MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Mass media have a strong effect on our expectations for family, parents, and children, creating standards for our way of life, affection, worship, and society. In simple words, we view reality in terms of our own experience that is influenced by primary groups (Family and Friends), secondary groups (School, religious institutions, and government), and mass media. While the influence of the primary group is waning and the secondary groups are time limited, the influence of mass media is increasing as it is a pervasive and permanent fixture of our lives. The influence of mass media increases when the number and strength of the other sources of influence decrease. There is no longer debate about the impact of the media on the thinking, behavior, and emotions of the general population. In addition, the effects may be pro-social or even anti-social. Mass media serve as socializing agents that aids in construction and perpetuation of perceptions and learned behaviors. Serving as a central source of information, mass media not only reflect public attitudes and values but also take part in shaping them. The effects of mass media are partly unintentional due to news and entertainment programs. The present review will highlight the role of media in mental health.

***KEYWORDS**: Media, Mental Health, influence, information.*

INTRODUCTION

Presently In India, people are increasingly using new media technology (e.g., smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops for Internet access), with increasing frequency to text message, E-mail, blog, as well as access social networking websites (like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.) for business, entertainment, and to stay in touch with family and friends and simultaneously acquiring information about national and world events from other traditional sources of mass media (like television, newspaper, magazines, books, movies, radio etc.).

Media has been defined as any storage and transmission channel or tool used to store and deliver information or data. Mass media is synonymous to media, which may refer to one single medium used to communicate any data for any purpose.

FORMS OF MEDIA

The term media commonly refers to the mediums of books, radio, magazines, newspapers, cinema, television, billboards and computer complexes. Each medium is a symbolic model of a big industry, which is further interlinked with other related industries. The various studies cited in this chapter focus on one or another of these media, and others examine a combination of media. India being the largest democracy and with fairly unrestricted media is likely to be a case in point about how media influences the perception of mental illnesses.

MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE SOCIETY

Over the past few decades, considerable amount of research has been conducted to examine the effect of the mass media on the belief systems of the public. These studies have concluded that the media's power to influence public perception, the frequency in which it is used, and the degree to which people are exposed to media representations combine to make the mass media one of the most significant influences in developed societies.

What people see and hear in the media impacts their daily lives. It encourages them to buy something they saw in a commercial, informs them of the latest 'craze' and also tells them how they 'should act.' This becomes alarming because the power of the media is easy accessible. The power that the media holds has evolved over time, with people trusting the message delivered, without really critically evaluating the information received. But there have been differences in the levels of skepticism about media, with some being more accepting than the other. This article though, may be biased to first world countries, and change in mindsets of individuals residing in third world countries like India need to be further explored. Hottentot and colleagues in a study reported the various sources of media from which people gather information regarding mental illness or any information regarding psychiatry. These are TV and news 70%, Newspapers 58%, News magazines 34%, TV talk shows 31%, Radio news 26%, Internet 25%, Non-fiction books 25%, Talk shows on radio 18% . The limitation here, though, is that the influence of social media has grown tremendously in the interval between this study and current times, and this needs to be considered in future investigations.

MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE

Media is a tool that can be potently used to increase knowledge, create favorable attitudes and change overt behavior. We need to find ways to optimize the role of media in our society, taking advantage of their positive attributes and minimizing their negative ones, to use the media to help people avoid behaviours that reduce their wellbeing and increase behaviours that promote it. If the media can worsen stigma in the field of mental illness, it is reasonable to assume that media can also potentially be used to reduce stigma as well. Documentary films can be used to educate the general public about mental health and disease. Viewing a documentary about schizophrenia have led schizophrenia to be perceived as less dangerous. Reading an article containing corrective information has led to a greater acceptance of persons with mental illness and less fear about mental illnesses.

Education of the media and using fake news screens can help control the problem to some extent, but possibly would not impact much on individuals working through social media accounts. Actions such as suspending the account for a brief period of time if there are lapses in the rules against propagating fake news, and rein station on retraction of the particular content could be attempted, but this requires significant resources and further planning, as it has to be done without impinging on the personal right to freedom of speech. This can make it difficult to report the 'citizen reporter' and therefore make it difficult to block fake news and misinformation that makes the rounds on social media.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Lamontagne and Verrault (1986) studied the Use of Mass Media in Mental Health. The authors discuss reasons which may explain the mental health professionals' lack of interest in this area of research, suggest new approaches for the elaboration of educational programs for the population and emphasize the importance of secondary and tertiary prevention.

Upadhyay (2013) Studied Mental Health, Mass Media and Stigma Reduction. The author said In a country like Nepal, where the mental health service is not well developed and public awareness is very low, majority of mental disorders and epilepsy patients are taken to faith healers for treatment. To develop more positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with mental disorder, public education and information about mental disorders are the most important. Various forms of mass media can be used to promote more positive community attitudes and behaviors towards people with mental disorders.

Zexin (2017) Conducted a study on How the media cover mental illnesses: a review. Research has found that entertainment-education programs and web-based media have strong potential in reducing mental illness stigma. Recommendations for future research are also discussed. Practical implications Findings can guide future efforts to use media to educate the public about mental illnesses and reduce mental illness stigma. Originality/value This

study reviews the most recent research on mental illnesses in the media and provides important references on the media representation of mental illnesses, media effects of such representation, and using media to reduce stigma.

Kelly, et. al (2018) conducted a study on Social Media Use and Adolescent Mental Health: Findings from the UK Millennium Cohort Study. The findings reveal that the magnitude of association between social media use and depressive symptoms was larger for girls than for boys. Compared with 1−3 h of daily use: 3 to b5 h 26% increase in scores vs 21%; ≥5 h 50% vs 35% for girls and boys respectively. Greater social media use related to online harassment, poor sleep, low self-esteem and poor body image; in turn these related to higher depressive symptom scores. Multiple potential intervening pathways were apparent, for example: greater hours social media use related to body weight dissatisfaction (≥5 h 31% more likely to be dissatisfied), which in turn linked to depressive symptom scores directly (body dissatisfaction 15% higher depressive symptom scores) and indirectly via self-esteem.

Chandran, et.al (2019) studied Media and the role of digital psychiatry in mental health. The study reveals that the mass media is largely regarded as an integral cogwheel in health service delivery, with a decisive influence on public attitudes. Numerous studies identify connections between media use and negative outcomes such as increased depression, suicide, anxiety, substance use, aggressive behaviour, obesity and eating disorders. Digital tools in psychiatry may promote change and improve health service delivery, augment clinical relationships and influence the dynamic relationship between mass media depictions of mental illness and the publics understanding. Unlike most journalists, who must rely on second-hand accounts, mental health professionals can weigh in directly with their advice, opinions, and expertise on social media, based on direct accounts from patients.

Hou, et. al (2019) studied Social media addiction: Its impact, mediation, and intervention. Results showed that the intervention was effective in reducing the students' social media addiction and improving their mental health and academic efficiency. The current studies yielded original findings that contribute to the empirical database on social media addiction and that have important theoretical and practical implications.

CONCLUSION

Mass media due to its tremendous reach and constant exposure have the unique ability to alter perception and sway popular opinion of large number of people. In fact, the media shape our ideas and understanding of various issues and events. The frequently negative and imprecise portrayals of mental health issues in general and persons with psychiatric disorders in particular, reinforce mistaken beliefs and myths about mental illness. This is worsened by exaggerating and sensationalizing unusual behaviors exhibited by the mentally ill. Persistent repetition along with reporting intricate details about various aspects of suicidal behavior may help TRPs but can and does harm society and should be avoided. An awareness of these adverse consequences and sensitive

reporting of issues relating mental illness in general and suicide in particular may contribute to reducing suicide rates and addressing stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

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