



The Portrayal of Males' Mental Health In Hindi Cinema Up Until 2021

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ABSTRACT

Cinema is a reflection as well as a powerful educator of society. Movies all across the world often use mental illness to further the plot of the story and evoke an emotional response from the audience. While it is a well-known fact that stigma surrounding mental health exists in almost all parts of the globe, this stigma has been observed to increase drastically when it comes to talking about males' mental health issues. This study was conducted to analyze the portrayal of males' mental health in Hindi Cinema. For the purpose of the study, the thematic analysis of a top-grossing movie *Kabir Singh* (2019) was conducted considering the massive effect it had on the audience, after which content analysis was conducted on several movies which involved a male character suffering from a mental health issue. The analysis of these movies revealed a clear pattern wherein mental health issues of male characters were often neglected or ignored both by the society and the character himself; the character was often shown to be dealing with stress through unhealthy coping mechanisms that involved activities like smoking, drinking, behaving violently, which were to a certain extent glorified through his actions, and a concept of 'magical cure' also existed in many films wherein the character dramatically recovered from a mental health issue without any kind of therapeutic or medical intervention, following events like accidents, remembering a repressed memory, or getting reunited with a lost companion. The interviews conducted with male participants in the last phase of the study reflected the unanimous view that the representation of mental health issues, especially when males are concerned has been quite inappropriate, neglectful of real issues and one that is likely to create misrepresentation, and sometimes stigmatization, in the minds of the audience. This study acknowledges the huge impact that Hindi cinema can

have on Indian society with respect to the huge market that it captures. It, therefore, becomes necessary for the mainstream media and cinema to talk about mental health in its appropriate and positive light to promote change, awareness and de-stigmatization in society.

Aim: Exploring the depiction of males' mental health in the Hindi Cinema

INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a powerful medium of building a public belief system, and when it comes to mental illness, cinema has always played and will keep playing a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and forming beliefs and attitudes towards mental illness (Pathak, Biswal, 2020). Movies are made of different elements, but the ingredient which is quintessential to each movie or each story is the ingredient of conflict. Stories mostly centre around a conflict; it can be either the conflict of a single character with the society or it can describe the journey of a few characters stuck in a tense situation. Mental illness has attracted the attention of filmmakers and writers across the globe through ages for there seems to be no stronger and spicier story than the one which talks about the conflict within a person; the fight of a person not against any negative character or the world, but against his/ her own self.

George Gerbner's (1973) cultivation theory, one of the core theories of media effects, puts forward the view that people watching television frequently are highly under the tendency to be influenced by messages that they learn through the television. This hypothesis can be naturally extended and applied to the world of cinema as well. Gerbner argued that the influence of the media can be such that their real-life perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour can be the result of the acts that they repeatedly and frequently see on television. Kubark (2020) made an observation that after watching a specifically selected film, the attitude of postgraduate students drastically improved after watching the movie, while the attitude of undergraduate students became much more negative significantly after watching the movie. Studies like these are enough to prove that media and movies have an important role to play in shaping the attitudes, perceptions, emotional evaluations and behaviour of the audience towards certain aspects that are portrayed in the movie.

The problem of movies and mental illness arises because movies are not made mainly for providing information but for providing entertainment. The success of any movie relies more on the amount of business that it does rather than on whether it is scientifically and psychologically accurate. It has been observed that when movies present a concept related to mental illness, they tend to use a template and design the character suffering from mental illness in the way which best helps the story and to create an emotional impact on the audience. This often leads to a misrepresentation which creates a template in the minds of the audience and they tend to associate the characteristics of a certain character with the whole group of people suffering from the particular illness leading to incorrect or faulty attributions and misinformation in the people's minds. For example, after watching a character suffering from amnesia behave violently in a movie, the audience is likely to form the bias that people suffering from amnesia generally tend to be violent and may avoid approaching such a person because of fear and stigma. Otto Wahl (1997) suggests how people watching movies and television series with even incidental references to psychiatric problems may be learning that people with mental illness may need forceful control, that they are best treated like children and that communities seek to punish them.

Movies are both a reflector and an educator of society. Cinema can help us understand the culture within a particular time frame and therefore the depiction and portrayal of mental illness within such a context should be of major interest to the students of psychology in understanding its influences on society. The way in which mental health issues are depicted in the movies can help us understand how society views such concepts thus reflecting the level of maturity of the society. Along with this, cinema often performs the role of reinforcing and strengthening certain assumptions while also educating and shaping the attitudes of the people that it affects. Pathak and Biswal (2020) in their study delineated how in the pre-media convergence era of the 20th century, mental illness was displayed in highly negative terms in the movies and associated with morality, and paranormal elements along with depicting mental health professionals as eccentric, weird, unprofessional, and apathetic. They suggested that this resulted in mental health often being correlated with paranormal elements and people not seeking treatment or help from professionals because of the lack of awareness. The authors also speculated and discussed how the representation of mental health issues created a template in the minds of the audience which creates fear, misinformation and stigma. They also noted the positive role played by movies like *Dear Zindagi*, *Judgemental Hai Kya*, and *Twitch* in being able to start a conversation in the society and spreading awareness about mental health in the Post-media convergence era.

The Hindi Film Industry, the world's largest film industry, produces twice the number of movies produced in Hollywood. The Hindi Film Industry is affectionately and popularly called Bollywood because of its origin in Bombay (now Mumbai) in the early 20th century. Although the Hindi Film Industry has learnt and borrowed a lot from western movies, it is safe to say that the genres developed within the industry have been typical and reflective of the Indian psyche and culture. Conventional Hindi cinema relies on Indian conventions, which restate the values and attitudes already known in a more internal form. Bhugra (2016) describes these conventions to often include the role of the woman, pleasures of poverty, ability to change things in spite of obstacles, the hand of fate, etc.

Films from different cultures and parts of the world have depicted mental health issues in a variety of ways. Movies from the west like *Silver Linings Playbook*, *A Beautiful Mind*, and even movies from India like *Taare Zameen Par* and *My Name is Khan* have portrayed mental health in an appropriate and positive light, helping in spreading awareness and destigmatizing the concept of mental health. As movies are made primarily for the purpose of entertainment, the issue regarding the appropriate depiction of mental health becomes a serious concern requiring in-depth analysis and understanding of the cultural context it is made in. To make the discourse on mental illness within the context of the films easier for the audience, the author and the producer/director are likely to simplify such concepts related to mental health, resulting in a condition where symptoms are confused and various psychiatric conditions are lumped together. We often find that the condition depicted is very exotic and esoteric such as possession states, trance, split personality or multiple personalities. Mental illness has been used in Indian cinema for a number of purposes from providing comic relief to using an 'illness' and behaviour in the affected individuals as turning points in the narrative (Swaminath & Bhide, 2009; Acharya et al., 2014).

Films help us to learn about the culture and the level of understanding and maturity of the culture regarding such issues. While it should be kept in mind that these movies are commercial in nature and made for the purpose of entertainment and not for education, it is mindless to assume that movies do not have a long-lasting effect on the minds of people. Mastro et al. (2008) talk about the influence of films on people's beliefs and opinions, stereotypes and attitudes, and how movies can have a significant impact in changing attitudes towards certain groups of people and causing newly formed opinions on various issues. The study

demonstrated that attitudes towards the elderly can be improved through screening of some effective and sensitive movies.

The portrayal of Mental Health Issues of Males in Hindi Cinema

Stigma In Real Life Towards Males' Mental Health Issues

In 2019, 1,39,123 suicides were reported in India, of which 97,612 (70.2%) were by men, 41,495(29.8%) were by women, according to data from National Crime Records Bureau (The Health Collective, 2017). It was recently reported by The Hindu (7th February, 2021), that seventy percent of callers to a mental health rehabilitation helpline launched, in September 2020 by the Social Justice and Empowerment (SJE) Ministry, were males, out of which about 32% of those who reached out were students. The Kiran Helpline, launched by the Department of Empowerment under the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities received 13,350 calls from September 16, 2020, to January 15, out of which 70.5% were males (The Hindu, 2021).

In their 2018 report, the WHO emphasized that cultural stigma surrounding mental health is one of the chief obstacles to people admitting that they are struggling and seeking help. Notably, this stigmatization is mostly prevalent among and in men. Surveys around the world report that men everywhere find it difficult to open up about mental health, even though they are at a higher risk of attempting suicide (Medical News Today, 2018). The issue of Men's mental health is often referred to as a 'silent epidemic' and a 'sleeping issue that has crept into the minds of millions, with 'chilling statistics', and therefore this issue of mental health among men becomes one which requires immediate and utmost attention.

A study from the University of British Columbia in Canada published in 2016 in Canadian Family Physician points out that prescriptive, ages-old ideas about gender are likely both part of the cause behind the development of mental health issues in men and the reason why men are discouraged and even stigmatized for seeking professional help. A study published in Community Mental Health Journal in 2016 found that in a national survey of English-speaking Canadians, among 541 respondents with no direct experience of suicidal ideation or depression, more than one-third admitted to holding stigmatizing beliefs about mental health issues in men. The stigmatization was reported to be so severe by this study that the responses of few men in this

group included views like, “I would not vote for a male politician if I knew he had been depressed,” “Men with depression are dangerous,” and “Men with depression could snap out of it if they wanted.”

It was also noted that in the group of 360 respondents who had direct experience with depression or suicidal ideation, more male than female respondents reported that they would feel embarrassed about seeking formal treatment for depression.

Stigmatization Towards Mental Health Issues in Hindi Cinema

The term ‘mental’ or ‘mad’ or ‘*pagal*’ is often used in a derogatory manner to refer to individuals with mental health issues. In 2019, a Hindi film titled “Mental Hai Kya” which translates to “Are you Mental?”, triggered outrage amongst mental health professionals with calls to change the title which was accepted by the filmmakers (The Indian Express, 2021). However, this has not been a singular incident in the Hindi Cinema Industry. Dialogues which refer to people suffering from mental health issues as ‘*Pagal*’, ‘*Mental*’, ‘*Psycho*’, can be found in numerous films.

In a country like India, where a vast population do not usually read material or articles on mental health, the cinema becomes an effective medium to educate them. In 2007, when *Taare Zameen Par* came out, the difficulties faced by children like learning disorders, dyslexia, etc sparked conversations among schools, teachers and parents and the country witnessed remarkable attention paid to children’s mental health by parents and teachers likewise. Movies like *Dear Zindagi* and *Fashion* have also succeeded in breaking the stigma surrounding mental health. While movies like *My Name is Khan*, and *Karthik calling Karthik*, have made an attempt to talk about certain mental health issues, they have failed to throw effective light on the issue of men’s mental health, and most importantly failed in creating a feeling that it is okay to feel vulnerable and seek out help, for both the genders.

Sohini (2020) makes the observation that the aftermath of the death (by suicide) of a noted Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput in 2020 witnessed a ‘witch-hunt’ and a massive media controversy while the conversation on mental health soon fell out from the public attention. She at this point analyses various movies which we will discuss in detail later and comes to the interpretation that the portrayal of mental health issues in Indian cinema has been faulty, and inappropriate and one which causes severe stigmatization of men’s

mental health issues. In such conditions, it becomes necessary to examine this issue as it affects a large audience, both young and adults and has a significant influence on their minds.

Stigmatization of Males' Mental Health Issue in Hindi Cinema

In the context of this study, the term men's mental health issue has been used to refer to the mental health issues faced by biological males and can include biological males who do not identify themselves with the gender and those who do identify themselves as males, as all the parties have to battle stigmatization from the society. The use of the word 'men' when referring to and talking about 'men's mental health issues does not mean or intend to exclude or offend any individual or group of individuals.

Hussain (2020), in his study on Bollywood movies, discusses how Indian cinema is guilty of stigmatizing mental health issues and often adopts a patriarchal perspective in observing mental issues. He mentions how movies such as Darr (1993), and Tere Naam (2003), glorify psychosis as new age heroism which celebrates obsessive, compulsive and often revengeful love and the unmistakably obvious unstable mental condition of the male lover which is often validated and glorified in the narrative of unrequited love. The author notes that while Darr ends with the protagonist dying, the psychosis of the character is still glorified, inspiring a cult status among the audience. While this is the case with male figures and their mental health issues, movies like Pyaar Tune Kya Kia (2001) and Gupt (1997) portray a violent female lover as "mad and crazy" who ends up in the safety of an asylum. This activity sparks a gender bias debate according to Hussain. The author puts forward the point that the mental illness of men is often celebrated and glorified while similar behaviour in females is reprimanded and considered offensive. What the filmmakers have missed is to normalize the problems that both of these genders face and provide appropriate help and assistance to them.

Sohini (2020) in her paper on Hindi cinema talks about how in movies like Dear Zindagi, Phobia, Judgemental Hai Kya, and Arth, mental illness is a consequence of being with the (wrong) women, wherein they are glorified as suffering from grief due to failed love or dealing with difficult or unattainable women, which goes on till he is requited with his love, further instilling in the common man the notion of running after a girl even if she says no; in other cases, they would be shown as dealing with the social and political turmoil in society, and their mental health in effect becomes a reflection of that society. In the new era, women afflicted

by mental health issues are shown in movies as needing a male counterpart in the form of an anchor or a therapist. These male saviours are identified either as a manipulator or a saviour, but they are unfazed by any mental health issue themselves. The author takes note of the cognizance of how Bollywood largely represents women with mental health issues in comparison to men, yet the opposite is true in reality. The author extends this observation to a phenomenon observed in the year 2020 where the death of a Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput by suicide was considered a murder by an industry attempting to keep talented outsiders out, or because of mysterious forces in his personal life; whereas mental health, which was talked about initially, fell out of conversation soon. There is a disparity in how mental health is in reality, and how it is represented in Bollywood (Swaminath & Bhide, 2009; Acharya et al., 2014). Swaminath and Bhide (2009) in their study on the concept of mental health as represented in Hollywood and Bollywood movies noted how filmmakers seem unable to understand characters with mental health problems, and often the comedy is based on that lack of understanding.

Misrepresentation

Acharya et al. (2014) conducted qualitative research with the objective of exploring the disparity between the cinematic representation and the DSM criteria for the diagnosis of the disorders, and the effect of these representations (or misrepresentations) on the layman's perception of them. A review and analysis of certain popular Indian films (made between 1990 and 2010) that thematically explore certain prevalent psychological disorders were attempted with the focus on four major film industries in India, namely- Hindi from the north, Tamil from the south, Marathi from the west and Bengali from the east. Moreover, the research also included structured interviews to assess both the knowledge about and attitudes towards the same, as created by such cinema, among the general public that is not predisposed to accurate information (in terms of the correct clinical picture, causes and treatment). These were conducted on a random sample of 120 subjects in the age range of 15-60, who had no prior or present knowledge of psychology. Results were assessed in percentage and mean values. The observations found a disparity between the representation of mental disorders in Indian cinema and their DSM descriptions, which had an influence on its audience. The general perception about mental disorders is that it is curable, may be controlled with discipline and is largely unacceptable in society. It was concluded that accurate portrayals make for relatively correct impressions on the viewers and leave less scope for misconception.

Swaminath and Bhide (2009) analysed a list of Hollywood and Bollywood movies which revolved around the concept of mental health issues. The authors noted that when asked what characteristics define film characters with mental illnesses, the top three answers were violent (39%), weird (35%) and likely to kill violently (30%). The study argued that films and stories need drama and conflict as an essential component to keep the audience engaged and interested and the mentally ill easily serve this purpose because extreme and erratic behaviour sparks a plethora of emotions in the audience. The authors noted that the story (if the central character is mentally ill) usually highlights dramatic breakdowns or relapses, the absence of adequate and good treatment, the inevitability of chronicity and finally poor outcomes. These situations are often depicted either comically or violently resulting and are full of misrepresentations about mental health issues. Moreover, if the drama is resolved, it happens quickly and in an idealized way: Illness being cured by the tumbling out of dark secrets (Equus) or by falling in love. The study ends by noting that it isn't just that filmmakers seem unable to understand characters with mental health problems; often the comedy is based on that lack of understanding.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was conducted in three phases. The first step was conducting the thematic analysis of the movie Kabir Singh, which was released in 2019, which while attracting a huge audience generated a wide controversy because of being misogynistic and misrepresenting several mental health issues. It was one of the highest-grossing movies of the year thus reflecting the vast number of audiences that it had its impact on. Thus, a thematic analysis of the movie was conducted wherein the themes related to mental health were identified and discussed in detail. Other irrelevant themes which were central to the movie but not related to mental health or the topic under consideration were kept aside.

Afterwards, based on the themes identified from the movie Kabir Singh, a content analysis was done of several movies which revolved around the concept of men's mental health issues and reflected similar themes or issues. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. It can be defined as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952) or a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages." (from Holsti, 1968) Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence,

meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text. In this manner, a content analysis of several movies revolved around the concept of men's mental health issues, that is, that directly or indirectly portrayed a character suffering from a mental health issue and the manner in which the portrayal was done of the mental health characters.

After this, five male participants from the age group of 19-22 who were college-going students of Delhi University were interviewed to obtain more data regarding the representation of men's mental health in Indian Media, Hindi cinema and in Indian society. This was conducted to analyze whether the analysis was done through content and whether thematic analysis was valid and representative of public opinion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Content Analysis Results

The content analysis conducted of various movies revealed the occurrence of the following themes in the following movies:

CONTENT ANALYSIS	
Themes	Movies
Portraying the male character with depression	Kabir Singh, Devdas, Anjana Anjani
Character going through a mental health issue shown to be overly aggressive	Kabir Singh, Tere Naam, Kyon Ki, Ghajini,

Concept of Magical Cure	Koi Mil Gaya, Khilona, Kyon Ki, Anjana Anjani, Tere Naam
Ignorance of Men's Mental Health Issues through negligence	Kabir Singh, Tere Naam, Khilona, Anjana Anjani, Darr, Devdas
Addiction displayed as a way adopted by the character to deal with stress	Devdas, Kabir Singh, Dev D

The movies which portrayed a male character suffering from mental health have been numerous like Khilona, Devdas, Karthik Calling Karthik, My Name is Khan and others. The movies on which the content analysis was done reveals that the movies which portrayed the male character suffering from depression are Kabir Singh (2019), Devdas (2002), and Anjana Anjani (2010). While we will talk about Kabir Singh in detail later, Devdas shows a male character who suffers from depression and severe alcoholism after being separated from his childhood love and meets his fate by dying outside her house. Anjana Anjani shows a male character who is depressed and attempts suicide three to four times during the course of the movie and then magically comes out of depression and finds the happiness in his life after being scolded by a doctor and falling in love.

There is a tendency to show the character suffering from mental health issues as overly aggressive and dramatic which creates a template in the minds of the audience and people are likely to develop a fear of people suffering from different mental health issues and which leads to social exclusion and isolation thereby aggravating the problem. The movies that reflect this phenomenon can also include Raat aur Din (1967) and Pyaar Tune Kya Kia (2001) which shows a female character suffering from mental health issue behaving aggressively, but since the study is directed towards the analysis of male characters, the movies which can be included here are Kabir Singh, Tere Naam (2003), Kyon Ki (2005), Ghajini (2008); all of them which show a male character behaving in an extreme aggressive and violent manner following the onset of a mental health issue thereby resulting in stigmatization and fear in the minds of the audience.

A number of movies of the Hindi cinema portray a concept of magical cure which can be defined as a tendency to portray mental health issues getting healed in the snap of a moment without proper intervention or therapy thereby creating a misconception in the minds of the audience that it affects. The movie Khilona (1970) portrays a character whose amnesia gets treated after he witnesses a triggering event, similar action of course follows in Kyon Ki (2005), Koi Mil Gaya (2003) involves the healing of mental disability through a magical touch of an alien, Anjana Anjani (2010) involves the healing of depression through falling in love, while Tere Naam (2003) portrays amnesia and other issues getting healed by religious and torturous rituals, and Kabir Singh (2019) portrays the depression and severe substance abuse of the male protagonist getting healed by the event of being reunited with his lost love.

Complete and blatant ignorance of Men's Mental Health Issues by neglecting their issues, comparing it to a phase and not motivating these characters to seek professional help is often witnessed. The movies that can be included under these criteria include Kabir Singh, Tere Naam, Khilona, Anjana Anjani, Darr (1993), and Devdas. Phrases like "boys don't cry" or maxims like "you will get over it" occurring repeatedly in these movies are often seen and while these movies revolve indirectly or directly around the concept of mental health issues, they fail to use it as an opportunity to spread awareness even to a small extent. The purpose of these movies seems to only exploit mental health issues to create conflict in their plots without the consideration of the consequences of the stigma that it creates in the minds of the audience.

Certain movies tend to portray addiction as a way of coping adopted by the character to deal with stress. These movies involve Devdas, Kabir Singh, DevD. It must be noted that while the filmmakers do not call the public to model these behaviours, the amount in which these characters are glorified in the movies leads the audience to model them and in the context of considering that no other medium teaches the audience to normalize the mental health issues of males, they are much more likely to inculcate these views in themselves which may result in modelling behaviour by teenagers and young adults. For example, interviews reported that college students had started modelling the smoking behaviour and actions of Kabir Singh in the few days post its release in 2019.

Thematic Analysis of Kabir Singh

CODE	THEMES
Ignorance of Men's Mental Health	Negligence; Abandoned and thrown out by family; Not encouraged to seek help Allowed to suffer.
Mental Health Issues	Addiction; Severe aggressiveness; Sadness and depression;
Magical Cure	Onset of issues with a trigger event and problems solved when the partner returns magically

Kabir Singh, one of the biggest blockbusters of 2019, was one of the films which while sparking a controversy succeeded in influencing the masses to a great extent and gained a cult status among quite a number of youths in India (The Financial Express, 9 July, 2019). While the filmmakers like to describe Kabir Singh as a romantic drama, many newspaper articles and feminist writings described it as a tale of toxic masculinity that should not be encouraged in this manner of glorification in the 21st century (India Today, 14 May, 2019; BBC, 25 Jun, 2019; The Hindustan Times, 24 May 2020). It is written and directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga and is actually a remake of his own Telugu film Reddy (2017). Produced under T-series and Cine1Studios, the movie stars Shahid Kapoor as Kabir Singh and Kiara Advani as his girlfriend and majorly revolves around these two central characters. The basic storyline of the movie revolves around the titular role of Kabir Singh, a surgeon who spirals into self-destruction and severe addiction when his girlfriend Preeti marries someone else.

The film was released in the theatres on 21 June 2019 and while it received mixed reviews and sparked controversies among a small group, Kapoor's performance was widely praised along with the background score of the movie. It became the third highest-grossing Bollywood film of 2019 and Kapoor's highest-grossing solo lead release by earning over ₹379 crore.

Basic Plot

The movie introduces us to a surgeon who is always on the verge of lashing out at everyone, shouts at his maid at home and nurses in the operating theatre, is heavily drunk when operating on his patients, and is so sexually charged up that he actually tries to force himself on a girl through the use of a knife in the opening sequences on the movie and then ends up putting ice in his pants. This is the protagonist of the film Kabir Singh. As we are led into the background story, we are shown that while Kabir was always heavily aggressive and used to beat up opponents in a simple football match besides being addicted to smoking, the real cause of his misery was the love of his life Preeti had left him.

Their love story begins with Kabir having seen her for the first time and as typical Bollywood movies would always have it, falling in love with her at that instant. Kabir then goes on to announce to everyone in the college that he has set his eyes on her and that no boy was to even try to talk with her. He barges into her classroom and makes her sit on the first bench of the class and then goes on to order her on what kind of girls she should be friends with. He then takes her out of the classroom saying that he will teach her properly. This continues and we usually see that most of their conversations happen like this where Kabir keeps ordering her and controlling her whole life. They soon fall in love and start to live together in the boys' hostel, though against the rules. Minor conflicts keep coming up but eventually, her father finds out about them and is angry at their relationship. Kabir, the short-tempered character that he is talks, angrily with her family and storms out, while trying to throw a pot at her sister's head. He gives a warning to Preeti to call him within 24 hours after sorting everything out with her family or else he will leave her. When Preeti tries to reason with him and pleads him to not go, he actually slaps her, storms off, goes to his brother's bachelor party and takes morphine injections with alcohol and passes out for two whole days.

When Kabir wakes up, he finds out that Preeti was married off in those two days by her family. When Kabir goes to her house to make a scene, he is beaten up by her family members and when he comes back to his own house, he is thrown out by his father. He moves to Mumbai and finds a good decent job as a surgeon. His family does not try to contact him much and leaves him to his fate. While they know that he is suffering, they do not really take any steps to help him. In Mumbai, Kabir's only friend is his college buddy Shiva who simply keeps telling Kabir to get over Preeti and move on. After moving to Mumbai, he becomes a heavy drinker and smoker and is hardly seen sober. He is drunk on his duty and on every operation that he ever performs. He is so aggressive that he chases his maid throughout the colony because she breaks a glass. While his friend Shiva understands that Kabir is suffering and wants to help him, most of the remarks made by Shiva revolve around telling Kabir not to cry because "boys don't cry" and shouting at him for always being so sad about Preeti having left him. Not once do we see any character in the movie tell Kabir that he should go to a psychologist or a mental health practitioner to deal with his issues nor does anyone try to understand him properly. Kabir's brother comes to talk to him but ends up fighting with him and shouting at him for behaving like he is still in college. He hardly seems interested in taking the responsibility of helping him but simply expects him to get over "the girl".

Kabir then has an affair with an actress named Jiya and their relationship actually starts with Kabir going over to her and saying that he needs her help physically to move on. She eventually falls for him and he storms off after getting angry and shouting at her. In one of his surgeries, Kabir falls down because of being heavily drunk and the hospital authorities file a case against him. It is at this time that Kabir's family decides to get involved in his life since he is in the news. Here we see the statement by her grandmother who says that suffering is personal to every human being and Kabir should be allowed to suffer independently. The family tries to bribe witnesses and to save Kabir from getting his license suspended but Kabir ends up drinking heavily on his day in the court and expects everything and cries for having let down his patients. Kabir's family still do not want to help him. His brother slaps him a few times and then leaves him to suffer. Kabir is eventually thrown out of his flat by the landlord, arrested a few times and leaves in slum areas with his dog. He then returns home after finding out that his grandmother had died.

The next morning, he goes to his father and tells him that he has left everything and that he will try to get his life back on track. He then meets Preeti and finds out that she is pregnant and when he goes over to talk with her and apologize, he finds out that she is carrying his baby and that she had left her husband two days after her marriage. Within five minutes, everything is resolved and both of them get married and Kabir's depression, addiction issues, alcoholism and excessively aggressive behaviour seem to have vanished magically.

Addiction issues

According to DSM 5, substance-related disorders can be related to 10 separate classes of drugs which include: alcohol; hallucinogens (phencyclidine or similarly acting arylcyclohexylamines, and other hallucinogens, such as LSD); caffeine; cannabis; inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, or anxiolytics; stimulants (including amphetamine-type substances, cocaine, and other stimulants); tobacco; and/or other unknown substances.

It has been identified in many researches that the activation and repeated triggering of the brain's reward system is central to problems from drug abuse (Hartney, 2020). The rewarding feeling that people experience as a result of taking drugs may be so profound that they neglect other normal activities in favour of taking the drug. Obviously, while the pharmacological mechanism for each class of drugs will be different, it has been observed and analyzed that the activation of the reward system appears to be quite similar across different substances in producing feelings of euphoria or pleasure, which the consumers like to refer to as "feeling high".

Criteria for Substance Use Disorders

According to DSM V, substance use disorders usually cover 11 different criteria as follows: Over consumption of substance for a longer period of time; trying to cut down but not being able to resist oneself; spending plenty amount of time in the process of getting, using or recovering from the use of the substance; cravings and urges for the substance; not being able to function properly and facing problems at work, in-home or school because of the substance use; not stopping even when problems because of substance use becomes apparent and quite devastating; giving up important social, occupational or recreational activities because of substance use; usage of substances over and over even when one is fully aware that it gets them in

danger; continuing usage even when knowing that one has an apparent physical or psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by the substance; the need for more substance to feel good and get the kick; development of withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of the substance.

The severity of Substance Use Disorders

Based on these criteria, clinicians based on DSM specify the severity of the addiction or substance abuse disorder and this diagnosis usually depends on the number of symptoms identified. The presence of two or three substances indicates mild substance use disorder; while the prevalence of four to five symptoms usually indicates a moderate substance use disorder and severe substance use disorder is classified when six or more symptoms are present.

Portrayal in the movie Kabir Singh

Based on the above-described information, an analysis of whether the central character suffers from a substance use disorder and the severity of the situation is presented as follows:

Over consumption: Kabir knows that he is addicted to smoking and drinking. When he is asked in college by Preeti's uncle on why does he smoke inspite of being a medical student, he explains to him that while he understands the damaging effects a cigarette can have on the body, he cannot leave smoking as he has become an addict. When in the latter part of the movie after Preeti has left him, we see that he is always seen with a drink in his hand. He takes morphine with alcohol and then passes out for two whole days. He moves to Mumbai and drinks throughout the day and even while performing complex operations on patients. He keeps consuming alcohol and other drugs day and night for months on end while knowing that these can have disastrous effects on his body.

Failure to cut down: Kabir tries to cut back on his addiction quite a few times in the course of the movie but fails to do so most of the time. When he passes out during his surgery and a case is filed against him, he is told by his lawyer not to drink anymore till the case ends. He is even advised by the other doctors to not drink anymore as it could actually kill him now. He tries to cut back and throws all of his bottles away. But on the day of the hearing, he finds one bottle of alcohol and drinks it all away as a result of which he passes out again. This leads us to an assumption that at the end of the movie, when Kabir decides to get rid of

all of his habits and marry Preeti, leaving alcohol might not be that easy for him or there is a high probability that he might not be able to quit after all.

Spending time procuring, using and recovering from substance: Kabir is seen frequently buying crates of bottles of alcohol and consuming it. Actually, the first scene of the movie opens with him drinking and smoking. At one point, he is seen waiting for the bar to open up in the early morning so that he can buy alcohol. When he loses his job, he is seen to be drinking continuously. He takes morphine, marijuana and even cocaine many times in the movie and is hardly seen sober.

Facing problems in life and at work: Kabir's problem with alcohol leads to more prominent areas of his life including his relationship with his family and his work. He is thrown away by his father and when he moves to Mumbai, he loses all kinds of contact with his family. When his brother comes to meet him and tries to convince him to give everything up, he ends up fighting with him violently. He is drunk during all of his surgeries which is not only ethical but also criminal and even after losing his license, he is not ready to give up his addiction but starts doing it more and more.

Not stopping even when problems because of substance use becomes apparent and quite devastating: The problems with his addiction become apparent and Kabir realizes it. He says that he is a full-blown alcoholic and is still not able to get rid of his addictions.

Giving up important social, occupational or recreational activities because of substance use: Kabir gets suspended from practising medicine, he is thrown out by his family, and he becomes overly aggressive and breaks off his relationships with most of the people in his life and realizes this fact but still cannot stop drinking or smoking. That is a clear sign that his disorder has become extreme and severe.

Usage of substances over and over even when one is fully aware that it gets them in danger: Kabir is a student of medicine. He knows the effects smoking has on him. He also knows the effects of alcohol and all other kinds of drugs but is not able to stop himself because of his suffering and trauma. He gets hospitalized and is told that further consumption of any kind of stimulant will actually kill him but he still cannot overcome himself and his addictions and continuous drinking and smoking to such an extent that he is not able to walk properly and passes out frequently.

The above-described analysis can help us in understanding that there is some weight to the interpretation that the central character of the movie Kabir Singh suffers from a severe substance abuse disorder of alcohol and tobacco (smoking) in the movie Kabir Singh.

DSM criteria for Depression and prevalence in the movie

Depression, the most prevalent of all mental health related disorders, is often looked at with skepticism in the Indian society and considered to be simply a phase of life (S Jadhav et al, 2007). Depression is characterized by a loss of interest in daily life and its activities, continued pessimism and feelings of guilt and worthlessness and is often accompanied by a desire to end one's life or hurt one's own self.

While good media which involves the cinema can help in spreading awareness surrounding the issue and break the stigma attached to it, the practice seems to be going in the other direction judging by the trends in India. Kabir Singh, the central character of the movie suffers from mild to moderate levels of depression but his problems are often masked under the trauma of having lost his partner in the movie and the problem is fixed at the end of the movie magically when the partner returns. The following point describes how Kabir Singh can be diagnosed with a mild to moderate level of depression according to DSM V.

Depressed and irritable mood: Preeti's marriage works as a trigger event for Kabir and he spirals into a web of mild depression. His mood is often seen to be depressed and sad in the movie and even when he tries to cry openly, he is discouraged from doing so by saying that "boys don't cry". His character is definitely a flawed one who has problems in expressing his feelings of being vulnerable and sad openly and so he tries to deal with his sadness through drinking and smoking, which end up making him more depressed and irritable. He cries alone, keeps drinking and keeps spiraling into a web of darkness and depression and this cycle keeps continuing for months.

Significant change of weight: As he spirals into the web of addiction and depression, his body obviously starts to suffer. His weight increases drastically in a period of a few months which is seen quite clearly in the movie through various scenes. His weight increases and his look keeps becoming messy and unkempt for which he is criticized repeatedly by his fellow doctors instead of being helped properly.

Feelings of guilt and worthlessness: Kabir is not fond of himself like before after he spirals into this web and starts to hate himself. At the hearing, he says that he is a full-blown alcoholic and while he hates himself, the only thing that he likes about himself is his career and service to his patient but as he realizes that he has broken the trust of his patients by conducting their surgeries when being drunk, he no longer has the one sole thing to be happy about himself. Post this sequence, he no longer has a job and the only thing he keeps himself engaged in is drinking and smoking heavily even if that means being thrown out of his flat and having to leave on the road.

Changes in sleep pattern: Kabir's sleep pattern also suffers as a result of his substance abuse disorder. He cannot sleep peacefully at night and most of the time ends up drinking and smoking till the moment he passes out so that he can sleep in this way.

While Kabir does not have a loss of energy or lethargy or inspirations to be suicidal, it can surely be diagnosed that he suffers from mild to moderate levels of depression, part of which has been onset by the event of Preeti having left him, and part of which is a side effect of his severe substance use disorder.

Intermittent Explosive Disorder and prevalence in the movie

A behavioural disorder which is characterized by excessive rage, anger, aggressiveness and even violence and which is often a disproportionate response to the stimulus at hand (for example shouting or fighting with someone over stepping on a foot) is referred to as Intermittent Explosive Disorder and often referred to as IED.

The disorder is currently categorized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) under the "Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders" category. It should be said that the disorder is not easily characterized and classified and found to co-exist with comorbidity or other disorders, especially bipolar or substance abuse disorders. Individuals who suffer from IED often consider and recall their outbursts to be quite short-lasting an average of about one hour accompanied by a variety of bodily symptoms that include sweating, stuttering, chest tightness, twitching, palpitations, etc. The aggressive acts performed are often reported to be followed by feelings of satisfaction, relief and even pleasure while the feelings of remorse and guilt accompany later.

The criteria for diagnosing IED can be described as follows according to DSM V:

Recurrent behavioural outbursts: Recurrent behavioural outbursts of aggression involve and represent a failure to be able to control aggressive impulses which is then manifested through direct violence or verbal aggression.

Verbal aggression: Verbal aggression involves temper tantrums, tirades, heavy and insulting verbal arguments or fights.

Physical aggression: Physical aggression can include aggression or damage inflicted upon property, animals or other individuals, occurring on an average of twice in a week, for a period of at-least three months. Physical aggression usually does not result in major damage or destruction of property nor includes severe physical injury to animals or other individuals.

The diagnosis of IED requires at least three behavioural outbursts involving damage or destruction of property and/or physical assault involving physical injury against animals or other people occurring within a 12-month period.

During the course of the movie, Kabir lashes out at several instances and while the argument can be put forward that his actions of aggression are a side effect of his substance abuse disorder and alcoholism, it can be easily pointed out to the fact that he is seen to be heavily aggressive and beating up the players of the opponent's team even before he suffers from substance abuse disorder. His physical acts of aggression include getting into a fight in a foot ball match, lashing out on Preeti and slapping her, running behind her maid angrily because she breaks a glass and trying to force himself on a woman with the use of a knife because she says no to him. Verbal abuse and aggression of Kabir are apparent throughout the movie and he keeps lashing out at his friends, his family, his staff at the hospital and even at his dog repeatedly throughout the movie. Based on the analysis and comparison with the DSM criteria for IED, it can be interpreted that Kabir Singh suffers from Intermittent Explosive Disorder.

Ignorance or Negligence of Men's Mental Health Issue

We have already talked about the stigma associated with the mental health issue of males and its consequences. The movie Kabir Singh shows us a character who suffers from Mild Depression, Severe Substance Abuse disorder and Intermittent Explosive Disorder and yet we do not find a single instance wherein an attempt is made to deal with these issues professionally or properly nor is he encouraged or even asked once to seek counselling or treatment for his issues. On the contrary, he is scolded, shouted at and criticized by society, including his friends and family, for behaving in such a manner and asked to 'snap out of it'.

There are several instances where this becomes apparent. After he loses consciousness due to the consumption of morphine with alcohol and later creates a ruckus at Preeti's house, he is thrown out of the house by his father and thus abandoned. It should be noted that this is an act by the father wherein he denies any kind of responsibility with Kabir. In an earlier scene in the movie, we see Kabir telling his father that he had been involved in a fight with a few boys in the football match and had beaten them, to which his father reacts quite lightly and does not consider it necessary to even talk with him or make him realize about his inappropriate behaviour. This is an indicator that maybe Kabir has been raised in this manner wherein he is allowed to behave according to his wishes, resulting in an impulsive and aggressive personality. However, when the father is disappointed with Kabir's behaviour, instead of taking the pain of trying to have a talk with him or providing him a space to deal with himself and his problems, he throws him out. This condition of Kabir can be compared with the plight of the countless number of women abandoned by their family members after developing mental health issues, for which, unfortunately, no statistics exist (The Indian Express, 2021).

Another major instance is when he moves to Mumbai and starts drinking and smoking heavily, his friend Shiva tries to confront him and tries to make an effort to help him. The verbatim that follows is as follows:

Kabir: Ek minute ke lie soch teri girlfriend ka pms ka month chal raha hai....Aise time me kya karega tu uske sath.? Usko bolega, "Baby yeh to har mahine aana hi, 4 din handle karna padega" yeh sab bakwas karega tu uske sath? Ya usko apne....lap me letayega, warm pillow dega, pyaar se bat karega? Medicine ki haina hum

logo ne? Will you give her some love and take care of her? Ya usko bolega “You are a woman, you have to deal with this, this is your life. Tujhe to yahi karna hai, yahi teri kismat hai.” Aise bat karega tu uske sath?

Shiva: ...Tujhe bhi vaise hi khyal chahiye na? Vahi haina? Lekin un logo ka to mahine me 4 din rehta hai. Tera to pura mahina chalu rehta hai. Haina? Tere yeh mood swings ke chakkar ko namakskar bhai.”

Translation:

Kabir: Think for a moment that it is the time of pms of your girlfriend. What will you do with her in such a time? Will you say, “Baby, this is going to come every month, you have to handle it for 4 days,”? Or will you...make her lie in your lap, give her a warm pillow and talk with love with her? We have done medicine right? Will you take care of her and give her some love? Or will you tell her, “You are a woman, you have to deal with this, this is your life. This is what you have to do, this is your fate.” Tell me, will you talk to her like this?

Shiva: ...You also want a similar kind of love and care, right? But women go through this for 4 days in a month. Your mood swings have been going for a month now. I am done with your mood swings brother.

This verbatim can be considered to be a cry for help by Kabir. Through this dialogue, Kabir tries to make his friend understand that he is hurting and that his emotions and behaviour are no longer under his control. His alcoholism and depression are not something that he can snap out of. He even hints at the role of biological factors in his current emotional state. However, his cry for help is met with utter disregard and disrespect by Shiva when he says that he has been doing this for too long now.

Following the sequence where Kabir angrily chases his maid for having broken a glass, Shiva says to Kabir, “Tu pagal hogaya hai kya be? Sachi me mardeta use tu!” (Have you gone mad? You would have really killed her!). Shiva has been a witness to Kabir’ alcoholism, and his severe bouts of aggression and while he has been for him whenever he has needed a friend, he does not motivate Kabir to seek professional help. Comparing this to a lack of awareness seems too far-fetched since both of them actually are graduates from one of the most esteemed medical institutions in the country. Therefore, this act can be attributed to the stigma associated with mental health and seeking professional help.

This act of stigma associated with mental health and men becomes apparent when in a later scene, when Shiva again reacts negatively to Kabir's act of crying by saying, "*Ro raha hai tu? Pagal hai kya? Ae ladke rote hai kya?*" (*Are you crying? Are you mad? Hey, do boys cry*) and then requests him to let it go and move on. Not only does Shiva stop Kabir from expressing himself freely but he also makes an attack on his masculinity causing further self-doubt and guilt.

At the time stamp of 1:58:56 in the movie, Kabir's brother comes to talk to him about his way of life, but instead of listening to him or talking calmly with him, he spends his time shouting at him and trying to make him feel guilty about his way of life and his body. He shouts at him for drinking so heavily and doing marijuana, while not making an effort to understand his problems and again asks him to get over it. Kabir's cry for help earlier, however, has turned into a disregard of everyone resulting in severe anger. He shouts back at his brother and even fights with him when he is asked all of these questions. He has become habituated to his state now and would not allow anyone to raise any questions on him. The wrestling scene between Kabir and his brother makes it evident that mental health issues are not at all properly addressed in the movie. However, this becomes highly reflective of Indian society where people, suffering from mental health issues like depression or substance abuse disorders are often asked to get over their phase and often face abandonment or anger when they cannot do so.

In a later sequence at 2:10:05, when the whole family is going to meet Kabir, his grandmother, with whom Kabir was closest, does not go to see him as she says, "*Suffering is very personal. Let him suffer.*" This statement ignores the fact that Kabir is in dire need of professional help and maybe even a rehabilitation center for getting over his substance abuse disorder. However, he is allowed to suffer because it is considered that he is grieving over his lost love. While this statement is highly reflective of the Indian society where people suffering from serious mental health issues like depression are often left to their state, it also creates a misconception in the minds of the audience that maybe it is okay to leave people to their state as they will soon come around. While Kabir finds a way magically in the end of the movie, because of which he is able to come out of his depression and substance abuse disorder, most of the people would not be able to deal with such issues all on their own leading to a number of catastrophic and unfortunate consequences.

After Kabir loses the case and his medical license, he is slapped harshly by his elder brother and the whole family then leaves him and goes back home. At this point of time, they are well aware of how serious his problem is and also that he has lost his job and any scope of livelihood in the near future. They still do not make an effort to take him to a mental health practitioner or to a rehabilitation center. It hints at the possibility that they have given up on him and are leaving him in Mumbai to suffer alone.

At 2:30:05 hours in the movie, Shiva asks Kabir to get married to his sister in the hope that Kabir will get back on track and will be cured of his issues after marrying her. While many might consider this to be an utter height of friendship and the sense of sacrifice that Shiva has for the betterment of his friend, this is an utter lack of negligence and ignorance. Shiva is well aware of Kabir's aggressive issues and his depression. By thinking that depression, substance abuse and aggression can be dealt with by marriage, Shiva is not only ready to ignore Kabir's needs for professional help but is also ready to plunge his sister into a well of misery. While Kabir disagrees, this act does reflect the tendency of many Indians who try to substitute therapy with marriage and companionship (as reflected in the views of the interviewees).

At 2:37: 04, when Kabir returns home in the event of his grandmother's death, he tells his father that he will leave everything and all of his addictions and will try to get his life back on track. His father tells him to take a vacation as he badly needs it. He does not realize the severity of his addictions and believing that Kabir will be able to control himself now is an act of foolishness at this point of time as it has been evident through various scenes that he is not able to control himself for more than a few days.

Another act of ignorance of his conditions is when his friend Aman asks him "*Acha, toh?*" when Kabir informs him that Preeti is pregnant. This shows that his friends do not want to listen to him patiently and become a little aggressive and skeptical whenever he starts talking about Preeti again.

The concept of Magical Cure

The concept of Magical Cure, along with many Bollywood movies like *Khilona* (1970) *Tere Naam* (2003), *Koi Mil Gaya* (2003), *Kyon Ki* (2005), *Anjana Anjani* (2010), exists in the movie *Kabir Singh* as well.

This establishes a causal chain of events wherein a certain factor leads to mental health issues and the moment the problem is solved; the mental health issues also disappear. This creates a feeling in the minds of the audience, especially those who are not well read in the field, that providing the patient's solution to their problems will help them get better and cure their problems. A proper treatment and therapeutic process is necessary for any kind of mild, moderate or severe mental health issue.

In the movie Kabir Singh, Kabir starts facing bouts of depression, moderate Intermittent Explosive Disorder and Severe Substance abuse disorder after his partner Preeti leaves him. At the end of the movie, when he is reunited with his lost love, suddenly everything is colorful and the problems that Kabir had been facing since the last 8 to 9 months seem to have disappeared magically. He leaves alcohol, and his depression is gone as the love of his life returns. Unfortunately, this similar theme or pattern is evident in many Bollywood films where men are the victim of mental health issues. The list of such movies includes Darr, Anjana Anjani, Kyon Ki, Khilona, Devdas, which time and again, have either portrayed a male character becoming a victim of depression, substance abuse disorder after suffering the ravages of heartbreak or being magically cured of their illnesses when they find romantic love in their lives.

Interpretation and discussion of the Interviews

For the purpose of identifying the views of the public regarding the depiction of mental health issue of the male gender in the media and in Hindi Cinema, 5 male participants between the ages of 20-23 who had a good background in the field of psychology and therefore had an objective viewpoint regarding the topic under consideration, were interviewed. The general opinion which all the participants shared regarding the amount of light thrown by the media in general on the issue of men's mental health, was quite negative in the sense that the participants observed that mental health itself did not receive much attention in the media and in such conditions, and no particular mental health issue faced by men received any kind of attention in the mainstream media. One of the participants observed that he was yet to see any kind of focus on the mental health crisis that had worsened in the Covid-19 pandemic on a major news channel, since that stage is being continuously occupied by politics. Another participant noted with hesitation that Indian media and the public missed a very important opportunity to talk about mental health issues and especially those surrounding men in 2020 when a noted actor Sushant Singh Rajput died by suicide on 14 June, 2020. The participant noted that the issue was discredited again and again in the media and the event backfired with instances of people assuming diverse

reasons for the unfortunate incident while they failed to have a proper conversation about mental health and the stigma surrounding it.

On the topic of how the Indian cinema and the media in general teaches men on how to deal with their emotions, the participants noted that while an attempt has been made to talk about mental health issues in a proper manner by a few movies and web-series, it has not received much limelight in the mainstream media. However, the movies that do succeed in receiving the attention of the masses were often those that created the impression that men were often unaffected by mental health issues and even if they were, the mechanisms that they adopted included the unhealthy ones like drinking, smoking, or searching for a potential intimate partner in order to get over their issues. A participant noted that when looking at the older cinema, the phrase of 'Man Up!' becomes quite apparent wherein the movies create an impression that men can simply get over their issues without much effort. All in all, the participants were of the opinion that the Hindi cinema often taught males to swallow their feelings or drink them away, thereby severely desensitizing the minds of the vast audience that it controls towards mental health issues, especially those faced by men.

When asked about the manner in which the Hindi cinema portrays mental health issues and whether the participant feels that there is a gender gap prevalent here, one of the participants noted that the gender gap exists in the roots of the Indian society and hence finds its way in the movies also. While all the participants agreed that mental health has not received much positive attention for both the genders by the Hindi cinema, they also voiced out the concern that while some amount of gender sensitization and a few movies like *Dear Zindagi* and *Fashion* have been successful in talking about mental health issues, concerning women, the stigma surrounding the mental health issues of men have only been made rampant by movies like *Kabir Singh*, *Devdas*, *Ghajini* and *Tere Naam*. One of the participants quoted a news event wherein a 16-year-old boy had thrown off his girlfriend of age 13 years from the roof of the building in the event of a breakup, and said that he had been inspired by the movie *Kabir Singh*.

The participants were then asked to list a few reasons why they think people in India, especially men, do not seek out professional help, to which the general opinion of the participants was the lack of awareness among people, and the stigma surrounding mental health. People are afraid of being judged by society and the concept of toxic masculinity further makes it difficult for men to openly accept the issues that they face.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a mental health challenge along with it which has made it crucial than ever to make strides towards understanding mental health, destigmatising it and tackling it around the world. Reports reveal that one in seven people do not receive treatment for depression in low resources countries. But as we make an effort to make mental help available to people of diverse classes and backgrounds, the stigma surrounding mental health calls for immediate attention to be dealt with. Studies across 30 to 40 countries have concluded that the stigma surrounding mental health can be considered universal.

While both men and women are affected by mental illness, it is oftentimes overlooked in males (Chatmon, 2020). The problem that researchers and practitioners around the world worry about is that mental health among men often goes untreated because they are far less likely to seek mental health treatment than women. Rates of depression and suicide are increasing as a leading cause of death among men. Men die by suicide at a rate two times higher than women. Males have also been reported to die due to alcohol related causes at twice the rate as compared to women as per the data of 2016. Men are also two to three times more likely to misuse drugs than women (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2017). These statistics are troubling because they reinforce the notion that males are less likely to seek help and more likely than women to turn to dangerous, unhealthy behaviors.

When we look at movies like Kabir Singh, Tere Naam, Dar, Koi Mil Gaya, Anjana Anjani, and countless other small and big instances in numerous other movies, we see a pattern wherein the male portrayal is often seen dealing with stress in his life through the use of alcohol and drugs. Many times, the cause of the stress happens to be either the loss of a former intimate partner or denial from a potential partner. The male protagonist usually gets enraged or severely depressed or both, tries obsessively stalking the girl (Darr, Tere Naam) or starts drinking heavily (Kabir Singh, Devdas). Sohini (2020) notes that when mental health is portrayed in this manner by Bollywood, it is likely to create an impression that when men suffer from depression, it is often because of the ravages of failed love and difficult or unattainable women. This, the author notes, while far-fetched, can be considered as one of the reasons why the Indian media and the public of India started a witch-hunt following the unfortunate demise of a noted Bollywood actor and also started

seeing it as an act of murder by other powerful forces of the industry, while the conversation surrounding mental health soon fell out.

Along with this, a concept that I like to define as Magical Cure exists in many movies of Hindi cinema wherein the characters suffering from severe mental health issues are cured magically in an instant without any kind of professional help. The instances of this can be found in *Koi Mil Gaya* (2003), where the male character Rohit, who is mentally disabled because of a prenatal injury is suddenly cured and becomes 'super-smart' and athletic because of a magical touch by an alien; in *Khilona* (1970) when the male character who has become mentally unstable and severely violent suddenly comes to his senses when he witnesses an event similar to the event that triggered his madness; while in *Anjana Anjani* (2010), the male protagonist gives up the idea of suicide which he has attempted more than thrice after a doctor scolds him, making him feel guilty about such actions and after he falls in love with a girl, or in *Kabir Singh* wherein the male protagonist is magically and suddenly cured of his depression and severe addiction disorder following the event of being reunited with his lost love. In *Tere Naam* (2003), we see the male protagonist who has completely lost his memory following a violent trauma on the head, suddenly remembers everything after being treated in an ashram through what at best be described as certain religious and torturous rituals. In movies like *Darr* and *Devdas* where we do not see this concept of magical cure, the concept of tragic death seems to be the only way out to resolve the created conflict. This creates the impression in the minds of the audience that mental illness can be resolved either magically or not at all. One of the consequences of this is that when people suffer from mental health issues, they either try to look for immediate solutions to their problems, approach religious figures, or tend to seek out different substances to deal with their problems, and if they do seek out professional help, they tend to look for a magical pill to solve the problems in an instant.

The interviews conducted reflect the opinion that mental health stigma in the Indian society is quite prevalent and the one surrounding the issue of men's mental health is quite extreme. The maxims like 'boys don't cry' stemming from the toxic masculinity and the patriarchal structure of the society creates a deep-rooted impression in the minds of the public that feeling vulnerable amounts to being weak and they are not supposed to feel that. When a large mass of the public suppresses their emotions, they tend to become the victim of various kinds of mental health issues but still are hesitant to seek out professional help for their

problems, hence becoming more likely to fall victim to substance abuse under the impression of the media that they consume.

Through the method of narrative analysis and content analysis of a few movies and through the analysis of interviews conducted, it can be safely concluded that the depiction of men's mental health in the Hindi Cinema has been one that tends to create misconceptions in the minds of the audience, often portraying characters deal with the stress in their lives through unhealthy coping mechanisms which are often glorified, and also portraying a concept of magical cure wherein the mental health issues get resolved immediately and magically without any professional treatment or help. The analysis of the interviews conducted also confirm this view. This study acknowledges the huge impact that Hindi cinema can have on the Indian society with respect to the huge market that it captures. It therefore becomes necessary for the mainstream media and cinema to talk about mental health in its appropriate and positive light to promote change, awareness and de-stigmatization in the society.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is a qualitative study and hence subject to several kinds of limitations. It is likely to be subject to the opinions and biases of the researcher thus affecting the results of the study. Since the study was conducted based on thematic and content analysis, empirical evidence involving statistical proofs cannot be obtained in this study. Moreover, this study talked about the portrayal of the males' mental health issue in Hindi cinema but did not measure the manner and the extent in which this portrayal leads to misrepresentation and stigma in the minds of the audience. The interviews were conducted with only 5 participants selected by the researcher. A larger data was not pooled which can be considered to be one of the limitations of the study.

To improve upon this subject of research, more strategic analysis of the movies need to be conducted along with conducting interviews, discussions and surveys regarding the portrayal of mental health issues in those films to obtain a much richer data. Moreover, this study does not mean to criticize the makers of any particular movie/s but does suggest a few things to be kept in mind while making any film which involves properly researching and studying about psychology and the issues that they want to portray and avoid any scene where it is likely to cause misrepresentation or stigma. The makers should realize the amount of impact their movies have, the audience that it is going to capture and use that stage to spread awareness and knowledge

along with entertainment, rather than spreading stigma and misrepresentation just because they want to earn more money.

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