

Intimate Partner Violence and its Realistic Projection: A Critical Study of Contemporary Indian Cinema

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Abstract

Despite an array of new statutes designed to safeguard women and punish abusers, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) continues to snuff out many lives leading to infringement of fundamental human rights and serious physical and mental health consequences. Like other societal phenomena, gender-based violence particularly IPV alongside its resistance, is prominently depicted in contemporary Indian cinema. By evaluating three films in light of a social responsibility paradigm which relies on realistic representation as its basic dimension, this research investigates how accurately IPV is portrayed across contemporary Indian cinema. The behavioural elements of the widely recognized The Duluth Model and Power and Control Wheel will be applied to determine realistic representation of IPV in each particular movie. This study focuses on films like Jasmeet K. Reen's *Darlings*, Charukesh Sekar's *Ammu* and Vipin Das's '*Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*' which premiered in year 2022 in Hindi, Telugu and Malyalam cinema respectively. The results demonstrate significant variations in the measure of social responsibility indicating that contemporary Indian cinema may play a significant role in realistic projection of IPV.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Indian cinema, realistic presentation, Power and control, social responsibility

Intimate Partner Violence and its Current Situation in India

A serious issue in India, and globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is when a partner physically, verbally, emotionally, and sexually abuses their intimate partner by exercising power and control over them. This term covers violence by both existing and former spouses or partners. (Sian Oram et al., 75) A severe infringement of human rights, IPV has human, social, and economic costs. (Rhys et al.,07) "The issue of violence against women is pervasive and has devastating consequences on girls and women's physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic well-being." (Gill & Rehman,76) The United Nations reports that "Worldwide, almost one third (27%) of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. Globally as many as 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners." (Violence Against Women) Additionally, it is said that "60% of the victims, either during or after the relationship dissolved corresponded to into the diagnostic mould for depression and have a significantly elevated risk of being suicidal."



(Barnett, 04) Numerous short- and long-term consequences for both physical and mental health, including a higher chance of injury, have been linked to intimate partner violence (IPV). (J. L. Fanslow & Robinson, 2011; Liu et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2021) “The most common mental health outcomes reported are depression (70% of all included studies), PTSD (29%), and anxiety (17%).” (White et al. 503) The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that in 2021, the shocking 15.3% of cases of violence against women in India are the result of continuing spikes in this domain. (NCRB Report 2021-22) The National Family Health study (NFHS), a huge-scale, multi-round research carried out in Indian families, has released its latest report, which claims: “29.3% married Indian women between the ages of 18-49 years have faced domestic violence or sexual violence.” (NFHS Survey 2019-2021) The data illustrates the tragic fact that, despite stringent laws protecting women, such as The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (Amended in 1986), Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 IPV is still an extensive issue in India. The study analyses that dropout in perpetrator intervention programs (PIPs) lead to intimate partner violence recidivism, and suggests that individuals requiring more intensive intervention are those who derive less benefit from it. (Cunha, et.al.) Assaults against women are prevalent in India and worldwide and attributable to repressive societal standards. “Furthermore, it is proven that violence against women is sustained by men's ingrained assumption that they are powerful than women.” (Elbert et al.,37).

In any contemporary civilization, the media particularly the film industry has a profoundly forming influence on social standards and behaviour. From its inception to the present, Indian film has been an authoritative and pivotal vehicle of popular communication and entertainment, and it has consistently featured women multifariously. During the Covid shutdown, television and streaming sites have exploded in prominence globally and render a platform to explore crucial societal matters. The contemporary boom of Indian cinema signified an abrupt shift and evolved into an embodiment of women's liberation and empowerment, honouring their manifold positions in society. Examining gender-based representations in cinema is a fascinating field of study and also a way to learn about contemporary society's socio-cultural perspectives. This study provides a framework aimed at assessing the relative societal responsibility of the realistic ways that IPV is portrayed in modern Indian cinema. By looking at a few chosen films, one may assess how realistically and responsibly these films portray IPV and draw conclusions from it.



Duluth Model and Power and Control Wheel: Model for Study

The Duluth Model and Power and Control Wheel (see Fig 1), developed in 1984, are one of the most frequently used psychoeducational, community-based interventions for IPV and abusers. (Scott; Snead et al.). Power and Control Wheel provides a feminist theoretical framework to identify IPV as male phenomenon that illustrates how men adopt eight different violent, abusing, and coercive behaviour patterns to exercise power and control over their female companions. (Scott; Snead et al.) Also explained in *Coercive Control: How Men Trap Women in Personal Life*, by Evan Stark, “The Power and Control Wheel is the most prevalent graphic representation of abuse. It was developed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, Minnesota. The spokes of the original wheel indicate different types of coercive control, such as isolation, economic control, emotional and sexual abuse, and others, while the hub, now shown as the rim, signifies violence.” (13) (See Figure 1.) “It is widely acknowledged that the core components of the "Power and Control Wheel" offer a useful conceptual framework for identifying and explaining the coercive control that female partners experience in their social, economic, and cultural environments.” (Ali and Naylor, 612) As observed in various studies that Power and Control Wheel lists numerous kinds of abuse, warning indicators, and abuser profiles. IPV mostly happens when an abuser exploits it to keep control and power in an intimate relationship. (Tscholl and Scribano, Straus et al.) The wheel makes the pattern, intent, and impact of violence visible. (Power and Control) “Coercive and controlling violence includes an ecosystem of behaviors that are used by perpetrators to gain power and control over their victims and to maintain this power throughout the relationship.” (Smith, 12) In addition to the various possible causes of IPV that have been implied, studies show “that a centuries-old traditional cultural norms that see women as inferior to males and deeply ingrained male gender stereotypes are among the primary factors why IPV is more prevalent in emerging nations like India.” (Gundappa and Rathod, 03) As it is being affirmed in “Conceptualising Violence and Gender” that “Actions (and intentions) and harm (and nonconsent) are together necessary for the definition of violence for use in the measurement framework” (Walby et al., 31) The present study evaluates films such as *Darlings*, *Ammu*, and *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* in order to determine how realistically IPV is portrayed in Indian cinema. Content analysis is being used in order to look at how psychological and physical abuse portrayed in contemporary cinema.



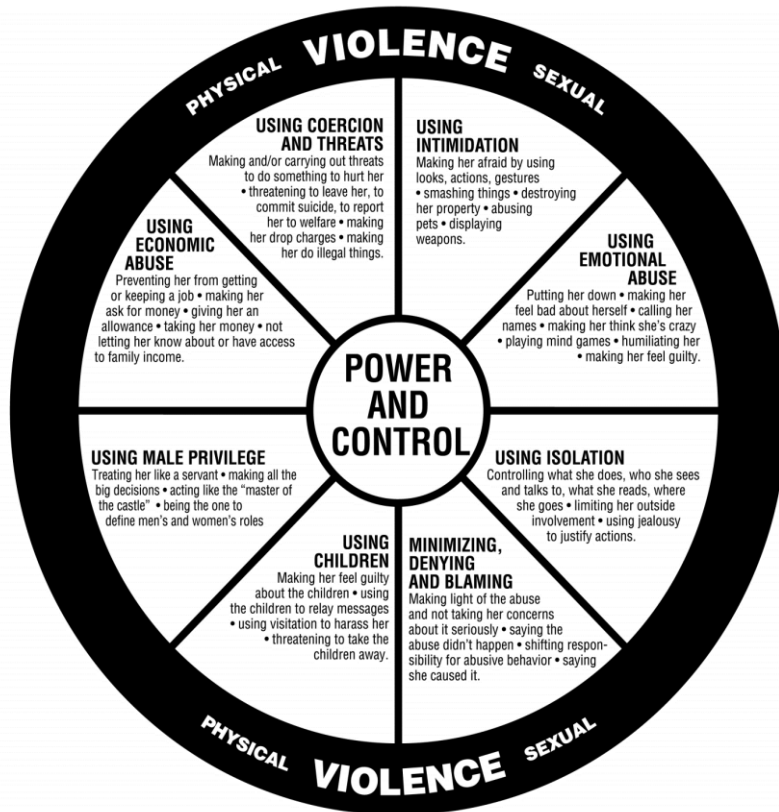


Fig.1 DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS (www.theduluthmodel.org)

Table 1. Model Components and the Rating Criteria

Dimension Name	Dimension Description	Criteria Rating	Standard for Criteria Rating (High, Medium, or Low)
Realistic portrayal of IPV	The standard framework for IPV behaviours is applied to evaluate how realistically abuse is portrayed. For each film, Power and Control Wheel (PCW) is examined which presented eight distinct forms of violence such as: (1) coercion and threats, (2)	High (3)	A truthful and unbiased depiction of IPV in relation to Power and Control Wheel (PCW). Film offers an informed view of the dynamics of IPV.
		Medium(2)	A limited comprehension and interaction with PCW, the dynamics of IPV.



	Intimidation (3) emotional abuse, (4) isolation (5) use of children (6) male privilege (7) economic abuse (8) minimizing, denying, and blaming	Low (1)	Inaccurate or perhaps deceptive or little to none at all portrayal of IPV in connection of PCW.
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Assessment of Realistic Presentation of IPV in *Darlings*

‘Darlings’ film premiered in 2022 on Netflix and immerses us in the lives of Badru and Hamza a married couple of Byculla, Mumbai. After a three-year marriage marked by romance and mild indiscretions, Hamza abuses his wife severely, accusing alcohol as the sole reason of this abuse. Even when Badru is pregnant, Hamza continues to bash her because he believes she is having an affair. Badru vows to avenge after recognising the actual devil in Hamza.

Table 2. Application of the Duluth Model to *‘Darlings’*

Duluth Area of Abuse	Elements of Abusive Behaviour	Rating	Description
1.COERCION AND THREATS	Carrying out threats to hurt her or commit suicide, taking her drop charges	H (3)	Badru was threatened by Hamza to kill himself, by pounding his head against the wall. He tries to strangled her several times and push her on stairs which resulted into miscarriage. By convincing her that he would give up alcohol and start over once again, Hamza persuades Badru to withdraw the allegations of domestic abuse against him.



2. INTIMIDATION	Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gesture smashing things	H (3)	Hamza usually gave frightening look to make her afraid. He forcibly tries to dunk her face into boiling curry and play a game by smashing heels on her fingers.
3. EMOTIONAL ABUSE	Putting her down, playing mind games. humiliating her, making her feel guilty.	H (3)	Hamza is constantly reminding Badru that he is immensely in love with her. He stresses their co-dependency and her domestic obligations toward him. He plays mind games and convince her to drop charges in the police station.
4. ISOLATION	Controlling what she does and limiting her outside involvement.	L (1)	Badru plans to take revenge from Hamza with the help of her mother and friend Zulfi.
5. MALE PRIVILEGE	Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions,	M (2)	Hamza never took Badru's opinion seriously regarding new house or having baby. He controls each and every important decision and limit her role to the four walls of house. He acts like the "master of the castle" and define men's and women's roles.
6. USING CHILDREN	Making her feel guilty about the children	M (2)	Badru is quite emotional for being a mother, so Hamza blackmail her for dropping charges. As soon he came to know that Zulfi has complained against him, he reaches to conclusion that Badru is having an affair with Zulfi and pregnant with



			his child. He pushes her down a flight of stairs, which results in her miscarriage.
7. ECONOMIC ABUSE	Preventing her from getting or keeping a job or taking financial decisions	M (2)	Hamza controls all economic decisions of the house and limit Badru to household chores. He tries to strangled her when she asks him to meet builder for new flat.
8.MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING	Making light of the abuse, shifting responsibility for abusive behavior	H (3)	Hamza beats Badru regularly and behave quite normal next morning. He minimizes his abuse and considered it also his way of expressing love. He also blames alcohol for his abusive behaviour.
OVERALL RATING FOR REALISTIC PRESENTATION OF IPV		Total points=19	Result: 19/8=2.3 M-H 2.3 This film rates 2.3 on the portfolio Chart

Assessment of Realistic Presentation of IPV in *Ammu*

Ammu is a Telugu film released in 2022 on Amazon Prime video. Like any other victim in a toxic and violent relationship, the main character of the movie, Amudha, also known as Ammu, is married to police officer Ravi and suffers the assault physical and mental both. She obsesses over things, puts too much guilt on herself, and tries in vain to transform her partner by means of love. The film does a fantastic job of illustrating how women are socialised to endure domestic violence for many generations, and how most of them even come to terms with it as the norm. The film also projects her strives for freedom and to coming out of a toxic wedlock.



Table 3. Application of the Duluth Model to ‘Ammu’

Duluth Area of Abuse	Elements of Abusive Behaviour	Rating	Description
1.COERCION AND THREATS	Carrying out threats to hurt her, making her drop charges	H (3)	Ravi left Ammu on the road in midnight after an argument. He constantly threatens her with angry messages full of recriminations, insults, and even death threat. He threatened her to drop charges of domestic violence.
2.INTIMIDATION	Making her afraid by using Looks, actions, gesture smashing things	H (3)	Ravi usually made Ammu afraid with his ferocious looks, abusive actions and savage gestures. He smashes food plate, thrash her mercilessly with his service belt. Moreover, he mis-uses his power as a police officer and spying over her.
3. EMOTIONAL ABUSE	Putting her down, playing mind games. humiliating her, making her feel guilty.	H (3)	Ravi humiliates Ammu when she brings lunch lately. He disparages Ammu before his colleagues and projects her as an incompetent wife. When she went to file a complaint of domestic abuse against him, he evinces her insane in the sight of lady police officer. He pretends to be a loving and caring husband before others but calls her with names such as stupid and useless.
4. ISOLATION	Controlling what she does and limiting her outside involvement.	H (3)	Ravi controls Ammu’s all actions and limits her outside involvement. He even controls her dressing, her talk, even abstain her to befriend in neighbourhood.



5.MALE PRIVILEGE	Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions,	H (3)	Ravi considers himself the master of the house and treat Ammu as a domestic servant. Ammu cannot do anything without his prior permission. In a scene, he beats her mercilessly as the food got burnt because she was busy in fixing button in his uniform.
6. USING CHILDREN	Making her feel guilty about the children	M (2)	Ravi dominates her decision of pregnancy by swaping her contraceptive pills. He wants to use child as a weapon to bound her in this abusive relationship.
7. ECONOMIC ABUSE	Preventing her from getting or keeping a job or taking financial decisions	N/A	The film does not address economic or financial matters related to the couple.
8.MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING	Making light of the abuse and saying the abuse didn't happen shifting responsibility for abusive behavior	H (3)	Ravi took his anger and abusive behaviour lightly and blames Ammu for his anger. He shifts all responsibility for abusive behavior toward Ammu and affirms her culpable.
OVERALL RATING FOR REALISM		Total points: 20	Result: 20/8=2.5 M-H 2.5 This film rates 2.5 on the portfolio chart



Assessment of Realistic Presentation of IPV in *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*

Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey is a dark comedy written and presented like a humorous tall tale, but what makes it so amazing is that it has a strong real-world foundation and addresses issues of gender equality and IPV. Jaya an intelligent and free-spirited girl marries to Rajesh, a chauvinist, aggressive, irritable, and self-centred individual and entrapped into an abusive and doomed life. But he finds himself in hot water when she chooses to strike back.

Table 4. Application of the Duluth Model to *Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*

Duluth Area of Abuse	Elements of Abusive Behaviour	Rating	Description
1.COERCION AND THREATS	Carrying out threats to hurt her or commit suicide, making her drop charges	M (2)	When Jaya object of throwing food plate Rajesh smack her and threaten her that he will teach a lesson if she ever raises her voice in future.
2.INTIMIDATION	Making her afraid by using Looks, actions, gesture smashing things	M (2)	Rajesh often waving his hands in Jaya's face as a sign of annoyance and mounting anger. Also, he stands close to her to indicate that he is ready to attack if she dares to displease him.
3.EMOTIONAL ABUSE	Putting her down, playing mind games. humiliating her, making her feel guilty.	L (1)	Rajesh put her down and make her feel culpable for their dysfunctional marriage. He played with her mind by pretending to be a caring husband and ensnared her into pregnancy.
4. ISOLATION	Controlling what she does and limiting her outside involvement.	M (2)	Rajesh is quite stubborn about his food choice. He controls Jaya's food choices, movie choice. He doesn't event let Jaya go to her parents' home.



5.MALE PRIVILEGE	Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions	H (3)	Rajesh is quite insensitive about Jaya's feelings and consider himself owner of the house. No one can eat food before he came. He wants her to be attentive to his services as a household servant.
6. USING CHILDREN	Making her feel guilty about the children	N/A	Jaya and Rajesh have no child.
7. ECONOMIC ABUSE	Preventing her from getting or keeping a job or taking financial decisions	N/A	The film does not address economic or financial matters related to the couple.
8.MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING	Making light of the abuse and shifting responsibility for abusive behavior	H (3)	Rajesh slapped Jaya even for small things and blamed his anger caused by her actions. He minimizes his abuse as nothing happened and tries to compensate his abuse by taking her out for movie and dinner of his own choice and ask if she is happy now.
OVERALL RATING FOR REALISM		Total Points= 13	Result: 13/8= 1.6 M-H 1.6 This film rates 1.6 on the portfolio chart.

Result: Portfolio Comparison of Three Films



This table shows the results of rating each of the three films by the key criteria. The rating also represents the social responsibility of contemporary Indian cinema in projecting the realistic presentation of IPV in relation to Duluth Model and Power and Control Wheel.

Film Name	Rating
<i>Darlings</i>	2.3
<i>Ammu</i>	2.5
<i>Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey</i>	1.6

Table 5. The Duluth Model: Ranking of the three Films for Realistic presentation of IPV

Conclusion

In order to penetrate the social realm of an intimate relationship marked by divergent forms of abuse and its indications, as viewed through the power and control wheel (PCW), the research tried to conduct comparative examination of realistic presentation of IPV in selected films. On the PCW, physical and sexual violence can be observed on the outline of the wheel, exterior to control mechanism located inside the eight spokes which forms the wheel. Violence and the threat of violence, in any manner, foster victim compliance by growingly controlling the way a victim behaves. At the nucleus of all of these behaviors, located in the center of the wheel, is the urge by the batterer to acquire control over the victim and to establish power in the relationship. The application of Duluth Model in selected films affirms power and control as prime triggers of abusive behaviors. These films also illustrate how physical and sexual violence are not always present in abusive relationships. The threat of physical and sexual violence exists, and is exacerbated through multiple controlling behaviors. The films not only accentuate the gravitas of IPV but also hearten women to confront violent relationships, break them off, and lead an autonomous existence. Realising that their relationship is toxic and needs to cease, Badru, Ammu, and Jaya painfully retaliate against their intimate partners. In three of these films, one of the main narratives involves pregnancy, which is portrayed as a man's decision rather than the woman's. The current study makes it clear that some sociocultural practises that provide legitimacy to issues based on gender need to be disapproved of. These films strive to illuminate the realities of IPV while also challenging social norms, igniting discourse, and exposing the underlying root causes of the problem. These films serve as a mirror for countless women who have been delude and conditioned by patriarchy to



contemplate that violence and love can co-exist. In order to foster women's well-being and smash the cycle of violence that renders women victims, the researchers propose that extending studies centered on The Duluth Model and power and control wheel is a potential avenue.

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