

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Various Portrayals of Drugs and Drug Abuse in Turkish Cinema: A Sociological Analysis of Drug-related Turkish Movies

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Main Points

- Drugs and drug abuse have been portrayed in Turkish films since the 1950s with either cinematic or social purposes.
- There is a positive correlation between the periodic portrayals of drugs in films and the periodic popularity of these portrayed drugs during these periods in Turkey.
- The number of films recommending precautions and solutions to combat drug abuse is very low.
- There is the need for more films addressing social problem in Turkey, including drug abuse, which is a serious social problem.

Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the portrayals of drugs and drug abuse in Turkish movies within a sociological context. Considering the mutual relationship between cinema and society, the question of whether drugs and drug abuse have been represented in these movies in a problem-based manner constitutes the main problematic of this study, which aims to analyze a variety of drug-related films. Therefore, 54 Turkish movies including the element of drugs have been chosen in a purposive sampling and they have been analyzed by using sociological film analysis as a research technique. Of the 54 movies in the sampling, only 27 depicted drug abuse and only 24 of them portrayed negative outcomes of drug abuse. Findings supporting a positive correlation between the drug abuse portrayals and the periodical popularity of these substances have been achieved. Emphasizing the reasons behind drug abuse and addiction, the neglect in dysfunctional families and the influence of the social environment have been stressed in various movies, whereas the solutions, preventive measures, and social messages displayed in the movies remain at low numbers. The promotion of the realistic representations of drug abuse in cinema in order to raise public awareness has been recommended.

Keywords: Drug abuse, drug addiction, drugs, film, portrayal, sociological film analysis, Turkish cinema

Introduction

The birth of cinema as a new means of entertainment in society marked the beginning of a new era within the context of fine arts and society. Throughout the 20th century, the artistic value and characteristics of cinema have been questioned by cinema experts and academics, with the question of whether cinema is the seventh branch of fine arts or simply a means of entertainment. For those who claimed that cinema was the art of the new era,

another question arose in terms of whether it was format or content which determined the artistic value of film (Andrew, 2010). Regarding this question, the growing emphasis on content has evolved with reference to the relationship between cinema and social reality. As a result of this orientation, social realism emerged as a cinema movement in authentic forms in various domestic movie sectors, like the Italian, British, and French cinema in the late 1940s and 1950s (Hayward, 2000). The social realist movement was born with the intention of

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reflecting the social reality on the screen, especially through the portrayal of phenomena like social classes or social issues which had until then been underestimated and underrepresented in cinema (Hayward, 2000). In time, this realist approach has extended its perspective by emphasizing the social functions and responsibilities of cinema and its mutual relationship with the society. This relationship took the form of an informing and influencing function, as the opinions and views of the public can easily be influenced by films (Iannicelli, 2001), and on the other hand, the form of a representative function in which the film simply becomes the social reflection or mirror of the society by feeding on the social realities (Zizek, 2011).

Reflection of social reality attained a new dimension, with the introduction of a new genre, namely social-problem films—a name popularized by the American cinema authorities—which include the presentation of a social problem in a contemporary setting, often with a didactic message concerning the problem (Cagle, 2017). The problems handled in this genre possess a huge variety of problematic sociological concepts like poverty, crime, violence, social inequality, dysfunctional families, gender-based problems, racism, xenophobia, and addiction. With the rise of social-problem movies, such problems began to be increasingly mentioned in movies of other genres as well.

One of these problems represented in cinema is drug abuse and addiction, which has been a worldwide issue since the early decades of the 20th century. Turkish cinema has been one of the national movie sectors in which drug-related movies have been produced since the late 1950s. Considering the mutual relationship between cinema and society, the question of whether drugs and drug abuse and addiction have been represented in these movies in a problem-based manner constitutes the main problematic of this study which aims to analyze a variety of drug-related films in Turkish cinema. Another aim of this study is to develop an inventory of drug-related Turkish films for researchers who would like to conduct studies in a similar context.

Methods

Film analysis as a research method requires the application of different scientific research techniques under different circumstances regarding the research question. In this sense, there is a variety of techniques, like structural, historical, semiotic, psychoanalytic, generic, or sociological film analysis. Based on the nature of the research aim and question, other research techniques in a quantitative methodology can be applied as well. Concerning the context of cinema and drug abuse, the changing application of these various methods and techniques can be seen in certain case studies. For instance, Gautam (2017), in his study about the portrayal of drugs and alcohol in Indian cinema, has questioned the positive influence of these portrayals on the addictive behaviors of the Indian youth by applying a survey. In another case study by Başar and Yılmaz (2011), scenes including the consumption of addictive substances like tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, in the movies produced in 2009, have been analyzed by using content analysis.

In this study within the context of cinema and drugs, the basic questions asked are as follows:

- Which illegal drugs have been portrayed as being abused?
- What kinds of negative outcomes related to their abuse have been represented?
- What kinds of methods and messages have been applied or given as treatment or preventive measures?
- What is the relationship between the portrayals of drug abuse and the prevailing drug-related social conditions in the periods when these movies were produced?
- Do these movies include any representation contributing to the development of any stereotypes which may be influential in the public's views and awareness?

In order to answer these research questions in a systematic context regarding the relationship between cinema and society, sociological film analysis has been used as the research technique in this study. Sociological film analysis is actually a methodology which has developed as a natural outcome of the academic trend in terms of establishing a link between cinema and society. This trend, namely sociology of cinema, or film sociology, has stressed a new context consisting of the mutual relationship between cinema and society whereby a variation in one of them leads to a variation in another (Tudor, 2014). In other words, while cinema influences the society, society influences cinema as well. Therefore, two different contexts have been dominant in film sociology studies, the study of the consequences of movies for society and the study of the consequences of society for the movies (Tudor, 2014). The consequences of the society for movies involve the social phenomena and/or realities which serve as a thematic or background source for the movie, such as a social problem predominant among the society, to be reflected on the screen. The consequences of movies for the society involve the influence of movies on the audience. The cinematic functions of informing, motivating, and mobilizing the audience are examples of such an influence. Another important issue to be noted here is that sociological studies of films also necessitate analysis of the social conditions prevailing during the period in which the movies in the sampling were produced (Özden, 2004). In other words, a consistency between the periodical social reality and the reality reflected on the screen should be questioned in sociological film analysis.

Considering these issues, this study has a two-fold context in terms of analyzing the mutual relationship of influence between cinema and society. On the one hand, this article deals with the influence of the social realities in the form of the social problem of drug abuse and addiction prevailing during different periods in Turkey. On the other hand, it was not the aim of this study to measure the direct influence of drug-related movies on the Turkish society; rather, the potential of these movies in terms of transmitting information, raising awareness, and developing stereotypes has been analyzed.

Consequently, a sample of drug-related movies in Turkish cinema has been analyzed in accordance with the themes asked in the research questions. The sample consists of 54 Turkish films in total which were selected through purposive sampling, using keyword searches on three digital platforms, namely YouTube, Google, and TSA (Center for Turkish Cinema Studies) to find movies with the occurrence of drug-related scenes in their synopsis. A detailed encyclopedia of Turkish movies (Özgüç, 2012) was

also used with the same aim. Short films were excluded and only feature films were selected. All the full-length movies in the sample were obtained from online resources. Out of 54 movies in total, four of them were amateur productions.¹ Each movie was watched only once in the home environment. The full list of the movies in the sampling has been provided in Appendix 1. Since the method of this research does not include any human element, ethics committee approval was not required.

Results

Within the context of social reality and cinema, illegal drugs as script elements have been given place in Turkish movies since the late 1950s. The film titled *Hata: Bırakın Ağlayayım* (1957) appears to be the first Turkish movie in this context, in which the main antagonist is a drug smuggler. However, this situation is just a detail which emphasizes the illegality of the antagonist in terms of strengthening the influence of dramatic issues in the eyes of the audience. In other words, drugs are neither visible in any scene nor mentioned as a source of a social problem, but rather used as a criminal detail. The same use of detail can be seen in many other movies like *Kadın Asla Unutmaz* (1961), *Kanun Der Ki* (1965), *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* (1967), *Beyoğlu Kanunu* (1971), *Cehenneme Dolmuş Var* (1971), *Şerefimle Yaşarım* (1971), *Dev Kanı* (1984), *Eşkiya* (1996), and *Ayaz* (2012).

Another kind of use of detail concerning drugs in Turkish cinema becomes apparent especially in comedy movies in which drugs, drug abuse, and drug smugglers are presented as secondary elements within the script as a means of increasing the humor quotient. The cycle of events in the movie evolves around the phenomenon of drugs in comedy scenes, and these drug-based events are mostly represented in various forms. One of these forms is the integration, into the script, of members of a criminal organization involved in drug trafficking and their relations with the main protagonists of the movie, which add to the humor. Such forms of use can be seen in the movies *Cilalı İbo Perili Köşkte* (1960), *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* (1964), *Gerzek Şaban* (1980), *Tokatçı* (1983), *Tarzan Rıfkı* (1986), *Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak* (1998), *Abimm* (2009) and *Vay Arkadaş* (2010). A second form of use in terms of adding to the humor in the film is the overrated types of funny behavior, like hallucinations which emanate from accidental or unintentional abuse of drugs. Scenes depicting such instances can be seen in the movies *Kolpaçino* (2009), *Yahşi Batı* (2010), *Çakallarla Dans* (2010) and *Kolpaçino: Bomba* (2011).

The common thread in all of these movies mentioned is simply the fact that drugs are regarded as social reality, either with their physical presence or through the criminal actions of drug smugglers. However, the emphasis on the social significance of drug abuse is so weak that the social reality about drugs reflected on the screen seems to be highly superficial. In other words, the fact that drugs have not been portrayed as a source of social problems in these movies makes it difficult to analyze and name them as reflections of the society.

For Mercer, cinema has two basic functions: as informing the audience about the unknown phenomena, and transmitting the publicly-known phenomena to the people (Mercer, 1953). Therefore, movies, while functioning as an information shortcut through which members of the society could learn new things, also serve as mirrors in which people can see the reflections of the processes and phenomena that they are surrounded with. In this case, the context of drugs and their portrayal in movies becomes a crucial issue in that people, first of all, can learn about the basic facts about drugs and drug abuse through films. Secondly, people, even though they may be equipped with information related to drug abuse, may have internalized this problem as an inevitable part of social life and their indifference toward this issue may be altered by developing social awareness about drug abuse through the use of films. Therefore, in each case, the issue of whether a realistic portrayal of drug abuse has been achieved in films becomes significant in the process of an all-out fight against drug abuse.

Concerning the functions and significance of movies within the context mentioned above, the following elements should be considered in the analysis of drug-related films: the types of drugs that are portrayed as being abused, the kinds of negative outcomes of drug abuse portrayed in terms of deviant, unethical, or criminal behavior by the individuals or of any kind of negative influence on them, the basic reasons behind drug abuse and addiction, the solutions and methods offered for curing and combating them, and finally, the kinds of generalizations or stereotypes these films develop with regard to drug abuse, which might sometimes be misleading for the members of the society in terms of raising social awareness.

In terms of mentioning drug abuse as a social problem, the first examples in Turkish cinema can be seen as early as the 1960s in certain movies produced in this decade, but these early cases lack the necessary portrayals mentioned above in terms of developing and reflecting a realistic representation of drugs in a social context. In *Ağlama Sevgilim* (1962), the daughter of a rich man is hospitalized due to her excessive abuse of drugs. But no portrayal of drug abuse or its negative outcomes occur in the movie. The drug-addicted character, Türkan, is never shown in any scene throughout the film, nor is the type of drug that she consumes. Her addiction is only mentioned as a problem which constitutes a detail within the script, rather than indicating a social problem. Similarly, in *Kenarın Dilberi* (1966), there is a drug-addicted character mentioned, but neither she nor any type of realistic representation of her has been shown in the movie. In *Sokakta Kan Vardı* (1965), even though drug abuse is emphasized as a serious social problem, there is no portrayal of any drug abuse or negative under-influence outcomes, and the film rather evolves as a typical action genre movie depicting a fight against criminal organizations. Therefore, Turkish movies of the 1960s, which include the phenomenon of drugs in their scripts, all lack the necessary portrayals for establishing a bridge between the society and the drug-abuse problem.²

1 These amateur movies, all directed by Gökmen Yıldız, are namely *Bonzai: Ölüm Meleşti* (2014), *Bonzai: Ölüm Planı* (2014), *Deli Seyit 1: Bonzai Savaşı* (2015) and *Deli Seyit 2: Flakka* (2018).

2 Two movies, namely *Can Düşmanı* (1966) and *Ailenin Yüz Karası* (1966), include drug-addicted characters but these movies could not be found in any visual source, and therefore could not be added to the sampling.

The first examples of drug-related Turkish movies with relatively more realistic portrayals were produced in the 1970s, a decade in which drug abuse had become a global problem and Turkey was among the countries with a rising ratio of drug addicts. In addition, thanks to the social realism movement which contributed to the changing atmosphere within the realm of Turkish cinema in terms of giving reference to social problems, a few films with realistic portrayals and strong emphasis on the drug abuse problem were produced in this decade. The first of these films was *Yirmi Yıl Sonra* (1972), which portrayed the withdrawal crisis of a marijuana addict. The highly realistic portrayal of the withdrawal crisis makes this movie very significant within our context, due to the fact that it was for the first time that the Turkish audience was able to see the portrayal of a negative outcome of drug addiction on the screen.

The link between the abused drug and the negative outcomes of its consumption becomes an important issue in terms of cinema's functions of informing the masses and raising awareness. Considering the power of cinema in terms of influencing the audience, the realistic representation of the process of drug consumption and the negative after effects, either in the short or long run, may easily turn out to be very influential on the masses. In this case, the question of which drugs and what kinds of negative outcomes have been portrayed in the drug-related films becomes one of the keys for analysis. The portrayal of drugs may extend through a wide variety of opiates, stimulants, or hallucinogens such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, MDMA (methylenedioxy-methamphetamine), and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide). As the after-use effects of all these substances are different, they may cause a wide range of negative outcomes in both the short run and the long run, such as aggressive and/or violent behavior, withdrawal crisis, overdose death, suicide, anti-social behavior, and career decline. The use of drugs and their negative outcomes portrayed in the movies analyzed in this study are indicated in Table 1.

The negative outcomes of drug abuse mentioned in the films can potentially serve as a means of increasing the awareness about drug abuse and addiction. Even though the level and variety of such negative outcomes may change from film to film according to the fiction integrated into the script, these outcomes are all based on real facts, without any doubt. Whereas there is a generally-known positive correlation between drug abuse and health problems which may result in cases like cardiac arrest and death, there is also an increase in the number of scientific studies which stress the positive correlation between drug abuse and violent behavior (Ünlü & Evcin, 2014). Scientific findings about the positive correlation between violent behavior and drug abuse in cases of multi-substance use such as consuming alcohol with drugs have been reflected in films like *Gemide* (1998), *Yazı Tura* (2004), *Barda* (2006), *Pars: Kiraz Operasyonu* (2006) and *Ceza* (2014). Concerning other negative outcomes affiliated with economic status, it has been emphasized in various studies that addicts facing economic problems may resort to illegal actions such as theft, robbery, and prostitution in order to provide the necessary economic resources to meet their demand for drugs (Ünlü & Evcin, 2014).

In addition to the portrayals depicting the relationship between drug abuse and its negative outcomes, other findings within the context of drugs and cinema can be reached as well. The data

in Table 1 depict important clues about the history of the drug-based trends changing by the decade in Turkish society. These findings have been indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 mostly indicates a positive correlation between the drugs portrayed in the films and the social awareness about these substances in the decades when these films were produced. Actually, the term "social awareness" here emphasizes public recognition which emanates from the popularity of different types of drugs in different eras and from the reflections of these popular trends on the society in terms of the frequency of drug-related events being publicly known through the mass media. In this respect, the portrayals of heroin abuse starting with the 1970s continued with a rising number in the 1980s and 1990s due to the prevailing frequency of the so-called golden-shot deaths resulting from overdose. It seems to be the similar case with synthetic cannabinoids as they are publicly recognized under the authentic name of Bonzai in Turkey, whereas due to the rising popularity of these drugs and the increasing number of Bonzai-related deaths in the 2010s (Çoban, 2014), synthetic cannabinoids were portrayed in the movies of this decade. The drug MDMA, or Ecstasy, as it is publicly known in Turkey, gained its popularity in Turkey since the beginning of the new millennium, and it is not surprising to see the portrayals of its consumption in four movies out of eleven which were produced in this period.

It is also of no surprise that marijuana has been portrayed in 13 out of a total of 27 films spanning all decades. This situation conforms to the realities of the drug realm, such that marijuana, as the oldest of all these drugs, has always been among the most popularly consumed ones in Turkey for decades (Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Narkotik Suçlarla Mücadele Daire Başkanlığı, 2021). In addition to its never-ending popularity, the position of marijuana as a gateway drug (Akkaya et al., 2006) also becomes significant in terms of the simultaneous portrayals of different drugs together with marijuana, in various Turkish movies. One of these movies emphasizing marijuana as a gateway drug is *Can* (2007). In the movie, the main character, a young woman named Can, begins her addiction with marijuana and in a short while climbs the ladder toward the top level of addiction by consuming MDMA, cocaine, and heroin, in that order.

Within the analysis of drug-related movies in Turkish cinema, another important issue revolves around the reasons behind drug abuse and the ideal methods of curing or combatting the drug addiction expressed in these films. In this context, such methods appear in these movies as either being applied in order to cure addiction or as recommendations mostly in the form of a social message, with the aim of raising social awareness. Among the movies analyzed, those which express such reasons and/or methods have been depicted in Table 3.

As shown in the table, among the reasons behind drug abuse and addiction, a dysfunctional family and the influence of the social environment have been expressed as the most significant. Among others, injection by force has been portrayed as a reason for drug addiction in three movies, emphasizing the fact that a single use may be enough for any individual to develop a heroin addiction. One exceptional case among these movies is *Yazı Tura* (2004), in which one of the main characters, Rıdvan, who is a war veteran, tries to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder

Table 1.
Drug Abuse and Negative Outcomes Portrayed in Turkish Films

Film	Year of Production	Abused Drugs Portrayed	Negative Outcomes
Yirmi Yıl Sonra	1972	Marijuana	Withdrawal syndrome
Gün Akşam Oldu	1974	Marijuana	Fraud, murder
Haşhaş	1975	Morphine, heroin, marijuana	Death by overdose, criminal involvement, withdrawal syndrome
Tek Başına	1976	Heroin,	Theft, prostitution, withdrawal syndrome
Günaha Girme	1982	Morphine	Suicide, death by overdose
Kelepçe	1982	Marijuana, heroin	Death by overdose, criminal involvement, withdrawal syndrome, armed assault
Beyaz Ölüm	1983	Heroin	Death by overdose, extortion, suicide
İdamlık	1983	Marijuana, heroin, unknown substance	Withdrawal syndrome, death, rape, murder, assault,
Damga	1984	Marijuana	Aggressive behavior, rape
Suçlu Gençlik	1985	Unknown pills, heroin	Aggressive behavior
Vazife Uğruna	1986	Heroin	
Kanımdaki Şeytan	1990	Heroin	Aggressive behavior, drug withdrawal syndrome with hallucinations, criminal involvement, death by overdose
Sahte Cennet	1994	Marijuana, cocaine, heroin,	Drug withdrawal syndrome, criminal involvement, death by overdose, sexual exploitation, accidental murder, aggression
Tabutta Rövaşata	1996	Heroin	Drug withdrawal syndrome, prostitution
Ağır Roman	1997	Marijuana, unknown pills in powder form	
Gemide	1998	Marijuana, multi-substance use with alcohol	Aggressive behavior, sexual abuse, rape, murder, brutal violence
Yazı Tura	2004	Marijuana, cocaine, multi-substance use with alcohol	Aggressive behavior
Dün Gece Bir Rüya Gördüm	2006	Marijuana, cocaine, unknown pills	Drug withdrawal syndrome, murder,
Barda	2006	MDMA (ecstasy), multi-substance use with alcohol	Brutal violence, murder, rape, and sexual abuse
Pars: Kiraz Operasyonu	2006	MDMA (ecstasy), heroin	Murder, aggressive behavior, overdose coma,
Can	2007	Marijuana, (possibly) MDMA (ecstasy), cocaine, heroin, multi-substance use with alcohol	Drug withdrawal syndrome, career decline, prostitution, overdose coma
Anti Depresan: +18	2010	Unknown substance	Psychotic downfall
Ceza	2014	MDMA (ecstasy), marijuana, multi-substance use with alcohol	Aggressive behavior, brutal violence, murder
Bonzai Ölüm Meleği	2014	Synthetic cannabinoids (Bonzai)	Cardiac arrest, career decline, anti-social behavior, aggressive behavior, violence, death by overdose
Bonzai Ölüm Planı	2014	Synthetic cannabinoids (Bonzai)	Death by overdose, overdose coma,
İmkansız Olasılık	2016	Heroin (flashback scene set in the 1980s), synthetic cannabinoids (Bonzai)	Death by overdose
Deli Seyit 2: Flakka	2018	Flakka	

Table 2.
Portrayals of Drug Abuse in Turkish Movies by Decade

	Marijuana	Heroin	Cocaine	MDMA	Synthetic Cannabinoids	Other & Unknown	No. of Films
1970s	3	2				1	4
1980s	3	5				3	7
1990s	3	3	1			1	5
2000s	3	2	3	3		1	5
2010s	1			1	3	2	6
Total	13	12	4	4	3	8	27

by consuming alcohol and marijuana, mostly in the form of multi-substance use.

Concerning the methods applied or messages given in the films, building strong family ties with mutual care and affection is mostly stressed as a precaution in fighting drug addiction. Another precautionary action implied in other movies relates to the initiatives and campaigns for increasing the social awareness about the harms of drug abuse. In terms of treatments applied to cure addiction, only two movies contain such portrayals. In *Kelepçe* (1982), the young drug addict is cured by professional

medical care, and in *Anti Depresan: +18*, an exceptional method of using anti-depressants as a substitute for drugs, which still has little scientific proof, has been applied.

In Table 3, it is seen that only 14 Turkish movies depict the reasons behind drug addiction. Only seven of them carry a preventive social message or a cure. These numbers seem to be highly insufficient considering the fact that cinema can be a powerful means of raising social awareness and informing the society. The same may apply to the issue of representations of drug abuse and its negative outcomes as portrayed in Turkish cinema, examining

Table 3.
Reasons for Drug Addiction and the Methods/Social Messages for its Cure and Prevention

Film Title	Year of Production	Causes of Addiction	Solutions applied/Messages Given
Yirmi Yıl Sonra	1972	Social environment	
Gün Akşam Oldu	1974	Social environment	Unclear (main character Emre suddenly emerges fully recovered in the last scene)
Tek Başına	1976	Injection by force	
Günaha Girme	1982	Injection by force	
Kelepçe	1982	Unknown	Medical cure (applied)
Suçlu Gençlik	1985	Dysfunctional family, social environment	Building strong family ties, family care and affection
Vazife Uğruna	1986	Injection by force	
Kanımdaki Şeytan	1990	Dysfunctional family, extremely democratic family, social environment	Family care and affection
Sahte Cennet	1994	Dysfunctional family, pressure by parents	Building strong family ties
Yazı Tura	2004	PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)	
Pars: Kiraz Operasyonu	2006	Social environment	Unclear (messages stressing the economic side of drug trafficking are given before the closing credits)
Can	2007	Social environment	Raising awareness about the harms of drugs on youth
Anti Depresan:+18	2010	Unknown	Use of anti-depressants (applied)
Ceza	2014	Social environment	
Bonzai: Ölüm Meleşği	2014	Social environment	
İmkansız Olasılık	2016	Unknown	Organizing social awareness campaigns (applied)

the numerical data in Tables 1 and 2. Therefore, the small numbers reached out of 54 movies in the sampling of this study puts forward the need for more realistic social-problem films dealing with the question of drug abuse.

One final issue to be referred to within the context of this study is the development of certain stereotypes in drug-related movies. The frequent portrayals of certain themes, settings, and elements in these movies may in time attain a stereotypical characteristic, such that they may lead to the development of generalized and/or prejudicial perceptions and recognitions by society. Within this context, Iannicelli (2001), in his study about the portrayal of drugs in American cinema, evaluated five general themes with a stereotypical character in most American drug-related movies. These themes are: (a) a general opinion such that drug-dealing is a sector controlled by the members of non-white race groups in America, like the Asians or African Americans, arising from the frequent portrayal of the members of these race groups in drug-related movies, (b) the belief that drug abuse and trafficking are urban problems rather than of peaceful rural America, (c) the belief that drug abuse always leads to an uncontrollable downward spiral, (d) drugs are intertwined with unbridled and dangerous sexuality, and (e) drugs are an indication of a wild and threatening youth (Iannicelli, 2001). Regarding drug-related Turkish movies, a similar situation is observable in terms of certain stereotypes developed. One noteworthy stereotype in this context is the frequent portrayals of drug abuse in urban areas, which depict it as an urban phenomenon. Of all the movies analyzed within this study, only one, namely *Yazı Tura* (2004) portrayed a drug addict in a rural environment. Another stereotype is the frequent portrayal of drug addicts as young people, which leads to a general belief that addiction is relatively a youth-related problem. This cinematic attitude has been reinforced with the frequent use of a somehow traditionalized representation of young people in many Turkish movies, in a “party-youth” setting. In this setting, there is a group of young males and females dancing and consuming alcohol and/or drugs either in public places like bars and clubs or in private locations like party houses. The same setting has been used in the movies *Yirmi Yıl Sonra* (1972), *Gün Akşam Oldu* (1974), *Haşhaş* (1975), *Kelepçe* (1982), *İdamlık* (1983), *Suçlu Gençlik* (1985), *Sahte Cennet* (1994), *Dün Gece Bir Rüya Gördüm* (2006), *Can* (2007), and *Ceza* (2014). Of all the movies analyzed within this study, only six of them include drug addicts in their middle or older ages. Therefore, the general outlook toward drug abuse as a youth issue becomes more concrete with such youth-based portrayals in movies.

Discussion

Cinema is a powerful tool in influencing people’s views and opinions, whereas the social reality shared by the members of the society can also be a powerful resource while producing films. This situation becomes more crucial especially in cinematic representation of social problems like drug abuse and addiction. Concerning Turkish cinema, there is a considerable number of drug-related movies produced since the early 1950s, but few that have adopted a problem-based social perspective, as can be seen in the findings of this study. Other portrayals of drug use and drug abuse in films, such as for criminal or comedy details in

the script, simply motivate the audience toward internalizing the drug issue rather than perceiving it as a serious social problem. The use of films in combating drug abuse may not only be limited to a precautionary function in terms of influencing and informing the audience, but rather, other uses such as cinema therapy should be considered as well. While foreign productions about drug addiction, like *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) – which have acquired a cult movie status – have been used in cinema therapy sessions in Turkey (Bağımlılara Türk Sinemalı Terapi, 2010), the same does not apply to Turkish movies in this context. Therefore, the necessity for the production of influential films which reflect the socio-cultural traits of the Turkish society to be used as means of cinema therapy for Turkish individuals addicted to drugs, may be seen as another important issue regarding the context of this study.

Limitations

One limitation in this study is the fact that some Turkish films, which seem to be of value for analysis, could not be accessed on any physical or digital platform and therefore could not be added to the sampling. Another limitation that has been applied on purpose by the author is the exclusion of short films and television series from the sampling.

Directions/Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study, the necessity of producing more problem-based movies about drug addiction becomes apparent. Although not mentioned in the study, cinematic initiatives to combat drug addiction, such as the Short Film Contest for Preventing Drug Addiction, which is annually organized by the Counter Narcotics Department since 2017 (Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Narkotik Suçlarla Mücadele Daire Başkanlığı, 2021) and the Healthy Ideas Short Film Contest, which is annually organized by the Green Crescent Foundation since 2015 (2018-2023 Uyuşturucu ile Mücadele Ulusal Strateji Belgesi ve Eylem Planı, 2018) can be evaluated as organizations that offer hope and promise in emphasizing the significance of films in combating drug abuse and addiction. Together with short films, promoting the production of feature films in the form of social-problem movies could be an important tool in terms of raising social awareness and developing preventive measures, especially among the youth who are generally very interested in cinema and visual media.

Ethics Committee Approval: Since the method of this research does not include any human element, ethic committee approval has not been required.

Informed Consent: N/A.

Peer Review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Appendix 1.

List of Movies in the Sampling

Film Title	Year of Production	Director	Genre
Hata: Bırakın Ağlayayım (Wrong: Let Me Cry)	1957	Şinasi Özönük & Lazar Yazıcıoğlu	Melodrama
Cılalı İbo Perili Köşkte (Cılalı Ibo in the Haunted Villa)	1960	Osman Nuri Ergün	Comedy
Kadın Asla Unutmaz (A Woman Never Forgets)	1961	Asaf Tengiz	Melodrama
Ağlama Sevgilim (Don't Cry My Love)	1962	Sırrı Gültekin	Melodrama
Fıstık Gibi Maşallah (She is So Sweet)	1964	Hulki Saner	Comedy
Kanun Der Ki (So Says the Law)	1965	Kemal Kan	Action
Sokakta Kan Vardı (There was Blood on the Street)	1965	Vedat Türkali	Crime
Kenarın Dilberi (Beauty from the Ghetto)	1966	Osman Fahir Seden	Drama
Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta (Goldenboy in Beirut)	1967	Ertem Göreç	Crime
Beyoğlu Kanunu (Beyoğlu Laws)	1971	Osman Nuri Ergün	Action
Cehenneme Dolmuş Var (Shuttle to Hell)	1971	Yılmaz Atadeniz	Action
Şerefimle Yaşarım (I Live with Honor)	1971	Çetin İnanç	Action
Yirmi Yıl Sonra (Twenty Years Later)	1972	Osman Fahir Seden	Melodrama
Gün Akşam Oldu (It is Sunset)	1974	Yılmaz Duru	Drama
Haşhaş (Poppy)	1975	Ertem Göreç	Adventure
Tek Başına (Alone)	1976	Cüneyt Arkın	Action
Gerzek Şaban (Şaban the Idiot)	1980	Natuk Baytan	Comedy
Günaha Girme (Do not Commit Sin)	1982	Natuk Baytan	Melodrama
Kelepçe (Handcuff s)	1982	Çetin İnanç	Action
Beyaz Ölüm	1983	Halit Refiğ	Melodrama
İdamlık (Sentenced to Death)	1983	Çetin İnanç	Action
Tokatçı (Fraud)	1983	Natuk Baytan	Comedy
Damga (Label)	1984	Osman Fahir Seden	Drama
Dev Kanı (Blood of the Giants)	1984	Çetin İnanç	Crime
Suçlu Gençlik (Criminal Youth)	1985	Orhan Elmas	Crime
Vazife Uğruna (For the Duty)	1986	Orhan Elmas	Crime
Tarzan Rıfkı (Tarzan Rıfkı)	1986	Natuk Baytan	Comedy
Kanımdaki Şeytan (The Devil in My Blood)	1990	Yücel Uçanoğlu	Drama
Sahte Cennet (Fake Paradise)	1994	Sami Güçlü	Drama
Eşkriya (Bandit)	1996	Yavuz Turgul	Drama
Tabutta Rövaşata (Kickback in the Coffin)	1996	Derviş Zaim	Drama
Ağır Romani (Slow Romani)	1997	Mustafa Altıoklar	Drama
Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak (Everything Will be So Fine)	1998	Ömer Vargı	Comedy
Gemide (On the Boat)	1998	Serdar Akar	Drama
Yazı Tura (Toss-up)	2004	Uğur Yücel	Drama
Dün Gece Bir Rüya Gördüm (I had a Dream Last Night)	2006	Ulaş Ak	Drama
Barda (In the Bar)	2006	Serdar Akar	Thriller

Appendix 1. (Continued)
List of Movies in the Sampling

Film Title	Year of Production	Director	Genre
Pars: Kiraz Operasyonu (Panther: Operation Cherry)	2006	Osman Sınav	Crime
Can (Can)	2007	Oğuz Eruzun	Drama
Karanlıktakiler (Those in the Dark)	2009	Çağan Irmak	Drama
Yahşi Batı (The Beauti-wild West)	2009	Ömer Faruk Sorak	Comedy
Abimm (My Elder Brother)	2009	Şafak Bal	Comedy
Kolpaçino (Fake Gangster)	2009	Atıl İnaç	Comedy
Anti Depresan +18 (Antidepressant +18)	2010	Ümit Cin Güven	Drama
Vay Arkadaş (Phew, Mate!)	2010	Kemal Uzun	Comedy
Çakallarla Dans (Dances with the Coyotes)	2010	Murat Şeker	Comedy
Kolpaçino: Bomba (Fake Gangster: The Bomb)	2011	Şafak Sezer	Comedy
Ayaz (Ayaz)	2012	Hakan Kurşun	Action
Ceza (Dare)	2014	Burak Donay	Thriller
Bonzai: Ölüm Meleği (Bonzai: Angel of Death)	2014	Gökmen Yıldız	Action
Bonzai: Ölüm Planı (Bonzai: Death Plan)	2014	Gökmen Yıldız	Action
Deli Seyit 1: Bonzai Savaşı (Mad Seyit 1: Bonzai War)	2015	Gökmen Yıldız	Action
İmkansız Olasılık (Impossible Possibility)	2016	Murat Şenöy	Drama
Deli Seyit 2: Flakka (Mad Seyit 2: Flakka)	2018	Gökmen Yıldız	Action