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# FROM SCREEN TO SELF: ACHIEVING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY THROUGH NETFLIX FILMS AND MEDIA THEORIES

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**Abstract:** “Netflix and Chill” is a phrase known to all. While chill here has different connotations, it is interesting to know that Netflix also plays a significant role in making the world more ‘chill’ by doing its part in raising mental health awareness. Alia Bhatt, a regular at international events like MET Gala and Cannes, through her notable work in films can serve as a catalyst for mental health awareness and behavioral change, depicting how stardom can intersect with social consciousness. The study uses content analysis to assess her movies available on Netflix like *Shaandaar* (2015), *Dear Zindagi* (2016) and *Heart of Stone* (2023). It focuses on how each movie deals with different mental health issues, such as trauma and flashbacks, psychological distress, and insomnia. Grounded in McCombs and Shaw’s Agenda-setting theory and Gerbner’s cultivation theory, this paper depicts different cinematic narratives that serve as public health agendas, foster empathy, and elevate discussions about mental health awareness to the fore of public deliberations. The contribution of each film’s narrative elements based upon these two media theories has been mapped via a specialized table. Through an interdisciplinary lens, the analysis indicates that celebrity-driven cinematic narratives have the power to profoundly alter public opinions by reaffirming the power of film to educate, destigmatize, and promote health and wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Cinema, Health literacy and promotion, Media theories, Mental health, Netflix

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## INTRODUCTION:

In recent times, mental health has gradually become a focal point for public discourse. Earlier it was long cloaked with taboo and stigma, but now it has become a part of daily life deliberations in a healthy way. Among the various channels of mass media shaping public perceptions and social awareness on mental health, Netflix has played a vital role. Netflix is a world-wide streaming service that is available in more than 190 countries with more than 300 million paid subscribers, making it a significant cultural force (Mass 2025). Beyond entertainment, the platform has also emerged as a global space to shape conversations on mental well-being through fiction-based storytelling (Pena & Sarraionandia 2023). Due to its multi-channel nature, technical mediation, and public appeal, movies are a tool for influencing society in the framework of mass media and communication (Fedotova 2003). Movies have a significant impact on the human brain and social consciousness, and this influence can and has been used to cause significant social change. For instance, social reform occurred in South Korea whereby a program was started by government for renovation of apartments situated in basements following the Oscar winning film *Parasite* (Sharf 2020). Similarly, in India, sanitary pads were made tax free following the movie *Padman* (Banerji 2018).

A recent survey reveals that cinema plays a substantial part in fostering awareness about cultural influences and behaviors (Lifestyle Desk News18 2023). The survey reveals that Gen Z and Millennials believe that cinema is a suitable initiative in portrayal of mental health to influence public perceptions and drive conversations at global stage with 77% percent believing that Movies and OTT content can maneuver mental health conversations (Storyboard18 2023). Interestingly, Netflix has a dedicated mental health resource, the [wanna.talkaboutit.com](http://wanna.talkaboutit.com) website, available in 26 languages (Bajaria 2020), Developed in collaboration with over 150 organizations from 45 different countries, including Mental Health America, The Pavena Foundation for Women & Children in Thailand, Consejo Ciudadano in Mexico, The Trevor Project and Crisis Text Line in the U.S. among others ensures that Netflix’s content provide awareness related to mental health well-being and access to professional help and resources worldwide.

An important factor that has contributed significantly in promoting mental health awareness in the general public is mostly the knowledge perceived by them through cinema and often by their favourite celebrities. While Netflix is available globally, it is also interesting to note that Alia Bhatt, who is considered to be one of the top-notch actresses of mainstream media, has films which traverse themes of trauma, healing, emotional repression, and psychological therapy. While exploring Netflix’s films related to mental well-being, the researchers observed a thematic commonality in Alia Bhatt’s movies like *Dear Zindagi*, *Heart of Stone*

and Shaandaar, addressing different psychological issues like anxiety, emotional trauma, insomnia and abandonment in varying narrative intensities.

These portrayals support the foundation of Cultivation theory as to how repeated exposure to such narratives gradually reshapes viewers attitudes towards normalizing mental health issues in the global culture psyche. Additionally, aligning with the Agenda Setting Theory, Netflix places mental well-being at the centre of public attention by exhibiting stories around psychological themes. Films such as Shaandaar, Dear Zindagi and Heart of Stone engage with various mental health struggles, emphasizing that psychological well-being is an integral aspect of everyday life and can be managed with appropriate support and intervention. These movies have sparked public discourse on platforms ranging from social media to therapy rooms, representing the therapeutic potential of cinema as popular culture.

This paper hence tries to inspect cinematic narratives as tools for mental health promotion on Netflix through Alia Bhatt's roles by examining her three movies: Shaandar (2015), Dear Zindagi (2016) and Heart of Stone (2023), as each of these films offers insights on mental health concerns through different characters. The choice of films is deliberate due to their diversity in tone and genre while maintaining a consonant focus on emotional struggles. In Dear Zindagi, the representation of mental therapies is not shown as dramatized but by beautifully portraying the significance of it by emphasizing the legitimacy of seeking professional help. In Shaandar, themes related to trauma one goes through due to loss of loved ones, self-worth and identity conflict are embedded within the narrative, reflecting how mental well-being topics can be subtly woven into the romantic comedy genre. In Heart of Stone, while action takes primacy, the attempt to explain the childhood and journeys of main characters showcases a transformative journey from past traumas through cinematic realism. Here an opportunity is also presented to compare different characters which further emphasizes the importance of love and care in healing psychological wounds.

To substantiate more the research study tries to understand how mental health is represented through contemporary cinema and what role Netflix's movies featuring Bhatt play in transforming public discourse on emotional well-being and societal challenges through an in-depth analysis of these selected films by using established media theories and concepts such as the agenda-setting theory and cultivation theory to educate public through custom -tailored pieces of entertainment.

To understand how media specifically Netflix via Alia Bhatt's roles has contributed towards mental well-being, the paper used media and communication based analytical framework. Two prominent theories have been taken into consideration to provide critical insights into the mechanics of message dissemination, influence and reception.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

Since this paper adopts a unique method of content analysis while leveraging Netflix films and media theories for health promotion, media theories and the films form the material for the research. In order to make the research precise, the researchers identified a platform which is available in most of the countries around the world. Netflix, with its presence in over 190 countries emerged as the winner in the process. To make the research even more precise, an actress with global presence and with multiple movies on mental health issues was identified. Alia Bhatt, an actress of Indian origin was hence shortlisted.

### Movies

#### Shaandaar (2015)

A stellar cast, a picturesque setting and chartbuster music- sounds like a perfect recipe for success on the box office, but the producers of Shaandaar begged to differ. Shaandaar is a Hindi language word that means fabulous. However, the movie turned out quite the opposite of its name and became the first career flop for Alia Bhatt. Shaandaar is nothing more than a bad dream for its makers. This also led to it escaping the eyes of researchers and analysts. Hence, unlike Dear Zindagi, Shaandaar has not been a part of any prior research. This in turn makes it a sweeter fruit, a road not taken.

Finding Shaandaar while studying Alia Bhatt's roles and their association with mental health feels more like finding a diamond in a coal mine. Insomnia, a mental health disorder, plays a central character in the movie and is the cupid to the main protagonists Alia and Shahid Kapoor, who plays her romantic interest. Quite interestingly, both the protagonists in the movie suffer from insomnia, the only difference being that Alia's character is well aware of her condition while Shahid's character only gets to know about the fact that his condition is called insomnia from Alia's character. Through the course of the film, it is revealed that Shahid's character also suffers from Nyctophobia (fear of night/darkness).

Both characters have childhood traumas which led to these mental health issues. Shahid lost his mother at a young age in riots and since then started to remain awake all night making the Indian dessert kheer since the kitchen was the only place in the house where there was a light bulb. His last memory of his mother is him playing hide and seek with her and then she disappeared. This incident acted as a stimulant for development of insomnia and nyctophobia in Shahid. Alia is shown as an orphan who gets adopted by Arora family as Bipin Arora brings her to his home and decides to keep her despite the disapproval of his wife and his mother. He loves her like his daughter and the story later reveals that she was in fact his illegitimate daughter. However, the loss of her real family, the tag of being called an orphan, and constant discrimination and lack of love made her a victim of insomnia.

The insomnia of both characters acts as a catalyst for bonding for both of them. Both the characters start to fill the void that was created in their life due to loss of their mothers by providing each other love, care, understanding and happiness that both characters lacked in their life. Both the characters hence help each other to finally sleep.

#### **Dear Zindagi (2016)**

A pioneer in the area of mental health in Indian cinema, any talk of mental health in cinema cannot be said to be complete without referring to *Dear Zindagi*. The movie broke many stereotypes and revolutionized Bollywood by pointing out that a movie wholly dedicated to mental health can also be a huge box office success. “*Dear Zindagi*” was the first film of Shah Rukh Khan, the global Bollywood icon, to be available globally on Netflix, allowing millions of subscribers worldwide to access this film, making it one of the platform’s first major collaboration with any Indian production company (PTI 2017).

The movie begins by presenting Alia Bhatt (Kaira) as a young professional in filmmaking who knows her craft well but struggles in relationships. She lives in Mumbai and is surrounded by her friends. The first reference to mental health comes here where one of her gay friends mentions that he goes to a “*Dimag ka Doctor*” (Hindi slang for a psychologist). She asks him whether he goes to a therapist to make him brave enough to come out with respect to his sexuality in front of the society to which he says that he is doing it to come out to himself, beautifully pointing out how it is difficult for a person to accept his own identity and personality.

Few days later, Kaira shifts back to her hometown in the state of Goa, where while shooting in a hotel she comes across a psychologist, Dr. Khan, who was a speaker at the mental health awareness session going on in the hotel. She gets intrigued and decides to visit Dr. Khan to get help with her sleeping difficulties. Doctor starts by asking about any major life changes. Kaira mentions shifting to Goa from Mumbai, and lies that she is here to be with her friend who is having a life issue. This is a lie as she doesn’t want to outright reveal that she is the one having issues. Khan tells a story with the lesson that “sometimes we choose difficult paths because we think that we can achieve great things only through difficulties and thus punish ourselves”. This solves the instant problem Kaira had at hand and impressed by the doctor she reveals that it was actually her story. This clearly demonstrates rapport formation, an important step in therapy. Kaira was happy that she would finally sleep but her sleep was interrupted by a weird dream.

She again visits Dr. Khan who assists her with unraveling her dream. Throughout the movie, various sessions are shown between Kaira and Dr. Khan which explore various emotional webs, relationship with family and friends, fear of judgement, taking control of your own life, how not been taught the ability to express emotions like anger, sadness etc. leads to messing up of emotional system and creates problems as an adult, abandonment issues, fear of being lonely and how it is affecting future relationships. Dr. Khan says, “Don’t let the past blackmail your present to ruin a beautiful future”.

Through the course of the sessions, Kaira is able to solve her various life problems and mend relationships with her family and friends. She is also able to work independently on a film. She is also now more ready than ever for a relationship. Thus, therapy is shown to have transformed her life for the better.

#### **Heart of Stone (2023)**

*Heart of Stone* is a Netflix Hollywood action film by Tom Harper. It presents Stone (Gal Gadot) as an agent of ‘The Charter’, a secret international organization that works towards establishing world peace. The Charter functions on the basis of ‘The Heart’ which is the most powerful device holding the potential to hack into everything. The movie revolves around the antagonists’ (Parker and Keya) trying to steal ‘The Heart’.

While it is the action scenes that form the USP of the movie, the movie also makes an attempt to reflect into the past of different characters which helps the viewers understand their traumas and what has made them ruthless killers.

Keya’s character is introduced as a tech genius working for the antagonists. A deeper dive into her character reveals that she was orphaned at the age of eight. Not only this, but her parents were also used as lab rats for medical trials and mercilessly died due to the same. All this led to a lack of love and care in her life, with revenge being the only thing in her mind. Another antagonist is Parker who also has no one to live for in his life and was left to die in a war zone. In contrast to this is the protagonist Stone who was also a difficult child, kicked out of multiple schools, alone, violent, helpless and broken. The only reason she is different from others is because she got rescued by the Charter which gave her discipline and a better life, trained her, showed her what’s possible when there is someone watching your back, making her an inspiration for others. When Stone told Keya “I got rescued by a woman from the Charter who trained her and showed me what’s possible when there is someone watching your back” Keya’s first thought was ‘who is this woman’ with her expressions and tonality clearly depicting that she wished she also got rescued like Stone, highlighting a lack of love and care in her life which she craves.

#### **Media Theories**

##### **Agenda Setting Theory**

The agenda setting theory is related to how mass media influences in making a certain issue as a public agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972). According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), media may not tell us as ‘about what to think’ but certainly tells us ‘what to think about’. Media, when used to prioritize issues, can underline certain neglected topics like childhood abuse, trauma and insomnia and hence sets an agenda in favor of

significance of mental health. Through repeated emphasis via film narrative, these issues have gained prominence which is a vital mechanism of agenda setting. With the help of therapy and supporting relationships, movies "frame" mental health as relatable and treatable rather than taboo, "priming" viewers to see mental health issues as common and manageable. The way viewers remember and assess mental health in real life is guided by this framing. Just as mass media can change public priorities through recurring thematic focus, when major films positively depict therapy and emotional healing, they help to normalize these practices more widely, lowering stigma and igniting discussions.

**Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation is both a theory and a research program in mass communication to understand the relationships between television exposure and one’s attitude and belief about the world (Diefenbach 2022). The theory was introduced by George Gerbner in 1967 and still remains a popular theoretical model for studying media effects today. The theory analyzed how long-term exposure to media is perceived by audiences and shapes their social realities. The repeated exposure to certain media such as cinema content is idealized to shape how people perceive realities. Films that repeatedly depict de-stigmatization, emotional recovery and treatment for mental health issues help to foster a culture-wide acceptance of mental health care. The "mainstream" view that mental health support and discussion are the norm is shaped by these stories. Those who have experienced trauma, insomnia, or mental anguish themselves might find these stories particularly poignant. "Resonance" like this strengthens the filmmakers' messages and increases their emotional impact. The films contribute to a widely held belief that psychological problems are prevalent and manageable because viewers often witness individuals going to therapy or helping one another through mental health challenges. This modifies societal perception, reflecting cultivation's premise that recurring media themes influence societal attitudes. These films provide a nuanced, empathetic view of mental illness, in contrast to previous depictions that characterize it as violent or unpredictable. Positive media can lessen "stigma" and promote mental health knowledge, as per the research (Diefenbach & West 2007).

**RESULTS**

In order to enhance the quality of analysis, several elements were identified that facilitate content analysis. These elements were chosen because they directly address how media—films in particular—highlight issues (agenda-setting) and mold audience perceptions and beliefs (cultivation) through continuous exposure to narratives. These elements are mapped to the two media theories highlighting how cinematic narratives act as tools for mental health promotion in Indian Cinema through Alia Bhatt’s roles by examining her three Bollywood movies: Highway (2014), Shaandaar (2015) and Dear Zindagi (2016):

TABLE 1 Title of the Table Table Mapping Elements of Content Analysis to Media Theories

Element	Agenda-Setting Theory	Cultivation Theory	Reason for Choosing
Health Issue	Emphasizes the importance of mental health issues (such as trauma, insomnia and attachment disruption) for public awareness.	Exposure over time can normalize mental health as a legitimate, widespread social problem.	The main idea—where focus begins
Narrative Structure	The importance of topics is indicated by storylines, which choose which issues to emphasize.	Constant exposure to comparable plot points strengthens awareness of mental health issues.	Salience and repeated pattern exposure are guided by structure
Character Development	These arenas are highlighted by the protagonists' mental health journeys and by its comparison with antagonists' journey in Heart of Stone.	Recurring, deep character arcs strengthen the belief in self-care and therapy	Prioritization and belief cultivation are both improved by personalization.
Emotional Appeal	Increases salience—what affects you, remains in your memory	Via resonance, strong emotions reinforce the development of beliefs	Emotion links the viewer to the problem

Perceived Susceptibility	Movies imply that mental health issues can affect "anyone," which makes them "public agenda-worthy".	Repeated depictions of vulnerability lead viewers to accept it as the norm.	Encourages compassion and mutual susceptibility
Perceived Severity	Displaying severe repercussions demonstrates the importance of mental health in public discourse	Highlights the hazards of the situation and uses recurring narratives to reaffirm its perceived seriousness.	Depth gives cultivated perception a sense of urgency and realism
Perceived Benefits	Demonstrating therapy and love as workable remedies supports the media's agenda for mental health solutions	Fosters the idea that assistance is effective and, via cultivation, shapes audience expectations	Provides normative fixes that are evident in all movies.
Social Stigma	Fighting stigma "frames" mental health as legitimate and worthy of consideration.	Decreases stigma gradually when more stigma-challenging representations are made.	Crucial point of leverage for norm change
Behavioral Influence	Setting an example of therapy, love, empathy and acceptance primes social action and dialogue.	Behavior patterns, such as seeking therapy and support, are internalized by viewers as normal	A dynamic depiction of action encourages imitation in the real world.
Impact/Outcome	Healing climax supports mental health as a solvable problem and a crucial social priority.	Successful resolutions normalize asking for assistance and foster optimism.	Explains the narrative payoff that supports both theories

## DISCUSSION

### Shaandaar (2015)

Insomnia presents a peculiar position in terms of mental health since it is both a mental health disorder as well as a symptom of other mental health disorders. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-III-R first included sleep disorders in 1987 (Reynolds et al. 1991). It offered general diagnostic criteria for "insomnia disorders" based on subjective complaints of non-restorative sleep or difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, occurring at least three times per week for at least one month, and related complaints of daytime functioning. The DSM-IV-TR retained the diagnoses of "primary insomnia," "dyssomnia NOS [not otherwise specified]," "related to another mental disorder," "due to a general medical condition," and introduced "substance-induced insomnia" while doing away with the frequency criterion and the overall diagnostic criteria for "insomnia disorders" (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2000). The DSM-5 has extended the duration criterion from one month to three months and removed the various insomnia diagnoses found in the DSM-IV-TR in order to reintroduce the overall diagnostic criteria for "insomnia disorder" with a specification of comorbid mental and/or physical conditions, preventing any causal attributions between insomnia and the physical or mental condition (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2013). The latter shift recognizes that chronicity is what distinguishes insomnia as a symptom for disorders from insomnia as a disorder itself.

While the dealing of such mental health issues is not as nuanced in Shaandaar as in Dear Zindagi, the movie deserves applause for the way the disorder was presented. It seems like the makers did their homework as studies show that insomniacs had a history of undesirable events and losses (Healey et al. 1981). Further, they were shown to have greater difficulty with interpersonal relationships, lower self-concepts and overall low satisfaction with their lives. These features can be found in the characters in Shaandaar. The movie has also successfully been able to explain the onset as well as resolution of the mental health disorder, though it might seem a bit 'filmy' and expedient. This however can be accepted given the limited duration of the movie and subjective nature of mental health issues including insomnia. The fact that the movie presented the mental health disorder elegantly while also managing to maintain the Bollywood touch of the film should in itself

be considered an award despite the box office debacle. Nevertheless, the film's contribution to mental health promotion deserves an applause.

#### **Dear Zindagi (2016)**

With therapy still being a stigma, even amongst the affluent sections, it is difficult to imagine the knowledge of therapy amongst the borderline population in a country like India. Modcy (2023) tries to explain the reason for this stigma, "the lack of awareness and in-depth knowledge about various mental disorders and the trauma linked to the same. Due to this social association of negative thought with mental health many people fear to be open about their struggle". The filmmaker has cleverly used Alka, a housekeeper who shares close bond with Kaira and falls within her inner circle to put forward this issue of therapy. In her complete oblivion of the existence of mental health professionals, Alka asks Kaira with concern, why she visited a doctor. Kaira informs her that she is physically fine and is only visiting a "dimag ka doctor". Kaira further explains to her that such doctors help to solve emotional problems a person is facing in life. Stunned by the existence of such doctors, Alka innocently pronounces that everyone should go to such doctors.

A woman from a low-income background believes that everyone should see such a doctor because she believes that everyone has issues, which is accurate. This can be contrasted with the so-called literate society which still stigmatizes and judges' people by believing falsehoods like "therapy is for crazy people" and "therapy is a hoax." The brief conversations that Alka and Kaira have with one another are very motivating for the practice of therapy and they also work as a catalyst to shift the mindset of more individuals into seeking therapy. Using therapy is normalized in this scene.

As Bhat and Pratibha (2022) say "the movie is a brief therapy session for everyone" and makes its mark in the minds of the people by making them more empathetic and normalized towards therapy by showing issues that most millennials can relate to. This is a great step towards a better society where people are more understanding and less judgmental of each other, becoming a cornerstone of mental health promotion through cinema.

#### **Heart of Stone (2023)**

A number of psychological concepts have tried to explore how trauma can lead to villainy which is clearly visible through the characters in Heart of Stone. The 'attachment disruption' which all three characters experienced leads to lack of empathy, distrust and a predisposition to cruelty and antisocial behavior as displayed by the characters, a sign of antisocial personality disorder (Voestermans et al. 2020). This attachment disruption was broken in the case of Stone due to which she remained empathetic and even blew her cover to save her team. On the other hand, Parker killed his team with his own hands. Trauma-induced personality pathology (Munjiza et al. 2019), resulting from prolonged betrayal, is also visible in the case of Parker who was mercilessly left to die and now displays narcissistic and antisocial traits whereby he wants power whatever may be the cost. Narcissism, Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy, the dark triad (Paulhua et al. 2002), marked by self-serving aggression, manipulation and coldness are also displayed by Parker and Keya. Carl Jung gave the concept of "the Shadow" (Vibhute & Kumar 2024), which is the dark, concealed side of an individual and often embodied by villains and shaped by trauma and unresolved emotions, also seems to be something manifested in Parker and Keya.

The movie highlights both psychological consequences of childhood trauma and how love, care and support can bring radical changes in an individual's life. By highlighting similarities and differences in the life journey of the three characters, the movie presents a powerful case for the idea that love, care and support act as interventions that can prevent individuals from developing a villainous personality.

#### **Agenda Setting Theory**

The aforementioned Alia Bhatt films play a vital role in promoting mental health awareness and to set it as a public agenda into broader social conversation. In Dear Zindagi, the central character Kaira from the outside looks like a successful cinematographer but deep-down she suffers from psychological despair due to unresolved childhood issues. The film is widely acknowledged for openly promoting the importance of mental health care and breaking the stigma related to mental health therapies. Kaira's journey in the film proposed strong narrative in normalizing mental health care where therapy is often stigmatized. Even in the whimsical world of Shaandaar, Alia's character struggled with insomnia and adoption-related insecurities. Together, these narratives implicitly set an agenda to invite society to reconsider the perception of psychological health and to give acknowledgement to normalize seeking help and making emotional struggles visible. Heart of Stone "sets the agenda" to prioritize mental health understanding—even within an action framework—by choosing trauma, betrayal, empathy, and pathology as its focal points.

#### **Cultivation Theory**

Through Alia Bhatt's films mental health is promoted significantly by showing relatable emotional struggles. In Dear Zindagi, Kaira's character attends mental therapy sessions on screen which motivates the viewers to rethink about their emotional vulnerabilities. Heart of Stone helps to cultivate viewers' perceptions of trauma, resilience, and moral decision-making by means of character arcs, emotional resonance, and other comparable media representations. Heart of Stone brings a radical approach towards life by shedding light on childhood traumas, and Shaandaar emphasized the concept of trauma caused by loss of loved ones. Through Alia Bhatt's characters, viewers are able to learn valuable life lessons (TOI Entertainment Desk 2025), helping them to prioritize their mental well-being as equally as physically well-being. It educates the audiences at large to accept mental health issues as real and important which were earlier stigmatized. These shifts in

attitudes promotes a healthier cultural understanding of mental well-being aligning directly with the core of cultivation theory.

## CONCLUSION

With 970 million people living with some kind of mental health issue, with real current number believed to be much more, mental health is surely a matter of concern worldwide (World Health Organization [WHO] 2022). The fact that adds fuel to the fire is that mental health disorders are stigmatized with their victims facing social ostracization in many regions. The only way to redress the stigma is to talk about it and Alia Bhatt's movies on Netflix have accomplished this exceptionally.

Dear Zindagi tries to postulate the benefits of therapy and emotional healing, by questioning the stigmas of mental illness whereas Shaandar with a blend of comedy highlights insomnia and phobias and the impact of family expectations. Heart of Stone, on the other side brings along childhood trauma with the role it could play in developing an antisocial personality.

Mass Media is a powerful tool that serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a significant force in influencing public opinions, setting priorities, and shaping public discourse. Thus, in addition to being a source of entertainment, movies hold the potential to influence public health behaviors as a major cultural force (Bora 2020). Movies are effective vehicles for public health initiatives because they frequently mirror and influence cultural norms, values, and behaviors (Ganti 2012). The movies have a profound impact towards creating public awareness on mental health issues (Aslam et. al. 2024). Understanding the chosen movies through the lens of cultivation theory and agenda setting theory which is a keystone in the study of how the media affects public opinion, establishes these movies as a vital tool for health promotion. The study has hence clearly highlighted the ways in which the chosen Alia Bhatt films available on Netflix actively promote mental health on the "public agenda" and how recurring narrative devices "cultivate" a cultural belief system on emotional health.

In conclusion, the way that mental health is portrayed in modern cinema is compellingly illustrated by Alia Bhatt's Netflix movies. Through the nuanced depictions, it humanizes the difficulties experienced by those with mental health disorders. A more sympathetic and knowledgeable grasp of mental health concerns is facilitated by her script choices and readiness to accept unconventional characters. Alia Bhatt's tryst with mental health through her work paved the path for more movies to explore this dimension across the globe. With her growing global presence, she is expected to utilize her position to continue to facilitate promotion on this vital health issue.

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