

The perspective of journalism students towards Palestinian short narrative films: Evidence from a survey across Palestinian universities

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Received: July 20, 2025 • Accepted: November 20, 2025

Abstract. Palestinian short narrative films epitomize the political, social, and cultural life of Palestinians. Beyond their artistic value, the films are pedagogical tools that shape students' learning and critical understanding. This study investigated the attitudes of journalism students toward Palestinian short narrative films in terms of viewing habits, motives, perceived content, and educational effect. The study is a cross-sectional survey carried out among 360 undergraduate journalism students from eight Palestinian universities during the period between June and December 2023. Of 384 students invited, 360 responded (93.7%). Most (78%) of the respondents do not watch Palestinian short films regularly, though 67.7% view them via satellite TV and 45% online. The dominant motives were educational and cultural, as 75.9% reported an increase in self-understanding and reflection on their identity, and 73.3% had an enhanced empathy with national issues. Political themes came first (74.1%), followed by historical themes (65.1%), and then social themes (61.9%). While 46.6% reported the technical quality as weak and the performance amateurish, 74.9% became more interested in the method of production, and 66.1% developed enhanced critical analysis skills. Generally, Palestinian short films can boost journalism students' cultural identity, media literacy, and technical skills, especially when better produced and integrated into coursework.

Keywords. Palestinian short films, journalism students, media education, cultural identity, film perception.

^{ES} La percepción de los estudiantes de periodismo sobre los cortometrajes narrativos palestinos: resultados de una encuesta en universidades palestinas

Resumen. Los cortometrajes narrativos palestinos encarnan la vida política, social y cultural del pueblo palestino. Más allá de su valor artístico, estas producciones constituyen herramientas pedagógicas que influyen en el aprendizaje y en la comprensión crítica del estudiantado. Este estudio analiza las actitudes de los estudiantes de periodismo hacia los cortometrajes narrativos palestinos en relación con sus hábitos de visionado, motivaciones, percepción de los contenidos y efectos educativos. La investigación se basa en una encuesta transversal realizada a 360 estudiantes universitarios de periodismo de ocho universidades palestinas entre junio y diciembre de 2023. De los 384 estudiantes invitados a participar, respondieron 360 (93,7 %). La mayoría de los encuestados (78 %) no consume cortometrajes palestinos de forma regular, aunque el 67,7 % los ve a través de la televisión por satélite y el 45 % mediante plataformas en línea. Las motivaciones predominantes fueron de carácter educativo y cultural: el 75,9 % de los participantes afirmó haber incrementado su autocomprensión y reflexión sobre la identidad, y el 73,3 % manifestó una mayor empatía hacia las cuestiones nacionales. Los temas políticos ocuparon el primer lugar (74,1 %), seguidos de los temas históricos (65,1 %) y sociales (61,9 %). Aunque el 46,6 % de los estudiantes calificó la calidad técnica como deficiente y las interpretaciones como amateur, el 74,9 % mostró un mayor interés por los métodos de producción y el 66,1 % desarrolló una mayor capacidad de análisis crítico. Los cortometrajes palestinos pueden fortalecer la identidad cultural, la alfabetización mediática y las competencias técnicas de los estudiantes de periodismo, especialmente cuando presentan una mayor calidad de producción y se integran de manera sistemática en los planes de estudio.

Palabras clave. sostenibilidad, energía nuclear, energía verde, taxonomía de la UE, YouTube.

How to cite: Musleh, A. (2026). The perspective of journalism students towards Palestinian short narrative films: Evidence from a survey across Palestinian universities. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 32(1), 109-121. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/esmp.104151>

1. Introduction

Mass media is considered an effective tool in all fields of life because of its audio-visual powers (Winarto *et al.*, 2012). Cinema is being used not only for amusement but also for teaching, with an increased focus on the use of visual expression in classrooms. The use of short films in education is made possible by the constantly expanding non-conventional education approaches (Kabadayi, 2012; Radwan *et al.*, 2020). There are different kinds of short films such as animation, video-art, experimental, fiction, documentary, etc. Short film creation is now accessible to a wide audience due to advancements in filming technologies, the proliferation of pocket cameras, the ability to shoot with digital cameras, and the availability of mobile phones with high-quality cameras. The affordable fiction programs facilitate easy shooting editing (Ohanian & Phillips, 2013; Wurtzler, 2007).

Recent scholarship underlines the evolving nexus of media education, cultural identity, and localized cinema in the Arab world, and especially within Palestinian contexts. For example, Salameh and Abuhasirah (2025) found that students in Jordan specializing in media faculties are aware of media literacy in surface dimensions (such as fact-checking), yet lack systematic curricular training that builds critical, production-oriented media literacy skills. In a related strand, Ben-Zvi Morad (2024) analyzes the fourth period of Palestinian cinema to argue that a distinctive cinematic language has emerged—one that ties personal stories with national narratives and hence develops collective identity through audio-visual storytelling. Similarly, Al-Masri and Al-Houbi (2024) demonstrate through a socio-cultural semiotic analysis of Palestinian films on gender-based violence that local cinematic narratives function as critical spaces where cultural values, identity, and resistance intersect. Salem (2024) further documents the “Media Literacy of the Oppressed” in Arab countries, illustrating that media literacy must be reimagined in contexts of political conflict, digital saturation, and cultural marginalization. Complementing these perspectives, Assad *et al.* (2025) review the integration of artificial intelligence (Hobeika *et al.*, 2024; Jebreen *et al.*, 2024) into media studies across Arab universities, showing how new technologies reshape pedagogical and creative approaches to audiovisual education. Taken together, these lines of work reinforce our theoretical choice of the Uses and Gratifications Theory by pointing to the active role of students—selecting media (in our case, Palestinian short narrative films) to fulfill cognitive, identity, and socio-cultural needs within their unique environment. Thus, our study extends this emergent literature by empirically examining how journalism students in Palestinian universities engage with short narrative films, not only as passive viewers but also as future media professionals who reflect, analyze, and acquire skills through culturally embedded audiovisual content.

Despite the growing body of research on cinema and education, few studies have offered a critical synthesis of how film literacy and media education intersect in non-Western or post-conflict settings. Much of the global scholarship treats film as a neutral pedagogical aid, rather than as a cultural text

that mediates identity and social struggle. The classic contributions to understanding the role of moving image pedagogy (Kabadayi, 2012; Laugier, 2021) have since been updated by recent debates on audiovisual literacy, focusing on reflexivity, ethical spectatorship, and local authorship as critical learning outcomes (Abdelmoneim *et al.*, 2024; Assad *et al.*, 2025; Salameh & Abuhasirah, 2025). Within the context of Arab cinema studies, contributions by Ben-Zvi Morad (2024) and Al-Masri & Al-Houbi (2024) document how Palestinian film practice succeeds in binding aesthetic innovation with civic education, yet empirical data about how students receive these films as part of formal media curricula remain scarce. This gap provided a motivation for the present study, which aimed to link the tradition of film-literacy research with lived realities of Palestinian journalism education, an environment in which cinema functions simultaneously as creative expression, identity work, and resistance pedagogy.

Short narrative films occupy an important place in the world of cinema, as they are considered a unique means of expressing artistic visions and social and humanitarian themes in a brief and effective dramatic form. In addition, short films contribute to enriching cinematic culture and work to deliver a message of benefit to the viewer, whether it is a means of raising community awareness about a specific topic, talking about a social or health issue, or shedding light on art, culture and heritage (Fekih-Romdhane *et al.*, 2025; Kamei, 2019; Laugier, 2021). These films are also an opportunity for directors and artists who have talent and creativity but do not have the resources and funding necessary to make feature films. Therefore, promoting short films will enhance the opportunity for young artists with a positive vision and new ideas.

Palestinian short narrative films originate on a fertile ground of events and a history of challenges and conflicts. These films are considered effective methods of expressing the issues of the Palestinian people, their suffering, and their hope for freedom and justice. They are also considered an educational tool, combining techniques, artistry, connotations, and metaphors. Short films focus on showing the human face of the Palestinian people and conveying their stories and dreams to a global audience in a manner that is typical and inspiring for viewers. Palestinian short narrative films are distinguished by their diversity and innovation, reflecting different experiences and filming methods. These films are an expressive space for Palestinian directors to express their views, hopes, and challenges, even though all of their productions are individual works. It is an artistic method of communicating with the audience and consolidating the Palestinian identity in the cinematic arena. Palestinian short narrative films use advanced cinematic tools to highlight interesting and influential stories.

The current study was based on the uses and gratifications theory, as this theory depends on Katz’s proposal to answer the question of “What does the audience do in the media?” (Katz *et al.*, 1973). The theory considers the receiving audience to be an active audience, who knows what it wants, and its use of the media is directed to achieve its goals and interests. Thus, the public can identify their needs

and choose appropriate means to achieve those needs while taking into account individual differences. The theory has classified usage motives into two types. The first is utilitarian motives, which are motives that aim to learn about oneself and acquire skills, experiences, information, knowledge, and all forms of learning. Certain types meet these motives, such as watching feature films. The second motive is ritual motives. This type of motive aims to spend time, have fun, relax, communicate, become familiar with the medium, and escape from problems. To gauge the specific impact on Palestinian media students, one would need to conduct surveys, interviews, or case studies within Palestinian universities. These methods could provide insights into the students' perceptions, learning experiences, and any changes in attitudes or skills resulting from exposure to Palestinian short narrative films.

Palestinian short films offer media students a unique perspective on the cultural, social, and political aspects of Palestinian life. By exploring diverse narratives, students gain a deeper understanding of Palestinian identity, fostering cultural pride. These films provide valuable lessons in concise storytelling, visual creativity, and the technical aspects of filmmaking, such as cinematography, editing, and sound design. Students can apply these skills to their own projects and develop a greater appreciation for the artistic and technical challenges of film production. Moreover, exposure to Palestinian short films enhances social and political awareness, helping students understand the challenges faced by their community and inspiring them to use their skills to amplify local voices on a global scale.

In addition to technical and artistic development, Palestinian short films also offer networking opportunities, as students engage with industry professionals through film festivals and screenings. These interactions may lead to internships, collaborations, and future career opportunities. Furthermore, studying these films fosters critical thinking and analysis, encouraging students to deconstruct and interpret visual narratives while understanding the impact of film on societal perceptions. Exposure to diverse themes in Palestinian films also promotes cultural exchange among students from various backgrounds, enriching their academic experience and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

To understand the specific impact on media students in Palestinian universities, you may want to refer to academic studies, surveys, or articles published after my last update in January 2022. Local universities, film institutes, or cultural organizations might have conducted research or organized events related to this topic. This study broadens the scope of Uses and Gratifications Theory by applying it to a post-conflict media education setting, where audience motivations intertwine with national identity and cultural resilience.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

This study utilized a descriptive, cross-sectional, questionnaire-based design. The research was conducted across eight universities in Palestine between June and December 2023. The focus of the

study was on undergraduate journalism students studying media at these universities. The study aimed to gather a broad understanding of how these students perceive Palestinian short narrative films. The model operationalizes *educational* and *identity* gratifications—constructs rarely tested together in prior UGT work. Eight universities were chosen to ensure geographical and institutional diversity, representing both public and private institutions in the West Bank and Gaza.

2.2. Questionnaire Development

The instrument was first content-validated by five experts in media education and communication, representing different fields: two from journalism, two from media studies, and one from film education. The items were screened for clarity and cultural relevance. Several revisions were made in view of the experts' suggestions. A pilot test with 30 students gave acceptable internal consistency, $\alpha = 0.84$.

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to gather comprehensive data on the perspectives of media students at Palestinian universities regarding Palestinian short narrative films. It consisted of six sections: Section 1 focused on the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, including age, gender, and educational background. Section 2 examined the viewing habits of media students, specifically their frequency and platforms for watching Palestinian short narrative films. Section 3 explored the motivations driving students to watch these films, while Section 4 investigated the themes commonly found in the films that students viewed. Section 5 addressed the negative aspects of Palestinian short narrative films as perceived by the participants. Finally, Section 6 assessed the effects of viewing these films on media students, particularly in terms of their academic and professional development. The questionnaire was structured to capture quantitative data, providing a detailed insight into the students' engagement with Palestinian short narrative films.

It consisted of six sections: viewing habits, motivations for watching, perceptions of content, technical and artistic evaluation, social and political relevance, and overall critical perspectives. The questions were adapted based on existing literature and previous studies in the field, with modifications to ensure relevance to the Palestinian context and media students. The questionnaire was distributed in Arabic and English, as these are the primary languages used for academic instruction in Palestinian universities.

2.3. Pilot Study

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. The pilot study helped identify any unclear or ambiguous questions, allowing researchers to refine the instrument for the main study. The results of the pilot were not included in the final analysis but served to enhance the validity of the survey.

2.4. Sample Size and Sampling Method

The study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling method, recruiting journalism students

from Palestinian universities. To determine the appropriate sample size for this study, we applied a sample size calculation method for a population of media and journalism students in Palestine. According to the latest estimation from the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education, the total population of students enrolled in media and journalism programs is 13,630. Using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, the initial sample size was calculated to be approximately 384 students, based on the standard formula for estimating sample size for proportions. To adjust for the finite population size, a finite population correction (FPC) was applied, which resulted in an adjusted sample size of 374 students. This sample size is deemed sufficient to ensure the reliability and representativeness of the survey findings, with an acceptable level of precision for the target population of media students in Palestinian universities.

2.5. Data Collection and Distribution

The survey was distributed electronically using Google Forms, with the participation being voluntary and anonymous. To ensure the integrity of responses, the researchers implemented a system that limited participants to one submission per email address. The participants were provided with an informed consent form outlining the study's objectives, voluntary nature, and assurances of confidentiality. The data collection process was carried out over a four-week period, after which the responses were analyzed to identify trends and insights related to students' perspectives on Palestinian short narrative films.

2.6. Statistical analysis

To summarize demographic characteristics and film participation responses, descriptive statistics were used to examine the data. For inferential analysis, the study utilized a multiple linear regression model to determine the effect of key factors—like viewing behavior, motivation to watch, thematic content, and negative attitudes towards films—on students' professional and academic development. The model allowed the researchers to examine the predictive strength and statistical significance of each independent variable on the dependent variable, providing insight into Palestinian short narrative films' educational role.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic characteristics

Out of a total of 384 invitations sent to potential participants, 360 responses were received, resulting in a high response rate of 93.7%. The demographic characteristics of the study participants (N = 360) reveal a diverse group of media and journalism students. The majority of the participants were female, making up 73.61% (N = 265), while males represented 26.39% (N = 95). In terms of academic year, the students were fairly evenly distributed, with 32.22% (N = 116) in their second year, 31.11% (N = 112) in their third year, 27.22% (N = 98) in their fourth year, and 9.44% (N = 34) in their first year.

Regarding academic major, the largest group of students (31.11%, N = 112) were enrolled in Press and Media, followed by 25% (N = 90) in New Media, 23.06% (N = 83) in Media Technology, 11.94% (N = 43) in Digital Media, 4.17% (N = 15) in Arabic Language and Media, and smaller groups in specialized fields such as Radio, Television, and Cinema (2.5%, N = 9) and Television and Film Production (2.22%, N = 8). The majority of students reported not owning a camera, with 31.67% (N = 114) citing financial reasons and 39.17% (N = 141) citing other reasons. Most students (99.17%, N = 357) used smartphones to connect to social media, and family size was predominantly large, with 49.72% (N = 179) reporting a large family. Regarding the educational levels of their parents, the majority of students' mothers (45%, N = 162) had secondary education, while most fathers (41.94%, N = 151) also had secondary education. The economic level of most families was reported as moderate (86.94%, N = 313).

When it comes to social media usage for following feature films, YouTube was the most popular platform, with 39.17% (N = 141) using it, followed by Instagram (26.11%, N = 94) and Facebook (17.5%, N = 63). Students followed various types of news on social media, with political news being the most common (47.5%, N = 171), followed by various news topics (33.61%, N = 121). In terms of the effects of social media panic caused by narrative films, more than half of the participants (53.61%, N = 193) reported not feeling afraid, while others experienced psychological (30.56%, N = 110) or combined psychological and physical effects (14.44%, N = 52).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the study participants (N = 360).

Variable	n(%)
Gender	
Female	265(73.61%)
Male	95(26.39%)
Educational level at the university	
First	34(9.44%)
Second	116(32.22%)
Third	112(31.11%)
Fourth	98(27.22%)
Major	
Arabic language and media	15(4.17%)
Digital media	43(11.94%)
Media technology	83(23.06%)

Variable	n(%)
New media	90(25%)
Press and Media	112(31.11%)
Radio, television and cinema	9(2.5%)
Television and film production	8(2.22%)
Do you have a Camera?	
I do not have property for financial reasons	114(31.67%)
I don't have it for other reasons	141(39.17%)
Device used to connect to social media	
Laptop	3(0.83%)
Smart phone	357(99.17%)
Family size	
Small	37(10.28%)
Medium	144(40.00%)
Large	179(49.72%)
Your mother's educational level	
Primary	53(14.72%)
Secondary	162(45%)
Graduate	112(31.11%)
Postgraduate	33(9.17%)
Your father's educational level	
Primary	63(17.5%)
Secondary	151(41.94%)
Graduate	106(29.44%)
Postgraduate	40(11.11%)
Economical level of your family	
Low	19(5.28%)
High	28(7.78%)
Moderate	313(86.94%)
What kind of social media platforms did you use to follow feature films?	
Facebook	63(17.5%)
Instagram	94(26.11%)
Myspace	1(0.28%)
Snapchat	1(0.28%)
Telegram	23(6.39%)
TikTok	27(7.5%)
Twitter (x)	4(1.11%)
WhatsApp	6(1.67%)
YouTube	141(39.17%)
What kind of new topics do you follow frequently on different social media platforms?	
Cultural news	14(3.89%)
Economic news	2(0.56%)
Educational news	7(1.94%)
Sports news	15(4.17%)
Political news	171(47.5%)
Technology news	18(5%)
Various news	121(33.61%)
Others	12(3.33%)
The effects of social media panic on students resulted from narrative films	
I wasn't afraid	193(53.61%)
Psychology	110(30.56%)
physical	5(1.39%)
Psychology and physical	52(14.44%)

Source: Own production.

3.2. Viewing habits

Table 2 findings identify that a significant percentage of the students indicated that they do not view Palestinian short narrative films on a daily basis, considering that 50.79% disagreed and 27.25% strongly disagreed with the statement. Only 22% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with this activity. Viewing medium-wise, satellite channels emerged as a relatively more common medium, considering that 67.72% agreed or strongly agreed that they view short narrative films through this medium. Online sites also showed moderate usage, with 44.97% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing to watch these films online. In comparison, watching through local festivals was less common, with only 23.28% indicating agreement or strong agreement.

In evaluating Palestinian social media groups and pages engaged in narrative film discussion as meeting quality, fewer than 40% of respondents (39.16%) felt they were enough, while more (60.85%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Moreover, the majority of students (77.78%) rejected the premise that too much sharing of the films leads to panic, displaying a resilience toward possibly distressing content. Notably, over two-thirds (69.31%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that specific filtering policies need to be imposed on social media during humanitarian crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 73.28% of them disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that most narrative films are shared on social media, showing a seemingly inadequate lack of their widespread availability.

While the results in Table 2 are encouraging regarding exposure to Palestinian short films, they also point out that such exposure is irregular and highly mediated by traditional outlets like satellite channels rather than structured educational spaces. This

implies that access, rather than interest, presents a limit to exposure. In UGT terms, this viewing pattern means that it is situational and not habitual, further undermining the medium's potential as a reliable learning resource. The clear preference for satellite and online viewing coupled with low festival attendance indicates the need for institutional integration of local films into coursework as well as student media clubs.

3.3. Motivations for watching Palestinian short narrative films

Table 3 indicates the motivations behind students' interest in Palestinian short narrative films. Identity and national awareness were the most prominent motivations. The majority of students (75.96%) agreed or strongly agreed that these films helped them understand themselves more and consider questions about identity, while 73.28% of them reported that the films prompted them to sympathize with national issues. A similarly high percentage (69.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that the films provided them with new ideas for content that can be created.

At the practical level, 65.87% of the students viewed the films as a means of learning and gaining practical experience on how productions are carried out. A further 57.41% were satisfied artistically, and 57.41% also viewed them as being entertaining and exciting. Entertainment and escapism were less compelling motivations, as only 43.92% agreed or strongly agreed that they watched the films for entertainment and just 20.9% did so to escape personal problems. These findings suggest that students watch Palestinian short narrative films mostly for educational, professional, and cultural reasons, rather than for entertainment or distraction.

Table 2. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to viewing habits of media students in Palestinian universities regarding Palestinian short narrative films.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I watch Palestinian short narrative films.	103(27.25%)	192(50.79%)	0(0%)	57(15.08%)	26(6.88%)
I watch Palestinian short narrative films through satellite channels.	24(6.35%)	98(25.93%)	0(0%)	143(37.83%)	113(29.89%)
I watch Palestinian short narrative films online.	60(15.87%)	148(39.15%)	0(0%)	124(32.8%)	46(12.17%)
I watch Palestinian short narrative films through local festivals.	127(33.6%)	163(43.12%)	0(0%)	69(18.25%)	19(5.03%)
the quality of Palestinian social media pages, groups, and accounts covering various topics with narrative films is adequate.	52(13.76%)	178(47.09%)	0(0%)	111(29.37%)	37(9.79%)
Excessive posting of narrative films on social media could spread fear and panic among people.	160(42.33%)	134(35.45%)	0(0%)	59(15.61%)	25(6.61%)
Social media filters should be prepared, and a specific policy should be followed during humanitarian crises, such as the spread of COVID-19.	24(6.35%)	92(24.34%)	0(0%)	167(44.18%)	95(25.13%)
Have many narrative films been published on social media?	153(40.48%)	124(32.8%)	0(0%)	70(18.52%)	31(8.2%)

Source: Own production.

Table 3. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to questions related to motivations for watching short narrative films.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Learning and gaining practical experience in production methods?	5(1.32%)	24(6.35%)	100(26.46%)	124(32.8%)	125(33.07%)
To nourish artistic visuals? (Satisfy the desire to watch)	5(1.32%)	38(10.05%)	118(31.22%)	125(33.07%)	92(24.34%)
Because it's highly engaging and exciting?	6(1.59%)	33(8.73%)	122(32.28%)	125(33.07%)	92(24.34%)
Entertainment.	33(8.73%)	52(13.76%)	127(33.6%)	103(27.25%)	63(16.67%)
Escape from my own problems.	95(25.13%)	106(28.04%)	98(25.93%)	50(13.23%)	29(7.67%)
Getting new ideas for topics that can be produced?	6(1.59%)	24(6.35%)	83(21.96%)	146(38.62%)	119(31.48%)
Enhancing self-understanding and reflection on identity issues.	0(0%)	20(5.29%)	67(17.72%)	141(37.3%)	150(39.68%)
It motivates me to empathize with certain national issues.	2(0.53%)	24(6.35%)	75(19.84%)	131(34.66%)	146(38.62%)

Source: Own production.

The motivational profile in Table 3 shows that cognitive and identity-based gratifications dominate over entertainment motives. This result supports UGT's hypothesis that active audiences choose media for purposes other than passive enjoyment, such as self-relevant objectives. Palestinian students view short story films as tools for professional learning and cultural reflection, not only as entertainment, as evidenced by the significant emphasis on self-awareness and empathy for national challenges. This goal-driven engagement also contributes to the explanation of why motivation is found to be the most powerful predictor of academic and professional advancement in subsequent regression analyses.

3.4. Perceptions of content, technical and artistic evaluation

The results in Table 4 indicate that students perceived multiple levels of meaning in Palestinian short narrative films. Political implications were most highly agreed upon, with 74.08% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing that such films address political issues. Historical (65.08%) and social implications (61.9%) were also highly noted. Religious themes were moderately noted, with 48.95% of the respondents marking agreement.

Economic and environmental themes were comparatively less noted. Only 35.45% agreed or

strongly agreed that economic concerns were addressed in the films, and even fewer (28.57%) did so for environmental and health concerns. Asylum and immigration concerns ranked more prominently, with 66.93% seeing these themes in the films. Entertainment content was the least perceived theme, with only 33.6% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing. These findings highlight that the students perceive Palestinian short narrative films as addressing serious and socially engaged subjects, particularly political and historical themes.

3.5. Negative aspects of Palestinian short narrative films

Table 5 presents the students' view on the shortcomings and limitations of Palestinian short narrative films. The majority of students were worried about technical quality since 46.56% agreed or strongly agreed that the filmmaking is poor. Similarly, 46.56% also believed that the actors are inexperienced. Although 24.07% of the students found the problems raised by the films dull, the majority (67.94%) disagreed or were neutral, suggesting mixed but leaning-positive attitudes.

Innovative storytelling was also questioned, since 49.47% either agreed or strongly agreed that narrative creativity is limited. Additionally, 25.4% of the students believed that stories were weak and unrealistic, and 49.44% disagreed or did not agree

Table 4. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to questions related to the themes in Palestinian short narrative films watched by media students in Palestinian universities.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social implications	6(1.59%)	20(5.29%)	118(31.22%)	145(38.36%)	89(23.54%)
Political implications	2(0.53%)	22(5.82%)	74(19.58%)	129(34.13%)	151(39.95%)
Historical implications	7(1.85%)	27(7.14%)	98(25.93%)	125(33.07%)	121(32.01%)
Religious content	7(1.85%)	47(12.43%)	139(36.77%)	109(28.84%)	76(20.11%)
Economic implications	22(5.82%)	67(17.72%)	155(41.01%)	93(24.6%)	41(10.85%)
Environmental and health implications	31(8.2%)	87(23.02%)	152(40.21%)	74(19.58%)	34(8.99%)
Asylum and immigration issues	5(1.32%)	36(9.52%)	84(22.22%)	113(29.89%)	140(37.04%)
Entertainment content	47(12.43%)	82(21.69%)	122(32.28%)	84(22.22%)	43(11.38%)

Source: Own production.

Table 5. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to questions related to the negative aspects of short narrative films.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The techniques used in filmmaking are weak and do not live up to the standards of feature films.	5(1.32%)	45(11.9%)	152(40.21%)	134(35.45%)	42(11.11%)
The actors in the films are amateurs and lack sufficient experience.	8(2.12%)	60(15.87%)	134(35.45%)	121(32.01%)	55(14.55%)
The issues raised by the films are of no interest to the audience.	34(8.99%)	109(28.84%)	144(38.1%)	67(17.72%)	24(6.35%)
The novelty and innovation in cinematic narratives are weak.	6(1.59%)	46(12.17%)	139(36.77%)	118(31.22%)	69(18.25%)
The stories the films address are weak and unrealistic.	36(9.52%)	125(33.07%)	121(32.01%)	64(16.93%)	32(8.47%)
The production of Palestinian feature films is weak and relies on foreign funding.	10(2.65%)	60(15.87%)	111(29.37%)	127(33.6%)	70(18.52%)
The directorial vision for Palestinian short films is weak.	10(2.65%)	62(16.4%)	147(38.89%)	114(30.16%)	45(11.9%)
The publication and distribution of Palestinian short films is severely weak.	8(2.12%)	41(10.85%)	93(24.6%)	134(35.45%)	102(26.98%)

Source: Own production.

with this. 52.12% of the students believed that feature film production is weak and depends on outside funding. Directorial vision (42.06% agreement) was also the concern and mainly distribution, for which 62.43% of the respondents stated that Palestinian short film publications and distribution are very lacking. These findings represent significant structural and creative challenges for the Palestinian industry of short narrative films, namely resources, capacities, and infrastructure of distribution.

Even though students pointed out a number of technical flaws, including poor production quality and distribution gaps, these criticisms coexist with largely favorable opinions regarding the films' cultural and educational worth. In line with studies on learning from low-resource media environments, the cohabitation of technical criticism and affective connection implies that identity relevance makes up for production deficiencies. This acceptance of flaws supports the claim that in post-conflict audiovisual

pedagogy, authenticity and significance are more important than polish.

3.6. Impact of Palestinian Short Narrative Films on Media Students: Professional and Scholarly Growth

Students reported a largely positive impact of Palestinian short narrative films on their professional and scholarly growth. As seen in the final column of Table 5, over three-quarters of students (74.87%) reported that their interest in methods of filmmaking had increased as a result of watching these films. Similarly, 65.34% stated that it made them train in production, and 69.84% stated improved knowledge of technical techniques. Enhancing storytelling and directing skill was also affirmed since 63.75% agreed or strongly agreed.

In terms of critical engagement, 66.13% of the students mentioned gaining the skill to critically assess, for instance, editing, lighting, and sound.

Table 6. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to questions related to the impact of Palestinian short narrative films on media students: professional and scholarly growth.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1) It increased my interest in the techniques used in producing Palestinian short narrative films.	3(0.79%)	19(5.03%)	73(19.31%)	191(50.53%)	92(24.34%)
2) It prompted me to train in Palestinian short narrative film production.	2(0.53%)	28(7.41%)	101(26.72%)	170(44.97%)	77(20.37%)
3) It increased my understanding of the technical methods used in producing Palestinian short narrative films.	3(0.79%)	20(5.29%)	91(24.07%)	189(50%)	75(19.84%)
4) It contributed to enhancing and developing my teaching skills in producing Palestinian short narrative films.	2(0.53%)	26(6.88%)	99(26.19%)	168(44.44%)	83(21.96%)
5) It helped me learn storytelling and directing techniques.	3(0.79%)	30(7.94%)	104(27.51%)	170(44.97%)	71(18.78%)
6) I acquired the skill of technical critique of Palestinian short narrative films (photography, editing, lighting, sound).	3(0.79%)	23(6.08%)	102(26.98%)	170(44.97%)	80(21.16%)

Source: Own production.

Table 7. Responses of study participants (N = 360) to questions related to the impact of Palestinian short narrative films on media students: technical and artistic effects.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1) My interest in portraying characters in Palestinian short narrative films increased.	2(0.53%)	18(4.76%)	91(24.07%)	176(46.56%)	91(24.07%)
2) My desire to follow the story or narrative presented in Palestinian short narrative films increased.	2(0.53%)	17(4.5%)	88(23.28%)	177(46.83%)	94(24.87%)
3) My awareness of the issues raised by Palestinian short narrative films increased.	3(0.79%)	11(2.91%)	99(26.19%)	165(43.65%)	100(26.46%)
4) My ability to understand and analyze the content of Palestinian short narrative films increased.	3(0.79%)	19(5.03%)	88(23.28%)	180(47.62%)	88(23.28%)
5) It strengthened my conviction about the importance of this type of film in Palestinian reality.	1(0.26%)	18(4.76%)	82(21.69%)	168(44.44%)	109(28.84%)
6) It influenced me in breaking stereotypes and preconceived notions about Palestinian short narrative films.	4(1.06%)	19(5.03%)	113(29.89%)	174(46.03%)	68(17.99%)
7) It contributed to enhancing and developing my skills in critical analysis of Palestinian short narrative films (narrative sequence, characters, content, directorial vision).	3(0.79%)	19(5.03%)	105(27.78%)	169(44.71%)	82(21.69%)
8) It motivated me to follow and participate in short film festivals.	10(2.65%)	33(8.73%)	112(29.63%)	145(38.36%)	78(20.63%)

Source: Own production.

Teaching skills were also improved positively, with 66.4% mentioning that the films helped improve their learning advancement in film making. These results indicate the overwhelming educational and professional influence of Palestinian short films and suggest that they are both a source of inspiration and a teaching tool for media students.

The answers compiled in Table 6 demonstrate how watching Palestinian short films fosters the development of concrete skills in addition to awareness. Experiential learning processes are indicated by students' self-reported improvements in narrative, directing, and critique. These results support the idea that localized film content might function as a "practice lab" for journalism education, where watching turns into a cognitive apprenticeship. By demonstrating how identity-driven motivation transforms observation into skill learning, the pattern also connects theory and practice.

3.7. Impact of Palestinian Short Narrative Films on Media Students: Technical and Artistic Effects

Table 7 also elaborates on the influence of Palestinian short narrative films on students' technical and aesthetic sensibilities. The majority of the students (70.63%) asserted increased interest in character portrayal, while 71.7% asserted increased interest in narrative development. Social and political consciousness was significantly enhanced, with 70.11% affirming that their social and political consciousness improved through the films.

Moreover, 70.9% of the students indicated that their critical thinking ability in film content analysis was improved, and 73.28% assured that the films strengthened their belief that they were still relevant to Palestinian reality. Notably, 64.02% indicated that

the films helped them resist stereotypes and assumptions, and 66.4% indicated an improvement in critical analysis of film elements, including narrative structure and directorial style. Finally, 58.99% were motivated to engage or attend film festivals, which is a tangible result in the area of industry engagement. All of these results cumulatively demonstrate that Palestinian short narrative films are not merely art but also potent instruments of learning that motivate professional growth and critical media literacy.

Table 7's technical and creative effects demonstrate how short story films help students develop analytical and reflective habits. Students are critical viewers rather than passive consumers, as evidenced by their growing awareness of narrative structure, character portrayal, and socio-political relevance. Their stated desire to take part in film festivals is an indication of the shift from receiving to creation, which is directly related to media literacy objectives. The educational value of local film in journalism training is reinforced by this conversion of spectatorship into creative participation.

Table 8 presents the results of a multiple linear regression analysis examining the relationship between students' engagement with Palestinian short narrative films and their perceived professional and scholarly growth. The analysis includes key predictors such as viewing habits, motivations, thematic content, and perceived negative aspects of the films.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that several factors significantly predict the impact of Palestinian short narrative films on the professional and scholarly growth of media students in Palestinian universities. Specifically, students' viewing habits ($\beta = 0.2457, p < 0.001$), motivations for watching the films ($\beta = 0.377, p < 0.001$), and the thematic content of the films ($\beta = 0.1397, p$

= 0.003) were all positively and significantly associated with the outcome. Among these, motivation emerged as the strongest predictor. Conversely, the negative aspects of the films did not show a significant effect ($\beta = 0.03876$, $p = 0.292$). These findings

suggest that positive engagement with Palestinian short narrative films—through frequency, relevance, and motivational appeal—plays a meaningful role in shaping students' academic and professional development.

Table 8. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing the Professional and Scholarly Growth of Media Students in Palestinian Universities Through Exposure to Short Narrative Films.

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	P
(Intercept)	1.163	0.1903	6.114	<0.001
Habits of media students in Palestinian universities regarding Palestinian short narrative films	0.2457	0.04113	5.974	<0.001
Motivations for watching short narrative films	0.377	0.05157	7.309	<0.001
Themes in Palestinian short narrative films watched by media students in Palestinian universities	0.1397	0.04731	2.952	0.003
Negative aspects of short narrative films	0.03876	0.03672	1.056	0.292

Source: Own production.

Regression analysis results show that motivational factors produce the greatest standardized effect, $\beta = 0.377$, indicating intrinsic engagement beats frequency of exposure. Viewing habits, with its $\beta = 0.246$, further implies consistent consumption promotes learning while thematic recognition, $\beta = 0.140$, supports content-driven reflection.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide an understanding of Palestinian journalism students' attitudes and use of short narrative films, interpreted within the context of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The theory posits that individuals make active media choices to fulfill specific needs, such as getting information, developing personal identity, enhancing social interaction, and entertainment (Katz *et al.*, 1973). Findings suggest that educational and identity gratifications co-occur, indicating an adaptation of UGT to collective, rather than purely individual, media experiences.

Using moving-image materials in coursework improves engagement, critical thinking, and transferable abilities, according to international studies on film-based pedagogy (Istanto, 2009; Kabadayi, 2012; Laugier, 2021). These results are consistent with the motivational profile found in this study, which also includes a unique aspect of civic and cultural affiliation. Palestinian journalism students linked short films to self-awareness and a sense of national identity, while many international classroom-cinema studies see them primarily as instruments for attention or language learning. This focus on social and historical consciousness is consistent with findings that short films are effective means of expressing collective realities (Winarto *et al.*, 2020) and with previous discussions of cinema as a medium of cultural documentation and moral education (Kamei, 2019; Laugier, 2021).

While situated in the Palestinian context, these results extend global understandings of how localized cinema supports cultural identity and media literacy under conditions of limited access and political constraint.

4.1. Watching Habits and Access Challenges

A high proportion of students reported infrequent viewing of Palestinian short narrative films, with

over 78% of students disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the item "I watch Palestinian short narrative films". This low exposure might be explained by issues of access. Whereas satellite television (67.72%) and the internet (44.97%) were common places to view films, local festivals were substantially under-used (23.28%), suggesting potential issues of access in communal public or educational settings. This echoes previous research calling for accessible and engaging websites to increase students' media intake and film literacy (Kabadayi, 2012).

4.2. Motivations Aligned with Educational and Cultural Enrichment

Educational and identity-based motivations were the primary drivers for students. More than 75% reported that these films enabled self-reflection on identity and enhanced empathy towards national issues. Moreover, 69% believed the films introduced new creative production concepts. These motivations resonate with UGT's emphasis on the audience's active search for media to satisfy cognitive and affective needs (Katz *et al.*, 1973). The emphasis on identity also aligns with Laugier's (2021) work, highlighting the moral and cultural educational potential of films. In the Palestinian context, these types of films are heavily involved in national consciousness and cultural pride (Kamei, 2019).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory's central claim—that viewers who interact with media for self-relevant and cognitive purposes learn more deeply—is supported by the regression analysis's dominance of motivation (Katz *et al.*, 1973). This means that in order to promote reflective and participatory participation in media education, teaching practices need go beyond passive viewing. In order to connect critique and practice, educators could: (1) encourage students to curate short films around common social themes; (2) combine textual analysis with low-stakes production exercises (Kabadayi, 2012; Laugier, 2021); and (3) assess assignments for ethical framing and cultural insight in addition to technical accuracy. These exercises enhance the analytical-creative cycle at the heart of professional training and transform watching into active learning.

4.3. Perceived Content Themes Reflect Societal Narratives

The study shows that the students recognized strong political (74.08%), historical (65.08%), and social (61.9%) themes in Palestinian short narrative films. This corroborates literature showing that cinema, and short films specifically, are a good vehicle for social commentary and historical documentation (Winarto *et al.*, 2020). These findings affirm that short films are vehicles of expression for conveying Palestinian social realities and aspirations (Kamei, 2019).

4.4. Recognition of Technical and Distribution Problems

Despite valuing the educational and thematic quality of the films, students recognized some technical flaws. About 47% believed the filmmaking craft was substandard, and a similar percentage found the acting amateurish. Moreover, 62.43% agreed that the release and distribution of these films were significantly lacking. These problems reflect the entrenched structural difficulties that have faced Palestinian filmmakers, including lack of good funding, training, and professional equipment (Ohanian & Phillips, 2013). Surmounting these constraints is central to unleashing the full potential of short films in education and advocacy.

The long-standing structural obstacles in Palestinian filmmaking—inadequate funding, limited training opportunities, and shaky production infrastructures—are reflected in students' recognition of poor technical quality, limited acting experience, and limited distribution (Ohanian & Phillips, 2013; Wurtzler, 2007). Instead of waiting for perfect circumstances, the proper educational answer is to use “production under constraint” as a pedagogical paradigm. Using locally accessible equipment or teaching minimalist shooting and editing techniques turns constraints into opportunities for creativity and connects classroom work to the real-world production settings that graduates will encounter.

4.5. Positive Impact on Academic and Professional Development

Encouragingly, most of the students reported that Palestinian short narrative films had a positive impact on their academic and professional competencies. Over 70% expressed more interest in production craft, storytelling, and critical analysis. These findings are supported by earlier studies that determined that audiovisual media can enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and technical skill in media education (Istanto, 2009; Kabadayi, 2012).

Results of the multiple linear regression analysis yield strong proof of predictive power of students' exposure to Palestinian short narrative films in their professional and academic development. One special source of motivation for watching the films emerged as the strongest predictor, and this suggests internal factors such as cultural identification, interest in learning, and innovative stimulation have a core part to play in determining student outcomes. Frequency of viewing and thematic content recognition also contributed significantly to perceived educational impact, affirming that depth and frequency

of exposure enhance skill acquisition and media literacy. Contrary to expectations, unfavorable beliefs about film quality did not impact student growth to a significant degree, indicating that the students may overlook technical mistakes when films offer high-level content. These findings highlight the educational value of localized media and validate the Uses and Gratifications Theory's suggestion that media consumption is informed by intentional, need-fulfilling actions.

The insignificance of perceived technical flaws in terms of learning outcome indicates that authenticity and relevance matter more than production polish. When films speak to the realities of their lives, students seem quite willing to look past imperfect execution. This finding strongly supports that audiovisual learning impacts education more through meaningful content and identity resonance than professional aesthetics per se (Kabadayi, 2012; Kamei, 2019; Laugier, 2021).

4.6. Implications for Media Education

The findings of the research suggest that Palestinian short narrative films can be more intentionally integrated into media curricula as reflective, practical, and critical learning tools. Their use is aligned with UGT's model since students are actively seeking films that align with their educational and personal growth aspirations. When sufficiently supported and shared, such films have the potential to reinforce not only technical and artistic skills but also socio-political consciousness (Katz *et al.*, 1973; Laugier, 2021).

Overall, Palestinian students of journalism demonstrate motivated, identity-aware engagement with short narrative films, enabling technical skill, critical reflection, and civic awareness. Their viewing behavior extends the Uses and Gratifications framework into an educationally under-resourced yet highly culturally significant setting. Integrating locally produced short films into journalism curricula can therefore transform material constraints into opportunities for experiential learning and cultural empowerment.

Whereas the majority of previous media education studies have focused on film as a supplementary pedagogic aid, the current findings suggest a shift in perspective toward viewing local film production as a primary site of meaning-making and the acquisition of skill. This contrast highlights how Palestinian students, navigating a highly politicized environment, utilize short narrative films not merely for information or entertainment but, rather, to negotiate identity and professionally define oneself. As such, this research refines, rather than reproduces, the conceptual connection between the Uses and Gratifications framework and media pedagogy by demonstrating that the gratifications include civic affirmation and cultural resilience—forms of learning rarely documented in prior comparative studies (Katz *et al.*, 1973; Kabadayi, 2012; Laugier, 2021).

5. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study has firm quantitative results, it is also limited to journalism students in Palestinian universities and may not reflect students in other disciplines

or contexts. Future research must examine larger and more diverse populations, as well as qualitative approaches to uncover detailed descriptions and emotional reactions. In addition, experimental research may investigate if the formal introduction of short films into curricula can influence student learning outcomes. Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it was appropriate given the exploratory nature of this research and logistical constraints across universities. The research question was descriptive; thus, together with categorical variables, the analyses here focused on regression modeling to establish predictive associations. Future research using structural equation modeling or longitudinal designs could test causality.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the attitudes, motivations, and academic value of Palestinian short narrative films among journalism students at Palestinian universities. The findings underscore the multi-dimensional value of the films as cultural representation, national identity, and academic enrichment resources. Despite limited access and high technical quality and distribution issues, students overall recognized the thematic richness and educational value of the films—particularly in promoting identity introspection, critical thinking, and professional development in media production.

Most of the students watched these films not just for pleasure, but to gain technical knowledge, research socio-political issues, and discover storytelling related to real problems. This conforms with the essential tenants of the uses and gratifications theory, which asserts that audience members intentionally choose media whose content is informative or developmental to their requirements.

This theoretical link is reinforced by the regression results, which demonstrate that intrinsic motivation and thematic engagement were the strongest predictors of perceived academic and professional growth. That means that students' learning does not depend primarily on the technical polish of the films but on their relevance for identity and cultural experience. These findings contribute to UGT by illustrating how, in resource-limited and post-conflict contexts, gratifications can include civic affirmation and cultural resilience in addition to cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

Parallely, the research indicates obstacles that must be addressed to fully access Palestinian short narrative filmmaking potential. These consist of increasing production levels, expanding the dissemination base, and turning inclusion of such films in formal curricula of media studies into a more strategic process. This recommendation, grounded in the data, would suggest that media programs need to institutionalize the use of short films within clearly defined courses on visual literacy, narrative construction, and critical analysis. Partnerships between universities and cultural institutions will help to provide small production grants and collaborative screening initiatives for crossing the existing access gap. Addressing those voids, cultural institutions, filmmakers, and universities can increase students' interest, enrich the local narratives, and develop an engaged

Palestinian media culture. By contextualizing UGT within Palestinian media education, this research contributes a non-Western perspective to audience-motivation theory and film pedagogy. The study thus goes beyond description to provide a model in which local cinema becomes both a pedagogical tool and a part of cultural development policy by connecting empirical results with educational policy.

Follow-up research needs to explore similar dynamics in other areas of study and examine qualitative methods to further understand the rich experiences of students learning about national cinema. Such research would contribute to a richer understanding of how locally produced media can influence learning, identity, and civic consciousness in post-conflict societies.

7. Statement on the use of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence has not been used throughout the research.

8. References

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