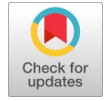


Representation of Therapy and Therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series: An Examination of Accuracy, Influence, and Perception

Anoop M Menon



Abstract: Film and psychology share a longstanding relationship with evolving depictions of therapy and therapists. While extensive research explores Hollywood's portrayal of mental health, a gap exists in understanding therapists in Indian media. This study addresses this void, examining how Indian movies and TV series portray therapists and their impact on audiences. Utilizing qualitative methodology, expert interviews provide insights into therapist perspectives. Bollywood often simplifies mental health, while regional cinema offers more authentic representations. Critiques target films like 'Dear Zindagi,' 'Atrangi Re,' and Tamil movies 'Beast' and 'Anniyan,' as well as the series 'The Family Man' for unrealistic therapy scenes. Positive examples include Tamil and Malayalam films like 'Kumbalangi Nights' and 'Irugapatru,' and the series 'Made in Heaven' for ethical therapist portrayals. Indian media tends to trivialize therapy, perpetuating misconceptions, and stigma. Experts stress the importance of responsible depictions, even in extreme treatments like Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). Therapists face challenges addressing misconceptions fuelled by media portrayals during sessions, underscoring the need for accurate and empathetic representations in Indian media.

Keywords: Therapy, Therapists, Movies, TV Series, Bollywood, Regional.

I. INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of mental health professionals and therapy sessions in Indian visual media carries significant weight in shaping societal perceptions. The researcher's interest in exploring these depictions stemmed from personal experiences intertwined with broader societal concepts, heightened by growing up surrounded by Indian cinema. Recognizing the substantial influence of visual narratives on mental health understanding, the researcher noticed discrepancies ranging from oversimplified heroics to exaggerated sensationalism in therapist portrayals, spurring a quest to unravel their implications on audience perceptions.

In the context of India's evolving socio-political discourse, mental health awareness has become increasingly pivotal.

As discussions around mental health gain momentum, the need for accurate and empathetic media portrayals becomes pronounced.

This study aims to bridge the gap in research focusing explicitly on therapists' representations in Indian visual media, considering the unique diversity of Indian films and TV series across languages and cultures.

Existing studies predominantly centre on Hollywood, leaving a void in understanding how therapists are depicted in Indian narratives and their resonance within the cultural context. Limited research delves into how these representations influence audience perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of therapy and mental health. Insights from mental health professionals can illuminate the accuracy, ethical considerations, and potential impact of these representations on public perceptions, yet such perspectives remain largely unexplored.

Understanding the portrayal of therapy and therapists in Indian media is crucial for assessing their role in perpetuating or mitigating mental health stigma and promoting awareness. Analysing how these portrayals contribute to normalizing or stigmatizing mental health issues can inform strategies to improve sensitive and accurate representations. By contextualizing motivations within personal encounters, societal dialogues, and the lack of comprehensive investigations, this research seeks to underscore the intricate relationship between media representations in Indian visual media and their influence on the populace.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The portrayal of therapists in the media has long been problematic, as it often depicts them as oppressive, malevolent, and inhuman, creating fear and doubt in people who may need help for mental health issues (Beachum, 2010, [1])[6][7][8][9][10]. Negative stereotypes not only discourage people from seeking help but also make it difficult for therapists to properly treat their patients. These negative media stereotypes can negatively affect people's perception of mental health professionals and their expectations of how therapists would respond in certain situations. Each of these portrayals can have a negative impact on the public's perception of the profession, promoting myths of a magical cure for psychological distress or encouraging the misconception that mental health professionals frequently betray the people they intend to help for their own personal gain (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). The media's portrayal of therapists can significantly influence people's decisions about healthcare services and providers, affecting how they perceive illness, what they consider effective treatment, and what behaviour they expect from therapists (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

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* Correspondence Author (s)

Anoop M Menon*, Department of Media Studies, Christ (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru (Karnataka), India. E-mail: anoopmmenon888@gmail.com, ORCID ID: [0009-0003-2016-0001](https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2016-0001)

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Representation of Therapy and Therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series: An Examination of Accuracy, Influence, and Perception

Therapists on-screen are often depicted as oppressive, malevolent, and inhuman, which instils fear and doubt in people who may need help for mental health issues (Beachum, 2010, [1]). Therapists have often spoken out against the unethical and exploitative portrayal of their filmic counterparts, but the negative stereotypes remain. These stereotypes not only deter people from seeking help but also make it difficult for therapists to properly treat their patients (Beachum, 2010, [1]). Representation of therapists in media can have a significant influence on people's decisions about healthcare services and providers in a culture where mass media messages abound. Such messages can affect how people perceive illness, what they consider effective treatment, and what behaviour they expect from healthcare providers. This is particularly concerning in the field of psychology, where research shows that the general public is not as well-informed about mental health and mental health disorders as they are about physical health and disease (Orchowski et al., 2006, [1]). According to Schultz (2005), negative depictions of therapists in the media are especially harmful to the subject of psychology. Even though mental health therapies have been carefully tested and are highly backed by research, politicians of the state often remain unwilling to provide support and financing. As a result, mental health treatments are difficult to get, and doctors' methods of treatment are strictly regulated (Beachum, 2010, [1]). The film industry has frequently used psychology to offer audiences with rapid insights into the motives and inner thoughts of characters. This was done to streamline the exposition and make the narrative more understandable to viewers. Therapists' consultations, according to Gabbard and Gabbard (1999), have given filmmakers with a wonderful mechanism for exposing dark secrets and adding depth to their story. Therapists are sometimes represented as puppet strings, used to provide momentum quickly and easily to the story (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). The entertainment industry has taken advantage of the field of psychology to make movie plots more attractive and appealing to viewers. Filmmakers generally employ tactics such as therapy to show the characters' inner thoughts and feelings (Young et al., 2008, [5]). Additionally, filmmakers may be attempting to portray the motivations behind mental health professionals' actions, although these portrayals may sometimes be exaggerated or inaccurate. This on-screen image of therapy may not necessarily reflect the reality of the profession and often creates unrealistic expectations among clients. Media stereotypes can negatively impact people's perception of mental health professionals and their expectations of how therapists would respond in certain situations. These portrayals can also affect the identities of therapists and shape their attitudes toward their profession. There is a study conducted by Bram in 1997, in which participants were presented with hypothetical scenarios involving a client insulting or expressing sexual interest in a therapist and were asked to predict the therapist's response. The study found that even participants with prior therapy experience had a predominant expectation that the therapist would act negatively, insult the client, pursue a relationship, or abandon the client. The study also found that participants overestimated the percentage of therapists who pursue romantic relationships with their clients. It suggests that

media stereotypes can still mislead people even if they have personal experience with mental health professionals. The media's portrayal of mental health professionals is often negative and inaccurate, which has led to the establishment of false beliefs and expectations about therapy.

Mental health professionals have often held the media accountable, for the stigma that makes people with mental problems less likely to acknowledge symptoms, seek therapy, or comply with treatment (Beachum, 2010, [1]). Despite this, it's worth noting that real mental health professionals may still exhibit some of these same motivations in their work (Young et al., 2008, [5]). The author highlights the importance of therapists examining their own attitudes toward therapy in cinema and developing awareness of how these stereotypes have influenced their understanding of psychological distress (Beachum, 2010, [1]). Atkinson's (1999) extensive filmography review for "authentic" portrayals of therapy relationships concluded that there are few genuine cinematic portrayals of therapeutic experiences, and most of the portrayals feature male characters who lack identifiable personality traits or signs of a social life (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

According to Gabbard (2001) therapists must manage their opinions by viewing the distortions in representation with empathy and understanding, engaging in collaborative discussions with clients about their expectations for treatment, and accommodating transference projections of therapists on the big screen. The author suggests that therapists must come to terms with the negative portrayals of therapy in film and settle with deriving some comfort from the fact that therapy is mentioned at all (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

The representation of psychotherapists in popular culture, particularly in movies, can greatly impact public perceptions of therapy and mental health treatment. Orchard et al. in 2006 [3], conducted a path breaking research citing the work of Gabbard in 2009 where common representations of therapists in Hollywood Cinema were crafted. This section particularly examines those representations of therapists in cinema, including the portrayal of therapists as the know it all oracle, the wrong minded therapist, the undiagnosed therapist, the romantic therapist and the therapist who suffers from trauma blurring ethical boundaries and struggling with their own issues (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). While some portrayals may be meant to create compassion for therapists, they can also perpetuate harmful myths and stereotypes, potentially discouraging individuals from seeking therapy (Beachum, 2010, [1]).

In the representation as the The Know-it-all Oracle the focus is on the portrayal of psychotherapists in films as prophets or oracles who claim to have exceptional insights into their patient's psyche.

This portrayal is problematic as it promotes the myth of a magical cure for psychological distress (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). According to Gabbard and Gabbard (1999) psychotherapists are often depicted in such roles in crime and detective movies where they are conveniently bestowed with miraculous oracular abilities.

However, when this portrayal is negatively portrayed, therapists are depicted as and pretentious know-it-all's who provide misinformation (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). The author cautions that the role of the therapist as a prophetic oracle is problematic in both "good" or "bad" cinema therapists (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). In the representation as The Wrong Minded Therapist the dualistic representation of psychotherapy as a societal agent is discussed. According to Gabbard and Gabbard (1999), "bad" therapists in this role are portrayed as forcing nonconforming members of society to conform to cultural norms. Wilson through his research in 1999 gives an example through the film "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", which depicts the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970s and vilifies all "mental health" programs in the eyes of the viewers. The character of Nurse Ratched, who is the mental health professional in the film, is seen as a representative of the discipline of professional psychology, and she encourages the misconception that mental health professionals frequently betray the people they intend to help for their own personal gain. The most concerning and most prevalent form of therapeutic experience is a "bad" therapist resulting in a positive client outcome (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). According to the author such portrayals present the eccentric and often unethical behaviour of the therapist as a curative factor in psychological care. The audience is encouraged to align and sympathize with "bad" clinicians and to "cheer them on" in pursuit of ethical dilemmas (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

In the representation as the The Undiagnosed Therapist and The Romantic Therapist, the depiction of a therapist with an odd persona is often seen as a sign of humanity, but these representations are more of an unprofessional therapist who is providing ineffective treatment. The depiction of therapists falling in love with their patients blurs the boundary between "good" and "bad" therapists, and although sexual relations are strictly unethical, it is frequently portrayed in cinema therapy. These depictions contribute to the de-medicalization of psychiatry and suggest that unethical behaviour is permissible so long as it benefits the patient (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

In the representation as The therapist who suffers from trauma, the common myth of the "psychologist as the wounded healer" is discussed and how it is portrayed in popular culture, particularly in the movie Good Will Hunting. The portrayal of a therapist who is emotionally vulnerable and struggles with their own issues is meant to create a sense of compassion for the therapist, but it blurs the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in therapy. Movie stereotypes of therapists can affect clients' expectations for treatment and treatment-seeking behaviour. A study by Flowers et al. (2004) used physiological skin conditioning to measure the effect of exposure to four types of cinema therapists, including Dr. Sean Maguire (e.g., Good Will Hunting), and found that participants perceived this portrayal as realistic. This study supports reports of negative attitudes towards therapy within the general public (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

The depiction of recovery and change within the therapeutic relationship in movies is concerning, according to Gabbard and Gabbard (1999). The authors note that movies often show clients leaving their therapist's office after a brief

and miraculous moment of recovery, which is a rare occurrence. Such portrayals can create false expectations of therapy and its outcomes, which is problematic in the context of managed care that emphasizes short-term therapy to reduce the scope and cost of mental health treatment. Clients who are limited to short-term therapies and expect a miraculous cure may experience significant distress when such expectations are not met. The authors also argue that such portrayals of therapy encourage the myth of a magical cure for psychological distress and do not accurately reflect the long-term, often challenging, process of psychotherapy (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

The author proposes that therapists talk with clients about their beliefs and expectations about therapy, which may have been influenced by media portrayals (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). Also emphasized is the importance of therapists working to counteract negative media portrayals of psychotherapy and providing accurate information to the public (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). The partnership between therapists and the media is understood, as well as how it may be advantageous in giving accurate and thorough portrayals of mental health treatment (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

Cinema can be used as a tool for therapists to discuss clients' preconceptions and expectations of therapy. The therapist can discuss with the client the representations of therapy and mental illness that they may have witnessed in mass media and how these representations have influenced their expectations of therapy. The discussion can also include potential fears about therapy or mental illness. This can provide an opportunity for the therapist to provide educational information regarding the tasks and goals of therapy and to provide corrective information to address any harmful misconceptions about therapy or the therapeutic relationship (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

The effectiveness and potential harm of therapy is often doubted, and media depictions of therapy contribute to this problem. Therapists must work to minimize bias in media to protect, maintain, and advance the public image of the profession. The Division of Media Psychology of the American Psychological Association provides an example of strategies that can be adopted to counteract negative portrayals of therapists in the cinema.

The Media Watch Committee of Division 46 presents two annual awards for positive portrayals of psychotherapy in the media, based on the competency of the therapists and their ability to respect boundaries and on the media's accurate and realistic portrayal of the therapeutic encounter (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). Therapists can be proactive in communicating their own image and depictions of therapy, especially in the age of new media, where the Internet has drastically changed many of the constraints traditionally imposed on the communication of information. However, new technology bears equal potential for consumers to access inaccurate information. Therapists can acquire greater control over the accuracy of information using TV and Movies as a publication medium.

Representation of Therapy and Therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series: An Examination of Accuracy, Influence, and Perception

Television broadcasting companies, committed to the distribution of educational and informative programming, may provide a promising avenue for therapists to collaborate in the production of films documenting accurate and informative depictions of a broad array of therapy mediums. The creation and distribution of these resources will require careful research and evaluation to prevent fraudulent provision of services and potentially damaging portrayals of therapy (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

Public's interest in cinema portrayals of therapy is due to curiosity about what goes on behind closed doors in therapy sessions (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]). As cinema and media influence society, therapists must remain aware of how therapy is portrayed in popular culture. The author argues that media portrayals of therapy can influence the expectations clients bring to therapy, and negative portrayals can impact the public's perception of mental health care. The author suggests that therapists should consider collaborating with creators and disseminators of public media to provide accurate and comprehensive illustrations of mental health care. Therapists must develop an awareness of stereotypical prototypes portrayed in cinema and bring a discussion of their influence into the therapy room to provide accurate information to their clients (Orchowski et al., 2006, [3]).

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are therapists portrayed in Indian Movies and TV Series?
- How does this representation influence the consumers of Indian Movies and TV Series?
- How do therapists respond to the representations of their profession in Indian Movies and TV Series and what challenges do they face with regard to it?

A. Research Objectives

- To understand if Therapists/Therapy in Indian Movies and TV Series have been portrayed accurately
- To understand how representations of therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series play a role in influencing consumers/viewers
- To understand the Perception of Therapy Portrayal and Reallife challenges faced by Therapists Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such

B. Theoretical Framework

For this research study 2 theoretical frameworks have been used to gain a better understanding to answer the research questions.

- Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory conceptualized by George Gerbner in the 1960's proposes that people who watch visual media frequently are influenced by the messages expounded by the media (mainstreaming) wherein their real-life experiences are often based on these messages (resonance). The first objective of the research "Accuracy of Therapy and Therapist Portrayal in Indian Movies and TV Series" and the second objective "Influence of Therapy and Therapist Portrayal in Indian Movies and TV Series" connects to this theory of how audience watch the representation of therapists in Indian

Movies and TV Series and are then influenced by it.

- Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory conceptualized by Lazarsfeld and Stanton in 1944, proposes that the audience/consumers use media to satisfy specific needs/desires. Human needs like information, entertainment etc. are gratified using different media such as film, social media, news media etc. The 3rd research objective to understand the perception of Therapists of Therapy Portrayal and real-life challenges of therapists including the information gained by the audience/consumers. This need for information of therapy and therapists are gained by using visual media like Indian Movies and TV Series by the audience. This way the theory connects to this research study. To understand if Therapists/Therapy in Indian Movies and TV Series have been portrayed accurately

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology involved a pilot study utilizing the Delphi Method to select Bollywood movies and TV series featuring therapists. It is a widely used and accepted method for gathering data from respondents within their domain of expertise (Hsu & Sandford, n.d, [2]). It was chosen to grasp insights from a close circle of experts efficiently. Following the Delphi process, common movies like "Dear Zindagi," "15 Park Avenue," and the TV series "The Family Man" were initially analysed. Subsequently, qualitative methodology became the primary method, focusing on non-numerical data to understand human behaviour and perceptions. The phrase qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour (Taylor et al., 2015, [4]). This approach, including in-depth interviews with six therapists holding bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology, aimed to explore opinions deeply and spontaneously. The semi-structured interview guide, derived from the Delphi Method outcomes and literature review, facilitated this exploration. Participants were chosen through convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling methods, ensuring a diverse range of experienced professionals.

The Delphi Method provided a structured framework for initial sample selection while interviews offered rich insights into perceptions and experiences. This hybrid approach allowed for a nuanced examination of the complex dynamics between media representations and real-world perceptions. Through systematic sampling methods, the study ensured a diverse range of perspectives, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Overall, this methodological framework enabled a rigorous exploration of the research questions, shedding light on the portrayal of therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series and its impact on viewers.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research has been conducted in a way wherein the interviewees are free to give their critical opinion based on a set of semi structured questions that have been asked. A total of 6 interviews have been conducted for the study.



Table- I: A Summary of Responses by all Experts

Inter view	Exp of Therapist	Accuracy of Therapy Portrayal	Influence of Therapy Portrayal	Perception of Therapy Portrayal and Real-life challenges faced by Therapists
1	5+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Overall, a good representation •Bollywood Representation of Therapists not accurate •Representation of Therapists in TV Series is better •Not necessary to always depict what a therapist does, focus more on script and if necessary, just mention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Important to have a professional therapist guide the filmmaker so there are no misconceptions which can affect people coming for therapy •Inaccurate representation of therapy cases the audience to have misconceptions in their mind •Impactful Therapy scenes in Mainstream movies influences a layman to know what it is •If therapy cannot be represented properly drop it off the script rather than misrepresenting the whole concept since Indian Audience are more judgmental of Films •Audience not still mature enough to understand mental health and intricate filmmaking so representation should be done in a sensitive manner •Treatment scenes like Electro convulsive therapy (ECT) should be avoided so as not to instill a sense of distress and avoidance to therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Information outburst is common in today's generation when one is vying for a product or service so It doesn't really matter if there is an information outburst because the onus always lies on the therapist to clear up any misinformation and needs to handle it with compassion
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapists are sexualized in TV Series •No boundaries or personal space between the therapist or clients •Difference in location boundaries may happen and work as viable treatment option in real life •Mental health shown like its horror especially when there is less information about what mental health is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapy is not taken seriously in Films which also causes the audience to not come for therapy •Difference in location boundaries may happen in real life too •Therapy is such a personal thing because it happens between two people in a closed room so movies and books are the only pathway to view therapy •If they're showing it in a positive light they talk about that this is actually illegal and this is not the most ethical way of taking on clients, It's good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It does not help when people diagnose themselves and come into therapy because it takes a lot to undo the damage which is done in terms of wrong perception of what disorders do the audience have or what therapists are/what therapy will be prescribed •There are limitations to how much a therapist can explain so the onus lies on bigger corporations and institutions
2	3+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bollywood Movies have a wider reach of audience, but therapy is romanticized •Symptoms from different disorders are taken and then clubbed together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Without any technical background of the disorder the audience will not know if what is shown is accurate •Only a few people among the audience go beyond just believing what they see and researching •Children don't have the same kind of logical reasoning as adults so when they watch the movies, they will automatically imbibe what the movies are showing •Negative representations will always do more harm than good no matter what the type of audience are because 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Inclusive representation of therapists is required where both the concept of therapy and therapists are addressed •It becomes a challenge for therapists to undo the labels and break them when the audience has already diagnosed themselves with certain labels due to their perception
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapists are sexualized in TV Series •No boundaries or personal space between the therapist or clients •Difference in location boundaries may happen and work as viable treatment option in real life •Mental health shown like its horror especially when there is less information about what mental health is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapy is not taken seriously in Films which also causes the audience to not come for therapy •Difference in location boundaries may happen in real life too •Therapy is such a personal thing because it happens between two people in a closed room so movies and books are the only pathway to view therapy •If they're showing it in a positive light they talk about that this is actually illegal and this is not the most ethical way of taking on clients, It's good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It does not help when people diagnose themselves and come into therapy because it takes a lot to undo the damage which is done in terms of wrong perception of what disorders do the audience have or what therapists are/what therapy will be prescribed •There are limitations to how much a therapist can explain so the onus lies on bigger corporations and institutions
3	3+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bollywood Movies have a wider reach of audience, but therapy is romanticized •Symptoms from different disorders are taken and then clubbed together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Without any technical background of the disorder the audience will not know if what is shown is accurate •Only a few people among the audience go beyond just believing what they see and researching •Children don't have the same kind of logical reasoning as adults so when they watch the movies, they will automatically imbibe what the movies are showing •Negative representations will always do more harm than good no matter what the type of audience are because 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Inclusive representation of therapists is required where both the concept of therapy and therapists are addressed •It becomes a challenge for therapists to undo the labels and break them when the audience has already diagnosed themselves with certain labels due to their perception
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			<p>people mostly watch movies for entertainment's sake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •While showing ECT it is important to show the depth of the character otherwise it will always do more harm than good 	
4	3+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bollywood does not an accurate representation of therapy but Regional Cinema especially Malayalam and Tamil have better representations •Representations of therapists comparing their life to the clients have been portrayed but it should be avoided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If movies and TV Series show inaccurate representations then it creates a sense of fear/hesitation towards the audience and it also adds to the stigma as well •People often look for quick solutions when it comes to therapy and the same is shown in both in Indian movies and tv series so they get easily influenced by the same •It is better not to show scenes of ECT because it often creates a lot of fear and bias, appropriate usage of such scenes in the plot with better research will be more helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If the information received from the perception converts into a place where the audience reaches out, then it's helpful but If the awareness just stays as awareness and becomes a self-diagnosis then it does not serve the purpose.
5	3+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Representation has got better in the recent years but very inaccurate representation has been shown in Old Films especially in Mollywood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Inaccurate representations scares people and hinders them from looking at it as help for the brain like how you need help for your body and for your mind, rather the brain. •If therapy is represented wrongly but if the audience is able to separate facts from fiction it would then lead to better awareness •It is better not to show scenes of ECT as it would lead to negative stereotypes even when in reality ECT is rarely used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It's mostly a challenge because self-diagnosis due to the inherent perception of the representation leads to more panic and harm
6	5+ Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More representation of mental health in therapy in recent years which is a good sign •Representation of Therapy Is more but vey few are actually accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The audience will often believe pseudo truth rather than reality so inaccurate representations will influence them to believe them easily •It is quite positive that more representation is there as it is a concept which is still considered taboo but again it is harmful if it's an inaccurate representation •ECT still exists but it is the last resort in a therapy process so when catering to a large audience it is better if such scenes are not showcased or if such scenes have to be showcased the depth of the character needs to be explored first •The onus remains on the Film/TV Series creator to separate facts from fiction and reach out to prominent mental health bodies before making a film or tv series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Perception of therapy and therapists due to the representation romanticizes it rather than normalize it and then information outburst leads to a sense of quirky coolness within oneself •Audience cannot necessarily be blamed due the lack of knowledge about therapy
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapists are sexualized in TV Series •No boundaries or personal space between the therapist or clients •Difference in location boundaries may happen and work as viable treatment option in real life •Mental health shown like its horror especially when there is less information about what mental health is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Therapy is not taken seriously in Films which also causes the audience to not come for therapy •Difference in location boundaries may happen in real life too •Therapy is such a personal thing because it happens between two people in a closed room so movies and books are the only pathway to view therapy •If they're showing it in a positive light they talk about that this is actually illegal and this is not the most ethical way of taking on clients, It's good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It does not help when people diagnose themselves and come into therapy because it takes a lot to undo the damage which is done in terms of wrong perception of what disorders do the audience have or what therapists are/what therapy will be prescribed •There are limitations to how much a therapist can explain so the onus lies on bigger corporations and institutions



Representation of Therapy and Therapists in Indian Movies and TV Series: An Examination of Accuracy, Influence, and Perception

A. Accuracy of Therapy and Therapist Portrayal

Experts expressed concerns about the depiction of therapists in Indian cinema, noting discrepancies between Bollywood and Regional Films. While Bollywood often simplifies mental health issues, Regional Cinema tends to offer more authentic portrayals. Criticisms were directed at movies like 'Dear Zindagi,' 'Atrangi Re,' Tamil movies 'Beast' and 'Anniyan,' and the Hindi TV series 'The Family Man' for unrealistic, unethical, or sensationalized therapy scenes. However, positive examples were found in Tamil and Malayalam movies like 'Kumbalangi Nights,' 'Irugapatru,' and 'Swayamvarapandhal,' which were commended for their genuine representations of therapists and adherence to ethical standards.

B. Influence of Therapy and Therapist Portrayal

The experts highlighted how Indian Movies and TV Series tend to trivialize therapy, portraying sessions as casual conversations, potentially undermining their impact. Inaccurate portrayals were seen to influence audience perceptions, fostering misconceptions about therapy and mental health practices. This could instil fear or hesitation in individuals seeking therapy, contributing to existing stigma. The responsibility lies with creators to portray therapy authentically and ethically. Quality representations were emphasized over quantity, and extreme treatment scenes, like Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT), were scrutinized for potential negative impacts on audience perceptions.

C. Perception of Therapy Portrayal and Real-Life Challenges

Therapists face challenges due to clients arriving with preconceived notions influenced by media depictions of therapy. These beliefs may lead to misaligned expectations during therapy sessions, requiring therapists to navigate and recalibrate them. The findings underscore the need for responsible and accurate representations of therapy in Indian media, with the potential to influence public perceptions and the challenges therapists face in addressing misconceptions derived from these portrayals.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The interviews revealed a spectrum of opinions on therapist portrayal, concerns about inaccuracy, and misrepresentations. Positive examples were found in Regional Cinema and TV Series, while criticisms were directed at Bollywood for oversimplifying mental health issues. Indian Movies and TV Series tend to trivialize therapy, influencing audience perceptions and fostering misconceptions. The responsibility lies with creators to portray therapy authentically and ethically, with a focus on quality over quantity. Extreme treatment scenes were scrutinized for potential negative impacts on audience perceptions.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, responsible, accurate, and ethical representations of therapy and mental health in Indian movies and TV series are crucial. These depictions wield substantial influence over public perceptions and require continuous efforts from the entertainment industry, mental health

professionals, policymakers, and the public to rectify misrepresentations, reduce stigma, and foster a more empathetic and informed societal discourse on mental health. Future research should address limitations and enhance understanding of the complex interplay between media representations, mental health perceptions, and professional practices in India.

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AUTHOR PROFILE



Anoop M Menon, MA, BA, is a dedicated researcher with a keen interest in exploring the intersection of Film Studies and Psychology. His academic journey has been driven by a deep passion for understanding the psychological impact of film. His recently completed thesis highlights the profound influence of Indian Media on our mental and emotional states.



With over five years of experience studying media and communication, Anoop is eager to bring his unique blend of creativity, enthusiasm, and insatiable curiosity to the corporate world.

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