



SURVIVING SOLITUDE: THE TREACHEROUS EXPEDITION OF A CHILD FOLLOWING A MATERNAL CATASTROPHE IN THE FILM 'PIHU'

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Abstract

The theatrical work titled "Pihu," directed by Vinod Kapi, portrays an emotional storyline that revolves around a toddler who experiences a day of solitude, unaware of the untimely demise of her mother due to an overdose of sleeping medication. The film emphasizes the profound consequences of Maternal conflict and mental health challenges on the developmental trajectory of a young child. This analysis aims to examine the various dangerous circumstances that the child experiences and highlight the film's importance as a medium for drawing attention to the significant consequences of suicide, domestic violence, and despair. This study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the film's narrative, to shed light on the difficulties and obstacles encountered by a child. The goal is to serve as an educational resource, aimed at increasing awareness regarding the significant psychological effects that arise from parental conflicts on a child's mental well-being. The significance of this research on 'Pihu' lies in its examination of the difficulties encountered by a child following the suicide of their mother. Moreover, it acts as a catalyst for deeper discussions concerning mental health, familial interactions, and the welfare of children in the aftermath of distressing occurrences. The primary objective of this study is to provide significant contributions to professionals, policymakers, and caregivers who are actively engaged in assisting children impacted by comparable situations. Ultimately, the study seeks to promote a more compassionate and knowledgeable approach to addressing the needs of these children and the importance of mental health.

Keywords: child well-being, domestic violence, suicide, cinema a platform for awareness, cinema for education, Mental health.



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Introduction

The medium of cinema possesses significant communicative power in engaging individuals with societal matters. The aforementioned phenomenon presents several significant advantages, encompassing but not limited to entertainment, education, cultural exchange commentary, economic influence, and artistic expression. The significance of film extends beyond mere happiness, serving as a medium for conveying strong messages regarding societal issues that were previously unknown to us. “Bollywood movies have initiated various changes in thought process and lifestyle, including changes in the institutions of marriage and family structure, the emergence of live-in relationships, and changes in food habits, clothing, career options, and belief systems” (Balabantaray, 2020). This will facilitate the dissemination of a more comprehensive comprehension of individuals and their cultural backgrounds. By exploring diverse stories and perspectives through film, we gain a deeper understanding and empathy for others. Additionally, films have the power to educate and raise awareness about pressing social issues, such as inequality, discrimination, and environmental concerns. Through compelling narratives and thought-provoking visuals, films can spark conversations, inspire activism, and drive positive change within society. Ultimately, the significance of film lies in its ability to bridge the gaps between people, fostering a global community that celebrates diversity and promotes understanding.

"Pihu", a 2018 Indian drama thriller film directed by Vinod Kapri, is a marvelously staged production that tells a touching tale about a two-year-old toddler who survives alone after her mother overdoses on sleeping pills and dies. Upon awakening, the toddler attempted to rouse her mother under the mistaken impression that she was still asleep; nevertheless, the child and mother were both unaccompanied in the room.

The film adeptly portrays the many hazards an unsupervised child faces, offering insight into the diverse array of dangers they may experience. Furthermore, the film successfully shows the psychological distress and profound vulnerability encountered by an innocent individual left behind in a conceivably hazardous environment without human supervision.

The portrayal presented conveys an emotional and significant message, highlighting the adverse consequences associated with domestic violence and suicide. This statement emphasizes the significant significance of recognizing that such behaviors not only directly influence the people involved but also have profound consequences for individuals in their immediate surroundings, particularly in cases involving children. The well-being of a child's mental and physical health during their developmental years holds paramount significance, as any adverse encounters or traumas during this critical period can substantially impact their subsequent behavior and overall welfare. This statement underscores the enduring effects that adverse events can exert on a child, persistently affecting them during their lifespan and shaping their subsequent actions and interpersonal connections. Hence, the film implicitly underscores the importance of establishing a

secure and supportive setting for children, one that is devoid of the adverse consequences stemming from domestic disputes and mental health challenges.

By utilizing the medium of film to amplify these messages, the director of "Pihu" has contributed valuably to raising awareness and fostering comprehension of these significant societal issues. The filmmaker's efforts have the goal of instigating beneficial transformations in societal attitudes and behaviors regarding depression, domestic violence, and the well-being of children. Through the portrayal of a vulnerable young infant navigating a perilous environment, the film underscores the enduring consequences that traumatic circumstances can exert on a child's developmental trajectory. This statement serves as a poignant reminder of the societal obligation to safeguard the individuals who are most susceptible to harm while also establishing a network of assistance for families confronted with such difficulties. The director's dedication to illuminating these matters through the medium of film not only imparts knowledge to the viewers but also functions as a driving force for transformation, motivating individuals and communities to address and prioritize children's welfare proactively.

Review of Literature

There is increasing worry about how a mother's suicidal thoughts can affect her child's development. A comprehensive investigation has been carried out to examine the enduring effects of such situations, elucidating the psychological, emotional, and social ramifications for children raised in households impacted by female suicide ideation. Through an analysis of the current body of literature, we can acquire a more profound comprehension of this intricate matter and its possible consequences.

The developmental phase of a child is crucial and has a lasting impact on their character as they mature. The caliber of early life experiences has a profound effect on a child's subsequent emotional and social growth. Researchers have highlighted the significance of parental approaches, educational contexts, and social interactions in molding a child's personality traits. Geller and Johnston (1995) Mothers who reported higher levels of depressed mood were more likely to attribute their own negative experiences to internal, controllable, global, and stable factors. Field et al. (1985) Face-to-face play interactions between depressed mothers and their children exhibited suboptimal interaction behaviors, suggesting that maternal depression may contribute to difficulties in early mother-infant interactions. Murray et al. (1996) Lower rates of maternal sensitivity and positive engagement were associated with the presence of depression, suggesting that it negatively affected the quality of early mother-infant interactions. Mauthner (1998) This study emphasizes the necessity of broadening the conceptualization of "bad" marital relationships to incorporate a variety of potential challenges, such as the active participation of women in such partnerships.

According to Wesley et al. (2019), The viewpoints of child welfare specialists are essential for understanding and defining well-being. Through conducting in-depth interviews with 29

professionals, we were able to identify two primary areas of focus: a practical approach for professionals and the personal experience of well-being for children. The key meanings found encompassed the concepts of humanization, the establishment of meaningful adult relationships, and a positive outlook toward the future. Participation in child welfare is of utmost significance in contemporary society, as it guarantees the safety and overall well-being of the next generation by providing them with essential support. It is crucial to prioritize both the pragmatic elements of child welfare, such as guaranteeing access to vital services and resources, and the emotional and social aspects, such as cultivating secure and caring connections. Professionals can significantly influence the future of the next generation by comprehending and tackling these essential areas of concentration.

Good positive interaction between the mother and child has a good impact on the child's development and generates a good quality perspective of the child on relationships and attachment. When a mother and child have a positive interaction, it fosters a sense of security and trust in the child, which is crucial for their social and emotional development. This positive connection also plays a vital role in shaping the child's perspective on relationships and their ability to form healthy connections with others later in life.

Mäntymaa et al. (2004) The study assessed 50 pairs of mothers and infants, recording their interactions and mental health. Results showed that hostility and parental psychopathology can predict a child's behavioral and emotional symptoms. Father's psychiatric issues were associated with higher problem scores, while mother's issues before pregnancy increased externalizing scores. Braungart-Rieker et al. (2019) The study found that toddlers with secure attachments experienced increased positive effects from ignore to reunion, while those with avoidant attachments did not. The pattern was similar for mother- and father-toddler dyads. Ambivalent toddlers showed more negative effects. Understanding attachment and temperament is crucial for predicting toddler affect in infancy.

Parent's behaviors, such as providing caring and responsive interactions, have the power to influence a child's capacity to control emotions and establish positive relationships. These behaviors establish a stable foundation for toddlers to investigate their surroundings and cultivate a feeling of confidence and safety. Consistent parental responsiveness to a child's wants and emotions promotes the child's acquisition of emotional regulation skills and their ability to navigate social relationships. Establishing a solid groundwork can result in enhanced mental well-being and enhanced interpersonal abilities in the future. The study conducted by Cabrera et al. (2011b) This study discovered that maternal risk has both a direct and indirect impact on cognitive development, with the indirect effect being mostly influenced by mother sensitivity. In contrast, paternal risk showed only an indirect association, mostly influenced by maternal sensitivity. Furthermore, in terms of social behaviors, both risks associated with the mother and father exhibited an indirect relationship, mostly influenced by the mother's sensitivity and the father's involvement. Maternal and paternal risk levels were shown to be linked to maternal supportiveness, whereas the risk levels of both mothers and children were found to be connected to parental cognitive stimulation.

According to Crandall et al. (2010) Family violence and alcohol consumption were shown to be strongly correlated with depression and thoughts of death (DTD); the probability of hospitalization for a newborn was significantly elevated when DTD was combined with either maternal alcohol consumption or family violence (p -value <0.001). Among the 880 moms (18%) who experienced clinical depression, 286 (33%) said they had considered suicide. Muzik et al. (2016) The child's mother or father's history of mistreatment during childhood influences their behavior toward the youngster. This study demonstrates the significance of utilizing a mother's medical history to identify those who may be at risk of developing depression; doing so ultimately increases vigilance when caring for the infant and prevents suicidal thoughts. Stein et al. (1991) Research has demonstrated that anxiety and postpartum depression are associated with an elevated likelihood of complications in the interpersonal relationship between the mother and child as well as in the developmental trajectory of the kid. Mother–child contact is significantly impacted by postnatal anxiety and, to a lesser extent, sadness.

Shepherd and Barraclough (1976) The study indicated that pre-suicide pressures and family instability were strongly connected to the present functioning of the children. The children who had suffered more pre-suicide pressures and family upheaval were more likely to have problems with their present functioning. Additionally, the incidence of psychiatric morbidity was shown to be greater among children whose parents had committed suicide compared to children in the general population, according to the study. Murray et al. (2011) research study predicted that diminished ego resilience and unstable baby connection at ages 5 and 8 would augment the likelihood of depression developing in offspring. Structural equation modeling (SEM) path studies revealed that diminished ego resilience and insecure attachment were associated with an increased risk of depression in children. Mebrahtu et al. (2020) This study gathered facts on the Consideration of suicide as a means of evading the load of these circumstances could potentially contribute to suicidal ideation. A clustering of negative life events, such as HIV and other life stressors, is associated with high and chronic suicidal ideation, according to the study. Consistent with prior research, there exists a negative correlation between the mother's mental health and the linguistic and visual development of the child.

Methodology

This study investigates and evaluates the film "Pihu," which was directed by Vinod Kapri, using a qualitative research methodology. By focusing on the difficulties encountered by a kid following traumatic incidents associated with parental depression and domestic violence, qualitative analysis permits an in-depth evaluation of the narrative's nuanced and complex elements. This study seeks to elucidate the psychological and emotional distress encountered by the young protagonist, Pihu, throughout the portrayed risky conditions through the utilization of qualitative research methods.

Data Collection

Selection of the Movie

"Pihu" was chosen for this qualitative analysis on account of its dramatic depiction of a child's survival-or-death circumstances stemming from the domestic abuse and depression of her mother. The film, which has a running time of [name duration of the film here], offers a thorough depiction of the obstacles encountered by the young protagonist, so providing an abundance of data for study.

Time Mentioning

The qualitative analysis entails a rigorous dissection of the film into discrete temporal parts to record in chronological order significant occurrences, interactions, and Pihu's emotional states. Every individual segment is thoroughly documented and examined in order to depict the progressive perils and the consequences of distressing events on the juvenile protagonist at various points during the film.

Echoes of Tragedy explores a child's resilience amidst domestic turmoil.

Movie Plot

"Pihu" a 1 hour 30 minutes movie immerses viewers in the terrible reality of a young girl living with the aftermath of her mother's suicide through its disturbing tale. This investigation delves into the serious consequences of domestic abuse and how the mother's decision affects the child's day-to-day life. This study focuses on major occurrences and emphasizes the negative repercussions of these settings on the child's emotional state, routine, and well-being. The central focus of this film is Pihu, a little girl who is two years old, as well as her mother Puja, and her father Gaurav. The core of the narrative is around Pihu, an ignorant kid who is unaware of her mother's demise, and her father who is away throughout this situation as he heads to Kolkata for a business trip.

Opening Segment

One morning, Pihu wakes up next to her mother and tries to wake her up, not knowing she is dead. Realizing her mother is not responding, Pihu tries to get out of bed, goes to find her father, and realizes he is nowhere to be found in the house.

8 minutes into the movie (0:08:00–0:17:00), Pihu walks over to the running kitchen faucet. Despite her greatest efforts, she is unable to climb to the top of the counter. She returns to her mother's bedside and tries to rouse her once more, but this time she tries a variety of methods without success. She goes so far as to play her mother's favorite serial in an attempt to wake her. However, she reacts to the typical behavior of a child in this scenario and begins to cry. After a few minutes of sobbing, she manages to collect herself and attempts to do her tasks, such as brushing her teeth.

Her mother's phone rang a few minutes later. She can't reach the phone because it was placed on top and out of reach. She tries to bring one of the stools from the living room up the stairs to the first-floor bedroom. When the ringing stops, she returns to her mother and attempts to wake her up again.

Risk of medicine consumption

Pihu notices a bottle of medicine sliding from her mother's hand as she tries to wake her up. Pihu, being the inquisitive child that she was, asked her mother if she might have one of those. She holds it in her hand while waiting for her mother to respond, and after a few minutes, she chooses to dump the bottle and move on because she hasn't received a response.

Empathy towards mother

After a couple more minutes 0:20:00, the phone starts ringing, and this time Pihu successfully utilizes the stool to reach the phone on top of the rack. On the other end of the line was her dad, Gaurav. Thinking it was his wife on the other end of the line, Gaurav began yelling at the phone before he realized it was Pihu. Immediately after asking Puja to switch off the iron press, he ends the call.

Pihu is concerned when she discovers her mother's face covered in bruises a few minutes later. So, she decides to apply some ointment to the bruises in the hopes of alleviating her mother's misery. We could observe the child's sympathetic connection to the mother. Even though she is only two years old, she understands that her mother is being physically abused and that the treatment might help her relieve the pain. The heartbreaking sequence tends to demonstrate that the child understands the difficult situation that an adult is going through.

Fire Hazards and Hunger

At 0:25:00 in the movie, things start to get serious. Pihu gets scared when he sees smoke and decides to go find where it's coming from. Pihu finds the iron press and tries to get around it to get to the smoke, but she gets burned in the process. She starts to cry and runs to her mother to get help and comfort. She lies down on her mom and goes to sleep.

At 0:29:00, she wakes up again and tries to wake up her mom because she's hungry. Then she goes to get a bottle of milk and spills it by accident. She then goes downstairs to the kitchen, where she finds two rotis and chooses to heat them in the microwave. She turns the microwave on and hits every button she can find. But this makes the roti burn. She then tries to heat it on the stove, but it catches fire.

Safety threads

Around 0:34:00 Pihu opens the fridge, starts looking through all of the stuff, and finds a piece of cake, which she then casually eats. Then she removes the vegetables from the bottom of the fridge and makes some space, enough for her tiny body to fit in. This is another potential hazard where the child gets locked up inside the fridge, but after crying for a few minutes, she's able to push the door and make her way out of the fridge. She then starts eating the spilled jam. As she is eating, someone knocks on the door. The confused child doesn't know how to handle it and stays there as the visitor leaves, thinking no one is inside the house. She then tries to feed her mother.

Around 0:40:00, she begins playing with a balloon near the hot iron, which is another potential hazard that can go wrong in a variety of ways. But fortunately, nothing happens.

The mother's phone starts ringing again at about 0:42:00, and Pihu answers it. This time, the father recognizes Pihu and requests that she pass over the phone to her mother, asking if the hot iron has been switched off. He decides to hang up the phone after a few minutes of not hearing back from her.

After her deceased mother ignored her all day, Pihu started watching TV around 0:44:00 to keep herself entertained. The screen immediately turns black. The curious child gets up and walks towards the TV, not knowing what happened. When she looks behind the TV, she notices that it is full of unorganized wire, which is quite dangerous for a 2-year-old toddler. Fortunately, a knock on the door prevents her from touching the wires and power plugs.

Communication Issues

As the film progresses, Pihu experiences a cycle of moments, each more alarming than the last, as she navigates a home alone and her mother remains unresponsive. She abruptly wakes up from a brief nap to the sound of her mother's phone ringing, which only makes her more alarmed. The source of the chaos is revealed as the stabilizer in the kitchen bursts, amplifying Pihu's sense of fear and helplessness.

Around 0:52:00 Pihu seizes a moment of freedom, taking her cherished doll to the balcony to showcase it to a friend. However, in an unfortunate mishap, the doll slips from her grasp, plummeting to the ground below. Desperate for her doll's return, Pihu turns to her mother for help, only to find her unresponsive yet again. She makes a determined effort to reach the balcony's edge while calling out to her friend for help.

Amidst Pihu's distress, a watchful neighbor catches sight of the child's precarious situation and intervenes, offering a comforting promise to retrieve the fallen doll. This neighborly act of kindness offers a glimmer of hope in an otherwise unsettling chain of events, providing a brief respite for Pihu in her moment of need.

An hour into the film, the phone rings again, and this time it is Puja's friend Meera, who, having been a major cause of the dispute or quarrel between Puja and her husband, apologizes and asks her to meet her. She then hangs up the phone because, once again, Pihu is a child and is incapable of good communication. Later, Pihu's father phones her again, this time to apologize to his wife, but Pihu informs him that Puja is still asleep. He then begs Pihu to relay this message to her mother before hanging up the phone and returning to his appointment. Pihu plays with the tablets again at 1:04:00, falls asleep on her mother, and wakes up to another phone call from a hotline service.

Pihu gets hungry again around 1:06 in the movie, and she finds a floor cleaner that looks like milk. Pihu then begs her mother if she can have some. Pihu, unable to comprehend her mother's condition, walks away to secretly pour it into the bottle for herself, only to spill the cleaner all over the place.

The tap, which had been open since the beginning of the story, had filled the area with water, so our beloved little Pihu began playing in it. The neighbors thought the Pihu family had gone on vacation without stopping at their water tap.

Her father calls her again around 1:11:00 into the film, and Pihu demands that he tell her a story. While the father was telling a story, he heard Pihu coughing on the other end of the phone and told her to go to her mother for treatment. However, Pihu claims that her mother was still sleeping. Gaurav requests that Pihu wake Mom up, but Pihu insists that her mother is sleeping. Gaurav became suspicious and instantly called Meera while attempting to keep Pihu on the phone, but she was disconnected.

Pihu grabs her mother's tablets again about 1:17:00 minutes into the movie, and this time she eats a few of them after receiving no answer from her mother after asking if she could have some. She then goes to play for a while before falling asleep again.

Around 1:22 in the film, people notice that something is wrong in Pihu's house and begin gathering around to figure out what is going on, and they call the police for assistance. Later, they informed him, who was on his way back from Kolkata to the residence, only to discover his wife's dead body. Gaurav sobs and begins to lament his wife's death; unsure what to do, he begins apologizing to his wife. Pihu requests her father wake up his mother since "she was making a beautiful home"! Gaurav sobs.

Discussion

The film "Pihu" effectively portrays the vulnerability and fortitude of a little girl as she confronts a distressing and perilous circumstance while being abandoned in a residence with her deceased mother. The film effectively depicts the possible hazards and perils that children, such as Pihu, might encounter in such situations, including the likelihood of mishaps like fires resulting from her efforts to prepare meals.

The story emphasizes the importance of carrying out hazard prevention and child safety measures within families. It emphasizes the need to establish, create, and maintain a calm and safe environment for children, especially during their developmental stages. The short effectively highlights the several hazards that Pihu encounters within her house, emphasizing the importance of childproofing places and creating a secure environment for children's well-being and progress.

Similarly, the film tactfully explores the psychological consequences that a youngster may face when dealing with trauma and loneliness. Pihu's ordeal and her feeling of helplessness resulting

from inadequate means of communication and the absence of assistance highlight the significant influence of disruption and bereavement on a child's mental health. The statement underscores the critical importance of emotional support, understanding, and effective communication techniques to assist youngsters in dealing with difficult circumstances.

Given these characteristics, "Pihu" advocates for heightened consciousness and proactive involvement from the community in identifying and resolving possible indications of distress within homes. This emphasizes the significance of social awareness and attention towards the well-being of children in nearby homes to guarantee their safety and mental well-being. The movie deeply connects with viewers by highlighting the vital importance of a secure and supportive setting in a child's upbringing. It emphasizes how important it is to minimize hazards, raise community knowledge of mental health issues, and involve the community to protect children and provide an environment favourable to their healthy development.

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