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CENSORSHIP OF FILM VIOLENCE: ITS PERCEIVED EFFECT ON ANTI-SOCIAL YOUTH BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Censorship and film classification play an important role in preventing or reducing the negative impact of certain films (more particularly, violent films), especially when viewed by youngsters. In Malaysia, this task falls to the Malaysian Film Censorship Board or Lembaga Penapisan Filem (LPF). In recent years, however, film-viewing habits have changed dramatically, shifting from place-based viewing in the company of others (e.g., cinemas or at home) to online, unsupervised and person-based viewing, often "on the go" and in private. Access to uncensored film versions is practically unlimited, increasing the risk of anti-social views, attitudes and/or behaviour. Using a 35-item survey questionnaire, the current study seeks to find out if current LPF censorship practices are seen to mitigate these negative consequences. The results of Pearson correlation and regression analyses show that predictor variables like family viewing habits, socio-economic status, education, peer pressure and parental censorship have, on the whole, only a weak or moderate effect on the dependent variable, namely, violent behaviour intentions, and the same holds for LPF censorship. None of them explain variability in the dependent variable in any major way. However, a second finding is that LPF censorship is a statistically significant mediating factor between this small set of predictor variables and survey respondents' perceptions about young film-viewers' intentions to engage in violent behaviour. The finding tentatively suggests that Malaysia's interpretive community considers LPF censorship successful in shielding particular viewers from the negative impact of film violence.

Keywords: *Film violence, violent behaviour, Lembaga Penapisan Filem (LPF), censorship, film classification, Malaysian youth*

INTRODUCTION

This current study examines the relationship between film violence and violent behaviour in the context of film censorship. It is generally agreed that film-related off-screen violence is influenced by – or correlates with – a wide range of factors including – but not limited to – the following five: family viewing habits, socio-economic status, education, peer pressure and parental censorship. Especially among youth, also in Malaysia, these factors shape – to some extent – teenage film viewing preferences, and more generally, their attitudes towards violence in film as well as real-life violence. Insofar as violent film scenes cater to a particular need for entertainment or identity formation, adolescents but also adults may watch violent films more frequently and be exposed to violence to the point of habituation (numbing) and/or sensitisation, often combined with novelty-seeking intentions. It has been observed that this

may – under certain very restricted and specific circumstances – lead to anti-social, aggressive or violent behaviour.

Worldwide, governments and authorities rely on censorship legislation, guidelines and policies to mitigate the risk of films being watched by the wrong audience (for example, underage and impressionable film-goers), and official film classification systems are one of the tools available. However, the near-ubiquitous distribution and accessibility of media content, especially feature films, present new challenges for national censorship boards faced with the increasing complexity of censoring these multi-cultural products (Robertson, 2005). Increasingly, films and programmes are being watched on satellite broadcast television channels or on the Internet through subscriptions like Netflix; thanks to major trends in media convergence and around-the-clock connectivity, more and more people watch films on their own and "on the go", away from cinemas and multiplexes or the family room at home.

Whatever the content, research has shown time and again that film has the power to shape the perceptions of its audience on a range of subjects (Pautz, 2015). For that reason, the idea of film censorship was originally mooted by reformers. Reformers feared that "immoral films" dealing with topics such as crime and adultery would set a bad example and help legitimise and normalise certain forms of behaviour (Pearson, 1996). Public discourse among professionals, parliamentarians and the media in the West, however, weakened – over time – the strict taboos on matters scorned by society. Though, for example, abortion or homosexuality can now be legally shown in the media, arguments seeking to preserve the *status quo* continue to influence public debate and change in line with society's perceptions and expectations (Parker, 2013).

The management of censorship practices has often met with criticism, not in the least from film-makers who are frequently issued so-called *deterrent conditions* in order for their films to receive approval; they argue that such conditions limit artistic freedom and creativity. However, overall, many stakeholders view censorship as both desirable and necessary. In one of its judgements in 1989, the Indian Supreme Court developed the following line of reasoning, worth quoting in full (Factly.in, 2015):

> *Film censorship becomes necessary because a film motivates thought and action and assures a high degree of attention and retention as compared to the printed word. The combination of act and speech, sight and sound in semi-darkness of the theatre with elimination of all distracting ideas will have a strong impact on the minds of the viewers and can affect emotions. Therefore, it has as much potential for evil as it has for good and has an equal potential to instil or cultivate violent or good behaviour. It cannot be equated with other modes of communication. Censorship by prior restraint is, therefore, not only desirable but also necessary.*

In Malaysia, the classification of films is the responsibility of the Malaysian Film Censorship Board or *Lembaga Penapisan Filem* (LPF). LPF is a regulatory body that serves the main purpose of moderating exposure to violence, sex, foreign politics and other content, especially when films contain conflicting messages that are harmful to harmonious and peaceful co-existence in the country. LPF was primarily influenced by the early British film industry (Amiza et al., 2011); ever since colonial times, censorship – another British legacy – has remained a key part of the administrative system of the Malaysian government.

The question can be asked whether Malaysia's film censorship is effective in preventing certain audiences from watching films with violence, indecency or immorality. Does classifying a film as violent and unsuitable for a certain age range work or is it more likely to have the opposite effect? Related to this, how do contemporary, more sophisticated audiences – in this "here, there and everywhere" viewing experience – perceive the government's role as gatekeepers and censorship authority? And what does the film industry itself think of the new film-viewing opportunities?

It is against this background that the current study seeks to explore the contribution of LPF film censorship in reducing the negative impact of film violence on young film-goers and their behaviour. Pautz (2015) and Guida (2015), among others, conclude that "younger people, particularly teens, are much more likely to be impacted than older adults because they are still developing and shaping their worldviews. That they are more likely to absorb all sorts of influences, including influences from film". They may also develop negative or sceptical attitudes towards film censorship and film classification, leading to political and social polarisation between those who accept boundaries and those who do not. Though the impact of films may be substantial, there is no evidence, however, that the impact lasts for longer periods of time into adulthood.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) theory *Hierarchy of Influences* was adapted to help put censorship and film classification in perspective and to draw attention to the major stakeholders.

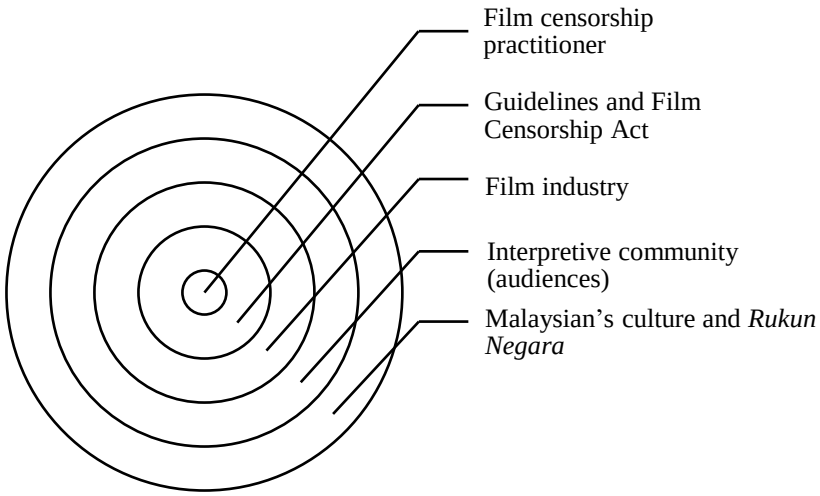

Figure 1: Adaptation from Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) *Hierarchy of Influences* model

The conceptual framework informed the construction of hypotheses for the study, in which censorship guidelines and Malaysia's Film Censorship Act 2012 mediate between a small set of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the film-goers and "violent behaviour".

Figure 2 below gives an overview of the main hypotheses to be tested, including the potential mediation performed by LPF censorship.

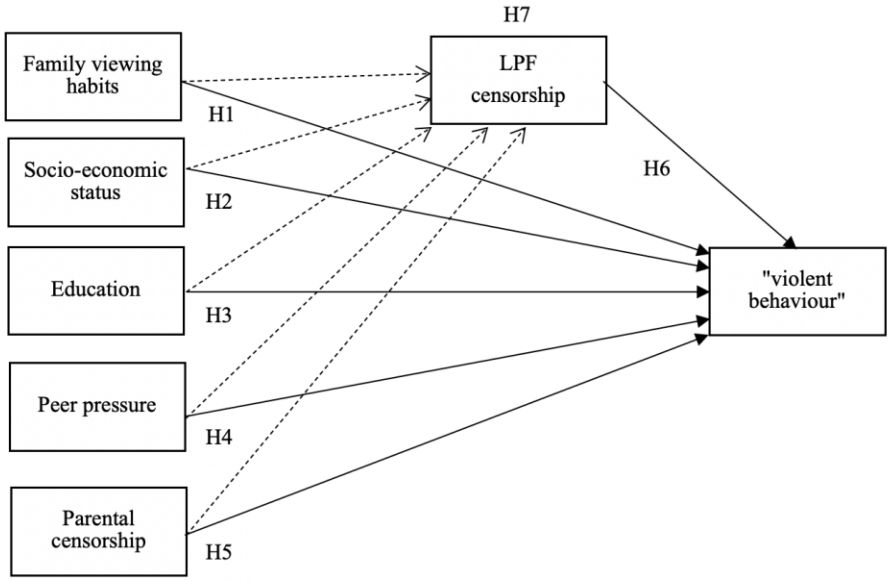

Figure 2: Conceptual model showing the potential role of LPF censorship

As observed at the beginning of the introductory section, certain factors have been identified in the literature as independent or explanatory variables that influence film-viewers' intentions towards engaging in violent behaviour. This then is the dependent variable. Note that the dependent variable is a cognitive research construct to be understood as (1) a young film-viewer's *intention* to behave violently, or more generally, in an anti-social way and (2) insofar as this intention is *perceived* to be present by themselves, peers or others. To avoid inadvertently mixing up opinions about mere intentions with actual and directly observable behaviour, the dependent variable will appear – in the remaining part of this article – inside double quotes.

To return to the independent variables, the study will be limited to the five mentioned earlier, namely, family viewing habits (a family's habit of watching violent films), socio-economic status (income), education, peer pressure and parental censorship (a form of familial-level self-censorship regarding certain types of film and/or film content). To examine whether they also influence "violent behaviour" among Malaysian youth, the following five hypotheses were developed:

H1: Family viewing habits have a significant impact on youth's "violent behaviour".
H2: Socio-economic status has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H3: Education has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H4: Peer pressure has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H5: Parental censorship has a significant impact of youths' "violent behaviour".

Given the study's interest in LPF film censorship as both an explanatory and mediating variable, two more hypotheses were proposed:

H6: LPF censorship has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H7: LPF censorship mediates between family viewing habits, socio-economic status, education, peer pressure, parental censorship and youths' "violent behaviour".

When taken together, statistical testing of these seven hypotheses will help answer the primary research question underlying the present study, i.e., what is the contribution of LPF film censorship in reducing the negative impact of film violence on young film-goers' behaviour?

LITERATURE REVIEW

For present purposes, it is sufficient to focus on what is known about Malaysia's approach to film censorship, the central topic of this study. Note that the Film Censorship Act 2002 defines "film" as any "movie, video tape, diskette, laser disc, compact disc, hard disc and other records that consist of a sequence of moving pictures with or without audio" (Ministry of Home Affairs Malaysia, 2011). The role of the Malaysian Film Censorship Board or *Lembaga Penapisan Filem* (LPF) is to censor all "film" media content meant for public screening including the certification of compulsory screening of satellite TV channels' programming.

What makes LPF's task challenging is not so much local Malaysian films but films telecast through satellite channels. The reason is that these are region-specific and often breach rules and regulations that apply to Malaysian productions; this creates resentment against specific censorship and classification rules. It is next to impossible, however, to manage the large volumes of satellite and online content in terms of age-appropriate suitability for viewing, let alone, to limit or regulate their accessibility. A case in point are censorable Western cultural products targeted at youth 13 years and older but that might not necessarily be suitable for youth below 13 years old (Rauschenberg, 2003). Boyd's (1972) point of view is to stamp the authorisation of films *before* being shown or aired – in an attempt to pre-empt lengthy censorship deliberation – rather than overhauling censorship guidelines *per se*. However, such overseas cultural products are easily accessible to young audiences through the Internet. Johan (2017), Malaysian lawyer, columnist and political secretary, observes that the existing law, the Film Censorship Act 2002, is unclear in its interpretation of what lies beyond freedom of speech and expression; in view of this, Johan (2017) suggests there is locally no need for censorship or a blanket ban on foreign films, arguing instead for adequate film classification.

Talking of which, the 1953 film classification in what was then known as Malaya consisted of only two categories: "Adults Only" and "Public Viewing". In 1996, the classification was changed into "U" – "unrestricted" – and "18" with 4 subcategories for those rated "18". Finally, January 2012 saw the introduction of the current system with three categories, as shown in Table 1 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011).

Table 1: Malaysia's film classification 2012

Film Classification	Description
U	This category is for viewing by all **without age limit.** The film is entertaining but also promotes morality, decency and positive values.
P13	Viewers under **13 years of age need parental/guardian** supervision. Scenes in the film contain elements of violence, negative acts, suspense and frantic elements, but not an excessively heavy storyline, and elements that can disturb a child's emotion.
18	This category is for viewers aged **18 and above.** The film contains violence, horror, gore but not excessively; adult scenes; sensitive political and religious elements which require higher-level understanding.

Overseas films censored for Malaysian cinemas also dominate broadcasting air-times with cuts for free-to-air TV, pay TV and satellite direct-to-home TV but LPF does not have control over their online or Internet versions. These broadcasts carry a range of ratings from "U", "P13" and "P18". For instance, Marvel Studio's *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) rated "P13" dominated Malaysia's all-time box-office collection, grossing in just two weeks a total of nearly RM88 m in revenue (Lee, 2019); it is likely the film was also watched by viewers younger than 13.

The extent to which LPF and other censorship boards in other countries can be successful largely depends on their membership. Ideally, censorship board members should be appointed from among media professionals with no political affiliation so they can simultaneously exercise tolerance and sensitivity, arriving at balanced decisions (Bhowmik, 2002). In a free society, the intelligent compromise between wholesale banning of overseas films and an indifferent *laissez-faire* attitude is to classify films judiciously and carefully and to periodically review classifications in line with broader societal developments and trends. However, the classification of foreign films, especially those made in the West, is viewed sceptically for their "electronic colonialism", which tends to re-orient young audiences away from their country's traditional cultural values (Rauschenberger, 2003).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a quantitative approach, with seven hypotheses developed from the research questions and a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire to capture the "subjective" data, i.e., the survey respondents' opinions and beliefs (Saunders et al., 2009). For the analysis of the data, three statistical tools were employed: Pearson correlation and simple linear regression, using SPSS v27, and to examine mediation, path analysis, using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017).

Reliability of the questionnaire and its six subscales – comprising a total of 35 items – were assessed by means of Cronbach's α coefficient (see Table 2). The rule of thumb is that coefficients within the .600–.700 range indicate an acceptable level of reliability.

Table 2: Reliability of instruments used

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's α
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		
Family viewing habits	5	.586
Socio-economic status	5	.724
Education	5	.724
Peer pressure	5	.658
Parental censorship	5	.654
"Violent behaviour"	5	.832
MEDIATING VARIABLE		
LPF censorship	5	.668

The study population consists of Malaysian youth aged 15 and above – N = 24,290,000 – with an assumed population proportion of .50 and confidence at 95%. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) method, a survey sample size of approximately 384 can be considered adequate. A pilot test was first conducted with 50 people with sufficient subject matter knowledge; this helped improve the quality, reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Eventually, the revised survey was administered to a total of 430 participants. The sample was made up of youth – broadly defined as aged 15 to 44 – who watch violent films and represent a cross-section of Malaysian society.

FINDINGS

Before analysing the response data and testing the hypotheses, this section will start off with a number of tables showing the demographic profile of the survey respondents (Table 3), the means, standard deviations and other descriptives (Table 4) and the results of the normality test (Table 5).

Demographic analysis

Table 3: Demographic analysis

	Demographic variables		*F*	*%*
Gender	Male		226	52.6
	Female		204	47.4
		Total	430	100.0
Age	15–24		176	40.9
	25–44		173	40.2
	45 and above		81	18.8
		Total	430	100.0
Ethnicity	Malay		238	55.3
	Chinese		108	25.1
	Indian		61	14.2
	Bumiputera		15	3.5
	Others		8	1.9
		Total	430	100.0
Residence	Temporary housing		30	7.0
	Community flats		153	35.6
	Hostels		66	15.3
	Gated community		112	26.0
	Condo/bungalow		69	16.0
		Total	430	100.0
Education	School drop-out		2	.5
	Primary school		1	.2
	Secondary school		65	15.1
	Undergraduate		344	80.0
	Postgraduate		18	4.2
		Total	430	100.0
Income	None		154	35.8
	RM1,000 and below		20	4.7
	RM1,001–RM3,000		105	24.4
	RM3,001–RM5,000		119	27.7
	RM5,000 and above		32	7.4
		Total	430	100.0
Occupation	Student		176	40.9
	Businessperson		44	10.2
	Employed		209	48.6
	Unemployed		1	.2
		Total	430	100.0

Descriptive analysis

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Skewness		Kurtosis		*N*
			Statistic	*SE*	Statistic	*SE*	
Family viewing habits	18.3	2.8	-.094	.118	-.126	.235	428
Socio-economic status	20.6	4.1	-.131	.118	-.963	.235	428
Education	18.2	3.2	-.266	.118	-.076	.235	428
Peer pressure	18.3	2.9	-.407	.118	.459	.235	428
Parental censorship	19.6	2.7	-.415	.118	.583	.235	428
"Violent behaviour"	16.9	3.9	-.195	.118	-.805	.235	428
LPF censorship	17.6	3.6	.255	.118	-.610	.235	428

Normality test

Table 5: Test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Family viewing habits	.140	428	.000	.971	428	.000
Socio-economic status	.122	428	.000	.972	428	.000
Education	.098	428	.000	.982	428	.000
Peer pressure	.111	428	.000	.973	428	.000
Parental censorship	.160	428	.000	.957	428	.000
"Violent behaviour"	.108	428	.000	.968	428	.000
LPF censorship	.242	428	.000	.968	428	.000

The latter two tables show that survey responses are approximately normally distributed, justifying the use of correlation and linear regression as statistical tools of analysis. As can be seen from Tables 6 and 7 below, all five independent variables significantly correlate with the dependent variable ("violent behaviour"), with a probability of this being due to chance lower than .01. Moreover, results of subsequent regression analysis show that all explanatory variables predict some variance in the dependent variable, with values for Adjusted R^2 ranging from .05 to .20.

Correlation analysis

Table 6: Correlation analysis

Variables	Family viewing habits	Socio-economic status	Educa-tion	Peer pressure	Parental involve-ment	"Violent behaviour"
Family viewing habits	1					
Socio-economic status	.428**	1				
Education	.404**	.369**	1			
Peer pressure	.473**	.354**	.399**	1		
Parental censorship	.249**	.165**	.366**	.296**	1	
"Violent behaviour"	.453**	.291**	.302**	.370**	.230**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Regression analysis

Table 7: Regression analysis

Model	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*SEE*	*F*	Sig.
1	.20	.20	3.46	109.78	.000
2	.09	.08	3.70	542.68	.000
3	.09	.09	3.69	42.64	.000
4	.14	.14	3.60	67.53	.000
5	.05	.05	3.77	23.74	.000

a. Dependent variable: "violent behaviour"
b. Predictors: Family viewing habits[1], Socio-economic status[2], Education[3], Peer Pressure[4], Parental censorship[5]

DISCUSSION

The discussion will be divided into two subsections: first, the five explanatory variables and their corresponding hypotheses, examined both separately and in comparison with each other (H1, H2, H3, H4 & H5); secondly, the effect of LPF censorship as respectively an *independent* variable (H6) and a *mediating* variable (H7). Note that all statistical hypothesis testing was performed at a significance level of .05.

To recap, here are the hypotheses again.

H1: Family viewing habits have a significant impact on youth's "violent behaviour".
H2: Socio-economic status has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H3: Education has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H4: Peer pressure has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H5: Parental censorship has a significant impact of youths' "violent behaviour".
H6: LPF censorship has a significant impact on youths' "violent behaviour".
H7: LPF censorship mediates between family viewing habits, socio-economic status, education, peer pressure, parental censorship and youths' "violent behaviour".

Family viewing habits, socio-economic status, education, peer pressure and parental censorship

As for the first five hypotheses, Tables 6 and 7 show that all of these are confirmed by the statistical analyses. Not all relationships are equally strong, however, witness the amount of variance that the predictor variables explain (see the Adjusted R^2 column in Table 7). When listed in order of decreasing strength, the following ranking appears.

- If family viewing habits include or promote violent films, there is more of a tendency for youngsters to engage in "violent behaviour", again, as this tendency or intention is perceived by the survey respondents (H1). The relationship is seen to be moderately strong (Adjusted R^2 = .20, $F(1, 428) = 109.78$, $p < 0.05$). Arguably, a family's film viewing choices and preferences will lead to some form of habituation among their children, which may be correlated at a later stage with particular types of anti-social behaviour.
- Next – but at a distance – is peer pressure (H4). It is natural to assume that youths are influenced by their peers. However, the current study shows that nowadays the influence is perhaps modest at best. Youths in this era value individuality and are not so easily influenced by their peers any more (Adjusted R^2 = .14, $F(1, 428) = 67.53$, $p < 0.05$). Besides, many films are being watched privately and alone.
- Socio-economic status and level of education (H2 & H3) account for respectively 8.3% and 8.9% of the variance in the dependent variable (Adjusted R^2 = .08, $F(428.1) = 542.68$, $p < 0.05$ and Adjusted R^2 = .09, $F(1, 428) = 42.64$, $p < 0.05$). For both, however, the likely effect on "violent behaviour" is only weak. Though further research is required, the survey responses seem to suggest that the higher someone's socio-economic status and the higher their educational achievement, the more probable it is for them to enjoy watching violent movies, and putatively, consider engaging in off-screen violence themselves. Higher socio-economic status – more real disposable income – could possibly mean that youths have more opportunities to watch violent films that are perhaps more extreme and/or uncensored. As for education, Table 3 shows that 80% of the

respondents have a diploma or bachelor's degree so not much can be concluded from the statistical analyses.

– Seeing that the majority of the respondents are 25 years old and above (see Table 3), it is not so surprising perhaps that parental censorship has barely any effect (H5). The proportion of the variability that it explains is just 5.1% (Adjusted $R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 428) = 23.74$, $p < 0.05$). As with the other independent variables, the relationship is statistically significant but weak.

The prominence of family viewing habits and peer pressure is further supported by the standardised regression coefficients. As Table 8 shows, family viewing habits ($\beta = .304$, $t(428) = 5.90$, $p < 0.05$) and peer pressure ($\beta = .153$, $t(428) = 3.03$, $p < 0.05$) significantly predict "violent behaviour" intention among youngsters.

Table 8: Predictability of the independent variables

Model	Standardised Coefficient (β)	*t*	Sig.
1	.304	5.90	.000
2	.071	1.47	.144
3	.065	1.28	.200
4	.153	3.03	.003
5	.073	1.59	.113

a. Dependent variable: "violent behaviour"
b. Predictors: Family viewing habits[1], Socio-economic status[2], Education[3], Peer Pressure[4], Parental censorship[5]

LPF censorship

Effective censorship can be reasonably assumed to mediate the relationship between the independent variables under analysis and the dependent variable "violent behaviour". Before assessing whether or not this is the case, it is necessary to establish if there is an association between LPD censorship as an *independent* variable and "violent behaviour" in the first place, and if so, which one (H6). Pearson correlation (2-tailed) and regression analyses confirm the hypothesis – there is a positive relationship ($r(428) = .51$, $p < 0.05$) – but also show this relationship to be moderate only (Adjusted $R^2 = .26$, $F(1, 428) = 150.963$, $p < 0.05$). This may hint at a psychological phenomenon where youngsters who are restricted in their personal agency and freedom of choice are more likely to rebel and actively seek out precisely those choices that parents, teachers, the law and society more generally consider unsuitable for them. Ironically, as the success and effectiveness of LPF censorship increases, the intention to watch certain violent films – whether censored or banned – will increase among youths, which then in its turn, but with the usual caveats, may increase readiness to engage in aggressive or violent behaviour.

Moving on to the *mediating* role of LPF censorship, five separate simple mediation analyses were performed to test the final hypothesis (H7). Generalising over the five mediation models (not shown here to save space), positive and statistically significant paths to LPF censorship could be established – at the .001 significance level – for all of the explanatory variables,

considering their respective standardised regression coefficients: family viewing habits (β = .59), socio-economic status (β = .42), education (β = .49), peer pressure (β = .35) and parental censorship (β = .27).

As was reported earlier in this study, the influence of all explanatory variables including LFP censorship on "violent behaviour" is also statistically significant. However, when LFP censorship mediates the relationship for family viewing habits, the indirect effect is only small (β = .25, 95% *CI* .1722 - .3387). In other words, it is a case of *partial* mediation. The same holds true for socio-economic status (β= .22, 95% *CI* .0869 - .3496), peer pressure (β = .17, 95% *CI* .1026-.2374) and parental censorship (β = .14, 95% *CI*, .0717 - .2210). A *full* mediating role is only played for education (β = .24, 95% *CI* .1703 - .3249); that is, when factoring in LPF censorship as an intervening variable, the level of educational achievement – from none to a postgraduate qualification – accounts for a much higher proportion in the variability of "violent behaviour" than when film censorship is left out of consideration.

When taken together, the statistical results for LPF censorship may suggest that LPF's current film classification and other guidelines are relatively effective at managing exposure to film violence and reducing the likelihood of off-screen but film-related violence.

CONCLUSION

The significance of the present study lies in its focus on film censorship of on-screen violence and the role that censorship can play in decreasing the probability of off-screen violence occurring in response to film – or on-screen – violence. A set of well-researched predictor variables have been related to likely violent behaviour among youngsters who watch violent films regularly: family viewing habits (specifically, violent films), socio-economic status (SES), level of education, peer pressure and degree of parental censorship. Low-income, less educated families that watch violent films, the anti-social group norms among peers and a disengaged parenting style may be correlated with a higher expectation that youth violence will take place. It was found, however, that those that were analysed in the present study do not constitute a straight or direct path to intended violence. All the independent variables investigated show a statistically significant relationship with violent behaviour – at least, in the opinion of the survey participants and purely at the cognitive level of intentions – but the relationships are weak or moderately weak only. It is also useful to remember the adage that "correlation does not imply causation".

Interestingly, no matter the strength or direction of the correlation, film censorship was found to play an important intervening or mediating role. Tentatively, this might be interpreted as an indication that Malaysia's film censorship policies and guidelines help mitigate the risk of violence resulting from repeated exposure to film violence. More particularly, the findings would then – but to some extent only – support the current film classification into "U", "P13" and "18". To firm up this conclusion, the study should be replicated, however, for a more homogeneous sample seeing that sampling outliers and heterogeneity (see Table 3) are limitations of the present study. Additionally, the descriptive and correlational analyses would benefit from insights, comments, facts and figures collected by means of a more qualitative research design. There is definitely room for in-depth interviews with informed third parties from within Malaysia's film industry, the national censorship board, the mainstream public and private broadcasters and – to get a more accurate understanding of film-related violence – the country's law enforcement agencies.

Triangulation and a mixed-method research design would hopefully lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex but tenuous and subtle relationships among film censorship, film violence and violent behaviour.

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