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## **The Gender Disparities in Public Relation Characters: Analyzing the Glass Ceiling In Hollywood**

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the gender inequalities with respect to the representation of women in such theme of Public Relations related Hollywood movies. The purpose is to comprehend the image of women in PR, more particularly in terms of the technical roles, the nature of work they are involved in the campaigns, and the nature orientations to family or not. The research methodology is largely expository and makes visage of semantic content analysis with portion of purposive sampling. The sample includes the movie "The Square (2017)", in particular the PR campaign, as it is the best nowadays American film according to IMDb. There is data collected on technical, primary, or secondary positions occupied by the female characters and family orientation. The results clearly show that ladies are discriminated on great most of the time and in most instances, it is more about women going under PR and being less family oriented. The paper highlights the way forward out of this limitation, concerning the representation of women in the film sector by breaking the gender stereotypes.

*Keywords: Gender, Hollywood film, Public Relations, Semantic analysis, Technical role*

## **Introduction**

This research paper examines the Hollywood films on the depiction of the female professionals working in the field of Public Relations. It focuses on the significance of women to the film's main plot and if they are presented in nontechnical, secondary roles having no family orientation along with no professionalism. While we cannot say how audiences perceive the field of public relations based solely on its portrayal in movies and television shows, it is widely acknowledged across various industries that media play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of a profession (Hill,2009). Miller (1999) says that films have the potential to give details and description on the public relations profession and roles for those who have no direct understanding on this field. Since public relations is not

a profession that people encounter regularly, unlike other ones, its depictions in popular culture often serve as the sole point of reference for many individuals.

### **1.1 Women in Public Relations field**

A continuing inquiry into the role of women in the field of PR was influenced by the identification of the "velvet ghetto of affirmative action" by Business Week in 1978, to describe the phenomenon of women being predominantly employed in secondary and nontechnical roles (IABC, 1984; Grunig & Grunig, 1995.)

Because many women are not working in the field of PR, the face of PR is considered to be female as per Adoory, 2005. Donato, 1991 points out that this is not mainly because women are considered technical or management experts but because they are considered as emotional labour who can assist in relationship building (Donato, 1990, p. 139). Grunig has pointed out at the need for the women to balance the family and professional life and that is why they can fit completely in wither of the two roles as per the society standards (Grunig, et al., 2001). These stereotypes are further reinforced by the film industry rather than being questioned. This greatly affects the PR industry's industry and roles expectations.

### **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Public Relations is an emerging field in the world. Though it has existed since decades but with the expansion in the technology and demand for more relationship building in order for business to prevail, it has not been becoming the mainstream area. Both men and women have different roles in the industry, but these roles are largely affected by how they are depicted in the mass media. Hollywood films play a significant role in forwarding these ideals to society. It has been noted that whenever women are portrayed in communication or Public Relations roles in the Hollywood films, gender disparities are prevalent by reinforcing stereotypical representations of women in terms of their roles, responsibilities, and limited representation. This media portrayal can impact industry standards, generating gender biases and impacting the perception of women in the industry. It is therefore imperative to conduct a thorough examination of Hollywood movies and discover any gender

disparities. This study aims to conduct a semantic analysis of two top-rated movies as per IMDb that revolve around the Public Relations campaigns, *The Square* and *Don't Look Up*. Study will identify any gender disparities in the portrayal of PR and communication roles and assess the potential impact of these stereotypes on the industry. Through this qualitative analysis, we aim to contribute to scholarship in the field of gender and public relations in the film industry.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the representation of women in technical roles within the Public Relations characters in Hollywood movies, and identify any gender disparities in their portrayal.
2. To analyze the roles and responsibilities assigned to women within the Public Relations in Hollywood movies, and assess the extent to which women are depicted in secondary rather than primary roles.
3. To investigate the depiction of women in the Public Relations roles in Hollywood movies, and determine whether they are more likely to be portrayed as single and independent, as opposed to family-oriented.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How women are represented in technical roles within the Public Relations roles in Hollywood movies, and if there are any observed gender disparities?
2. What roles and responsibilities are assigned to the women in the Public Relations roles in Hollywood films, and if women are depicted as primary secondary to the plot?
3. How women in the PR roles depicted when it comes the family-orientation in Hollywood movies?

## **Literature Review**

Gender disparities in the entertainment industry have long been a topic of interest. This has particularly focused on how women are underrepresented, and the dominant roles are assigned to their male counterparts. One of such movies are the one that are made on the public relations profession. Women characters are

portrayed in the subordinate roles in these movies. The literature reflects light on this aspect of the entertainment industry and how the concept of glass ceiling has been pervasive in the media industry.

The glass ceiling i.e., the invisible barrier that keeps the women from reaching the dominant and prominent sections and positions is not only on-screen, but it begins from behind the screen (Choueiti et al., 2019; Madeline Di Nonno & Stacy L. Smith, 2019). A study conducted by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at the University of Southern California stated that mere 4.8% of the top grossing movies of 2019 were directed by the female directors. Even the background roles and support jobs were mainly held by males, giving only 21% to the females. The lack of portrayal of women in the dominant roles and the consistent glass ceiling keeps the women from progression.

Horne and Boyd (2009) found that women are mainly presented as sex appeal in the films. Even if they take the role of the businesswomen or are given any professional roles, the character arc somehow takes away the professional aspect and adds the soft image adding the glass ceiling. This overall generalizes the negative connotation to the women in the field and raises questions on their work efforts and contributions. The restriction in the portrayal of their roles limits them reaching the influential positions. Study promulgated that the portrayal of females as mere 'dumb blondes' is not uncommon for Hollywood.

Similar concerns were raised by the study carried out by Kim and Willis (2007) who found that the movies that were made on the profession of PR gave more screen time and prominent roles to males. They observed that even when the female was the protagonist, they still had to face the glass ceiling and were not given the kind of serious screen time that was given to the male protagonist.

Lauzen et al.'s study (2019) found that women are simply expected to look youthful and attractive even when they are carrying out a serious professional character. The same is not expected from the males. Smith et al. (2019) raised the similar concerns and stated that the only outcome that the films are trying to achieve from the female characters is to make them look sexualized and attractive. From

script to screen time and from camera angles to the visual cues, everything is focusing on that.

A study by O'Brien and Lee (2018) used semantic analysis to analyze the representation of gender in the top 100 grossing films of 2016. Male characters were consistently placed in higher-powered roles as leaders, while female characters often played supportive parts as wives and mothers, the study found. The study also discovered that female characters were overall also more sexualized, objectified and treated as objects than their male counterparts. In a different type of study, Eichner and Johnson (2016) used semantic analysis to examine the description of gender in movie scripts between 1970 and 2013. Although the overall amount of gendered language in movie scripts has decreased, the study concluded that leadership roles remain male-dominated.

Although there is some data on Hollywood films about the number of women in different professions for example, research so far neglects specific analysis of the PR roles. For example, a review article from Smith excerpted in Tab. (1,200 popular movies released from 2007 to 2018 were analyzed for gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ, and disability representations. Similarly, Eichner and Johnson (2016) studied the role of the women presented in various roles for Hollywood movies to determine if gender equality was present on the silver screen. Although they do not focus on gender representation in the PR roles, these works provide a broader picture of the gender landscape across media industries. Similarly. Furthermore, Lauzen, Davis & Smith (2019) examined the 100 top grossing films of 2018 and discussed employment opportunities for women behind-the-scenes.

This circumstance led to a dearth of research on how the movies depict public relation roles and gender inequalities that this paper attempts to fill the gap. There is a need for this gap to be filled by more explicit analysis, as important as the published literature has been in providing wider context and critical background. The need for more research incorporating semantic analysis of gender disparities as they relate to movie representations within public relations is a possible further limitation. Though others have examined gender disparities depicted in movies

through content analysis, semantic analysis might offer a deeper and more subtle understanding of how these portrayals manifest themselves. The current study intends to fulfil these gap by employing semantic analysis to analyze gender disparities portrayal in movies in public relation roles.

The importance of this study is highlighted by its contribution to public relations and the understanding of gender roles within the industry. The results can offer valuable insights to researchers, practitioners, and industry leaders, helping them to recognize and confront any gender biases that may be present. Ultimately, this study aims to foster gender equality and contribute to a more inclusive and fair industry.

## **Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

To explore the gender disparities in portrayals of public relations roles in the Hollywood movies, the researcher has used the Descriptive method. In order to carry out this analysis, the researcher has carried out a qualitative sampling.

Researcher has employed semantic analysis using nonrandom technique of purposive sampling, in which movies will be selected based on a time period of the release and top IMBd rating. The purpose of the sampling is to ensure that the media content analyzed is relevant to the research question and allows for meaningful interpretation and analysis.

By using the semantic theory, the researchers can provide a comprehensive overview of the topic, and identify key factors in the portrayal of Public Relations roles in terms of gender disparities in the Hollywood movies.

### **3.2 Population**

To achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions, a semantic analysis of top-rated Hollywood movies has been conducted. The sample has been drawn from the top 100 highest-grossing Hollywood movies of the past decade (2012-2024), as listed on IMDb (Inter Movie Database). These movies have

been selected as they represent the most popular and commercially successful movies of recent years.

### 3.3 Sampling technique

Non random, Purposive (to choose top movies on Public Relations topic from the contemporary times)

### 3.4 Sample

Movie "The Square (2017)" with 7.1 ranking has been chosen as it is among the **top 10 movies** in the IMDb ranking in the **Public Relations category**<sup>1</sup>. Among other top movies, prominence has been given to the **top 10 movies of the contemporary times**, and those that had their main **plot around PR roles or PR Campaign** as compared to the movies that were ranked higher but had less part touching the Public Relations area. For example, in the movie, "The Martian" (2015), the protagonist Mark Watney is tasked with keeping a video diary of his experience on Mars, which is then edited and broadcasted back to Earth by the NASA PR team. The PR team's goal is to promote the agency's image and garner public support for the rescue mission to save Watney. However, the PR part is overshadowed by the NASA's mission. "The Square"(2017) is a Swedish satirical drama film that focuses on the contemporary art world and the PR roles. The movie portrays a male-dominated industry, where men hold most of the high-level positions and make all the significant decisions.

### 3.5 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis are the female characters in the movies who work in the PR roles or are running PR campaigns. In the movie "The Square" (2017), there are several female characters who work in the public relations roles:

1. **Anne (AN):** Anne, a journalist who becomes romantically involved with the main character, Christian. Anne is a complex character who challenges Christian's worldview and his perception of himself.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/search/keyword/?keywords=public-relations>

2. Michaela (**MI**): The head of the advertising agency that Christian hires to promote the museum's new exhibit. Her agency plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of the museum through their PR tactics.
3. Ingrid (**IN**): An employee of the advertising agency that Christian
4. Elna (**EL**) (Museum Board of Directors): A member of the board of directors at the X-Royal Museum.
5. Josephine (**JO**) (The Assistant): Christian's dedicated and efficient assistant at the museum.
6. Female journalist (**FE**): A woman who interviews Christian during a public event but is interrupted by an angry man in the crowd.
7. Nicki (**NI**) (The Intern): A young and inexperienced intern who works at the museum.

### **3.6 Variables**

Data has been collected on the following variables:

- Gender
- Technical role
- Primary or secondary role
- Family orientation.

### **3.7 Coding**

The coding scheme has been developed based on the research questions and objectives.

The study's limitations include the narrow focus on Hollywood movies, the reliance on secondary data sources, and the potential subjective interpretation of the data. However, this study's findings will provide valuable insights into the representation of gender in the area of Public Relations in Hollywood movies, highlighting the gender disparities that exist, offering suggestions for ways to address them.

## **4. Data Analysis**

**Anne**

**Symbols:** Anne is shown in stylish in feminine clothing in approximately 16 scenes, while Christian is shown in practical, professional clothing in approximately 14 scenes.

**Language and Speaking:** Anne is portrayed as emotional and overly reactive in approximately 20 scenes, as compared to Christian who is portrayed as stoic and rational in approximately 10 scenes. Anne's desperation is shown through camera angles in approximately 5 scenes.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Anne's transformation from confident journalist to dependent woman in a romantic relationship with Christian is presented in approximately 8 scenes.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Anne's depiction in relation to her romantic relationships is shown in approximately 10 scenes, and the use of the stack of chairs in the background to convey her frustration is shown in approximately 3 scenes.

**Codes:** Anne is coded as "feminine" in approximately 25 scenes, through her appearance, behavior, and emotional reactions.

### **Josephine**

**Symbols:** Josephine is shown wearing professional attire and carrying a clipboard in approximately 6 scenes.

**Language and Speaking:** She speaks in a polite and but nonprofessional or unconfident manner in approximately 4 scenes.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Josephine's lack of significant role is shown in a specific number of scenes, depicted through the lack of camera attention when she speaks or leaves the frame.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Her non-technical role is indirectly conveyed in approximately 1 scene where she leaves the room along with Nicki and nobody pays attention.

**Codes:** Josephine's role in the film represents the organizational structure and bureaucracy of the art world and is shown in approx 6 scenes.

**The journalist** appears in one scene of the interview and is dressed professionally and holding a microphone, indicating her role as a journalist. It is also highlighted that she is objectified by the audience member who calls her out with sexual remarks.

**Ingrid** appears in several scenes throughout the film, but her role is not as prominent as some of the other male characters. She appears in around 5 to 6 scenes where she is presented as secondary to the plot.

**Michella's** character has a relatively minor role in the film, and her appearances are limited to a few key scenes.

**Nicki's** wardrobe and appearance are eccentric and her portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes about women in professional settings, particularly those in assistant roles, throughout the film.

**Elna** appears in approximately 7-8 scenes throughout the movie, though she is not always prominently featured in those scenes.

### Semantic Analysis of The Square

	Symbols	Language and Speaking	Synchronic vs. Diachronic	Metonymy and Metaphor
<b>Anne</b> (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)	16	20	8	10
<b>Michaela</b>	1	0	0	2

<b>Ingrid</b>	4	2	2	4
<b>Elna</b>	5	3	2	2
<b>Josephine assistant</b>	6	4	1	1
<b>Female journalist</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Nicki (Assistant)</b>	2	1	0	1

*Table 1: Semantic Analysis of The Square (2017)*

## **4.2 Data Description for The Square (2017)**

### **4.2.1 Female Representation in Technical Roles**

In the industry or the area that the women are working in, more women are shown in nontechnical roles as opposed to the men e.g. Anne, the journalist is never seen in her actual role except for one interview. Ingrid, Josephine and Nicki are apparently part of the communication or ad agency's team, but they are seen performing other tasks in the movie rather than the technical role of the field. However, Elna is shown as the part of BoD of the museum while Micheala as the head of ad agency but they are not involved in many strategic debates. Similarly, the female journalist who appears only in one scene and has a great stake in transferring the essence of the PR campaign to the public is shown in the technical role which later gets mocked out with female abuse.

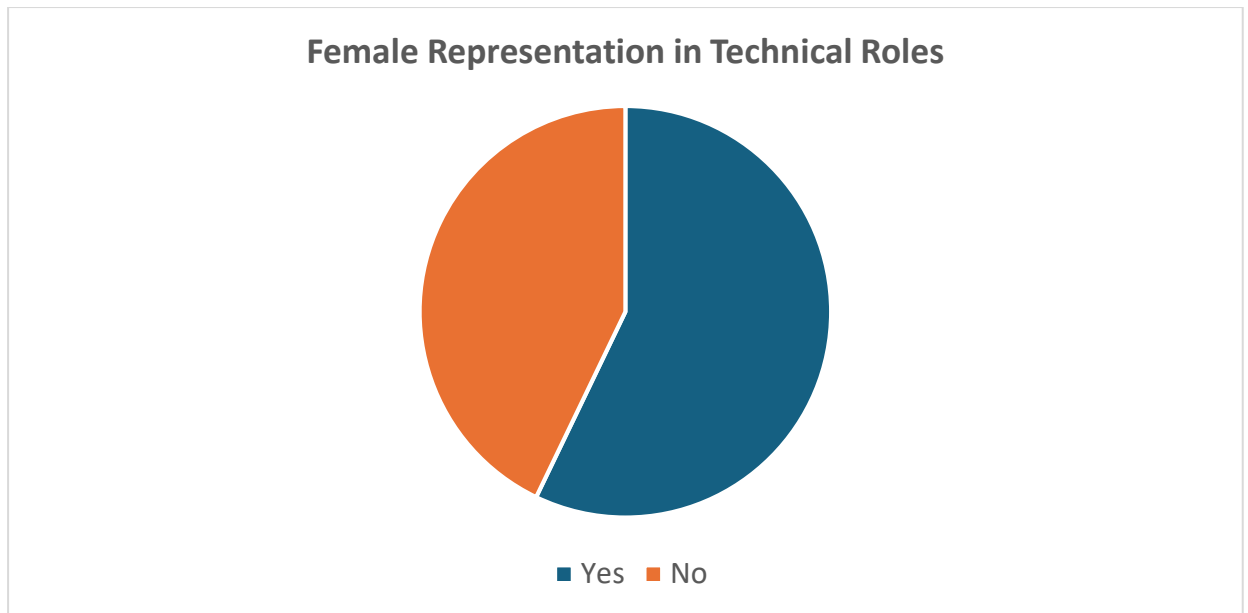


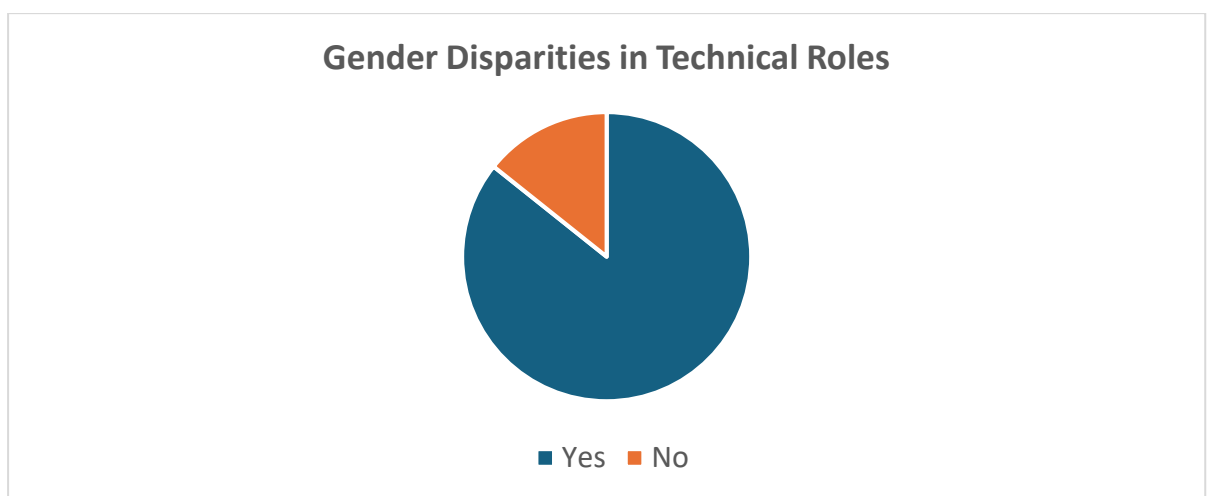
Figure 1: Female Representation in Technical Roles

**Female Representation in Technical Roles**

	Yes	No	Gender Neutral
<i>Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)</i>		2	
<i>Michaela</i>	1		
<i>Ingrid</i>		2	
<i>Elna</i>	1		
<i>Josefina assistant</i>		2	
<i>Female journalist</i>	1		
<i>Nicki (Assistant)</i>		2	

**4.2.2 Gender Disparities in Technical Roles**

Except for Elna, all the characters are shown in sexual, non-technical light as compared to their make counterparts in the film for instance at 55:44 Josefina is shown second time in the movie while Cristian celebrates getting his phone and wallet back. Here she is shown sitting in his lap while he enjoys piano. Josefina was shown previously in a scene when Christian was planning his PR Strategy on the Square in the initial scenes of the movie. She has no **intellectual input as she stays quite throughout the scene.**



*Figure 2: Gender Disparities in Technical Roles*

### Gender Disparities in Technical Roles

	Yes	No
Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)	1	
Michaela	1	
Ingrid	1	
Elna		2

<b>Josefina assistant</b>	1
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<b>Female journalist</b>	1
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*Nicki (Assistant)*

*Table 3: Gender Disparities  
in Technical Roles*

### **4.2.3 Roles Assigned to Women**

Anne is a journalist but more often she is shown in a romantic relationship with Christian having intimate scenes, even when she confronts him on his wring depiction of arts, she is seen waiting outside the restroom with him where she brings in the topic of “female interviewee being called as Cunt” rather than any other technicalities that have to be discussed with him on his idea around the Square as was discussed by Christian’s male assistants. Elna and Micheala are although the part of BoD and head of ad agency yet in the decision making around the PR campaign for the square, they are shown in secondary roles. All other women too have no primary or key role that runs the plot. Even the execution and announcement of the PR campaign on the square is headed by male assistants.

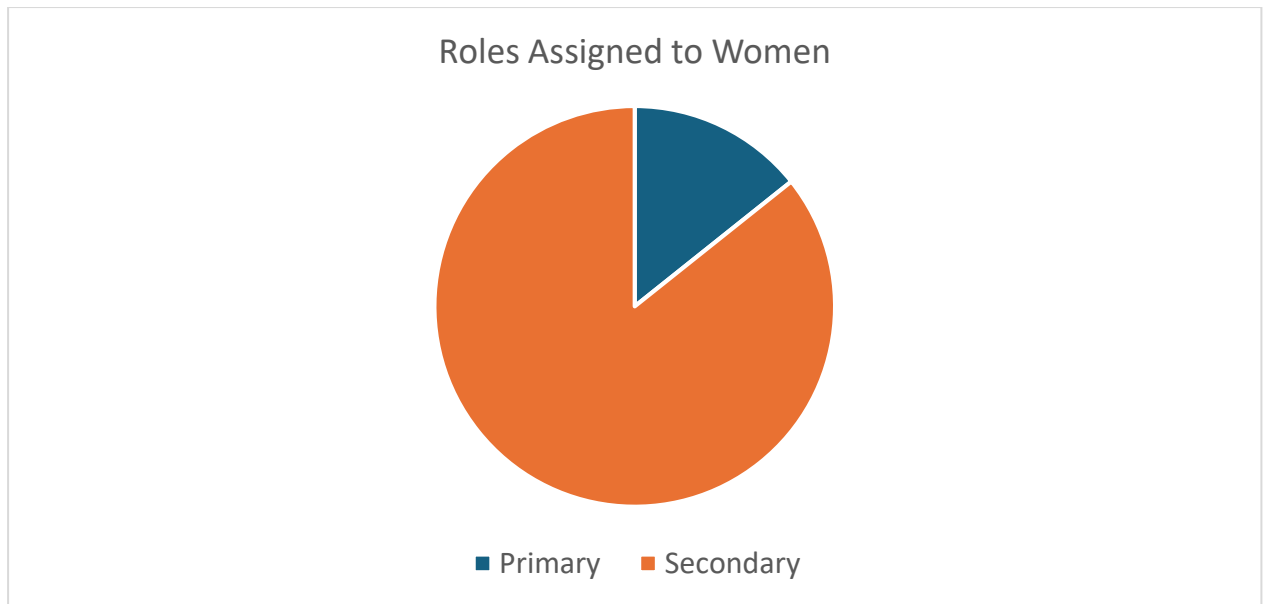


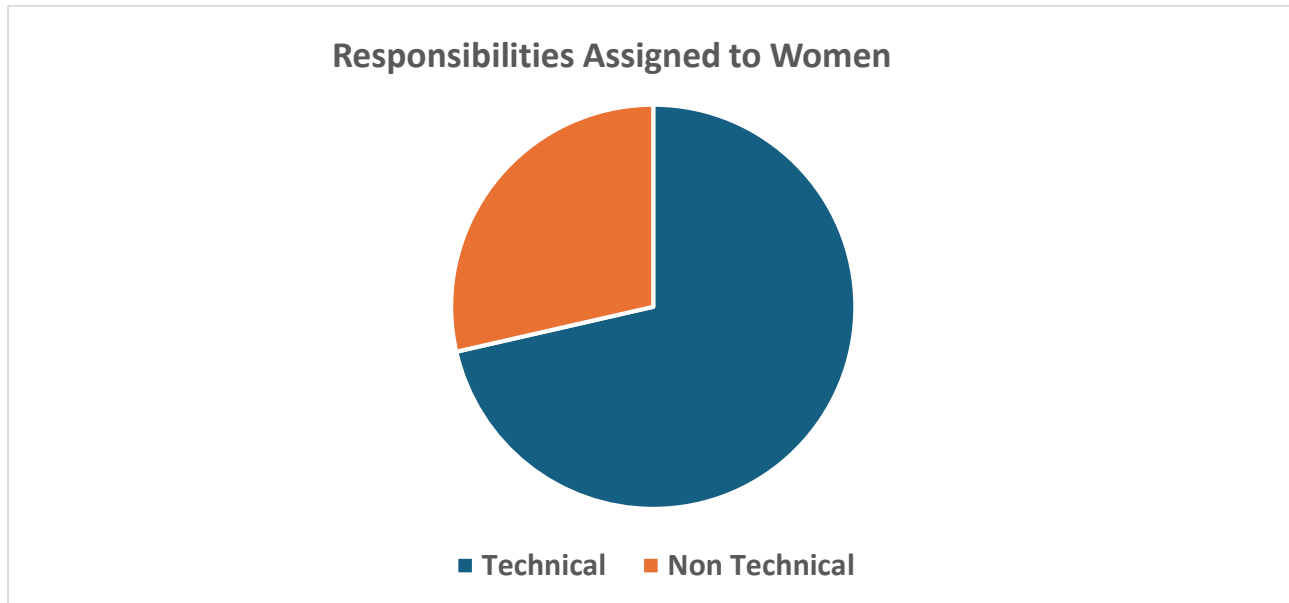
Figure 3: Roles Assigned to Women

*Roles Assigned to Women*

	Primary	Secondary
<i>Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)</i>	1	
<i>Michaela</i>		2
<i>Ingrid</i>		2
<i>Elna</i>		2
<i>Josefina assistant</i>		2
<i>Female journalist</i>		2
<i>Nicki (Assistant)</i>		2

**4.2.4 Responsibilities Assigned to Women**

Except for Elna, Micheala and the female journalist who conducts the interview, all the women are assigned nontechnical positions like assistants etc.



*Figure 4: Responsibilities Assigned to Women*

### *Responsibilities Assigned to Women*

	Technical	Non-technical
<i>Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)</i>		2
<i>Michaela</i>	1	
<i>Ingrid</i>		2
<i>Elna</i>	1	
<i>Josefina assistant</i>		2
<i>Female journalist</i>	1	
<i>Nicki (Assistant)</i>		2

*Table 4: Responsibilities Assigned to Women*

#### **4.2.5 Portrayal of Women in Public Relations**

At 01:01 Anne, the journalist, is seen having sexual relationship with Christian. She is shown as an accomplished journalist yet there is a sexual angle to her role while she is not seen active in other areas of her field questions her role.

Rather than being shown progressing in her field or challenging Christian overtly on his portrayal of arts, Anne is shown emotional and irrational during their sex scene.

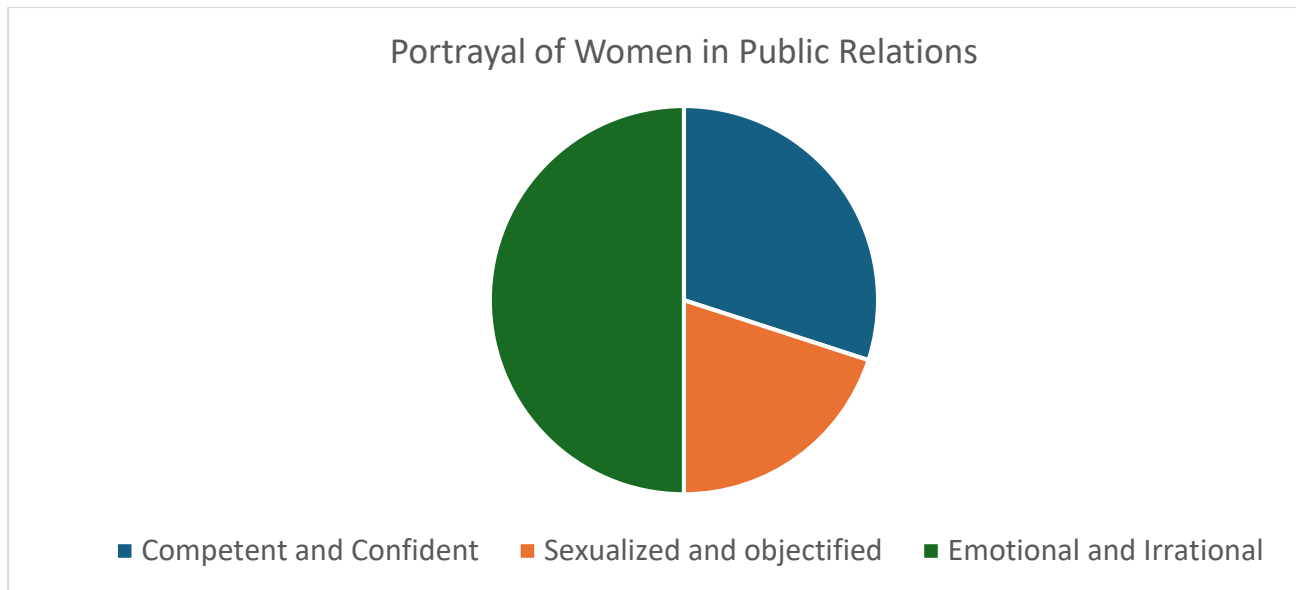


Figure 5: Portrayal of Women in Public Relations

**Portrayal of Women in Public Relations**

	Competent and Confident	Sexualized and objectified	Emotional and Irrational
Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)		2	3
Michaela	1		3
Ingrid	1		
Elna	1		3
Josefina assistant		2	
Female journalist			3
Nicki (Assistant)			3

Table 5: Portrayal of Women in Public Relations

## Family Orientation

Anne is shown living alone with a pet Gorilla with no reference to her family throughout the movie. On the other hand, Christian is shown as having two kids back at his place. No women in the movie, from Public Relations team or the Museum team has been referred to as someone who had a family back there. A male assistant, in contrast is shown with his child that he brings to the workplace.

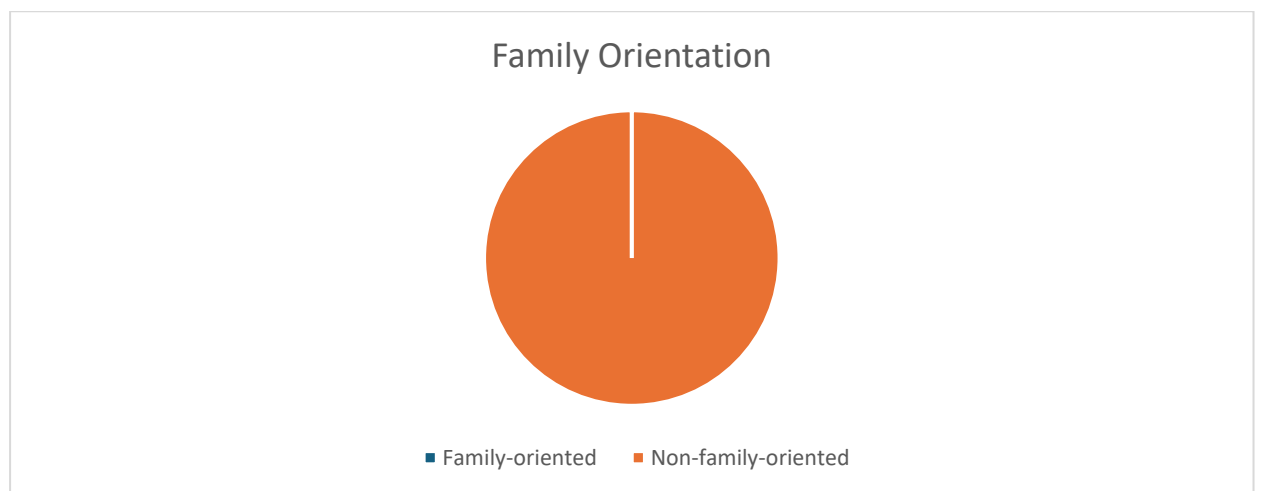


Figure 6: Family Orientation

### Family Orientation

	Family-oriented	Non-family-oriented
<i>Anne (Main character opposite protagonist Christian)</i>		2
<i>Michaela</i>		2
<i>Ingrid</i>		2
<i>Elna</i>		2

<i>Josefina assistant</i>		2
<i>Female journalist</i>	<i>Table 6: Family Orientation</i>	2
<i>Nicki (Assistant)</i>		2

### 4.3 Findings

#### 4.3.1 Anne

**Symbols:** Anne is often shown wearing stylish, professional clothing that highlights her femininity, such as dresses and high heels. She is also shown wearing heavy makeup and jewelry. In contrast, Christian, her male counterpart is shown wearing more practical clothing like suits and ties, and rarely wearing makeup or jewelry. These symbols reinforce women with appearance and men with competence.

**Language and Speaking:** Anne is portrayed as articulate and intelligent, but also emotional and reactive. She has shown emotional with ups and downs of her voice who easily gets distracted. She is shown expressing frustration or annoyance, which reinforces the stereotype of women as being overly emotional. Meanwhile, male character is portrayed as more stoic and rational, reinforcing the stereotype of men as being more balanced. She is also shown as desperate through the camera angles later in the film when she is sitting in her room remembering Christian who hardly remembers her name.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** From a confident and successful journalist to a vulnerable and dependent woman in a romantic relationship with Christian, Anne's character undergoes a significant transformation. This reinforces that the women in public relations roles are being more dependent on men. And in one way or the other, more important thing for is their romantic relationship.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Anne is normally depicted in relation to her romantic relationships, such as her love affair with Christian. The scene where she

confronts Christian has a stack of chair in the background that is creating noisy environment, it somehow adds to the frustration that is being conveyed in the scene at Anne's part. This also highlights the stereotype of women in public relations roles as being focused on their personal lives and relationships rather than their professional lives.

**Codes:** Anne is coded as "feminine," through camera angles, music, her appearance, behavior, and emotional reactions. This reinforces the stereotype of women in public relations roles as being less capable and non-serious in regard to their professional position than their male counterparts in technical roles. Anne's character is portrayed in a way that reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes, depicting women in public relations roles as less competent, less independent, and always emotionally driven than male counterparts.

#### 4.3.2 Female Journalist (The Interviewer)

**Symbols:** The journalist is dressed professionally, indicating that she is likely a journalist or reporter. She is also holding a microphone, which is a symbol of her profession and her intention to conduct an interview.

**Language and Speaking:** Anne speaks confidently and assertively when she approaches Christian for the interview. She asks him specific questions about the museum's new exhibit and seems well-informed about the subject matter. However, at 47:21 Anne is being called out by the crazy man in the audience. Rather than calling out to the main character 'Christian' who was the protagonist, this crazy man calls out to the female journalists with sexual remarks and using words like 'whore'. This objectifies women even when she was shown in the technical role.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Women who is a professional journalist is shown as nervous and confused as she gets distracted by the crowd as opposed to the protagonist Christian. This is depicted by the pauses in her nervous voice and by her shaky hands. This is also depicted by ups and downs of her voice as she speaks.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** her uncomfortable gestures supported by the same music in the background depicts her unease and unacceptance of the unruly

behavior of the angry man in the crowd as compared to Christian who remains absolutely calm. She asks the angry man if he has seen the gallery also points out to the facts that as opposed to Christian she is feeling more uncomfortable as the man is calling her out with the words insulting her using abuses that are directed at her gender.

**Codes:** Her role in the film represents the media's interest in the museum's new exhibit and the cultural significance of contemporary art. Her appearance in the film also highlights the tension between Christian's desire for publicity and the public's unpredictable reactions to controversial artwork. But for the purpose, Christian has used the female abuse like the words whore, and other explicit words. This comes from the later interaction between Anne(who Christian is having a romantic relationship with) and Christian where Anne expresses here disgust for these remarks that might have been “planned” by Christian to draw publicity.

#### 4.3.3 Josephine (the Assistant)

**Symbols:** Josephine wears professional attire and carries a clipboard, symbolizing her role as Christian's assistant and her organizational responsibilities.

**Language and Speaking:** Josephine speaks in a polite and professional manner when addressing Christian and others at the museum. Her tone, however, is submissive rather than confident. She is also fluent in English and French, which is highlighted in a scene where she assists with translating for a visiting artist.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Since Josephine has a minor role in the film. In comparison to her male counterparts, who are shown supporting Christian in big tasks throughout the movie, she is shown as sitting in his lap just while he is celebrating.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Josephine as an assistant is shown as someone who has no significance. This is forced by the lack of camera attention when she speaks or leaves the frame. For instance, when Elna enters the room and Christian along with his male assistant is tracing his lost mobile phone in the computer, Josephine along with Nicki leave the room but nobody pays attention. This is not

directly pointing out to her submissive and non-significant role but the environment indirectly lets the audience believe that she is not the important one.

**Codes:** Josephine's role in the film represents the organizational structure and bureaucracy of the art world. She is responsible for managing Christian's schedule and ensuring that the museum's operations run smoothly. However, her character is not developed in detail and remains somewhat secondary to the main plot of the film.

**4.3.4 Ingrid** (employee of the ad agency Christian hires to promote the museum's new exhibit)

**Symbols:** Ingrid is often seen wearing professional attire and carrying a notebook, which symbolizes her role as an advertising executive and her organizational responsibilities. She is yet not allowed to speak much when the males around are speaking. Her opinions are shown as intelligent as she opposes the idea of showcasing a child beggar inside the square just to be blow up away for publicity. But she never gets enough stage to put forward her opinion. She is showcased by the camera angles putting her in unimportant place and with the men signaling her to stay quite with his eyes and hands pointing out.

**Language and Speaking:** Ingrid speaks less but she speaks in a confident and assertive manner when discussing advertising strategies with Christian and Michaela. She is also fluent in English, which she uses to communicate with the English-speaking members of the museum staff. However, she is never shown as heading any meeting nor is she ever shown as initiating any conversation. She sits at the side of the table and would only speak often.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Ingrid's character does not undergo significant changes over the course of the film, so a synchronic analysis would be more appropriate. From this perspective, Ingrid can be seen as a representation of the advertising industry and its focus on generating attention and buzz around a product or event. She, however, is shown as emphatic and sensible. The problem lies in her secondary role as compared to that of other members in her team. She along

with another women are always on the sidelines of any discussion. The authority than men enjoy is not seen the same when she is on the screen.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Ingrid does not use any significant metaphors or metonymies in her speech during the film.

**Codes:** Ingrid's role in the film represents the role of advertising executives in shaping public perception and generating interest in cultural events. She is often portrayed as aggressive and single-minded in her pursuit of attention-grabbing ideas, which underscores the tension between artistic expression and commercialization. Additionally, her character is one of the few in the film who holds a position of power and influence, which highlights issues of gender and class in the art world.

#### 4.3.5 Michaela

**Symbols:** Her wardrobe and accessories, such as her business attire, smartphone, and bag, symbolize her role as a professional in the ad agency. Additionally, her relatively reserved demeanor and lack of vocalization may symbolize a preference for action and practicality over conversation and discussion.

**Language and Speaking:** Michaela is not seen speaking a lot in the movie, and when she does, her dialogue is typically brief and to the point. Additionally, her limited speaking role underscores the gender imbalance in the advertising and public relations industries, where women are often underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Michaela can be seen as a representation of the advertising industry's focus on practicality and results-oriented strategies, as well as the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. At timestamp 1:13 in the film, she is part of the most important meeting where her body language depicts that she is uncomfortable with the idea pitched for publicity of the Square, but she agrees to the males rather than disagreeing.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Rather than having an overt opinion, Michaela is merely shown as part of the agency, and all her gestures and discussions are dependent on her male counterparts.

**Codes:** Michaela's character highlights the gender imbalance in the advertising industry.

#### 4.3.6 Nicki

**Symbols:** Nicki's wardrobe and appearance: Nicki is often seen wearing quirky and eccentric outfits, including a bright yellow sweater and a shiny silver skirt. This may symbolize her lack of professionalism and suggest that she is not taken seriously by her colleagues.

**Language and Speaking:** Nicki's dialogue: Nicki is often portrayed as scatterbrained and silly in her speech, mainly just giggling and laughing. This may suggest that she is not intelligent or capable in a professional setting.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Nicki's actions: Throughout the film, Nicki is shown making mistakes and being scatterbrained, such as accidentally setting off the museum's alarm and getting lost while driving Christian. These actions portray her as incompetent and non-serious.

**Metonymy and metaphor:** Nicki's role is mainly that of an assistant or intern at the museum, but she is hardly shown in any technical task rather she is being portrayed as dumb. Her expressions like an unwanted smile to Elen and her loud laughter in the meeting may be seen as a metaphor for her lack of professional standing and power. The male assistant in the film, on the other hand, has shown having more power and role than her.

**Codes:** The way Nicki is represented through her actions and dialogue can be seen as a code for her lack of intelligence and competence. This code reinforces negative stereotypes about women in professional settings, particularly those in assistant roles. Overall, Nicki is portrayed as a silly character who is not taken seriously by her colleagues and is not shown to have any technical expertise.

#### 4.3.7 Elna

**Symbols:** Elna is often shown wearing black staff uniform type clothing, which symbolizes her role as an employee of the institution. She is seen carrying a clipboard and a walkie-talkie, which symbolize her readiness to assist with any task.

**Language and Speaking:** Elna speaks in a gracious and professional manner, using formal language when communicating with Christian and other colleagues. But as is the problem with the technical portrayals, she too has not been given much screen time. Her character is not shown speaking extensively in the movie, and the dialogue suggests that her role is minor and not central to the plot.

**Synchronic vs Diachronic:** Her character does not have a significant backstory or history, as her role is limited to assisting with the museum exhibit preparations in the present moment. Not much about her is shown in the movie except for her peg Dog when she interacts with Christian. This is portrayed when Christian brings her daughters to her place. Again, the contrast between male and female character where male is shown with a family while female is shown with no family orientation.

**Metonymy and Metaphor:** Her representation as someone who is in the BoD but doesn't have much say, Elna can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the competent and helpful support staff who.

**Codes:** Elna's character is coded as professional, reliable but a secondary one due to her role as a museum staff member and someone who has no technical input in the PR strategy of the square in the film. However, her minor role and limited presence in the movie can be seen as a code that implies that women in supportive roles, are not as important or significant as men in more prominent characters.

#### Discussion and Conclusion

The study aimed to explore gender disparities in the portrayal of the Public Relations roles in Hollywood movies. To achieve this, the study investigated three objectives, which were to examine the representation of women in technical roles, analyze the roles and responsibilities assigned to women, and investigate the

depiction of women in terms of family orientation. The researcher analyzed the films using semantic analysis to examine the portrayal of gender disparities in the PR roles in the film industry.

The present study aims to fill the gap in the literature on gender disparities depicted in the Hollywood films in the portrayal of women working in Public Relations in any way. The research study focused on representation of women in technical roles, their overall roles and responsibilities while working for PR campaigns and how they are depicted compared to men in terms of being family oriented.

In the film *The Square* had male protagonists and, in a few scenes, the camera faced men even when the women were speaking. One exact example is from the film "The Square" where while planning the Public Relations Strategy, when woman from the ad agency speaks and gives her opinion. For the most part, the camera keeps facing men irrespective of the film's plot requirement. This aligns with the previous studies that promulgate that women are underrepresented in key behind-the-scenes roles in the film industry (Choueiti et al., 2019).

The films reviewed had a serious plot but the women behind the PR campaigns in the movies were sexualized and objectified compared to male characters. This again aligns with the previous studies that showcase that male characters are more likely to be portrayed in positions of power and leadership. A study (Horne and Boyd, 2009) found that female PR actors were often portrayed as "dumb blondes" or sexual objects, contributing to negative stereotypes and limiting their representation in influential positions. Moreover, a study by Kim and Willis in 2007 supported one of the other findings of the present study that male characters in PR roles were given more screen time and significant roles as compared to their female counterparts, even when the female characters were the main protagonists.

The present study employed semantic analysis and examined the representation of the gender disparities in the Public Relations industry or PR roles in Hollywood films. The findings of the study suggest that women are not reflected in the technical roles and when they are portrayed, they are often given secondary

rather than primary roles. This is also consistent with previous studies that have shown that women are underrepresented in key behind-the-scenes roles in the film industry.

The analysis about gender disparities in the Public Relations roles aligns with the concept of glass ceiling, which refers to the unseen barrier that prevents women from reaching the highest levels of management or strategic positions. The present study also found that women were mostly shown as living alone and had no families as compared the men. The male characters were not only enjoying the position of power but were also having families to go back to. Also, it was depicted that women who were either siding men in their PR Campaigns or were working as media persons were used physically by men and that they prioritized their families. This not only out female characters who are professional in a negative light but also disgraces the PR and media industry. This again is supported by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative study (2019) that brought to the light the grave state of women in film highlighting the need for increased diversity and representation in all industries, including Public Relations and media.

The findings of the study highlight the presence of gender disparities in the portrayal of the Public Relations roles in Hollywood films. Women are underrepresented in technical roles within the industry, and when they are portrayed, they are often given secondary rather than primary roles.

The analysis of "The Square" demonstrated that women in technical Public Relations roles are often portrayed through cultural stereotypes, such as irrationality and superficiality. In contrast, their male counterparts are depicted as more composed, rational, and dominant. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that found gender disparities in Hollywood films, particularly in terms of how female characters are portrayed and their limited representation in key roles behind the scenes (Madeline Di Nonno and Stacy L. Smith, 2019)

Research by Horne and Boyd (2009) showed that female Public Relations actors were frequently portrayed as "dumb blondes" or sexual objects, these negative stereotypes restrict the portrayal of women in influential places. Kim and Willis's

(2009) study found that male counterparts often dominate Public Relations roles in Hollywood films, even when female characters are the main protagonists. This exhibits the disparities in the roles and responsibilities given to women within the Public Relations plots in Hollywood films, leading to a limited depiction of women in influential positions. Overall, the representation of women in technical Public Relations roles in Hollywood films is often limited to negative stereotypes and sexual objectification, contributing to the “glass ceiling” effect.

The recent studies on gender disparities in Hollywood films have shown that this issue is pervasive and extends beyond how female characters are depicted. The findings of this study highlight the need for diversity and inclusion in Hollywood films especially when portraying media and PR roles to break the glass ceiling effect.

The study has several implications for the film industry and the field of Public relations and Communication. Firstly, the film industry needs to increase the representation of women in key technical roles to ensure that women's perspectives are adequately represented. And this must be depicted as such i.e., a women who might be depicted as PR Manager must also be persuing the same role rather than deviating from her job for a male protagonist as was depicted in *The Square* where journalist interviewed Christian and then fell in love with him ignoring every other thing. Secondly, filmmakers need to be aware of the gender stereotypes that they may be reinforcing through their portrayals of women in the Public Relations roles.

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for diversity and representation of women while depicting professional characters as it impacts the real life scenarios of the industry. Addressing the issue of societal issues surrounding gender inequality and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society to challenge gender stereotypes and promote greater diversity and representation in all industries.

To summarize on the findings obtained from the analysis of Hollywood films, the following conclusions can be drawn

Concerning the first RQ, which was to examine if women are represented in technical roles within the Public Relations roles in Hollywood films, and if there are any observed gender disparities, the results revealed that women are hardly depicted in technical roles such as managers, publicists, marketing leads, and communication directors. The irony is this that even if they are presented in these roles, they are still not shown performing the technical work that is the requirement of their role. This aligns with the literature that found that women were often portrayed as secondary characters or as assistants to male counterparts in leadership positions, rather than holding leadership positions (Eichner and Johnson, 2016). Furthermore, women in technical roles were mostly showcased through the codes having gender stereotypes, such as being emotional, sensitive, or sexualized and objectified.

On the second research question, which examined the roles and responsibilities assigned to women within the Public Relations roles in Hollywood films and if women were presented in secondary rather than primary roles, the findings showed that women were often assigned tasks that were not central to the plot or were used as support character to enhance the male lead's character development. Women in technical roles were also frequently depicted as being focused on their personal lives, more importantly on their romantic relationships, rather than their professional careers. These findings suggest that women in technical roles are often demoted to secondary roles and are not given equal representation compared to their male counterparts in the films.

Finally, the third RQ aimed to study how women in the Public Relations field are depicted in Hollywood films and if they are depicted as family-oriented or not. The results showed that women in technical roles were often depicted were not depicted as family-oriented while men were portrayed as being more career-driven and at the same time, concerned for their family life. This suggests that gender stereotypes about gender-specific roles are being disseminated through the representation of women in technical roles in the top rated films.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, study's findings show that there are significant gender disparities in the representation of women in technical roles within the Public Relations roles depicted in Hollywood films. Women are often limited to secondary roles and are not given equal representation compared to men in the same profession. Furthermore, gender stereotypes are often disseminated through the codes which can have negative implications for the way society views women in the workplace. Consequently, it is indispensable to challenge these stereotypes and promote gender equality in the depiction of women in technical roles within the Public Relations characters in the film industry.

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