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Reel to real life: Life skills lessons for managers from the movie 'PK'

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Abstract

PK is a fiction comedy film. The movie was directed by Rajkumar Hirani and was produced by Rajkumar Hirani and Vidhu Vinod Chopra. The film stars Aamir Khan in the lead role with Anushka Sharma. The film has gone on to become the highest grossing Indian film of all time and is the first Indian film to gross more than INR 6 billion worldwide. The story revolves around an alien (PK) who comes to the earth for a research mission and lands in Rajasthan, with a locket (Remote) around his neck. In no time, a person snatches away his locked (Remote) and runs away and then the story begins. On one end when we could see fiction, drama, action and comedy in the movie, on the other hand the movie was also successful in showcasing all the ten life skills which are laid down by WHO (World Health Organisation). The case study is an effort to understand how the ten Life Skills can be learnt from the movie and how the managers can incorporate them in their personal and professional life.

Key Words: Life skills, manager, management, movie, PK

Introduction

PK is a fiction comedy film. The movie was directed by Rajkumar Hirani and was produced by Rajkumar Hirani and Vidhu Vinod Chopra. The film stars Aamir Khan in the lead role with Anushka Sharma. The film has gone on to become the highest grossing Indian film of all time and is the first Indian film to gross more than INR 6 billion worldwide.

The story is about an alien (PK) who comes to the earth for a research mission and lands in Rajasthan, with a locket (Remote) around his neck. In no time, a person snatches away his locket and runs away. Jaggu (Journalist) meets the alien (PK), and becomes fascinated while watching him distributing leaflets about a missing God. He attempts to learn the language of the land by grabbing and holding the hands of people and absorbing their memories, but unfortunately they used to chase him away, when he tried to do so, as they wrongly interpreted his actions.

After learning how to speak, the alien (PK) comes to Delhi, while searching for his remote. Because of his strange and unique behaviour, the people used to ask him "pee-kay hai kya?" (Are you drunk?), and from then on, he adopts the name 'PK'. The alien (PK) later learns that Tapasvi (Godman) had his locket. On the other hand, Tapasvi falsely claims to the masses to have attained the object from God in the Himalayas, thus, he refused to give it to the alien (PK). After hearing PK's story, Jaggu comes up with a plan to expose Tapasvi and help PK get back his locket.

Seeing people following different religious and worshipping different Gods, PK becomes very much confused. Through this, he came to the conclusion that Tapasvi and other religious leaders must be dialing the 'wrong number' to communicate with God, and as a result are spreading misunderstanding and advising their followers to engage in meaningless rituals. Highly pressurised by the situation, Tapasvi agrees to come to the studio and face PK on air. During the confrontation Jaggu and Sarfaraz (Jaggu's boyfriend) get to speak to one another and get an opportunity to clarify their misunderstanding. Due to this, Tapasvi is exposed as a fraud man, and is forced to return PK's locket. During the movie, PK falls in love with Jaggu but refrains from expressing his love because PK comes to know that she loves Sarfaraz.

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While going back to his planet, PK lies to Jaggu about the content of the tapes, and despite she knows the reality, she keeps quite.

On one end when we could see fiction, drama, action and comedy, on the other hand the movie was also successful in showcasing all the ten life skills which are laid down by WHO (World Health Organisation). Let us try to understand how the ten Life Skills can be learnt from the movie and how the managers can incorporate them in their personal and professional life.

i. Self-Awareness: Self Awareness skill is considered as the mother of all live skills. Self-Awareness is all about recognizing oneself, his strengths, his weaknesses, his likes, his dislikes, his desires and his character as a whole. Being aware of himself helps the individual to recognize when he would be under pressure, stress, etc.

PK was completely self-aware of himself. He knew his strengths and weaknesses. Once a person is aware of his strengths and his weaknesses, based on that he can assess what he can do by himself and where he needs someone or an external entity apart from himself to help him. For example, if a common man injures himself, at some point he realises that to get back to full health he will require a doctor as he himself does not know how to cure himself. Also, the doctor can only help you based on the amount of knowledge he has. In some situations even doctors are not able to control the outcome and they say 'only God or a miracle can help you' referring to an external force. The case was same with PK, he knew that he was in a problem and did start searching for the solution to that problem by trying each and everything possible way, knowing all his limitations.

He also knew that he never lied and simultaneously also knew that he could read peoples mind by holding their hand which turned out to be quite a strength. Using that strength he managed to learn a new language. His only weakness was his lack of knowledge, which he was always aware of and hence was forever in search of knowledge and was also constantly asking questions whenever he got an opportunity to do so. PK slowly put together all the information he gathered throughout his stay on Earth and also managed to figure out what was really true and what was false by the simple use of his logic.

ii. Empathy: Empathy is a skill to understand what the other person feels. Empathy will help the make the communication even more effective. For a successful relationship, empathy is the key. Empathy will help the individual to accept others who may be very different from him. Thus, empathy helps in improving the social interaction and making it more fruitful. Empathy is one skill where a person learns or understands the situation or condition of another person or metaphorically "to try on someone else's shoes". The following are the instances where PK shows the skill of empathy:

- First, when he realised that Jaggu did not have any money to go back home, he gives her his money knowing that if he is not in a position to go back to his home yet, the least he could do is to help another person out to do so.
- Second, he understood the pain which one goes through when they cannot go back home. As PK could not go home yet, he was going through a lot of difficulty being away from home, hence he understands exactly how it feels not to be able to go back home. He doesn't want other people to undergo the same pain as he is going

through, so if there is a way to help them get back home he will most certainly help whether it may put him in a slight difficult position or not.

- Third, he gives money to the old man who comes asking for money and he realises that the man ran out of money as his wife suddenly ordered for an ice-cream. Now, to a third person his actions may seem naïve, but his intentions were the purest. He very well knew the fact that the old man's wife was not going through any difficulty, but despite that he gave the money knowing the truth behind the old man's action. PK realised that the old man had an honest intention behind asking for money though he took a dishonest method of acquiring it, but PK empathising with the old man open heartedly gave him the money he wanted.

iii. Critical Thinking: Critical Thinking is a skill which deals with analysing information or action. Critical Thinking helps the individual to assess and recognise the various factors which directly and indirectly influence behaviour, attitude and perceptions, such as peer pressure, values, culture, media, etc.

The movie is full of critical thinking, which was done by PK. The following are the various situations:

- Firstly, he thinks that when a small idol can do the job then why do we have to buy a big one? Wouldn't buying a big idol just be a waste of money when the small one works just as effectively? Plus, maintaining and taking care of the big idol can also turn out to be quite expensive, but the small idol on the other hand can easily be carried around wherever a person would want to take it.
- Secondly, he starts to think whether it is man who created God or God who created man. This thought process came into his mind merely by looking at the way people followed their religions. He was quite sure of the fact that man was created by God, but when he looked around he could see people creating what they called 'God' with their own hands. This got him in-to a deep thought process regarding who created who.
- Third, he thinks that when God can listen to people directly, then why do people need an Idol. He finds it quite contradicting and unnecessary when people find an indirect way to contact or speak to God. If God listens to people directly from their mouths or even their hearts, then what is the point of having middlemen in the form of 'God-men' and idols.
- Fourth, he thinks, why are the Idols not verbally responding to his request. If according to the people those idols are Gods then why is there no response coming from them?
- Fifth, he thinks whether God would tell its creation to roll over the ground and then come to get their wish fulfilled. Would God make his believers do absurd things just to listen to him?
- Sixth, why would God ask people to offer him milk? God is self-sufficient and does not need any material possession to satisfy him. He created everything on Earth so what is the point of giving his creation back to him?
- Seventh, why does God discriminate between the rich and the poor? Is it that only if a person has money to travel to a particular place or give a huge amount of money will his wishes be fulfilled? Then the poor people who have no money, how can they survive? Who will

they ask for help if money and material sacrifices are needed to be heard by God?

- Eighth, can human beings protect God? God, according to them who created them, breathed life into them, does he need protection from humans?
- Lastly, how could the God-men predict the future? If these men could really predict the future then why have they not averted the major wars and calamities that have taken place over all these years? If they could protect the future then there is so much good that can be done, but unfortunately no one has done it yet.

iv. Creative Thinking: Creative Thinking is a skill which talks about being unique and different. It is a skill which talks about thinking out of the box. It is a skill which talks about doing things in a different way. Creative Thinking is all about being different from others in every possible aspect, which helps to person to stand out of the crowd. It is about coming up with new ideas, concepts and perspectives.

PK uses his creativity in various situations. The following are the situations.

- Firstly, PK decides to wear a yellow coloured hat while going around distributing pamphlets to people with the logic that if God wanted to find him he would be able to focus on him effectively just like how the yellow coloured Taxis are easily visible even in a Traffic Jam.
- Secondly, by locking his slippers to the gate so that they don't get lost. He is well aware of the fact that people either steal or mistakenly wear another's footwear and leave, so he thinks of a solution by which no one can steal his footwear anymore.
- Thirdly, he uses a stick with a sharp end which he bought along with him to remove the money from the donation box as there was no other way for him to collect the refund which he thought he was supposed to receive.
- Fourthly, he comes up with an idea for his own self defence which turns out to be quite effective. He puts stickers of 'God' on his cheeks giving the logic that "People put photos or painting of 'God' on walls so that the public doesn't urinate there, in the same manner he puts stickers of 'God' on his cheeks so that no one dares to beat him". Understanding the love and respect that people have for God, he used this respect and love to his advantage to get out of tricky situations.
- Fifthly, when PK wants to prove to the God-man that his phone-call to God was actually a wrong number and that there was no distinguishing mark or feature that separates any human being on the basis of religion, he think of an innovative way of cross dressing people of different faiths to confuse the God-man. This ended up working perfectly as the God-man was baffled that none of the people who came were of the faith he initially imagined them to be.
- Sixthly, he commits a small crime so that he can spend the night in the lock-up. He doesn't have any home or provision for food, therefore finds a place where he can find shelter and also food for free.
- Seventhly, in order to show how people can be easily fooled, he takes Jaggu's father to a college and places a small stone near a tree with some red colour on it and in no time people start worshipping the stone.

v. Decision Making: Decision Making is a skill about selecting from option from the available alternatives.

Decision Making ultimately facilitates us to deal in a constructive manner with various decisions, which affect us directly and indirectly. It is a process which teaches people how to actively make decisions about various aspects relating to their professional or personal lives.

There are many occasions during the movie where PK makes his own decisions after rationalising and analysing the situation he is in. The following are the various situations:

- Firstly, when finding out that his 'remote control' is probably in Delhi, he decides to leave Mandava and head all the way to Delhi in pursuit of his beloved remote control.
- Secondly, while originally he was in search of some person who could help him out in search of his beloved remote, he is told by a policeman who could not help him retrieve it that even they are human beings not God. That is when PK decides to get in search of God to help him find his remote.
- Thirdly, when he finds out that Jaggu doesn't have any money to return home as all her money went into the a temple's deposit box, PK decides to give his own money to her despite having the need for it himself.
- Fourthly, during the time when PK tried following all religions hoping that one of them would be his own, he puts on various necklaces (amulets), threads and ornaments. But, later on he gets beaten up and thrown out of a car he makes up his decision to get rid of all such accessories.
- Fifthly, PK originally never had a name, but due to the large number of people who constantly asked whether he was PK, he finally out of frustration decided to name himself as PK and continues to do so and consequently be addressed with the same name throughout the whole movie.
- Sixthly, PK never tells anybody he meets that he is an alien from another planet. He hides it from everybody except Jaggu. Jaggu is the only one who he felt would be trustworthy and hence decides to only let her know about his story.
- Seventhly, PK falls in love with Jaggu and he had to make a decision whether to tell her or to abstain from it. When he comes to know that Jaggu was in love with the boy called Sarfaraz, he decides not to express his love to her. Although he had intentions of letting his feelings out he stopped himself when he came to know about Jaggu's love. This shows how he makes right decisions based on the knowledge one has. He realised that the consequences of him revealing his feelings for Jaggu would only worsen the situation and make them feel awkward in front of each other therefore after getting the knowledge about Sarfaraz he immediately changes his decision and just abstains from letting Jaggu know anything about it.

vi. Problem Solving: Problem Solving is a skill which helps the individual to face his problems with a positive mind set. If problems are not solved of a very long time, they cause mental and physical stress and in-turn lead to various problems in a person's life. Thus, possessing problem solving skills will help a person to lead a happy and stress less life.

The following are the various situations of Problem Solving:

- Firstly, somewhere around an old man comes up to him claiming his wife is in surgery and requires only a little more money, despite knowing the truth of the matter PK

still solves his problem by giving him the required money and along with it gives a little extra money for the sake of a tip, hence solving the difficult situation and problem that the old man was in.

- Secondly, the climax of the movie is based on a problem which PK tries to solve. Due to a misunderstanding between Jaggu and Sarfaraz when the movie begins, both of them thought that they were betrayed. PK in order to solve this problem started asking questions such as, did she know the boy who gave her the letter, what was the guarantee that the letter was from Sarfaraz or whether she tried calling Sarfaraz after reading the letter. When one wishes to solve any problems in life, they must let go of any preconceived notions one has else that will disrupt or hamper the problem solving process. Just like how a particular God-man had influenced Jaggu by constantly telling her that a Pakistani would always betray her, for a long time that thought had prevented her from ever making contact with Sarfaraz. But at the end of the movie through the questions which PK asked, they were finally able to resolve the misunderstanding and hence solve the problem.

vii. Interpersonal Relationship: Interpersonal Relationship is a skill which helps the individual to relate and interact with people in a positive manner. It is a skill which helps the individual to become a better social being. Interpersonal Relationship is all about keeping good relationship with everyone who is around the individual and especially with whom he interacts on a regular basis.

The following are the situations where we can witness the Interpersonal Relationship:

- Firstly, PK develops a good interpersonal relationship with Jaggu, thus they end up getting along very well and understanding each other, which ultimately helps them to fight against the god-man called 'Tapasvi'.
- Secondly, PK also makes sure he doesn't hurt anyone's feelings thereby keeping his relationship with everyone stable.
- Thirdly, PK listens to everyone's opinions and gets to understand them better, this way he knows how to answer back and react towards people thus building his interpersonal skills.
- Fourthly, PK decided to tell everything about himself to Jaggu alone mainly because of the type of relationship they had, which he could build at the initial stage. PK was well aware that Jaggu is a person who is very trustworthy and hence can keep his secret.
- Fifthly, PK is of the opinion that the God-man 'Tapasvi' was a decent person who was only given wrong information or was being taken for a ride through a wrong number. But still PK tried to explain it to him nicely regarding what he thought was happening and keeping his relation with the God-man calm even though he was thrown out of the Aashram by his bodyguards.
- Sixthly, PK was never rude, abusive, insulting or hurtful towards anybody. Whoever he spoke to, he did it politely and in a friendly manner without intending to make fun or a fool out of anyone. This is evident when we see that PK in many instances tries to help or console people based on the knowledge he had received e.g.: consoling a widow, attempting to console a woman wearing a white dress who was about to get married thinking she was widowed and also the same for the three Muslim women clad in black. But, in all these

cases, PK is either beaten or chased by people but still PK doesn't retaliate as he doesn't wish to ruin his relation with anyone.

viii. Effective Communication: Effective Communication is a skills being able to express oneself effectively, in ways that are appropriate to the situation, both verbally and non-verbally. Effective Communication is all about the individual being able to express his desires and opinions in the most appropriate manner.

The following are various aspects of Effective Communication:

- Firstly, when PK comes to the earth, he realises that he could not speak the local language, so was in search of a person who could lend their hands so that he could learn their language. When he learned to communicate, he was finally able to do many things. He shared his story with Jaggu and thus she agreed to help him get his remote back.
- Secondly, as part of effective communication is being clear. PK clearly puts forward his questions and doubts to people.
- Thirdly, PK also manages to clearly tell Jaggu his whole story despite the fact that she didn't believe him initially. Another part of effective communication is by giving people examples to understand. PK is shown giving people various examples of people who tend to judge and misunderstand each other. A perfect example would be in the God-man 'Tapasvi's' Aashram where he cross dressed people of different faiths only to prove that nobody is born branded. Another example would be when PK tries to show Jaggu's father how fear plays an important factor in people's beliefs, so he puts a rock with a red mark in front of a college where exams were taking place, and then consequently people lined up to give money and pray to it out of fear of failing or performing badly in the exams.
- Fourthly, a major part of communication also involves the process of listening; and PK listens to what people say very clearly before giving his opinion.

ix. Coping with Emotions: Coping with Emotions is a skill which deals with recognizing the emotions within the individual. It is about being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and how the individual is able to respond to the emotions effectively and appropriately. Coping with Emotions is very essential because emotions like anger and sadness can have a negative effect on the health of the individual, if they are not handled appropriately. Coping with Emotions facilitates a person to think clearly and helps him not to get carried away with their emotions, thus does not make him regret in the future.

The following are the various aspects relating to Coping with Emotions.

- Firstly, PK becomes very sad that he is not getting his remote back, so he finds a place where idols were in the manufacturing stage and starts requesting them to help him get his remote; he controlled his emotions by not converting his sadness to anger.
- Secondly, he also understood that the god-man is trying to play with the emotions of the people and trying to make them afraid only for the sake of their business.
- Thirdly, when Jaggu received a message from her father that he was ashamed of her, she becomes very sad and depressed, and then PK consoles her and tries to

indulge her in some activity to that she could overcome her sadness. He teaches her the dances they do in his planet such that they get recharged.

- Fourthly, during the end of the movie PK loses his friend to a bomb blast and is in tears during that whole period. Despite the fact that he was still hurting from his loss he decides to go on air and confront ‘Tapasvi’ because he had to make his point to him which then eventually resulted in him getting his remote back.
- Fifthly, when PK is about to leave the earth to go back to his planet, he feels very sad as he is leaving Jaggu, with whom he fell in love with. Thus, in order to control and hide his emotions he turned toward his spaceship and started walking towards it and never turned back.

x. Coping with Stress: Coping with Stress is a skill which helps one to identify his sources of stress, identify how it affects him and finally take actions to overcome them and keep them under control. If one does not learn the art of Coping with Stress, it will have a very strong effect on one’s health.

The following are the various aspects relation to Coping with Stress:

- Firstly, when a person snatches his chain and runs away, he goes all the way to Delhi from Mandava and starts distributing pamphlets asking people to search for ‘God’ as people said that only he could help him in getting his remote back. He only tried to do things which could help him get it back instead on crying and venting out his anger. He formulated plans throughout his stay on Earth to find what he wanted.
- Second, when he was not able to find his remote and when he felt that he was getting confused with all the various teachings of different religions, he decided to worship the Gods of all religions thinking that at least one among them will be the true one and he will listen to his prayers. But confusion can lead to a lot of stress,

therefore at moments like these one needs to think of all alternatives in front of him and then choose wisely which was exactly what PK did.

- Thirdly, when the staff and bodyguards of the god-men throw PK on the road, he feels fully dejected and then removes all the amulets and rings and throws them away as he no more wanted to have faith in any of them. This was also a very stressful situation for him where he got beaten up and thrown away, but still he did not give up on himself nor did he give up on God, he was resilient and once again goes in search of a solution to find his remote controller but this time with a different plan of action.

Conclusion

On one hand, PK not only make people think about the kind of world they live in, it not only makes people look at God with a much logical perspective, but on the other hand, it also teaches a lot of Life Skills which could be adopted by managers in their personal and professional life, so that they can lead a happy and efficient life respectively.

Teaching Methodology

- Stage 1: Students must be asked to watch the movie or it must be screened
- Stage 2: Students must be asked to share what lessons they have learnt from the movie
- Stage 3: The teacher must give an introduction to the ten life skills
- Stage 4: Students must be asked to identify the ten life skills in the movie
- Stage 5: Students must be given the case study to read and understand the various aspects of life skills in the movie
- Stage 6: Students must be asked to explain how these skills can be used by managers in their personal and professional life

Table 1: Usage of Life Skills by Managers in their Personal and Professional Life

Skills	Personal Life	Professional Life
i. Self-Awareness	To know about the strengths of weakness which impact their personal life	To know about the strengths of weakness which impact their professional life
ii. Empathy	To understand his family members and friends	To understand his superiors and subordinates
iii. Critical Thinking	To think in an analytical manner before making decisions	To analyse the situation from various aspects before taking decisions
iv. Creative Thinking	To think in a completely different manner, while dealing with situations	To think out of the box to face the stiff competition
v. Decision Making	To take various decisions relating to the spouse and children	To make short, medium and long term decisions
vi. Problem Solving	To solve various problems which are encountered in the daily life	To solve problems which are encountered during work
vii. Interpersonal Relationship	To develop a strong bond with all the family members	To build a strong relationship with all the stakeholders in business
viii. Effective Communication	To ensure the speech and body language is used effectively	To exchange information effectively for smooth working
ix. Coping with Emotion	To control one’s emotions when they happen to encounter a shocking situation	To control one’s emotions when they happen to encounter an unexpected situation
x. Coping with Stress	To manage one’s life in case of any unexpected situation	To balance one’s life when challenged with lots of work and pressure

Minimum time duration for comprehensive discussion: 2 hours

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