The Research of the Attention from Chinese Animation Film *Deep Sea* on the Depression Group

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Abstract: Based on the increasingly prominent problem of depression and the gradual rise of the Chinese animation film market, this research chooses the film *Deep Sea* to conduct its research on the concern and discussion of the depression group. The study adopts a three-stage quantitative research, observes and analyzes the film. From the small to the large, the author obtained information on how the film portrays patients with depression. Then the author conducted comparative analysis, causing excavation and further inference. On the basis of previous studies, this study filled in research gaps in previous research on group refinement, focusing on the depression group. The psychological theories of Freud and Adler are used for analysis. This is of great significance for making psychological films, helping people with mental illness to heal, exploring the influence of media on audiences, and how to make full use of media resources. The whole study is both inheritable and innovative.

Keywords: film, mental illness, depression, media

1.   Introduction

Deep Sea is an animated film produced by October Culture and Caitiaoya Pictures and directed by Tian Xiaopeng. It took seven years to make. The film is released on January 22, 2023, the first day of the Chinese New Year. This film tells a fairy tale. Far out in the deep ocean, where all the secrets are hidden, a modern girl strays into an imaginary world, and finds herself on a unique journey. According to official statistics, as of February 2023, the total box office of the *Deep Sea* has reached 863 million yuan, ranking the 10th in the history of animated films in the Chinese mainland, then reached 913 million yuan by 16:00 on March 19, 2023. Moreover, the film was shortlisted for the 73rd Berlin Film Festival.

China's animation film market is becoming more and more mature, giving this film, as China's first 3D ink animation, a good production environment and release timing. According to statistics, the average annual box office output of Chinese animated films from 2015 to 2021 is about 5.5 billion yuan, and the box office of Chinese animated films in 2021 is 3.918 billion yuan, with a year-on-year growth of 28.37%; The box office of Chinese animated films in 2022 reached 3.56 billion yuan [1].

From the perspective of the scale of the animation film industry, during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, driven by content innovation and technological progress, China's online animation industry

has achieved explosive growth. In 2020, China's online animation market scale reached 23.87 billion yuan, an increase of 4.73 billion yuan compared with 2019, with a year-on-year growth of 24.7%; In 2022, the industry market scale reached 27.121 billion yuan, with a year-on-year growth of 13.62% [1]. The animation film industry will continue to grow in the future. Under this background, the *Deep Sea* comes into public view in 2023.

When it comes to depression group, it has increasingly become a social issue worthy of attention. According to the Chinese Mental health survey, the lifetime prevalence rate of depressive disorders among Chinese adults is 6.8%, of which 3.4% is depression [2]. At present, there are 95 million people suffering from depression in China, about 280,000 people commit suicide every year, and 40% of them suffer from depression [2]. The incidence of depression has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a 28% increase in the incidence of depression worldwide. It can be seen from the survey data that the age of high incidence of depression is on a downward trend, and young people are the high-risk group for depression [3]. The detection rate of depression risk in the age group of 18-24 is as high as 24.1%, which is significantly higher than other age groups, while the detection rate of depression risk in the age group of 25-34 is 12.3%, which is significantly lower than that in the age group of 18-24, and it was significantly higher than that in all age groups 35 years and older [3]. When it comes to the environmental factors leading to depression, 62.36% of people often feel depressed [4]. Emotional stress and parent-child relationship are the main social environmental factors leading to depression, followed by intimate relationship and career development [4]. For adolescents, the prevalence of depression is 15%-20%; Among the depressed group, 50 percent were in school and 41 percent had dropped out of school for depression. Family environment is the primary factor that leads to depression [4]. 63% of student patients experienced harshness/control, neglect/lack of care and conflict/violence in their families [4]. At the same time, academic pressure has become a mountain for teenagers with depression.

Therefore, the director of *Deep Sea* combines these main factors and sets the main character as a depressed teenage girl with a problematic family of origin. The *Deep Sea* is focused on the depression group, and the protagonist is a depression patient. The film unfolds the story around the little girl, so as to depict the inner world of the depression group. In a word, the whole film concerns about and explores the depression community.

2. Literature Review

The author consulted relevant literature in this field during the research. These papers can be divided into three aspects that discuss the psychological film itself, the impact of psychological film on the audience, and how the film is connected with mental illness.

From the perspective of the film itself on the shaping of mental illness. According to Zimmermann's study, he mentioned that Since the early 20th century's silent era, cinema has shown itself to be an art form particularly suited to depicting human psychological experiences, and it is rife with characters who serve as examples of psychopathology [5].

Further more, in Julius Riles and Jessie M. Quintero Johnson's study, there is discussion of the stigmatization and stereotypes of mental illness in the media. According to research statistics, 72 percent of people with mental illness are portrayed in films and television as a violent, aggressive role who kills others [6]. Yet its prevalence, social stigma and false information continue to cloud people's opinions of mental illness. The study indicates that this process raises the prevalence of mental disease because the media promotes stigmatizing perceptions about mental illness [6].

In two other studies, experimenters conducted quantitative analyzes to observe the impact of trauma films on viewers. One of the studies found that the subjects watched films with traumatic

content [7]. The research results showed that the subjects would be influenced by the reminder cues in the film and carry out recognition and memory. Part of the recognition memory leads to free recall containing situational information [7]. While another part leads to non-situated familiarity. And another study found that, by measuring electrodermal activity and other methods, trauma films will make the corresponding trauma exposure, trigger the anxiety and negative effects of the subjects, this research mainly focuses on the platonic relationship and friends after traumatic stress Positive role in alleviating negative emotions [8].

The impact of cinema and television dramas on viewers is unquestionably a subject that merits more investigation in the emotional studies of media process and effect. There are a number of various hypotheses and viewpoints regarding audience reactions to tragic depictions. Affective disposition theory states that viewers are more likely to appreciate a film when the main character gains something from the conclusion of the plot [9]. Those who are exposed to sad film endings exhibit much greater levels of emotional stress and emotional degradation [9]. If the protagonist fails, people feel sorry for them, which might cause a decline in mood and wellbeing [9]. On the other hand, according to the theory of fear management, people need anxiety buffers more when they are reminded of their own frailty and mortality. In reality, facing mortality head-on can have uplifting benefits, foster a sense of purpose and self-confidence, foster an appreciation for life, and boost life satisfaction [9].

In other literature author can see the discussion of how mental illness, psychology and film are connected. Huang Shuqiong's study illustrate that psychological films are constructed with mental illness as the material, and use the material of mental illness as the plot tool and background color to express the thoughts, wishes, anxiety, fear, love, desire [10]. In the hearts of the characters, so as to promote the audience's understanding of human behavior. Moreover, as a kind of psychotherapy for mental illness, psychological films are more and more valued by psychologists and counselors [10]. Chen Yuehua and Wangjiyun's study analyzes character shaping from the perspective of film psychology, such as how to use body language to express character personality [11]. Through analyzing the techniques of character shaping in Chinese and foreign films, emphasize that the creation of "psychological art" that runs through the costume, makeup and movement of character shaping will lead the audience to think about self, others and society. This study further clarify how to build the psychological connection between the film and certain groups [11].

In 2022, Luo Yiying's study combines Freudianism with the exploration of early Chinese psycho-cinematography. In this study, art forms such as film are regarded as the tortuous expression of human unconscious impulse, a kind of "formalized daydream" [12].

Although there have been some achievements in research in this field, few scholars have detailed research into the depression group. However, it can be seen from the above background research that the population of depression is growing day by day, and it is necessary to refine the research on the population of depression. This is conducive to further research on the relationship between psychology and film, so as to provide constructive suggestions for psychological film production. It is also beneficial to research on the issue of mental illness, how to take care of this group and bring about positive impacts through films and other forms. It has universal significance.

This research will study the attention and discussion of the Chinese animation film *Deep Sea* on the depression group through qualitative observation methodology.

3. Methodology

This study mainly analyzes the *Deep Sea* through the method of qualitative research. From the outside to the inside, first watch the film as a participant role and make observations.

The first time to record the viewing experience and main plot, and the second time to record details, such as dialogue, clothing. The third time to record the protagonist and depression Control

analysis of population characteristics. First-pass recording is to watch as a participant as a whole, record overall feelings and key points that trigger strong feelings, key points of plot transitions, main characters, and main story construction information.

The second record is to record the details. First record information about the protagonist. Record the age, occupation, social role, costume and image of the main characters during the second viewing of the film. Take a closer look at behaviors, relationships, personality traits. Then record body language, language, monologues, inner thoughts. To analyze the effect of emotional communication and the degree of exaggeration. Finally, analyze the thoughts, desires, emotional expression of the protagonist, and change before and after. In addition, the characteristics of group images and character metaphors are recorded.

Then record the plot construction, such as the setting, the mythological setting, the key turning points, and the overall tone of the story. Divide the beginning, climax, development and end of several parts.

Finally, the characteristics of animated films are recorded, such as the production of special effects, the analysis of picture characteristics (composition, technique, style, light and shadow, aesthetics, emotional transmission), cartoon character characterization, plot imagination. Besides recording and analyzing the soundtrack and dubbing.

The third part is to record and analyze the following contents. Analyze the corresponding relationship between the characteristics of depression and the main characters, and the embodiment of the typical characteristics of depression in the role. In addition, the main character's family analysis. For the main character, conduct behavior record, behavior motivation analysis. Further based on the analysis of Freudian and Adler psychology, record the key points of empathy correspondence, and propose treatment methods.

This study mainly analyzes how the film portrays, maps and pays attention to the depression group. It is not convenient to use numbers to display the content of the film, and the time interval between the release of the film and this research is short, and there is no large amount of data collection support, so the qualitative analysis method is chosen, instead of choosing a quantitative analysis method. The advantage of using this research method is that it is low in cost, easy to observe, willing to analyze things and summarize general laws, which is beneficial to the classification and summary of main factors. The limitation is that it is difficult to visually analyze the impact of the film on the depression group.

4. Result

4.1. The Result of the First Record

This section describes the record of the first viewing of the film. General plot and story construction. The young girl Shenxiu made up her mind to travel to the seaside with her father's reorganized family, but ended up falling into the sea on the ship, and thus began an imaginary journey. She was led by the Sea Spirit to the *Deep Sea* Hotel. Here she meets another protagonist, Nanhe, and the two protagonists started their voyage to the depths of the sea. The first pars of the film is all about the fantasy experience of Shenxiu and Nanhe in the *Deep Sea* Hotel, but at the end, the film tells the real situation. Nanhe is a staff member who plays a clown in the tourist place. After witnessing Shenxiu falling into the sea, he jumped into the sea to save Shenxiu. The previous plots are all about Shenxiu's near-death imagination and subconscious revelation, but the real situation is that Nanhe died and Shensu was rescued. Overall feeling. "Film is a daydream" is an important theoretical proposition in the psychological path of early Chinese film theory exploration. This film describes a dream, immersed in fairy tale fantasy in the early stage, and broken by reality in the later stage. The better the early stage, the crueler the later stage, the greater the psychological contrast.

4.2. The Result of the Second Record

This section describes the record of the second viewing of the film. The protagonist's information is recorded as below.Her name is Shenxiu.Her characters' identity is a teenage girl with depression.Her Occupation is student. The Clothing showing in the film is a red hoodie.The protagonist wears a short hair,which is always seen in Chinese schools. When it comes to metaphor of clothing. The hoodie reveals the memory of Shenxiu's mother; The name of the protagonist Shenxiu corresponds to the star "Betelgeuse" in the Chinese records of the stars, and the red sweater corresponds to the essence of Betelgeuse in reality. It is only a matter of time before a red supergiant star towards the end of its life explodes. In the film, the main character always wraps himself in this hoodie, indicating the closed heart of depressed patients. Common hairstyles generalize mapped groups. It's a true portrayal of some depression patients. When it comes to personality and interpersonal communication. Shenxiu's character reflects the characteristics of solitary, sensitive, introverted, silent, considerate, kind. She has poor performance in interpersonal communication, and is lack of interpersonal communication. Her emotional communication effect is poor, and degree of exaggeration is low. About the thoughts, desires and feelings expression, the film shows the innermost emotional needs of the main character in the subconscious expression. She has a cold father in reality, so in the subconscious she beautifies her father as bark is worse than bit. She grew up without the role of a mother, so a gentle mother appeared in her subconscious. Her self strength in depression is not enough, so in the fantasy appeared a good friend who can help her. Group characteristics is a group of sea animals, such as sea otters, is more in line with a girl's fantasy world. The observation result of the features of animated films is below. In this part, it can be seen from the perspective of film production, how to create an immersive environment, enhancing the audience's sense of engagement, and drive the audience's emotional resonance.

About Animation special effect, for the first time, "ink painting" (the soul of Chinese traditional culture) and "three-dimensional" (the world's mainstream animation technology) are combined. Chinese ink and wash painting, three-dimensional concrete realistic, natural contradiction between the two. In order to restore the ethereal and granular feeling of ink painting, the team used countless particles to form ink shapes to break the hard contours of three-dimensional objects. The film "split the sea" shot, single shot particle effect of more than 100 layers, the number of particles up to billions. About screen features, the artistic style of the film is "Miyazaki Hayao" style, the whole is full of childlike innocence and imagination. Light and shadow are well handled, both realistic and dreamlike. About Soundtrack and dubbing, the original score of the film *Deep Sea* was tailor-made by famous composers and music producers. It took three years to create a mysterious, dreamy, colorful and epic music environment with highly imaginative and experimental creative creation. The dubbing also fits the characters and conveys emotions.

4.3. The Result of the Third Record

This section describes the record of the third viewing of the film. The most important method used by the director to portray and display the depression group in this film is to visualize the subconscious world. When it comes to the emergence of typical depression features, the protagonist is negative, withdrawn, defensive about interpersonal relationships, and reticent. More specifically, depressed, suspicious, feeling, easily angry. There is a concrete expression in the film "depressed ghost." In addition, the protagonist's self-blame is very strong, and her sense of self-identity and social identity is low. When it comes to Original family, the protagonist's parents divorced, the father remarried and gave birth to a son with the stepmother. Shenxiu's mother left and never met the protagonist again. The whole family environment is extremely lack of education, care for Shenxiu. This is also a true portrayal of some families of patients with depression. It can be seen

from the previous background explanation that problematic native families are often an important cause of depression. In terms of behavior motivation analysis, the behavior of Shenxiu in the film is generally in line with the logic of the behavior of patients with depression. When problems arise, due to the influence of low self-identity and cognitive standards, she first introspects and blames herself. Also, her inner world is rich but her outer connection is weak. Furthermore, the inertial standards of the environment in which she grew up made her consider others more and ignore herself, and she longed for external help and recognition. Based on Freudianism. The story structure of the film is based on Freud's analysis of dreams, and shows the real inner world of a girl by depicting her dreams. In addition, based on Freud's "causality" view of psychological trauma, the family of origin will largely affect the mental state, cognition, and behavior of patients with depression. This is also the logic shown in this film.

5.   Discussion

The above research shows how the film *Deep Sea* pays attention to and explores the depression group. From the film construction and dissemination to the audience two aspects, firstly, a depressed patient with typical and common characteristics is created, and the age is positioned at the high-incidence age group of depression, that is, teenagers. The advantage of this is that the audience, especially the audience with depression, can see similarities with themselves in the characters to the greatest extent. Furthermore, after the audience empathizes with the characters, the film is more likely to affect the audience, especially the spiritual world and real life of patients with depression. In similar groups, people can find a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of loneliness and insecurity. Such films make people with mental illness, not just those with depression, feel that they are being paid attention to and taken seriously. In addition, the film gives the protagonist the whole process from depression to being cured, and gives psychological comfort and even practical advice to people with similar experiences, such as seeking help and companionship from friends. The film visualizes the healing process, and at the same time conveys power to the audience through the protagonist's passionate lines and the growth of the characters before and after. This is a typical case of using films as a medium to connect people with depression and make a difference.

But on the other hand, these kinds of films are more likely to reinforce the stereotypes that people with depression have about themselves, such as having a bad family, so they don't behave well in the rest of their life. This kind of logic operates on the basis of Freud's theory. However, in the history of psychological development, in addition to the schools represented by Freud and Jung, Adlerian psychology also appeared, which is a theory opposite to Freud's "causality". Adler denies the decisive influence of trauma on people, and emphasizes people's subjective initiative and power of change. He believes that past experience itself is not decisive, what is important is the meaning given to the experience by the person involved. To a certain extent, this cognitive mode is more conducive to the recovery and self-healing of patients with depression. For people with depression and other mental illnesses, a combination of cognitive breakthroughs, environmental changes, and physical and drug treatments is required. Cultural products such as films and books are conducive to giving patients emotional support, psychological comfort, recognition value enhancement, and opportunities for cognitive breakthroughs. Although in this process, it is very likely to face negative emotions such as anxiety after the trauma is revealed, this is often unavoidable. Fortunately, disclosing trauma and confronting pain can also be beneficial in recovery for some patients.

People's mental health should be paid attention to in the future, and relevant media can be actively used as a carrier. In addition to conveying content, the film also creates an immersive experience of about two hours, which for some is also a unique psychotherapy session. The role of spiritual power in cultural works cannot be underestimated.

6.   Conclusion

To sum up, this paper breaks through the previous generic research on films and mental illness, and refines it to a typical film and depression group. This article mainly studies the Chinese animation film *Deep Sea* through qualitative research, and analyzes how the film portrays the role of a girl suffering from depression. The study observed from multiple angles. The first pass recorded general information, the second pass classified and summarized from the characteristics of characters, plot structure, film characteristics and immersive experience creation, and the third pass connected films with depression groups. In this process, the author analyzes how the film maps the depression group, how the film is used as a carrier to convey ideas and connect to the audience. In addition, this study further demonstrates that psychological films have a positive impact on depressed audiences, but they may also deepen stereotypes, which is not conducive to the recovery of patients. At the same time, a solution is proposed. First, starting from the psychological basis of the film, it can break the narrative logic formed by the single use of Freud's theory in the existing psychological film. Secondly, this paper proposes solutions from cognitive breakthroughs, environmental changes, and the complementarity of physics and medicine to the field of cultural industries. At the same time, it should further fully tap available resources and media for cognitive guidance and treatment of patients with mental illness.

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