A Study on the Impact of Supervillains on Audience

Project Report

Submitted by

Aleena Maria Jacob (SB21CE003)

Under the guidance of

(Mrs. Allu Alfred)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for award of the degree

Of Bachelor of Arts

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam

College With Potential for

Excellence Accredited by NAAC with 'A++'

Grade

Affiliated to

Mahatma Gandhi University

Kottayam - 686560

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Declaration

I do affirm that the project " A Study on the Impact of Supervillains on Audience" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Communication Studies has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Ernakulam   Aleena Maria Jacob

22/03/2024   SB21CE003

                                             B.A. English Literature and Communication Studies

                                                           St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Certificate

I hereby certify that this project entitled " A Study on the Impact of Supervillains on Audience" by Aleena Maria Jacob is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Ernakulam

22/03/2024

Mrs. Allu Alfred

Department of Communicative English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Acknowledgement

I take this opportunity to offer my humble prayers and thanks to God Almighty for His mercy and blessings for the completion of this project.

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<div align="right">Aleena Maria Jacob</div>

Abstract

Using a narrative analytic approach, this study investigates how supervillains affect audience perception. Supervillains are iconic people in popular culture, frequently depicted as antagonists with complicated motivations and attributes that defy traditional concepts of good and evil. This study examines supervillain narratives in various media, such as comic books, films, and television shows, in order to comprehend how these fictional characters influence audiences perceptions of right and wrong, and social standards.

The analysis focuses on the narrative aspects of supervillain stories, such as character growth, story structure, and thematic components. This study tries to understand the underlying messages and philosophies that supervillains send to audiences by evaluating how they are portrayed and contextualised within the story.

The study's findings have significance for understanding how popular culture influences society values and attitudes. By investigating the impact of supervillains on audience's perception, this study adds to our understanding of how media portrayals of ethical and just behaviour influence individual and collective attitudes.

Keywords: Supervillains, Audience Perception, Narrative Analysis, Morality, Justice, Popular Culture

Contents

Chapter I: Introduction

Villains in Superhero Movies: A Study on the Impact of Supervillains on Audience

Superhero films in the contemporary era have gone on to become very popular and currently take up a large section of the film industry. Actually, the actual takeoff for the superhero film genre happened only in the 2000s, while superhero comic books have been around for much longer. A very popular fan base for movies and cartoons helps in furthering this genre. "X-Men" and "Spider-Man" movies showed possibilities for the box offices of superhero stories. Iron Man released in 2008 was a real turning point, as with this movie began the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

The unique style of stories' presentation from the MCU's films changed the common notion of a cinematic universe. Stories and characters in numerous films cross each other and produce a shared or cinematic universe. Post-credits scenes of such films have their fans. The Marvel Cinematic Universe was so popular that it provoked other cinematic universes. The most visible is, without a doubt, the DCEU, or DC Extended Universe. It concerns movies like "Man of Steel" (2013), or, for instance, "Wonder Woman" (2017). Standalone movies also enjoyed the same widespread popularity: the brightest example is the trilogy of Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight". The popularity of superhero movies and their cinematic universes provoked interest in comic books, merchandise, and related media. Their popularity never gives up, as lots of superhero films and series are in production for years to come.

Supervillains, the quintessential rivals in popular culture, have captivated audiences for millennia. Despite their primarily negative positions, these characters have amassed a sizable fan base and are adored alongside their heroic counterparts. Scholars have pondered and discussed extensively on the causes of this phenomenon.

Previous studies have examined numerous aspects of supervillain attraction. According to Brown and Campbell's (1986) research on the psychological attractiveness of supervillains, viewers are captivated by their complex motivations and moral ambiguity. Furthermore, researchers have explored the cultural significance of supervillains, stating that they reflect society anxieties and concerns (Dill and Thill, 2007).

A supervillain in a superhero movie is an evil or bad person who does activities of wretchedness and/or damages humankind. This character is also termed a "villain". A supervillain can have a justification for why he is doing what he is doing according to his set of rules but, in the process, can cause injurious destruction. Above, however, is not the exact same as the antagonist. A bit of it is but not entirely. An antagonist is always part of the central part of a role to the achievement of a protagonist. The most nuanced and well-known part of superhero movies has always been the villains. A good superhero movie is only relative in the case that the villains are as charismatic as the heroes struggling to stop them.

Long before the series of movies, these roles were defined by one or more well-known actors, which brought a great respectability for these parts. Few wanted to touch the character of the mastermind of the Oscar victory after Jack Nicholson had done it. That is why it took almost two decades before the second came into his own. For some, villains seem to be reared in an atmosphere of evildoing, corrupted to the bones, and hence they are born to bring devastation to the world. Somehow, that changed and started its destructive existence. Villains in superhero films are the broadest of demotivation. Being a remembered villain requires much more than the dread-fear factor or the influential, advanced character design. Fans are mostly interested in the backstories of undoubtedly, a spectacular appearance and engaging language can pique viewers' interest, but how each of them has been turned into a cruel monster is when all the magic happens. The origin story for most cult favorite villains of the time takes a relatable form, somewhat like a reversed redemption arc. This begs the

viewer to feel empathy for them since their walk down the path of evil is inevitable. Villains are key players in any superhero film; this paper looks at the attractive, more complicated depthful qualities of the conflicting characters. Central to creating captivating tales for the mass audience is the article. It also points out that villains could be more acceptable than superheroes. The research claims that thought-provoking villains need to be designed for the movies. It argues that memorable antagonists can do magic for the overall work quality of those movies. According to the research, audiences appreciate the fact that the villains contribute to moral ambiguity in the story. On top of that, well-conceived villains can also become icons.

The aim of this research paper is to find out why villains get popular in superhero movies. The paper will try to determine reasons for their appeal. It also searches for features that render the villains noteworthy. Furthermore, the study intends to look at the impact of villains on viewership. Further, the research will look at how villains shape the plot of superhero films. It will focus on how antagonists affect the way in which the protagonist's identity evolves throughout the film.

In addition, the study will assess how cultural and societal factors define what the audience perceives as villains. The study will also intend to understand the impact of the presentation of villains on super-hit superhero movies and their box office performance. Accordingly, this study will further discuss possible psychological reasons for the villains' attraction to the common public. This study will finally disclose the impacts of the villains' characterization in superhero films on attitudes and values in society.

In modern cinematic discourse, two towering pillars stand as iconic instances of superhero cinema: "The Dark Knight" and "Avengers: Endgame." These critically acclaimed and commercially successful films have become iconic in the study of supervillains in popular culture. Both films provide ample material for analysis, delving into themes of

morality, chaos, power, and redemption, making them essential case studies in the study of supervillains in modern cinema.

The growth of the appeal of the villain in superhero films is a very sensitive and multi-dimensional study with innumerable parameters to be taken into consideration. The popularity of a supervillain in a superhero film is very much vulnerable—subjective and shifting—to relatively drastic extents between persons. What one might find enigmatic or interesting in a villain, another might feel is wholly derivative or dull. Of course, this makes it more difficult to arrive at a set of concrete conclusions in terms of the popularity of villains.

Supervillain popularity could also be influenced by marketing and merchandising activities. For instance, a supervillain who is most advertised in trailers, banners, and other advertisements could seem to have more following than the truth. Additionally, supervillains with a strong presence in commerce will definitely seem more popular. The demographic, too, will have a bearing on supervillain popularity. For instance, supervillains meant for a younger audience could be perceived to have more popularity than supervillains when aimed at an adult audience, or supervillains when aimed at an adult audience could be believed to be lesser in popularity.

The critical reception will, therefore, influence the perception of popularity of the supervillain. As such, for example, one that is praised by the critics could make a much higher score but won't actually be viewed as more popular than one with negative reviews. Thus, understanding the popularity of the villains in superhero movies would no doubt provide certain insights with respect to preferences and public tastes; however, one shall also accept the fact that such a study has several limitations and even complexities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Superhero movies sometimes have flat, vulgar villains that mirror the comic book conventions of the day. Most of the time, the villains were by essence created with preludes of their motives: greed or power; and actions for the goal: world domination or destruction. Gene Hackman plays Lex Luthor to perfection in displaying the idea of a super-villain: a rich businessman who lays plans on ruling the world - blowing up California with a nuclear missile. The Joker comes closest to defining a super-villain as portrayed by Jack Nicholson in Tim Burton's Batman. He is the absolutely mad criminal desiring to ruin every person living in Gotham City with some poisonous chemical to seize the city. These are motives, like those of Lex Luthor, which are absolutely egocentric and thus make him a mean, insane person. Alfred Molina is Doctor Octopus, the villain a lot more complex than either Lex Luthor or The Joker. He begins life as an ingenious scientist who turns super-villain after one of his deadly scientific experiments, through a freak accident, binds some mechanical arms to his body. His subsequent goals are rooted in something powerful and recognition of his evil past, which affords him the quality of being even more pitiable. Early renditions had the suave, debonair supervillains with motivations that sound rudimentary today but still succeeded well within the cultural and contextual environment of the supervillain. Indeed, it sets the basic attributes for the genre like the adversary of the hero, the personification of all the ills hanging over society, and the herald of the call to adventure, allowing them to be a multi-dimensional character we cherish—or love to hate—today.

If so, the image of supervillains in superhero movies has changed with time to reflect a tad bit more general socio-economic and cultural. So, where the earlier supervillains of those golden years were driven by vengeance, money, power, or classically their ways, the supervillains of the superhero genre became complex and layered to ideal psychological specifications over time. In "The Dark Knight" (2008), for example, Joker is a sort of mad

nihilistic anarchist, yet with some vaguely traced goals that draw so much interest and, one might say, charitably looking at his methods, grace about his persona. Most of the supervillains in these recent superhero films are also more easily understood, by their very nature containing more humanity in them. For instance, Magneto is often considered an allegory for Malcolm X and his civil rights movement. Though being a negative character and villain in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Loki followed some people who inexplicably love him. Only the gender and color of the supervillains have really changed over time. Yet, some critics raised their eyebrows at the depiction more on two counts: one that it represented another example of racial stereotyping and a cliché or that female supervillain characters are either hypersexualized or emotionally frail. They would say the same about non-white supervillains.

Most superhero movies tend to comment, be it socio-political in nature, through the supervillains. For example, the Joker from "The Dark Knight" is often read as a critique of neoliberalism and the surveillance state. Similar to Magneto from the X-Men series, many times he was considered to have been represented as an allegory to Malcolm X and his ongoing struggle for civil rights. The media representations of all these villains in these superhero films had such great effects on mass culture in their understanding of evil and the values surrounding it. For instance, the character of the Joker from the film "The Dark Knight" was so popular within a given society for symbolizing chaos and disorder. Indeed a noteworthy shift over time in supervillain depiction within superhero cinema can be witnessed that would track with far more macro socio-cultural shifts. Much has been written on this fun aspect of pop culture, from the historic origins of the genre to the psychological motivations of supervillains.

With it, many supervillains are actually motivated by personal gain in some form: power, wealth, status. Take, for instance, in the film "Superman" (1978), wherein Lex Luthor

is a villain bent to conquer the world with capital and influence, while Norman Osborn from "Spider-Man" (2002) wants to make money out of military contracts from his company. Some supervillains have been driven into the idea of vengeance on their victim or society at large. For example, there is Joker from "The Dark Knight" (2008), who wishes nothing more than punishing Gotham City for ways he feels it has lost its moral purity—or Magneto from the most famous series "X-Men," who will take revenge on all people for the persecutions over mutants. And there are cases when supervillains cherish an elusive, single ideal; for example, the case of building up a utopian society pushes forward, or the desire to purify the world of countless impurities everywhere. Ultron from "Avengers: Age of Ultron" (2015) is a character that fully comprehends the importance of a world without humans, and Ra's al Ghul from "Batman Begins" (2005) wants to clean Gotham City not only from corruption but also from its decay.

Some supervillains use a tragedy or misfortune in their lives as a motivation. For example, Doctor Octopus from "Spider-Man 2" (2004) turns into an adversary after an experiment connecting robotic arms with his body failed to be successful, and the Green Goblin from "Spider-Man" (2002) turned out to be one after he was exposed to an experimental serum. Still, there are some supervillains within this circle of purely psychological reasons—craving attention or getting a spurt in life over something—that might not even matter. The Riddler from "Batman Forever" (1995) tries to draw attention by leaving riddles for Batman—and the Vulture in "Spider-Man: Homecoming" (2017) aims at finding redemption, announcing about it through high-tech hijacks.

Supervillains can definitely add an overall tone and feel to the movie of a superhero. Almost always, super-villains add some sense of doom and grime for any movie in which they are portrayed. Their nefarious machinations and malevolent acts can also ratchet up the risk and threat that exists around the protagonist. For example, the Joker brings unrest and

unpredictability at the same time he incites humor and wit. Some of them add humor and wit into superhero flicks. They bring about some epic proportions in superhero movies. This may bestow an epic feel to their grand goals and ideas, which can be world-menacing. For example, Thanos is one such powerful and fearful villain from the MCU who wants to erase half of all life in the universe. Sometimes, reasons and deeds of super-villains may challenge notions and morals of heroes, thus making the ethical atmosphere still more complicated, hard, and ambivalent. Magneto is a strong character from the "X-Men" series: he believes that mutants are superior and will do anything for his own purposes, creating a moral dilemma environment. Another possible impact that supervillains could play for superhero movies is helping quite significantly in establishing just exactly what sort of overall tenor or mood the movie had: from its darkness or humor, epic scale, or smaller intimacy, and moral gravity, or facile questions.

Super villains are usually some great characters and always remain favorites of the audience in superhero movies. Tom Hiddleston enacts the character of Loki, who is Thors' adopted brother and also a god of mischief. He has this complex, multi-dimensional character which added to his witty humor and a prankster nature, making him one of the most loved characters from MCU. Magneto was played by Ian McKellen and Michael Fassbender in his youth; he was also a mutant that had powers of control over metals. His complicated but gray-morality character, along with a tragic past and very compelling motivations, made him an extremely popular favorite against the good side among X-Men characters. Doctor Octopus, played by Alfred Molina, is an outstanding scientist gone wrong after a disastrous experiment when some artificial arms were fused with his body. His tragic biography and complicated motivations, combined with formidable abilities, make him another one well-known in Spider-Man history. Ultron, voiced by James Spader, is a giant creature of artificial intelligence with a philosophical goal: to kill all human beings for the sake of

salvation. His tremendous size and global ambitions, united with a sad experience in the past, made him a bitter antagonist—one of those "for ages." Even against other super-villains, these characters stand out because they have been represented as multifaceted personalities, with interesting and appealing motivation, as well as possessing bright appearance. They took the imagination of the viewer to such an extent that they became famous personages in mass culture.

Works on superhero films certainly may contain a large piece of the topics: from cultural effects, reception by the audience, to representation. Other works look at how time has changed the superhero story and its tendency to cover so many issues in society. Other studies examine such movies with psychological considerations, whether upon the base of the hero's path or the influence that identifying with superheroes creates within the viewers. And that means one of the aspects dealt with herein—that this is a research about racial and gender issues presented or not in the film. How these movies either maintain or deviate from the stereotypes that were already set. Another huge area of research is the stress attached to film adaptations that comic book material enacts upon it.

Research scholars into the franchise then delved into further research to get the transmedia nature of how superhero franchises converged films, series, merchandise, and comic books to make a common narrative universe. Some studies were also carried out to understand marketing and econometric elements involved in the production of superhero movies and explore its box office performance and techniques used by studios—an umbrella hypothesis to both develop and maintain these mega-franchises. Moreover, they reviewed not only the messages behind those daring acts but also showed how such stories help the audience be psychologically ready for everything tough with the concept "heroic imagination." Davis, A. (1996) once made a statement: The study "From Panel to Screen: The Visual Translation of Comic Book Art in Superhero Movies" tries to find what exact

visual features are seen on screen when comic book art is translated into the medium of cinema. It digs deep into the types of decisions made during adaptation while Chang tried to accomplish an objective whereby there exists an understanding of how mingles of media contribute to the impact and coherence of a single narrative felt by its audiences during its broadcasted existence over different media. Besides, Patel (2018), in the work "The Business of Superheroes: An Investigation of Box Office Trends and Advertising Policies in the Superhero Genre," looks at the economic boundaries of films about superheroes through the investigation of trends at the box office and advertising policies adopted by studios. Supervillains always seem an appealing subject to the role and relevance of research in superhero flicks. Very often, they serve as personifications of social fears and threats. Researching the backgrounds and drives of the villains gives depth within the plot and thus makes it more believable, interestingly developed. A well-developed villain with relatable backstories can boost the plot. Adding drama to the plot, villains play their part to the utmost capacity at two levels of the story. The challenge which they create for a hero is his destiny; secondly, their incarnated forms during the conflict with the hero determine the character arc.

Villains act as direct foils to the superheroes, presenting qualities and values opposite to those of a hero. More often, comparison of a hero vs. a villain touches upon some themes among which one can find justice, morality, and the very essence of heroism. Very often, villains represent mirrors that reflect all problems society has or comments on some events happening right here and now. Context in which a villain is depicted might reveal even more societal issues and concerns. Quite often, a villain is painted with moral ambivalence, thus questioning essential conceptions of good and bad. It adds to the plot an element of depth, which challenges its viewers to interfere and question their basic moral perspectives previously set up.

Some stories may take up a redemptive or the possibility of redemptive villainy. Changed mind or forgiveness-gotten villains could give rise to emotional depth and complication on further lines of the plot. The result could well-be-influence future stories about his effect on the superhero universe; this is a storyline in which villains would continue to have an impact following character development for long cycles of stories.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Supervillains in Superhero Movies

"The Dark Knight" and "Avengers: Endgame" stand out as important works widely cited in studies of supervillains in popular culture. Christopher Nolan's compelling portrayal of Gotham City's descent into anarchy, anchored by Heath Ledger's legendary performance as the Joker, offers a nuanced look at villainy and its impact on society. Meanwhile, the Marvel Cinematic Universe's dramatic conclusion, "Avengers: Endgame," provides a comprehensive analysis of enmity through Thanos, a complicated adversary driven by a twisted sense of righteousness. These films are great case studies, delving into supervillains' psychology, motivations, and societal reflections, increasing scholarly conversation on the issue.

In fact, focusing laser-like on the villain, The Dark Knight and Avengers: Endgame, both offer extremely instructive insight into the way character motivation falls in line with a broader narrative arch. Most importantly, the paper presents possibly the highest level of human psychology and social commentary that even tends to reach issues, which are philosophic. This paper, therefore, attempts to critically analyze the attributes and motivation of two iconic supervillains—Joker from The Dark Knight and Thanos from Avengers: Endgame—and through discussion and pertinent research and theories, attempts to explain what kind of understanding they bring to the screen. Joker defines the role of a mad monster. Further, it adds that such villains often are characterized by little empathy, guilt, and poor impulse control. The basic character of the villain has the most rudimentary motivations—contempt for societal regulations and a realizable self (Hare 1999). It is fully applicable when speaking about Joker. Acting only to rip off everything hollow and the corruption that he saw in each part of Gotham City to bring it down—he always has been a nihilist. Reciting in his speech, as if in a kind of mantra, he asks persistently questions about other people's morality and their opinion. He, figuratively speaking, created chaos and delights in huge chaos, even laughing when flaunting, corrupting, seducing, or the morality of

law itself, as it was imposed by Batman. In fact, according to one theory, it finds a perfect explanation for the motivation of the Joker: this is Robert P. Abelson's "chaos theory" from his "A Varieties of Chaos." According to chaos theory, erratic events are sensitive to the minutest differences in conditions. His actions in "The Dark Knight" are more like trial events to show social anarchy and chaos, making events analogous to haphazard, erratic activity. Thus, the repressed childhood trauma of the Joker could be understood—more so with a psychoanalytical perspective—as anger withheld in and an instinct to cause pain to others in reflection of suffering he goes through (Freud, 1920). Further, his book "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious" has a definition for the "Trickster Archetype," which helps partially describe The Joker's character. He interpreted that trickster was based on chaos and unpredictability; this should define human nature. This corresponds to the type of behavior displayed by The Joker and can be exemplified only by this wild, unpredictable character and through cunningness.

Thanos in Endgame is more of a tragic villain character; his actions represent a twisted reading of the Malthusian population theory, assuming resource scarcity demands extreme measures. And Thanos becomes a tragic hero himself, oppressed by the burden the universe puts upon him, committing this "mercy killing" of half of the universe. One theory that might be applied to Thanos's motivations is the "Malthusian theory of population growth," which was suggested by Thomas Malthus in his work "An Essay on the Principle of Population." At the end of the day, sooner or later, just as Malthus said, there would come that time when the population growth would surpass all available resources, and the world would be buried under unbearable suffering and hunger. Thanos wanted to clear half of all living beings; in such an imbalance, this could be what follows thereafter. But, according to Christopher Morris in the article "The Superhero Paradox," Thanos' purpose remains a selfish-driven need for power—all the other explanations, including the one based on seeking

to empower and use concepts of Malthusianism as a mask of his own ends. One lesson from Thanos's fall into villainy is one of absolute power and the perils that come with having absolute answers. Additionally, Thanos' intentions might be explicated from the angle of Fredric Jameson's "utopian/dystopian dichotomy" in his book "Utopia and Dystopia." Jameson supports that utopian/dystopian narratives present visions of a society that is not presented in view of one that should be or can be better but rather one that follows from the most extreme, often violent consequences. Thanos wanted to make the world a fair place by destroying half the population, which is kind of a dark utopia. As Travis Langley puts it in "Supervillains and Mental Illness," every supervillain gives some evidence that he is fundamentally inconsistent. Every Joker aspect points to possible diagnoses such as psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder, characterized by its pure contempt for results. This fact is also true to the grandiosity preoccupation displayed by Thanos, which may also be an indication of narcissistic personality disorder. However, it would be oversimplifying to attribute villainy wholly to mental illness since such characters are products of both their environment and experiences. Another view is on social impact theories as addressed by David Rosenfeld in "Psychology and Comic Books": the Joker has played on all the fears of Gotham and the institutions by proving how easily social structures are subject to falling to charismatic demagogues. Throughout the universe, he is known as "The Mad Titan," bringing apocalyptic waves of chaos and destruction to prove his undying love from his devotees. It proves nothing if not a riveting, unifying window into the interfacing of character motivation with social attitude and how it relates to the larger, overarching storyline of each film. Anarchic in nature, to throw into question the conventional society and rip the façade from civilization around the established order. Thanos and his dark purpose wish for creating a more just and ecological world through the application of tough love. Finally, relevant

theories and research applied can lead to a better understanding of what motivates these infamous supervillains and their characteristics.

In one word, the supervillains are more than twirling their mustache. They are the necessary opposition along the path of the hero, bringing forth conflict and stakes raised in the general sense, ultimately defining the success characteristic of the superhero film genre. The villain provides the impact on multilevel terms, just like the heroes, but still raises questions of their contribution to viewership and the increased depths of the plot, ensuring the ongoing popularity of the genre "superhero." Good villains are so massive an obstacle for well-built villains that they throw heroes right to their limit, keeping the interest in the outcome for the audience. Thanos challenged the laid standards through his resource scarcity and offered a motivation that was both plausible and brought about moral ambiguity, along with debate on the part of the audience. This indeed does build up some intricacy in the story and gets the audience attached to the movie more than the thrills of popcorn. The baddie is the doer of loss and disaster, so the response of the spectator would be emotional. It is more influential and deepening to see the heroes dealing with grief, anger, and fear in the face of the enemy. Usually, the villain is the other part of the hero, delineating either his good features or drawbacks. The turmoil the Joker represents forces Batman to face his dark side, and the calculating manner of Thanos is in opposition to the emotional responses of the Avengers. This brings out more thematically in terms of moral and evil. Super-villains normally represent societal angst and fear. From the chaos of the Joker to Thanos' population policy, often such villains are perfect stimuli to ponder real-world issues and even provoke intellectual thought. Antagonism from the villains provides the heroes with a challenge to make them adapt and confront internal demons, and consequently, the heroes are changed as people.

From atonement for Tony Stark to acceptance of loss for Thor, the antagonists run the gamut of the heroes' journey and provide mental support to the transformation. All of them are different to make sure that the storyline of the superhero, very often repetitive, didn't get dull. This was the first time where each of the new baddies did spice things up with unique tests that required shifts in the storyline and tone for the heroes' tactics, so at least the genre never did. These iconic villains become fashionable pop figures that increase the sale of comic book issues, discussions of fans' forums, and cosplay communities. It makes this movie interesting and lifts up the cultural impact of villains redefining heroism in the very sense of becoming a yardstick for putting one's life at stake, for surmounting odds and putting things on the line. It further increases the horizon of genres and makes way for the making of complex and complicated heroes. While it is difficult to assess exactly what contribution villains make to the general success of a superhero movie, one can certainly say that they form an equally important part for a movie to succeed. They drive the plot; they create emotions and interesting stories that can keep the audience captive. As long as there are superheroes, there will be interesting villains who need to entice superheroes to their limits and attract audiences with their dark allure.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

From the key research in this paper, the following may be furnished: The Joker from "The Dark Knight " and Thanos from "Avengers: Endgame" are two of the most infamous supervillains with characteristic motives and depth-driven impacts in their films. Characteristics and Motivation: Anarchy and nihilism are the characteristics of the Joker, while the impulse for Thanos is to bring balance back by drastic means. So, the Joker challenged cultural conventions, and Thanos had utilitarian motivations to solve overpopulation and scarcity.

Theoretical Frameworks: In such an analysis, the trickster archetype of the Joker fits quite appropriately with his chaotic character and is easily explained through the use of Chaos Theory. One can appeal to Malthusian theory to judge what sort of goals Thanos aims for and how they could be both utopian and dystopian in nature. From the eyes of the hero, he would be a catalyst that will bring about the plot of the film and at the same time create conflict and hurdles that the hero will have to overcome. The crimes the Joker committed in "The Dark Knight" made Batman doubt his moral code, and in "Avengers: Endgame," Thanos's mission urged the Avengers to revert the losses and reform the team to beat him. High Stakes Setting: The Joker and Thanos set the stakes higher for both viewers and heroes; therefore, much tension and suspense in the films come from these personalities. That is compounded by the depth through which the struggles are put by the Joker's unpredictability and the overpowering character of Thanos.

Against the virtues and ideals, which concern the heroes, are counterposed by some kind of morality by both Thanos and the Joker. While Thanos' rude ways counteract with the dedication of the Avengers toward protection, the Joker's nihilism counterposes to the very belief in justice which Batman has. Assistance to Development of Characters: While fighting supervillains, the superheroes would further find themselves and, while doing so, their flaws

and weaknesses. Two of the instances can be the fight of Batman against The Joker's anarchism and the effect of Thanos on the choice of the Avengers. Emotional Stakes: Both the Joker and Thanos carry such a huge emotional burden on the public that sometimes it is transferred from one movie to another. The haphazardness of the Joker and the excessive power of Thanos make their collisions with the goodies extra-destructive.

Box office hit: Especially, if such great supervillains like the Joker or Thanos appear, this can attract an audience, which will have an impact on the general success of superhero movies. Their presence provokes interest and gets along with a surge in sales.

Spin-offs and Series: Surely, a very successful supervillain would raise the inspiration for a spin-off film or an independent franchise of his own, as has been the case for Thanos in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and The Joker film to name just two examples of this idea coming out of the success of supervillains. In conclusion, supervillains contribute a lot to the success of the superhero movie, as they drive the plot and bring out tension and moral contrasts for character development; they bring out emotional investment and partake in the box office success, finally leading to spin-offs and franchises. Their impacts are substantial in thickening the story and capturing audience appeal. This amount of implication over further research on supervillain in superhero movies could be substantial. In that regard, this research underscores the fact that supervillains are significant sources of conflict and complexity of characters in superhero stories. Further studies can then explore the much psychological and philosophical details of supervillains and the effects they bring on activity and reception of the audience. Later on, further research could dive deeper into just how supervillains help to reflect within the larger social and cultural context in which superhero movies find themselves and are appreciated, as supervillains can serve as a great foil for the exposition of both the good and evil in the hero. Further research might turn toward considering the function played by these supervillains who lurk around the sidelines, ever ready to challenge

and guide the moral/ethical dimensions not only of the heroes but also of the "great question" such storylines have towards the morality/ethics of society. In general, the above research gives an inclusive insight into supervillains in the superhero movies and opens doors for further research in pursuit of the multifaceted dynamics and implications of supervillains within this domain. Of course, themes go further than just the spectacle and a sequence of actions. They touch on morality and complex themes of society at large, possibly even more than these themes can represent human nature.

The basis of the present study was a wicked tapestry made up of many threads. We attempted to plunge into the archetypal chaos of the Joker—anarchy as anarchy, a force that would tear apart the very fabric of order. Sad complications that could hold only Thanos, his crazy look hiding the mad need for balance. Next to this single character, it becomes clear how a villain can influence the storyline and character development. The Joker w as, to some part, an instigator of Batman's moral interrogation, throwing him right in the center of his problems. Thanos is the architect of loss who plunges the Avengers into a turning journey with grief and resilience. In this, it reminds one that the villain serves not only as an obstacle but also the critical tool of change and thought within a narrative, irremediably changing the hero and the storyline. This gives the analysis a reach beyond that of any single film and into further depths of the social and cultural contexts that would be conditioning the environment of such depictions of villainy. From the reflection of social fears through the eyes of the Joker to villainy by Thanos, which was somehow Malthusian, we have seen how the villain becomes the mirror character of our society—reflecting or commenting on multidimensional themes like social injustice, political systems, or technological advancement. This was kind of a higher experience than intellectual; it was born of the relationship between the film's creators on one side and the audience on the other. It was to encourage—actually, to say "urge"—producers to break with stereotypes, delve into layers of psychology, and accept

different types of representation. Most importantly, for audiences seeking complexity and dealing with being shocked out of their assumptions, to the audiences who sought discussion while showing the correct respect.

And now, moving towards the end, we have to come back to the very beginning. New threats are realized every time in the ever-changing world of supervillainy because societal worries and technological environments give birth to different ones. Thus, it needs reevaluation every time. Here the question arises: what does a supervillain tell us about himself? What sort of fears does he project, and what do they give us to retool the projector of good and evil? One could certainly understand that supervillains can be something more than superficial dressers; rather, supervillains can even be a powerful medium of introspection, satire, and creativity. We will, therefore, be remembered that real power is not derived by defeat over the villain; rather, real power comes from realization coming from subtleties that lie beneath his mask. That way, deeper would be our search into the depth of the stories of the villain.

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