# Character Analysis of the Representation of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Two Selected Ethiopian Amharic Films

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## Abstract

There is no denying the value of film in fostering social interaction, creating awareness, and developing the economy, culture, education, and language. The purpose of this paper is to assess and examine how people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are portrayed in two Amharic films. The study's findings were based on information obtained from six direct participants—film producers, directors, scriptwriters, and actors—who were carefully chosen through interviews and firsthand viewings of the two chosen films. It took advantage of media content analysis. The data from the interviews and the film video were then thematically examined for the study. Among other things, the study's findings showed that characters are portrayed in ways consistent with the behavioral characteristics of people with autism. Other concerns impacting films about ASD include the lack of awareness of ASD among film producers and writers, the lack of care among government officials for ASD and how it affects their ability to make high-quality films, and an overreliance on one individual for all roles. The two Amharic films that were chosen, "*Tism*" and "*Bandaf*," have their own strengths and limitations when it comes to portraying or expressing ASD characters or features. The study found that lack of understanding about ASD and misconceptions about people with ASD were the root causes of these strengths and limits.

**Keywords**: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Character Representation, Films

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

There is minimal internationally comparable data on the incidence, distribution, and trends of disability, even though there isn't exact agreement on the criteria for disabilities. Disability, in the words of the World Health Organization, is "complex, dynamic, and multidimensional" (WHO 2011, p. 3). However, in the Ethiopian context, persons with disabilities are defined as people who are unable to provide themselves with a normal living on their own due to a deficit in their physical or mental capacities. The *Nagarit Gazeta* of Emperor Haile Selassie I, in Order No. 70 of 1970 (cited in JICA 2002),

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defined "disabled" as people who, because of physical or mental impairments, are unable to maintain themselves and do not have anyone to help them. Additionally, it shall include persons who are unable to earn their livelihood because they are too young or too old.

In "*Negarit Gazeta*," the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 101 of 1994, referred to a disabled person as a person who is unable to see, hear, or speak or is suffering from mental retardation or from injuries that limit him or her due to natural or manmade causes. However, the term does not include people who are alcoholics, drug addicts, or those with psychological problems due to socially deviant behaviors (JICA 2002).

Similar to other illnesses, autism is difficult to describe. As Snedden (2010) pointed out, autistic people have brains that have not evolved normally. Since its discovery in 1911, autism has been used to describe a variety of developmental disorders that are now collectively referred to as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) can manifest as both high- and low-functioning autism in individual situations.

The Greek term "autos," which means "self," is where the word autism originally came from. According to reports, the word has been in use since the 1900s. Numerous academics have used the idea of autism to connect it to other mental health conditions, like schizophrenia. Leo Kanner, who undertook research in 1943 to distinguish between autism and schizophrenia, is credited with developing the notion of autism. Kanner's research with kids indicated infantile autism, which he labeled as clinical characteristics including aloofness and language difficulties that manifested at a young age of three (Kita and Hosokawa 2011).

According to the American Psychiatric Association (1952), mental health professionals define autism as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), prepared by the American Psychiatric Association. With the emergence of more research about the symptoms of autism, the definition of autism has been revised. The DSM has updated several diagnostic criteria for autism and other mental disorders. The first and second publications of the DSM, published in 1952 and 1968, respectively, classified autism under a mental disorder termed schizophrenic reaction of childhood type that is characterized by symptoms such as disturbances, streams of thought, and intellectual abilities. The third publication of the DSM provided more tangible diagnostic criteria than the previous two publications. This publication categorized autism under disorders of infancy, childhood, and

adolescence (American Psychiatric Association 1980). The fifth edition of the DSM classifies autism under a group of neurodevelopment disorders and describes the diagnostic features of autism as impairments in social interactions and communication skills. Impairment in social interactions includes abnormal use of non-verbal behaviors, a lack of developing peer relationships, a lack of regard for others, etc. Impairments in communication skills involve a delay or lack of spoken language development, an inability to sustain conversation, and the use of stereotyped and repetitive language (American Psychiatric Association 2013). This edition of the DSM uses the term autism spectrum disorder. This term is an umbrella term that includes four separate disorders: autistic disorder, Asperger's syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and the catch-all diagnosis of pervasive developmental disorder.

Similarly, Kerri (2014) found that autism is a combination of immune disorders that need to be treated bio-medically. There are a lot of things that we still need to understand about autism spectrum disorder, including why and how these immune dysfunctions affect kids' development, causing nearly complete impairment of their social interaction and communication.

There are numerous studies that have been conducted regarding ASD, including its diagnosis, symptoms, treatments, and effects on an individual and societal level. As Sally *et al*. (2012) said, "children with ASD are unique," with a personal set of special gifts and challenges. Like each typically developing child, each child with ASD has a unique personality, set of likes and dislikes, talents, and challenges. But all young children with autism spectrum disorders struggle to relate to and communicate with others, as well as to play with toys in a conventional manner.

The types of challenges that young children with ASD face have been extensively studied in studies on early development and intervention in children with ASD. They find it challenging to pay attention to the speech and actions of those around them. They frequently find it difficult to convey their emotions to others through their facial expressions, gestures, sounds, or words, such as happiness, rage, sadness, or frustration. They go through the complete spectrum of emotions, but they might not express them clearly to others. They might not be particularly interested in playing with other kids, and they might not take well to other kids trying to play with them. While many kids with ASD enjoy playing with toys, their play is frequently repetitive and unconventional. Even for those who learn to repeat other people's words, many children with ASD may still have difficulty learning to speak and

responding to other people's speech. They frequently don't make a lot of gestures to communicate and don't seem to comprehend others' gestures. Additionally, it is not uncommon for children with ASD to reject the conventional methods used by parents to teach their offspring appropriate behavior. They may act out, strike or bite others, ruin things, and occasionally harm themselves or engage in self-destructive behavior (*Ibid.*).

## ASD and Communication Problems

Although all people with an ASD diagnosis struggle with communication, each person's issues are unique in nature and severity. Heflin (2007) defined communication as the process of communicating information with other individuals in a variety of forms. In addition to language, it also refers to non-verbal communication such as body language, gestures, and facial emotions, as well as the comprehension of symbols. Communication is essentially the ability to decode messages for others and encode messages for oneself. Although the procedure is intricate, it proceeds quickly (Noens and Berckelaer 2005).

The following three communication periods allow researchers to track a person's development in a characteristic way. The first is intentional communication, which entails using vocalizations or gestures to draw attention or make an effort to satiate a need or a desire. The use of early language to engage in social interactions, attract attention, and satisfy wants is known as symbolic communication, which is the second type. The last and most complex stage of communication is linguistic communication. This is the capacity to hold a comprehensive conversation with another person while utilizing a variety of communication methods (Noens and Berckelaer 2005). Persons who receive a message must determine the intention of the sender, the context of the message, and then successfully translate the information before resolving the next steps to be taken. These skills are fundamental for learning and for developing social bonds with society (Velentzas and Broni 2014).

As mentioned above, communication skills include non-verbal and verbal language skills, which are critical in learning and developing social bonds between the community and persons with ASD. However, people with ASD have limited communication skills. They face challenges with communication and language, as well as social interactions (Cadette 2015 cited in Aloklash 2018). Additionally, there is a connection between language development at later developmental stages and nonverbal communication abilities in individuals with ASD. A person with ASD may have trouble picking up language through typical channels due to deficiencies in imitation skills. Early

instruction in non-verbal communication techniques helps people with ASD express their thoughts and feelings more effectively through body language and pointing (Alshurman and Alsreaa 2015 cited in Aloklash 2018).

## ASD and Emotional Attachment

According to Attwood (1997), a man or woman with Asperger's syndrome can develop intimate personal relationships and become a lifelong partner. Emotional attachment, or bonding, is the deep, enduring emotional connection between specific people and us that we know and that is important to us. One of the most significant occurrences in our emotional and social experiences is this emotional attachment, or bonding. Children absorb the experiences of attachment they had with their parents or primary caregivers, and these internalized parental attachments then serve as the cornerstone for all ensuing connections. When our attachments or emotional relationships are founded on joy, we seek out the individuals we are attached to for solace and protection when we are in need.

## Film as a Source of Education

The influence of media on society is plainly visible in societal patterns and may be quantified by consumer expenditure in the marketplace. Media creators are likely to take delight in this assertion. But when it comes to addressing the real impact that media have on society, those same producers are frequently reluctant to do so (Klobas 1988).

Many people believe that media, including films and television, frequently reflect reality. Therefore, if there are misrepresentations, they may significantly affect how the audience feels about and acts toward people with disabilities (Connor and Bejoian 2000). Many people and kids spend more time learning about the actual world through media like films and television than through print media (ibid.). As a result, rather than through a printed research journal, information concerning disability is more likely to reach this broad audience through those mediums. This assertion is accurate considering the expanding accessibility and popularity of media (*ibid.*).

The popularity of motion pictures and the convenience of film viewing at home have made film an important medium for educating society about disabilities. As noted by Safran, "for many citizens with limited exposure to individuals with specific impairments, film, regardless of its accuracy, serves as a major source of information on the very nature of disabilities" (Safran 1998, p. 1). In his article, *Disability Portrayal in Film: Reflecting the Past,*

*Directing the Future*, Safran focused on the role films could play in serving as a tool for awareness and education and shaping the knowledge and attitudes of teachers and students. This same notion of using films for awareness and educational purposes can be applied to the public to help educate them on disabilities and reduce stereotyping by broadcasting on mainstream media.

## Stereotyping and "*Othering*"

In the book Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation, the author (Pickering 2001) discussed possible reasons for stereotyping and the various dilemmas that surround these reasons. The problematic foundation of stereotyping is that it is a narrow perception of the whole. This narrow perception is often used to help the majority obtain a sense of dominance, security, and order in society. The narrowness of most stereotypical perceptions enforced by the majority can limit flexibility, openness, and overall acceptance of people.

The majority frequently uses stereotyping as a convenient strategy. No matter how accurate it may be, categorizing individuals who are different is a tactic employed to maintain the majority's hold on power (Pickering 2001). Pickering's definition of "othering" includes this placement. Pickering pointed out that stereotypes function as a form of evaluative putting and aim to fix in place the people or cultures from a particular and privileged standpoint, while they occur in all sorts of discourse and can draw numerous ideological assumptions. In essence, he claimed that the purpose of "othering" is to create the impression that a particular person or group of people is separate from the rest of society. This isolation is palpable in daily life and easily reflected in the media.

## Stereotypes on Autism Spectrum Disorder

To form an impression of a person based on their group membership, people often use 'stereotypes'. These are the knowledge, beliefs, and expectations of social groups and their members (Sherman, Stroessner, and Conrey 2005 cited in Caroline *et al.* 2018). The environment plays a significant role in influencing the development of views about others, particularly in relation to how people identify others and classify them into groups. Stereotypes emerge because of social and cognitive development. Stereotypes' tendency to conserve resources also explains why they are so prevalent. By using pre-existing group schemas that are already stored in long-term memory, stereotypes conserve cognitive resources and facilitate the perception of others (Kirchner, Schmitz, and Dziobek 2012; Macrae, Milne, and Bodenhausen 1994 cited in Caroline *et al.* 2018).

People with learning disabilities are often stereotyped as having low intelligence. May and Stone (2010), cited in Caroline et al. (2018), found that disabled people are often stereotyped as being warm but incompetent. One way in which stereotypes can be reinforced is through the media. Media representations of autistic people, for example, often portray them in a negative way (Anjay 2011 cited in Caroline *et al.* 2018). Other stereotypes depict autistic people as either dangerous and uncontrollable or unloved and poorly treated, in addition to having a range of negative traits such as being disruptive and distracting to others (White, Hillier, and Frye 2016 cited in Caroline *et al.* 2018).

**Myths on Autism Spectrum Disorder**

A myth can be defined as a traditional tale that expresses a belief about a truth or phenomenon of experience and frequently personifies the forces of nature and the soul. It is a widely held but untrue belief or misperception that exaggerates or idealizes reality. The Autism Institute states that there are lists of myths.[3] Here are a few of them[4]:

**1.** Myth: People with autism don't want friends.
*Science/Truth:* If someone in your class has autism, they probably struggle with social skills, which may make it difficult to interact with peers. They might seem shy or unfriendly, but that's just because they are unable to communicate their desire for relationships the same way someone else does.

**2.** Myth: People with autism can't feel or express any emotion- happy or sad.
*Science/Truth:* Autism doesn't make an individual unable to feel the emotions others feel; it just makes the person communicate emotions (and perceive others' expressions) in different ways.

**3.** Myth: People with autism can't understand the emotions of others.
*Science/Truth:* Autism often affects an individual's ability to understand unspoken interpersonal communication, so someone with autism might not detect sadness based solely on one's body language or sarcasm in one's tone of voice. But when emotions are communicated more directly, people with autism are much more likely to feel empathy and compassion for others.

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[3] www.AutismSpeaks.org/U
[4] When the authors used the phrase "science/truth," they were referring to a reality that had been supported by science. Therefore, contrasting myth and science is helpful.

**4.** Myth: People with autism have an intellectual disability.

*Science/Truth:* Often, autism brings with it just as many exceptional abilities as limitations. Many people with autism have normal to high IQs, and some may excel at math, music, or another pursuit.

**5.** Myth: People who display qualities that may be typical of a person with autism are just odd and will grow out of it.

*Science/Truth:* Autism stems from biological conditions that affect brain development, and for many individuals, it is a lifelong condition.

**6.** Myth: People with autism will have autism forever.

*Science/Truth:* Recent research has shown that children with autism can make enough improvement after intensive early intervention to "test out" the autism diagnosis. This is more evidence for the importance of addressing autism when the first signs appear.

**7.** Myth: Autism is just a brain disorder.

*Science/Truth:* Research has shown that many people with autism also have gastro-intestinal disorders, food sensitivities, and many allergies.

People with ASDs are portrayed in the media, especially in films, but these representations are not as straightforward as they might seem since media portrayals are not just a reflection of society; rather, they are carefully chosen and created representations of real-life experiences. These representations have the power to mold and frame how we view and treat people with disabilities. Film is the most socially significant innovation, according to Jarvie, who describes how audio-visual aspects are combined to transfer and convert knowledge into society. This is due to the fact that films convey information, ideas, and tales that have an impact on how people feel and behave (Jarvie 1978). This shows that film is one of the most influential artistic expressions, giving it the power to be called the most important of all the arts of modern times. Film is one of the most influential parts of media, which plays a significant role in awareness creation, building a civilized society, promoting lifestyles or cultures, and introducing technology. It has the power to reflect the lifestyle and attitudes of society and express the hidden issues of different types of disabilities (Mwakalinga 2003).

Film production in Africa took decades, and it is associated with culture, religion, anti-colonization, and so on. ''Framing people, objects, and events with a camera is always 'about' something. It is a way of pointing out, describing, and judging. It domesticates and organizes vision' (Patrick and Coster 2009).

In the Ethiopian context, there is a policy for film production that is governed by the Minister of Culture and Tourism. The policy is very good and encouraging on paper, but controversial. Here are some good tips: "Efforts will be made to enhance new market opportunities by entering into market linkage and cooperation agreements with countries at an advanced stage in the sector" (Minister of Culture and Tourism 2017).

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

According to the estimation of the UN, the population of Ethiopia is estimated at 110.14 million[5]. From this, nearly 500,000 individuals have ASD (Nia Foundation 2002 cited in Dejene *et al*. 2016).

Persons with disabilities like ASD in Ethiopia are perceived as "weak," "hopeless," "dependent," "unable to learn," and "subjects of charity." The misconceptions of causal attributions, added to the misunderstandings of the capabilities of persons with disabilities such as ASD, have contributed to their low social and economic status (Tirusew 2005).

Recent situational analysis of autism services in Ethiopia (Dejene *et al*. 2016) revealed that Addis Ababa, the country's capital, provides many of the diagnostic and educational services for kids with autism. As a result, most people who reside in rural areas do not have access. There are lengthy waiting lines at Addis Ababa's schools for children with autism. Stigma, unfavorable preconceptions, and false information regarding the causes of child mental illness further impede the diagnosis, care, and treatment of children with autism (*Ibid*.).

Despite the lack of official data on autism in Ethiopia, it is estimated that 0.70% of the total population lives with autism. In Ethiopia, 75% of autistic cases have a learning disability accompanying their autistic case, which is why most of the children change schools so many times but fail to reach the expected goal. Children with autism in Ethiopia face lots of stigma, even from their parents. Similarly, more than 80% of these individuals are locked down in dark rooms and chained to control their unusual behavior (Getnet 2010).

There have been only three autistic centers operating in Addis Ababa since 2002, providing a special service for children with autism who are lucky. Yet, there are still lots of these children on the waiting list looking for special education (Nia Foundation 2002 cited in Dejene *et al*. 2016).

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[5]http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ethiopia-population/

Unlike many other minorities, people with disabilities are more likely to be misunderstood and inadequately represented in everyday life. This real-life situation inadequately and oftentimes inaccurately represents disabilities in the media. The problem with media images of people with disabilities in our society is that there is an increase in able-bodied children and adults relying on media, such as television and film, to expose them to and educate them about various disabilities (Connor and Bejoian 2006).

The early practitioners of the genre who introduced Ethiopia to the art of film wrote, "Ethiopia arrives to learn this visual art alongside Egypt and Nigeria in Africa". The earliest Amharic narrative films in the history of Ethiopian filmmaking were created in the 1950s, E.C. Two films were produced at this time, including *"ሂሩት አባቲ ማነው?"—*"*Hirut A'abatua Maan Naw,*" which translates to "Who is Hirut's father?" and "*Guma"* (Tigist 2017).

Teshome (1982) writes: "Because the promise of freedom and the recovery of autonomy of identity remain in memory, folklore offers an emancipatory 'horizon, a liberated and alternative future. Hence, writers appreciate the films that portray disability in the first place and want to fill the gap that exists to their level best.

Though the numbers of films produced are too small from the viewpoint of the huge socio-cultural and historical heritage of the country, there has been a dramatic development in the film production sector of Ethiopia in the last three decades (Masresha 2009 cited in Minassie 2010).

The goal of this study is to investigate and close the gap between the misrepresentation and underexposure of disabled people in Ethiopian films. This research project only focuses on certain Amharic films that have been made about autism spectrum disorders, as opposed to addressing all disabilities. The focus of the study is on how well-developed, scientifically accurate characters with ASD are portrayed in the films. The stereotypical characteristics of ASD and misconceptions have also been looked at. By responding to the following research questions, the way they portrayed the characters in the films, *Tisim* and *Bandaf,* was examined.

The present work manages to answer questions: how do characters represent persons with ASD in selected Amharic films? What can these films contribute to society? What gaps do filmmakers have when they represent a person with autism in their film production? And, what must be done to fill the observed gaps?

**1.3 Objectives**

The general objective of this study was basically to examine the character representation of persons with autism spectrum disorder in two selected Amharic films. The specific objectives are to examine how the characters with autism are portrayed in selected Amharic films, to analyze the contribution of selected films to awareness creation related to autism, and to examine the correctness of selected Amharic films.

**2. Methodology**

**2.1. Research Design**

The primary goal of this research was to examine how people with autism are portrayed in Amharic feature films. Based on a qualitative research methodology, data were gathered through interviews with film producers, scriptwriters, actors, and directors, as well as from audiovisual materials. The qualitative media content analysis used by the researchers was appropriate for this study. Media content analysis is used to study a broad range of 'texts,' from transcripts of interviews and discussions in clinical and social research to the narrative and form of films, TV programs, and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines (Neuendorf 2002). Additionally, according to Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool (1952), content analysis operates on the notion that linguistic activity is a form of human behavior, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process. Accordingly, content analysis seeks to describe what is stated about a given topic in each location at a given time with the highest degree of impartiality, precision, and generality.

The foundation of qualitative research is the idea that when we study people, we are looking at a creative process in which individuals create and preserve forms of existence, society, and systems of meaning and value. The ability to construct nations out of symbols that reflect this desire to coexist and establish meanings for existence is the foundation of this artistic endeavor. Humans rely on interpretation to sustain themselves. They experience life rather than just reacting or responding. Qualitative investigations are focused on rediscovering the truth of how people live, guided by their goals, objectives, and values. The researchers did not ask, "How do the media affect us?" But "What are the interpretations of meaning and value created in the media, and what is their relation to the rest of life? is a more valuable question" (Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool 1952)? Accordingly, qualitative content analysis is chosen over quantitative methods.

## 2.2. Study Area

The study was carried out on two selected Amharic films, which are produced in Addis Ababa. It can be said that Addis Ababa is the home of heterogeneous types of people who represent various nations and nationalities among Ethiopians. This condition of the city seems to be an advantage for filmmakers in selecting different characters and situations. In the last 10 years, the film industry in Ethiopia has expanded rapidly in terms of numbers (Tigist 2017). Most of these films are produced in Addis Ababa and distributed to different parts of the country, which generates employment opportunities for many employers and also creates awareness regarding ASD.

## 2.3. Sampling Technique

The approach of purposive sampling was employed to choose the sources of data. 115 films were made in 2016, according to data from the Addis Ababa Culture and Tourism Office. The year was chosen because it is current to observe the state of local film productions at the time, and the films chosen for examination were also made in 2016. However, two of these 115 films that deal with ASD were specifically chosen for this study. The two films produced on ASD and currently accessible through VCD/DVD in video rental stores were the subjects of the effort.

## 2.4. Instruments for Data Collection

### 2.4.1. Interview

Structured interviews were conducted with the producers, directors, scriptwriters, and actors of the selected films since it was easier to focus on the main point of the issue than other types of interviewing methods. Participants were interviewed using structured questions during their appropriate interview times. The researchers used open-ended sets of questions to explore participants' experiences. The interview was conducted with a total of six film makers (2 producers, 2 actors, a director, and a script writer). The researcher used a purposive sampling method to select the interviewees based on the researcher's judgment and prior knowledge to get the required data because they were directly concerned with the issues. This method helped the researchers set an appointment and communicate with them easily during the interview. The interviews were mainly focused on the character representations of a person with ASD in two selected films, the correctness of the films to create positive awareness in society, and the challenges they face in producing films to be effective in delivering the planned message.

### 2.4.2. Audiovisual Materials

The audiovisual materials were the other main source of information for this study, which was acquired by watching two VCD players of chosen Amharic films. The study's main objective was to look at how people with ASD were portrayed in the selected films. The data gathered from these audiovisual resources assisted in classifying the various ASD subtypes and examining the characters' strengths and weaknesses/gaps as depicted in the films.

### 2.5. Coding Categories

The most important feature of media content analysis is to define a set of scopes to be considered during the analysis. As Hansen (1998) strongly argued, the 'task' of content analysis is to examine a selected body of the content and classify it according to several planned measurements. Conceptually, the most demanding aspect of any media content analysis is to define the dimensions or characteristics that could be categorized.

### 2.6. Methods of Data Analysis

Following the end of data collection, filtering the raw data gathered from the interview material for accuracy, consistency, completeness, and illegibility to make analysis relatively simple was carried out. To address these issues, handwritten document editing, coding, theme data entry, and consistency checking were first carried out. Qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data. Sentence-level analysis was done on the interview-derived qualitative data. Finally, the findings were reviewed and evaluated to derive significant implications.

### Media Content Analysis

Lasswell (1997) first used media content analysis as a systematic way to investigate propaganda in the mass media. It is a specific branch of content analysis and a tried-and-true approach to conducting research. In the 1920s and 1930s, it gained popularity as a study methodology for examining the constantly rising communication content of films. With the introduction of television in the 1950s, media content analysis became widely used as a research approach in the social sciences and mass communication studies. Media content analysis has been a primary research method for studying portrayals of violence, racism, and women in television programming as well as in films.

As it was mentioned before, the main purpose of this research is to assess the characters of people with ASD and how they are represented in selected films. Therefore, media content analysis is applied to carry out the study. Content analysis is a technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of films, television programs, and documentaries to determine how they are collective. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated (Deacon *et al.* 1999). As Neuman (1997) argues, the analysis should also identify what is included, what is excluded, and what processes and types are drawn upon to represent events. Each film was divided into five-minute intervals to check how characters' representation and communication were portrayed. During the course, each film paused at five-minute intervals, and there was a job to code the content. Neuman says, media content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text, TV programs, and films. As mentioned before, "content" refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated in the selected films.

## 2.7. Ethical Considerations of the Study

First and foremost, the researchers used logical methods throughout the entire data gathering process. The study's purpose was explained to participants, who also signed a consent form before participating. They were asked if it was okay to interview them for the study's purpose. As a result, measures were undertaken based on these ethical beliefs to ensure and maintain anonymity throughout the course of this study project.

## 3.  Findings

## 3.1. Background Information of Selected Films

The research focused on two selected Amharic films that were produced in 2016, which revolved around ASD and love. According to their titles and posters, the selected films were *Tisim* and *Bandaf*.

The settings of these films were in different areas. *Tisim* is solely produced in the Nehmiah autistic center in Addis Ababa, and *Bandaf* is also produced in Addis Ababa at different places like school and home, and some parts of it are cast in Hawassa, the capital city of SNNP Regional State. According to their titles and posters, the selected films were named *"Tism"* and *"Bandaf,"* which means you said it once. The word *Bandaf* is Amharic but not a formal word. Both films, *Tism* and *Bandaf*, demonstrated ASD.

Like other theories, film theories address a variety of social, political, philosophical, scientific, and pedagogical topics. These methods are primarily employed while examining films from various perspectives and for various objectives. Some theories are used to analyze films from the perspective of their structure; others analyze films from the writer's perspective; others analyze films from the ideology and philosophy of the director; others analyze films from the viewpoint of the audience; and still others analyze films from the perspective of the entire film industry. As a result, patience and such art knowledge are needed for film analysis. However, as the author of this manuscript raised above, the emphasis of this work is to evaluate the character representation of a person with ASD in two selected Amharic films.

## 3.2. Profiles of Participants

The demographic characteristics of each participant who was chosen and interviewed are listed below. Six people took part in the event. A playwright and director, two producers, and two actors are involved. There were five men and one woman among them. This demonstrated a male predominance over females among the scriptwriters, producers, directors, and actors of *Bandaf* and *Tism* films.

Regarding the respondents' ages, three were between the ages of 31 and 40, two were between the ages of 19 and 30, and one was beyond 40. Two of the participants have combined expertise in the Ethiopian film industry for more than ten years.

The educational backgrounds of the two chosen films' directors, actors, writers, and producers reveal that one of them merely underwent brief schooling in filmmaking and ultimately established his career through experience. Nevertheless, five of them held first-degree credentials in various professions. However, none of them had the chance to participate in autism-related training for even a single day.

## 3.3. Challenges of Producing Films on Autism

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the Ethiopian film industry delivers high-quality films about autism. The majority (four) of them said that this delivery is at a low level, while two others agreed and said it is at a medium level.

In the interviews, participants were asked to describe a few elements that they felt had an impact on their ability to offer spectators high-quality films. They listed: low awareness of film producers and writers related to autism; least

concern of government officials to autism; film directors, script writers, actors, and producers shared a common goal to promote the use of films in presentations to create awareness about ASD, but some of them are foregrounding themselves only on urban life, and for this reason their themes and settings are confined to cities and towns, while 85 percent of Ethiopian populations are rural dwellers.

Even if they foreground themselves in multilingual urban areas, they have limitations on translating the film into different languages; for example, the *Bandaf* film is portrayed only in Amharic. *Tism* is translated into English with a subtitle that has a lot of grammatical errors. The signature tune of the film clearly manifests the crucial problems of Ethiopian film production. They need to have English subtitles for other audiences and for researchers who want to study the films.

As in many films about Ethiopia, there is also much more role monopoly by one person. As per the researcher's observation in both films, the scriptwriter and the directors of the films are the same person. The film Bandaf is written and directed by Leul Sefefe and *Tism* is written and directed by Sophonnias Taddese, even though the story is by the executive producer Kalkidan Getaneh. Kalkidan herself plays the roles of actor, producer, and storyteller. This decreased the chance of alternative editing, changing, and developing acts of performers and other related elements of the film character from different perspectives.

All participants in the interviews mentioned that they are very eager to try to incorporate their profession with ASD to address what they know about it and create awareness about the issue. According to Henok, the producer of *Bandaf*:

> *Producing such a kind of film is not making us beneficiaries in finance, but it gives us mental satisfaction. We did it at our own financial risk because it was not displayed in cinemas as expected. Unfortunately, people in our country don't want to watch these kinds of films in cinemas; they come to see only romantic comedy films. The good thing is that there are various TV channels in our country. That's why our films are displayed on the popular channels, namely, EBS and Fana TV, which means people can access them easily without thinking about the amount of money they spent.*

Likewise, Sophonias (director and scriptwriter of *Tism*) asserted, "When we come to cinema, people don't want to pay money to watch such kinds of films that don't entertain them.

## 3.4. Contribution of the Films to ASD

Both the producers of *Tism* and *Bandaf* stated that they only received mental joy in exchange for the money they spent on the film's creation. After the film aired on EBS and Fana TV, they received many phone calls from viewers. "Many people saw it as their own problem and began considering the care for this kind of ASD child," says the author. As they stated, this is what they have been working toward, and being a part of this history makes them proud of it.

The making of this film altered peoples' perceptions of ASD. Sophonias, a screenwriter and filmmaker, is a wonderful example of this. Before the making of this film, he was unaware of ASD and what it meant. Because he had the opportunity to interact with special needs educators and experts, this film gave him the opportunity to study more about ASD and see documentaries that have been produced on the condition. He continued and said that, as a lady with extensive knowledge and experience of ASD and film producer Kalkidan Getaneh, "she guided me to a deeper understanding of ASD in this film production." He felt that the making of the film *Tism* altered his perspective and filled in any knowledge gaps he had about ASD.

The two actors were motivated to act in these films. They claimed throughout the interview that they were fortunate to have had the chance to witness a person with ASD in their working environment. They said that it was difficult to replicate the characters, even if they were familiar with the actions and personalities of people with ASD in their immediate surroundings. For them, emulating the emotions and sentiments of a person with ASD was challenging. Since their audience wanted to see their true emotions in every instant of their performance, mirroring those emotions is one of the most difficult tasks. But, as they pointed out, it was the film that gave them an opportunity to feel what ASD people feel and know their emotions.

## 3.5. Character Representations in *Tism* and *Bandaf* Films

In order to examine the character representations, the researchers employed audiovisual observation through the blending of several digital media kinds, such as images, sound, and video, into a multi-sensory interactive application or presentation.

### 3.5.1. Character Representation in *Tism* Film

Autism can be one of the most difficult diagnoses to accept for parents. It is particularly challenging due to the symptoms associated with ASD. As with many things that society does not understand, autism also has a certain stigma

attached to it. The negativity can make it quite difficult for families struggling to cope with an individual who has the diagnosis (Getaneh 2017).

*Tism* is one of the few films that focus on a key character with ASD. The film is just a love story deliberately produced; the researchers intended to create awareness about autism among viewers. The setting is solely at the Nehmiah Autistic Center. Elias Wosenyeleh's portrayal of Surafel (the autistic character) starring in this film is falling in love with Linsho (the character name), Netsanet Aytenfisu. Surafel shows genuineness and authenticity in representing the character with a mild ASD called Asperger's syndrome. A person with Asperger's disorder might be very intelligent and able to handle his/her daily life properly. He/she can focus on topics that interest him or her and discuss them nonstop (WebMD 2018).

As such, Surafel in the film enjoys growing flowers (gardening), is well versed in the many varieties of flowers, and is genuinely eager to talk nonstop about them. The character's initial few sentences were spoken with a slight delay. The character did not, however, delay in present-day language abilities or in word combinations, according to the study.

In truth, the character does not have any trouble starting up a discussion or keeping it going when he talks about flowers, but he does have trouble talking about subjects that are picked by the other person. The character does not grasp sarcasm or any other type of humor, even though the researchers have not heard him utter any incorrect things. However, the character, Surafel, infrequently spoke in terms of strange or repeated vocabulary, using erroneous pronouns, speaking in an unduly formal manner, or speaking at an unusual volume, tempo, or pitch.

Movement interests, on the other hand, exhibit unique, intense, or focused behavior. Those who with Asperger's do adore... Because they cannot put themselves in another's shoes, most people are hardwired to find a solution that is satisfactory to both parties. However, Asperger's sufferers are not. Due to mental blindness, they are unable to read their partner's signals. The customary expressions of love and romance are difficult for people with Asperger's syndrome to understand. They do not intend to ruin their relationship by withholding loving words and deeds (Marshack 2009), which is portrayed in the film by Surafel.

**Unreasonable Insistence on Sameness/ Routines**

To show his love for Linsho and replace the old, wilted flowers in the vase with new ones, Surafel frequently presented her with a bouquet of fresh flowers. Because of this, the researchers warn that the character's publicized behaviors (such as changing fresh flowers) must be done in a specific way; he struggles with even a small deviation in routine. Additionally, he became agitated when things were moved around, particularly when it came to gardening. He retrieves the flower and occasionally washes a little of each bloom's leaf to make his life better. The individual urinated on his flower as it was being filmed. Linsho, the girl he loves, asked him why he washes the leaves of his flower. He gave her the following response:

> *Linsho*: Sure-ye what are you doing?
> *Surafel*: a rude vandal …when I came to water to my flowers, he peed on them.
> *Linsho*: So why you wash it now?
> *Surafel:* eh! If someone pees on you, don't you wash it? They are like us we aren't different; they breathe out oxygen… we inhale oxygen. We live for them; they live for us.

He cannot stop talking about flowers and how much he loves them, as was already established. He continues to discuss it with his brother at home and the personnel at his place of employment. His brother Estifanos, as to why he does not get sick of continuously treating flowers, questions him.

> *Estifanos*: Sura (when calling in a short form) you don't want some food?
> *Surafel*: this flower has been growing for 45 days. Look, his brother asks him for food, but he answers it in his way. In seven days, I will give it to Tsion's mom.
> *Estifanos*: do you not get tired of flowers? Seedlings, samplings, flowers, every day?
> *Surafel*: Tulip flowers from Holland in old days are worth gold, Holland. Now I want to find that flower.

According to the studies on Asperger syndrome, such misunderstandings and communication gaps will lead to conflict. Problematic behaviors in such children span a wide range and tend to vary according to the child's development and intellectual ability. Although stereotyped and repetitive behaviors (e.g., body rocking or hand flapping) do occur in such individuals, they occur infrequently and most likely arise during highly stressful, unpredictable situations or when the child does not understand the expectations for behavior. Most often, they engage in rigid patterns of behavior and/or display restricted patterns of behavior in the context of an all-

absorbing preoccupation with a circumscribed topic of interest (Howlin 1998; Myles and Simpson 2003 cited in Cowan *et al.* 2010).

The researchers have not seen an exaggerated motor mannerism such as hand flapping, toe walking, or head banging; rather, he exhibits no eye contact while conversing with others. The character name Surafel is displayed in the film as a mature person who has sufficient knowledge about flowers and does not play with parts of toys (e.g., doors, wheels, strings).

It is not always simple to comprehend ASD. But thanks to the way the disease is portrayed in films and television these days, a lot of people are familiar with it. However, there are both positive and negative depictions of ASD sufferers, as well as the impact the illness has on their families' lives. The poor representations put a cap on deception and aggressively installed false perspectives on people. The effective ones increase awareness and foster compassion for both people with ASD and the family members and caregivers who manage the illness.

Young (2012) examined mediated, storied representations of characters with ASD, considering what they repeatedly "suggest" reality to be. Young concluded that since films serve to reflect reality, misrepresentations could have a major impact on the behaviors and attitudes of audiences towards those with disabilities. Publications by Carr (2010) and Turkle (2011) also recognized the positive and negative aspects of media and technology on the perception and acquisition of social skills and attitudes towards ASD. Notably absent from this conversation is an investigation into the growing emergence in popular press, revealing a "pecking order" regarding what popular press considers someone with ASD spectrum to" be." For example, such representations may appear to focus on what might be referred to as "high functioning" (Gilling 2012).

On the contrary, there is a supporting actress. Beimnet Getasew's portrayal of Selam depicted severe autism and joining the Nehmiah autistic center from the countryside (even though the name Nehmiah is a real autistic center, the character played is a professional/filmmaker for the purpose of showing a character play, not the real people working there). Selam has speech and language challenges, sensory dysfunction, and wandering and eloping (running away with no obvious cause and no destination). The caregivers of the village, as she is an orphan, believed what the Shaman (a traditional faith healer) claimed. He affirmed that her ancestors displeased the spirit. She also exhibits some signs and symptoms, such as restlessness and biting her fingers

frequently. The neighbors have tied her up in a dark room ever since her childhood. She is now almost a teenager.

In conclusion, the film is about how to treat someone with ASD with empathy and understand the pain that parents or other caregivers experience while raising a child with ASD. This film addresses morals, loyalty, religion, happiness, love, and spirituality.

### 3.5.2. Character Representation in *Bandaf* Film

*Bandaf* is one of the first full-time films in Ethiopia to capture the life of an autistic individual. This film was presented by Henok Film Production and produced by Henok Tolchisa. It was written and directed by Leul Sefefe in 2016. The central story of this film is mainly about a person with ASD in a family and the challenges they face.

The film *Bandaf* shows us that if we do not fully comprehend how to support and take care of those who are in need, we will have to pay the price of an inevitable expense. A youngster whose father has autism and whose mother had passed away. The character of Thomas, played by Andualem Dejene, is a young kid in this film. On her deathbed, Thomas' mother begged Kal, Kal's neighbor, who is portrayed by Selam Tesfaye, to promise to take excellent care of Thomas. She always attempted to be by his side because of the vow, as at a young age, village kids Thomas's age were playing husband and wife while neglecting Thomas. She asked the village girls why they were not playing with Thomas.

> *Kal:* Why don't you play with Thomas?
> *Village Girl*: ehe we are playing husband and wife; he is foolish how can I marry him?
> After thorough observation, Kal told Thomas to play with her a game that is pretending to be husband and wife.
> *Kal:* leave them I will play you as a wife and you play as a husband, ok?
> *Thomas*: head moving.
> *Kal*: so, when husband came from job, he will kiss her hand like this (she gives him her hand and he kiss).
> *Kal*: cleaver!
> They start walking and, on their walk, she starts telling him a story.
> *Kal*: Story story
> *Thomas*: ok!
> *Kal*: long ago, there have been husband and wife called Thomas and Kal.

It is how the story starts. For Thomas, the mere game is not just a game; rather, it is something real. For this reason, she broke up with her many

boyfriends. For her boyfriends, for her brother, and for her mother, Thomas was perceived as a source and center of conflict for all. She stuck with Thomas, and unknowingly, she conditioned him not to live without her.

> *Selam*: "I was wondering… a man could go into outer space. Lions and hyenas can be tamed. However, a fish…"
>
> *The sailor*: "You're right. A fish can't …because its life is closely associated with water. As a result…a fish can't…if it jumps out of water it abruptly ceases its life. Since the necessary nutrients it needs for life are all found in the water. The water can live without a fish. But if a fish doesn't get adequate water, it will soon be dead."

According to the above excerpt from the film, the author personifies the fish as Thomas. He highlighted that Thomas can't live without Kal. It vividly portrayed Thomas as solely dependent on her. Eventually, he falls in love with her. Even if she is pretending to be with Thomas, there has been gossip behind their friendship. While she was pretending, she was expecting that he couldn't fall in love with her. According to her understanding, Thomas is not conscious of or capable of falling in love with her. But, from that moment on, they start talking about husband and wife. He keeps on thinking, talking, and singing his personal song about her (*kaliy kaliy yene fikregna*) literary (*kal kal* my love). He was thinking about his wedding to Kal, the girl he fell in love with.

In the character, Thomas displays some unusual challenges that affect people with milder forms of ASD, such as self-injury (e.g., head banging and aggressive and anti-social behavior). Aggressive behaviors in children with ASD often cause a great deal of difficulty for families. Hitting, kicking, biting, throwing objects, and other behaviors are expected during a temper tantrum, or destruction can exist and increase parent stress[6]. Restricted and repetitive behaviors vary greatly across ASDs. They can include repetitive body movements (e.g., rocking, flapping, and spinning, running back and forth) and routine motions with objects (e.g., spinning wheels, shaking sticks, flipping levers). Sometimes, excessive anger can also be a symptom of mental health problems. Unfortunately, some people with ASD might become angry and aggressive very quickly and find it hard to deal with. The speed and intensity of their anger can be extreme. Most aggressive outbursts or tantrums happen because the person has feelings building up and can't communicate them. By managing one's own feelings and staying calm and quiet, one won't add their emotions to the mix.

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[6] https://sparkforautism.org/discover_article/children-with-autism-and-aggression/

The character Thomas exhibits this conduct while the girl he loves, Kal, is on vacation with her previous partner in Hawassa. He was wailing, beating his skull, and scaring his father at the time because he was missing Kal, the girl he loves most.

Parents whose children are labeled 'high functioning', including those with Asperger's diagnosis, have a reason to be concerned that their kids, who may be dealing with things like ADHD, anxiety, and sensory issues in addition to their social and communication delays, do not magically stop needing support after they reach a certain chronological age[7]. The family can lack the knowledge necessary to completely comprehend the child's condition. Additionally, it's possible that the family does not have the time to be on-site all the time to provide care. Parents might engage a special needs caregiver to overcome these challenges.

Apparently, the character Kal also played the role of a special needs caregiver; unfortunately, she was yoked and seemed to carry the unbearable burden due to the solemn promise. She tried a lot to treat him, but because of her personal life and the push that came from her parents and her boyfriend, she decided to stop treating and spending time with Thomas. That was a horrible time for Thomas and his father.

Here, the film reproduces how much the stereotypes and pressure come from circles of influence made her disappointed and how much lack of awareness about ASD was a challenge for caregivers. The attitude toward a person with ASD was perceived, as he doesn't know anything about Kal pretending to be a wife. But on Thomas's birthday, Kal failed in the swimming pool unknowingly, and when Thomas saw that, he immediately jumped in to save her, and he did. That was a turning point for Kal to think about Thomas again and go back to treat him. The pretending as a husband and wife has been restarted, but the continuation of this pretending ended on her weeding day. Thomas came with his father for weeding. What Thomas knows is that he came to marry Kal, but his father brought him to know and see the reality that the day is her wedding day, and she is marrying another person. While he saw Kal with her fiancé on the stage, he couldn't control himself and started disturbing and shouting around. Kal's brother and the other person took him into the brewery storeroom. He kicked himself with a beer bottle, and he died there after prolonged bleeding. That was painful for Kal. She starts walking on

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[7] www.childmindinstitute.Inc. 2019

the road alone, and she says, "*what if my story was about Hyena and the monkey rather than Thomas and Kal?"* (The story she told Thomas previously). It shows the pain and reflects how much she regretted.

The message from the character play doctor was very critical: *"Not knowing how to talk to a person with ASD like Thomas costs life. We should know what we are doing; they are aware of things we assume they are unaware of. Every person with ASD deserves respect."*

## 4. Discussion

*Tism* and *Bandaf,* two Amharic films, primarily aim to highlight the common constraints experienced by those with ASD. The two films' main characters have been crafted to represent both the covert and overt actions of people with ASD. Additionally, they exhibit problems with speech, social connection, sensory sensitivity, and sexuality, particularly in the *Bandaf* film.

Individuals with autism are frequently seen with unusual behavior because of its complications. The major characters, Surafel from *Tisim* and Thomas from *Bandaf*, are designed to show the basic behavioral limitations. Two of the films in this research have successfully presented the physical features, which are almost always explicitly seen, of people with ASD. Though the characters are not able to show the mobility limitations during infancy and childhood, after watching these two films, one can understand the basic behavioral borders of ASD.

A person with ASD may communicate and engage with others in unusual ways. Due to ASD's impact on communication, either the individual limits social interaction or society excludes them from social connection. Surafel from Tisim and Thomas from Bandaf, the two main protagonists, both have limited social connections. They make strange physical gestures and facial expressions to communicate. Two of them have limited active vocabularies, which is evident in their verbal communication, which is marked by stuttering, speaking slowly, and other issues. As a result, they steer clear of repetitive gaming and only interact with a select few others; Thomas with Kal and Surafel with Linsho.

Barbara (2009) asserts that YouTube provides a safe environment for individuals with autism, but for this research, intimate friends were the main safe way for autistic children. The findings of this research have put all the characters during their adulthood age on screen effectively. However, in the

*Tisim* and *Bandaf* films, the researchers observed only two types of therapy: exposure therapy for Surafel and art therapy for Thomas.

The theory of sexual behavior proposes that human mating is governed by an inborn sexual behavioral system, and those individual differences in sexual motives, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors reflect variations in the functioning of this system. Even though our culture is not open to such an issue in the Ethiopian context, when it comes to ASD, it is more serious. But the issue of sexuality is noticed in the *Bandaf* film. In any case, as the physical growth continues, it will bring hormonal changes. Hence, the hormones advance emotional development to a higher level. Sexuality is part of it. People with ASD are too enthusiastic to establish a relationship, and they intuitively create strong intimacy or affection with their caregivers. Nevertheless, this natural feeling has been denied or/and overlooked by society's attitude through its complicated communication and language shortfalls (*Ibid*).

Both films, *Tisim* and *Bandaf*, have shown the sexual characteristics of people with ASD. The foundation of the two films' stories is built on closeness and relationships. Beginning with trust, the connection progressively develops into love and sexual attraction. Although those with ASD are unable to vocally communicate it, it can still be seen in a variety of ways. The researcher has observed this in the film Bandaf, where the character Thomas kisses his caregiver's hand and also touches other body parts, which can be interpreted as the display of a well-built desire for affection or sex. Because they are found in imperfect social interaction, likewise, they attempt at least to compensate 'the lost feeling' with someone who is physically and emotionally close to them.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusion

The primary goal of this study was to assess how personss with ASD are portrayed in two Ethiopian-made Amharic films, *Bandaf* and *Tism*. Like other kinds of art, the film is in a comprehensive and complicated state. Scholars of film psychology have reportedly been researching the nature, traits, and social effects of films since the earliest days of filmmaking. The production and study of film have, however, been modest and unrecognized since the art form was first introduced to Ethiopia in the early years of its introduction to the rest of the globe. However, the creation of feature films has been thriving and expanding recently.

The characters in the films *Tism* and *Bandaf* are presented from the perspective of someone with ASD. The depicted characters have individual names and characteristics. The autistic characters in both films were shown to be the antithesis of the codified stereotypes held by society at large. A media content analysis was used to assess how autistic characters were portrayed to answer the research questions. Even though the films have their own storylines, both of them relied largely on well-known myths and preconceptions about ASD that were addressed and challenged.

The findings from the content analyses were checked against literature reviews and personal experiences to make sure whether or not the characters of persons with ASD are portrayed appropriately while entertaining. Hence, the contents of myths and stereotypes were presented.

The researchers believed that the findings of this study would help address the issues and characters of persons with ASD and ignore the underrepresentation of individuals with ASD images in front of an audience through different media. Because films have their own brush and canvas in everyone's mind to paint in the worlds of paradise or agony, their artistic value has made them powerful to create unforgettable life lessons. These lessons are emotionally grasped by all five senses when they are presented in films, since art touches on different burning issues all over the world.

Throughout the entire research process, the study has discovered that the two films have shallowly tried to show the common limitations of persons with ASD. The films *Tism* and *Bandaf* have offered proof of the sexual dimensions of people with ASD. In this aspect, the portrayal, in particular of *Bandaf*, was quite successful in illustrating the difficulties faced by caregivers. The audience can therefore infer the kind of care and treatment that should be provided to people with ASD. Furthermore, they displayed difficulties in social interaction, communication, sensory sensitivity, and sexuality.

This study found that watching these films helped people grasp the fundamental physical and emotional characteristics of people with ASD. Researchers discovered that the two films did a good job of depicting the communication difficulties that people with ASD face.

Further, the researchers have investigated the limitations in both films; both have tried to show the major characters of persons with ASD but failed to show the mobility and communication limitations during infancy. Above all, no intervention has been seen in the films. Hence, the audience has learned

nothing about the cumulative impact of ASD during infancy as well as the childhood period, which is very important to be seen.

Finally, the study discovered that *Tism'*s producer has gotten enough consultation from professionals to touch on the untouchable issues of ASD. However, the film *Bandaf* would have come with a better presentation of ASD if its producers had professional advice.

## 5.2 Recommendation

The following recommendations are forwarded regarding what has to be done to fill the observed gaps.

Before a production is presented, there should be a critical conversation with specialists. The government, in particular the Addis Ababa Office of Culture and Tourism, should also include special needs experts when appraising such films. Governmental and non-governmental groups must also assist or sponsor such filmmakers in order for their work to be seen by a general audience. Additionally, the researchers want to inspire other researchers to conduct additional research on this and other sorts of disorders that may have an impact on other people with disabilities.

The audience must be informed about all available forms of care and therapy for ASD. It is feasible to impart knowledge through media like films and television because ASD is a spectrum disorder and a very diverse issue.

In general, the two films' main goal is to highlight the main issues with ASD. When the untouchable subject has received specific attention, other disabilities like physical, social, communication, language, etc. have also been affected. It would have been better if the audience had observed obstacles and any interventions during infancy and childhood. This means that it would have been better if they had employed a flashback approach to storytelling. The researchers would like to conclude by saying that it is an excellent starting point and an effective instrument for educating society. It is hoped that by using these two films as a benchmark, other filmmakers will be inspired to produce research-focused films about similarly urgent topics.

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