
AI and Mental Health: A Study of Netflix's CTRL Film

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary cinema has transcended traditional love narratives and hero-villain contrasts to address complicated thought-provoking subjects that encourage people to evaluate their future. Contemporary films are tackling urgent themes, including political and societal matters, along with the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence. The younger generation has grown progressively dependent on AI-powered assistants, soliciting support from morning to night in managing their everyday activities. This reliance on AI has significantly affected their mental health, a reality that is mostly unrecognised by the youth. The topic "AI and Mental Health: A Study of Netflix's CTRL Film" has been chosen as the research topic in light of the research challenge. The present study will utilize content analysis as its research methodology to examine the portrayal of mental health issues and AI in the film CTRL. This study intends to examine how the film portrays the mental health problems that young people, who are becoming more reliant on social media and artificial intelligence confront. Examine how the movie illustrates the possible risks associated with highly customised AI assistants, especially when those assistants are able to access a user's private information. Talk about the movie's portrayal of how social media sites may be used to dominate narratives and affect user behaviour, particularly when influencer culture is involved. This film raises concerns over data privacy and the possibility that businesses could use user information without permission. It reflects our increasing reliance on technology. The plot of the film explores the hidden risks associated with our digital habits, mirroring the problems that Gen Z and today's youngsters experience in real life. This movie encourages us to examine our digital footprints more carefully.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, AI Ethics, Mental Health, Social Media, Visual Storytelling

INTRODUCTION

Cinema has enthralled international audiences for decades with visual narratives and storytelling. Modern cinema has surpassed conventional romantic plots and hero-villain differences to explore complex, thought-provoking themes that prompt audiences to reflect about their future. Modern films address pressing themes, encompassing political and societal issues, as well as the integration of Artificial Intelligence. The swift incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into everyday life has raised apprehensions regarding its effects on mental health. This study examines the depiction of artificial intelligence and mental health in Netflix's insightful film, CTRL. Concerns about the possible impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on mental health have emerged due to its rapid integration into our daily lives. This article analyses the representation of AI and mental health in the provocative Netflix film CTRL. We are all informed of the dangers associated with excessive screen time and the pursuit of validation on social media. This film advances the narrative by revealing the disturbing impacts of integrating AI into our daily lives, particularly due to its human oversight. The cautionary narrative examines the adverse effects of our reliance on technology when we lose control of our happiness and survival to robots.

CTRL is a 2024 film by Netflix, directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, released in Hindi, English, Tamil, and Telugu. The film precisely illustrates the pervasive influence of social media, cyberbullying, and viral material within the framework of Generation Z. It underscores the paramount validation pursued through shares, comments, and followers. Motwane's direction skilfully illustrates the indistinct boundaries between digital identities and reality. The film has a duration of 1 hour and 39 minutes and stars Ananya Panday, Vihaan Samat, Devika Vatsa, and Suchita Trivedi in key parts. This dependence on AI has profoundly impacted their mental

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health, a truth largely unacknowledged by the youth. The research topic selected is "AI and Mental Health: A Study of Netflix's CTRL Film" in response to the research challenge.

REVIEW LITERATURE

1. **Anjali Verma (2018), Effects of Social media on Youth: A Review Paper**, this study revealed significant insights on the level of social media usage among adolescents in the Accra suburbs of Nima and Maamobi, including their purposes for usage, methods of access, and the challenges they encounter as a consequence of their engagement. Social media studies has to be incorporated into the educational curriculum to ensure that students comprehend the importance of exercising caution while utilising social media.

Conclusions and Recommendations for the Future Over the past two decades, new media has increasingly influenced the lives of adolescents, introducing both novel obstacles and opportunities. An increasing corpus of research is revealing social media experiences that may impact adolescents' mental health. Nonetheless, due to the swift evolution of the digital media landscape, additional research is needed. A significant portion of the current research relies on self-reported assessments of teenage media consumption and is undertaken at a singular time point, complicating the ability to draw conclusive determinations about whether media usage precedes and predicts mental health outcomes or the reverse. Future experimental and longitudinal studies, particularly those employing objective metrics such as direct observation of adolescents' social media platforms, are necessary. Moreover, subsequent research should examine the distinct social media experiences and individual traits that may render certain adolescents especially susceptible to the positive or negative impacts of social media, rather than relying on earlier conceptions of "screen time" as the principal factor influencing mental health.

2. **Dr. A. Udaya Shankar (2023), Artificial Intelligence's Effects on Mental Health, Human Behaviour and Well-Being – An Empirical Study**, this paper provides a thorough analysis of the current situation and establishes a foundational framework for future research and policy formulation. The purpose is to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) enhances human wellbeing while efficiently managing and mitigating associated risks. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence has generated numerous ethical and cultural ramifications concerning mental health, human behaviour, and overall welfare. The continuous advancement of AI technology requires a comprehensive analysis of its potential implications for individuals and society as a whole. This study intends to analyse the ethical and societal implications of artificial intelligence across several sectors, employing a wide array of sources to provide a comprehensive viewpoint. While artificial intelligence demonstrates significant potential in improving mental health, human behaviour, and overall well-being, it also raises issues, particularly with privacy, bias, and the risk of addiction or over reliance. The effective development and implementation of AI across different sectors requires meticulous evaluation of the advantages and obstacles to attain a balanced strategy.
3. **Kelechi Elizabeth Oladimeji (2023), Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Psychological and Mental Health Promotion: An Opinion Piece**, this review illustrates the diverse applications of AI, encompassing the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health disorders, as well as public mental health education. To ensure the responsible and effective application of AI in mental health care, it is essential to address issues such as algorithm accuracy, geographical contexts like Africa, user experience, and data privacy. Furthermore, there is an urgent necessity to incorporate AI into clinical environments through the application of scientific strategies that consider the specific impacts of AI on diverse populations. Thus, the discipline of psychology can continue to utilise AI to enhance mental health outcomes and promote overall well-being through fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. It is crucial to carefully consider ethical implications and the role of human psychologists to ensure the responsible and effective application of AI in mental health.
4. **Dr. Kavita Khadse (2023), Cyberpsychology and the Impact of AI on Mental Health**, in this paper the conclusion, cyberpsychology and artificial intelligence significantly influence individual mental health. The integration of AI into mental health interventions and services may enhance accessibility and convenience, facilitate early identification, enable the development of individualised treatment plans, and improve overall outcomes. Concerns have emerged regarding the potential negative impacts of AI on mental health. The factors include reduced human connection, ethical issues, and individual differences along with contextual circumstances that affect the extent of its success. Encouraging the development and implementation of evidence-based, user-friendly artificial intelligence (AI)-powered mental health technologies is crucial for maximising benefits and minimising risks. Simultaneously, ensuring algorithm transparency, privacy, and user safety is essential. To sustain empathy and connection, a measured approach that integrates AI interventions with human engagement is essential. Furthermore, to tackle ethical issues and guarantee the appropriate use of AI in mental health, the establishment of specific standards and regulations is necessary. Closing the digital divide and

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ensuring equitable access to AI technologies is crucial for enabling all individuals, especially underprivileged communities and marginalised groups, to benefit from these advancements. Further investigation is necessary to enhance understanding of the intricate relationships among cyberpsychology, artificial intelligence, and mental health. Additionally, refining tactics and interventions to improve mental health outcomes requires ongoing study and monitoring.

5. **Quynh Nguyen (2023), AI REPRESENTATION IN CINEMA: A Quantitative Content Analysis**, this study examines the representation of artificial intelligence in cinema and its evolution across several eras. Employing theories such as Social Representation Theory and Cultivation Theory, we discovered that AI is often characterised as an autonomous robot with certain objectives. This image transitions from an angry antagonist to a more multidimensional, even protagonist character. The data indicates a tendency of increasingly favourable interactions between AI and humans. This research emphasises that societal hopes concerning AI are more prominent than the fears depicted in these films. Social Representation Theory was utilised to analyse the influence of media representations on societal perceptions.
6. **Shilpa Mary (2024), THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH**, the study highlights the prevalence of cyberbullying and the negative impact of excessive social media use on mental health. Research indicates that young individuals are susceptible to the influence of selectively curated internet information, potentially resulting in heightened expectations and body image issues. The study highlights the potential of social media as a platform for community development, self-expression, and access to diverse perspectives. Emphasising the importance of parental supervision and comprehensive digital literacy is essential to mitigate negative effects and encourage appropriate social media usage.

Objectives

1. To analyse the depiction of mental health issues faced by young individuals increasingly dependent on social media and artificial intelligence in the film.
2. To Analyse the film's depiction of the potential dangers linked to highly personalised AI assistants, particularly regarding their access to users' private data.
3. To examine the portrayal of social media platforms as tools for narrative dominance and their influence on user behaviour, especially in the context of influencer culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study will utilize content analysis as its research methodology to examine the portrayal of mental health issues and AI in the film CTRL.

Research Design-

1. **Qualitative Content Analysis:** Suitable for analysing the representation of AI and mental health in a film. Focuses on a single case (CTRL film) to gain in-depth insights.
2. **Purposive Sampling:** Selected CTRL film for its relevance to the research topic and potential to provide rich insights. Analyses a single film to explore the research question in-depth.
3. **Data Collection Methods:** Film Script and Visual Elements, Analyses the film's narrative, dialogue, and visual representations, Identifies and code themes related to AI and mental health. Data was gathered through a detailed analysis of the visual and textual elements in the segments of the movie.

Data interpretation:

1. **Theme-** The title 'CTRL' itself suggests the underlying theme of the film, which is to 'take control of your life.' This movie is a psychological dark film.
2. **Story-** Nella (Ananya Pandey) and Joe (Vihaan Samat) represent an influencer power couple whose seemingly ideal relationship deteriorates following the revelation of Joe's infidelity. Nella seeks a new beginning by utilising an AI tool to eliminate Joe from her life. However, the application exerts influence over her, assuming control of her life.
3. **Dialogues-** Nella and Joe were social media influencers who constantly posted about their lives. However, when Joe becomes fed up with the facade, he exclaims:
Joe - "What kind of relationship is this, where we're constantly thinking about what to post, when to post, which brand to collaborate with, and how to increase engagement?..... We're not entertainers; we're salespeople..... We sell things to people under the guise of humour. Buy this product after watching a joke, order pizza after a meme, and if it doesn't arrive within 30 minutes, it's free! But what about the delivery boy's salary? Will it be deducted to pay for that free pizza?"

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Nella responds, "Now you're the internet's messiah... the Robin Hood of social media. After accumulating wealth and fame, you'll take a social stand?"

These dialogues reveal how social media influencers present a curated version of themselves online. **Joe's monologue suggests that he's tired of this artificial world and is craving authenticity. His words hint at a growing sense of disillusionment and a desire for revolution.**

4. **Visual representation of AI-** Following the conclusion of Nella and Joe's relationship, she experiences online cyberbullying. Among the derogatory remarks from trolls labelling her as "psycho", "loser", "fake", and "witch", one comment stands out: "Instead, use @ctrl.ai to erase him." This signifies the commencement of the film's central narrative. Nella downloads the application and establishes a personal AI assistant, designating it as **Allen**, represented by a male avatar. The laptop screen remains active, presenting Allen's options:

- **Ctrl your posts**
 - **Ctrl your digital past**
 - **Ctrl your schedule**
 - **Ctrl your interactions**

As Nella seeks to erase her digital past, Allen's sharp calculations reveal that deleting Joe from her life will **take 90 days, 16 hours, 42 minutes, and 22 seconds, considering the 1,49,881 photos and 19,655 videos** they shared. To facilitate this process, Nella grants Allen access to her camera and microphone without hesitation. The AI is depicted as possessing a cognitive capacity that surpasses human speed, executing calculations swiftly while maintaining a congenial disposition, thereby fostering greater user trust compared to human interactions. This artificial intelligence is capable of:

- **Read messages and respond automatically**
- **Manage time and schedule meetings with prominent brands**
- **The AI is well-versed in internet algorithms.**
- **Mimic voices and, as seen in the film's climax, create deepfake content**
- **The AI keeps track of various aspects of the user's online presence.**
- **Online accounts**
- **Social media handles**
- **Bank details**
- **Every other aspect of your digital life**

The AI's capabilities are not limited to just managing your online presence, but also extend to monitoring and controlling your personal data. The film's narrative showcases how the AI assistant, which initially helps Nella gain followers, eventually gains control over her life by the end.

5. **Emotional estrangement from family-** The CTRL examines how the younger generation's fixation on social media influencers and digital affirmation is alienating them from their families. Contemporary youth are overlooking the significance of interpersonal connections, failing to communicate their emotions and challenges with their parents.
6. **Depression Beneath the Illusion of Reel Life-** Nella, the protagonist, struggles with depression and online harassment, yet continues to present a perfect online persona. The film showcases the stark contrast between her reel life and real life.
7. **Digital Freedom fighters-** The film also touches on the theme of digital freedom, introducing characters like Joe and his team public interest tech group, who fights against a corporation exploiting users' personal data through AI-powered apps.

CONCLUSION

- The film effectively demonstrates how technology infiltrates all facets of our existence, encompassing intimate relationships and public identities. It prompts enquiries on the extent of our influence over our digital existence and the degree of control technology exerts over us.
- "CTRL" underscores the delicate boundary between surveillance and security. Nella's employment of AI to oversee and influence Joe's behaviour highlights the ethical quandaries associated with utilising technology to exert control over individuals, even for ostensibly legitimate purposes.

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- The film challenges the culture of affirmation via likes, comments, and followers. It illustrates how the quest for online validation can result in personal decline, highlighting the necessity for a more stable sense of self-esteem.
- "CTRL" on Netflix is a thought-provoking film that compels viewers to reevaluate their connection with technology. Through its captivating narrative and persuasive performances, it highlights the frequently neglected perils of our digital era.
- The film illustrates the ambiguous boundaries between online validation and real-world contentment, generational discontent, excessive device attachment, and the threats presented by Big Tech, deep fakes, and generative AI models.

In conclusion, today's youth are forgetting the importance of communication with their families and are instead sharing their lives with strangers on social media. While they celebrate their joys and sorrows online, they often neglect to open up to their parents, especially when struggling with depression. This lack of emotional attachment to their families and excessive reliance on social media makes them vulnerable to cyberbullying, trolling, and online harassment. The root cause of these issues is the excessive use of the internet and the unchecked influence of AI assistants. Youth are becoming increasingly dependent on these AI-powered tools, often granting them permission to access their personal information without fully understanding the risks. This can lead to devastating consequences. Therefore, it is essential to promote cyber security awareness and educate the youth about the importance of responsible internet use, digital limits, and spending time with nature and loved ones to maintain good mental health.

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