



BOLLYWOOD PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL ILLNESS

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ABSTRACT

Role of cinema on our attitudes, cognitions, behaviors and thought patterns has been neglected by psychologists in the past but from past few years it has been studied that media has a huge impact on our lives. It has been noticed that over a period of time the trend in Bollywood is towards making movies on various mental disorders. Though this initiative to portray such crucial issues is applauding, but the portrayal of mental illness is often inaccurate and exaggerated, though over a period of time the trend towards mental illness has become a little sympathetic and the characters are not shown in negative light, but still a lot lacks which needs to be changed in the cinema, so that individuals who are watching and learning from movies get authentic and accurate information, so that they aren't misled regarding this sensitive issue. It is very crucial for us to realize that this rising fascination shouldn't create difficulties for the individuals concerned.

KEY WORDS:

Bollywood, Disorder, Prognosis and Mental Illness.

INTRODUCTION:

We all are very much familiar with the impact of television in our lives. At the same time, it is essential and crucial for us to realize that cinema which is considered important for our leisure is influencing us in various and diverse ways. Everywhere in India we see that children, adults, youth and older people are crazy about cinema. It doesn't matter if we belong to the rural or to the urban background; everyone has access to Hindi cinema. Over a period of time it has been seen that our film industry is gaining lot of interest in topics related to mental illness such as autism, agoraphobia, schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder so on and so forth and through various short films or movies the directors are picking movie plots through which they can sensitize the public towards mental illness and regarding various treatment options available through which one can sought help (Hylar, 1988).

It is very important that we understand the impact cinema leaves on our minds because it has been seen that whatever is depicted through movies, media, etc. shapes an audiences thinking and attitudes. And if mental illness is shown as a bad example with stigmas attached to it, through various stereotypes then the impact it will leave on the minds of the people watching cinema and learning from it will be very demeaning and harmful for the patient and their families (Domino, 1983).

According to some research studies conducted over time media dramatizes and creates distorting images of mental illness, emphasizing on its danger, harmful effects, criminality and unpredictability, with such images leading to negative reactions in the form of fear, rejection, ridicule and mockery towards the mentally ill (Stuart, 2013).

MENTAL ILLNESS IN BOLLYWOOD AND ICD-10:

Barfi: In this the director focused on autism which is a disorder of neural development which is chiefly characterized by impaired social interaction, impaired development in

receptive or expressive social communication skills and failure to develop relationships that involve a mutual sharing of interests and emotions and failure to adequately use eye to eye gaze, facial expression, body postures for interactions (ICD-10). We can clearly see from the above mentioned diagnostic criteria's how many were actually successfully covered through this movie and shown to the audience.

Phobia: It is a movie about agoraphobia which is understood as an anxiety disorder characterized by an intense, irrational fear of moving out into open places or situations in which help or escape might not be available and lead to excessive anxiety or panic symptoms. In this movie without any doubts *Radhika Apte* did a commendable job but despite of that, gradually the plot of the movie lost track of the symptoms of agoraphobia and the patient started showing symptoms of schizophrenia such as hallucinations, delusions and paranoia, which completely ruined the plot of agoraphobia and made the audience understand it as a scary illness.

These are few of the movies through which despite of the director and the story writer having good intentions in their minds to educate the masses through their story lines; have provided misleading and incorrect information by distorting the plot of the movie to bring interesting twists and turns in the plot, which in the long run can be harmful to our society and our understanding of mental disorders and its prognosis.

CONCLUSION:

Hindi films since over a period of time have appeared to be influenced by changing cultural norms which in turn is affecting the way mental illness is portrayed. Yet it is essential that we as researchers need to bring it to light that individuals and audience shouldn't base their judgments completely on the cinema for understanding various things, the things which are sometimes shown through cinema is not completely accurate and there is a lot of information which is incomplete and completely fictional, hence being dependent on that information is harmful for us. Also it is crucial for us to understand that whatever is shown through cinema in a society, shows the society's

understanding of that concept and if wrong content is projected through movies then this shows our poor state of understanding and hence as psychologists, it's our work to educate the people regarding the accurate correct information.

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