Digital Delight: Exploring Online Movie Preferences of University Students During the Pandemic

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Abstract

During COVID-19, passing the time with joy became one of the main challenges, and the movie was one of those tools that helped people in that crisis moment. The theaters are opened when the COVID-19 situation gradually normalizes. However, a large section of young students are still used to online platforms. So, through this study, an attempt has been made to see what kind of platform they prefer, what kind of movies they enjoy there, and why. This study followed the survey method with open-ended and close-ended questions. The study focused on students of Khulna University in Bangladesh to identify their preferred online platforms for watching movies and the purposes of using those platforms. By using snowball sampling, the study took 1.25% of respondents for interviews from the population. The findings of the study reveal YouTube as the most preferred platform, followed by Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hoichoi, and others. A specific number of students use other online platforms like Netflix and Amazon by providing subscription costs. The COVID-19 pandemic and long-term lockdown and travel restrictions have been a blessing for online streaming platforms.

Keywords: online Streaming Platform, OTT, Movie, Preference, Perception, Pandemic, COVID-19.

Background of the study

Movies, which are used to entertain people, as well as to educate, influence, and direct them, are accepted and used as the most significant cultural conveyors of the 21st century. But during COVID-19, when passing the time with joy became one of the main challenges, the movie was one of those tools that helped people in that crisis moment. 'Home confinement, physical isolation from family, friends, and relatives, a high rate of job loss or pay cut, and, above all, ongoing anxiety about preventing contact with the disease were the outgoing order. COVID-19 introduces a variety of transitions at a

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faster rate and thus sets the norms for a new standard' (Bhattacharyya, 2020). Generally, people want to go to the market for shopping and are keen on going to the theater to enjoy movies. However, the pandemic has forced consumers to change their choices almost overnight. Most of the people were forced by the situation. Hence, the investigation into the dynamics of e-commerce was an inevitable pursuit. Furthermore, overall revenue from an online platform was expected to rise in these uncertain times due to the growing preference for OTT platforms during the crisis. Expanding upon this viewpoint, the present study ascertained the unique trend of viewing films via digital platforms during these uncertain times.

The history of the movie industry goes way back to 1896 when Edison and The Lumière Brothers were the inventors of motion pictures. Lumière Brothers and Thomas Edison Frenchman Louis Le Prince were granted an American dual-patent on a 16-lens device. It combined a motion picture camera with a projector. However, because Le Prince suspiciously disappeared on the evening before the premiere of his invention, he was not recognized as the founding father of motion pictures until 1930' (Howells, 2006). After that, it switched from Nickelodeon to videocassettes, DVDs, and now to various movies streamed online. As the Internet is cheaper nowadays, technology giants like Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Apple, etc., produce content for online streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, MercTV, Amazon Video, FuboTV, etc. In Bangladesh, three communications operators. - Grameen-phone, Banglalink, and Robi- provide streaming services by introducing Bioscope, Banglaflix, and Robi TV, respectively. Besides, Bongobd, Popocornlive, and 3rdbell are popular streaming services. 'Netflix is considered one of the first to enter the online video streaming business. In 2005, Netflix (NFLX) began providing 'on-demand' TV or video services. As the name suggests, the biggest thing that separates broadcasting resources online television is the freedom to watch at a time that suits you. This rapid growth in broadcasting means that people can watch on any screen - mobile phone, laptop, or TV and have personal information (Khandelwal, 2019). To find out the preferred online platform for watching movies during COVID-19 and to know the purpose of using those platforms for watching movies are the primary objectives of this study. And the specific objectives of this study are to identify how much time they spend on these platforms by watching movies and to discover which genre attracts them most.

Rationale of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in various aspects of daily life, including entertainment consumption patterns. With

restrictions on social gatherings and closures of cinemas, there has been a notable shift towards online movie streaming platforms as a primary source of entertainment. Understanding the movie preferences of university students during this period is crucial for several reasons. The pandemic has restricted traditional forms of entertainment, such as going to cinemas or attending live events. As a result, individuals, particularly university students who are heavy consumers of entertainment media, have turned to digital platforms for their movie-watching needs. Exploring their preferences during this time can provide insights into how the pandemic has influenced their choices. The pandemic has accelerated the digitalization of entertainment content consumption. Online streaming platforms have become more central in delivering content to audiences. By studying university students' movie preferences, researchers can gain insights into the specific types of content that resonate with this demographic in the digital realm. Movies play a significant role in providing escapism and entertainment, especially during challenging times like the pandemic. Understanding which genres, themes, or types of movies university students prefer can shed light on the psychological and emotional needs they seek to fulfill through entertainment consumption during periods of stress and uncertainty.

Movie preferences can reflect broader cultural and societal trends. By examining the types of movies preferred by university students during the pandemic, researchers can uncover shifts in cultural values, interests, and trends within this demographic segment. Insights into university students' movie preferences can also inform industry stakeholders and policymakers. This understanding can guide decisions related to content creation, licensing, distribution strategies, and even public health policies during times of crisis. exploring the online movie preferences of university students during the pandemic is essential for understanding the evolving landscape of entertainment consumption, its psychological impacts, educational implications, cultural reflections, and its broader societal and industry implications. This research can provide valuable insights into how entertainment preferences have adapted to unprecedented circumstances and help shape future strategies for both the entertainment industry and academia.

Research Questions
1. What are the preferred online platforms and the reasons for using those platforms to watch movies during COVID-19?
2. Which genre do they find most appealing to watch?

3. Do they prefer Bangladeshi movies and Bangladeshi online platforms?
4. Do they want censorship on online platforms?
5. Should online platforms produce more movies?

Literature Review

While doing this study on university students' online movie watching, we have done some literature studies. From these studies, we tried to see which platforms students feel comfortable using in the global context during COVID-19.

The study examines Indian viewers' perceptions of the changes in the Indian television and cinema industry as a result of high-quality applications. This study shows that about 56% watch television for less than 1 hour and, about 4% spend more than 3 hours watching television. In contrast, the OTT viewer viewing method shows that as many as 25% spend more than 3 hours watching OTT video platforms and 45% spend between 1 and 3 hours (Madnani et al., 2020). Statements on the variance of the two outcomes, namely, satisfaction and willingness to continue and subscribe (WCS) as well as statements affecting consumer eating habits in the current era of coronavirus lockdown (Gupta & Singharia, 2021). During the COVID-19 epidemic, the number of subscribers to these OTT broadcasts increased by almost 6 million users in one year. The study found that subscribers to these OTT forums increased their use by approximately 3 hours on average daily as a result of the epidemic, citing various reasons such as 'Boredom', 'Extra Time', 'New Content' etc. (e.g. Hulu and HBO Max) (Parnami,2021). This study aims to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on OTT platforms in India, as it has led to the re-creation of popular consumer content. The first study focused on the effect of various factors such as time, content, comfort, satisfaction, and work from home (WFH) on OTT platforms during the COVID-19 disaster and the second study focused on changes in human behavior before and during the lockdown using visual representation. (Madnani et al., 2020). This study investigated the effects of perceived ease of use, usefulness, enjoyment, and intention to use online platforms on behavioral intention in online movies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Easy-to-use simplicity has a positive effect on the imagination, fun-to-use, and purpose of watching movies online (Basuki et al., 2021). Comedy remains the most-watched genre (84%), followed by drama (62%), action (51%), thriller (44%), and horror (32%). The findings emerged from a survey of 1,458 OTT users in all 16 Indian cities (Jha, 2019). With 4 out of 5 Indians subscribing to streaming platforms during the lockdown, OTT platforms saw significant growth in subscriptions. They said Amazon Prime saw a 67%

increase in subscriptions, followed by Netflix, and a 65% increase in subscribers. According to a survey, about 73% consumed YouTube and Hotstar content more often than other OTT apps (Surviving COVID-19 and Beyond, 2020). The variety of programs, news, movies, and games successfully predict user satisfaction with cable TV, while dramas and movies predict user satisfaction with OTT TV. Their research used the theory of satisfaction (Chen, 2019**).** Through the survey, they acquired the practice of watching a series of films and action scenes in the theatre using a simple method of selecting random samples. Use the Online Questionnaire to collect data. An online survey using Google Forms is conducted. Respondents were selected from the Bhopal District. This study followed the application and theory of satisfaction (Between the age group 18-40). (Patel et al., 2021). Respondents to this study group were OTT platform buyers who were in the age group of 14 to 45+. Data were analyzed using essential descriptive mathematical tools. (Patnaik et al., 2021). This study focuses on the conceptual knowledge of OTT forums that influence users during a pandemic, including consumer feedback, understanding, and awareness of OTT forums, as well as the issues users face a lot of information related to the recorded material is considered to analyze and obtain the result (Anbumalar, 2021). The study was to study the increase in subscription (OTT) at the time of the lockdown as part of the COVID-19 approach to analyze the future of OTT venues in India following the reopening of theaters after the epidemic. A quantitative assessment method was used to complete the survey. In conducting the research, a spread of creative theory, proposed by Evert M Rogers and the Uses and Gratification theory, proposed by Elihu Katz, were used (Revati & Babu, 2021). Their behavior towards movie theaters after OTT became the convenient regular driver for all and consumers' perception towards the changing media and entertainment industry (Varghese & Chinnaiah, 2021). Through this literature study, it is understood that online movies have an effect on students in the context of Bangladesh. And if Bangladeshi students are watching movies online during COVID-19, they need to find their preferences and viewing variety. As a result, researchers will be motivated to conduct such a study on university students in Bangladesh.

Methodology of the Study

This research is qualitative and quantitative in nature. It uses combined elements of quantitative and qualitative research to collect data. In this study, researchers need to know the exact data about how many people used online platforms to watch movies during COVID-19, as well as the reasons behind using those platforms to watch those movies. This study

involves quantifying and analyzing variables to yield results. Conversely, qualitative research is characterized by its emphasis on gathering data through open-ended and conversational communication. In this study, the utilization of qualitative methods facilitated a deeper understanding of not only "what" people think but also "why" they hold those beliefs. The authors conducted surveys to collect data for this study, enabling a comprehensive exploration of user perspectives and motivations. A semi-structured questionnaire, incorporating a blend of open-ended, closed, and multiple-choice questions, was designed for respondents, focusing on the most prevalent movie-watching platform during the COVID-19 period. The formulation of these questions aligns with the specific objectives of the study.

Khulna University of Bangladesh was selected as the area of study. The area is selected purposively. It causes feasibility with the cost and time frame of the study. There are 6965 students at Khulna University, which is the study population. This study employed Snowball sampling, a method categorized under Non-Probability Sampling techniques. In this approach, research participants assist in identifying additional potential subjects, creating a network of referrals. Through this process, researchers trace back to the primary sources of data, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive sample. Following the identification of the initial data sources, the sample size was determined to consist of 87 students, providing a robust foundation for analysis and insights. It is hard to find enough students who watch movies on online streaming platforms during COVID-19. Though the sample size is 1.249 percent of the population. Which is presentable for the population.

Theoretical Framework
The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reshaped the entertainment landscape, particularly in the realm of movie-watching habits. This study delves into the preferences and habits of university students regarding online movie platforms, shedding light on their motivations and the underlying factors that influence their choices. In an era characterized by unprecedented connectivity and digital immersion, the way we consume media has undergone a profound transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its accompanying lockdowns and social distancing measures, further accelerated this shift, particularly in the realm of entertainment. Among the most popular forms of escapism during these challenging times has been the consumption of online movies. The Uses and Gratification Theory posits that individuals actively seek out and use media to fulfill specific needs or gratifications. Rather than being passive recipients of media messages,

audiences are viewed as active participants who select media content based on their motivations, preferences, and psychological needs. According to this theory, people engage with media to satisfy various gratifications, including information seeking, personal identity reinforcement, social integration, entertainment, and escapism. In the context of online movie preferences during the pandemic, the Uses and Gratification Theory provides valuable insights into why university students gravitate toward particular types of films and streaming platforms.

Through the lens of this theory, we can discern the diverse motives underlying their movie choices. With the stress and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, many students turn to online movies as a form of entertainment and escapism. Whether seeking light-hearted comedies to lift their spirits or immersive dramas to transport them to different worlds, the desire for relaxation and diversion motivates their movie selections. Despite physical distancing measures, online movie viewing offers a sense of social connection and shared experience. Virtual movie nights with friends or family provide an opportunity for students to bond over a common interest, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie even in a socially distant world. For some students, online movies serve as a source of information and education. Documentaries, biopics, and historical dramas offer insights into diverse cultures, perspectives, and real-life events, satisfying their curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Movie preferences can also reflect and reinforce individuals' identities and values. Whether identifying with specific characters or resonating with thematic elements, students may select movies that align with their interests, beliefs, and aspirations, contributing to a sense of self-affirmation and validation. The choice of a survey method in the study aligns seamlessly with the tenets of the Uses and Gratification Theory.

Surveys allow researchers to directly inquire about participants' media consumption habits, motivations, and gratifications sought, providing valuable quantitative data for analysis. By administering surveys to university students, the researcher can gain insights into the specific reasons underlying their online movie preferences and how these preferences relate to their psychological needs and socio-cultural contexts. The intersection of digital delight and the Uses and Gratification Theory offers a nuanced understanding of online movie preferences among university students during the pandemic. By recognizing audiences as active agents who select and engage with media to fulfill specific gratifications, researchers can unravel the complex interplay between individual motivations, media content, and socio-cultural influences. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the Uses and Gratification Theory remains a valuable framework for

deciphering the dynamic relationship between media consumption and human behavior.

Results

The data are presented through the visual chart. Each of the figures is followed by a short analysis of data; the number of responses is also presented with a percentile breakdown.
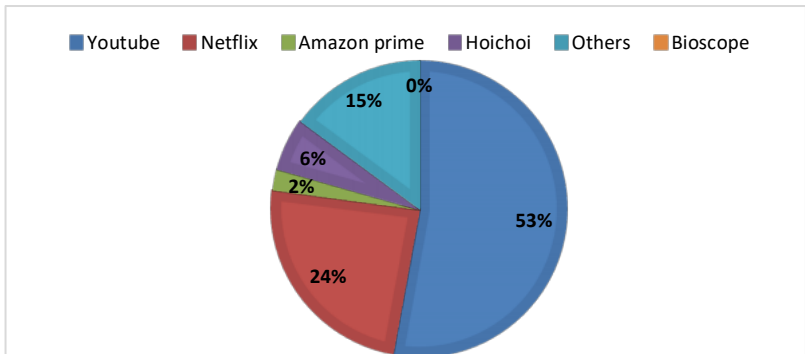

Figure 6.1: Preference for the platform

This figure shows that 53% of respondents use YouTube to watch movies, and no one uses Bioscope. Netflix ranks second with 24%, followed by Amazon Prime, Hoichoi, and others at 2%, 6%, and 15%, respectively. This figure shows that the majority of respondents prefer to use YouTube to watch movies. Recipients state that there are several causes behind that. YouTube is pretty easy to use and quite basic. It offers a huge movie library that viewers can access without a membership.
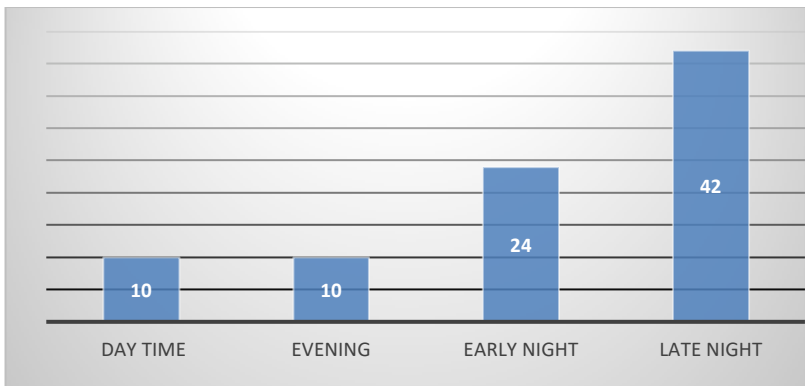
Figure 6.2: Respondent's preferred time

This figure shows that 48.28% of the respondents state that their preferred time for watching online movies is late at night. 27.59% of respondents prefer the early evening for watching online movies. 11.49% of respondents were interested in watching movies in the evening.
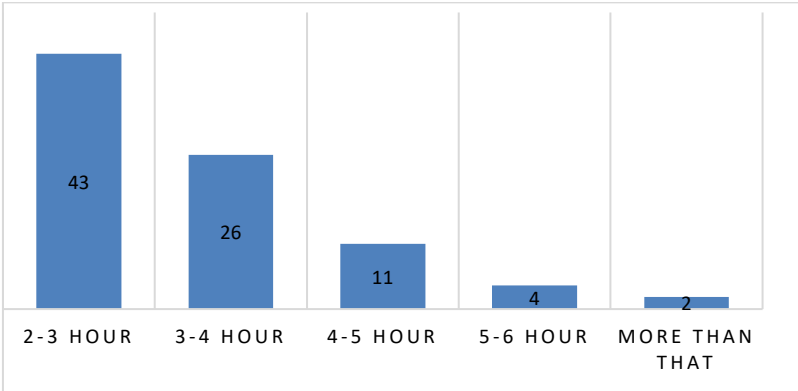
Figure 6.3: Spending time watching movies

The data shows that the majority of people (43) spend 2-3 hours watching movies on online platforms. 26 respondents watched movies for 3-4 hours, 11 respondents spent 4-5 hours, 4 respondents spent 5-6 hours, and 2 respondents gave much more time than that.
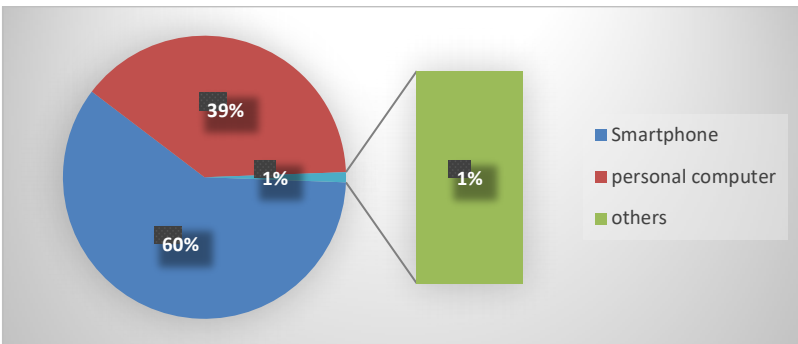
Figure 6.4: Preferred Device

This chart illustrates that 60% of the respondents prefer a smartphone as their first-choice device for watching movies. 39% of the respondents prefer personal computers and 1% use another device.
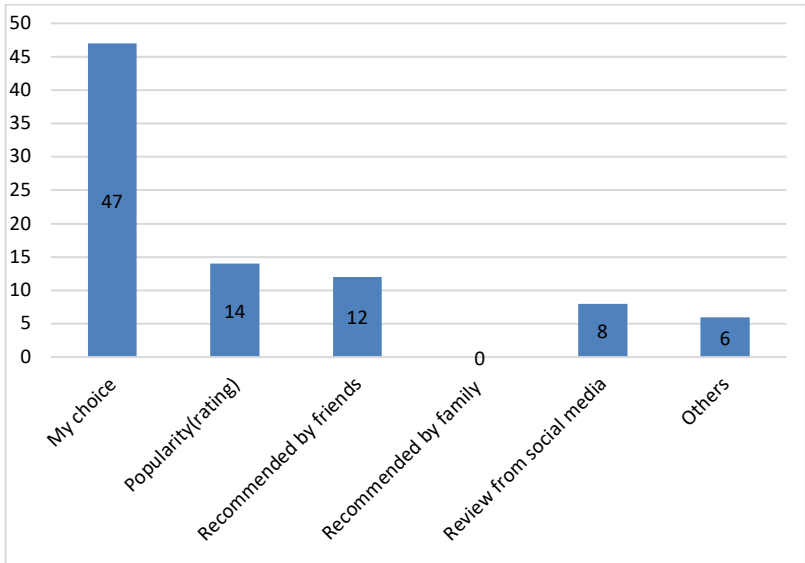
Figure 6.5: Basis of using online platforms

This graph shows that 54.02% of the participants use a preferred online platform. According to popularity, 16.09% of the respondents use an online platform. Twelve 13.79% of the participants make use of an online platform that a friend has suggested. Additionally, 9.19% of the respondents expressed interest in using the review's web platform on social media. Six respondents, or 6.29%, use an internet platform that they found through another source. The respondents received no recommendations for any internet site from the family.
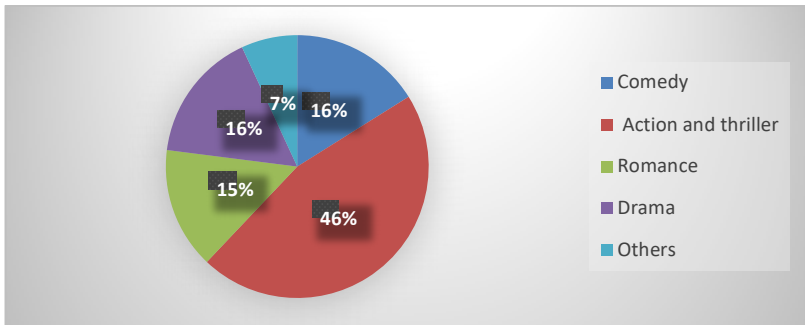
Figure 6.6: Respondents' preferred genre

This pie chart shows action and thrillers take first place, each having 46%. Comedy and drama both rank 2nd, each having 16%. On the other hand, 15% of respondents chose the romance genre, and 16% chose the drama genre. 7% of respondents like to watch other genres.
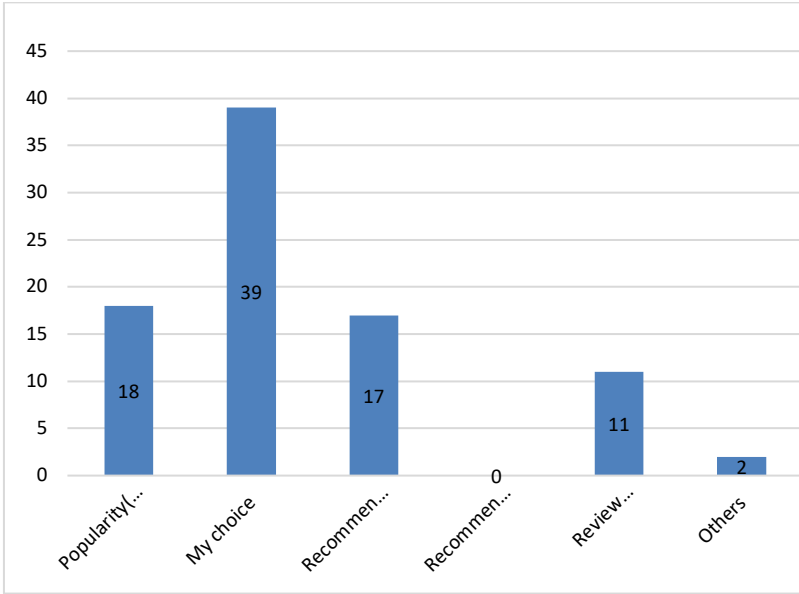
Figure 6.7: Respondents enjoy movies on a different basis

Among the respondents, 44.83% reported actively choosing online movies based on their personal preferences, reflecting a significant inclination towards individual tastes and interests. Additionally, 20.69% of participants indicated a tendency to select online movies based on their popularity, suggesting a reliance on trends and mainstream appeal. Furthermore, 19.54% of respondents reported watching online movies recommended by friends, highlighting the influence of social networks and interpersonal connections on media consumption choices. Notably, 9.19% of participants expressed an interest in online movies based on reviews shared through social media platforms, indicating the impact of user-generated content and online discourse on viewing decisions. Moreover, 12.64% of respondents cited accessing online movies through alternative sources, underscoring the diversity of pathways through which individuals engage with digital media content.
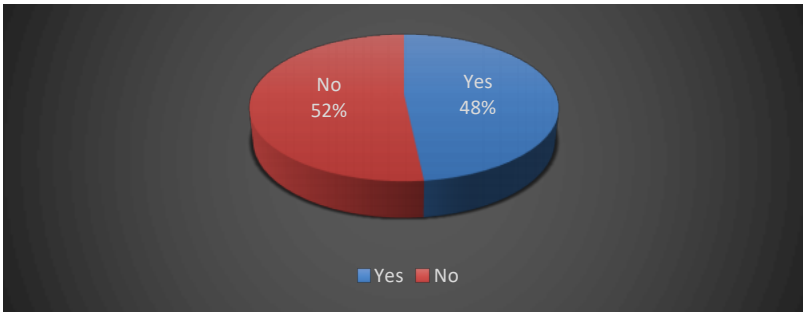
Figure 6.8: Respondents use an online platform for watching Bangladeshi movies

The figure indicates that 52% of the respondents did not utilize online platforms for watching Bangladeshi movies, while 48% reported using online platforms for this purpose. A significant portion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the quantity of Bangladeshi movies available on online platforms, citing the perception that they do not produce enough content. Moreover, concerns about the quality of Bangladeshi movies emerged as another factor influencing viewing preferences. Interestingly, respondents generally indicated a preference for television over online platforms when it comes to accessing Bangladeshi movies.
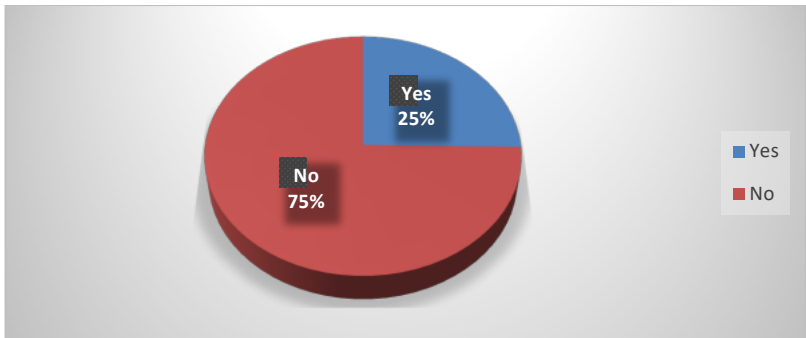
Figure 6.9: Respondent's uses of the Bangladeshi online platform

This chart displays 75% of the respondents did not use any kind of Bangladeshi online platform. Only 25% of respondents use the Bangladeshi online platform. This data shows that respondents are reluctant to use Bangladeshi online platforms. A few respondents said they are not aware of Bangladeshi online platforms. Many respondents are reluctant to pay subscription costs as well.
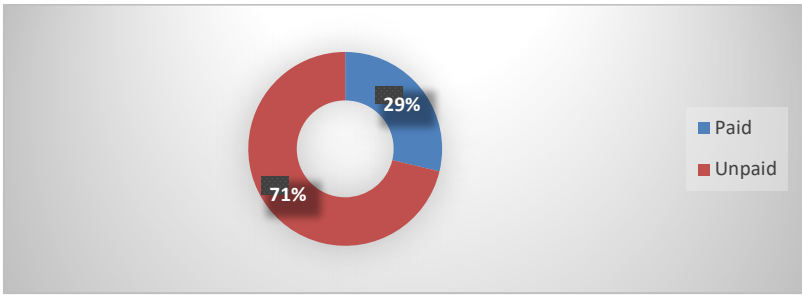
Figure 6.10: Respondent's types of using an online platform

This pie chart shows, in terms of subscription, 71% of the respondents are unpaid subscribers while 29% of the respondents are paid subscribers. This pie chart illustrates students don not like to pay for subscriptions.
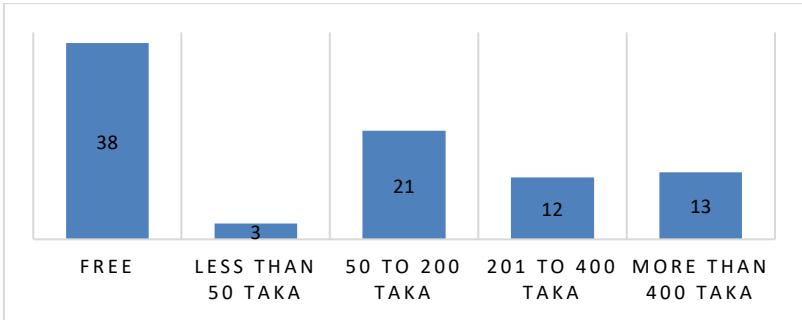

Figure 6.11: Respondents' cost of using the online platform

Figure 12 shows that 38 respondents use the free internet platform, and 3 respondents cost less than 50 taka. On the other hand, 21 people use the internet for 50-200 taka, 12 responders call 201-400 taka, and 13 respondents call for more than 400 taka.
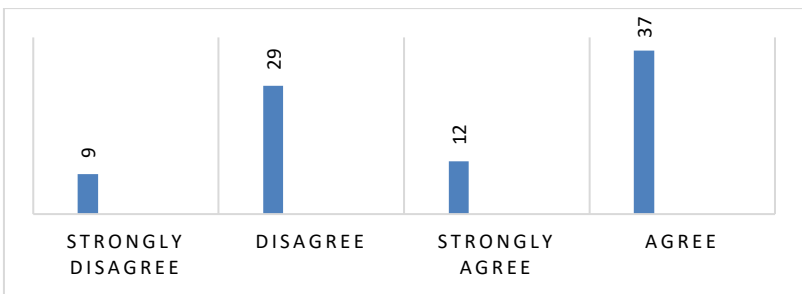

Figure 6.12: Sexual content than other traditional platforms

According to the survey, 49 respondents believe that online platform movies contain more sexual content compared to traditional platforms, whereas 38 respondents disagreed with this notion. Interestingly, some students expressed the view that to attract a younger audience, online platforms should feature more sexual content than traditional platforms, with a certain number of respondents indicating comfort with this approach. However, the majority of respondents reported feeling uncomfortable with such content, suggesting a divergence in opinions regarding the appropriateness of sexual content on different viewing platforms.
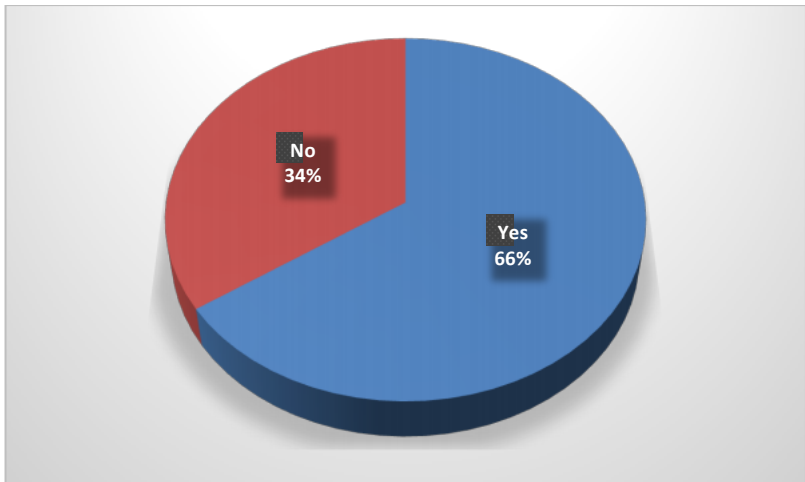

Figure 6.13: Opinion about Censorship

The figure depicted reveals a significant divide among respondents regarding the necessity of censorship for online platform movies, with 66% advocating for censorship by authorities and 34% opposing it. Respondents in favor of censorship argue that they desire to enjoy movies with their families, emphasizing the importance of content appropriateness, especially with the increasing access to online platforms by children due to technological advancements. They believe that authorities should establish standards to regulate content accordingly. Conversely, a substantial portion of respondents oppose any form of censorship, fearing that it would stifle the creativity of filmmakers and impede artistic expression. This dichotomy underscores the complex interplay between societal values, regulatory concerns, and artistic freedom in the realm of digital media consumption.
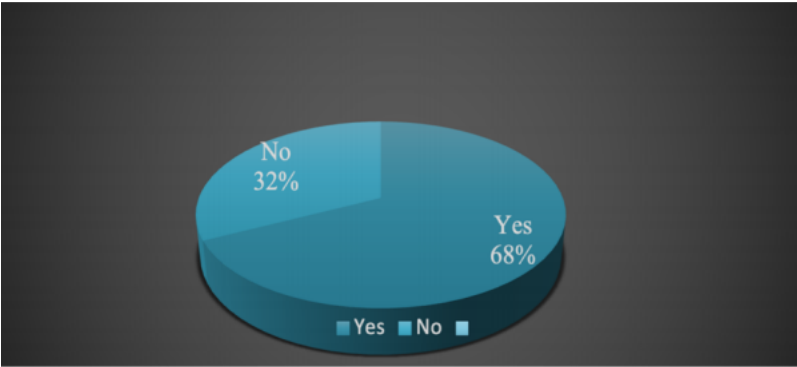
Figure 6.14: Respondent's preference between the online platform and traditional media

The figure presented indicates a clear trend, with 68% of respondents expressing a preference for watching movies on online platforms over traditional media, while 32% continue to use traditional media for their movie enjoyment. This suggests a notable shift among students towards online platforms for accessing entertainment content. Respondents cited several reasons for favoring online platforms, including their ease of accessibility, flexibility to enjoy movies at their own convenience, and the freedom to choose from a wide range of movie options. Consequently, when faced with a choice between movies and other content on online platforms, individuals tend to prioritize movies for their entertainment, highlighting the central role that movies play in their viewing preferences.
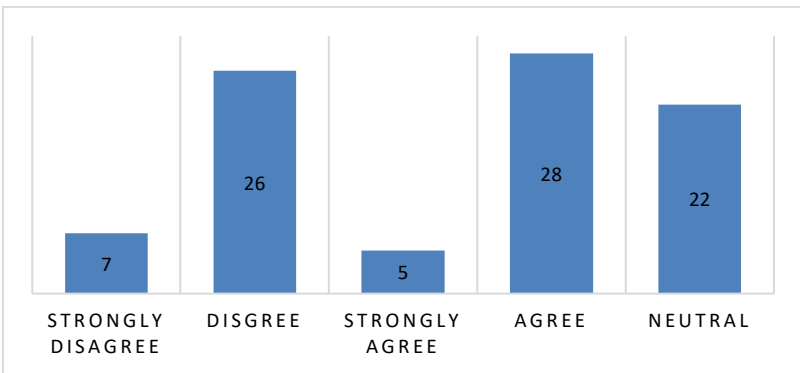

Figure 6.15: Thought about affecting educational performances

This chart informs respondents' thoughts on online platforms movies can teach or not. 28 respondents believe that online movie affects their academic performance, while 26 respondents do not.
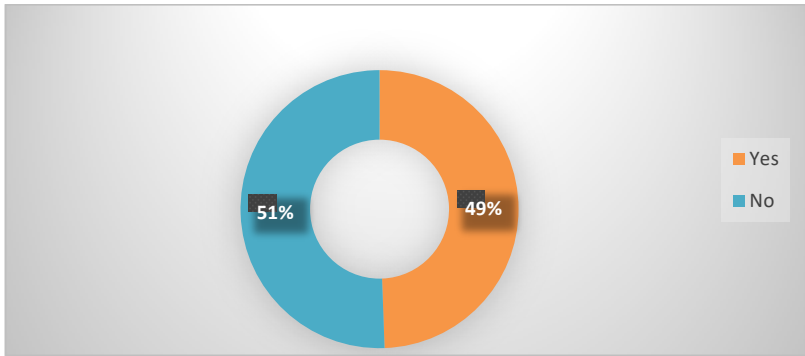
Figure 6.16: Respondent's thoughts regarding learning about life problems and solutions

The pie chart indicates that 51% of respondents believe they can learn solutions to life problems from movies and online platforms, whereas 49% do not share this perspective. This suggests that a majority of people perceive movies as a valuable source of insight into life's challenges and resolutions. Respondents commonly expressed the belief that movies offer a unique window into various realities, cultures, and diverse problems and solutions. Additionally, they highlighted the motivational impact of biographical movies, which inspire individuals to achieve extraordinary feats. Overall, these findings underscore the profound influence and educational potential of movies in shaping perspectives and providing valuable life lessons.
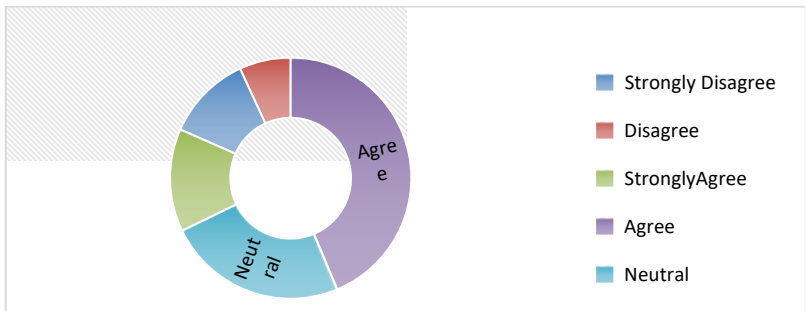

Figure 6.17: Opinion on Affecting Language

Figure 19 shows that the majority of respondents agree with the fact that online movies affect language, while a number of respondents disagree.
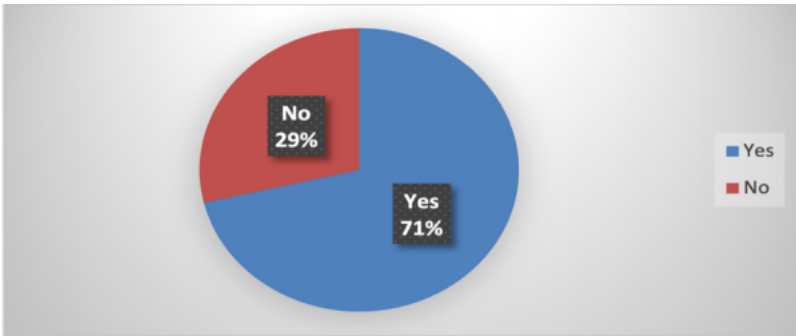
Figure 6.18: Respondent's thoughts about causing any mental health issue

The pie chart illustrates that 71% of respondents believe that movies contribute to mental illness, while 29% disagree with this assertion. This suggests a prevailing concern among students regarding the potential negative impact of movies, particularly those accessed through online platforms, on mental well-being. Respondents specifically pointed to crime genre movies as having a significant effect on mental health, highlighting the portrayal of dark characters who wield considerable influence over audiences and can profoundly affect their mental state. While some respondents expressed comfort with such content, the overarching sentiment reflects a recognition of the power of movies to influence mental health, prompting a broader conversation about the responsibility of filmmakers and the need for conscientious content consumption practices.
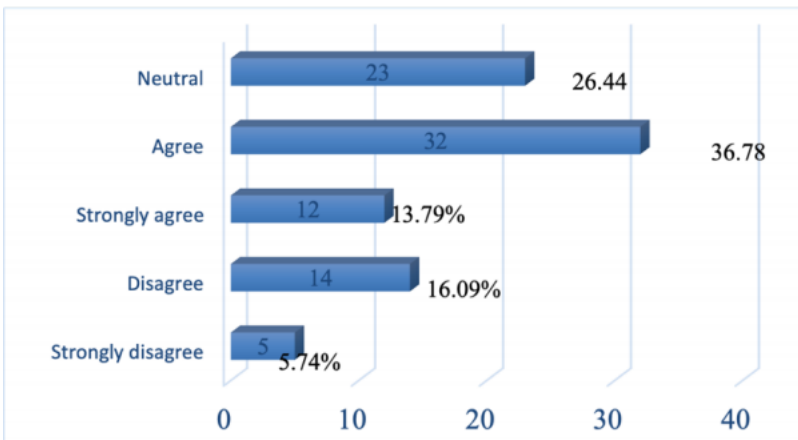

Figure 6.19: Opinion on affecting fashion and culture

According to the chart, 36.78% of respondents agree, while 16.09% disagree with the opinion that movies always introduce people to new cultures. Additionally, 26.44% of respondents remain neutral on this matter, while 13.79% strongly agree and only 5.74% strongly disagree. The responses reflect a range of perspectives on the role of movies in cultural exposure and influence. Many respondents noted that movies serve as a gateway to new cultures, often sparking fascination and admiration for different lifestyles portrayed on screen. They highlighted how viewers can become enamored with particular styles showcased in movies, adopting aspects of the depicted culture into their own lives, including speech patterns, dialogue usage, and even fashion choices. Furthermore, respondents mentioned how movie stars serve as inspirational figures, prompting viewers to emulate their lifestyles and behaviors, thereby contributing to cultural assimilation and identity formation. These insights underscore the complex interplay between movies, cultural exploration, and individual identity development.
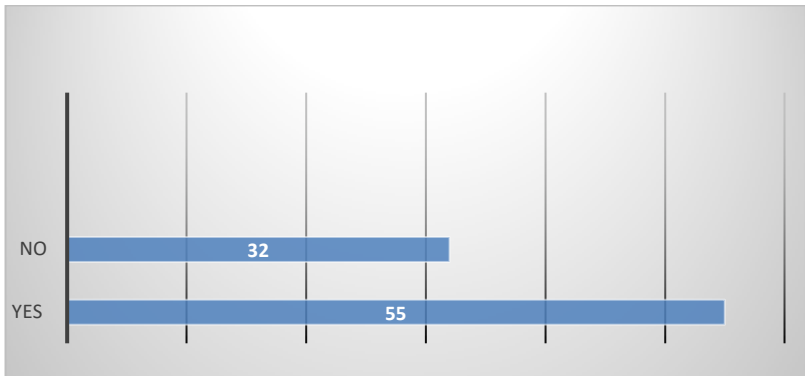

Figure 6.20: Thought about developing educational performance

The figure presented illustrates that 36.78% of respondents believe movies are not useful for educational purposes, while 63.22% hold the view that movies can indeed serve as valuable educational tools. Respondents highlighted various ways in which movies contribute to their learning experiences, particularly in gaining insights into different cultures, educational systems, culinary traditions, mentalities, and societal perspectives. They emphasized how exposure to English-language movies aids in improving speaking abilities, serving as a practical language-learning resource. Additionally, respondents cited inspirational movies like "Super 30" as catalysts for motivating them to pursue excellence in the educational realm, demonstrating the potential of movies to inspire and drive individuals

towards academic achievements and societal contributions. These insights underscore the multifaceted role of movies in fostering learning, cultural understanding, and personal development.
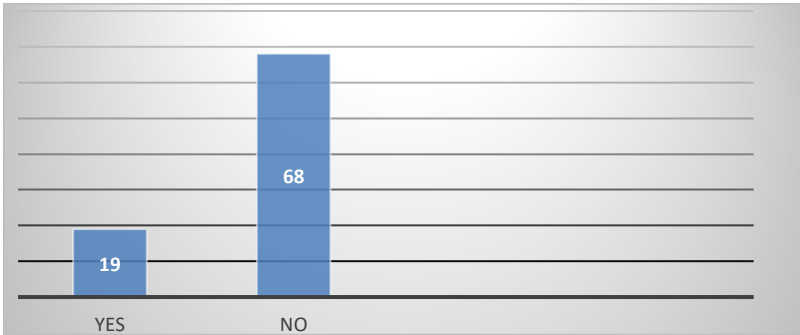

Figure 6.21: Frustration caused by watching movies

The figure indicates that the majority of respondents, comprising 78.16%, did not report feeling frustrated when watching movies, whereas 21.84% experienced frustration while watching movies on online platforms. Respondents highlighted the dual role of movies as both educational tools and sources of entertainment, serving as important companions during solitary moments. However, a minority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with certain movie genres, particularly violent or dark films, which left them feeling uneasy or agitated. Similarly, some respondents reported feelings of loneliness after viewing romantic movies, suggesting that while movies can provide solace and distraction, they can also evoke complex emotions depending on the content consumed. These insights underscore the nuanced relationship between movie consumption and emotional experiences among viewers.
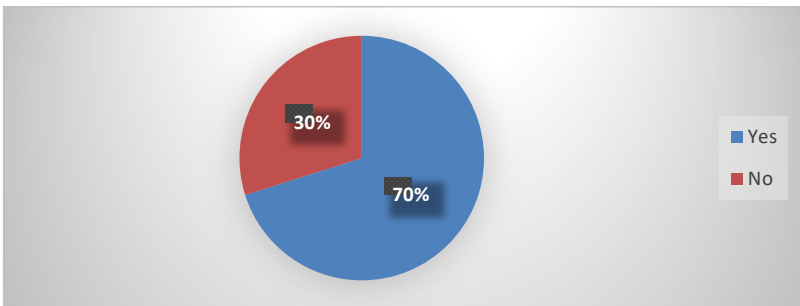

Figure 6.22: Watch movies when frustrated

This pie chart reveals whether or not the respondents watch movies when they are frustrated. 70% of the respondents watch movies while they are frustrated. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents do not watch movies when they are frustrated.
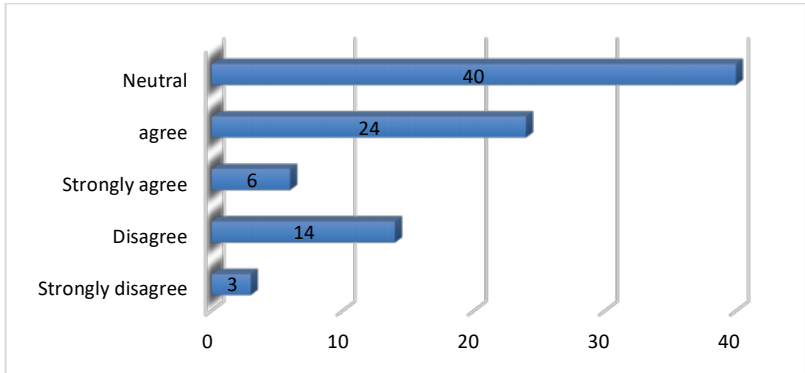

Figure 6.23: Impact of Movies on Respondents' Attitudes

The chart illustrates the impact of movies on the attitudes or behaviors of respondents, with 40 respondents expressing neutrality on the subject. Among the remaining respondents, 30 agreed that movies influence their attitudes or behaviors, while 17 disagreed. According to respondents, movies exert a significant influence by showcasing appealing styles and cultures, often leading viewers to emulate characters' behaviors without fully considering their fictional nature. Many respondents admitted to being drawn to trends depicted in movies and occasionally adopting them in their own lives. However, some respondents diverged from this viewpoint, indicating that they did not experience the same level of influence from movies. These insights underscore the varying degrees of susceptibility to cinematic influences among viewers.
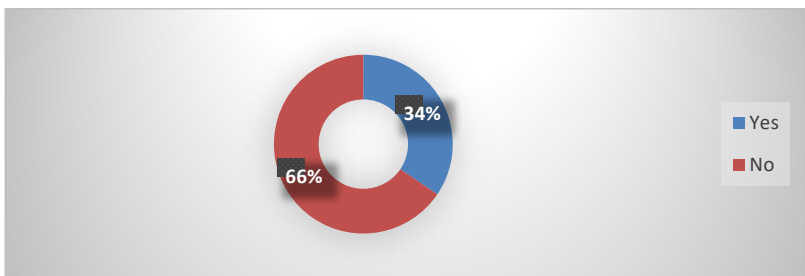

Figure 6.24: Respondents thinking about influencing violence by watching movies

The figure indicates that 66% of respondents did not perceive movies on online platforms as influencing violence, while 34% held a contrary opinion. Thus, the majority of respondents do not attribute violence to movie influence. However, some respondents acknowledged the potential impact of famous dark characters in inciting violent behavior. They noted instances where violent movies may encourage individuals to commit violent acts. Nevertheless, the prevailing sentiment among most students is that such behavior is scripted and does not translate into real-life actions. These insights highlight the complex interplay between perception, media influence, and individual beliefs regarding the relationship between movies and violence.
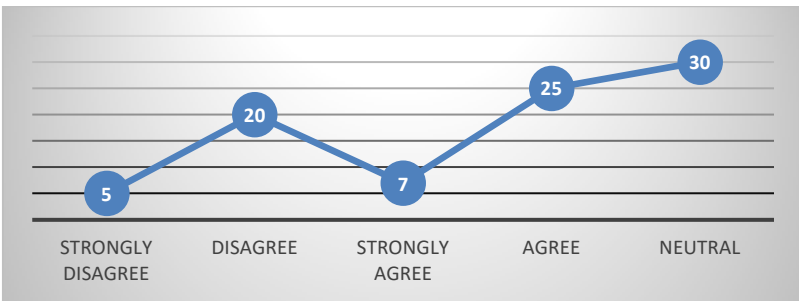
Figure 6.25: Respondents thinking of influencing others to smoke and take drugs

This figure illustrates that 25 of the respondents agree that movies encourage them to smoke or take drugs and 30 respondents are neutral, 20 respondents disagree with this point of view, and 7 respondents strongly agree. Only 5 of the respondents strongly disagree with this thought.
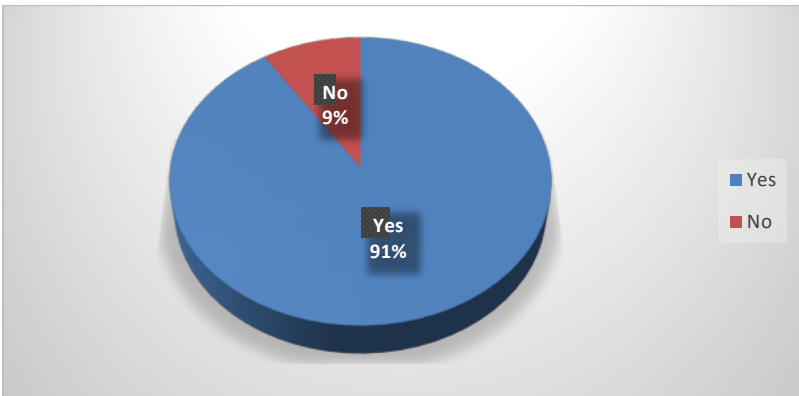

Figure 6.26: Respondent's opinion on making more movies on an online platform

This figure shows that 91% of respondents think online platforms should produce more movies, while 8(9%) respondents did not feel the same way. According to the respondents, more demand, More Produce - the only quote that suits the online platform. In today's world, people prefer watching movies online.

Discussion
The study's findings reveal that YouTube is the preferred movie-watching platform for most respondents, with 53% selecting it as their top choice. Netflix follows with 24%, while Amazon Prime, Hoichoi, and other platforms capture 2%, 6%, and 15% of preferences, respectively. Respondents attribute their preference for YouTube to its ease of use, vast movie collection, and free access without subscription requirements. Some opt for subscription-based platforms like Netflix and Amazon for their curated content offerings. Interestingly, a previous study (Surviving COVID-19 and Beyond, 2020) noted a similar trend, with 73% of respondents favoring YouTube and Hotstar over other OTT apps. Regarding movie-watching habits, 48.28% of students prefer late-night viewing, primarily using smartphones (60%) over laptops or PCs. Additionally, 54.02% opt for their preferred online platform, while 14.9% select based on popularity. Contrary to previous research (Jha, 2019), this study highlights a shift in genre preferences, with action and thrillers taking the lead at 46%, followed by comedy and drama at 16%. Surprisingly, families do not influence movie choices, as 44.83% of respondents prefer selecting movies independently, while 20.69% opt for popular titles. Moreover, the majority (52%) do not utilize online platforms for Bangladeshi movies, and 75% express disinterest in Bangladeshi online platforms. These insights provide valuable perspectives on contemporary movie-watching trends and preferences among students. The study's findings reveal a nuanced landscape of preferences among university students. YouTube emerges as the preferred movie-watching platform for a majority of respondents, attributed to its ease of use, extensive movie collection, and free access. Subscription-based platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime appeal to some students for their curated content offerings. This aligns with the tenets of the Uses and Gratification Theory, where individuals seek out platforms that cater to their specific preferences and needs. Respondents expressed reluctance towards watching Bangladeshi movies, citing dissatisfaction with the content produced by Bangladesh. They acknowledged exceptional filmmakers like Humayun Ahmed and Zaher Rayhan but expressed a preference for similar high-quality productions. Additionally, respondents noted that online platforms lack an extensive collection of movies and called for

improvements in promotional activities to enhance platform visibility and user engagement. According to Jaya (2021), effective advertising and the production of original, innovative content are crucial for retaining subscribers. In terms of subscription, 71% of respondents are unpaid subscribers, while 29% pay for subscription services. A majority (43.68%) utilize online platforms without incurring subscription costs, contrasting with findings from "Survival in COVID-19 and Beyond" (2020), which reported significant subscription growth for Amazon Prime and Netflix. Furthermore, 42.05% of respondents believe online platforms contain more sexual content than traditional media. Additionally, 66% of respondents advocate for censorship of online platform movies by authorities, while 34% oppose censorship. Respondents expressed concerns about the prevalence of sexual content in online movies, emphasizing the need for regulatory intervention. Contrary to earlier studies, which indicated a predominant preference for specific genres and platforms, this research unveils a dynamic array of motivations driving movie choices. Respondents prioritize late-night viewing, primarily on smartphones, and exhibit a penchant for action and thriller genres. The Uses and Gratification Theory's emphasis on individual agency underscores how students actively select movies that align with their emotional states and preferences. The data reveals that a significant majority of respondents (68%) prefer online platforms for watching movies, and a similar proportion (59%) prioritize movies over other forms of content. Moreover, studies by Madnani et al. (2020) and Gopi et al. (2021) highlight the growing popularity of OTT platforms, offering diverse content not found on traditional television. Respondents (32%) recognize the educational value of movies, citing their ability to provide solutions to real-life problems and influence language usage. While some acknowledge the impact of online platforms on language, others (16%) disagree, emphasizing movies' role in presenting diverse realities and cultures and inspiring biographical narratives. Despite the popularity of online platforms, challenges such as dissatisfaction with Bangladeshi movie content and concerns about the prevalence of sexual content persist. However, respondents also highlight opportunities for improvement, emphasizing the need for diverse and high-quality content. The Uses and Gratification Theory elucidates how viewers' desires for specific types of content drive their engagement with online platforms, signaling avenues for platform enhancement. Interestingly, there's a divided perspective on the relationship between movies and mental health. While 71% of respondents believe movies contribute to mental illness, others (29%) disagree. Dark characters in crime genre movies are seen as particularly detrimental to mental well-being by some, while others view them merely as scripted portrayals. Despite differing opinions

on mental health, the majority (78.16%) of respondents do not feel frustrated when watching movies, although frustrations may arise specifically from online platform viewing. Notably, many students (70%) turn to movies for solace during periods of frustration, with action and thriller genres being preferred (42.53%), followed closely by comedy (34.48%). Regarding the influence of movies on violence, most respondents (66%) do not perceive a connection, though 34% hold differing views. However, on the issue of influencing drugs and smoking, respondents mostly express neutrality. Respondents emphasize the convenience and variety offered by online platforms, driving increased demand for movie content. As a result, platforms are compelled to produce more movies to meet this growing demand. These insights underscore the complex interplay between viewer preferences, content consumption habits, and perceptions of media influence. As the pandemic continues to shape media consumption patterns, understanding the intricacies of online movie preferences among university students becomes paramount. Through the lens of the Uses and Gratification Theory, this study illuminates the dynamic interplay between viewer motivations, platform preferences, and content consumption habits. By acknowledging the agency of the audience, content creators and platform providers can better cater to the evolving needs and desires of their viewers, fostering a more enriching and satisfying movie-watching experience.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with ongoing lockdowns and travel restrictions, has unexpectedly propelled the growth of online platforms. While the segment was already poised for significant expansion, these circumstances provided a sudden surge in momentum. Online platforms have witnessed a notable increase in subscription-based viewership and overall viewing hours. In response, production companies, streaming service providers, and filmmakers are ramping up investments in original content creation to cater to this growing demand. Consequently, there's a gradual shift in consumer behavior, with more people transitioning from traditional television to video streaming platforms. However, the question remains, can these platforms sustain their dominance in the film industry in the long term? To secure their position, several challenges must be addressed. For instance, Bangladeshi online platforms need to diversify their content offerings and enhance their promotional efforts. By producing a variety of original content and increasing visibility through effective marketing strategies, these platforms can attract and retain audiences amidst stiff competition. Ultimately, addressing these issues will be crucial in ensuring

the continued success and dominance of online platforms in the evolving landscape of the film industry.

Ethics statement
Interviews are conducted with the consent of participants. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to revoke participation at any time without explanation. No incentive was offered to the participants. No animals were harmed during this study. No action has been taken which harms the environment.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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