barriers when dealing with important issues. Because some clients are resistant to therapy, video therapy may help in increasing a bond by improving empathy with a client. This resistance may be partially due to not believing in therapy or understanding how effective it can be. Clients «are generally not interested in cooperating with a system that they regard as useless» [19, p. 220].

One way of inviting adolescents' involvement in therapy may be through engaging them in video therapy, which can be seen as a form of art therapy. Artist Adrian Hill coined the term *art therapy* (as cited in [13]) in 1942, after using his own art as therapy when recovering from an illness during World War II and encouraging its use among other patients. The field of art therapy may be considered to derive from certain kinds of art experiments. Margaret Naumberg is considered the founder of American art therapy, and her theoretical orientation toward the art-making process was built on the works of pioneers of depth psychology Jung and Freud [26]. For the purpose of this study, depth psychological approaches to film analysis may help to explain the meaning of film, and meaning is vital to the understanding of art therapy.

Different types of art therapy have since developed, including writing [20], poetry [10], photography [25], painting [27], drawing [15], music [9], drama [5], and journaling [18]. Psychotherapist Ira Progoff used journaling with his patients as a way to explore his theories related to depth psychology and transpersonal psychology [8; 18]. He worked with Jung from 1963 to 1965 and developed a specific journaling method, which he used not only for increasing self-awareness, but also for exploring one's unconscious behaviors, including dreaming. Watching films can be healing as well. Solomon (1995) utilized movies to help treat his patients. He trademarked the term *Cinematherapy* although the term was used earlier by Linda Berg-Cross, Pamela Jennings, and Rhoda Baruch (1990), who described this process as a way of stimulating discussion. Watching movies can also have a «direct therapeutic effect» [28, p. 210]. The idea for cinematherapy is related to bibliotherapy, which utilizes individuals' reactions to the contents of books and other written material and employs exercises to help deal with symptoms of loneliness, guilt, hopelessness, and other symptoms of depression [11, p. 275–280]. Because video is a powerful method of engagement, video therapy has the advantage of helping to engage youth in therapy. The use of video may also help to develop a group dynamic [6, p. 165–169]. Videotaped drama can assist youth in dealing with tough issues such as drug abuse, delinquency, depression, and behavioral disorders. By taping certain dramatic enactments, these young people may have a way of dealing with unexpressed energy [3, p. 15–21].

Cinematherapy

Cinematherapy is defined by Tyson, Foster and Jones as «a therapeutic intervention allowing clients to visually assess a film's characters interaction with others, the environment, and personal issues, thereby developing a bridge from which positive therapeutic movement may be accomplished» [26, p. 35–41]. According to the authors of this article, cinematherapy is a technique that is rapidly gaining in popularity in the mental health field. Others define cinematherapy as «a specific therapeutic technique that involves selecting commercial films for clients to view individually or with others as a means for therapeutic gain [1]» [4, p. 163–180]. Still others discuss cinematherapy as «video work», and define video work as therapeutic process in which clients and therapists discuss themes and characters in popular films that relate to core issues of on going therapy. We use films to facilitate self-understanding, to introduce options for action plans, and to seed future therapeutic interventions [12].

Like bibliotherapy, cinematherapy is a form of therapeutic metaphor, a term used to describe the myriad of counselor techniques meant to by-pass client resistance in order to assist the client in achieving goals. However, the relatively new therapeutic technique of cinematherapy

has been minimally addressed in the professional literature. Moreover, when cinematherapy has been discussed within the literature it has been a conceptual discussion, lacking in empirical research and data. The following section focuses on the limited cinematherapy literature, including the definition and description of cinematherapy the suggested uses of cinematherapy, and the use of film and cinema within the field of counseling.

Cinema films as a guide to self help

The premise of a self-help book for women written by Peske and West is that movies are more than entertainment [16].

They can serve a therapeutic function as well. If there is an appropriate match between the movie and the viewer's mood, the way in which the movie's female characters relate to events should help the viewer to obtain a better understanding of her own feelings and perhaps lead her to resolve issues in her own life. Peske and West suggested that the reader first assess her own mood and then select an appropriate movie from the annotated lists provided by them. Peske and West's presentation was decidedly tongue-in-cheek and witty [16]. They described themselves as film fanatics with no academic credentials. Two examples of their chapter titles are illustrative of their light-hearted approach: *Someday has Come and Gone and My Prince Still Hasn't Shown Up: Happily Ever After Movies* and *I am Woman, Hear Me Roar: Straining to Hear Your Inner Voice Movies*.

A book by Solomon [24] was more serious but the intent was similar to that of Peske and West, which was to show how movies could be used as a self-help device, with the viewer controlling her or his own rate of recovery. Solomon is a psychotherapist who listed 200 movies for use in specific situations. Each movie was chosen because it contained a «healing story». What made each story healing was that what happened to the characters in the movie was like what happens to many viewers in real life. Solomon argued that, even though people perceive things differently, some images are so powerful and compelling that the message is viewed in the same way by all who see it. According to Solomon, movies cause people to look at themselves [24]. Because movie stories break through the walls of denial, people see and hear things that they were unable to acknowledge on their own. As a result, they view situations in a realistic way. For that reason, movies can change the way that people think and feel. People can find answers to life problems, and the changes they make in their lives can be lasting. In touting the value of his approach, Solomon pointed out that it takes less time to watch a movie than to read a book and that movies make it relatively easy to follow the story line [24]. Visual images have an immediacy that is not present in print, he stated. By showing how denial works, movies help people to understand their own denial.

Furthermore, watching a movie at home makes the person feel safe and so the individual is more open to exploring emotions than might be the case in a therapist's office. The movies recommended by Solomon constituted what he termed «prescriptions» for specific problems, such as, feelings of abandonment, depression, and custody issues, and they could be viewed alone or with others [24]. If viewed with others, the movie could serve to open a dialogue. One example given by Solomon was the case of a parent who watches a movie about family relationships with his or her child. According to Solomon, negative images can be useful. For that reason, the viewer might be advised to watch a film about someone who is not leading a rewarding and satisfying life (e. g., a cocaine addict). The viewer experiences what Solomon called «paradoxical healing», which means that the viewer decides not to behave like the character in the movie. Solomon provided explicit instructions about what he wanted the reader to do when watching the movies he listed [24].

The person was asked to keep notes on the feelings experienced during the movie and to consider what events in the movie were reminiscent of events in her or his past. After the movie ended, the viewer was instructed to read the notes and expand on them. The final step was to build a library of notes, a procedure which the author asserted would lead to «tremendous growth and personal healing». The basis for that statement was that the viewer would identify with the characters, experience the feelings of those characters, and then undergo a breakthrough in emotions and thoughts. Solomon in 2001 subsequently wrote a sequel to his 1995 book in which

he listed 200 additional movies, each of which was accompanied by a list of four or five healing themes. The author supplied his own analysis of what was depicted in each movie but also asked the reader to consider what message he or she got from the movie. If the movie were about growing up, one question would be: «Is that what it was like growing up in your family?» The intent was to help the viewer relate the movie to her or his own life. A cross-referencing index was provided so that the reader could look up movies on specific topics (e. g., sexuality, divorce, etc.).

Methodology

The present study created, conducted, and evaluated a clinical intervention in which Turkish comedy cinema film clips (Banker Bilo and Zugurt Aga) were used in a group setting with adolescent. The purpose of this intervention was to enhance self-esteem among adolescent. The intervention used portions of readily available films to portray various issues and circumstances. Group discussion followed the Turkish comedy cinema films and addressed the relevance of the issues in the clips to participants. We hypothesized that the outcome of the film therapy group intervention would be an increase in the participants' self-esteem at posttest, compared with the pretest measure. We questioned whether the use of Turkish comedy cinema film clips in a group therapy setting with adolescents would help increase their self-esteem levels. This question was addressed in two ways. First an outcome scale (participant response form) was administered after each session. In addition, pre- and posttests were compared to discover the effectiveness of the overall intervention.

The data presented in this section describe group participants' views of each group session and changes in participants' level of self-esteem.

The CSEI was administered to participants as a pre- and posttest measure. A paired t-test was performed to compare the pretest CSEI scores to the posttest CSEI scores. The null hypothesis was that there would be no change in pretest and posttest scores. The mean difference was -2.43, with CSEI scores rising from pre- to posttest. Results were not statically significant, $t(6) = -.97, p = .37$. In order for the results to have been statistically significant, the value of the t-test would have to have been 2 rather than .97. The P value of .37 represents the probability that the findings are incorrect if the null hypothesis is rejected. While the increase in self-esteem did not reach statistical significance, it was a substantial change. A sample size of seven is very small, almost too small to use inferential statistics, which attempt to draw conclusions about the whole population. It is likely that the change in self-esteem fell short of statistical significance because the sample was so small. Such an average change in self-esteem may be clinically relevant though it is not statistically relevant. Four of the participants had a measurable improvement in their self-esteem as represented by their scores on the CSEI. The improvements of these participants ranged from a 5- to 9-point increase. Only one participant demonstrated a decline in her self-esteem (of 9 points) and two remained essentially unchanged with scores that dropped 1–2 points. The final week's theme was positive interpersonal relationships/positive friendships. Participants indicated that the discussion was the most beneficial and enjoyable part of the group. In addition to the discussion portion of the group, participants also found the themes relevant and interesting. Participants indicated that talking about themes (i. e., body image, future goals, confidence) were of benefit to them. Participants also indicated that the use of films was beneficial to the workings and dynamics of the group in addition to the group being great and fun overall. There were also group dynamics that began to develop, such as people needing to focus and be more respectful of the group. These results provide some support for further research of the group therapy intervention developed for the present study.

This creation, implementation, and evaluation of a group therapy intervention with Turkish adolescents was based on the following assumptions: that using Turkish comedy cinema film clips would facilitate group discussions of themes/topics of importance to Turkish adolescents, that participation in this program would improve participants' self-esteem, and that participants would indicate that this program was useful for them. Overall, participants' ratings over the course of the 4 weeks indicated that using film clips in the group therapy sessions was effective not only in depicting the theme of the week but also in facilitating discussion of those themes.

Although participation in this group did not improve the participants' self-esteem to a statistically significant degree, there were changes that could be interpreted as clinically significant. Four of the seven participants demonstrated a positive change in their self-esteem while two remained relatively unchanged and one reported a decrease in her self-esteem. The present study focused on using movie clips in a group therapeutic setting to explore their possible benefits. My findings are similar to those of Powell et al. [17] who found that cinematherapy was an effective tool in enhancing participants' self-esteem. Powell et al. conducted a study in which a control group of adolescents received coping-skills training and the experimental group participated in brief cinematherapy. The researchers were investigating what effect participation in the experimental group would have on participants' self-esteem and found that the addition of cinematherapy was effective in improving self-esteem. Although the specifics of the study are different than my research, it can be noted that with the addition of using film clips, four of the seven participants in my study did demonstrate improvement in their reported levels of self-esteem (two remained relatively unchanged and one decreased). These results could be attributed to a number of factors, including but not limited to other life circumstances, positive interactions with peers in the group setting, or a particular connection to the film clips that were shown. Research has provided information that indicates that there are ways in which media integration can be beneficial.

This can be especially true if a client's experience or situation is in some way matched to that of the characters in the film that is viewed for a therapeutic purpose. There is the potential benefit that a client can apply learning or problem-solving techniques to her own experience, especially if there are similarities between the client's experience and that of the characters in the film. The clients can apply problem solving skills to their own situations by learning from characters in a film [14; 23]. As films are enjoyable, accessible, and a common part of our culture, it is possible that the film clips also provided a means of connecting the participants to each other and the group process. Because the present study was conducted in a group setting, the importance of peer connection should also be taken into account. For the age group of the population in this study, peer interactions and connections are highly important. Adolescent females' sense of self is centered on relationships with peers [2]. Many factors can impact one's self-esteem. As the participants were participating in this group on a voluntary basis and living everyday life, circumstances outside of the group could have impacted the participants' self-esteem. Traditional cinematherapy involves a therapist selecting a film and assigning it to a client (individual or family) then discussing and processing salient themes in the following session [23]. In Powell et al.'s study [17], the efficacy of cinematherapy was evaluated in adolescent males and females diagnosed with severe emotional disturbances.

Researchers found that cinematherapy had a positive effect on participants' self-esteem. In the present study, participants agreed that they were learning something new about themselves or learning something that they could use in their lives by participating in the group. Interactions in a peer group and group discussions can improve these social skills, as they facilitate practicing social intelligence, learning social cues, and learning when or how to interject their contributions to the group. Group members were able to explore their reactions to the various themes and learn from others' experiences as well.

Many aspects of self-esteem can be explored through discussions stimulated by film clips, as they provide group members a focused topic to discuss. This allows for personal exploration of the specific theme and can also connect to improvements in overall self-esteem.

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У статті досліджується специфіка впливу художнього сприйняття на формування самооцінки особистості. Як естетичний матеріал обрано турецькі комедійні фільми. Описується створення, реалізація та оцінка програми, призначеної для підвищення самооцінки у турецьких підлітків. Докладно наведено підсумки роботи з пілотною групою, у якій було розглянуто різні аспекти самооцінки.

Ключові слова: комедійні фільми, групова терапія, самоповага, турецькі підлітки.

В статье исследуется специфика влияния художественного восприятия на формирование самооценки личности. В качестве эстетического материала выбраны турецкие комедийные фильмы. В статье описывается создание, реализация и оценка программы, предназначенной для повышения самооценки у турецких подростков. Подробно приведены итоги работы с пилотной группой, в которой были рассмотрены различные аспекты самооценки.

Ключевые слова: комедийные фильмы, групповая терапия, самоуважение, турецкие подростки.

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