

Impact of Youtube on the Stigma of Mental Illness in India

Senthil Kumar P¹ and Dr. Richa Bansal²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

²Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Sunrise University, Alwar, Rajasthan, India

Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not YouTube has had an effect on reducing the stigma that is associated with mental health. The research will place particular attention on the nature of the content, the reach, and the reaction of different online mental health initiatives and videos. Additionally, the study takes into consideration the perspectives of both young people and experts working in the field of mental health*

Keywords: Mental Health Awareness, Stigma Reduction, YouTube Campaigns

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mental Health

Most mentally healthy individuals are pleasant, hardworking, and community-minded. The research increases awareness of mental health diseases, which are as significant as physical ailments but often disregarded. To preserve our civilization, we must embrace and solve these issues collectively and help the needy. The research report appropriately emphasizes the problem's severity, which is helpful.

Mental health was taboo in India until a few years ago, despite our medical scientific prowess. Many fail to notice a problem and treat it with drugs and therapy. A recent WHO study indicated that one in four people worldwide had a mental illness, making it a leading cause of illness. About 450 million suffer globally. The two most frequent mental illnesses in India are clinical depression and anxiety disorders, with 56 million and 38 million, respectively. 7.5% need medical attention. Participation in local decisions that affect the poor is also crucial (Pathlavath, 2016). It helps this process.

Ads, documentaries, and social media initiatives that assist victims understand their mental health have helped overcome mental illness stigma in the subcontinent as technology has grown.

B. YouTube as a Medium of Communication

The YouTube video hosting service constitutes a social networking website on which practically any individual or organization with Internet access can upload videos that can be seen almost immediately by wide audiences. As the world's largest video platform, YouTube has had impact in many fields, with some individual YouTube videos having directly shaped world events.

C. Video is beyond entertainment

It has become a critical component in business, politics, communication, social media and even in music. We need video to market and sell products, promote new ideas and share beliefs. Since video appeals to both sight and sound in a quick burst of stimulation, it captures the attention of the viewer immediately and makes a lasting impression. The messaging is concise and easy to understand, reaching people of all demographics.

Ultimately, therein lies the power of video the ability to effectively share beliefs and impact audiences worldwide from the comfort of their homes to the screens of their smartphones 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The potential of YouTube to be used as a medium to communicate intrinsic ideas that are essential to our growth must be realized. YouTube being world's largest video platform has helped in social awareness amongst wide audiences and it's a fact that it has led to social impact on society, culture, and even world events.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Roots and Causes: Mental health disorders affect 450 billion people globally, accounting for 12% of the global disease burden in 2012 and 15% by 2020. Nearby, 9-102 mental health cases per 1000 people are documented. Mental health issues might be behavioral, disaster-related, or induced by depression, stress, or concern.

Most findings showed certain things. Poverty and social and economic distress induce depression, hence higher-income countries have better mental health. Urban and rural conditions were comparable in lower-income countries like India. Despite their different sources, the two areas' mental health issues were likely comparable in weight. Teens and adolescents experience mental health issues due to adjustment issues, peer-induced anxiety, atmospheric stress, and drug or alcohol addictions. The elderly, who typically have mental health issues owing to dementia, arthritis, cataracts, etc., are the last and easiest to target.

Mental illness affects 5 crore Indians 8% of the population. How can things improve? First, we must recognize that we have a major issue that needs quick attention. Psychological development for toddlers and teenagers should begin early. Women should be empowered in all sectors, and elders need greater social support. Professional mental health therapy should be available nationwide and not stigmatized. Stakeholder interaction becomes clearer (Pathlavath, 2018).

1. The Indian Scenario

The WHO has described how mental illness and suicide undermine sustainable development goals. In 2015, India had a suicide rate of 15.7/100,000, higher above regional and global norms of 12.9 and 10.6. In India, 15–29-year-olds commit suicide most often. Unmet demographic needs are substantial. Mental disease prevalence and treatment rates differ by 76%–85% in developing countries. Resource constraints contribute to the large treatment gap. Infrastructure and human resources are lacking in India. Despite health advancements, India has a disproportionate global sickness burden. Our health indices are dismal compared to middle-income countries and India's neighbors. High out-of-pocket health-care expenses and poor treatment make a large portion of the population poor. Task-shifting to non-specialist community health practitioners may help low-resource settings administer care. Piggybacking on primary care systems and deploying force multipliers may work given the shortage of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, and social workers.

2. Media Influences

We know media affects our thoughts and actions. Much has been written about how popular culture misrepresents mental illness and harms society. India is only starting to see mental illness differently. Studies have examined media transmission and its consequences on attitudes, actions, and opinions. Images of mentally ill persons may convey their experience. Television offers several vicariances. Cultivation theory may increase viewer vicarious exposure. Assess payment methods, technology, security, legal challenges, and new distribution channel operation to benefit people.

In July, the American Journal of Preventative Medicine evaluated youngsters' usage of 11 social media sites Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Vine, Snapchat, Facebook, and Reddit and "perceived social isolation". Express their rights and grievances despite all obstacles. Stakeholder conversations motivate communal problem-solving. Users felt more isolated on these networks. Social isolation harms mental and physical health. Envious users may suffer from the site. Most social media and mental health studies "aren't able to determine whether spending more time on social media leads to depression or anxiety, or if depressed or anxious young people spend more time on social media". Mental illness is not only caused by social media.

3. Media Theories

Media theory, also known as new media theory or media-centered theory of composition, examines how writing is formed, specifically the tools and channels employed. New media includes an array of digital communication methods, frequently combining text with visual or audio elements. With the emergence of computers as word processing tools, media theorists today study the rhetorical strengths and weaknesses of diverse media and their effects on literacy, author, and reader. YouTube is an effective social media platform for mental health messaging.

Many development specialists believe what occurs after individuals are linked to technology is most important. Pathlavath, A, K (2013). Technology must aid progress.

Active audience theory holds that media audiences actively, often unknowingly, interpret messages in their personal and societal settings. Family background, beliefs, values, culture, hobbies, education, and experiences might impact media message decoding. YouTube's mental health awareness material and reaction reflect users' thoughts.

III. METHODOLOGY

To answer the primary research question, "Has YouTube helped in mitigating the stigma around mental illness in India?" the researcher has opted for mixed methodology methods. The following has been kept in mind while making the decision:

1. The qualitative approach provides an opportunity to observe subtle details that outline and elaborate on the research problem, while the quantifiable data seeks to justify/ invalidate the observations made during the process in a graphical format.

2. With more data in hand, the strengths of both methods are employed and a broader perspective is obtained.

However, certain limitations may ensue:

1. If the researcher leans towards one methodology owing to convenience, possibly neglecting the other, results are bound to be biased and inaccurate too.

2. While the quantifiable data seeks to provide a singular, definite answer, qualitative methods usually end with varied, subjective analysis, thus leading to an inconclusive research.

A. Qualitative Research

Content Analysis: The most essential method of the research is analyzing the content of various material that is available online with the primary objective of raising awareness and mitigating the stigma around mental illness. These include:

1. Videos available on Youtube by popular channels such as "AIB: If People Treated Other Illnesses Like They Treat Depression", and "The Timeliners: If Anxiety Was a Person".
2. Advertisements of institutions/ brands such as those of "Deepika Padukone: Live, Laugh, Love Foundation", "Mirinda: Release The Pressure:", and "Levis: Shape My World".

These will be analyzed on the basis of their subject matter, outreach, and immediate and long-term response.

B. Personal interviews

The researcher will also be reaching out to mental health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors) to get well-versed with their perspectives and expert opinions in terms of the effectiveness of the content available of Youtube with regard to mitigating the stigma around mental illness and seeking help.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

A. Online Survey

The researcher has drafted a questionnaire to attest the popularity of mental health campaigns and the way these messages are perceived. The respondents include the youth from urban cities of India.

B. Data Analysis

Content Analysis of Videos: To achieve a better understanding of the mental health oriented content available via Youtube, a total of five videos were selected based on their popularity and prominence. The researcher then analyzed them based on the following parameters:

1. **Reach and Response:** Number of views, comments, likes, and dislikes.
2. **Message type:** Informative, Responsive, or Persuasive.
3. **Content Appeal:** Emotional, Humour, or Rational.

4. Overarching themes.

Video I: “AIB: If People Treated Other Illnesses Like They Treated Depression”

Description: Published on 11th April, 2017, to 1,690,848 views, 52,783 likes, 3,679 dislikes, and 2,788 comments (as of March 2018), this video was released under the banner of popular Indian comedy channel, All India Bakchod. The video showcases a character named Gaurav, who comes down with the disease of Typhoid (which is representative of Depression), and his health issues are trivialized over the pretext of not being real, a jab at people who say the same frequently about mental illness(es).

Content Appeal: The narrative of the video is replete with elements of sarcasm, exaggeration, and irony. Although it prompts the viewers to laugh out loud, the ultimate goal is for them to ponder over the gravity of mental illness, and to the extent that it has been trivialised. Thus, the video makes use of a humour appeal to evoke a response and attempt to retain the primary message in the minds of the viewers.

Message Type: With humour as a predominant element in the video, the message type is responsive, in that it seeks to evoke an empathetic and understanding response from the viewers to create a lasting social impact.

Themes: Metonymy, Sarcasm, Dramatization, Ridicule.

Video II: “The Timeliners | If Anxiety Was A Person”

Description: Published on 10th October 2017, to 301, 849 views, 11,000 likes, 371 dislikes, and 413 comments, the video was released by a lifestyle channel created by Scoop Whoop, called The Timeliners. The video that showcases the struggles of a woman with an anxiety disorder (personified by another character) received a positive response for exploring a common, yet not talked about mental health issue, and getting the message across in a light-hearted way.

Content Appeal: The narrative of this video is influenced by the elements of personification, with the attributes of anxiety presented in a very straightforward and blunt manner. The primary appeal of the video is humour, an attempt to bring an everyday mental health issue to the forefront by presenting it in a comedic context.

Message Type: The primary message type of the video is responsive. By representing relatable content, the creators wish to communicate the regularity of anxiety in our lives and destigmatize it in the process.

Themes: Personification, Dramatization, Normalization.

Video III: “The Live Love Laugh Foundation: Doobara Poocho”

Description: Published on 10th October, 2016, to 552, 117 views, 2,300 likes, 17 dislikes, and 185 comments, Deepika Padukone’s foundation released a video showcasing different members of the community, teenagers, young adults, middle aged people- both male and female- struggling with depression and hesitantly opening up to their loved ones. It received a mixed response, but was able to get the message of empathy across.

Content Appeal: The primary appeal of the video is emotional, making its viewers realize that mental duress can get to anyone and everyone and that it’s important for their issues to be acknowledged and looked after.

Message Type: The predominant message of the video is persuasive, urging its viewers to look out for their loved ones, and ask them repeatedly about their mental well-being, and eventually taking necessary action.

Themes: Call for Action, Difficult Conversation, Normalization.

Video IV: “Mirinda: Release The Pressure”

Description: Published on 15th February, 2017, to 24,744, 945 views, 50,00 likes, 8,747 dislikes, and 3,344 comments, Mirinda’s marketing campaign and social initiative shot by Shoojit Sircar is the most popular video chosen in the sample. It showcases students writing open letters to their parents with regard to the pressure they face for examinations.

Content Appeal: The primary appeal of the video is emotional, highlighting the societal pressure that builds up in individuals’ lives and is the leading cause of depression and suicidal tendencies in students.

Message Type: The message type is persuasive, urging primarily parents of teenagers to not let their children get stuck in a place of inadequacy and bleakness.

Themes: Confrontational, Behaviour, Regularity, etc.

Video V: “Levi’s: Shape My World | Illeana D’Cruz”

Description: Published on 15th September, 2017, to 261,827 views, 1,278 likes, 67 dislikes, and 34 comments, the video was released by international denim brand, Levi’s as a part of its individualized campaign, Shape My World. This

specific video follows Indian model and actress Illeana D'Cruz, as she discusses her struggle with body image issues, being diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder, and subsequently overcoming it.

Content Appeal: The content of the video is conversationalist and straightforward, and the primary appeal of the video is rational, where the celebrity discusses her insecurities in a matter-of-factly manner.

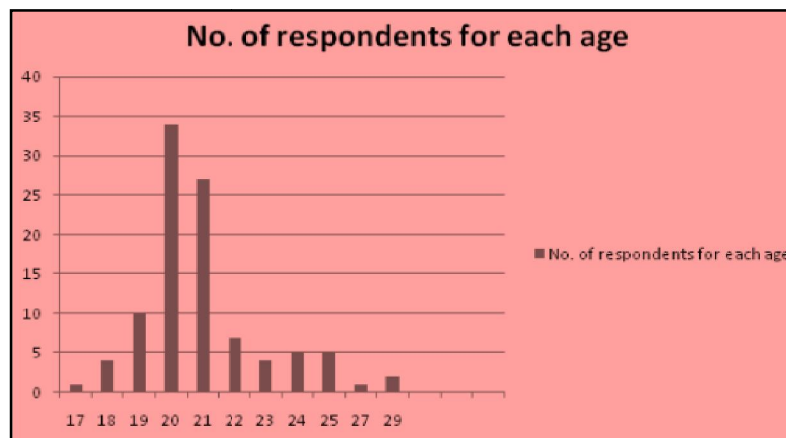
Message Type: The primary message type of the video is informative, communicating to the viewers the intricacies and struggles that come with body dysmorphic disorders.

Themes: Conversational, Overcoming of Insecurities, Normalization, etc.

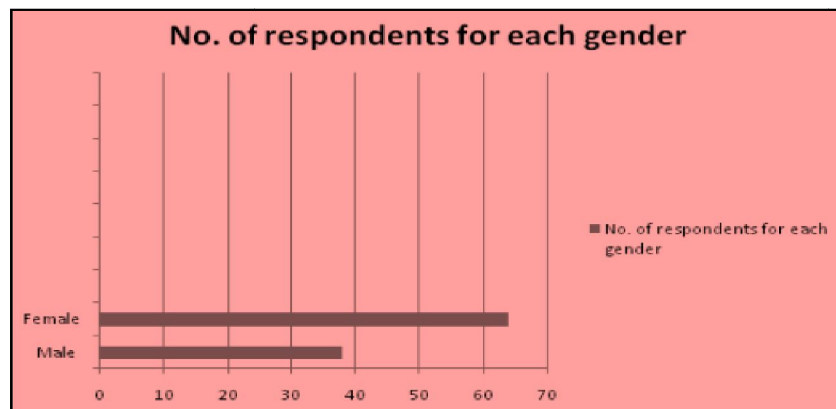
V. Survey

A survey was conducted for the research paper to adjudge the popularity of mental health oriented content (both videos and campaigns) present via Youtube, and to look into how the messages portrayed in these videos are perceived. It was targeted at the youth, and a hundred respondents between the ages 0f 15-29 were approached. These included both male and female respondents from the urban cities of India. It was a quantifiable questionnaire conducted via Google Forms.

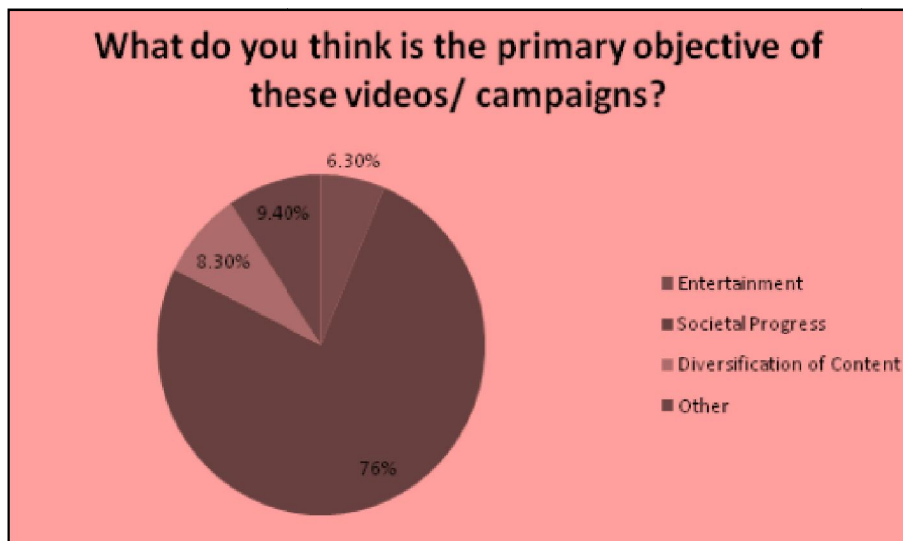
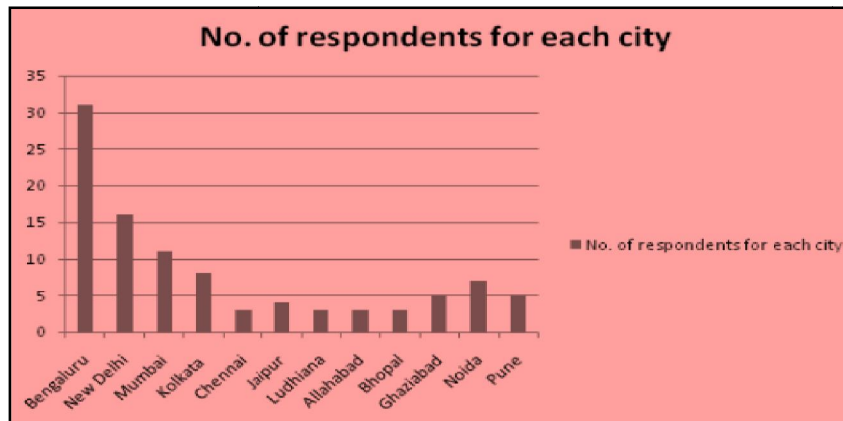
Age



Gender



City



IV. FINDINGS AND SUMMARY

The research has yielded the following findings:

Content Analysis

Mental health oriented content on Youtube primarily makes use of emotional, rational, and humour appeals to get their message across.

The messages are primarily informative, persuasive, or responsive in nature.

The dominant themes include initiation of a difficult conversation, normalization of the issue, and a call for action.

Survey

49.2% of the respondents are familiar with the mental awareness videos available on YouTube.

Respondents are more likely to participate/ observe textual/ pictorial campaigns rather than video centric content.

Respondents believe that the primary objective of such campaigns is societal progress.

Respondents believe that only a specific section is targeted/ affected by such content.

Respondents believe that such content helps in popularizing platforms to discuss mental health.

There exists a conflicting opinion on the interpretation of content, some believe it results in a positive discussion, some believe it is superficial in nature.

Personal Interviews

Respondents believe that the underlying motive of such videos is a sense of social responsibility, reflected in from social inclusion, normalization, and creation of safe spaces.

Respondents believe the primary objective is to create safe spaces, reflected in repeated exposure, market appeals, and de-stigmatization.

Respondents believe that it leads to the homogenization of data, reflected in oversimplification, stereotypical impressions, and the precedence of creativity over the main issue.

Respondents believe access to new media is essential, reflected in digital literacy, and a target audience characterized by urban areas and a specific age-group.

Respondents believe that only awareness of one's health isn't enough, some people lack emotional support and funds.

Respondents believe such campaigns are effective in drastically reducing the stigma around mental health, but only those with financial independency and/or immediate familial acceptance can pursue medical aid.

INTERRELATION

According to studies, YouTube's three complicated methods may reduce mental illness stigma. The video's well-meaning ideas are carefully considered by viewers. Based on collective research, the new media theory states that material is carefully picked to provide an interactive and customized communication experience that engages viewers for long-term retention. Active audience theory claims that viewers' personal and social contexts impact broadcast messages. Positive mental health awareness works. Family involvement, treatment sensitization, and social integration may reduce mental illness stigma. Lack of mental disease knowledge limits therapy. Community-based solutions are more popular in low-income nations, research finds. Literacy affects health awareness.

Information errors create stigma and prejudice. Very few Indian studies have studied mental health literacy. Low mental health literacy in adolescents: 29.04% depression and 1.31% schizophrenia/psychosis. Stigma accompanied help-seeking. These studies support mental health. Mental health literacy is increasingly synonymous with mental health knowledge and understanding. Health literacy is "accessing, understanding, and using information to promote and maintain good health." Recognition, causality, self-help, professional intervention, and information highway navigation are mental health literacy topics. Public awareness may lessen identification and help-seeking barriers. Many situations indicate education improving mental health.

V. CONCLUSION

A fifth feel lonely depression. Due to ignorance and social difficulties, society stigmatizes the illness. Social media is helping people overcome pessimism and share their feelings after the perfect storm no one can explain it. Applauding the internet and addressing mental health makes sense. Mental health is vital, and the internet delivers rapid knowledge, ideas, and worldwide connection. The mental health paradigm and negative online media coverage make such relationships difficult. Too many mistake mental health with illness. Newspaper headlines say "internet is bad for kids' mental health". Hope for mental health and embrace the internet's survival, understanding, and growth. Recently, organizations and the public have creatively explored mental health. Handheld and social media may concentrate mental health intervention effectiveness and information. Micropatterns in enormous amounts of big data will impact decision-making. Start again with new enthusiasm because most mental health projects in developing countries have failed for 60 years. Apathy may be avoided by mental health knowledge. Evidence-based government policies, engaged media, a vibrant educational system, a responsive industry, active use of new technologies, and creative crowdsourcing may eliminate mental illness.

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