CONCLUSION

Observations, stories, and the media have suggested that films watched on an airplane are more likely to cause you to cry than films watched on the ground. I thus asked different people how they rate their chances of emotional engulfment in medical conditions like ALS/MND, MS, and dementia.

In some social media the phenomenon has been described as “altitude-adjusted lachrymosity syndrome” (AALS).

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NO TEARS IN HEAVEN:
Did the media create the pseudo-phenomenon “altitude-adjusted lachrymosity syndrome (AALS)”?

INTRODUCTION

Celebrities, airlines, and the media have suggested that films watched on an airplane are more likely to induce involuntary, uncontrollable, or surprising crying than watching one on the ground, or whether this is a pseudo-phenomenon. Amazon Mechanical Turk survey participants (N=1,084) living in the United States who had watched a film on a plane in the past 12 months were invited to complete an online survey.

METHODS

Our objective was to determine whether watching a film on an airplane is really more likely to induce involuntary, uncontrollable, or surprising crying than watching one on the ground, or whether this is a pseudo-phenomenon.

Amazon Mechanical Turk survey participants (N=1,084) living in the United States who had watched a film on a plane in the past 12 months were invited to complete an online survey.

RESULTS

We tested for a number of putative risk factors.

RISK FACTORS

We tested for a number of putative risk factors.

Female gender
Watching dramas, animated/ family films, or adventure/ fantasy/sci-fi films
Experiencing a recent emotional life event
Watching a “guilty pleasure” film
Watching a high quality (“10 star”) film
Whether they were on a plane or on the ground
Alcohol
Age
Jet lag or feeling tired
Income

Our objective was to determine whether watching a film on an airplane is really more likely to induce involuntary, uncontrollable, or surprising crying than watching one on the ground, or whether this is a pseudo-phenomenon.

Amazon Mechanical Turk survey participants (N=1,084) living in the United States who had watched a film on a plane in the past 12 months were invited to complete an online survey.

SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF CRYING:

☑️ Female gender
☑️ Watching dramas, animated/ family films, or adventure/ fantasy/sci-fi films
☑️ Experiencing a recent emotional life event
☑️ Watching a “guilty pleasure” film
☑️ Watching a high quality (“10 star”) film

NON-SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF CRYING:

☐ Whether they were on a plane or on the ground
☐ Alcohol
☐ Age
☐ Jet lag or feeling tired
☐ Income

FILM GENRES

Film genres listed as the highest risk factors for crying while watching:

42.5% Drama (incl. biography, historical, romance)
28.9% Animated, Family
25.2% Adventure, Fantasy, SF, Westerns
14.4% Action, Thriller, Horror
13.5% Comedy, Romantic Comedy

CONCLUSION

People reporting the pseudo-phenomenon of AALS are most likely experiencing “dramatically heightened exposure”, watching as many films on a plane in a week’s return trip as they would in a year at the cinema, and choosing to watch more drama films. Such perceptions are probably magnified by confirmation bias and further mentions in social media.