

Construction of Antipathy: The Impact of Three-dimensional Character Traits of Villains

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Abstract

Villains are the core of a film and their character is portrayed in such a way that they create a sense of antipathy among the audience. The three-dimensional character traits of the villain's personality play a significant role in this job. This research work aims to study the impact of physiological, sociological, and psychological character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy among the film audience. The data of 506 respondents was collected using a structured questionnaire for the online survey and then quantitative analysis was carried out using multiple regression. This study statistically proved that the three-dimensional character traits of villains have a positive and significant effect on the construction of antipathy. Since there are few studies available on villains and antipathy, this research work will pave the way for further psychoanalytic research in this area.

Keywords: Villains • Antipathy • Character traits • Three-dimensions of character

Introduction

Characters are the essence of any motion picture and lead the viewers towards its main ingredient. Vladimir Propp gave seven types of character archetypes in his character theory among which this research work solely focuses on villains. Defined villains as the cause of "misfortune, damage or harm" who are engaged in evil actions like stealing a magical object, kidnapping a person, or committing murder and these misdeeds lead them to a fight or struggle with the protagonist [1]. Another important definition of the villain was given by DeGuzman K [2], according to which villain is "an evil or wicked character that enacts evil action and/or harms others". Each story must have at least one villain because the protagonist must have some problems to overcome and there will be no story if there is no villain to stir the pot. A villain is not simply a character who does bad things to hold up the progress of the protagonist but he always has the justification and rationale for his actions. According to TenHouten WH [3], the three primary emotions of hatred are anger, fear, and disgust which alone or in combination with each other result in antipathy among the film audience.

Antipathy or hatred is the opposite of sympathy. The works of Smith M [4], Plantinga C [5], Grodal T [6] and Carroll N [7] mentioned that the character of the hero or protagonist is portrayed in such a way that the audience develops a sense of sympathy for them and wishes that they should achieve whatever they want before the movie ends. In this account, Kjeldgaard-Christiansen J [8] highlighted that as the hero builds sympathy and empathy among the viewers, similarly villain creates a sense of antipathy or hatred among them and that is why they begin to wish that all the villains should come to a tragic end as the movie reaches to its climax.

According to Reich J [9], there are three dimensions of character and they are character physiology, character sociology and character psychology. When filmmakers portray the character of a villain, they think of each of these three

dimensions. For the construction of antipathy, the villain must be real and his three-dimensional character traits must give grounds to his evil personality. Physical features are the first thing that the audience notices in any character and in terms of character physiology, the major characteristics that define a villain's physical look are tall height, fat body, dark skin colour, moustaches, slicked back hair, disfigurements, facial scars, sinister narrow eyes, harsh voice, hyena-like laugh, missing hand, leg or eye, sharp nails, tattoos, black or dark coloured clothes and an overall scary look [10-12]. Although there are no established rules of how a villain should look these are some common physical traits that give a tough, fierce, and intimidating look to the villains.

Regarding character sociology, the crucial sociological traits of a villain's character are richness, high profile, political influences, debauchery, spending time in clubbing, partying, and other such amusements, social or communal domination and the support of henchmen or a gang of allies [13]. In the context of character psychology, a huge variety of mental disorders are used to create villains like personality disorders, anxiety disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorders [10,13-15] have pointed out the psychological traits of a villain and mentioned that he is not only powerful, intelligent, determined, ambitious, mysterious, and clever but also deceitful, jealous, greedy, merciless, immoral, wounded, arrogant, crazy, hypocritical, and sneaky. He is obsessed with power, wealth, sex, etc. He plays tricks, opposes justice, takes revenge, thinks that he is the hero and has a point of view that justifies his evil actions. All three dimensions - Physiology, sociology and psychology of villains are combined to establish them as powerful opponents of the protagonist and make them hateful in the eyes of the viewers.

A few researches related to the portrayal of villains have been conducted to date, however, significant works have been done on the audience's sense of judgement towards the morality of the characters. According to the disposition theory of media enjoyment given by Zillmann D [16], audiences form affective dispositions towards the movie characters after evaluating the morality of a character's actions. The viewer's disposition towards a character becomes positive when he acts according to the viewer's sense of morality and similarly, the viewer's disposition towards a character becomes negative when his actions deviate from the viewer's sense of morality Zillmann D, et al. [17]. The disposition theory of drama Zillmann D and Cantor JR [18] also contends that audiences fear negative outcomes and hope for positive outcomes for liked characters like heroes, whereas they fear positive outcomes and hope for negative outcomes for disliked characters like villains.

Movie watchers are more compassionate towards the heroes. Smith M [4] in his work "Structure of sympathy" described how a sympathetic film hero is created. Plantinga C [5] pointed out that filmmakers give more attention to sympathy instead of antipathy because the audience is more prone

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Received: 24 September, 2023, Manuscript No: jmcj-23-114650; **Editor assigned:** 26 September, 2023, PreQC No. P-114650; **Reviewed:** 13 October, 2023, QC No. Q-114650; **Revised:** 20 October 2023, Manuscript No. R-114650; **Published:** 30 October, 2023, DOI: 10.37421/2165-7912.2023.13.545

to compassion rather than disdain or dislike but Kjeldgaard-Christiansen J [8] highlighted that instead of sympathy, it is important to understand the construction of antipathy. His article "Structure of antipathy" builds an analytical framework; according to which villains intend and desire bad outcomes which are known as "guilty intentionality", face bad outcomes of their misdeeds which are called "consequential actions" and are causally responsible for those outcomes which are known as "causal responsibility" [8].

According to Bergstrand K and Jasper JM [19], heroes and villains share almost the same range of strengths. The only difference is in intentions, morals, and ethics. Just like a hero can be superhuman with god-like qualities, villains are inhumanly strong. In the context of villains, intelligence becomes clever, virility becomes disrespect for women, nobility becomes corruption, physical strength is brutish, courage has an unavoidable moral mixture, there is no scope for self-sacrifice along with the characteristics of being purposeful, powerful, and threatening [19]. Villains aim to transform the audience's anxiety and frustration into indignation, and fear and agitation into anger [20] and thus, reinforce negative feelings.

After a thorough review of literature, the researcher has identified the research gap that a few studies are available on villains and antipathy. There is a need to identify whether the qualities of a villain's personality contribute to creating a sense of hatred among the audience. Therefore, an empirical study should be conducted to study the impact of different character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy or hatred among movie watchers. It will bring new insights into this area of research.

Research objectives

1. To identify the impact of physiological character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy
2. To identify the impact of sociological character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy
3. To identify the impact of psychological character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy

Hypotheses

H1= Physiological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.

H2= Sociological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.

H3= Psychological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.

Methodology

This section of the research work will explain the framework that includes systematic methods and procedures to conduct the study objectively and achieve the research objectives. For this study, a quantitative research approach was used to quantify the attitude of film audiences for generating numerical data that can be transformed into usable statistics [21]. To collect the quantitative data, a web-based survey was conducted by the researcher because it is the best method to investigate the characteristics, behaviours, or opinions of a large group of people. The data was collected using a structured online questionnaire (Google Form).

The population for this research work is the film audience and for sample selection, purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used. The respondents of this research work are Indians and belong to the age group of 17 to 30 years. People who review or critic movies or have a keen interest in watching them were asked to fill out the questionnaire because they are frequent watchers and their data can give accurate results for the study. The online questionnaire was floated on social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram) to access potential respondents. Also, the respondents were requested to share the questionnaire with suitable respondents. Altogether 522 responses were received; out of which 16 unauthentic responses were

discarded. Hence, for data analysis and interpretation, 506 responses were used.

In this study, there is one dependent variable (Antipathy towards villains) and three independent variables (Physiological, sociological, and psychological character traits of villains). Therefore, multiple regression analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis. The objective of multiple regression is to predict the dependent variable based on its covariance with all the concerned independent variables [22]. SPSS (version 17.0) was used to create the correlation matrix and to perform multiple regression analysis.

Data analysis and interpretation

This section of the research work will analyze and interpret the data that is collected using an online questionnaire from 506 respondents. The demographic details of the respondents are given in Table 1 which allows a better understanding of the background characteristics of the respondents. The participants of this survey are youth in the age group of 17 to 30 years and most of them are currently studying (Table 1).

The antipathy (hatred) among the respondents towards villains was measured using three statements based on the three primary emotions of hate – Fear, anger and disgust. The responses are shown in Figure 1. Large portions of orange and yellow colour show that villains are straight to moderately hateful in the eyes of respondents. Additionally, a high inclination of the 'anger' emotion towards the left side indicates that villains are annoying according to the film audience and make them angry (Figure 1).

The antipathy (hatred) towards different character traits of villains among the respondents was measured based on three categories or dimensions of the character – Physiological, sociological and psychological (refer Figure 2). The physical look of a villain is the first thing that draws the attention of the audience. The respondents gave mixed responses in terms of the physiological character traits of villains. Tall height, fat body, dark skin colour, scary look, facial scars, harsh voice, and creepy laugh received almost equal levels of hate from the audience. According to Wolfhartproductions [23], dark colours depict unpleasant qualities such as death, power, darkness, decay, and complexities and are contrasted with the colours worn by good characters but the responses of this survey show that black or dark coloured clothes are not at all hateful for a majority of the respondents.

After the physical look, the social characters of the villains are considered

Table 1. Demography of the respondents.

	Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Age	17 – 23 years	370	73.12%
	24 – 30 years	136	26.87%
Gender	Male	218	43.08%
	Female	286	56.52%
	Prefer not to say	2	0.39%
	In school	20	3.95%
Education	Pursuing graduation	146	28.85%
	Pursuing post-graduation	246	48.61%
	Pursuing Ph.D.	10	1.97%
	Not a student (Doing job)	64	12.64%

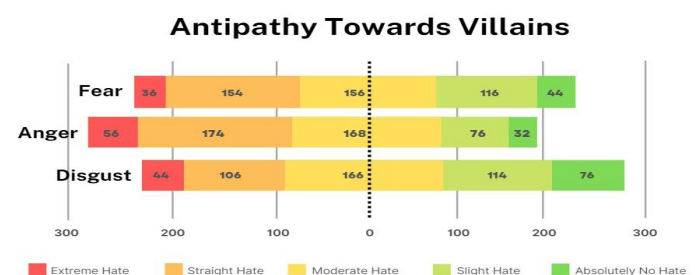


Figure 1. Antipathy towards villains.

by the audience. In the case of sociological character traits, all the qualities are highly inclined towards the left-hand side of the graph which indicates that villains who are rich, high-profiled, dominating the society or the community, smoker, alcoholic, drug addicted, philandering (spends time in clubbing, partying, and other amusements), and the leader of a gang (or henchmen) are extremely to moderately hateful in the viewpoint of the film audience. Since villains are power-hungry, they are depicted as personalities with larger-than-life swag ruling over a large section of people or society. Additionally; smoking, drinking and consuming drugs are not only signs of evil intent, but they are also important elements of a villain's stereotypical image [13].

Filmmakers pay special attention to the psyche or mental state of villains to make them believable. In the context of psychological character traits, villains who are obsessed with wealth, power, sex, etc. are extremely hateful according to most of the respondents. Miller K [15] highlighted the importance of this quality of a logical villain and wrote that the obsession motivates the villain to stop at nothing to reach his goal and hence, the motion of the story is set, "requiring the hero to rise and try to stop things before it's too late". The responses to the survey also suggest that clever and ambitious villains are not at all hateful for a majority of them. According to Drago AD [14], a truly formidable villain is possessed by an unstoppable drive to achieve his or her goal and to be established as a worthy opponent of the protagonist, he cannot be foolish or naive. Additionally, villains who are liars, play tricks, immoral, merciless, arrogant and think that they are the hero of the story are extremely and straightly hateful in the opinion of a majority of the survey's participants as all these qualities of a villain's personality seem annoying and disgusting to the movie-watchers (Figure 2).

Hypotheses testing

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and create a regression equation for the model. The researcher has kept the significance level to 0.05 i.e., the confidence level at 95%, therefore p-value less than 0.05 rendered the null hypothesis to be rejected and the alternate hypothesis to be accepted. Table 2 is the correlation matrix and it showcases the correlation coefficients between the dependent and independent variables. It is clear from the table that all the variables have a value of correlation above 0.9 which shows that all of them are positively correlated and the correlation among them is very high. Also, there is a great possibility of collinearity. Therefore, the increase in one variable will lead to a linear increase in another variable too (Table 2).

Table 3 is the model summary of regression analysis according to which the value of Multiple R is 0.998. The R Square value of the model is 0.997 which strongly indicates that the independent variables have been able to explain 99.7% of the variability of the dependent variable i.e., Antipathy (hatred) towards villains. Also, the adjusted R square value of 0.997 suggests the sufficiency of the responses and specifies that the regression model has a strong fit (Table 3).

Table 4 is the ANOVA Matrix of the regression analysis in which it can be observed that the value of calculated F for the variance generated by the regression is 64333.894. The critical value of F, at the significance level of 0.05 with 3 degrees of freedom at the numerator and 502 at the denominator is 2.622. Also, the $p = 0.000$ is lower than the significance level of 0.05. On comparing the critical F with the calculated F, it is clear that the independent variables are highly influential in nature. It also indicates that the overall regression model is significant for the data and there is a significant linear relationship between the antipathy towards villains and the three-dimensional character traits of villains (Table 4).

Table 5 is individually evaluating the regression coefficients. In the case of the physiological character traits of villains, calculated t (12.161) is higher than the critical t (1.964) and the level of significance indicated by the test 0.000 is lower than the chosen level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it has been statistically proved that the physiological character traits of villains have a positive and significant impact on the construction of antipathy among the film audience.

In the case of sociological character traits of villains, calculated t (44.244) is higher than the critical t (1.964) and the level of significance indicated by the

HATE TOWARDS THREE-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS OF VILLAINS

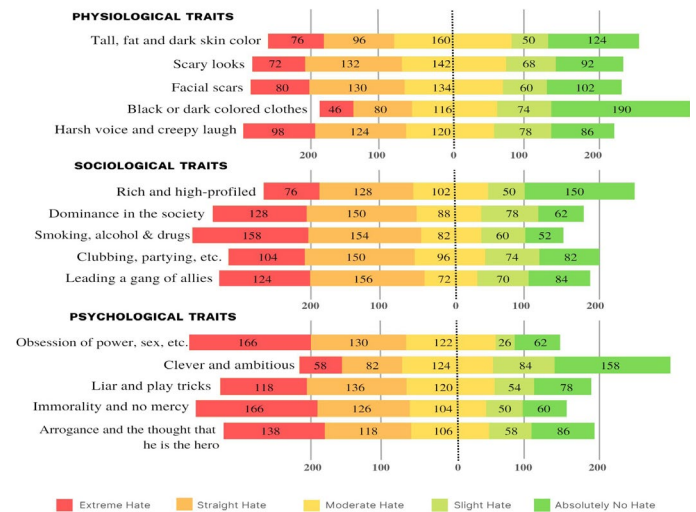


Figure 2. Hate towards three-dimensional character traits of villains.

Table 2. Correlation matrix.

Variables	Antipathy Towards Villains	Hate Towards Physiological Character Traits	Hate Towards Sociological Character Traits	Hate Towards Psychological Character Traits
Antipathy towards villains	1	-	-	-
Hate towards physiological character traits	0.978	1	-	-
Hate towards sociological character traits	0.998	0.985	1	-
Hate towards psychological character traits	0.991	0.993	0.995	1

Table 3. Model summary.

Model	Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	Items
1	0.998	0.997	0.997	0.064	506

Table 4. ANOVA matrix.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	802.190	3	267.396	64333.894	0.000
	Residual	2.086	502	0.004	-	-
	Total	804.277	505	-	-	-

test 0.000 is lower than the chosen level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it has been statistically proved that sociological character traits of villains have a positive and significant impact on the construction of antipathy among the film audience. In the case of the physiological character traits of villains, calculated t (5.013) is higher than the critical t (1.964) and the level of significance indicated by the test 0.000 is lower than the chosen level of significance of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it has been statistically proved that the psychological character traits of villains have a positive and significant impact on the construction of antipathy among the film audience (Table 5).

Table 6 showcases the summary of hypothesis testing according to which all three alternate hypotheses have been accepted and there is a significant impact of the three-dimensional character traits of villains on the construction of antipathy or hatred among the movie-watchers (Table 6).

Table 5. Table of coefficients.

	Model	Standardized Beta Coefficients	Standard Error	T Value	Sig.
	(constant)	-	0.007	1.897	0.058
1	Hate towards physiological character traits	0.341	0.028	12.161	0.000
	Hate towards sociological character traits	1.138	0.025	44.244	0.000
	Hate towards psychological character traits	0.206	0.041	5.013	0.000

Table 6. Summary of hypothesis testing.

S. No.	Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Result
1.	H ₁ = Physiological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.	Antipathy towards villains	Hate towards physiological character traits	Accepted
2.	H ₂ = Sociological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.	Antipathy towards villains	Hate towards sociological character traits	Accepted
3.	H ₃ = Psychological character traits of villains have a significant effect on the construction of antipathy.	Antipathy towards villains	Hate towards psychological character traits	Accepted

Results and Discussion

The film is an audio-visual medium of communication and therefore, the three dimensions of characters are portrayed with the help of visuals and sound [9]. A movie has to perfectly illustrate the character's physiology, sociology, and psychology to create a three-dimensional character with a well-developed background. Villains are undoubtedly hateful and the findings of this study also reveal that the villains are extremely to moderately hateful in the viewpoint of the majority of the respondents. They are fearful, annoying as well and disgusting.

This research work aimed to identify the impact of the three-dimensional qualities of the villain's character on the construction of hatred or antipathy among movie watchers. The results of Table 5 clarify that the physiological, sociological and psychological character traits of villains have a positive and significant effect on the construction of antipathy. The results have made it obligatory to accept all three alternate hypotheses. If the statistical tests are taken in the spotlight, the correlation matrix (Refer Table 2) also reflects that there is a strong collinearity among the dependent and independent variables. The model summary of multiple regression analysis (Refer Table 3) with the 0.997 adjusted R Square value and the ANOVA Matrix (Refer Table 4) with $F(3,502) = 64333.894$, $p = 0.000$ indicate that the regression model has a strong fit and it is significant for the data. The independent variables influence the dependent variables and there is a significant linear relationship between the antipathy towards villains and the three-dimensional character traits of villains. In this way, all the research objectives have been achieved and all the hypotheses were statistically tested by the researcher [24-27].

Conclusion

To develop a story, filmmakers have to show the conflict of moral and ethical qualities between the hero and the villain such as integrity vs. deceit, honesty vs. dishonesty, courage vs. cowardice and many more; using a well-developed background and making the character three-dimensional with strong physiology, sociology, and psychology. All these three dimensions of character may dominate and affect each other but overall, they provide depth to the character. This paper has its predominant focus on the villains and their three-dimensional character traits because villains are the core of a film. The character of villains is portrayed in such a way they create a sense of antipathy or hatred among the movie-watchers.

Since most of the research works focused on the audience's sense of judgement towards the morality of the characters and different character traits of a sympathetic film hero, this paper intended to study villains and evil personalities in films claiming that as the character of the hero is portrayed to gain sympathy from the audience, the character of villains is portrayed to create antipathy and their character traits play a significant role in doing that job. The study of three-dimensional character traits is also significant because the qualities of villains also define the character traits of the protagonist and

the conflicts that he is going to face in the movie. Since a few researches have been carried out in this area, this paper may pave the way for further psychoanalytical research on different aspects related to the construction of antipathy. A detailed study of hate towards various villain "archetypes" can also add significant knowledge in this area of research.

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How to cite this article: Rathore, Khushi. "Construction of Antipathy: The Impact of Three-dimensional Character Traits of Villains." *J Mass Communicat Journalism* 13 (2023): 545.