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Family and Family Education in the Mirror of Soviet Feature Films (1960–1985)

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Abstract

Feature films about family life are powerful cultural artifacts that shape the upbringing of youth by modelling behaviour, reinforcing values, and addressing moral and ethical dilemmas. They provide young people with tools to navigate their own family relationships, foster empathy, and influence their aspirations for future family life. By portraying a range of family experiences, films help youth understand the complexity of relationships and the importance of communication, compassion, and responsibility in a family setting. Hence, studying feature films about family life in the context of film studies and media education plays a significant role in the upbringing of youth by shaping their understanding of family relationships. Our content analysis of Soviet feature films about family and family education during the period of “stagnation” showed that they reflected the desire of the Soviet government to maintain stability and order through the propaganda of the ideals of a strong and stable family. However, despite the official positive narratives, the films increasingly raised issues of the crisis of family relations, the conflict of generations and moral dilemmas, which spoke of the real problems of society. The worldview of the film characters of the “stagnation” period is characterized by a combination of conformism, the desire for stability and an internal search for the meaning of life against the background of general social stagnation. The characters are torn between traditional family values and a feeling of internal dissatisfaction, which creates tension and forces them to solve personal and moral dilemmas.

Keywords: family, family upbringing, media, media text, media culture, media education, feature films, stagnation.

1. Introduction

Contemporary society is undergoing significant changes and transformations, which is reflected in the family as a social institution: the number of single-parent families is increasing; the tendency towards late marriage and a conscious choice of childlessness is growing; the practice of civil marriages and unstable family relationships is widespread: “In recent years, traditional family values have been transformed in society, which has led to such results as: unpreparedness for family life, deterioration of the microclimate in the family, an increase in divorces, an increase in the number of unregistered marriages, etc.” (Andrienko et al., 2020: 37). These changes require the adaptation of family education models that are able to cope with new challenges. Traditional parenting methods lose their effectiveness in some situations, so the task of developing flexible and adapted approaches to family education has become urgent.

Economic instability and global crises have a significant impact on family life and the upbringing of the younger generation too. Parents often face the need to combine professional activities and raising children. This leads to increased stress in parents, which requires attention to

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the mental health of both parents and children. In such conditions, family education should take into account not only personal and moral qualities in the child, but also a psychologically comfortable environment for the whole family, since the family remains the main source of social and emotional development of the child. Therefore, in the context of constant changes in society, it is important to maintain the emotional well-being of the child, develop self-confidence, self-regulation skills and informed decision-making. In addition, family education forms basic moral attitudes and behavioural models affecting the further successful and fruitful life of a person in society (Zhuravleva, 2023).

Hence, studying feature films about family life in the context of film studies and media education plays a significant role in the upbringing of youth by shaping their values, behaviours, and understanding of relationships. These films often serve as both mirrors of societal norms and powerful tools for transmitting cultural and moral lessons. They often depict various family structures, roles, thus showing how parents, children, and siblings interact. These portrayals can serve as models for young viewers, illustrating how conflicts are resolved, how love and respect are expressed, and what healthy communication looks like. Moreover, youth often look to characters in films for guidance on how to behave in certain social roles. These depictions can shape their understanding of what is expected of them in family settings. Finally, films often reflect and reinforce the values of the society in which they are made. Through storylines and character development, youth are exposed to ideals such as respect for elders, family loyalty, honesty, and personal responsibility. Many films about family life present traditional or evolving views of gender roles, influencing how young people view the responsibilities and expectations of men and women in family and society. Some films serve as tools for promoting national values or ideologies. For example, Soviet-era films often portrayed families in ways that supported collective socialist values, teaching youth the importance of community and work ethic.

Also, critical film studies provide for emotional education of children and youth. Films often explore a wide range of emotions experienced within family life such as love, anger, betrayal, disappointment, grief, and joy. Youth can learn how to navigate their own emotions and empathize with others by observing characters going through similar experiences. On the other hand, films that portray family conflicts, divorce, or the loss of a loved one can help young people process difficult emotions and understand that such challenges are a normal part of life. This can build resilience and emotional intelligence in youth. Watching family stories unfold on screen allows young people to step into the shoes of different characters. This helps develop social skills such as understanding, tolerance, and compassion. Moreover, films often depict various approaches to resolving family conflicts, from open communication to reconciliation. Young viewers can learn valuable lessons about how to handle disputes in their own families and relationships by observing how characters navigate tensions. Positive portrayals of supportive, loving families inspire youth to aspire to similar relationships, while films addressing family dysfunction encourage them to avoid repeating negative patterns. Youth often develop their expectations for parenting and family life by observing how parents in films raise their children, balance work and family responsibilities, and deal with challenges.

Meanwhile, in the context of ongoing globalization, changes in social norms and intercultural interactions, traditional family values are being revised. Many families are faced with the need to raise children in a multicultural environment and changing ideas about gender roles. This requires that parents should pay attention to issues of tolerance, respect for differences and intercultural communication, and to develop flexible value guidelines that will help the child adapt to a rapidly changing world: "Indeed, the possibilities of media education in promoting interethnic tolerance in the student audience have already firmly established themselves in Russian media education as an important factor in education, upbringing and development of the younger generation" (Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2021: 49).

Digitalization has also affected many aspects of modern life, including family relationships and raising children. Modern children grow up in an environment saturated with gadgets, the Internet and social networks, which creates both new opportunities and challenges for parents. In this context, the experience of introducing modern technologies and methods of film and media education in order to educate children and adolescents is being updated. Here, it seems vital to form conscious and safe behaviour in children on the Internet, develop digital literacy and critical thinking skills, maintain a balance between online and offline interactions, developing social, communicative and emotional competencies of young people in real interpersonal relationships.

2. Materials and methods

The material of our study is audiovisual media texts on the topic of family and family education. The main method is a comparative-hermeneutic analysis of Soviet films of the “stagnation” period (1960–1985) devoted to family issues (including: analysis of stereotypes, ideological analysis, identification analysis, iconographic analysis, plot analysis, character analysis).

In our study, we analysed Russian (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020; Kosinova, 2016; Letzbor, 2019; Obukhovski, 2021; Prokhorova, 2013; Suvorova, 2021) and foreign scientific findings (Bruzzi, 2005; Douglas, Olson, 1995; Fulmer, 2017; Jenkins, 2015; Kerry, 2016; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013; Levy, 1991; Tanner et al., 2003; Zurcher et al., 2018) devoted to family and family education in the mirror of Soviet feature films. In addition, the following research methods were used: analysis and synthesis of articles and monographs on the topic of the study, generalization and classification.

3. Discussion

The theme of family and family education was always an important and relevant aspect of Russian feature cinema in the period from 1960 to 1985. This period of time covers the end of N.S. Khrushchev’s “thaw”, the era of L.I. Brezhnev’s “stagnation” and the first years of perestroika. During these years, cinema became one of the key means for the transmission of ideological values, norms and ideals of the Soviet family. During the “thaw” of the 1960s, there was a move away from strict ideological censorship and the liberalization of art, including cinema, began. Cinema became more humane, there were more plots related to everyday life, personal relationships, issues of morality and education. For example, Mikhail Kalatozov’s film *The Cranes Are Flying/Letyat zhuravli* (1957) shows complex family relationships against the backdrop of the war.

The issues of family and family education in Soviet feature films of the “stagnation” period (1970s – early 1980s in the USSR) are relatively widely studied by Russian (Chelysheva, 2013, 2014; Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2022; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020; Kosinova, 2016; Letzbor, 2019; Obukhovski, 2021; Prokhorova, 2013; Suvorova, 2021) and foreign scholars (Applebaum et al., 2018; Chion, Brewster, 1991; First, 2008; Ianushko, 2022; Kim, 2022; Todd, 2023; Zawlacki, 2020; Zvonkine, 2016). During this period, cinema actively depicted the contradictions and characteristics of the Soviet family, emphasizing both traditional values and new social challenges. Films about relationships between spouses, parents and children reflected the real problems faced by Soviet people.

Cinema of the 1970s “stagnation” period, on the one hand, continued to depict the idealization of a stable Soviet family, but at the same time some films touched on the topic of generational conflicts and crises in family relationships. Films of this period often raised issues of moral choice, the value of family, labour and collectivism. For example, Vladimir Menshov’s film *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears/Moskva Slezam ne Verit* (1979) shows the evolution of the main character from a single mother to a successful, self-sufficient woman. “Art, both professional and amateur, became one of the main channels for transmitting the ideas of power. The erosion of the “Soviet project” in the field of art became most noticeable in the era of stagnation. This is reflected in the field of amateur and naive art. In the works of a number of amateur and naive artists of this time, one can observe the phenomenon of the growing importance of individualistic values and the gradual displacement of the dominant ideological discourse (similar processes are also developing in professional art during this period), and the “grand narrative” of power is transformed into images of a schematized, strictly organized utopia” (Suvorova, 2021: 82).

Films of the 1980s (the beginning of perestroika) more openly criticized the existing political system in the country, emphasized the internal problems of Soviet society, also in the family sphere. Film directors explored the theme of alienation, the crisis of moral foundations, and the complexity of education in a changing world. For example, Vasily Pichul’s film *Little Vera/Malen’kaya Vera* (1988) shows a deep crisis of the family against the backdrop of a general decline in moral and social norms.

A quantitative and genre analysis of Russian feature films about family education conducted by I.V. Chelysheva and G.V. Mikhaleva shows that the number of feature films about family created from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s reached more than 150 films (Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024). The same period is the leader in the average annual number of films shot about family and family education (about 9 years annually). At the same time, dramas and melodramas prevailed in terms of genre. In addition, the focus of feature films of this period was on the inner experiences of the

hero of the story, which led, in particular, to changes in the genre policy of Soviet cinema: “If the first half of the 1970s is characterized by a mixture of genres, then the second half of the 1970s – early 1980s is rather a time of “pure” genres. Especially many adventure, detective and melodramatic films began to appear. This is due to the decline in audience attendance that occurred in the second half of the 1970s. The battle for the viewer was waged by various means, including those of “pure” genres. A striking example of victory in this battle is V. Menshov’s film *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears / Moskva Slezam ne Verit*” (Kosinova, 2016: 257).

In addition, during this period, such an unusual genre as a parable film came into fashion (*Parable of Love / Pritcha o Ljubvi* (1974), *Flights in Dreams and Reality / Polety vo Sne i Najavu* (1982) by R. Balayan, *Kalina Krasnaya / Kalina Krasnaja* (1973) by V. Shukshin). “It is significant that the widespread use of the parable experience coincided in time with the heightened interest in the so-called moral and ethical issues that the cinema of the 1970s and early 1980s was so intensely engaged in. One of the reasons for the gravitation towards the parable genre in the 1970s is that at that time the best moral ideals of socialism, humanism, etc. do not stand up to the test of reality. Thus, for the first time, an undefeated positive hero appears on the Soviet screen” (Kosinova, 2016: 258). Such films were very popular with young audiences: “During the Brezhnev stagnation period, researchers came to the conclusion that the favourite films of Soviet students were such films as *The Dawns Here Are Quiet/A Zori Zdes’ Tihie*, *They Fought for the Motherland/Oni Srazhalis’ za Rodinu*, *Kalina Krasnaya/Kalina Krasnaja*, *Solaris/Soljaris*, *Romance of Lovers/Romans o Vjublennyh*, and *Mirror/Zerkalo*. Soviet youth showed a tendency to liberate themselves from the prevailing ideological dogmatism, which, in particular, manifested itself in their interest in the films of A.A. Tarkovsky, which did not fit into the sociocultural paradigm of the “stagnation” period” (Obukhovskiy, 2021: 46).

On the other hand, as M.I. Kosinova aptly noted, “the strengthening of censorship in the era of ‘stagnation’ leads to the overwhelming majority of filmmakers ‘breaking’ under the yoke of the system and continuing to work by inertia – in the space of canonical communist ideas and Soviet ideas about life. These ideological attitudes continue to be launched into the conveyor belt of the Soviet film industry, which automatically imparts to most of the products it produces a taste of falsehood, which the viewer cannot help but feel. In many ways, it is for this reason that in the 1980s our cinema will find itself in a deplorable state” (Kosinova, 2016: 255).

It is well-known that the family in Soviet films is often portrayed as an integral part of society. Many plots emphasize the importance of collective life and the connection between personal and public interests. Cinema from the 1960s to 1985s became an important mirror reflecting not only the family values of the time, but also changes in society, cultural and ideological attitudes. It played a significant role in the formation and maintenance of the ideal of the Soviet family, however, simultaneously reflecting the obstacles and contradictions that society faced during this period.

The family was seen as the main institution for transmitting moral and ideological values. Films often showed how parents tried to instil in their children such qualities as hard work, honesty, collectivism, and loyalty to the ideals of socialism. The image of the mother in Soviet cinema was often idealized, with selflessness, wisdom, love, and patience attributed to her. The father was usually portrayed as the head of the family, hardworking and fair, but sometimes distant or overly strict.

The theme of generational conflict became especially relevant in the 1970s and 1980s. These films show how children encounter difficulties in communicating with their parents, who do not always comprehend the changes in society and the lives of the younger generation. “The techniques of representing family life patterns underwent significant changes in films on the school theme in comparison with the previous periods. Very often the film makers showed the generation gap on the screen, problems of teacher-parent relationships (*You Wouldnt Even Dream It/Vam i ne Snilos’*, 1980, etc.), the crisis of family relations/single-parent families (*The Boys/Patsany*, 1983; *Other People’s Letters/Chuzhiye Pis’ma*, 1975), cruelty and violence combined with indifference and spiritual poverty (*Scarecrow/Chuchelo*, 1983; *Plead Guilty/Priznat’ Vinovnym*, 1983, etc.). In general, the films on the school theme were based on everlasting moral values such as generosity, kind-heartedness, goodness, responsibility, desire to help people, etc. These values had a powerful educational impact during that period” (Chelysheva, Mikhaleva, 2018: 138).

Discussing the verisimilitude of the cinematography of the period of “stagnation” and the appropriateness of its use in teaching Russian as a foreign language, K.V. Letzbor comes to the

conclusion that “in the cinematography of the period under consideration, we are talking about the embodiment of artistic truth according to the ideas of the French theorist of cinematography A. Bazin, which suggest reflecting the essence of life phenomena from the position of the artist and his aesthetic ideals and which are achieved with the help of life-like techniques of artistic imagery. Due to the linearity and simplicity of the narration, this cinematic language will also be more accessible to foreign students” (Letzbor, 2019: 73).

Analysing the theoretical concepts of the leading Soviet magazine “Art of Cinema” during the period of “stagnation”, A.V. Fedorov emphasizes that “On the whole, the magazine “Art of Cinema” in 1969–1985, as in the years of the “thaw”, was still within the framework of the typical model of a Soviet humanitarian magazine, which, despite significant concessions to censorship and the authorities, in no less than half of its text tried to preserve the ability to artistically analyse the film process (unfortunately, this did not allow it to criticize even in minimal doses the shortcomings of the work of the most “initial” influential Soviet screen artists of that time). The magazine was unable to hold back the “thaw,” which was still strong even in the late 1960s, and found itself largely in the ideological rut of the Brezhnev peak, although, paying tribute to Soviet propaganda, the magazine could afford to publish “in some narrow spaces” meaningful discussions and important theoretical works” (Fedorov, 2023: 43).

Thus, the relevance of the topic of family and family education in modern conditions is due to profound social and cultural changes, the influence of technology, economic instability and the transformation of family structures. Modern parents and teachers face new challenges of the time, requiring the adaptation of educational models that take into account the influence of digital technologies, intercultural aspects and socio-economic factors. In this context, family education continues to be the basis for moral values and the full development of the individual.

4. Results

The stagnation period feature films (1960–1985) about family and family education. Place of action, historical, social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts.

1. *Historical context (dominant concepts: media agencies, media categories, media representations and media audiences). Features of the historical period when media texts were created, market conditions that contributed to the idea, the process of creating media texts, the degree of influence of that time on media texts.*

The period of “stagnation” in Soviet history began after L.I. Khrushchev’s “thaw” and is characterized by relatively stable political, economic and social stability against the background of the absence of significant reforms. This is the time of Leonid Brezhnev’s rule (1964–1982), which is remembered for stabilization, but also stagnation and conservatism. The historical context of this time directly influenced the subject matter and mood of feature films, including those dealing with family and family education.

In the 1970s, the political system of the USSR became more closed, and serious reforms ceased. The main goal of the state was to maintain stability and preserve the existing system. Hence, at that time, the cult of a stable, predictable life was actively promoted, which was reflected in cinema. Although censorship was less strict than under Stalin, the tendency to show positive, stable images, including in the depiction of the family, again increased in film production.

The family was seen as a unit of socialist society, which should demonstrate the strength of relationships prevailing traditional values: respect for elders, hard work, love for the Motherland and collectivism (*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears / Moskva Slezam ne Verit*, 1979). State policy emphasized the importance of family ties, raising the younger generation in the spirit of collectivism, patriotism and socialist morality. Cinema actively promoted the image of harmonious and strong families, which served as a reflection and propaganda of state ideology. However, despite the official narratives of stability, in reality, society faced various social problems – deteriorating living standards, moral crisis, alcoholism and problems in family relationships. These aspects sometimes penetrated into the films of that time, but most often they were touched upon only indirectly.

2. *Socio-cultural, ideological, religious contexts (dominant concepts: media agencies, media categories, media representations and media audience).*

a) *ideology, directions, goals, objectives, world outlook, the concepts of the media texts’ authors in the socio-cultural context; ideology, culture of the world, depicted in these media texts.*

One of the key themes in Russian feature films of this historical period was the conflict between generations. Older people, brought up under the strict discipline and ideology of the Stalin era, encountered new trends among young people who grew up in relative stability and did not experience the hardships that their parents had gone through. So, the elders, brought up in the spirit of socialist ideals, often did not understand or did not accept the worldview of their children, who were more pragmatic and less idealistic. Young people in these films were depicted as freer, but also more cynical, which created additional conflicts in families (*Courier/Kur'yer*, 1986).

In cinema, these conflicts were resolved through the elders accepting the values of the youth or, conversely, the youth came to understand the importance of traditional Soviet values. For example, the film *Father and Son/Otets i Syn* (1971) presents a story of the relationship between a father, a representative of the older generation, and his son, who try to understand and accept each other.

Against the backdrop of official slogans about strong families, themes of family crisis also began to be raised in feature films. A number of films of this time trace themes of disappointment, alienation, and feelings of loneliness in marriage, which reflected the real problems of Soviet society. For example, the comedy film *Love and Doves / Lyubov' i Golubi* (1984), which, despite its light form, touches on important themes of family relationships, betrayal, and reconciliation.

The films of this period also actively raised the theme of women's emancipation, although this took place within the framework of traditional Soviet values. Women were depicted not only as mothers and wives, but also as full-fledged participants in the production process, actively involved in public life. However, most films still showed women as keepers of the hearth, which corresponded to the state ideology of the time. For example, in the drama *Autumn Marathon/Osenniy Marafon* (1979), the main character, the wife of the protagonist, embodies the image of a traditional Soviet woman who faces a marriage crisis, but remains faithful to the family.

In general, since the most important function of the family in cinema remained the upbringing of the younger generation in the spirit of socialist ideals, many films of that time emphasized the importance of raising children, passing on to them the correct moral values and skills necessary for life in Soviet society.

b) the world outlook of the characters in media texts about family.

The worldview of the characters mirrored the complex social and psychological atmosphere of that time. Unlike the "thaw" period, when cinema began to show personal conflicts and more realistic images, the "stagnation" era saw a gradual return to ideologically verified plots, but with a new emphasis on the internal and moral experiences of the characters.

In the conditions of social stagnation, many characters of family films show a tendency toward conformism – adaptation to existing conditions without actively trying to change anything. This could be expressed in the desire to live peacefully, avoid conflicts and not seek change, which coincided with the public mood of this period. The characters do not try to actively fight the system or personal difficulties, preferring to resign themselves and accept reality as it is. Often, they take a position of wait-and-see or passivity.

Films of the "stagnation" period usually dealt with the crisis of traditional family values. The heroes faced personal problems that reflected the erosion of old foundations, including divorce, midlife crisis, and generation gaps. However, such conflicts rarely led to radical changes or challenges to the system. On the contrary, the characters strived to preserve the family, at least outwardly, despite internal disappointments and crises.

The family was traditionally presented as the last bastion of stability in the context of general social stagnation. Films showed conflicts within the family, but they usually did not reach a tragic plot denouement: the family remained an important social unit, and the characters tried to preserve it despite difficulties. However, behind this stability there was often an internal feeling of dissatisfaction and emotional alienation, which was not always spoken out loud, but was felt at the level of latent conflicts.

The characters retreat into their personal experiences, thoughts about life, aging and the past. Unlike the characters of the "thaw" era, where there were attempts to actively change their lives, during the "stagnation" epoch, the characters more often retreat into the inner world, avoiding external conflicts. In addition, in the films of this time, there is some nostalgia for the past and an attempt to avoid real problems through memories, dreams or idealized images.

Many characters face questions of personal morality and the search for the meaning of life. In the conditions of stagnation, social activity lost its appeal, and characters began to think about more personal issues: personal happiness, the meaning of work, roles in society. At the same time,

heroes often find themselves in a dead end, unable to find a way out of the internal crisis, which corresponds to the stagnation in the social and cultural life of that time.

The main stereotype of success in this world.

The main stereotype of success in films about the family of the “stagnation” period was the achievement of external stability and social respectability despite internal crises or discontent. This stereotype reflected the public mood of the time, when Soviet society valued predictability and stability, especially in family life. In such films, success was measured not so much in personal happiness or self-realization, but in compliance with accepted norms and expectations.

Family well-being was considered the main indicator of success. Starting a family, having children, and maintaining outwardly harmonious relationships were often the highest goals. Even if there were problems within the family, they were usually resolved by compromise and a return to the norms of traditional values. The stereotype assumed that success meant preserving the family at any cost, even if crises, discontent, or internal conflicts arose. Divorce or family breakdown were seen as failures (*Vanity of Vanities / Suyeta Suyet*, 1979).

The character's success was often assessed through the prism of material well-being. This could include having an apartment (preferably with an improved layout), a dacha, a car, and other symbols of material success, which were scarce in the Soviet era. A family that had wealth, even if limited, was presented as stable and prosperous. Providing for the family was considered an important task, and characters who achieved this were perceived as successful. Characters considered successful often occupied a respected position in society – be it a prestigious job, the respect of colleagues, or participation in public life. Career or professional achievements also played an important role in the perception of success. The stereotype of success implied the fulfilment of social expectations. A man should be a responsible breadwinner, and a woman – a caring mother and housewife. Even if the heroine occupied a high position at work, she still had to maintain a traditional role in the family. Films often emphasized the importance of women finding a balance between career and family, and true success came when they returned to their main role – as homemakers.

Although the characters often achieved external success (a stable family, material well-being, a career), many of them felt internal dissatisfaction and a spiritual crisis. However, this theme was not always deeply explored, since the films usually led to the fact that family or social obligations were more important than personal needs. This created a typical stereotype: the film hero or heroine could experience personal doubts, but ultimately returned to generally accepted values – family and stability.

3. *Structure and narrative modes in media texts (dominant concepts: media categories, media technologies, media languages, media representations).*

a) *the location and time period in media texts.*

Stagnation films often depicted Soviet reality through familiar and typical locations for viewers. This helped to strengthen the connection between events on screen and people's everyday lives, thus creating a sense of familiarity and social stability. Cities, especially large ones such as Moscow and Leningrad, often became the centre of action. The urban landscape was presented as a space of progress and social life. However, many films did not show the central streets, but rather residential areas, factories, plants, and communal apartments – places where most of the population lived and worked. Rural life also played an important role in stagnation films. Films often featured scenes associated with communal apartments or Soviet apartment buildings. These places emphasized the collectivist way of life of Soviet people, where private and public space often intersected. The village was often contrasted with the city, presented as a more traditional, “true” space where traditional values – hard work, collectivism, and mutual assistance – were preserved. Characters who came to the village from the city often “cleansed themselves” and found a way to themselves. Stagnation films were mainly focused on the present – the 1970s and early 1980s. This was a time period that was actively supported by ideology as a “golden time” of stability achieved after the heroic victories of the past. Films often showed the everyday life of a modern Soviet person, their everyday worries and problems. The time context was also deliberately close to the viewer so that they could easily identify with what was happening on the screen.

b) *the environment typical for these media texts, household items.*

Films shot during the period of stagnation in the USSR, especially domestic dramas, actively depict the typical environment and objects of everyday life of those years (“Khrushchyovkas” or

panel houses, carpets on the walls, wall cabinets, desks with a table lamp, tulle curtains, pull-out sofas, crystal glassware, rotary telephones).

c) *genre modifications.*

Most films on the topic of family and family education were shot in the genre of drama or melodrama, but comedies and children's films were also shot (Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024).

d) *(stereotyped) devices to depict reality.*

The family was portrayed as strong and harmonious, with relationships between spouses and children always maintained at the proper level. Often, the emphasis was on mutual support, assistance, trust and respect between family members. This reflected the ideology of the Soviet state, which viewed the family as the basic "unit of society". Films of the "stagnation" period contained many moral lessons about proper behaviour in the family, raising children and respect for elders. These lessons were conveyed through dialogues, the heroes' actions and their decisions, showing that following traditional Soviet values leads to success and happiness. For example, the film *The Elder Son/Starshiy Syn* (1975) emphasizes the importance of accepting parental responsibility, which is deduced as the main moral lesson for the younger generation. The image of the ideal father in films of this period was often portrayed as the head of the family, who is responsible for raising children and maintaining discipline. He was portrayed as a fair and wise mentor, sometimes strict, but always caring. In the film *Father and Son/Otets i Syn* (1971), the father is the embodiment of moral principles and stability, despite internal family conflicts. The stereotype that happiness and stability in the family come through honest work is often traced in films. The parents demonstrate hard work, which becomes a role model for their children. The family is formed as a work collective, where everyone makes their contribution (*Carnival/Karnaval*, 1981).

The stagnation cinema also used the motif of conflict between fathers and children, which was always resolved in favour of the older generation. Young people, carried away by new ideas or lifestyles, eventually realize that their elders are right and return to traditional values. "The stereotyped techniques of representing family life patterns are also interesting in comparison with the previous periods, and they undergo significant changes in films on the school theme. The generation gap and problems of teacher-parent relationships are more often touched upon (these models take place in *You Wouldn't Even Dream It/Vam i ne Snilos'*, 1980, etc.), also the crisis of family relations/single-parent families (*The Boys/Patsany*, 1983; *Other People's Letters/Chuzhiye Pis'ma*, 1975; etc.)" (Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024: 136).

Stereotypical methods of depicting family and family upbringing in cinema were aimed at supporting traditional values corresponding to state ideology. Films were created in order to show that the Soviet family is strong and stable, despite temporary difficulties. Such films contributed to the creation of an idealized image of the family, which did not contradict the interests and goals of the state, despite some hidden problems and inconspicuous drawbacks.

e) *character typology (character traits, clothing, physique, vocabulary, facial expressions, key gestures, presence or absence of the stereotypical manner of representing the characters in these media texts):*

– *The age of characters:* the age range of children is 7–17, however, teenagers are more common. The age of the adult characters (parents, grandparents, etc.) can be anything;

– *The education level:* characters can have any level of education;

– *Social status, occupation:* the financial situation of children is approximately the same, they can be either from families of workers and farmers, or from the intelligentsia. The professions are different.

– *The marital status of the characters:* adult characters are mostly married; however, single parents also appear in films.

"The institution of the family was traditionally shown in films about school as a stronghold of society. We can see such healthy families in the film *Vice Versa/Naoborot* (1981), where the parents of the major characters are their children's best friends, they are wise and understanding people. Another variant of representing the character's family condition is in films where the character loses/ looks for/finds their families, for example, in such films as *The Orphans / Syroty* (1976), *Other People's Letters / Chuzhiye pis'ma*, (1975), etc." (Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024: 136).

– *Appearance, clothes, body build, features of their characters, vocabulary.*

The film characters reflected the main social types of their time. Their appearance, clothes, physique and character were closely connected with the realities of Soviet life of that period.

The characters were distinguished by their external simplicity, practicality in clothes, restraint in character and conservatism in vocabulary. These elements created images that reflected the public demand for stability, collectivism and moral values. For example, *Office Romance/Sluzhebnyy Roman* (1977) is a film about the working days of office workers, in which the main characters (Novoseltsev and Kalugina) demonstrate typical features of that time: modesty, hard work and commitment to social norms.

f) a significant change in the life of media characters.

Significant changes in the lives of the characters concerned, first of all, their personal and family relationships, professional activities and reassessment of their values. These changes reflected both individual crises and the pressure of social norms. Despite all the changes, a characteristic feature of most characters was the desire to preserve family values. These films often ended with the characters finding a balance between their personal desires and social expectations, even if this process was accompanied by crises and difficulties.

g) the challenge that the characters face.

One of the key challenges for the characters is the contradiction between their personal aspirations and social responsibilities. Society emphasized collectivism, stability, and fulfilling social roles, but the heroes increasingly began to feel inner discord, striving for personal happiness and self-realization (*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears/Moskva Slezam ne Verit*, 1979). Although the era of stagnation often emphasized stability and material security, the characters often faced real everyday problems: lack of housing, long lines for goods, and lack of personal space. These problems created tangible difficulties for the characters in everyday life: the film *Pokrovskie Vorota* (1982) shows several generations living in one apartment, which leads to numerous conflicts and misunderstandings. The characters are faced with the need to share not only space, but also personal boundaries, which becomes a challenge for their relationships.

Family relationships in films were often put to the test, especially when the characters faced domestic hardships, personal crises, or changes in circumstances. This could be due to adultery, a lack of mutual understanding, or even the characters' desire to find themselves outside the family (*Love and Doves/Lyubov' i Golubi*, 1984).

Films often reflected pressure from society and the need to meet collective expectations. The characters were forced to act within the framework of generally accepted norms, where personal aspirations sometimes had to be sacrificed for the public good. This created a conflict between individualism and collectivism, which was especially acute in the family and at work (*A Dormitory for Single Workers/Odinokim predostavlyatsya obshchezhitniye*, 1983).

The characters often experience internal conflicts caused by the gap between their ideas about happiness and real life. In conditions of social stability and material wealth, many lacked emotional satisfaction, which gave rise to a search for meaning and personal happiness (*Autumn Marathon/Osenniy Marafon*, 1979).

The challenges faced by the characters of the stagnation era films reflect the key contradictions of the time: the gap between personal aspirations and social expectations, the crisis of family and professional relationships, the search for personal happiness in conditions of social stability. These challenges often lead to deep internal conflicts that the heroes overcome through personal changes, although sometimes they never find a complete solution to their problems.

h) solving the problem.

The characters solve their problems through open communication, rethinking priorities, accepting responsibility, finding compromises, support from loved ones, self-analysis and adaptation to new conditions. These approaches help them overcome difficulties, maintain family ties and find personal happiness, despite the challenges that society and time put before them. The characters suffer the consequences of their actions and learn to accept responsibility for them. This is an important step towards solving their problems. For example, Vasily, the main character of the comedy film *Love and Doves/Lyubov' i Golubi* (1984), after his betrayal, realizes the importance of family and decides to return to his wife. He understands that he must take responsibility for the destruction of the relationship and do everything possible to restore it.

5. Conclusion

Nowadays, the issues of family and family education are becoming especially relevant for a number of reasons related to social, economic and cultural changes. Family plays a key role in the

formation of personality, its moral values and social competence, which makes issues of family education critically important for the development of society as a whole.

Feature films about family life are powerful cultural artifacts that shape the upbringing of youth by modelling behaviour, reinforcing values, and addressing moral and ethical dilemmas. They provide young people with tools to navigate their own family relationships, foster empathy, and influence their aspirations for future family life. By portraying a range of family experiences, films help youth understand the complexity of relationships and the importance of communication, compassion, and responsibility in a family setting.

Our content analysis of Soviet feature films about family and family education during the period of “stagnation” showed that they reflected the desire of the Soviet government to maintain stability and order through the propaganda of the ideals of a strong and stable family. However, despite the official positive narratives, the films increasingly raised issues of the crisis of family relations, the conflict of generations and moral dilemmas, which spoke of the real problems of society.

The worldview of the film characters of the “stagnation” period is characterized by a combination of conformism, the desire for stability and an internal search for the meaning of life against the background of general social stagnation. The characters are torn between traditional family values and a feeling of internal dissatisfaction, which creates tension and forces them to solve personal and moral dilemmas.

The stereotype of success in films about the family of the “stagnation” period was reduced to external compliance with social expectations – a stable family, material well-being and social status. Even when the characters faced personal crises, the films led to the conclusion that success lay in maintaining traditional family values and stability despite internal doubts or discontent. During the period of “stagnation”, Soviet cinema often used stereotypical techniques to depict reality, especially in films about family and family education. These techniques emphasized the official ideals enshrined in state propaganda and reflected stability and traditional values. However, stereotyping made it possible to hide the real social and moral problems that families faced.

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