Film Review as an Approach in Teaching and Learning Fundamental of Islam

Farah Safura Binti Muhammud

[1]Senior Lecturer,
Academy of Islamic Studies Contemporary
UiTM Terengganu.

*Corresponding author's email: farahsafura@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

21st century learning requires lecturers to change from traditional learning to student-focused learning as well as applying critical learning and critical thinking skills. The film approach has been used in the subject Fundamental of Islam (CTU101) which is a compulsory subject for year 1 students of UiTM. This study is to identify the effectiveness of the film approach and the ability of students to integrate understanding related to Fundamental of Islam in film contents. The problem statement states two issues; firstly, learning challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic period and secondly learning challenges for Islamic Studies subjects. This study has selected five films that are included in the CTU101 syllabus, namely, My Name Is Khan, 2012, Laskar Pelangi, Jilbab Traveler, and Joker. This research used quantitative data to hundred CTU101 students and analysed using SPSS 20.0 software. This research has shown all positive reactions and happiness from students. Learning through films, well guided from a lecturer will then be a good approach for Islamic Studies subjects. The findings of the study show that students feel fun and easy to apply the fundamentals of Islam in daily life. Hence, watching movies while studying can alleviate some of the stress in the pandemic season that demands learning online.

Keywords: Film Review, Islamic Study, Fundamentals of Islam, CTU101

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first year Diploma students in Universiti Teknologi MARA are required to enrol in Fundamental of Islam (CTU 101) course. Students learn the Islamic worldview and its relationship with daily practices. Throughout the time, the students discuss the application of *Shariah*, `*ibadah* and *akhlaq* in life, and identify the contemporary issues and challenges. The skills of reciting, memorising, and analysing the Quranic texts are also emphasised in this course. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

   i.   explain and deliver the approach towards daily practices based on the principles of Islam.
  ii.   make a written assessment by discussing the impact and significance of the implementation of *akhlaq mahmudah* based on the principles of Islam.

iii.   produce a written report of a discussion on Islam as a religion (*al-Deen*) based on the principles of Islam.

Therefore, to help students achieve the outcome of the course, they are given a film review assignment with a selection of five movies. These movies are selected with the Islamic values embedded in the storylines. The movies are:

i.   *My Name is Khan* (*Wasatiyah* in Islam)

My Name is Khan refers to a story of a Muslim's journey whose life has poorly changed because of the 9/11 attack. A boy, with the Asperger's disease, and his family experienced a post 9/11 prejudice. According to Afifah (2010), there are several reasons to study this film, including the discrimination on Muslims in the United States of America after the 9/11 attack, Khan's sacrifices that proved Islam is not a terrorist religion, and the moral lesson found in this movie. Human beings are distinctive based on humanistic nature, and not religion.

ii.   *Joker* (Mental Illness and Self-Control in Islam)

The film *Joker* (2019) depicts a scrawny middle-aged party clown man in the city of Gotham. His low communication skill led to the practices of peculiar body languages and facials, which have made him an object of bully or alienation. This situation isolated him, making him even weirder. Being aware of his peculiarities, he aims to become a stand-up comedian, who will be accepted and admired by most. Until one day, he found that he could use guns to extend his emerging identity. Camp and Webster (2010) analysed *Joker: A Dark Night* to show how the Joker's madness was constructed to inform stigmatisation efforts. Thus, they highlighted the processes, cultural resources, and images to alter the depictions and related stigma.

iii.   *Jilbab Traveller* (Women Empowerment)

Jilbab Traveller tells the story of a young writer who wears jilbab until she is known as *Jilbab Traveller* among her readers. One day, her father sent her to Baluran in East Java, where her parents had fallen in love. While admiring the beautiful sceneries of Baluran, she met with a South Korean photographer, and conflicts began to set in. Nisa et al. (2019) analysed the message of `*aqidah* and *Syari`ah* by implementing the qualitative approach of Ferdinand de Saussure semiotic analysis to determine the meanings of every plot, text, sound, dialogue, video, and symbol in the movie. The study highlights the Islamic elements in the film, including *tafakkur*, *istighfar*, *dzikr*, and other Islam principles, including praying, dressing, fasting, almsgiving, sincerity, also alcohols and pork prohibition. The study also found the practices of polygamy and the premarital process, which are *khitba* and *taaruf*.

iv.   *Laskar Pelangi* (The Importance of Education)

Laskar Pelangi movie was inspired by the true story of the Pacific Island's children who struggle to go to school, their strong motivation to learn and the teachers' dedication in the middle of limitations. Nuzulia (2019) believes that this film could inspire the youths as well as the educators on the importance of education and the determination to learn.

v.   *2012* (`*aqidah* and the Day of Judgement)

2012 begins with the discovery of a geologist that the Earth's crust is becoming unstable after a massive solar flare caused by an alignment of the planets, and a novelist's attempts to bring his family to safety as the world is destroyed by a series of the extreme natural disasters. Seipel (2017) in his study of natural disasters in social learning and perceived realism perspective justifies that the perceived reality of media portrayals increases the acceptance and incorporation of particular attitudes and behaviours into someone's life.

These five movies have their unique messages, which are essential in learning the Fundamental of Islam (CTU 101) course. The theme subjected to each film demonstrates the principles of Islam, especially in strengthening Muslim students' character and well-being.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the film is defined as "a series of moving pictures, usually shown in a cinema or on television and often telling a story." The Merriam-Webster Dictionary refers to the film as a movie or moving picture. The Collins Dictionary has a more comprehensive definition of the film, which is more suitable for this study. The film consists of recorded moving pictures that tell a story and show a real situation shown at the cinema or on television. Film review has been considered as one of the efficient approaches to learning. Learning from the actual scene instead of written theories is more efficient, especially in understanding values in action and learning from live acts. The example can be discovered immediately and more clearly, especially when learning new moral concepts. Movies have become the tool of empowering people too, especially among young children. Besides, the religious film has a significant influence on youth behavioural change (Saodah et al., 2014). The benefits of film watching can be identified in its effects on the emotional responses, perceptions over time and personal lives overtimes (Mathews et al., 2012).

A research was conducted by Hine et al. (2019) about the influence of gender role models on gender knowledge and identity through fairy-tale adaptation. 131 children in the UK, ranging from 8 to 9 years old, participated in the study. These children were presented with old (*Sleeping Beauty*) versus new (*Moana*) Disney princess movies. They were also assessed on the attribution of gendered characteristics before and after the movie. The study found that the children could recognise and interpret gendered representations to which they were exposed to, including the more androgynous character (a person with high in masculine and feminine traits) among gender role portrayals. The study suggested that the Walt Disney Company plays a significant role in children's gender empowerment worldwide. Learning from movies can change people's lives too.

The film or movie has been used as a teaching aid to engage students in the teaching and learning process. Educators use film as a learning tool that gives a live example, and better understanding to students. For example, students can learn the pronunciation in the movie in English class, especially students who are learning different languages worldwide. According to Bissière and Degroult (2016), there are many benefits of using the films inside the classroom including:

    i.   Students understand the language better as they can hear from the language spoken by native speakers.
    ii.   Students develop more understanding and experience the culture from different worldviews and ways of life.
    iii.   Teachers can create activities across chapters to reinforce learning.
    iv.   Students are encouraged to learn more as they are invited to experience the culture through watching.

Mathews et al. (2012) also believes that film review maximises students' learning. Therefore, their study proposes that educators should apply contextual self-theory as a pedagogical guide for the actual selection of films for classroom use. The task of reviewing films or movies need interpretation skill. As people's experience inspires movies, there are individual values that the filmmakers try to convey. Ryan and Lenos (2020) highlight many movies with their unique meaning, which is sometimes difficult to interpret, including *The Pulp Fiction* (1994), *The Shining* (1980), *The Birds* (1963), and *The Lord of The Ring* (2001). They believe that some meanings come from the filmmaker's culture without realising it because people's thinking and belief are shaped by culture. For example, Alfred Hitchcock's life experience influenced the values he inserted in his movie, *The Bird*. Ryan and Lenos directly refer to the atmosphere where Hitchcock grew up in a conservative Catholic culture. He tried to convey the message that sexually independent women are dangerous to society. The values he tried to deliver are that men

should rule, and women should behave. All these elements which come from the culture determine the kind of movies they produce. Therefore, the reviewer of the film needs to discover the real meaning of the whole story.

Eijaz (2018) also has a similar idea on how background influences the filmmaking and its effects on the viewers. He believes that films reflect the filmmakers' ideologies and policies since they can determine the time and ways to evoke certain realities based on the selected issues. Eijaz provides the term Muslim fundamentalist as a stereotype to convey negativity. Looking at this factor, teachers should choose appropriate films for the students and the course content. Saodah et al. (2014) found that the non-Muslim students felt threatened and believed that their faith was challenged after watching a short Islamic film, even though the movie was intended to strengthen the Muslims' faith.

There are many ways educators instruct film review assignment to students. When Cooper (n.d.) assigned his students with the movie review assignment, he also reminded the students with the terms that they should be aware of including the blurbs, mediocre, cliché, plot, critical bias, and spoilers. Blumer (2010) has conducted a study of the instructional delivery of cinema viewing. Ten selected participants consisted of the family therapy students; marriage/ couple was assigned a film review task to understand and increase awareness about the diversity and systems in individuals, couples, and families. Students were presented with three films for selections (*The Joy Luck Club, Tortilla Soup, and Torch Song Trilogy*). Other than to limit the use of formal academic references, they were also given guidelines as follow:

   i.   one-page summary of the film.
   ii. three to four pages of analysis in the aspects of systems, culture, diversity, social justice, feminism, and multiculturalism.
   iii. two pages of therapeutic implications and application, including their experience.

One example of the film review is the analysis of Amir Khan's *PK* (2014) from the aspect of religion (Qadri & Mufti, 2015). This article review starts with the background of India's film industry and the trace of religion in filmmaking. Religion plays a significant role in the life of Indians, and this situation can be identified in the Indian movies (the Bollywood, Tamil, and Telugu) in the form of characters, locations, plot, dialogues, social norms, weddings, rituals, social institutions of marriage, education, etc. Therefore, the next subtopic followed is India's religious sense, particularly on the controversies on films about religion. *PK* is regarded as a satirical comedy that challenges superstitions labelled as spiritual practices. Therefore, this movie is considered challenging the religious institution in India, which forms a sensitive issue. The article also highlights the provoking response among the people towards *PK*. Several terms are explained by the reviewers, including the poster, plot, characters, religious codes, and symbols. Criticism about the ongoing communal frictions and the comparisons with other movies of the same theme such as *Oh My God* with Paresh Rawal and Akshay Kumar as the actors were included in the conclusion.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative research method that uses questionnaires. Researchers also choose the design by descriptive study to identify and study empirically and systematically related to the form of questionnaire used as the answer selection questionnaire. This study also uses data acquisition techniques on a five-point Likert type answer scale as the respondents' scale of answers to all statements used in this study instrument. The Likert scale is suitable to be used to measure the views given continuously by respondents in a given space about a practice of perception and attitude (Cohen et al., 2000). This study involved students who were studying for the subject of CTU101 at Universiti Teknologi Mara Terengganu Branch. The population consisted of 129 respondents who took this subject. Based on Cohen et al. (2000), if the sample population of 129 people, it is sufficient to have 100 people as the sample size. However, the sample size obtained by the researchers exceeded the target of 129 people and the data were analysed using SPSS 20.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics test is used to describe the pattern of sample as the frequency distribution, mean, median and mode and measure of variability (Mohd Najib, 2003). These data were analysed using SPSS 20 and findings are presented in table 2 with the calculation of mean score.

Table 1: Adaption from Wierma, 2000

Mean score	Interpretation Level
1.00 -2.49	Low
2.50 - 3.49	Moderate
3.50 - 5.00	High

Based on table 2 below, the results of the data analysis found that all items of students' interpretation of film review as an assessment are at a high mean score level that is between the range of 3.82 to 4.36.

Table 2: Mean score for perception of students

Questions	Mean score	Interpretation Level
I agree this film review approach is creative	3.82	High
The film provided by the lecturer is very helpful in understanding the subject of CTU101	4.36	High
I can easily apply the lesson through film criticism	4.32	High
I learned a lot of values in the film criticism	4.33	High
Film review approach can open the mind and integration of knowledge	3.99	High
Average Mean	4.16	High

The results in the table above show the students' excellent interpretation of the film review approach for the CTU101 subject. This shows that learning for religious subjects should be in line with current educational developments but not behind the basic theory of Islam. Although based on the poll, the top 3 of the most dominant values from the film review approach in CTU101 are shown as below:
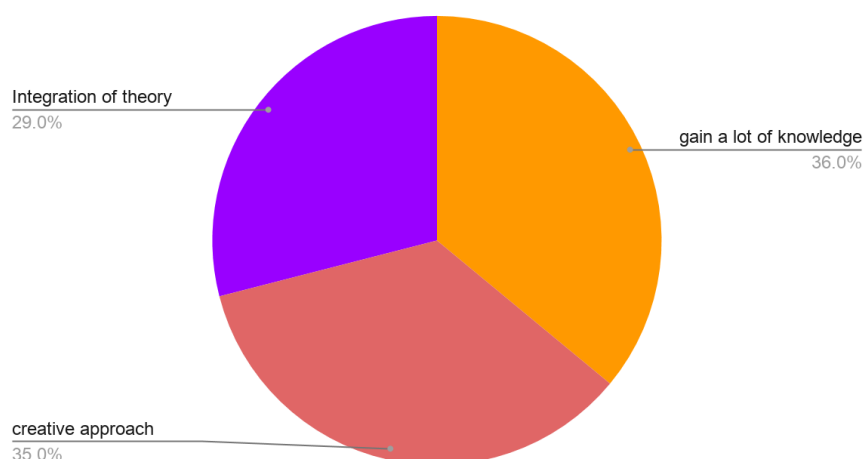
Figure 1: The Most Dominant Values from the Film Review Approach in CTU101.

Based on the figure above, it has shown that students are satisfied with the film review approach. The approach of learning through film can help the creativity and adaptation of students with the Islamic theory learned. Students are happy when watching movies and able to integrate with the fundamentals of Islam learned by lecturers. Furthermore, students are required to analyse the film and argue based on the verses of the Quran. Therefore, students can add new knowledge in a creative way but not behind the basics of knowledge.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic season greatly affects students if continued with the old approach. Therefore, the approach of learning through selected films greatly empowers students and receives a good response. This approach is in line with 21st century learning, that focuses on a student-centred approach based on elements of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and values and ethical applications. Based on the five selected films, students need to describe and analyse their understanding based on the appropriate verses of the Quran and guidance by the lecturer. This approach can help students achieve understanding in the subject in a creative way.

REFERENCES

Afifah, N.H. (2010). Stereotyping of Being Muslim In America Reflected in Johar's "My Name Is Khan": A Sociological Approach. Thesis, Bachelor Degree of Education, English Department, School of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University Of Surakarta.

Bissière, M. & Degroult, N. (2016). *Sèquences: Intermediate French through Film. Ed. 3*. Australia: Cengage Learning.

Blumer, M.L.C. (2010) 'And Action! Teaching and Learning Through Film', *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 22: 3, 225 — 235.

Camp, M.E. & Webster, C.R. (2010). The Joker: A Dark Night for Depictions of Mental Illness. *Academic Psychiatry, 34*(2), 145-149.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) Research Methods in Education. 5th Edition, Routledge Falmer, London.

Cooper, C. (n.d.). *Movie/Film Review Lesson Plan.* Retrieved from https://repository.dinus.ac.id/docs/ajar/film+review+lesson+plan.pdf.

Eijaz, A. (2018). Trends and Patterns of Muslims' Depictions in Western Films: An Analysis of Literature Review. *Mediaciones*,*14*(21), 19-40.

Hine, B., Ivanovic, K., & England, D. (2019). From the Saving Princess to the World-Saving Daughter of the Chief: Examining Young Children's Perception of 'Old' versus 'New' Disney Princess Characters. In The Dundes, L. *Psychosocial Implications of Disney Movies.* Switzerland: MDPI.

Mathews, C.S., Fornaciari, C.J., & Rubens, A.J. (2012). Understanding the Use of Feature Films to Maximize Student Learning. *American Journal of Business Education, 5*(5), 563-574.

Mohd. Najib Abdul Ghaffar (2003). *Reka Bentuk Tinjauan Soal Selidik Pendidikan.* Johor : Penerbit Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

Nisa, M.K., Fardila, U.A., & Widodo, A. (2019). Isi Pesan Dakwah Aqidah dan Syariah Dalam Film Indonesia Islami "Jilbab Traveler Love Sparks In Korea". *Translitera Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi dan Studi Media*, *8*(1):1-12.

Nuzulia, L. (2019). The Analysis of Laskar Pelangi Movie By Andre Hirata Using Theory Structuralism. *Proceeding of National Seminar of PBI (English Language Education)*, Unikal Press, June 19, 2019.

Qadri, M. & Mufti, S. (2015). Films and Religion: An analysis of Aamir Khan's PK. *Journal of Religion & Film. 20*(1), article 9.

Ryan, M. & Lenos, M. (2020). *An Introduction to Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film. Ed. 2.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Saodah, W., Rizalawati, I. & Faridah, A.M. Impact of Islamic Film on Understanding of Islamic Values and Cultures for a Multiracial Society in Malaysia. *International Journal of Science Commerce and Humanities. 2*(5), 161-174.

Seipel, M. (2017). Natural Disaster Films: A Social Learning and Perceived Realism Perspective. Thesis, *Master of Arts*, School of Communications Brigham Young University.