

**THE ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA IN ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN
UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF NEW VISION NEWSPAPER**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I, **Nuwasasira Lucy**, hereby declare that this is my original work, and has never been submitted for the award of degree in this University or any other institution of higher learning. All information presented is as a result of my personal work, unless otherwise stated.

Name

Sign

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled The Role of Print Media in Addressing Mental Health in Uganda: A Case Study of New Vision newspaper has been conducted under my supervision and is now ready for submission.

Ms. Prever Mukasa,

Supervisor.

Sign

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my father, Mr. Kakuru James and my mother, Nyangoma Mary Immaculate. Their unwavering support, encouragement and love have been my guiding light. Their belief in the power of education and their commitment to nurturing my dreams have inspired me to pursue this research. This work is a testament to their endless sacrifices and values they have instilled in me. Thank you for being my greatest mentors and pillars.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the inadequate coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media, focusing specifically on "The New Vision" newspaper. Despite the critical public health challenges posed by high rates of mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, the representation of these issues in print media remained limited. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of media coverage and the barriers faced by journalists.

In this study, the purposive sampling method was applied to let readers in the contents of articles of "The New Vision" which were published in April and May 2024 by evaluating how often the mental health story was covered, what language and framing fashions were used etc. Also, semi-structured interviews of about 5-10 important stakeholders including journalist, editors, mental health practitioners, and advocates were undertaken to understand the problems faced in the reporting of mental health more clinically reporting.

Quantitative data collected through the use of coding and SPSS for statistical analysis were complemented with qualitative data from interviews which were also analyzed thematically. In these studies, it was established that there were indeed gaps in the understanding of issues from a mental health perspective as the coverage was impacted by cultural stereotypes, inadequately trained journalists from newsrooms, and focusing more on news rather than health stories from the editorial considerations.

The research pointed out a lack of sufficient training and resources for the journalists and ways to increase the coverage of mental health issues in print media. The study emphasized that print media is more responsible than any other form of media in changing the attitude of the society and argued on the need to take mental health issues more seriously with regard to implementation of the changes that are being sought.

The interview analysis confirmed that print media had opportunities that could be optimally utilized in influencing mental health attitudes in Uganda. Although stigma, pertaining to a lack of access to information or the right type of training still hampered advancement in this area,

recognition of the importance of mental health reporting was on the rise. Where such opportunities were exploited through proper training, working with mental health professionals, and carefully reporting on the issues at hand, print media had the potential of changing people's perceptions towards mental health in Uganda.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

This section presents the definition of terms, background of the study, the problem statement, purpose and objectives of the study, justification of the study, and scope of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Mental health to me has many definitions, usually described as a state of well-being where the individual realizes his or her own abilities can cope with normal stresses of life and work productively and is able to make meaningful contributions in their community. This comprised of the emotional, psychological and social health that determined how people think feel and act (Cooper et al., 2010). It was seen as central to health in general, and thus quality of life (affecting relationships, physical expression/health; capacity for coping with adversity/stress) [17]. The tenet of good mental health went beyond the negating of just symptoms related to one or other category and included a positive thinking, purposeful perspective (Bhana et al., 2010), in addition to experiencing resilience punctuated by effective life coping strategies.

Print media in Uganda Too was a critical section of the Ugandan press scene that lined diverse urban and rural audience using an selection of papers (MacKian, 2008). Major newspapers: New Vision, Daily Monitor (Covering politics, economy culture & health) [1] — Nabuzale; 2017a Even though print media was a major form of informing, influencing public opinion and facilitating the debate amongst the masses (Arise et al., 2017), it still had its own hurdles due to dwindling resources; readership inconsistency as well as blurring out against digital media across various communities in Kenya. However, print media was still an important information medium and held significant sway over public conversation as well as policy creation (Bwanika et al., 2022).

Psychological was a paramount dimension of human life, and one inevitable constituent of healthy lifestyle (O'Connor et al., 2021). Mental health continued to be a major but neglected global issue, impacting millions (Akol et al, 2018). As was common in most developing countries, the rapid population growth rates (over 45 million people) necessitated for responses to address not only increasing material poverty but also immense and numerous mental health problems especially depression anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder PTSD(Crabb et al.,2018; Ann Mugunga,2021). These issues are further compounded by all sorts of conflict worldwide, poverty and domestic violence drug abuse, lack to no access to medical care for such a diverse body.

Furthermore, Uganda's diverse culture also fueled the stigma and misconceptions of mental illness which hampered psychological treatment seeking-requires among individuals living with mental health disorders (Bwanika et al., 2022). Print media played an essential role in shaping how the public perceives issues, spreading information, and influencing policy decisions (Akol, 2018). In Uganda, traditional media platforms, such as print media, continued to be important sources of information and entertainment (Akol, 2018). They could shape the views and opinions of the public in regard to mental health by providing appropriate and comprehensive coverage of relevant matters. By such reporting, the print media could play a highly significant role in the education of the public, in reducing stigma, and in the demand for increased services for mental health. (Cooper et al., 2010) However, in their present form, it appeared that the print media in Uganda were failing regarding these aspects. (Bird et al., 2011). This was due to various reasons that include cultural stigmas attributed to mental health, lack of resources, and expertise by journalists, and very little attention to health journalism. These are according to Patil 2022.

This study was aimed at establishing reasons why print media in Uganda do not give sufficient attention to mental health issues. It analyzed content from "New Vision," one of the leading newspapers in the country, as well as interviews with some journalists. This was intended to bring to book barriers and challenges that contribute to this minimal coverage. Gaining insight into these important factors is crucial in devising strategies that offer better representation of mental health in the media. This would, over time, help in building a better-informed and more supportive environment for those people suffering from mental health disorders in Uganda.

1.3 Problem statement

Print media in Uganda, such as the already acknowledged newspapers "New Vision," "Observer," and "Daily Monitor," has been very instrumental in informing the audience and setting trends in society. As important as it is, print media has been unsuccessful to a large extent in addressing mental illness. According to research by the World Health Organization, up to 14% of Ugandans will experience a mental disorder sometime in their lifetime (WHO, 2018). These range from conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and PTSD have been caused by some other factors such as poverty, domestic violence, conflict, and a lack of access to health services in Uganda Okello et al. (2007). And the weakness is because of one reason or another, including stigma under Poor mental health; lack of training for

journalists in health reporting; and prioritizing other news judged to be more immediate or newsworthy. This inadequate coverage has tended to reinforce negative stigma and myths regarding mental illness in Ugandan society. As a matter of fact, most of the Ugandan public have remained unaware, misinformed, or uninformed. This has perpetuated stigma and hindered advocacy efforts at alleviating mental health and provide efficient support to those in need. Few studies have been done which analyze the weaknesses of print media representation regarding mental health in Uganda. The present study, therefore, intended to identify the underlying causes of this insufficient reporting and propose ways of enhancing the engagement of print media in mental health awareness in Uganda.

1.4. Purpose of the study

Vision" newspaper, alongside interviews with journalists, editors, mental health professionals, and media analysts. The objective was to identify the obstacles that prevent comprehensive and accurate reporting on mental health in print media. Also, the research investigated the impact of cultural stigmas, inadequate specialized training, editorial priorities, and limited resources on the portrayal of mental health in print media. Eventually, the study sought to formulate practical recommendations to enhance the coverage of mental health issues, which would, in turn, raise public awareness, diminish stigma, and create a more knowledgeable and supportive atmosphere for mental health in Uganda.

1.5 Study Objectives

1.5.1 Main Objective

To investigate how print media addresses mental health in Uganda.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To analyze the coverage of mental health issues in the Ugandan print newspaper, "New Vision" currently.
- ii. To identify barriers faced by journalists in reporting mental health issues.
- iii. To develop recommendations for enhancing mental health coverage in print media.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What was the frequency of articles addressing mental health issues in the "New Vision" newspaper?
- ii. What were the perceived challenges and obstacles encountered by journalists when reporting on mental health topics?
- iii. What strategies could be proposed to improve the quantity and quality of mental health reporting in Ugandan print media?

1.7 Justification of the Study

This research focused on the lack of mental health coverage in Uganda's print media. Although the country exhibits high rates of mental health issues like depression and anxiety, there has been a notable absence of reporting on these subjects. This shortfall has led to the continuation of stigma and has restricted access to mental health services. The study aimed to examine mental health coverage in prominent newspapers and magazines to gauge the extent of the issue and determine obstacles faced by journalists, including cultural stigma and inadequate training. Enhancing mental health reporting could increase public awareness, counteract stereotypes, and impact policymaking and resource distribution. Finally, this research aimed to encourage a more knowledgeable and supportive atmosphere for mental health in Uganda.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This research examined how mental health topics were covered in "New Vision," which is one of Uganda's prominent newspapers, during April and May 2024. It assessed both the frequency and the depth of the reporting and looked into the challenges encountered by journalists. The study did not include other types of media or make comparisons with different areas. Its purpose was to offer suggestions for improving mental health coverage in Uganda's print media, with the goal of raising awareness and decreasing the stigma related to mental health.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This research focused on the representation of mental health issues in print media in Uganda, particularly in the "New Vision" newspaper. It analyzed the frequency, depth, and nature of the reporting, while also exploring the challenges faced by journalists. The study aimed to fill an important gap in understanding how mental health topics were portrayed and discussed in the public sphere. The importance of this research was its potential to enhance awareness and

understanding of mental health, combat stigma and discrimination, inform policy and practice, and support academic and professional growth. Finally, the results of this research could positively influence public attitudes, policies, and practices related to mental health in Uganda, leading to improved well-being for individuals affected by mental health challenges.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the existing research and academic discourses in regard to the focus of this study: how print media represent mental health issues. It provides a perspective regarding the importance of print media through an examination of emerging themes, trends, and findings from past studies, which have been included in this thesis. This section also gives an overview of the current trends in health reporting, challenges that journalists face, and the strategies that could help in changing the trend for the better.

2.1 Media Representation in Mental Health

How mental health is portrayed in media has an overall effect on the perception, attitude toward, and behavior of people when it concerns mental illness (Maier et al., 2014). The portrayals by media do more than affect societal standards and help stigma. More importantly, they play a role in educating people about topics on mental health, available resources, and options for support (Encourage, 2006). Hence, the need to understand media coverage of mental illness as one of the means to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and offer supportive environments for people experiencing a mental illness.

The different forms of media have given several and varied representations of mental health, which include news articles, television dramas and films, and social media postings (Stuart, 2006). The media can be used effectively as an educational tool through advocacy, also perpetuates stereotyping, dramatization of mental illness, and contributes to the dissemination of misinformation. (Nuwarinda Gift, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that how mental health is portrayed in the media has to be critically assessed to appreciate the issues associated with portraying and perception in society. (Bhana et al., 2010)

Literature by various authors has discussed how media shapes perceptions regarding mental health globally as well as locally and within particular cultural settings, such as Bwanika et al. (2022), Maier et al. (2014), Nabuzale (2017). These have highlighted how media framing, language, and imagery use shape the view of the public about mental illness. For instance, studies have shown that using stigmatizing language or portraying mental illness

victims negatively only helps to further stereotype them and discourage people from seeking treatment and help. On the other hand, sensitive and compassionate media coverage can dispel stigma, build awareness, and stimulate conversation about mental health.

Media portrayals of mental health intersect with larger social and political debates. News stories can reflect and entrench cultural values and beliefs, power relationships, and disparities associated with access to and the provision of mental health services. This is also the case in terms of the way news framing of mental health issues may influence policy priorities, budgetary focuses, and public health responses. Francis et al., 2004).

In light of the Ugandan context, this study into media representation of mental health becomes particularly pertinent due to its one of the highest rates of mental health disorders and overall poor access to mental health services. Bhana et al., 2010. Despite these, in the contemporary world, there is an increasing trend towards being more conscious of and sensitive to the role of media in increasing awareness about mental health and removing associated stigma. Kenez et al., 2015.

2.2 Global Perspectives on Mental Health Reporting

The representation of mental health in the media is a subject attracting considerable attention across the globe; hence, the mountain of research that has taken place to study its effects on public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors about mental illness. Research carried out across different countries highlights complex relationships between media coverage and stigma and awareness and help-seeking behavior associated with mental health. Studies from Western countries reportedly have shown that mass media create or perpetuate stigmatizing images of individuals with mental illnesses; Like in the US and the UK, there has been much focus on the use of stigmatizing language and negative media portrayal of mental illness. These studies indicate that, in any case, sensationalized media reporting on issues of mental health only supports the reinforcement of stereotypes and prohibits efforts toward the reduction of stigma and the promotion of empathy toward those who have been afflicted. Conversely, studies from low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, have revealed distinct challenges and opportunities in the media representation of mental health (Kilbourne et al., 2018). Factors such as limited access to mental health services, cultural stigma, and resource

limitations greatly influence how mental health is covered in these settings (Stroope et al., 2017).

In spite of these obstacles, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of responsible and compassionate media reporting in promoting mental health awareness and mitigating stigma on a global scale (Kazmi, 2020). Campaigns like "Time to Change" in the UK and the "Speak Your Mind" initiative led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United for Global Mental Health aim to challenge stereotypes and promote open discussions about mental health within the media (Kenez et al., 2015).

2.3 Mental Health Landscape in Uganda

Understanding the mental health situation in Uganda is essential for framing the related challenges and opportunities in media coverage of mental health matters. Uganda contends with a substantial burden of mental health disorders, where conditions like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have high prevalence rates (Dewa et al., 2007). The World Health Organization estimates that 14% of Ugandans will develop a mental illness at one point in their lives.

Poverty, domestic violence, conflict, and lack of health care services are some of the reasons that can be attributed to Uganda's mental health crisis. For several decades, the country has undergone political turmoil and violence that has deeply affected the Mental well-being of its people.

Cultural beliefs and practices can always foster the stigmatization of mental illness, consequently making the facilitation of proper mental health care and support even more difficult, 1992). Despite the high demand for services, Uganda's mental health resources are extremely limited, 2022. The country has just one psychiatric hospital, which is located in Butabika, and a few trained mental health Professionals, whereas the need for services is estimated to be very high (Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019). The shortage of such resources insinuates that a sizeable proportion of individuals who have mental health problems do not get the care they need, contributing to increased burdens on individuals and their communities due to mental illness (Nabuzale, 2017a).

Addressing issues concerning mental health has been ongoing in Uganda by the government, NGOs, and international partners. The Ministry of Health, in response, has developed policies

and strategies that aim at integrating mental Health into primary health care, and increase service accessibility Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019. Organizations such as Mental Health Uganda and the Uganda Counseling Association have been in the frontline in advocating, creating awareness, and offering services Uganda Mental Health Coalition, 2020. Media's role in addressing mental health Media coverage of stories about mental health issues becomes crucial.

Good media representation has the potential to raise awareness of mental health disorders, challenge stigma, and lead to improved services and support (Kigozi et al. 2010). However, prevailing cultural stigmas and lack of specialist training for journalists are serious limitations to achieving comprehensive and appropriate media representation of mental health issues (Ssebunnya et al. 2010.)

2.4 Coverage of Mental Health in Uganda's Media Print

Mental health issues have received limited coverage in Uganda's print media, and the few stories published are often sensationalized. Research has also indicated that Ugandan newspapers and magazines rarely report on mental health issues, and when they do, the reporting is meager and lacks depth and sensitivity. Such scant attention contributes in part to perpetuating stigma and misconceptions about mental illness within Ugandan society (Bhana et al., 2010). Analyses of Ugandan print media reveal that mental health issues are often framed negatively, with a focus on extreme cases and sensational stories (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004; Okello et al., 2007). Such representations could enhance negative stereotypes and further stigmatise people with mental health disorders. There is an inclination also towards the use of stigmatizing language, which has the potential to perpetuate the idea that those with mental illnesses are dangerous or unpredictable (Wahl, 1992).

Secondly, Ugandan print media has been criticized for lack of investigative journalism and thorough reporting of issues on mental health matters (Okello et al., 2007). Reporting on matters of mental health is mostly brief and fails to provide full information about the causes, symptoms, and treatment options of different mental health conditions. This superficial approach limits public knowledge on mental health and problems related to mental illness (O'Connor et al., 2021).

Despite all these, in recent years there has been a couple of positive trends happening. There is increasing sensitization of journalists and media houses on the importance of responsible

reporting when it comes to mental health issues (Nguu et al., 2010). Several NGOs and mental health advocacy groups have begun giving training and workshops to inform journalists about mental health issues, as well as ethical reporting practices (Uganda Mental Health Coalition, 2020). What is more, some media have begun running personal narratives and experiences of people with mental health disorders (Bwanika et al., 2022). These might be useful in humanizing mental illness and creating a fair and humane view (Nuwarinda Gift, 2017). However, this happens occasionally and should be scaled up to ensuring a more complete and realistic portrayal of mental health in the media (Rajabzadeh et al., 2021).

2.5 Challenges to Effective Mental Health Reporting in Uganda

Mental health reporting in Uganda's print media is characterized by several key challenges, which often result in deficient and frequently stigmatizing coverage of the stories.

Understanding these challenges is key to developing means of enhancing the quality and impact that characterize mental health reporting in the country. One of the great barriers towards effective mental health reporting in Uganda is the deep-seated cultural stigma surrounding mental illness.

Many Ugandans explain mental health problems in terms of traditional beliefs and superstitions, often attributing illnesses such as mental illness to witchcraft, curses, or moral failings (Kinyanda et al., 2017). It is within this cultural context that it becomes challenging for journalists to be able to report on mental health matters openly and sensitively without experiencing social backlash or perpetuating stereotypes that already exist (Abbo, 2011).

Another important impediment is the general lack of specialized training on mental health matters for journalists. Most journalists have never taken courses on specific areas regarding sensitive and accurate reporting of mental health issues (Cooper et al., 2010). In absence of such training, defaming language is used and myths about mental illness are conceptualized while reporting on the topic in question as cited by Bwanika et al., 2022. There has been an utmost requirement for such training programs regarding mental health reporting which would impart reporters with relevant knowledge and necessary skills for better sensitive reporting. Secondly resource constraints at media organizations hinder responsible reporting of mental health issues. Most Ugandan newspapers and magazines function on shoestring budgets and with skeleton staff, leaving little room for in-depth investigative reporting into mental health matters (Akol, 2018). Reporters are often under severe deadline pressure and heavy workloads that may lead to cursory coverage of complicated subjects such as mental health Okello et al. (2007).

In addition, there is a lack of reliable data and resources relating to mental health significantly hinder the creation of comprehensive and accurate reports (Stuart, 2006). The editorial policies in media outlets can also limit reporting on issues concerning mental health. News editors and publishers may cover news considered more worthy or controversial, thus pushing major yet less sensational topics such as mental health into the background (Nogui et al., 2010). This editorial bias can render mental health issues invisible in the print media and provide insufficient continued coverage of these topics (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004).

Also, poor public understanding and awareness of mental health issues contribute to making such media coverage even more challenging. Generally speaking, as long as people from the public are not well informed about mental illness, their access to substantial reporting concerning mental health issues is low (Promote, 2006). When basic awareness and interest in mental health are missing, the journalists may fail to captivate their audiences with mental health stories. (Kazmi, 2020).

2.6 Approaches to Improvement of Mental Health reporting

Improvement in the reporting on mental health issues in Uganda's print media calls for directed strategies that respond to the existing challenges while encouraging sensitive and responsible reporting. Various approaches can be used to improve responsible mental health reporting and engender a better-informed and non-judgmental public discourse.

The best way through which mental health reporting can be improved is through specialized training and education when journalists are other targets for training and workshops, which would provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to accurately report on mental health matters. According to Dewa et al. (2007), such training programs will enhance better understanding of the conditions, the use of non-stigmatizing language, and recognition that news can shape the public's view. Such may be further facilitated by initiating collaborations between media houses, mental professionals, and NGOs with the aim of establishing a framework for Initiations are usually characterized by more detailed and correct reporting, when reliable information and sources about the mental condition of the person are available. To this effect, media houses can collaborate with institutions of higher learning in mental health, research agencies, and advocacy groups to offer up-to-date information and expert contacts to journalists (Kinyanda et al., 2017). Information repositories with data on mental health, research findings, and expert contact bank may be provided online (Abbo, 2011).

Sensitize ethical and sensitive reporting practices. critical in reducing stigma as well as fostering understanding. Media guidelines and codes of ethics on reporting mental health issues can be formulated and distributed to journalists Nuwarinda Gift, 2017. The guidelines should outline the importance of accuracy, respect for privacy and dignity of persons, and avoidance of sensationalism. Highlighting positive recovery and resilience stories may also assist in countering negative stereotypes and portrayal of a better view Bwanika et al.,2022).

Collaboration with mental health advocacy groups has the potential to increase both the quality and impact of mental health reporting. These agencies are very well-placed to provide journalists with insight, story leads, and contacts leading them to people willing to tell their stories of living with mental illness (Uganda Mental Health Coalition 2020). The advocacy groups can also support media campaigns aimed at raising awareness and reducing stigma by serving as networks and this knowledge helps in improving the scope and reach of such programs further.

Digital platforms provide novel ways in which mental health reporting can be improved and reached with a wider audience. Online news, social media, and multimedia stories also supplement traditional print media, allowing other venues for in-depth coverage of mental health issues (Johnson et al., 2018). Other aspects which digital platforms provide are interactivity and participatory journalism, whereby readers can engage in content, sharing of experiences and provide an opportunity to participate in discussions about mental health (Garcia & Martinez,2017).

Greater publicity and engagement by the public on issues of mental health can provide a better climate for responsible media reporting. Public education campaigns, local events and school initiatives can improve awareness of mental health and increase tolerance (Kinyanda et al.2017). The more informed and accepting the public are regarding the subject of mental health, the stronger the demand will be for truthful and comprehensive media coverage was widely covered by Abbo, 2011.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the research design adopted for the study, including the different methods used in its sampling. It then goes ahead to explain how data collection was methodologically done for the research. More so, it stipulates the instruments that were adopted as tools of research for the study. Finally, it explains the modalities through which the research data were analyzed and interpreted.

3.2 Description of Study Area

This research was conducted in Uganda, an East African country with a population of about 45 million people Ann Mugunga, 2021. Uganda has a diverse media landscape that includes several national newspapers such as "The New Vision," "Daily Monitor," "Bukedde," and "Red Pepper." This print media played a significant role in shaping public perceptions and discussions (Akol, 2018.) Mental health is an important public health concern in Uganda with high prevalence for depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Unfortunately, For that matter, there is only one psychiatric hospital and few qualified professionals (Bwanika et al., 2017). The influence of print media on the public's perception is strong, hence the research into how "The New Vision" newspaper reports on mental health issues. In that line, the researchers aimed at highlighting some of the challenges associated with such reporting and went ahead to recommend ways of enhancing the presentation and understanding of mental health issues in Uganda.

3.3 Study Design

This was a mixed-methods study that used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This will give an in-depth analysis of how mental health issues were presented in Uganda's print media. The mixed-methods design helped in combining numerical data with detailed insights into one, hence making a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

3.4 Sampling

A purposive sampling method is employed to select a sample of print media articles. Sample highlighted one of the major national newspapers "The New Vision.". Articles running from the month of April and May were reviewed to obtain a comprehensive insight into current trends in mental health reporting. A purposive sampling method was also conducted to determine the various participants for qualitative interviews. The participants included those coming from different backgrounds: journalists, editors, mental health professionals, and organizations that provide advocacy for the mentally ill. The number of interviews conducted was 5-10 to compile a myriad of perspectives (Kinyanda et al. 2017).

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection focused on measuring particular components in the "New Vision" articles. This included frequency counting of mentions of mental health topics; evaluation of language used

to describe the interest topics; and analysis of the framing done for issues related to mental health. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were also conducted. An interview guide was developed to bring some level of consistency in the interviews, while at the same time allowing the exploration of new themes that come up in the process. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to assist the analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data that was collected were coded and input into a statistical software program, such as SPSS, for both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations were used to summarize the data. Interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis. Themes and patterns were recognized through an interactive process of categorizing and interpreting the data. The data obtained were described and tabulated into tables and pie charts. All data were analyzed at 5% level of significance.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study solely aimed to know why print media concentrates on mental health issues in Uganda, a gap that is known to exist in creating awareness about the issue. The researcher sought ethical clearance from the research ethical committee to satisfy ethical standards. All the participants informed consent, showing that they understand the purpose and methods of the research study, as well as their rights. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected, and participants at any time during the research could withdraw without incurring any penalties. To this end, the researcher made sure that all materials and interviews were done with full informed consent from the people involved, and that participants themselves were informed of their rights and the benefits of participating in the research project. Moreover, data that was collected was strictly treated as confidential.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the data collected from interviews with journalists and mental health professionals on coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media, with a primary focus on the New Vision newspaper. The analysis of data is organized around themes identified during the interviews as critical and represents experiences, challenges, and perspectives of respondents.

4.1 Coverage and Representation of Mental Health Issues

The analysis commences with a review of what the New Vision newspaper is currently doing concerning mental health reporting. The respondents indicated that few stories on mental health issues are underreported; this is essentially because of the stigma and misunderstanding attributed to the issues of mental health problems.

Journalists estimated that many people still associate mental problems with weakness or spiritual problems. This perpetuates a culture where few discuss their status on mental health matters openly. One of silence regarding mental health, making it hard for journalists to find people willing to share their stories. At New Vision, the journalist at the helm of limited coverage is supposed to do health-related stories. The press releases and tips they get on health stories range from infectious diseases to new medical gadgets that detect diseases. Mental health stories, however, are few and far between and usually not so sensational. As such, these stories are invariably passed on for more pressing and newsworthy topics, such as an outbreak of disease or any political scandals involving health. This limited coverage leaves the general public with very little information on matters related to mental health. Stigma and distortion, when mental health is reported, the tendency is to focus on the extremes, such as a person with a mental illness being violent. An article may dwell on a story where a schizophrenic person created a public disruption; this only emphasizes the notion that everyone with a mental illness is dangerous. This portrayal is, in itself propagating a limiting belief since those affected by ill mental health may not seek help due to the fear of being judged and belittled.

The causes of mental illness vary across cultures and historical periods. In many Ugandan societies, mental illness is often perceived from a cultural perspective. For instance, when a member of the family seems to suffer from depression, they attribute this to spiritual factors,

like witchcraft or a curse from someone, rather than a medical one. This cultural perspective makes the work of a journalist rather difficult in reporting on mental health as an illness, since it may easily conflict with and offend cultural beliefs or be misconstrued.

Growing Awareness Despite all of these challenges, there is a growing movement by younger Ugandans who are more open to talking about mental health. Social media campaigns and influencers do much to make this a reality. For instance, a popular Ugandan YouTuber may opt to do a video talking about their journey with their mental health. The legions of followers then feel compelled to follow suit. This buzz online then trickles down to the traditional media as journalists do stories that are drawing a lot of interest online.

Personal Accounts, through this, journalists learn and It enables the reports to relate more to personal life. For instance, in a case where a story highlights an interview with a young woman who overcame depression and is now an advocate for mental health, people will connect easily. By doing this, mental health stories are humanized, and sometimes sympathetic, which makes it easy for society to act upon and to look at those affected sympathetically.

Expert Contributions, with access to Reporting to mental health experts is crucial for correctness of reporting. However, Uganda has a limited number of experts in the field of mental health; these are often burdened with clinical work. A journalist may struggle to get a psychiatrist to share insights into a story on rising anxiety cases among teenagers. Without expert input, this journalist may go ahead and publish a report that is incomplete or inaccurate.

Policy Implications, print Media can play a role in policy change by bringing into light the shortfalls of services offered in mental health. For example, various in-depth news about the lack of mental health facilities in rural regions will raise public concern and result in pressure that will compel policy actors to utilize more resources in those areas. Journalists at New Vision have spoken of their dedication to using their platform to advocate for better infrastructure and funding in the care and management of mental health.

4.2 Challenges in Reporting

A number of challenges faced by journalists reporting on issues of mental health were underlined in the interviews. A persisting stigma associated with mental health remains one of the big barriers to actually accessing credible sources and statistical data.

Stigma and Fears, young man with bipolar disorder, when approached by a journalist may have this apprehension of being judged or discriminated against by his community. Such a risk for

adverse impacts is what journalists need in the form of personal stories to drive across essential and realistic stories.

Insufficient Sources of Information, a journalist who would want to get a mental health overview of Uganda would find there is a lack of recent and comprehensive information. For instance, government reports of health may be outdated or even lack several essential records on prevalence of mental health disorders. This no doubt, hinders all attempts to represent the state of mental health.

Limited availability of experts, since there is a small number of mental health specialists.

Reporters often find it difficult to find an expert who could provide them with valid and detailed information. In this regard, in a small town, a journalist calls the only psychiatrist, who happens to be unreachable because he or she has a tight schedule thus leaving the journalist with no key source to base their report on.

Cultural Sensitivity, reporting on mental health issues in Uganda is like navigating through complex cultural beliefs; for example, when reporting on the reception of a mental crisis in the people of a certain community, a journalist has to balance between not being insensitive with their beliefs and setting the record straight so that the right information goes through; mistakes in this regard could result in an uproar or misinterpretations of the journalist's intentions.

Trauma from reporting stories: Reporting on critical mental health disorders, for example, suicide or major depression, can be traumatic to the journalists who do the reporting. A journalist could spend a great deal of time with families torn apart by suicide, thus experiencing secondary trauma, which saps energy from them to report effectively.

Constraints on resources: most journalists have to work within the constraint of limited time and resources; a journalist could be allowed to have several days to complete a report on a new mental health program and mightn't have the time or budget to travel to outlying areas to conduct an interview, this could result in less in-depth reporting.

Ethical Dilemmas, through sensitive mental health reports, journalists often find themselves in ethical predicaments. For instance, an interview with a person who is in a psychiatric facility begs the question of consent and privacy. A journalist would do well not to cross these lines of One of the concerns to be avoided is the issue of taking advantage of the vulnerable while they make sure that what the public receive is valuable information.

4.3 Public Attitudes and Awareness

The interviews discovered a complicated array of public attitudes toward mental health in Uganda. Numerous participants mentioned that the general populace exhibits a combination of ignorance alongside a growing awareness.

Ignorance and Stigma, in some Ugandan communities, there exists a prevalent belief that mental health issues indicate personal weakness or a deficiency in faith. For instance, when someone experiences depression, their community may advise them to pray more or suggest that they are simply not making enough effort to be happy, instead of encouraging them to seek professional assistance.

Cultural Misconceptions, many people continue to link mental health problems to supernatural phenomena. For example, a family may think that their relative's schizophrenia is a result of witchcraft and seek traditional healers rather than medical professionals. This mindset makes it challenging to educate the public about mental health using a scientific approach.

Generational Differences, younger generations, influenced by global and social media, are more inclined to discuss mental health topics. For instance, university students may organize mental health awareness events and use hashtags on Twitter to promote these activities, in contrast to older generations, who may perceive such conversations as taboo.

Growing Openness, there are notable signs of increasing openness, especially among younger people. A young professional might openly share their experiences with anxiety through a popular blog, encouraging peers to seek help and helping to diminish the stigma related to mental health concerns.

Community Engagement, community initiatives like workshops and support groups are being established to enhance awareness of mental health issues. For example, a local NGO may host a mental health camp in a rural community, offering education and resources to locals, concurrently helping to change public perceptions into a more understanding and supportive outlook.

Influence of Media, print media greatly influences public perceptions. Responsible journalism, such as publishing a series of articles that debunk myths about mental health and display recovery stories, can challenge existing misconceptions and promote a better-knowledgeable public understanding.

Need for Education, there is a distinct requirement for educational initiatives. For instance, schools could incorporate mental health education into their curriculums, informing students

about the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and how to seek assistance, thereby nurturing a more enlightened and supportive future generation.

4.4 Recommendations for Improvement

To improve the coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media, several recommendations arose from the interviews conducted.

Specialized Training: News organizations should invest in targeted training programs for journalists. For instance, workshops on sensitive reporting of mental health issues, comprehension of mental health terminology, and ethical considerations in mental health journalism could be implemented. Such training would equip journalists to handle these topics with the required sensitivity and accuracy.

Building Partnerships: Media houses can collaborate with mental health organizations and experts. For example, partnering with a national mental health NGO could grant journalists access to credible data and expert insights, enhancing the quality and depth of their reporting.

Prioritizing Mental Health Stories: Editorial policies should incorporate a commitment to regularly emphasize mental health narratives. For example, allocating a weekly column to mental health issues or ensuring mental health is a central aspect of health reporting can enhance the significance of these critical topics.

Incorporating Personal Stories: Including personal accounts can increase the impact of mental health coverage. For instance, a series of articles featuring interviews with individuals who have effectively managed their mental health conditions can inspire and educate readers, aiding in stigma reduction and promoting understanding.

Diverse Coverage: Media outlets should effort to explore a broad range of mental health topics. For example, articles could address various aspects of mental health, such as prevention

strategies, different treatment modalities, recovery narratives, and the effects of mental health across diverse demographics. This all-encompassing approach offers readers a wider perspective on mental health issues.

Ethical Guidelines: Establishing clear ethical guidelines for mental health reporting can assist journalists in navigating sensitive subjects. For example, guidelines might address matters such as securing knowledgeable consent from interviewees, safeguarding the privacy of individuals with mental health conditions, and evading sensationalism in reporting.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Media organizations can conduct public awareness initiatives to educate the community about mental health issues. For instance, a campaign could consist of articles, public service announcements, and social media posts aimed at dismantling myths surrounding mental health and promoting available resources for individuals in need.

4.5 Conclusion

In summary, the examination of the interviews emphasizes the essential role that print media, especially the New Vision newspaper, can play in influencing public views on mental health in Uganda. Despite ongoing issues such as stigma, limited access to information, and a lack of adequate training, there is an increasing awareness of the significance of mental health reporting. By tackling these challenges through focused training, collaboration with mental health experts, and prioritizing careful and precise reporting, print media can play a key role in enhancing public understanding and acceptance of mental health issues in Uganda. The knowledge obtained from this research is a basis for further investigation and action in the field of mental health journalism, finally seeking to encourage a more knowledgeable and empathetic conversation about mental health in Ugandan society.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Discussion

The results from the examination of interviews conducted with journalists and mental health experts discover several essential themes related to the reporting of mental health matters in Uganda's print media. This chapter explores these themes in relation to current literature, emphasizing their impact on journalism and mental health advocacy.

5.1.1 Stigma and Cultural Beliefs

The widespread stigma and cultural beliefs regarding mental health in Uganda have a important effect on media coverage. As mentioned in Chapter 4, mental health issues are frequently misunderstood and linked to notions of weakness or spiritual causes. This is consistent with existing research that emphasizes stigma as a important obstacle to mental health awareness and treatment in many African countries (Kohn et al., 2004).

A journalist may find it difficult to identify sources who are willing to share their mental health experiences publicly due to concerns about social consequences. This anxiety is rooted in cultural views that perceive mental health conditions as a cause for shame or as effects of supernatural forces. Such beliefs make it challenging to achieve accurate and compassionate reporting. For example, an individual dealing with depression might hesitate to disclose their story due to fears of being labeled as "possessed" or "cursed," resulting in potential social exclusion and discrimination.

5.1.2 Limited Coverage and Misrepresentation

The limited and often sensationalized reporting of mental health issues in the New Vision newspaper mirrors a wider trend seen in media across the globe. Studies show that mental health stories are frequently underreported and, when they are covered, they often emphasize extreme cases that reinforce negative stereotypes (Stuart, 2006).

An article that focuses on a violent incident involving a person with a mental illness can sustain the false belief that people with mental health conditions are inherently dangerous. This misrepresentation can discourage individuals from seeking necessary help and adds to the persistent stigma surrounding mental health. For instance, if a newspaper regularly publishes reports about violent events associated with mental illness without offering context or expert insights, it may encourage a distorted view that all individuals with mental health challenges are likely to commit violent acts, a notion that lacks supporting evidence.

5.1.3 Challenges in Reporting

Journalists encounter several obstacles when reporting on mental health topics, such as a shortage of reliable statistics, limited access to experts, and insufficient resources. These obstacles impede the production of thorough and accurate narratives, as emphasized by participants in the study.

For instance, a journalist might struggle to access up-to-date mental health statistics due to old or incomplete government reports. This absence of current data creates challenges in accurately portraying the mental health environment, resulting in less knowledgeable reporting. Without recent information on the prevalence of mental health disorders or the success of treatment programs, journalists may find it difficult to provide context or display advancements in mental health care.

5.1.4 Emerging Awareness and Positive Trends

Even with the difficulties faced, there are encouraging signs that indicate a rise in awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, particularly among the younger population. Social media and online platforms are essential in enabling these discussions and helping to diminish stigma.

A well-known Ugandan influencer shares their own mental health experience on social media, motivating followers to talk about their own stories and seek assistance. This surge in online conversations gradually leads to greater coverage in traditional media, as journalists notice these trending discussions. For instance, a widely shared post emphasizing the significance of mental health care could lead to a series of articles or features in print media, aiding in a larger cultural shift towards understanding and acceptance.

5.1.5 Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception

The media has an important impact on how the public views mental health. Responsible and accurate journalism can help dispel myths and encourage a better understanding of mental health challenges.

A collection of articles that include interviews with individuals who have effectively managed their mental health conditions can motivate and educate readers, aiding in the reduction of stigma and encouraging understanding. For example, narratives that emphasize recovery, resilience, and the success of treatment can instill hope and encourage others to seek assistance, thereby contributing to a more supportive and educated community.

5.2 Conclusions

It highlights the vital contribution of the print media, particularly the New Vision newspaper, to the shaping of the opinions regarding mental health in Uganda. Key conclusions to be suggested from the analysis are:

- i. **Stigma and Cultural Beliefs:** These are important contributors to the societal stigma and cultural beliefs standing in the way of appropriate coverage and understanding of mental health issues. These elements contribute to a culture of silence and misrepresentation in the media.
- ii. **Limited and Sensationalist Coverage:** Coverage is scanty and sensationalized; this perpetuates negative stereotyping. Through this kind of limited reporting, the public remains misinformed, hence perpetuating stigma.
- iii. **Challenges in Reporting:** Among the many challenges being faced by journalists are inadequacy of reliable data, restrictions of access to key experts, and resource constraints. These barriers have been identified to comprehensive and precise reporting about mental health-related issues.

iv. Emergent Awareness: There is an emergent awareness and willingness to discuss mental health matters, especially among the younger generation. Social media and online platforms are great means by which this change is being assisted.

v. Media's Role in Shaping Perceptions: Media plays a significant role in shaping the mass view about mental health. Responsible and accurate journalism can help in dissipating conceptions and leading to a better view of issues pertaining to mental health.

5.3 Recommendations

To expand the coverage of mental health issues in Ugandan print media, and to stimulate an increasingly sensitized and supportive public discourse, the following recommendations are presented

5.3.1 Specialized Training for Journalists

News organizations should provide resources for specialized training programs for news reporters. Workshops could be offered on sensitive reporting about mental health issues, using correct mental health terminology, and dealing with ethical considerations in mental health journalism. This training would help prepare journalists to tackle these subjects with the care and precision they deserve. A workshop might include how to interview people who suffer from mental illness, the nuances of a variety of mental health disorders and how to avoid language that perpetuates stereotypes.

5.3.2 Creating Partnerships with Mental Health Organizations

News organizations may create partnerships with groups dedicated to mental health and/or experts. For example, partnering with a national mental health NGO would, in turn, provide the reporters with valid information and expertise over time, adding value and weight to their reports. This cooperation may involve regular briefings with specialists in the field of mental health, exposure to research studies, and opportunities to attend conferences and events related to mental health. This helps avail to the reporters the support and means necessary to generate well-informed and accurate stories.

5.3.3 Publishing Mental Health Stories Regularly

Editorial policies should give a commitment to running regular mental health stories. Examples include devoting a weekly column to mental health-related issues, or ensuring that the coverage of mental health is a significant component of health reporting highlights the significance of these vital stories. This can be done by setting aside a particular news page on mental health dedicated to various stories regarding local initiatives about mental health, personal stories of recovery, and professional advice regarding ways of keeping good mental health. Emphasizing such activities can help normalize conversations about mental health and encourage greater public engagement.

5.3.4 Incorporating Personal Stories

Personal narratives could make mental health reporting more effective. For example, a series of articles highlighting personal interviews with people who have successfully fought against their mental health issues can serve to teach and inspire readers, which in effect will help to reduce stigma and increase awareness. Personal accounts humanize mental health stories and add relatable examples of resilience and recovery. For example, an article might describe how one with depression and their road to recovery, highlighting not only the struggles they endured but also the support they received. Personal stories like these might offer hope and encouragement to anyone who might be suffering.

5.3.5 Diverse Coverage

The media should seek to cover a broad scope of issues relating to mental health. Articles for instance can focus on various issues about mental health, including but not limited to efforts on prevention, various types of options, recovery narratives, and the effects of mental health across different demographic groups. This holistic approach gives the reader a broader look at issues related to mental health. Coverage could include: perspectives on the impact of mental health on children and adolescents; the challenges of accessing mental health treatment in rural settings; and the engagement of traditional healers in the context of mental health care. By depicting a variety of subjects, the media can also convey a more detailed and nuanced representation of mental health.

5.3.6 Establishing Ethical Guidelines

Formulating detailed ethical guidelines on reporting about mental health can help journalists navigate sensitive areas of their stories. Such guidelines may involve recommendations on obtaining informed consent from interviewees, respecting privacy among those with mental conditions, and avoiding sensationalist reporting can be avoided. What this all means is that such guidelines ensure mental health stories are reported respectfully and sensitively. Such ethical recommendations may include avoiding stigmatizing language, dealing sensitively with graphic or distressing material, and ensuring that interviewees are fully aware of any potential consequences of telling their stories. The advantage of such guidelines is that they foster trust with both readers and sources and encourage better journalism.

5.3.7 Engaging in Public Awareness Campaigns

Media agencies can also help in conducting public awareness campaigns which are the best ways of training the community concerning issues about mental health. For example, a media campaign would entail several articles, public service notices, as well as social media communications aimed at setting the record straight with respect to myths about mental health.

5.4 Future Research

It is important to investigate how media coverage of public mental health impacts the perception of this entity in Uganda. The following are some aspects that might be explored in further research:

Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal studies may be conducted to determine changes in public perceptions about mental health over time, and how media contributes to such fluctuating trends. Such studies can establish with precision the various ways in which media reports of mental health stories influence the perception and behavior of the public by monitoring. This will also provide valuable insights on the effectiveness of different reporting strategies.

Comparative Studies: A comparison of mental health coverage between different media and regions within Uganda to observe best practices and avenues of improvement. For instance, urban and rural newspapers on mental health issues could be compared on their styles of reporting, themes, and impacts on public awareness and stigma.

Impact Evaluation: Evaluating the impact of each media campaign/intervention in bringing about improvement in public awareness and stigma reduction. The study might involve reviewing the outcomes of selective media campaigns in terms of changes in public attitudes, uptake of mental health services, and reduction in stigma. Such evaluations keep track of the best practices that must be implemented and help plan future media efforts toward awareness and support for mental health.

5.5. Summary

The coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media, particularly through the New Vision newspaper, is a crucial aspect of shaping public understanding and attitudes. While significant challenges remain, there are also promising signs of progress. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this chapter, media organizations can play a pivotal role in promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and fostering a more informed and compassionate society. The insights gained from this study provide a foundation for continued efforts to improve mental health journalism in Uganda, ultimately contributing to better mental health outcomes for the population.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONSENT TO TAKE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Hello, you are invited to participate in a research study exploring the coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media. Your participation will involve an interview lasting approximately 30-60 minutes, or completing a survey about your perceptions of mental health coverage. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. All information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymized. While there are minimal risks, discussing mental health topics may cause some discomfort. There will be no monetary compensation, but your input will contribute to improving mental health journalism in Uganda.

If you have any questions, please contact Lucy Nuwasasira at 0787053926.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood this information and agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Name

Participant's Signature

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview guide will be used to conduct semi-structured interviews with journalists, editors, mental health professionals, and representatives from mental health advocacy groups. The questions are designed to explore the participants' experiences, challenges, and perspectives regarding mental health reporting in Ugandan print media.

Interview Guide Questions:

Can you describe your experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda?

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What challenges do you face when covering mental health topics?

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How do you perceive the public's attitude towards mental health issues as reflected in your reporting?

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What training or resources have you received on mental health reporting?

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How do you decide which mental health stories to cover?

.....
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What role do you think print media plays in shaping public perceptions of mental health?

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Can you suggest ways to improve the coverage of mental health issues in print media?

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APPENDIX 3: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEET

The content analysis coding sheet will be used to systematically analyze print media articles on mental health. The coding sheet will capture various elements, such as the frequency of mental health topics, the use of language, and the framing of mental health issues.

Article Information:

Title of the Article

Newspaper Name

Date of Publication

Content Categories:

Mental health topic covered (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD, general mental health) (Tick)

Source of information (e.g., mental health professional, person with lived experience, government official)

Type of article (e.g., news report, feature story, editorial)

Language and Tone:

Supportive/Respectful

Neutral

Stigmatizing/Negative

Framing:

Focus on individual responsibility

Focus on societal factors

Emphasis on treatment and recovery

Emphasis on violence or danger

Visual Elements:

Presence of images or graphics

Type of images (e.g., photographs, illustrations)

Relevance of images to the mental health topic

INTERVIEW ONE

Assessing Mental Health Coverage in Uganda's Print Media.

Hello, you are invited to participate in a research study exploring the coverage of mental health issues in Uganda's print media. Your participation will involve an interview lasting approximately 30-60 minutes, or completing a survey about your perceptions of mental health coverage. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. All information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymized. While there are minimal risks, discussing mental health topics may cause some discomfort. There will be no monetary compensation, but your input will contribute to improving mental health journalism in Uganda.

If you have any questions, please contact Lucy Nuwasasira at 0787053926.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood this information and agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Name**BATUNGA ROSE**....

Participant's Signature 

The questions are designed to explore the participants' experiences, challenges, and perspectives regarding mental health reporting in Ugandan print media.

Can you describe your experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda?

My experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda has been both challenging and rewarding. I have covered several stories highlighting the struggles of individuals dealing with mental health problems, the lack of resources available for mental health care, and the efforts of various NGOs working to improve the situation. One notable report I worked on involved a series of interviews with mental health patients and professionals, which shed light on the severe stigma associated with mental health in Ugandan society.

What challenges do you face when covering mental health topics?

One major challenge is the pervasive stigma around mental health, which makes it difficult to find individuals willing to share their experiences. Additionally, there is a significant lack of reliable data and statistics on mental health in Uganda, which hampers the ability to provide a comprehensive picture. Accessing mental health professionals for interviews can also be difficult due to their limited numbers and heavy workloads.

How do you perceive the public's attitude towards mental health issues as reflected in your reporting?

Public attitude towards mental health issues, as reflected in my reporting, appears to be one of general ignorance and stigma. Many people still view mental health problems as a form of weakness or something to be ashamed of. However, I have noticed a slow but growing awareness and openness to discussing mental health, particularly among younger generations and through the influence of social media campaigns.

What training or resources have you received on mental health reporting?

I have attended a couple of workshops organized by international NGOs that focus on mental health awareness and reporting. These workshops provided valuable insights into the ethical considerations and sensitivities involved in covering mental health stories. Additionally, I have accessed online resources and guidelines from organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO).

How do you decide which mental health stories to cover?

The decision on which mental health stories to cover is based on several factors: the relevance and timeliness of the issue, the potential impact of the story on raising awareness or prompting action, and the availability of credible sources and personal stories that can humanize the topic. We also consider reader interest and feedback from previous mental health stories.

What role do you think print media plays in shaping public perceptions of mental health? Print media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of mental health. Through thoughtful and accurate reporting, we can challenge misconceptions, reduce stigma, and encourage open discussions about mental health. By highlighting stories of individuals living with mental health conditions and showcasing expert opinions, print media can educate the public and influence policy changes.

Can you suggest ways to improve the coverage of mental health issues in print media?

To improve the coverage of mental health issues, I suggest increasing training for journalists on mental health reporting to ensure sensitivity and accuracy. Building partnerships with mental health organizations can provide journalists with better access to information and resources. Additionally, editorial policies should prioritize mental health stories and allocate more space and prominence to them. Lastly, incorporating more personal stories and experiences can make the coverage more relatable and impactful.

INTERVIEW TWO

Michael Ainomugisha

Can you describe your experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda?

My experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda has been limited but enlightening. While there is increasing recognition of the importance of mental health, it remains a relatively underreported area in the media because sometimes there's still less knowledge between a mental health issue like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and spiritual issues explained by the fact that some want mental health issues solved in church. The stories I have covered often focus on the stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health, as well as the lack of resources and support systems available to those in need. It's a sensitive topic that requires careful handling to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or misinformation.

2. What challenges do you face when covering mental health topics?

The main challenges include a lack of access to reliable data and credible sources, the stigma surrounding mental health, and the general reluctance of individuals to discuss their mental health struggles openly. Additionally, there is a limited understanding of mental health issues among the general public and sometimes within the media itself, which can lead to misrepresentation or oversimplification of the issues. There is also a scarcity of experts who can provide accurate information and insights also i feel sympathetic to the victims yet I am supposed to keep my opinion from the sources

3. How do you perceive the public's attitude towards mental health issues as reflected in your reporting?

The public's attitude towards mental health issues, as reflected in my reporting, is generally one of ignorance and stigma. There is a prevalent belief that mental health problems are a sign of weakness or a lack of faith, which hinders open discussion and acceptance. However, there are signs of gradual change, with more people willing to talk about their experiences and seek help, especially among the younger generation because there has been a lot of conversations online on the topic.

4. What training or resources have you received on mental health reporting?

I have received some basic training on mental health reporting through workshops and seminars focusing on ethical journalism and sensitive topics. These sessions have provided guidelines on language use, the importance of context, and the need to avoid sensationalism. However, there is a lack of specialized training and resources specifically focused on mental health, which can make it challenging to report on these issues accurately and compassionately.

5. How do you decide which mental health stories to cover?

The decision to cover mental health stories is often influenced by current events, public interest, and the availability of credible sources. I prioritize stories that can raise awareness, challenge stigma, and provide useful information to the public. Additionally, we consider the potential impact of the story and its relevance to our audience. Human interest angles, such as personal testimonies and expert opinions, are also important factors in selecting stories.

6. What role do you think print media plays in shaping public perceptions of mental health?

Print media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of mental health by providing a platform for discussion and education. It has the power to challenge stereotypes, address myths, and promote understanding and acceptance. However, the media can also perpetuate stigma if mental health issues are sensationalised or misrepresented. Therefore, responsible journalism is crucial in ensuring that coverage is accurate, respectful, and informative.

7. Can you suggest ways to improve the coverage of mental health issues in print media?

To improve the coverage of mental health issues, print media should invest in specialised training for journalists on mental health reporting.

There should be a greater emphasis on humanising stories and providing accurate information. Collaboration with mental health professionals can also enhance the quality of reporting. Moreover, media outlets should strive to cover a diverse range of mental health topics, including prevention, treatment, and recovery, to provide a comprehensive view of the issue. Also, it's important to maintain sensitivity and avoid sensationalism, ensuring that coverage is respectful and supportive of those affected by mental health issues.

INTERVIEW THREE

Participant Name: **Julius Nkora**

Participant Signature

The questions are designed to explore the participants' experiences, challenges, and perspectives regarding mental health reporting in Ugandan print media.

Can you describe your experience with reporting on mental health issues in Uganda?

Mental health issues is a big challenge in our communities given the less attention. Most people relate mental illness to running mad but they don't know that it is more than that and involves many health challenges including depression, anxiety disorders and trauma. The public is not sensitized more on mental health issues that most times they relate it to witchcraft.

What challenges do you face when covering mental health topics?

The challenge is that there are a few mental health specialists. This at times makes it difficult for me to get information necessary to enrich my stories on mental health. Also care takers of mental health issues are sometimes not willing to give information about their people who are mentally ill, some hide them and this is mainly of stigma these people face in communities. Some of the mentally ill are always violent so engaging them is very challenging.

How do you perceive the public attitude towards mental health issues as reflected in your reporting?

The public harbors both positive view about mental health. Some associate it witchcraft, being cursed or wicked behaviors like drugs abuse especially alcohol and marijuana. But there are also those who are aware that mental health has other underlying causes like child hood trauma, losing someone close to you, stress, losing a loved and poverty.

What training or resources have you received on mental health reporting?

I have received training-Understanding Mental health and Depression at home and workplace by the Ministry of Health. Also Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital administration at the Mental Health department has been resourceful in giving me timely updates and linking me to homes with people facing mental health challenges.

How do you decide which mental health stories to cover?

I do research in communities but also get reports like on statistics on mental health from NGOs dealing with issues of mental health and government institutions like ministry of health.

What role do you think print media plays in shaping public perceptions of mental health?

By providing messages that can help in educating people about mental health and mental health issues, promotion of mental wellbeing. It has also put to task policy makers and government to come up with programs and strategies to address gaps in mental health service provision.

Can you suggest ways to improve the coverage of mental health issues in print media?

Carrying out research on issues to do with mental and also going for training courses related to mental health.