

Exposure And Response to Mass Media Campaigns on Mental Health Amongst Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates

Ogechukwu N. Okoli,

Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
08030569547, Ogechukwuokoli59@gmail.com

Chinyere Felicia Nweke,

Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
09073761916, nwekefc@gmail.com

Chiazor Chiaghana

Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
08037322421, chiazochiazo@gmail.com

&

Evelyn Chinwe Obi

Department of Mass Communication,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
08032217932, eve4dad96@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study examined the exposure and response to mass media campaigns among Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates. The objectives of this study are to find out the level of exposure and response of Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates on Mass media campaigns on mental illness. The theoretical framework of this was anchored on Health Belief Model and Social Norms Theory. The survey method was done using a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. A sample of 381 respondents was drawn from the population of the study which comprises undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Findings from the study revealed that the Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates have a high exposure to mental health campaigns on mass media, and have encountered them a couple of times, especially through the Internet; Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates are persuaded by Mass media campaigns. The study recommended that further studies should be made to analyze the importance of mass media as a tool for creating awareness of mental health disorders among others.

Keywords: Campaigns, Exposure, Mass media, Mental health, Response, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Mental health, according to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, CCOH (2022), is a state of well-being in which a person understands his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to his or her community. Both physical and mental health are the result of a complex interplay between many individual and environmental factors, including a family history of illness and disease/genetics, lifestyle and health behaviors (e.g., smoking, exercise, substance use), levels of personal and workplace stress, exposure to toxins, exposure to trauma, personal life circumstances and history, access to supports (e.g., timely healthcare, social supports).

Many people who have a mental illness do not want to talk about it. But mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical condition, just like heart disease or diabetes. And mental health conditions are treatable. We are continually expanding our understanding of how the human brain works, and treatments are available to help people successfully manage mental health conditions (Central Community College, 2023)

Mental illness does not discriminate; it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, geography, income, social status, race/ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, background, or other aspects of cultural identity. While mental illness can occur at any age, three-fourths of all mental illnesses begin by age 24 (American Psychiatric Association, 2023).

Every October 10, the World Health Organization (WHO) marks World Mental Health Day dedicated to raising “awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health” (WHO, 2022). According to WHO, the day serves as “an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.”

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of mental health. In Nigeria, mental health is becoming a serious issue of concern with more citizens becoming

affected (Iremeka, 2023). This reality is also reflected among students where in recent times, growing cases of depression and suicides have been reported (Sahara Reporters, 2022). Against this backdrop, this study investigated exposure and response to mass media mental health campaigns among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Today, mass media plays a central role in shaping public opinion, influencing consumer behavior, and shaping cultural norms and values. While it has the power to inform, educate, and entertain, mass media also has the potential to spread misinformation, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and undermine democracy. In this same light, a planned series of newspaper articles, television interviews, media posts, etc. that are intended to achieve a particular aim which is called mass media campaigns, is a key role of the mass media. Media synthesizes the conception and understanding of mental health.

Mass media campaigns are often used to raise awareness and promote mental health among college students. These campaigns may take a variety of forms, including posters, social media posts, videos, and public service announcements. This study intends to increase knowledge and awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and encourage help-seeking behaviors among students.

Research on the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health among college students has produced mixed results. Some studies have found that these campaigns can increase knowledge and awareness of mental health issues, as well as reduce stigma and increase help-seeking behaviors (Pineda, Castro-Sánchez, Sánchez-Herrero, Ortiz-Barreda, Lomas-Campos, & Lomas-Vega, 2018). Yusuf, Nweze, Smith and Okoro (2020). For example, one study found that a social media campaign focused on reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness resulted in increased knowledge and more positive attitudes towards seeking help (Yusuf et al., 2020).

However, studies have found that mass media campaigns may not have a significant impact on mental health outcomes among university students (O'Connor, O'Connor & White, 2014). One study found that a campus-wide mental health campaign did not result in significant changes in attitudes toward help-seeking or perceived social support (O'Connor et al., 2014).

Similarly, many students in various tertiary institutions are going through mental stress due to the harsh economy and its attendant financial burden, natural disasters like floods

and other numerous factors often leading to poor academic performances, depression, and an increase in suicide, this brought about mental health awareness in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

It is frequently said that Health is Wealth, and this statement should not only be looked at in the case of physical well-being but also of Mental health. It seems that more attention is being placed on physical health matters than on mental health among students. Even with seminars and broadcasts on mental health awareness, there still seems to be exposure to some of these campaigns that have led to increased cases of mental illnesses among them. This proves to ask if there is anything wrong with these mass media campaigns as to why the desired effect of reducing mental illness is a problem, and if not, why then are the cases of mental illnesses rising? Is it that the campaigns are not having any effect on the students? It is against this backdrop that the researcher considered the study of exposure and response to mass media campaigns on mental health among UNIZIK undergraduates.

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community. WHO (2022). *Mental health* can be defined as the absence of mental disease, a state of being that also includes the biological, psychological, or social factors that contribute to an individual's mental state and ability to function within the environment.

Mental health (sometimes called behavioral health) includes a person's psychological, emotional, and social well-being. It shapes the way you think, feel, behave, and interact with others. Your mental state also affects how you cope with stress. It's a vital part of your life, from infancy through adulthood. In talking about mental health, Mental (behavioral) health disorders, or mental illnesses cannot be left out as it also affects the way you think and behave. They change your mood and can make it difficult to function at home, work, school, or in your community—ClevelandClinic (2022).

Mental Health could be treated through medication, such as antidepressants and antipsychotics, also psychotherapy, alternative therapies that include herbal remedies, massage, acupuncture, and yoga, and finally brain stimulation therapies which include electroconvulsive therapy. Most people with behavioral health disorders can manage their

symptoms. They lead full, fulfilling lives with the right treatments. Some people will need to manage a mental illness for the rest of their lives. Others find that symptoms improve as they get older. Overall, mental illnesses tend to peak in young adults ages 18 to 25, then diminish greatly after 50. Mental illness can also increase your risk for certain health conditions such as stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. (Cleveland Clinic, 2022)

Mental healthcare is in a sorry state given that we have more than 60 million Nigerians suffering from various mental illnesses and the fact that only about 10 percent of them were able to access appropriate care. We are left with more than 90 percent who are unable to access care and this group is called the treatment gap for mental illnesses (Obindo, 2022). Mental health is an issue that receives little attention in Nigeria. Despite being a significant public health issue, it is often overlooked and stigmatized in the country. Nigeria suffers from a severe shortage of mental health professionals, with only one psychiatrist per one million citizens. (WHO, 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for the Nigerian government to get a better understanding of their citizens' mental health needs. The telling effects of isolation and loneliness on mental wellbeing and a plethora of domestic violence incidents during the lockdowns should have served as a wake-up call to revisit its paused mental health and substance abuse bills. However, it became a missed opportunity to instate comprehensive mental health legislation. Likewise, neither the World Health Organization's universal mental health coverage initiative nor the Nigerian youth drug abuse endemic influenced the federal government to pragmatism. (Ajao, 2022).

The mass media is a technology intended to reach a Mass audience, platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. (Erica, Steven and Lesley, 2022)

The portrayal of mental health in mass media can have both positive and negative effects on individuals. On one hand, media can increase awareness and reduce the stigma of mental health by highlighting the experiences of individuals with mental health disorders and also encouraging them to make their voices heard. The rise of social media with low barriers to entry (everyone can, in principle, start a blog or a Twitter account), allows

'ordinary' people with mental health difficulties to produce content and make their voices heard while bypassing mainstream media (Newman, Dutton and Blank, 2012).

On the other hand, media can perpetuate stigmatizing stereotypes and misinformation surrounding mental health. Media portrayals of those with mental illness often skew toward either stigmatization or trivialization. Consequently, all forms of media—including television, film, magazines, newspapers, and social media—have been criticized for disseminating negative stereotypes and inaccurate descriptions of those with mental illness. (Saleh, 2023)

Amedu, Bello, and Adeyemo (2022) explored the influence of social media campaigns on knowledge, attitude, and preventive practices of mental health among youths in the Ibadan Metropolis. The study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. The research adopted a survey research design. The instrument of data collection was a self-designed questionnaire. The area of the study was Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State. Findings showed that youths in Ibadan Metropolis often see mental health campaigns on social media and high numbers of the youths do see these campaigns occasionally. A minority of the youths in Ibadan Metropolis often see mental health campaigns on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram. Also, the respondents are aware of their mental health status, and that mental health disorder affects mood, thinking, and behaviors. They also know that everyone is susceptible to mental health disorders and that mental health disorders are treatable. The study recommended that government, non-governmental organizations, and health organizations should tap into the opportunities provided by social media to educate and inform youths on mental health.

Aluh, Anyachebelu, and Anosike (2018) investigated the knowledge of depression among Nigerian adolescents. The study was a cross-sectional descriptive survey conducted among students of a Federal Government College (high school) in southeast Nigeria. All consenting students in the senior secondary classes (grades 10–12) were recruited, making a total of 285 participants. The participants were presented with the 'friend in need' questionnaire designed to elicit the participants' recognition of the disorder depicted in two vignettes and their recommendation about the appropriate source of help-seeking. One vignette was of a clinically depressed case while the other vignette was about a girl undergoing a normal life crisis. Findings revealed that out of the 285 students recruited into the study, 277 returned

their copies of the questionnaire adequately completed indicating a response rate of 97.2%. A total of 4.8% (n = 13) of participants correctly identified and labeled the depression vignette. Only four respondents (1.5%) recommended professional help from a psychiatrist or psychologist. Insomnia was the most identified symptom of distress for depression (17.1%). Females demonstrated higher mental health literacy, in terms of their ability to correctly label the depression vignettes, their expression of greater concern over a depressed peer than males, their expectation that depression requires a longer recovery than normal teenage problems, and their ability to identify individual symptoms of depression. Family and friends were the most recommended sources of help. The study concluded that mental health literacy was abysmally low amongst the adolescents surveyed, hence there is an urgent need to increase mental health awareness in Nigeria.

Atilola and Olayiwola (2012) investigated how often Nigerians are exposed to films that contain scenes depicting mental illness and how much premium they place on such portrayals as reflecting reality. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to obtain socio-demographic data and to find out how often respondents see scenes depicting 'madness' in home videos, as well as their views about the accuracy of such depictions from the orthodox psychiatry point of view. Current home videos available in video rental shops were selected for viewing and content review. Results indicated that all 676 respondents had seen a Nigerian home video in the preceding 30 days: 528 (78%) reported scenes depicting 'mad persons'; 472 (70%) reported that the scenes they saw agreed with their own initial understanding of the cause and treatment of 'madness'. About 20% of the films depicted mental illness. The most commonly depicted cause was sorcery and enchantment by witches and wizards, while the most commonly depicted treatment was magical and spiritual healing by diviners and religious priests. The study concluded that Nigerian home video is a popular electronic media in Nigeria and scenes depicting mental illness are not uncommon, hence the industry could be harnessed for promoting mental health literacy.

Omoera and Aihevba (2012) studied broadcast media intervention in mental health challenge. The study deployed analytical, observation and interview techniques. In doing this, it used the Edo State scenario to critically reflect, albeit preliminarily, on the interventionist role the broadcast media have played/are playing/should play in creating awareness and providing support systems for mentally challenged persons in urban and

rural centers in Nigeria. The study found that television and radio media are very innovative and their innovativeness can be deployed in the area of putting mental health issue in the public discourse and calling for action. This is because, as modern means of mass communication, radio and television engender a technologically negotiated reaching out or dissemination of information which naturally flows to all manner of persons regardless of their place of abode, class, political, social or religious orientations and persuasions. It further found that although radio and television can readily provide friendly platforms for people to interact, with the intent of sensitising and mobilising others to individually or collectively support identified social causes, their potentialities are yet to be fully explored in terms of programming, social responsibility as well as the maintenance of public good, with regard to creating awareness and understanding among the people toward remediating the prevalent problem of mentally challenged persons in Edo state, Nigeria.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a theoretical model that can be used to guide health promotion and disease prevention programs. It is used to explain and predict individual changes in mental health behaviors. It is one of the most widely used models for understanding health behaviors which in this case is on mental health.

Bringing this theory to the purview of the study, Nnamdi Azikiwe University undergraduates' exposure and response to mass media campaigns on mental health could be evaluated through their subjective perception of mental health issues, their perception of the seriousness of mental health and disorders, undergraduates' sentiments towards carrying out mental health interventions being suggested through mass media campaigns on mental health.

The Social Norms Theory which was first used by Perkins and Berkowitz in 1986 to address student alcohol use patterns is a theoretical framework that explains how people's behavior and attitudes are influenced by their perceptions of what is normal or acceptable behavior in their social environment. When it comes to mental health, social norms can play a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward mental health and their willingness to seek help.

Concerning this study, if the mass media deploys the use of Social Norms Theory and approach in their campaigns, positive behavior change related to mental health by targeting undergraduates' perceptions of mental health norms in their social environment will get them more exposed to mental health topics as a norm and elicit a positive response to the mass media campaigns. For example, a mass media campaign on mental health, that emphasizes the high prevalence of mental health problems or the challenges of stigmatizing attitudes towards mental health issues, may be effective in changing individuals' perceptions of and response to what is a normal or acceptable behavior related to mental health, equipping them and getting them more exposed to the matter.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to offer solutions to the problem of this study:

1. To What extent are UNIZIK undergraduates exposed to mass media campaigns on mental health?
2. What is the level of awareness gained by UNIZIK undergraduates through mass media campaigns on mental health?
3. To What extent are UNIZIK undergraduates persuaded by messages of mass media campaigns on mental health?
4. To What extent do UNIZIK undergraduates comply with the messages of mass media campaigns on mental health?

Methodology

The research design used for this study was a survey. Survey is descriptive study and an investigation in which only part or sample of the population is studied and selection is made in a true representation of the whole population. The nature of the variables being investigated in this study made sample survey the ideal design for the study. The study population comprised of all the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Undergraduates, estimated to be 38, 650 students (NAU Registry Unit, 2023). The sample size of 381 for the study was determined by relying on the Sample Size Computation by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2013). The multi-stage sampling technique was used with

the students divided into two functional clusters: Faculties and Departments. The sampling procedure was multi-stage approach. The researchers conducted sampling in three stages as follows:

At the first stage, four out of the 14 faculties of the university were selected. The selection was made using simple random procedure. The faculties were listed in alphabetical order, and using a table of random numbers, the following faculties were selected: Arts, Education, Management Sciences, and Social Sciences.

At the second stage, the researchers chose two departments from each of the four faculties selected above, using the same simple random procedure. So, a total of eight departments emerged as follows: Arts – English and Music; Education – Educational Foundation and Guidance and Counselling; Management Sciences – Accountancy and Marketing; and Social Sciences – Political Science and Mass Communication.

At the third stage, a particular number of respondents from each department were chosen based on the proportion represented by each department, the sample (381) calculated as follows

$$NR = \frac{n \times 381}{N}$$

Where NR = number of unit (to be selected from a cluster)

n= total number of unit in the cluster

N= population

These three stages are illustrated in the table below:

Stages	Selections	Total	Population	Sample
1st Stage	4 faculties from UNIZIK	Arts, Education, Management Sciences and Social Sciences.		
2nd stage	2 departments from each	English, Music, Educational Foundation,		

	faculty	Guidance and Counselling, Accountancy, Marketing, Political Science and Mass Communication.		
3rd stage	381 students proportionally selected from 8 departments.	English	510	42
		Music	502	41
		Educational Foundation	550	45
		Guidance and counselling	560	46
		Accountancy	562	46
		Marketing	570	47
		Political Science	791	65
		Mass communication	586	49
Total		8 departments	4, 631	381

The instrument of data collection used for this study was the questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed and presented in tables using Software Package for Social Science (SPSS). The pre-test and validation of the research involved 20 respondents, to test the validity of the field, to assess if the items in the instrument are best to address the measurable variables and to use the information generated to evaluate the preliminary research questions. The results from the pre-test showed that the instrument was understood by the respondents to a large extent as virtually all the respondents filled out the items.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Findings from this study were drawn from data obtained from 381 respondents. On gender status 104 of the respondents representing 28.1% were males while 266 representing

71.9% of the respondents were females. This simply indicates that the majority of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Students who participated in this study were females. In terms of age of the respondents, about 78 representing 21.1% of the respondents were between the ages of 16 – 20 years, 279 representing 75.4% of the respondents were between the ages of 21 – 25 years, 8 representing 2.1% of the respondents were 26 – 30 years, and 5 representing 1.4% were above 30 respectively. This result reveals that the majority of the participants in this study were between the ages of 21 – 25 years.

Research question 1: What Extent Are UNIZIK Undergraduates Exposed to Mental Health Campaigns On Mass Media?

Level of exposure of the respondents to mental health campaigns on Mass media.

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you seen, heard, or read any mass media campaigns on mental health in the past year?	Yes	357	96.5
	No	13	3.5
TOTAL		370	100
How frequently have you seen, read, or heard mass media campaigns on mental health?	Many times	44	12.3
	Several times	199	55.7
	Rarely	144	32
TOTAL		370	100
Which messages have you seen, heard, or read?	Importance of mental health care	248	69.5
	Symptoms of mental health care	64	17.9
	Preventive measure against mental health problems	45	12.6
	Corrective measures for	-	-

	health problems	mental	
TOTAL			370
			100.0
Which medium did you see, hear, or read on mental health campaigns?	TV		44
			12.3
	Radio		54
			15.1
	Internet		238
			66.7
	Print (Newspaper and Magazine)		21
			5.9
TOTAL			357
			100
From which source did you first know about the mass media campaigns on mental health?	TV		54
			15.1
	Radio		65
			18.2
	Internet		217
			60.8
	Print (Newspaper and Magazine)		21
			5.9
TOTAL			357
			100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Response to Table 1 above presented the result of the frequency distribution in response to whether participants have seen, heard, or read any mass media campaigns on mental health. Majority of the respondents (96.5%) stated YES, while 3.5% stated NO. Hence, the majority of the respondents have seen, heard, or read any mass media campaigns on mental health. The respondents who chose NO were asked to skip questions 6,7,8 and 9 in this section thus reducing the total number of respondents to 357. On the frequency distribution in response to the rate at which respondents have seen, read, or heard mass media campaigns on mental health. 12.3% stated many times, 55.7% of the respondents stated several times and 32% stated rarely. Hence, the majority of the respondents have seen, heard, or read mass media campaigns on mental health several times.

On the messages respondents have seen, read, or heard. The response reveals that 69.5% have seen, read, or heard the importance of mental health care, 17.9% have seen, read, or

heard symptoms of mental health care, 12.6% have seen, read, or heard about preventive measures against mental health problems, and 0% of respondents have not seen, heard or read on corrective measures on mental health problems. This implies that the majority of the respondents have seen, read, or heard the importance of mental health care. While on responses on which medium respondents have seen, read, or heard on mental health campaigns. The response reveals that 12.3% have seen, read, or heard mental health campaigns on TV, 15.1% have heard mental health campaigns on the radio, 66.7% have seen, read, or heard mental health campaigns on the internet, and 5.9% have seen or read mental health campaigns on the print (newspaper and magazine). This implies that the majority of the respondents have seen, read, or heard mental health campaigns on the internet. Then on the source did you first know about the mass media campaigns on mental health. This table also shows responses on the source respondents first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health. The response reveals that 15.1% first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health on TV, 18.2% first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health on the radio, 60.8% first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health on the internet and 5.9% first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health on the print (newspaper and magazine). This implies that the majority of the respondents first knew about mass media campaigns on mental health on the internet.

Research question 2: What Is the Level of Awareness Gained by UNIZIK Undergraduates Through Mass Media Campaigns on Mental Health?

Table 2: Respondent's Awareness on Mental Health Issues Have Improved After Encountering Mass Media Campaigns.

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you think your encounter with mass media campaigns on mental health have improved your awareness of mental health issues?	Yes	288	77.8
	No	13	3.5
	Maybe	69	18.7
TOTAL		370	100.0

Which Mental Health Conditions Respondents Have A Better Understanding of Due to Mass Media Campaigns On Mental Health?	Depression	264	71.4
	Anxiety	34	9.2
	Bipolar disorder	3	0.8
	Schizophrenia	0	0
	Bulimia	0	0
	Anorexia	12	3.2
	ADHD	57	15.4
	Post Traumatic Stress disorder		
TOTAL		370	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 2 presented the results of respondents on whether encountering mass media campaigns has improved their awareness of it. 77.8% stated YES, 3.5% stated NO and 18.7% indicated maybe. Hence, from the response, it can be stated that the majority of the respondents' awareness after encountering mass media campaigns on mental health has improved.

On the mental health condition respondents have a better understanding due to mass media campaigns on mental health, the table showed that the majority of the respondents (71.4%) have a better understanding of depression due to mass media campaigns on mental health.

Research question 3: What Extent Are UNIZIK Undergraduates Persuaded by Messages of Mass Media Campaigns on Mental Health?

Table 3: Showing the Rate at which respondents believe mass media campaigns on mental health

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you believe mass media campaigns on mental health?	To a large extent	253	68.4
	To a small extent	104	28.1
	Not at all	13	3.5

TOTAL		370	100.0
What aspects of their messages do you tend to believe most?	Importance of mental health care	256	71.7
	Symptoms of mental health care	45	12.6
	Preventive measures against mental health problems	56	15.7
	Corrective measures for mental health problems	-	-
	Other	-	-
TOTAL		357	100.0
What aspects of their messages do you tend not to believe most?	Importance of mental health care	23	6.4
	Symptoms of mental health care	69	19.3
	Preventive measures against mental health problems	46	13
	Corrective measures for mental health problems	184	51.5
	Other (spiritual aspects)	1	0.3
Others (none)	34	9.5	

357

100.0

TOTAL

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 3 above presented the result of the frequency distribution on the extent respondents believe mass media campaigns on mental health. The table showed that the majority of the respondents (68.4%), to a large extent believe mass media campaigns on mental health.

The respondents who chose NOT AT ALL, were asked to skip questions 13 and 14 in this section thus reducing the total number of respondents to 357.

On the results of respondents on what aspect of mass media campaign messages they believe most. The table showed that the majority of the respondents (71.7%) believe in the importance of mental health care in mass media campaigns. Again, on the results of respondents on what aspect of mass media campaign messages they tend not to believe most about. The table showed that the majority of the respondents (51.5%) tend not to believe the corrective measures for mental health problems.

Research question 4: What Extent Do UNIZIK Undergraduates Comply with The Messages of
Mass Media Campaigns on Mental Health?

Table 4: Showing If Respondents Through Mass Media Campaigns Have Been Influenced to Take Their Mental Health Seriously.

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have mass media campaigns on mental health influenced you to take your mental health seriously?	Yes	357	96.5
	No	13	3.5
TOTAL		370	100.0
Have mass media campaigns on mental health influenced you to take your mental health seriously?	Yes	311	84.1
	No	46	3.5

health influenced you to take personal preventive measures against mental health issues?	Maybe	13	12.4
TOTAL		370	100.0
How have mass media campaigns on mental health influenced your behavior or decision- making?	This inspired me to seek medical attention	54	15.1
	Educated me about the importance of seeking help	172	48.2
	Increased my willingness to discuss my mental health with others	131	36.7
TOTAL		357	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 4 presented the results of respondents if respondents through mass media campaigns have been influenced to take their mental health seriously. 96.5% indicated YES, and 3.5% indicated NO. Hence, from the response, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents have been influenced through mass media campaigns to take their mental health seriously.

On whether respondents through mass media campaigns have been influenced to take personal preventive measures against mental health issues. 84.1% indicated YES, 3.5% indicated NO, and 12.4% chose MAYBE. Hence, from the response, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents through mass media campaigns have been influenced to take personal preventive measures against mental health issues.

The respondents who chose NO were asked to skip question 17 in this section, thus reducing the total number of respondents to 357.

On whether respondents through mass media campaigns have been influenced to take personal preventive measures against mental health issues. 84.1% indicated YES, 3.5% indicated NO, and 12.4% chose MAYBE. Hence, from the response, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents through mass media campaigns have been influenced to take personal preventive measures against mental health issues.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first finding of this study showed that most of the undergraduate students have been exposed to mental health campaigns on mass media. The majority of the undergraduates have seen, heard, or read mental health campaigns on mass media several times, especially through the internet, and for the first time as well. This shows that there is an increased level of exposure to mental health campaigns on mass media which corroborates the assertions of Amedu, Bello, and Adeyemo (2022), who found that youths in Ibadan Metropolis often see mental health campaigns on social media and high numbers of the youths do see these campaigns occasionally. The constant effort of the mass media to promote mental health through its campaigns has brought about exposure of most of UNIZIK undergraduates to these campaigns and as such, tallies with the theory of Health Belief Model.

The second finding revealed that there is an increased level of awareness of mass media campaigns on mental health among undergraduates. It also shows that undergraduates have a better understanding of mental health conditions, especially depression, due to mass media campaigns. This tallies with the findings in the study of Amedu, Bello, and Adeyemo (2022), which showed that the respondents are aware of their mental health status and that mental health disorder affects mood, thinking, and behaviors. Through health promotion of mental health, through mass media campaigns, it is seen that there is an increased level of awareness of mental health, and this corroborates the theory of the Health Belief Model.

The third finding revealed that most of the undergraduates to a large extent are persuaded by Mass media campaigns on mental health as they believe them. Although the students do not believe some aspects of messages in mass media campaigns on mental health, especially on the corrective measures for mental health problems, the majority still believe in the importance of mental health care through these mass media campaigns. This is by the study by Atitola and Olayiwola (2012), which revealed that Nigerian home video is a popular electronic media in Nigeria and scenes depicting that mental illness are not uncommon, hence the industry could be harnessed for promoting mental health literacy. This finding stands on the Social Norms Theory which suggests that people's perceptions of the prevalence and acceptability of mental health problems as a norm, can impact their willingness to seek help.

The fourth finding revealed that the majority of the undergraduates, through mass media campaigns on mental health have been influenced to take their mental health seriously and also take personal and preventive measures against health issues influencing their behavior and decision-making in seeking help. This tallies with the assertions of Omoera and Aihevba (2012), who found that television and radio media are very innovative and their innovativeness can be deployed in the area of putting mental health issues in the public discourse and calling for action, and also the theory of HBM which states that there must be a cue to action which is the mass media campaigns that initiated the decision-making process for them to seek help.

The findings of this study suggest that since there is a high exposure and response to mass media campaigns on mental health amongst Nnamdi Azikiwe university undergraduates, as well as their encountering of mass media messages a couple of times especially through the mass medium of the internet and also that UNIZIK undergraduates have an increased level of awareness on mass media campaigns on mental health, thus it has given them a better understanding of mental health condition mostly depression. It will also help them to shun every illicit act that will lead into depression and other types of mental health. To a large extent UNIZIK undergraduates are persuaded by the messages of mass media campaigns on mental health, as well as the fact they do believe in most of the messages, they also do not believe in some aspects of messages encountered through these mass media campaigns on mental health. Through the mass media campaigns on mental health, the response of UNIZIK undergraduates have been influenced towards taking personal and preventive measures towards mental health issues and also their attitude towards seeking help. By implication, this is in consonant with HBM which suggests that considering the dangers of not adhering to a health based messages and also looking at the benefits of adopting such messages, students will do everything to ensure that they do not fall victim of mental health disorder.

Therefore, there is a need for appropriate massive mass media campaigns on mental health and modification of mass media campaign content to suit young people including students, to incorporate more topics on different mental health conditions, symptoms, and preventive and corrective measures on mental health. This is to ensure that they have a broader and better knowledge of mental health through the mass media. The university management and the government should prioritize the mental health of the students and young persons by organizing and promoting mass media campaigns on mental health, especially through their community radio stations such as the radio station in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, to intensify their focus on enhancing the knowledge of mental health among the general population. Further studies should analyze the importance of mass media as a tool for creating awareness of mental health disorders, and the depiction of mental health through the mass media. Such analysis may be achieved through quantitative and qualitative content analysis and will help in understanding the proposed study. A repeat of this study also may be relevant for enlarging the scope in terms of expanding the

study area, population, and sample. This will complement the instant effort by providing further insight into the subject of study.

REFERENCES

- Agofure, O., Okandeji-Barry, O. R. & Ume, I. S. (2019). Knowledge and perception of mental disorders among relatives of mentally ill persons in a rural community in south-south Nigeria. *Journal of Community Medicine and Primary Health Care*, 31(2), 66 – 77.
- Ajao, T. (2022). Normalizing mental health needs in Nigeria: A wake-up call. Retrieved from <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/normalising-mental-health-needs-in-nigeria-a-wake-up-call>
- Aluh, D. O., Anyachebelu, O. C. & Anosike, C. (2018). Mental health literacy: What do Nigerian adolescents know about depression? *Internal Journal of Mental Health System*, 12(8), 1 – 6. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-018-0186-2>
- Amedu, A. A., Bello, A. O. & Adeyemo, O. O. (2022). Influence of social media campaigns on knowledge, attitude, and practice of mental health disorder prevention among youths in Ibadan metropolis. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 10(5), 23 – 36.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2023). What is mental illness? Retrieved from <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>
- Atilola, O. & Olayiwola, F. (2012). The Nigerian home video boom: Should Nigerian psychiatrists be worried? Lessons from content review and views of community dwellers. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 58(5), 470 – 476. DOI: 10.1177/0020764011408544
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, CCOH (2022). Mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.ccohs.ca/topics/wellness/mentalhealth/>
- Central Community College. (2023). Mental health. Retrieved from <https://libguides.cccneb.edu/mentalhealth>
- Chigbata, E. (2022). Mental Health Awareness Seminar Ends At UNIZIK Awka. Retrieved from https://www.absradiotv.com/2022/12/04/mental-health-awareness-seminar-ends-at-unizik-awka/?amp_markup=1
- Cleveland clinic. (2022). Mental health disorders. Retrieved from. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/22295-mental-health-disorders>

- Eaton, J., Nwefoh, E.C., Okafor, G. O., Onyeonoro, U. U., Nwaubani, K. & Henderson, C. (2017). Interventions to increase use of services; Mental Health Awareness in Nigeria. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 11. DOI: 10.1186/s13033-017-0173-Corpus ID: 20465406
- Iremeka, C. (2023). Poverty, depression, and rising cases of suicide in Nigeria. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/poverty-depression-and-rising-cases-of-suicide-in-nigeria/>
- Newman, N., Dutton, W. H., & Blank, G. (2012). Social media in the changing ecology of news: The Fourth and Fifth Estates in Britain. *International Journal of Internet Science*, 7(1), 6-22
- Obindo, T. (2022) 60 million Nigerians suffering from mental illnesses – Psychiatrist. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/553402-60-million-nigerians-suffering-from-mental-illnesses-psychiatrist.html?tztc=1>
- O'Connor, S. S., O'Connor, R. C., & White, B. L. (2014). The effectiveness of a mental health campaign: The role of attitudes toward help-seeking and perceived social support. *Journal of American College Health*, 62(3), 164-171.
- Omoera, O. S. & Aihevba, P. (2012). Broadcast media intervention in mental health challenge. *Antrocom Online Journal of Anthropology*, 8(2), 439 – 45.
- Pineda, J. A., Castro-Sánchez, E., Sánchez-Herrero, S., Ortiz-Barreda, G., Lomas-Campos, M. M., & Lomas-Vega, R. (2018). Effectiveness of a university-wide campaign to promote help-seeking for mental health. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 20(2), 99-107.
- Saleh, N. (2023). How the Stigma of Mental Health Is Spread by Mass Media Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/mental-health-stigmas-in-mass-media-4153888>
- Seun, L. S. (2020). 7 Places You Can Turn. Retrieved from <https://blog.babybliss.com.ng/7-places-you-can-turn-to-during-a-crisis/>
- Tambe, N. A. (2022). 2023 Budget: Health gets highest allocation ever but fails to meet AU commitment Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/559213-2023-budget-health-gets-highest-allocation-ever-but-fails-to-meet-au-commitment.html>
- Tribune online reporters. (2022). NGO takes mental health awareness campaigns to secondary schools in Ibadan. Retrieved from <https://tribuneonlineng.com/ngo-takes-mental-health-awareness-campaign-to-secondary-schools-in-ibadan/>

UNICEF. (2021). The State of the World's Children 2021, On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021>

University of California, Irvine. (2023). Mental Health & Emotional Well-Being. Retrieved from <https://studentwellness.uci.edu/topics/mental-health-awareness>

World Health Organisation, WHO. (2015). Anti-stigma campaign. Retrieved from <https://www.emro.who.int/mnh/campaigns/anti-stigma-campaign.html?format=html>

World Health Organisation, WHO. (2022). Mental disorders. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

World Health Organisation, WHO. (2022). 10 October is World Mental Health Day. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-mental-health-day>

World Health Organisation, WHO. (2022). Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. Retrieved from <http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool?params=gbd-api-2019-permalink/d780dffbe8a381b25e1416884959e88b>