Visual Representation of Mental Illness In Georgian Media

Research Presented to the Faculty of

Multimedia Journalism and Media Management

Georgian Institute of Public Affairs

For the Master's Degree

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Tbilisi, 2024

Abstract:

This study examines the visual representation of mental illness in the Georgian media and focuses on reportages from 2019 to 2024. It uses visual-verbal video analysis (VVVA). By analyzing visual elements, images, and sound, recurring patterns and themes in the portrayal of mental illness are identified. Sixteen purposefully selected reportages, from both television and non-television sources, were sourced from eight different Georgian media channels, ensuring a comprehensive sample size for the study. It was found that the Georgian media repeatedly used dramatic sounds, mystical music, dark lighting, and blurred scenes when depicting mental illness topics, they were mostly showing an isolated and desperate person. Such portrayals contribute to the stigmatization of mental health in society and also reinforce fear and misconceptions.

The findings also show how important it is to maintain ethical media practices, when working on such sensitive subjects and provide balanced and nuanced portrayals to promote a more informed and compassionate public discourse. It further indicates that responsible media reporting, combating stigma, and strengthening the social environment for people with mental illnesses are very important for present-day Georgian media practice.

Keywords:

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Introduction

Videos are widely available today. It has changed the way we communicate and absorb information. They provide researchers with a large amount of data that they can study to better understand how people interact and build relationships. Researchers can learn more about social behavior by examining video data and observing how patterns change in different situations. Visual language is most important in video content because it shapes how each idea is presented and its impact on people, especially when used in media. In relation to mental health, the portrayal of various issues in the media is problematic, as it has a significant impact on the public's perception, attitude, and understanding of these illnesses.

Facial expressions, body language, colors, sound effects, and scenery are very powerful tools that help to bring out emotions associated with mental illnesses. For example, depression is usually depicted using dark lighting, and the shaking movements of cameras show anxiety. Another premise is that stigmatization gets reinforced when false information and stereotyping are used by the media to depict dangerous or helpless images of people with mental illnesses. It means that mass media is bound to both try to combat these stereotypes and to spread empathy, as well as bring negative outcomes to people's perceptions around these issues. Accurate portrayals can humanize characters, normalize mental health problems, and encourage people to pursue help. In this way, the impact of visual language must be acknowledged by creators and viewers of the media.

Since 2017, Georgia's Charter for Journalistic Ethics has provided guidelines for reporting on mental health in the media. These guidelines define mental health
and
illness and refer to their increased prevalence in the wake of wars and disasters. The guidelines also emphasize the role of the media in either reinforcing or combating the stigmatization of mental health. Journalists are advised to avoid assumptions,

speculation, and generalizations about diagnoses and related issues. However, these guidelines do not address the use of visual language in mental health reporting. However, by critically examining and consciously incorporating visual components, we can contribute to a more truthful, empathic, and stigma-free portrayal of mental health issues in the media. This includes being aware of the images, symbols, and representations that can unintentionally reinforce prejudice or negative meanings.

While visual representations of mental illness in the media have been explored in a variety of contexts, there is still a significant gap in the literature regarding their portrayal in Georgian media. Professor Darejan Javakhishvili from Ilia State College's Mental Health MA program emphasizes that, due to the lack of accessible bibliographies, there is an urgent need for further studies in this area. Professor Jana adds that although there are some publications on related topics, there is no systematic research on how mental health problems are visually represented in the Georgian media.

Our research aims to fill these gaps and promote a more informed and compassionate understanding of mental health. This research will provide a complete analysis of the individual elements of visual language.

Literature Review

One of the most important subjects in mass communication research is understanding the impact of mass media on people's attitudes and behaviors. Two theories of mass communication, cultivation theory and social learning theory, are particularly useful in understanding how the media act as a socializing agent and potentially impact the development and persistence of mental illness stigma. (Gerbner et al., 2002)

According to cultivation theory, constant exposure to repetitive television messages shapes and promotes certain values and perspectives and transmits these ideals into society and culture (Stout et al., 2004; Gerbner et al., 2002). According to Gerbner and colleagues, "those who spend more time 'living' in the world of television are more likely

to see the real world' in terms of the images, value systems, characterizations, and viewpoints that emerge through the lens of television" (Gerbner et al. 2002, p. 47). In other words, people who watch less television than those who watch a lot of television are more likely to express opinions and ideas that are similar to those expressed on television. Applying this theory to the stigmatization of mental illness would mean that people who watch a lot of television have a more stereotypical view of mental illness. Especially nowadays, when smartphones and portable computers are everywhere, and information is accessible 24/7 (Becker & Connor, 1981; Sarwar & Soomro, 2013), this fact potentially further reinforces these stereotypes.

Similarly, social learning theory states that learning can occur through both direct observation and direct experience (Bandura 1986). People can gain much knowledge about the world from the things they see and hear on television, especially from media sources (Bandura, 2002). According to Bandura, television helps people learn social norms such as codes of conduct and behavior. Also, according to social learning theory, actions that are rewarded are more likely to be maintained and used than those that are not rewarded or punished. The presentation of the lesson is important, and television teaches social norms for dealing with people who are mentally ill. For example, a common belief is that people with mental illness are dangerous and should be feared and shunned. This view is reinforced by repeated portrayals in the media. Numerous studies show that people who watch a lot of television tend to have a more negative opinion of mentally ill people than people who watch less television (Granello & Pauley, 2000).

Narratives in entertainment television almost follow a general pattern. Wilson et al. (1999a) do the research on the matter by examining 14 New Zealand television dramas to find the way the media constructed the dangerousness of people who have mental illness. After this, he highlighted nine elements: visual presentation, music and sound effects, illumination, dialogue, switching between scenes, abrupt transitions, perspective, horror traditions, and references to other texts. The study found that people with mental illness were often portrayed negatively, and they were represented as a

threat to social norms, socially isolated, and incompetent. It also showed that positive portrayals were uncommon, and according to the author, accurate diagnostic information was rarely provided.

There are several studies that have examined the effects of media exposure on viewers, including a notable study by Wahl (1992) on the portrayal of mental illness. Participants in this study saw distorted as well as realistic depictions of mental illness in popular media. These portrayals revealed ten distinct patterns or themes. People with mental illness were portrayed as dangerous/aggressive, simple-minded/childish, unpredictable, failure-prone/unproductive, antisocial, vulnerable, dangerous/incompetent, unreliable, caring/empathetic, and as social misfits. The significance of these themes differed based on the setting and the program's requirements for narrative.

There are not many studies on how people with disabilities are portrayed in the Georgian media. A 2012 study by Vakhtang Menabde's Media Development Foundation titled "Media Coverage of Issues Related to Persons with Disabilities" revealed significant shortcomings in the portrayal of persons with disabilities. Nine journalistic articles were examined between February 15 and March 15, 2012. Only one was adequately reported, while eight articles were inadequate. This means that, despite generally positive portrayals, people with disabilities were often portrayed as charitable subjects or through a medical lens. According to the study journalists also lacked relevant knowledge of disability issues.

The portrayal of mental health is a popular theme in films both in Georgia and around the world. However, it was a really actively used topic in the 1990s, and during this time portrayal of it was really problematic. For example, between 1968 and 1997, many Hollywood films portrayed people with mental disabilities as a burden or a problem to be hidden, often depicting their birth as a tragic event. Rarely did these films address their right to independent living or use a person with an intellectual disability as a narrator (Abashidze & Arganashvili, 2021).

Renwick's research suggests that the portrayal of people with intellectual disabilities in

the media must be done with care. He recommends portraying their life experiences honestly and often, emphasizing the challenges they have faced due to obstacles in their environment. Even if his/her disability is only a part of her personality and not the focus, it is important to highlight her thoughts, connections, activities, and emotions. According to him, the best way to highlight character's activism and interests is to portray them in different roles, e.g., as professionals, family members, and hobbyists. Ultimately, it is decided that the most appropriate type of media representation is one that shows people as they actually see themselves (Renwick, R. 2016).

In contrast to the negative portrayals in media, there are some examples of how we can change these perceptions, and some filmmakers have done so. For instance, the documentary "On the Adamant" by Nicolas Philibert, for example, focuses on a day center in the middle of Paris that provides various services for psychiatric patients. Philibert describes this center as a place "where beautiful things happen," which inspired him to film there. His intention was to portray the patients not as "sick" but simply as human beings, disproving the stereotype that psychiatric patients are inherently dangerous (Unifrance, 2024). Philibert's method emphasizes the ability of visual media to overcome stigma and promote a more empathetic understanding of mental health. He does this by using bright colors, natural sounds, and light scenes to create a peaceful atmosphere and a sense of balance, happiness, and freedom.

Research Question and Methodology

There is a research question for this qualitative study, which is focusing on porpousily selected media reportages and uses the Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA) framework to examine the representation of mental illness in the Georgian media From 2019 to 2024:

"How is mental illness visually represented in Georgian media reportages from 2019 to 2024, and what patterns and themes can be identified through a multimodal analysis using the Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA) framework?"

This study qualitatively examines the visual representation of mental illness in the Georgian media over five years, using a Purposive sampling method to select specific stories. It is known as a judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling method, which can be used as a non-probability sampling technique. This research method is a powerful tool for qualitative research, because of its specifications, like gathering rich, detailed data and clearly defining the criteria for inclusion. Despite the growing importance of video data in social science and medical research, methods for analyzing such data are often inadequate. This is happening because there are no detailed guidelines for multimodal analysis. To address this issue, the study uses the visual-verbal video analysis (VVVA) method, which utilizes a structured six-step framework adopted from multimodality theory and visual grounded theory.

Multimodality theory was developed by Gunther Kress. This approach examines how communication occurs through a variety of modalities or approaches other than spoken or written language. It recognizes that meaning is created through a combination of different forms of communicative resources, including:

- Visuals: images, color, layout, and other visual elements.
- Auditory: sounds, music, tone of voice.
- Gestural: body language, facial expressions, gestures.
- Spatial: use of space, proximity, arrangement of objects.
- Linguistic: spoken or written words.

It also suggests that these modes work together and are creating a richer, more nuanced communication experience. In a documentary, for example, the message is conveyed not only through dialogue but also through visual scenes, background music, and the way the camera moves. To analyze the overall meaning, it's essential to understand how these different modes work together and what types of visuals can be used to create a concrete mood.

Visual grounded theory is an extension of grounded theory. It combines the analysis of text and image data and creates categories based on empirical data. What is most important is that it also generates hypotheses. This is a way to provide a structured approach to understanding visual content and social issues better. Here's how it works:

● Data collection: Collect visual data such as photos, videos, and drawings. ● Initial coding: Look closely at the visual material to find key elements, themes, and patterns. This is similar to analyzing text but focuses on visual content. ● Categorize: next step is to group these elements into categories based on their similarities. This helps to identify common patterns.

● Theory development: compare and analyze the visual data continuously to develop theories that explain what is happening. These theories emerge directly from the visual material.

● Contextual understanding: Consider the context in which the visual material was created. For example, a photo of a demonstration not only shows the event but also emotions and social dynamics.

By focusing on visual data, this method gives researchers the possibility to explore aspects of social life that are not easily captured by words alone, and it creates the chance for them to provide deeper and more direct knowledge.

The VVVA method utilizes these two theories for analysis and to create a more detailed picture and works with a variety of video data sources. This method is specifically tailored to organize and evaluate video material across different dimensions (Fazeli et al., 2022). In this study, we use the VVVA method with modifications, which are codes created based on Georgian media visual language analysis, to analyze gestures and body movements, sound, color, setting, objects, background, camera movement, editing style, and other visual components.

Several steps of the VVVA method are used in this analysis, including:

Collection and Organization: systematically collecting and organizing video data with particular attention to gesture/body movement, sound, color, setting, objects, background, camera movement, editing/cutting style, and additional visual elements as a form of visual expression.

Video segmentation: deciding to analyze the entire video or specific segments that focus on relevant visual cues.

Data extraction and coding: extraction and coding of visual information using predefined matrices, in our case codes created during research that enable systematic classification and analysis.

Identification of themes: identification and interpretation of overarching themes and subthemes within the video material.

Reporting of results: a structured presentation of research findings, including the appropriate use of visual aids that illustrate analytical procedures and consequences, was clear and easy to understand.

The research results and analysis

For the study, 16 different TV and non-TV reportages from 8 different media channels between January 1, 2019 and May 1, 2024 were selected. These media channels include:
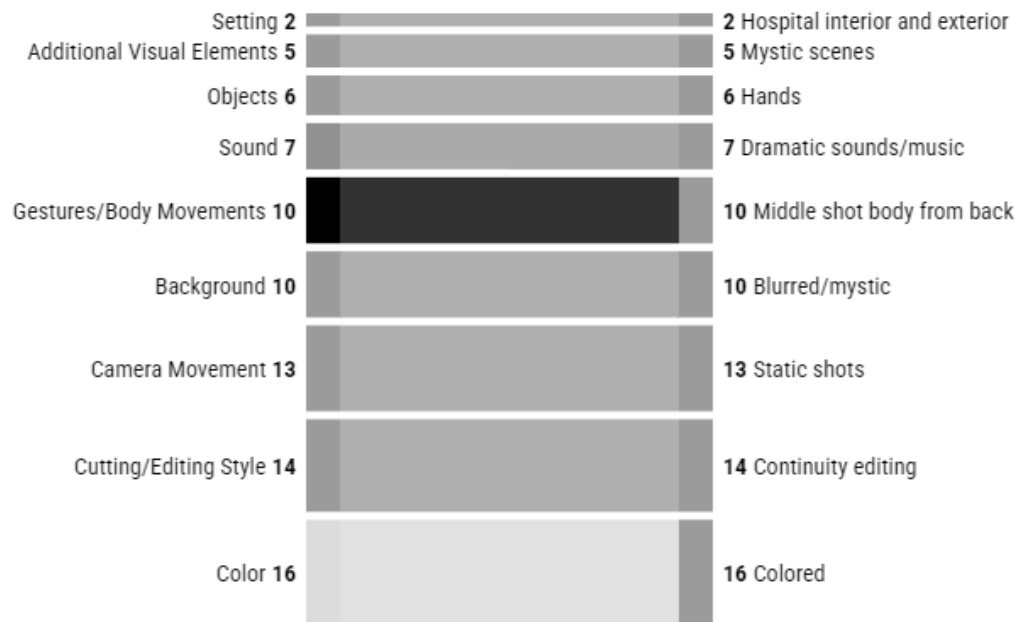
- **Studio Monitori**
- **TV IMEDI**
- **Georgian public broadcaster**
- **Sapari Union**
- **Mtavari Arkhi**
- **Formula News**
- **TV Pirveli**
- **Accessible environment for all**

In this analysis, several steps of the VVVA method are applied and also the research is focusing on specific codes such as: gestures or body movements, sound, color, setting, objects, background, camera movement, editing/cutting style, and additional visual elements. The process involves systematically collecting, storing, tagging, and organizing video data, watching the videos multiple times to focus on different

aspects,
and deciding whether to analyze the entire video or specific segments based on relevant visual cues.

The visual information is then classified and coded using predefined codes, and each unit of analysis is reviewed and transferred into extraction matrices. Finally, frequently used themes and subthemes in the video material are identified and interpreted verbally and visually. Here is a graphic that shows the most recurring patterns used in Georgian media under different analysis codes. The detailed data and analyses can be accessed via the following link.

Most Used Visual Elements in Representing Mental Illness in Georgian Media
from 2019 to 2024

Setting 2	2 Hospital interior and exterior
Additional Visual Elements 5	5 Mystic scenes
Objects 6	6 Hands
Sound 7	7 Dramatic sounds/music
Gestures/Body Movements 10	10 Middle shot body from back
Background 10	10 Blurred/mystic
Camera Movement 13	13 Static shots
Cutting/Editing Style 14	14 Continuity editing
Color 16	16 Colored

Source: 8 Media Channel

Analysis of Visual language and its potential Psychological impact

This chapter examines the detailed visual components that were used in mental health reporting, and there are potential explanations for possible psychological influences on viewers. As there are few sources that specifically address the visual language of media in mental health coverage, there are studies on the visual language of film: "The Visual Structure of Film, Television, and Digital Media," by Bruce Block, which highlights the importance of visual elements such as space, line, shape, sound, color, movement, and rhythm in creating a narrative. Block's explanations are also used in the evaluation of the individual codes.

There are some important patterns after a detailed examination of the individual features and visual language. The reportages mainly use visual elements like movements, sounds, colors, settings, and camera techniques to illustrate the emotional and psychological complexity of mental health problems. However, this visual language is usually based on dramatization, which captures the viewer's attention and draws attention to the subject. On the other hand, it helps to reinforce prejudice and stigmatization. In addition, the use of sensationalist images is also a way to oversimplify the complexity of mental health problems and lead to misunderstandings among viewers.

To create appropriate visual content, it is crucial to understand the psychological implications of these characteristics. Observing and analyzing each aspect can help media creators produce more balanced and supportive representations. This is the only way to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and promote a more informed public debate about mental health.

Gestures/Body Movements:

The gesture (the Middle Shot Body from the back and walking legs) is a significant visual motif, and Georgian media often uses it to illustrate the solitary journey of people,
who are struggling with mental health issues. This recurring imagery (medium-shot body - 10 times, Walking Legs - 5 times) also highlights themes of progress, struggle, and vulnerability. Body movements play a crucial role in conveying emotional states, and these specific gestures can create a feeling of isolation. The "walking legs" gesture

represents both a sense of purpose and uncertainty and also reflects the physical manifestations of anxiety and stress. The nonverbal cues studied by Ekman and Friesen, which show how these gestures increase the viewer's empathy and understanding of the characters' psychological experiences, are consistent with these visual components. (Ekman & Friesen, 1969).

Close-Up Shots:

The use of close-ups to capture trembling hands and tense facial expressions gives viewers a visual understanding of the characters' psychological problems and also these shots (instances: close-ups - 6 times) allow viewers to fully experience the unfiltered emotions of the characters, including their physical signs of stress, anxiety, and inner turmoil. These subtle movements also show the characters' psychological struggles and deepen the audience's empathy and connection. Block emphasises the importance of close-ups, if you want to draw attention to specific details or heighten the emotional impact close-ups According to him, this is a really powerful technique, and especially close-ups of trembling hands and tense facial expressions immerse the audience in the raw emotional experiences of the characters (Block, 2021).

Sound:

Block also talks about how sound and music can profoundly affect the viewer's interpretation of visual content by enhancing emotional depth or altering meaning (Block, 2021). Georgian media use a wide variety of sounds, from dramatic climaxes to nostalgic melodies to relaxing nature sounds, and they are used almost in all reportage. Dramatic music is the most common (7 cases), followed by nostalgic music (4 cases) and mystical music. These types of music vary greatly depending on the topic, sometimes even within a single report.

The use of certain soundscapes in media coverage of mental health can have negative effects:

Dramatic music: heightens tension and crisis, but often sensationalizes mental health, contributing to stigma and misunderstanding.

Nostalgic music evokes a longing for better times before there were mental health

issues. This can romanticize the past while oversimplifying current problems.

Mystic music: conveys spookiness, strangeness, and detachment from reality. It also reinforces negative attitudes towards mental health and is likely to make people with mental health problems feel that they don't belong or that they are different. This may further strengthen the feeling of "otherness."

Color:

In the section below, we will explore what role color and tone play in the representation of mental health in the media. It should be mentioned that colored imagery is the most frequently used(16 - times), but sometimes with dark tones (6-times). According to Block's model, color establishes the atmosphere, creates emotions in viewers, and affects the overall mood of the film. He discusses the significance of employing tonal contrast in the scene, and talks about how the intentional use of black-and-white visuals, especially variations in light and dark tones and color, gives rise to a deep visual storyline that can both illuminate and obscure the boundaries of mental health issues. We will also look at how different colors can evoke or enhance emotional responses from the audience and how they could be used to represent the complex experiences and emotions associated with mental health.

Black-and-white Imaging: Commonly used by media for the purpose of showing a very stark, somber tone of seriousness, it also dedicates attention to the emotional and psychic contents in the scene. With black and white pictures, it is easy to increase the emotional intensity of the subject because the portrayal will seem more raw and impactful. According to Bleicher (2011), monochromatic visuals have weight that can emphasize how serious and deep mental health problems are.

Dark Tones: These are primarily dark or muted colors, typically associated with sadness, hopelessness, and despair. Such visual choices create a heavy, full, oppressive atmosphere, mirroring the internal experience of a mentally ill person. If dark tones immerse the audience in the psychology of the character, resulting in a deeper sense of empathy and understanding, they may reinforce negative stereotypes.
Lighter tones: can be applied to recovery scenes, scenes of hope, or any other instance when the character finds clarity. What would set these scenes apart as visual relief from the rest is the contrast between light and dark depictions—a look towards a positive

outcome. Blended light tones can stand for healing and progression. In that case, the journey of mental health will not seem one-way.

Colored Imagery: The dominance of the colored imagery (Instances: Colored 16) gives scenes a variety of emotions, each color contributes to revealing a different aspect of the characters' emotional destruction. Color is viewed as a potential tool for triggering mental responses, with bright colors representing the intensity of the emotional experience and more subdued color palettes reflecting somber moods.

Setting:

According to Block, the environment is an integral part of a visual storytelling method since it offers context and influences the tone of the narrative. He claims that "ambiguous space creates tension, disorientation, or confusion in an audience. Thrillers and horror films use ambiguous space to enhance the emotional mood of the story." From the aseptic interiors of hospitals to public parks and abandoned buildings, each comes with a baggage of symbolism that matches the attitude of society and each person's fight.

Hospital Interiors: The representation of hospitals as places marked by clinical paleness, sterility, and coldness highlights the truth of the dehumanizing aspects of mental health care. By showing such a reality in coverage settings, it is a representation of the institutional approach to mental health and is a crucial part of showing reality. But, when the scenes are used for dramatic effect, especially with dark tones, this portrayal highlights how alone and powerless the patient may feel in certain situations.

Public Parks and Natural Settings: public parks and natural settings convey peace, recovery, and a relationship to the world outside of the mental health struggle. Such environments provide a visual and emotional relief from the more oppressive hospital settings. These scenes (public park-5 times) are used most frequently to convey therapeutic and rejuvenating ideas about nature. They emphasize the healing potential
of natural environments and the importance of supportive and nurturing atmospheres in the recovery process. However, it should be noted that Georgian media use this setting with blurred scenes, which is a reason for losing the positive effect of showing such an environment in a reportage.

Abandoned buildings: give viewers a sense of helplessness, deterioration, and neglect. It also represents the sense of isolation and loneliness experienced by those with mental disorders. These settings are metaphors for the inner state of whoever is being portrayed, and the use of such visuals is to exaggerate the problem or situation of mental health individuals.

Objects:

Block writes that objects within a frame hold great meaning narratively. He points out that frontal surfaces and the enclosed space formed by doorways, windows, and walls are essential components of the visual scheme that builds the setting for the central characters' internal conflicts. Each carefully placed element in the frame—from trembling hands to clinical pills and inviting windows—serves as a storytelling vessel rich in symbolism. The recurrence of these objects (Hands - 6; Pills - 3; Windows - 4) adds layers of meaning to the narrative.

Pills: they are signifiers for both treatment and dependence, pills underline medicine in dealing with mental health disorders. They signify the hope of recovery using medication. At the same time, they point to an ongoing struggle with the necessity of treatment and its consequences. In most instances, the presence of pills conveys a dual message—offering relief while also carrying a burden.

Windows: can symbolize two themes, imprisonment and hope, and it is one of the most frequently used tools in Georgian media (4 - times). They can be interpreted to mean a blockade between the self and the external world, thereby symbolizing feelings of isolation and restriction. On the other hand, windows have come to symbolize a quest for mental healing and liberation. In this context, there definitely is meaning to its repeated appearance within tension between two totally opposite forces in a mental health narrative.

Trembling Hands: This representation of the shaking hands is a telling, sad visual cue that shows anxiety, stress, and turbulence in the characters. Viewers are able to empathize with the characters' emotional states and are reinforced in feeling that mentally disturbed people are unstable due to this physical manifestation of their mental suffering. In spite of the one sided negative effect of using shaking hands in reportages, Georgian media uses it most frequently (6 - times).

Camera Movement:

Block considers camera movement as an ideal tool for shaping the perception of the spectator and making an emotional impact. He further explains that the disorienting camera angle can cover up the real space of familiar objects or places, which will deepen a shot and make it indefinite.

Different camera movements—from static stability to handheld turbulence—draw the audience members right into the characters' raging emotional landscapes. Dominantly used, there are static shots and handheld movements: (Static shots: 13 - times), (handheld camera: 9 - times) These shots imitate the internal conflicts among characters, instilling a physical feeling of stillness or chaos.

Static Shots: As we mentioned, it is the most commonly used shot and could have a positive as well as negative meaning. During the shooting of reportages journalists mostly use static shots, and that's absolutely normal. However, there are theories that a static shot can symbolize the feeling of being trapped or unable to progress, and when the camera remains fixed and stable, it often captures the sense of stillness and stagnation experienced by individuals dealing with mental health issues.

Handheld Camera Movement: The shaky, at times jolting movement of handheld cameras is able to simulate states of mental instability and chaos, such as anxiety or even psychosis. This affects the viewer with a sense of the person's disorientation. Double Exposures: Double exposures can be used in films to create pictures with layers, thereby showing the fragmented thoughts or two different realities experienced by people with conditions such as schizophrenia. A visual effect like showing overlaps and even contradictions in these layers of reality might be dangerous and can have a negative effect on viewers, because of its strangeness.

Cutting/Editing Style:

Continuous editing (instances - 14) is the most commonly used editing choice in Georgian media. However, the editing choices range from smooth, continuous cuts to sudden, jarring cross-cuts. These techniques control the story's pace and emotional build-up. Block explains that editing affects a film's narrative flow and emotional pacing.

Editors can use contrasts in movement to change scene intensity. "Continuum contrast can either confuse or guide the audience," he says. Strong contrasts can make movements feel jerky or violent and may push the audience out of the experience (Block, 2021).

Continuity editing: This has been a traditional style for maintaining the continuity of action and time to hold a story together. Its usage in reporting on mental health is very hospitable, making the story very accessible and relevant to the audience. By portraying the events in a logical chronology or order, it takes viewers through the narrative, enhancing understanding and undertaking.

Cross-cutting: This technique switches between different scenes or perspectives, allowing viewers to compare the subject's inner and outer worlds. It creates contrasts between the patient's mental state and their environment or interactions with others. By showing the disconnect between internal struggles and outward realities, media can increase the complexity of mental health experiences.

Quick cutting: entails quick cuts that express urgency and chaos and usually occur over moments of acute crisis or emotional upheaval. Quick cutting does raise tension but can be overwhelming to the viewer if abused. When used properly, quick cutting appears to effectively convey the intensity of emotional states, immersing the audience in the character's experience, but in cases of improper usage, it can create a dramatic effect and more tension than is necessary.

The reportages analyzed predominantly use visual elements that underline the emotional and psychic intensity of the mental health struggle. The use of concrete gestures, sounds, colors, settings, and camera techniques provides a detailed and subtle depiction of mental illness, but it frequently dramatizes it. Media creators who want to provide realistic and fair portrayals of mental health issues have to understand the psychological ramifications of these visual components. Ethical media techniques, based on a solid knowledge of visual psychology, have the power to change society's perspectives about any topic. When media makers promote balanced storytelling, they not only help the audience understand mental health issues, but they also contribute to a larger cultural movement toward acceptance and support.

Conclusion

By examining the visual components, imagery, and cinematography, this research aimed to address the research question and get as many exact answers as possible by carefully analyzing the provided data. Using the VVVA methodology, the goal was to identify repetitive patterns and subjects in the presentation of mental illness. Also, it is important to offer insights into how it is visually portrayed and communicated within the media landscape of Georgia. Through the scrutiny of the data using the VVVA framework, recurring themes were evident, such as the portrayal of mental health institutions as gloomy and representing locations and individuals with mental disorders as being isolated and in distress. The somber or eerie soundtracks often accompany these depictions, which causes the exaggeration of the feeling of fear and lack of understanding. The black-and-white imagery and blurred, mysterious scenes also played a part in shaping the story of mental illness as an unfamiliar and frightening state.

The purposive sampling method has it's limitations, because of its' non-random selection process. And that's a reason why the findings from it are not easily generalizable to the broader picture. In our case, the study's scope was limited to a specific selection of media reportages from eight different channels spanning a five-year period, which may not fully capture the breadth of media content available on mental health topics during that time. Another limitation of this method is that the quality of the sample depends on the researcher's knowledge and judgment. For instance, the interpretation of visual elements such as gestures, sound, color, and setting is subjective and may vary among analysts, potentially influencing the analysis.
Further, the research has checked only those media reportages that were created within the framework of Georgian media, and therefore they cannot be transferred to other cultural and geographic contexts. Moreover, the trends of new media themselves might change dynamically across time, and this may have implications for generalizing the findings beyond a specified timeframe.

During this research, only two reportages, produced by the Georgian Public Broadcaster showed individuals with mental health issues in a positive, non-dramatic way. These reportages were mainly focused on the humanity and daily lives of individuals with mental health conditions, they also tried to avoid sensationalism by presenting a balanced view of characters. This effect of media was explained by a study by Jones and Barlow in 2010 and later by Smith et al. in 2015, which revealed that, through sensationalized media portrayals, it rather damages how the general public perceives mental health. The media reporting was called to be more accountable and accurate in its representation. Exaggerated portrayals can heavily impose on people's attitudes

towards mental health, according to Jones and Barlow, thus making the increase in fear, misunderstanding, and prejudice considerable. A point made by Smith et al. (2015) is that media depictions are key and instrumental in shaping social views with respect to mental illness, as their message can stigmatize or continue to support negative stereotypes.

Overall, the study emphasizes the crucial role of the media in shaping and changing how the public perceives mental health, which is consistent with the ideas presented by Jones and Barlow (2010) and Smith (2015). Instead of concentrating on sensationalized or exaggerated portrayals, it is crucial for the media to adopt a balanced and considerate approach. From 2019 to 2024, the Georgian media could potentially create negative stereotypes by using dramatic and enigmatic elements in their reports. This shows the urgent improvement of the existing coverage of mental health and how important it is to have more responsible and accurate representations. The purpose of this research paper is not only to analyze the existing trends, but also to encourage a move towards ethical media standards. Examples from Georgian public broadcasters and filmmakers such as Nicolas Philibert are used to show the possibilities of how to create unbiased and compassionate representations that significantly reduce stigma and increase understanding in society. Adopting these ideas, and fostering ethical media practices is critical for overcoming stereotypes and establishing a helpful atmosphere for people dealing with mental health concerns. In the end, by covering mental health issues in a sensitive and trustworthy manner, the media can help promote a more informed and empathic society.

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