

Research Paper

Relationship between Watching Crime Thriller Movies and the Fear of Happiness

Aravind Sai Kumar S^{1*}, Bismirty Bhuyan²

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between watching crime thriller movies and the fear of happiness among young adults aged 18 to 24. A total of 133 respondents filled out a questionnaire that included a 'Yes /No' question to determine if they watch crime thriller movies or not, followed by the Fear of Happiness scale. 120(90.2%) reported watching them while 13(9.8%) reported not watching them. The data analysis was done using Jamovi and it revealed a significant negative correlation between watching crime thriller movies and the fear of happiness (Pearson's correlation = -0.285, p-value = 0.001), indicating that individuals who watch crime thriller movies tend to show lower levels of fear of happiness. The findings suggest that fear of happiness is not much exhibited by individuals watching crime thrillers which could be because they may become less sensitive to the emotional ambiguity surrounding happiness. The findings enhance our knowledge of how media consumption—especially that of crime thrillers—can affect emotional health and lays the groundwork for further studies on the psychological impacts of various media genres on emotional reactions.

Keywords: *Fear of Happiness, Crime-thriller, Emotional health*

Crime thriller movies have gained popularity in recent years and may influence viewers both physically and psychologically. They, thus, can affect the moods and feelings of the individuals as well. The purpose of media could be to entertain, but examining such sinister and upsetting topics as crime, brutality, and treachery may have an impact on the viewers' emotional state (Nabi, R. L., & Riddle, K. (2008). The emotional health of young adults, a group that is especially drawn to these genres, may be impacted by frequent exposure to these intense topics. The possible impact of "fear of happiness"—a psychological condition in which people get uncomfortable or show aversion to feeling happiness because they associate it with unfavourable, sorrowful outcomes. This study seeks to find if there is a relationship between watching crime thriller movies and the fear of happiness. It is important to comprehend this link because it may provide information about how media exposure affects emotional control and well-being in a susceptible age group.

Since happiness is perceived as a universal goal across the world, people avoid or are averse to being happy or situations that elicit happiness, reflecting a psychological aversion to

¹Student, MSc Clinical Psychology, AIBAS, Amity University, Bengaluru.
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5919-8429>

²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Amity University, Bengaluru.

*Corresponding Author

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experiencing positive emotions, particularly happiness, which is most likely associated with negative outcomes like disappointment, misfortune, or emotional vulnerability (Gilbert et al., 2012). The restriction of happiness can also stem from cognitive patterns of associating pleasure-giving activities or events with negative outcomes and can lead to fear of happiness. This fear of happiness is called Cherophobia. Chero is a Greek term, that means to rejoice, and phobia, which means fear, is called Cherophobia. Cherophobic people have a fixed belief that happy events lead to bad outcomes, and thus avoid the kinds of activities or events that could make them happy or joyful (Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014). Cherophobia is not a recognized disorder, however, it is an emotional obstruction that could have an impact on a person's general happiness and well-being. It can specifically influence how people react to the good things in life, which may result in emotional repression and weakened psychological resiliency. Cultural and socioeconomic variables can also influence the fear of happiness, as indicated by studies. The "tall poppy syndrome" implies that in some societies, especially Eastern nations, too much happiness indicates misfortune or tragedy (Joshanloo, 2013). Yet, some people in Western culture may still suffer from cherophobia because of psychological or personal factors, such as a history of trauma, loss, or emotional instability, even though these cultures generally encourage the pursuit of happiness as a basic life goal (Ford et al., 2014).

Several theoretical frameworks try to explain the psychological basis of the fear of happiness. Gilbert, et al. (2012) state that fear of happiness is linked to negative cognitive distortions that take place in emotional reasoning and catastrophizing, where the person thinks that happiness will immediately result in bad consequences. Past experiences where happy moments turned into disasters can strengthen these distortions, thereby cognitively linking positive emotions to suffering in the future. Also, there is a link between mood disorders like anxiety and depression and an exaggerated fear of happiness, where people repress pleasant emotions to reduce their sensitivity or potential emotional swings (Gruber, et al. 2011).

Cherophobia, in particular, may become deeply ingrained at the level of personal belief systems when people believe happiness is self-indulgent. Sometimes, cherophobia shows up as a defensive tactic to ignore joy to avoid the pain that comes with the possibility of emotional turmoil. This deliberate suppression of emotions by people to avoid joy or happiness due to fear of it can weaken their ability to cope with stress and manage negative emotions effectively (Fredrickson, et al. 2001).

Crime thrillers have dark, suspenseful plots that are marked by violence, and loss. The media, thus, exacerbates the fear of happiness. As a result, they typically increase the viewers' sense of risk and unpredictability. Happiness is a fleeting emotion for the protagonists in this genre since they experience wonderful moments that are quickly replaced by suffering or catastrophes. These beliefs such as happiness are fearful/ harmful, are problematic because they reinforce negative perceptions of happiness. This will make vulnerable people, particularly adolescents who are already in a stage of emotional formative development, more afraid of happiness (Hoffner & Levine, 2005).

The **Hypodermic Needle Theory**, sometimes referred to as the Magic Bullet Theory, is an early mass communication framework that posits that media messages are "injected" straight into the minds of passive audiences, with potent and instantaneous results. Developed throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the thesis posits that people are consistently and passively impacted by media content without questioning or opposing it. When propaganda was

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employed to sway public opinion, as it was during World Wars I and II, this framework had a particularly significant impact (Lasswell, H. D. (2017)). According to the notion, media has a consistent, immediate, and direct effect on viewers—much like an injection that has an instantaneous effect on the body.

According to the **protection Frame Theory**, people shield themselves from elements of negative emotions by the use of cognitive frames. The viewers construct a psychological frame in their minds when they watch crime thriller movies that enables them to experience strong, frequently upsetting content without it directly affecting their emotions or conduct in the real world. According to this hypothesis, people have the ability to distinguish or disengage from what they are viewing, viewing it as entertainment or fiction rather than as mere representation of reality. Protective Frame Theory can be used to explain why many people can enjoy crime thrillers that feature violence, crime, and psychological trauma without being emotionally distressed or engaging in dangerous behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the fear of happiness and the frequent viewing of crime-thriller films, specifically among young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. It is crucial to comprehend the possible emotional and psychological effects of crime thrillers because this age group is extremely impressionable and frequently interacts with powerful media content. It is theorized that cherophobic tendencies may be strengthened by repeated exposure to the negative themes found in crime thrillers, making this demographic more fearful of happiness. This study aims to shed light on the wider effects of media consumption on the fear of happiness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study compared how individuality and collectivism affect emotional experiences to examine cultural differences in Asian and European Americans' fear of happiness. 29 Asian American and 49 European American undergraduates took part in Study I, and 275 non-student adults (118 Asian Americans and 147 European Americans) took part in Study II. In both the research, personality, subjective well-being, and the fear of happiness were measured. The results showed that Asian Americans exhibited higher fear of happiness levels than European Americans in Study I, but in Study II, this difference was not detected. In both the culture groups, there was a negative correlation between subjective well-being and fear of happiness. The study also emphasized the biculturalism of Asian American participants, who supported both individualism and collectivism, indicating that more research is necessary to fully understand the connection between biculturalism and fear of happiness Muhtar, H. (n.d.).

A tool for assessing people's level of life satisfaction is the General Life Satisfaction Scale. In some studies, skewed responses of people towards the life satisfaction scale were recorded, and some of the variation in these scores did not accurately reflect people's circumstances. The current study offered the primary evidence that the fear of happiness—the conviction that happiness could have unfavorable effects—influenced how respondents answered questions on a life satisfaction measure in a sample of Iranian university students Mohsen Joshanloo (2013).

This study examines how psychopathy is portrayed in movies and is marked by persistently immoral behaviour, a lack of conscience, and a tendency to lie without feeling guilty. The close connection between criminal activity and psychopathy is highlighted. Psychopaths are frequently portrayed in movies as cunning, cold-blooded, and violent, yet these depictions

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hardly properly explain the complexities of the disorder. The literature emphasizes the importance of interpersonal ties in comprehending psychopathy by looking at historical and contemporary film portrayals. With their insights into how psychopathy is portrayed and its practical implications, these films serve as a platform for a deeper understanding of the condition and its real-life consequences Morten Hesse (2009).

The study examines how important psychological concepts like hope and flourishing relate to the fear of happiness. Earlier research has revealed that people's emotional and psychological health is adversely affected by their fear of happiness, which is mostly connected to anxiety or emotional repression. According to research, people who fear happiness typically have lower levels of flourishing—life satisfaction and personal development—and less hope, which is important for setting goals and overcoming obstacles. The fear of happiness prevents people from experiencing positive psychological states, emphasizing how critical it is to deal with this fear to support achievement, emotional health, and well-being Rittika Chakraborty & Dr. Neerja Pandey (n.d.).

The study investigates the connection between college students' fear of happiness, self-criticism, and metacognition. Emotional well-being is significantly predicted by metacognitive awareness, which encompasses declarative knowledge (knowing one's cognitive processes) and assessment (evaluating these processes). Higher metacognitive awareness may impact emotional regulation and lessen unpleasant feelings like the fear of happiness. Self-criticism has also been connected to emotional problems like elevated anxiety and decreased life satisfaction. The research supports the notion that students' emotional experiences, especially their fear of happiness, are greatly influenced by both metacognition and self-criticism Monica Sharma, & Divyanshi Garg. (2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- Type: Descriptive, correlational study.
- Approach: Quantitative research using a questionnaire survey method.
- Objective: To explore the relationship between crime thriller movie viewing and the fear of happiness in young adults aged 18 to 24.

Hypotheses

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between watching crime thriller movies and the fear of happiness in young adults aged 18 to 24.
- H₀: There is no significant relationship between watching crime thriller movies and fear of happiness in young adults aged 18 to 24.

Participants

The sampling method used for this research is non-probability sampling. A non-probability sampling technique called snowball sampling was relied upon to gather data from individuals who meet the age and movie-watching criteria.

- Population: Young adults (male and female) aged 18 to 24 years.
- Sample Size: 133 participants
- Sampling Method: Snowball Sampling

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Inclusion Criteria

- Participants aged 18 to 24 years.
- Participants who watch or do not watch crime thriller movies.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals outside the age range.
- Participants who are unfamiliar with crime thriller movies.

Method of Data Collection

- Crime Thriller Movie Watching (Yes/No): A single Yes/No question asking participants if they watch crime thriller movies.
- Fear of Happiness Scale: A validated scale measuring participants' level of fear associated with happiness. This scale consists of a series of statements rated on a Likert scale (e.g., 1-7), where participants express their agreement or disagreement (Joshi et al., 2013)
- Scoring: The responses from the Likert scale are added and the more the summated number, the more the fear of happiness, if the score is low, the fear of happiness is low.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data was collected through an online survey method using Google Forms. Snowball sampling, sometimes called chain-referral sampling, is used in this study. This approach involves first contacting a group of participants and asking them to recommend other members of the same target demographic (here, young adults between the ages of 18 and 24). The sample size can increase as more participants distribute the questionnaire to their peers. The data was collected in one week, and the responses received were 133. The instructions to complete the questionnaire were provided in the description below the questionnaire title.

Ethical Consideration

- The participants were informed about the aim of the study in the description.
- Participation in the study was voluntary and no remuneration was provided.
- Informed consent was obtained.
- Confidentiality was maintained as their responses will only be used for research purposes.
- Anonymity was maintained.

Data Analysis

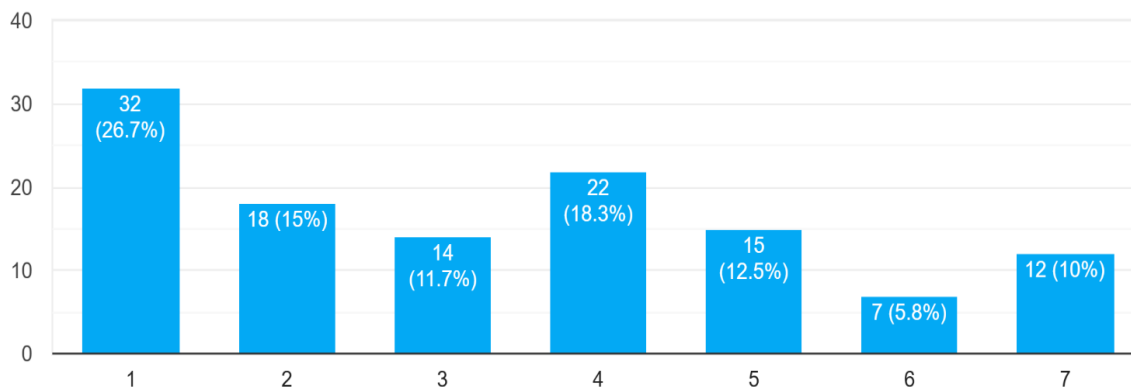
Out of the total 133 participants, 120 (90.2%) reported watching crime thriller movies (“Yes”), while 13 (9.8%) reported not watching crime thriller movies (“No”). All participants were within the 18 to 24 age range. On a Likert scale, the Fear of Happiness Scale analyzed participants' extent of fear. The distribution of fear of happiness scores among participants who watch crime thriller films was displayed in a bar chart made only for the "Yes" group since the number of “Yes” responses was in the majority. This graphic representation showed that while fear of happiness differed from person to person, it frequently fell into the neutral range.

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The following shows the graphical representation of the findings for the “Yes” responses.

1. I prefer not to be too joyful, because usually joy is followed by sadness.

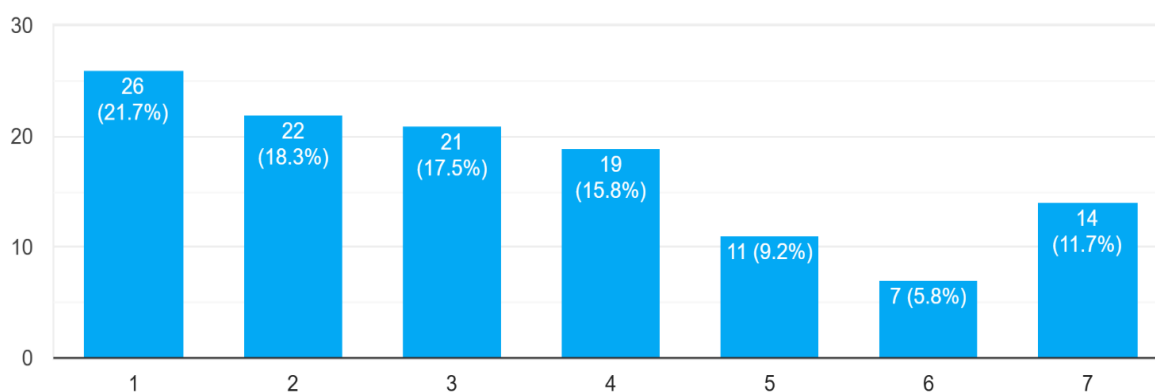
120 responses



There are more responses on the disagreeing side, indicating a little left-skewed distribution. 53.4% of respondents disagreed with all three points. Together, the accord (5-7): 28.3% of those surveyed 18.3% of replies were neutral. This implies that even if the majority of respondents oppose inhibiting current happiness out of concern about future suffering, a sizeable minority (around 28%) do support this idea to some extent.

2. I believe the more cheerful and happy I am, the more I should expect bad things to occur in my life.

120 responses

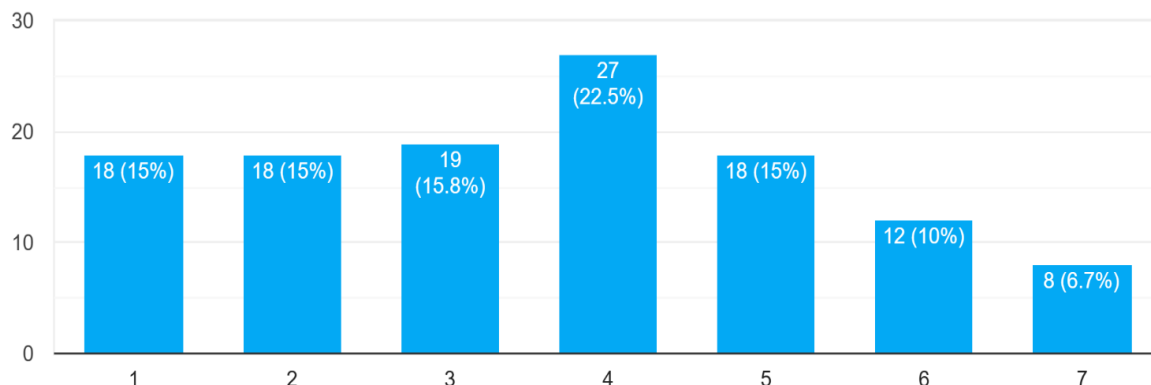


26.7% of respondents agreed with all five points. 15.8% of responses were neutral. The trend from disagreement to agreement is declining. Given that the distribution is left-skewed, there is generally more disagreement. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who "strongly agree" has slightly increased to 11.7%, indicating that a tiny but significant group of people firmly believe in this superstitious (unfounded) relationship. This suggests that although a majority of responses contrast the superstitious notion, roughly 25% support it to some extent.

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3. Disasters often follow good fortune.

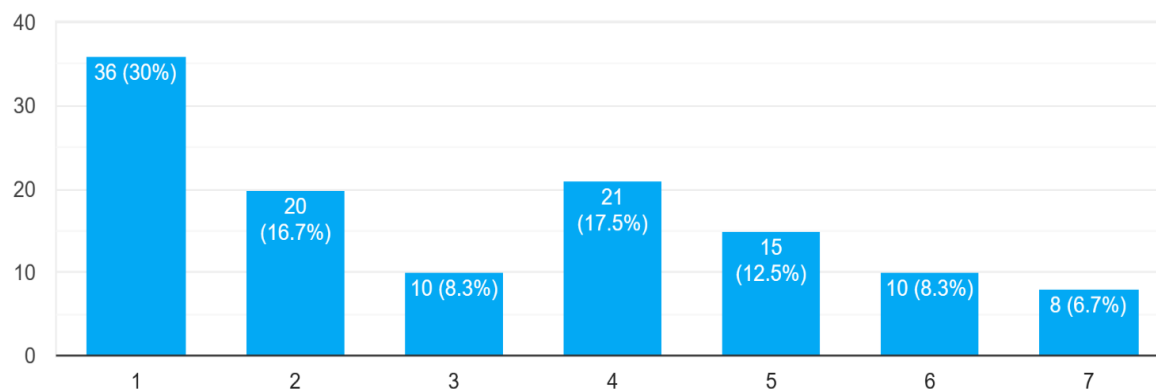
120 responses



45.8% of respondents disagreed with all three points. 31.7% of respondents agreed with all five points. 22.5% of replies were neutral. This distribution is more evenly distributed than the prior ones. More doubt regarding this notion is suggested by the peak at the neutral position (4). There is a gradual shift from neutral to strongly agree. The disagreement spectrum is distributed equally (levels 1-3 are all about 15%). In contrast to the first two charts, this one displays a greater percentage of ambivalent answers. The chart is less polarized and shows a smaller gap between those who agree and disagree.

4. Having lots of joy and fun causes bad things to happen.

120 responses

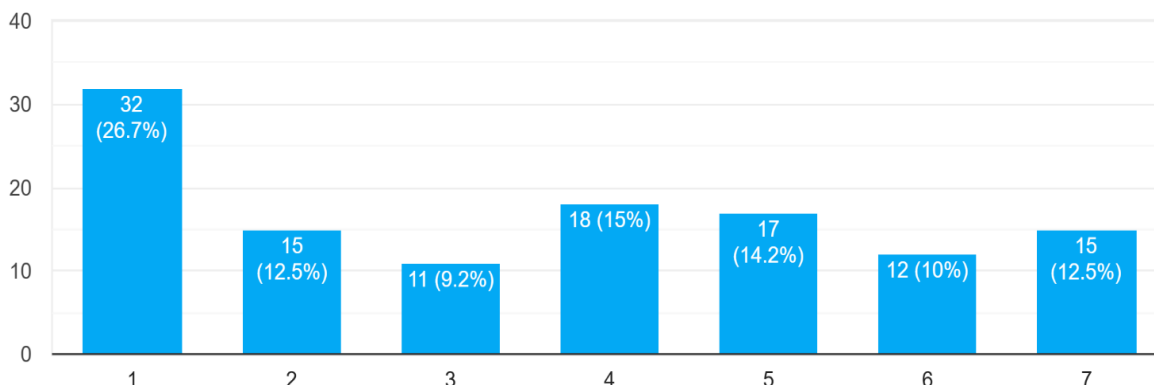


55% of respondents disagreed with all three points (levels 1-3). 27.5% of respondents agreed with all five points (5-7). 17.5% of replies were neutral. 30% of respondents gave "strongly disagree" as their strongest response. There is a gradual decline from strong disagreement to strong agreement. At neutral (4), a spike interrupts the otherwise continuous decrease. The numbers are low in the agreement level (6-7). Although a sizable minority (27.5%) support this idea to some extent, many respondents seem to deny the direct causal association between happiness and tragedy despite such media exposure.

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5. Excessive joy has some bad consequences.

120 responses



48.4% of respondents disagreed with all three points. 36.7% of respondents agreed with all five points. 15% of responses were neutral. A strong polarization, with a comparatively high number at strong agreement (7) and the highest peaks at strong disagreement (1). There is a more uniform distribution throughout agreement levels (5-7). There is a greater percentage of overall agreement than in prior questions. Numbers from levels 2–7 are comparatively constant (varying from 9.2% to 15%). In contrast to the earlier charts, this statement displays an intriguing change in responses. Although the most frequent reaction is still strong disagreement, overall agreement is greater.

Correlational Analysis

- To provide the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables, Pearson's correlation was used.
- Software: Statistical analysis was conducted using Jamovi software.
- Inferential Statistics

Correlation Matrix

		Total Score	Do you watch crime thriller movies?
Total Score	Pearson's r	—	—
	df	—	—
	p-value	—	—
Do you watch crime thriller movies?	Pearson's r	-0.285	—
	df	133	—
	p-value	<.001	—

($r = -0.285$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 133$)

A Pearson's correlation test revealed a **negative correlation** between watching crime thriller movies and fear of happiness, with **Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) = -0.285**, and a **p-value = 0.001**. This result indicates a statistically significant negative relationship, meaning that participants who watch crime thriller movies tend to have lower levels of fear of happiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to examine the relationship between watching crime thriller movies and fear of happiness among young adults aged 18 to 24 years. A total of 133 responses were analyzed, with 120 participants (90.2%) reporting that they watch crime thriller movies and 13 participants (9.8%) reporting that they do not. The results from correlation analysis indicate a negative correlation between the two variables. The p-value, from the correlational analysis, is <0.005 and thus indicates that the result is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis H_0 while acceptance of the alternate hypotheses which suggests a meaningful negative relationship between watching crime thriller movies and the fear of happiness.

The participants who answered "Yes" were the main focus of the analysis. To show the distribution of fear of happiness scores in this group, a bar chart was made. The graph provides a preliminary descriptive understanding of the data by highlighting potential correlations in the relationship between fear of happiness and viewers of criminal thriller films. The Fear of Happiness scale was used to assess the connection between happiness and unfavorable outcomes in people, watching crime-thriller films in specific. The majority of respondents consistently disagree with the idea that joy, happiness, or good fortune results in unfavorable outcomes across all topics. Still, a sizable minority (approximately 27–37%) regularly expresses some degree of agreement with these views. The question about calamities after good fortune has the highest percentage of neutral answers (22.5%). The direct causality statement, "Having lots of joy and fun causes bad things to happen," received the biggest rejection, with 30% of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Correlation analysis, an inferential statistics method, is used to measure the relationship between the two variables. To evaluate the relationship between seeing crime-thriller films and fear of happiness and determine its strength, Pearson's correlation test was used. With a **p-value of 0.002** and a Pearson's correlation coefficient (**r**) of **-0.273**, the findings showed a negative relationship between watching criminal thriller films and fear of happiness. This statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$) implies that fear of happiness tends to decrease as the frequency of viewing crime thriller films increases. The correlation's small to moderate strength indicates that there is a relationship but it is not very strong. The p-value of 0.002 indicates that the observed negative correlation is unlikely to be due to chance, confirming the statistical significance of the relationship. The correlation was computed using Jamovi software.

Viewers of crime thriller films are frequently subjected to high levels of tension, anxiety, and misery, which can cause emotional desensitization. By repeatedly exposing viewers to such strong feelings, they may become less sensitive to unpleasant emotions in general and less afraid that happiness will be followed by bad things (which is a major component of the fear of happiness). Psychological or cultural variables might also be involved. People who enjoy crime thrillers may have unique coping strategies or personality features that affect their emotional reactions, particularly how they deal with happiness. They might be less afraid of happiness because they feel more at ease with risk and unpredictability.

The small negative correlation implies that although viewing crime thrillers might be linked to a decreased fear of happiness, other elements like personality attributes, societal norms, or life events are probably more important. There may be deeper psychological causes underlying the fear of happiness that are not solely influenced by media intake (watching crime thriller movies).

Limitations

1. Only 13 participants in the study's sample said "No" to watching criminal thrillers, which makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the differences between people who do and do not watch these kinds of movies. Deeper insights would be obtained by a bigger and more evenly distributed sample for the "No" group.
2. Although snowball sampling works well for recruiting participants, the new participants may share common characteristics with those who referred them, leading to sample bias, which might restrict the generalizability of the study.
3. There is a possibility of self-report bias in responses.
4. The binary yes/no question may oversimplify movie-watching habits.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to look at the connection between young adults' fear of happiness and their viewing of crime-thriller films. The results show an important negative relationship between watching crime thriller movies and fear of happiness (Pearson's correlation = -0.273, p-value = 0.002), based on the analysis of 133 responses using a Yes/No question on crime thriller movie watching and the Fear of Happiness Scale. This implies that those who watch criminal thrillers are less likely to have a fear of happiness. The results suggest that watching crime-thriller films may help people become less sensitive to the expectation of unpleasant feelings after joy, thus promoting psychological resilience. The correlation's low to moderate strength, however, suggests that although there is a relationship, personality qualities or more general psychological and cultural influences can affect how someone develops their fear of happiness. This study adds to our understanding of how media use affects emotional health, especially when it comes to fear of happiness. To improve the findings' generalizability, additional research could examine the fundamental mechanisms behind this association, take longitudinal techniques into account, and use a more varied sample.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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