

# Researchers find fans of apocalyptic movies may be coping with pandemic better

3 July 2020, by Bob Yirka



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A small team of researchers from the University of Chicago, Pennsylvania State University, and Aarhus University has found that people who are exposed to end-of-the-world movies may be more resilient when dealing with the real-life ongoing pandemic. They have written a paper describing questioning volunteers about movies they had seen and their real pandemic experiences. Their paper is available on the PsyArXiv preprint server.

The [movie industry](#) has been cranking out end-of-the-world type movies for years—from Martians attacks and massive volcanic eruptions to asteroid strikes—and, of course, pandemics killing everyone. Psychologists have been trying to understand why people watch such movies, but have met with little success. In this new effort, the researchers looked at such movies in another way—as preparation for real-life disaster scenarios.

They wondered if watching a movie about an epidemic, such as "Contagion," (2011) starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Matt Damon, might help

people deal with a real-world [pandemic](#). They noted that viewership of "Contagion" rose dramatically during the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic. To find out why, and whether watching the movie helped viewers, the researchers turned to Prolific—an online recruitment tool that allows researchers to connect with volunteers virtually. For their study, the researchers queried 126 individuals—notably, each of them was paid for their efforts. The researchers asked them about themselves and whether they were fans of movies in certain genres. They also asked them how they were feeling about the coronavirus and, of course, if they had watched the movie "Contagion."

The researchers found that people who had recently watched what they describe as "prepper" movies showed signs of higher levels of resilience to the real-world pandemic. They suggest exposure to certain scenes in a movie psychologically prepared viewers for some of the events that unfolded as the real pandemic got underway. They further note that people watching generic horror movies also reported higher levels of coping abilities during the early days of the real pandemic. The researchers suggest such [movies](#) allow viewers to practice coping skills, which they apparently put to use if a real need arises.

**More information:** Coltan Scrivner et al. Pandemic Practice: Horror Fans and Morbidly Curious Individuals Are More Psychologically Resilient During the COVID-19 Pandemic, (2020). DOI: [10.31234/osf.io/4c7af](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/4c7af)

[esiculture.com/an-infectious-c...es-during-a-pandemic](https://www.esiculture.com/an-infectious-c...es-during-a-pandemic)

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