



STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS ON MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF AUCHI POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: *Mental health challenge remains a stigmatized and under-addressed issue in Nigeria, contributing to significant societal challenge. Mass media campaigns have emerged as potential tools to raise awareness and combat the stigma. However, little research explores the effectiveness of these campaigns from the perspective of students. It is in the light of the above that this study examines students' perception of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria. The researchers embarked on this study with the intent of achieving four objectives and, based on the objectives of this study, four research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study. This study is hinged on the rational model theory. The researchers adopted the survey research design, and data were collected through the use of questionnaires. Findings from this study reveal that the majority of the respondents (31%) rated their level of awareness of mental health issues as very high as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns on the subject. The study also reveals that the majority of the respondents (30%) noted that one of the impacts of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental concerns is that these campaigns have increased help-seeking behaviour among students. This study therefore concludes that mass media campaigns have proven to be effective in addressing mental health issues in Nigeria by raising awareness, promoting understanding, and reducing stigma. They have successfully disseminated information, encouraged help-seeking behavior, and fostered conversations about mental health. This study, among other things, recommends that producers of media messages should recognize the cultural and regional diversity within Nigeria and tailor mass media campaigns accordingly. Mental health issues may be perceived and addressed differently across various communities; therefore, the producers of media messages should produce campaigns that resonate with different cultural backgrounds, languages, and social norms to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.*



INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon to find many people feeling sad and down for a number of different reasons. For example, some of them might feel sad because of their non-performance in school or for failing examinations. Some might have experienced strained romantic relationships or lost a parent, friend or a loved one. They might also feel disappointed and lose interest in activities they once found pleasurable. In some instances when students are sad or withdrawn emotionally and socially, their parents or teachers might think they are simply playing some pranks or just acting out poor behaviour for a purpose while, in actual sense, the adolescent might be suffering from depression.

Mental health is a critical aspect of public health and, in recent years, there has been an increasing global focus on destigmatizing mental health conditions and providing adequate care for those who need it. Despite this, mental health issues remain largely misunderstood and stigmatized in many societies, including Nigeria. Mass media campaigns have been instrumental in creating awareness about various health issues and can play a significant role in addressing mental health stigma and promoting mental health care in Nigeria. Nnamdi (2019) noted that the mass media, encompassing television, radio, print media, and digital platforms, serves as a powerful tool for disseminating information and shaping public perception on various issues. By leveraging the ubiquity and influence of mass media, public health experts and advocates can reach a wide range of audiences to educate and inform them about mental health issues. In Nigeria, mass media campaigns on mental health aim to educate the public about mental health conditions, debunk myths and misconceptions, reduce stigma, and promote the use of mental health services. They also advocate for policy changes to improve mental health care and protect the rights of people living with mental health conditions (Chukwudi, 2020).

Oladapo (2016) noted that mass media campaigns have been effective in increasing public awareness and knowledge about mental health issues in Nigeria. Through various programs, documentaries, and news stories, they have introduced mental health concepts to the public, explained different mental disorders and their symptoms, and highlighted the importance of seeking professional help when needed. This increased awareness is a critical first step towards reducing stigma and improving mental health care. Using media outlets like television, newspapers, the internet, radio, and other platforms to disseminate information about certain topics to a large audience is known as media reporting. Reporting in the media is a real tool for enlightening the general public on some important societal concerns. Media have a significant impact on politics, economics, social practices, and mental health challenges. They also have a strong positive impact on community attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (World Health Organisation, 2019). WHO (2019) added that one of the many factors that may encourage a vulnerable individual to take their own life as a result of mental health challenge is media's coverage of suicides. In other words, news stories about suicide cases may contribute to an increase in suicides. Young people may imitate the suicide methods employed in that instance if they see or hear about it in the media (television, radio, print). This is referred to as the modeling effect, in accordance with Cheng, Hawton, Lee, and Chen (2008).

Onabayo (2019) opined that despite the prevailing stigma associated with mental health in Nigeria, mass media campaigns have made significant strides in stigma reduction. By portraying people with mental health conditions in a positive and empathetic light, they have helped challenge negative stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, such campaigns have



promoted the idea that mental health conditions are common and treatable, just like physical health conditions. Mass media campaigns have also played a crucial role in advocating for policy changes to improve mental health care in Nigeria. By bringing mental health issues to the forefront of public discourse, these campaigns have pressured policymakers to review and amend outdated mental health laws and policies and invest more in mental health services.

It should be noted that the ultimate goal of any health promotion campaign is to change behaviour. The media are efficient instruments for influencing health behaviors because they can reach a vast, dispersed audience at the lowest cost. There are two ways that the media might influence behavior, knowledge, and attitudes regarding health care, according to Robertson and Wortzel (2008). By campaigns created intentionally for such an impact, the media may inadvertently change information, attitudes, and behavior. When media audiences are exposed to media messages that contain health-related themes intended to have an impact on health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, the media may do so incidentally or unintentionally.

Successful communication is only feasible when the proper message is communicated through the appropriate channels to the appropriate audience at the appropriate time. Because it is a weapon for mobilizing, sensitizing, educating, informing, and entertaining the vast majority of its audience in and throughout the globe, the media's significance is escalating. The control and prevention of suicide could be greatly aided by proactive and practical media programs that are thoughtfully conceived, produced, and packaged with the socio-cultural patterns of the community in mind.

One of the main ways in which the mass media can be effective in mental health support among students in Nigeria is by providing information about the causes, warning signs, and risk factors associated with suicide and other mental health challenge. The media can help to raise awareness about the problem of suicide, promote public discussion, and provide information about available resources for individuals at risk. This can be done through various channels, such as news reports, feature articles, documentaries and public service announcements, and such campaigns can be effective in increasing knowledge and changing perceptions about mental health among students in Nigeria.

Another important aspect of mental health awareness is changing attitudes towards mental health. In many societies today, there is often a stigma associated with mental health issues since as many people with mental health challenges do not receive the necessary support (Arikenbi et al., 2023a). Therefore, mass media campaigns can play a significant role in changing these attitudes by portraying mental health issues in a more understanding manner. However, the effectiveness of the mass media in this regard is often questioned by the public. Some people believe that the media's sensationalization of mental health challenge and graphic portrayal of suicidal behavior can actually have a negative impact on individuals at risk. They argue that this can lead to copycat suicides, where individuals imitate the suicidal behavior of others, leading to a "contagion effect." Others argue that the media's portrayal of suicide can create a stigma around the issue, making it more difficult for individuals to seek help.

Despite their successes, mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria face several challenges. These include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and limited access to mass media, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and attitudes towards mental health can be difficult to change and may limit the effectiveness of these campaigns. Mass media messages may also be misinterpreted or misunderstood by the



public, leading to an unintended increase in stigma or misinformation about mental health. The success of mass media campaigns also heavily depends on the quality and accuracy of the information disseminated, the cultural sensitivity of the messages, and the use of appropriate communication channels that reach the target audiences.

Based on the above postulations, this study therefore assessed students' perception of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The mental health crisis in Nigeria is making individuals hopeless and leading some of them to consider suicide. This silent epidemic is stealthily claiming countless lives without anyone noticing it. The alarming trend is brought on by numerous, interrelated elements, including addictions, absolute lunacy, and common disorders that impact tens of millions of individuals, such as depression and acute anxiety. It becomes vital to launch media campaigns aimed at creating awareness about mental health issues, particularly among students. However, these campaigns often struggle to change deep-seated attitudes and beliefs about mental health especially in a culture where there is a strong preference for privacy on such matters. Individuals may be reluctant to engage with mental health content due to fear of discrimination and social ostracisation.

Objectives of the Study

The researchers embarked on this study with the intent of achieving the following objectives:

- i. To assess the level of awareness of students on mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns.
- ii. To examine the impact of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental health concerns.
- iii. To ascertain students' perception of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria.
- iv. To determine the frequency of exposure of students to media campaigns on mental health.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study:

- i. What is the level of awareness of students on mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns?
- ii. What is the impact of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental health concerns?
- iii. How do students perceive the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria?
- iv. What is the frequency of exposure of students to media campaigns on mental health?



LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental Health: An Overview

Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, and it refers to a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community (WHO, 2019). Mental health plays a vital role in determining an individual's quality of life, and it is affected by various factors such as genetics, environment, lifestyle, and socio-economic status.

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2021) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Also, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2019), cited in Arikenbi et al. (2023a), defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2022) also defines mental health as the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others' dignity and worth.

Mental health is influenced by various factors, including genetics, environment, lifestyle, and socio-economic status;

- **Genetics:** Genetics play a significant role in mental health, as some mental disorders have been linked to specific genes. For example, research has shown that individuals with a family history of schizophrenia are at a higher risk of developing the disorder (Sullivan, 2013). Research has shown that genetic factors can play a significant role in mental health disorders. Studies have identified genes that are associated with various mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and autism. For example, a study by Sullivan (2013) found that genetic factors accounted for approximately 25% of the risk of developing major depressive disorder.
- **Environment:** Environmental factors such as early life experiences, exposure to trauma, and stressful life events, can also influence mental health. Childhood experiences, such as abuse, neglect, and poverty, have been linked to a higher risk of developing mental health disorders later in life (McLaughlin, 2012). Trauma, such as physical or sexual abuse, can also increase the risk of developing mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Stressful life events such as divorce, job loss, and financial difficulties, can also contribute to the development of mental health disorders.
- **Lifestyle Factors:** Lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, and substance use, can also have an impact on mental health. A healthy diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, has been associated with a lower risk of depression and anxiety. Regular physical activity has also been shown to have a positive impact on mental health, reducing symptoms of depression



and anxiety. Substance use, including alcohol and drug use, can have negative effects on mental health, increasing the risk of depression and anxiety.

- **Social Factors:** Social factors including social support, socioeconomic status, and discrimination, can also impact mental health. Social support, such as having close relationships with family and friends, can provide a protective factor against mental health disorders. Low socioeconomic status has been associated with a higher risk of mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety. Discrimination, including racism and homophobia, can also contribute to mental health disorders, such as depression and PTSD.

Causes of Mental Health Disorder

People's attitudes and behaviors may have become more aberrant as a result of a significant occurrence that affected the current generation of Nigerians and led to many individuals demanding too many goods that were not readily available. This most likely caused the country to enter the current economic crisis, which may have undermined family bonds and school discipline and sped up relationship disintegration in a variety of contexts. Mental health disorders and suicidal behaviors are linked to these and other factors. Unfavorable economic conditions, bereavement, family turmoil, work pressure, strained relationships, and individual circumstances are a few of these.

- **Bad economic conditions:** According to Okafor and Okafor (2018), rising mental health issues and suicide rates were correlated with poor economic conditions. Notwithstanding the lack of statistics in Nigeria to support this claim, they insisted that recessionary periods had likely contributed to an overall increase in suicide rates in Nigeria. There were fewer jobs available, more people lost their jobs, and there were other financial reversals as a result of the severe economic conditions. As people were worn down by sufferings and hardships, they argued, the people would wish for a 'rest in peace' or a 'better shelter.' This drive may result in suicidal thoughts and actions.

- **Family disruption:** Mental health disorder among persons has been linked to a number of family disruptions, including separation, divorce, death, parental psychopathology, and family violence (Okafor & Okafor, 2018). This research concurs that parental attitudes, feelings, and behaviors have an impact on children and result in long-lasting identification in them, which is then observable in their perceptions and imaginations of other people and themselves. A youngster may want to run away from their parents' unpleasant interactions, such as when one of them is violent. Children appear to mimic their parents' violent behavior and identify with their hatred and criticism of them, according to research. The youngsters view themselves as terrible, hostile, disruptive, and useless as a result (Okafor & Okafor, 2018).

- **Pressure of work:** Academic strain in particular seems to have a simple correlation with mental health disorder. The typical student who commits suicide has a solid academic history but feels that his or her performance falls short of expectations. Individuals who believe they fall short of expectations from others may experience feelings of shame and guilt, which can leave them vulnerable to feeling unworthy and inadequate. Unwanted negative thoughts that could lead to suicide and other suicidal behaviors in their

- **Poor relationship:** When one is unable to develop intimate and meaningful relationships with friends, parents, and older role models, it may lead to a feeling of loneliness. Someone may feel deeply hurt and resentful within after being rejected by a lover. Some of the



risk factors for mental health challenges include being continuously treated unfairly, having one's accomplishments ignored no matter how hard one tries, and being denied affection and admiration. Someone who is ignored or who does not have strong peer ties could act inappropriately to get attention. Then, he or she may decide to punish him/herself in order to punish others. Social isolation is one of the elements that raises the risk of suicide in later life. This is true in communities where older persons are not given respect or valuable duties.

Common Mental Health Disorder

Mental health disorders are prevalent worldwide, affecting millions of individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 1 in 4 individuals globally will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lives (WHO, 2019). Mental health disorders can significantly impact an individual's quality of life, social relationships, and overall well-being. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the most common mental health disorders, their symptoms, and potential treatments.

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders worldwide, affecting approximately 264 million individuals globally (WHO, 2019). Depression is a mood disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest or pleasure in activities that an individual typically enjoys (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). Other symptoms of depression may include changes in appetite, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. There are several effective treatments available for depression, including psychotherapy and medication. Psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), focuses on changing negative thought patterns and behaviors associated with depression (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Antidepressant medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), can also be effective in treating depression.

Anxiety disorder is another common mental health disorder, affecting approximately 284 million individuals globally (WHO, 2019). Anxiety disorder is a group of disorders characterized by excessive and persistent fear or worry that interferes with an individual's daily life. Examples of anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). Treatment options for anxiety disorder include psychotherapy, such as CBT or exposure therapy, and medication, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or benzodiazepines. Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise, a healthy diet, and stress management techniques, can also be effective in managing anxiety symptoms (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental disorder that affects approximately 5% of children and 2.5% of adults worldwide (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). ADHD is characterized by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with an individual's daily life (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). Symptoms of inattention may include difficulty staying focused on tasks, forgetfulness, and disorganization, while symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity may include restlessness, interrupting others, and acting without thinking. Treatment options for ADHD include medication, such as stimulants or non-stimulants, and behavioral therapy, such as parent training or individual therapy (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Lifestyle



changes, such as regular exercise, a healthy diet, and regular sleep patterns, can also be effective in managing ADHD symptoms (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Schizophrenia is a severe mental health disorder that affects approximately 20 million individuals globally (WHO, 2019). Schizophrenia is characterized by a range of symptoms, including hallucinations, delusions, disordered thinking, and abnormal behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). Symptoms of schizophrenia can significantly impact an individual's daily life, including social and occupational functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2021).

The Media as a Tool for Mental Health Awareness in Nigeria

The media, which includes television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, has a powerful influence on public opinion and behavior. As such, the media can play an essential role in raising awareness about mental health disorders and promoting prevention strategies. Arikebi et al. (2023b) noted that the media, through the instrumentality of health communication, at various times has been used to convey health information messages. The media is crucial in bringing attention to social concerns like mental health issues. Their reporting on mental health disorder plays a significant role in influencing how the general public views the problem. One of the most critical roles of the media in the prevention of mental health disorder is to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Mental health disorder is often stigmatized and not openly discussed, which can lead to feelings of isolation and shame for individuals who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. Media campaigns, such as public service announcements, documentaries, and news stories, can help to break down barriers and promote understanding and empathy. For example, the "It Gets Better" campaign, launched in 2010, aimed to reduce mental health disorders among LGBTQ+ youth by sharing positive messages of hope and support.

The media can also provide information about mental health issues and encourage individuals to seek help. Hotlines, crisis centers, and mental health services can be highlighted through targeted advertising and news coverage. By providing accurate and accessible information, the media can help individuals make informed decisions and take proactive steps to protect their mental health. At the same time, the media must be cautious about how they report on suicide. Irresponsible reporting can lead to copycat suicides, also known as the Werther effect. Studies have shown that sensationalized media coverage of mental health challenge can increase suicide rates by providing detailed information about methods, romanticizing mental health victims, and minimizing the impact on the community.

Effectiveness of Mass Media Campaigns on Mental Health Issues

Mass media campaigns have been widely utilized as a powerful tool to raise awareness, educate the public, and combat various social issues. In recent years, the focus on mental health has gained significant momentum, with increasing efforts to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and promote well-being. Mass media campaigns play a vital role in raising awareness about mental health issues. By utilizing various mediums such as television, radio, print, and online platforms, campaigns can reach a vast audience, transcending geographical boundaries and demographics. These campaigns aim to educate the public about mental illnesses, their symptoms, and the importance of seeking help.



One of the primary advantages of mass media campaigns is their ability to challenge the stigma associated with mental health. By providing accurate information, personal stories, and testimonies from individuals with live experiences, these campaigns humanize mental health issues and encourage empathy and understanding. By normalizing conversations around mental health, they help individuals feel more comfortable seeking help and reduce the fear of judgment or discrimination.

Mass media campaigns often provide information about available mental health resources, such as helplines, support groups, and treatment options. By disseminating this information widely, campaigns help individuals in need connect with appropriate services and support systems. This increased access to resources can be particularly beneficial for those who may not have been aware of the available help or who face barriers in accessing mental health services, such as financial constraints or limited geographical access. In addition, media campaigns empower individuals and communities by promoting self-care, resilience, and seeking help when needed. By highlighting stories of recovery and resilience, these campaigns instill hope and encourage individuals to take proactive steps toward their mental well-being. They provide valuable information about coping strategies, stress management techniques, and self-help tools that can be easily implemented in daily life. By empowering individuals, these campaigns contribute to the overall mental health literacy of the population.

Mass media campaigns have the potential to influence policy changes and promote mental health advocacy. By generating public discourse and engaging key stakeholders, campaigns can put mental health issues on the public agenda. This increased visibility often leads to policy discussions, resource allocation, and the development of initiatives aimed at improving mental health services. Mass media campaigns can thus act as catalysts for broader societal changes, fostering an environment that supports mental health and well-being.

While mass media campaigns have numerous benefits, they also face certain limitations and challenges. One challenge is the potential oversimplification of complex mental health issues to fit the limited time or space available in media formats. This may result in an incomplete understanding of the subject matter or perpetuate stereotypes. Additionally, reaching marginalized populations, such as those with limited access to media or low literacy levels, can be a challenge that requires targeted strategies and alternative communication channels. Mass media campaigns are powerful tools for addressing mental health issues. Through raising awareness, reducing stigma, increasing access to resources, empowering individuals, and influencing policy changes, these campaigns have the potential to positively impact individuals, communities, and society at large.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Rational Model Theory. This theory posits that people are rational decision-makers who weigh the costs and benefits of their actions before making a decision. In the case of mental health disorders, individuals may contemplate taking their own lives due to a variety of factors, including mental illness, social isolation, financial stress, or relationship problems. The theory suggests that individuals may consider suicide if they perceive that the benefits of ending their lives outweigh the costs of continuing to live.

Bayo (2019) noted that mass media, including television, newspapers, and social media platforms, can influence how people perceive mental health disorder and its consequences.



Media coverage of mental health disorder has the potential to shape public attitudes and behaviors towards mental health challenges. The media can provide accurate and helpful information about suicide prevention and control or inadvertently promote suicidal behavior through sensationalized reporting or graphic depictions of suicide.

The rational model theory suggests that media coverage of mental health disorder can influence individuals' decision-making by providing information about suicide prevention and control strategies. For example, media campaigns that promote suicide prevention hotlines or encourage individuals to seek help for mental health problems can increase the likelihood that individuals will seek help before contemplating suicide. Media coverage of successful suicide prevention programs or stories of individuals who have overcome suicidal thoughts can also provide hope and inspiration to those who may be struggling with suicidal ideation.

On the other hand, media coverage of mental health challenge that is sensationalized or which glamorizes suicide can have a detrimental effect on suicide prevention and control efforts. Graphic depictions of suicide methods or details of suicide notes can create a contagion effect, where vulnerable individuals may be more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide after exposure to such content.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design. Survey is highly useful in the field of social and behavioural sciences and, indeed, in any study that has to do with human action and studies that have individuals as units of analysis. This method was considered appropriate for this study since it provided all demographic and psychographic information, judgmental views and opinions from respondents on the topic that was investigated.

In terms of population, the population of this study comprises students of the School of Information and Communication Technology, Auchi Polytechnic who are in the regular programmes in 2023/2024 academic session. The numerical strength of this population is 4,534 students (MIS, Auchi Poly, 2023).

The sample size for this study is 400 which were randomly drawn from the population. This sample size is made up of individuals who have been selected randomly from the population. In getting the sample size of 400, the researcher employed the Taro Yamane's formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(0.05)^2}$$

n = sample size

N = Population

0.05 = Margin of error

$$n = \frac{4534}{1 + 4534(0.05)^2}$$



$$= \frac{4534}{1 + 4534 (0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{4534}{4535 \times 0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{4534}{11.33}$$

$$= 400$$

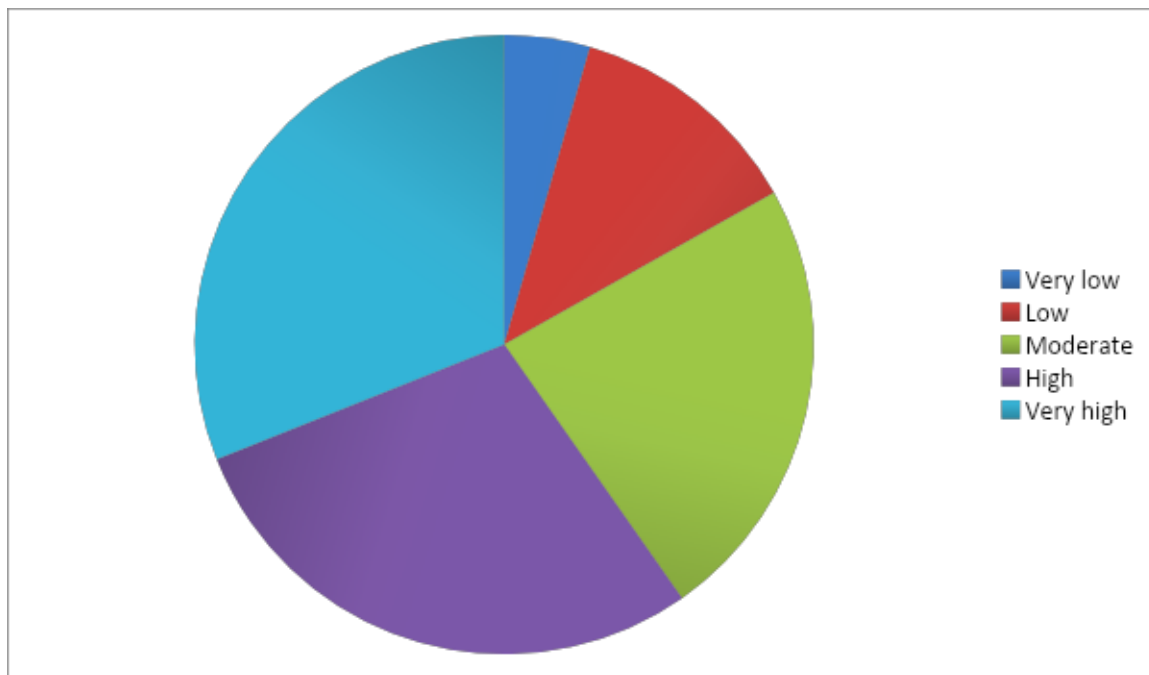
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

During this research, 400 copies of questionnaires were printed and distributed to the respondents. From the above figure, 380 copies were returned and 20 copies were wrongly filled. This reduced the total number of questionnaires collected to 380 copies. The data collected is shown below:

Table 1: Level of awareness of students on mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Very low	17	4.5	5	5
Low	47	12.4	12	17
Moderate	89	23.4	23	40
High	109	28.6	29	69
Very high	118	31.1	31	100
Total	380	100	100	

(Source: *Field Survey, 2023*)



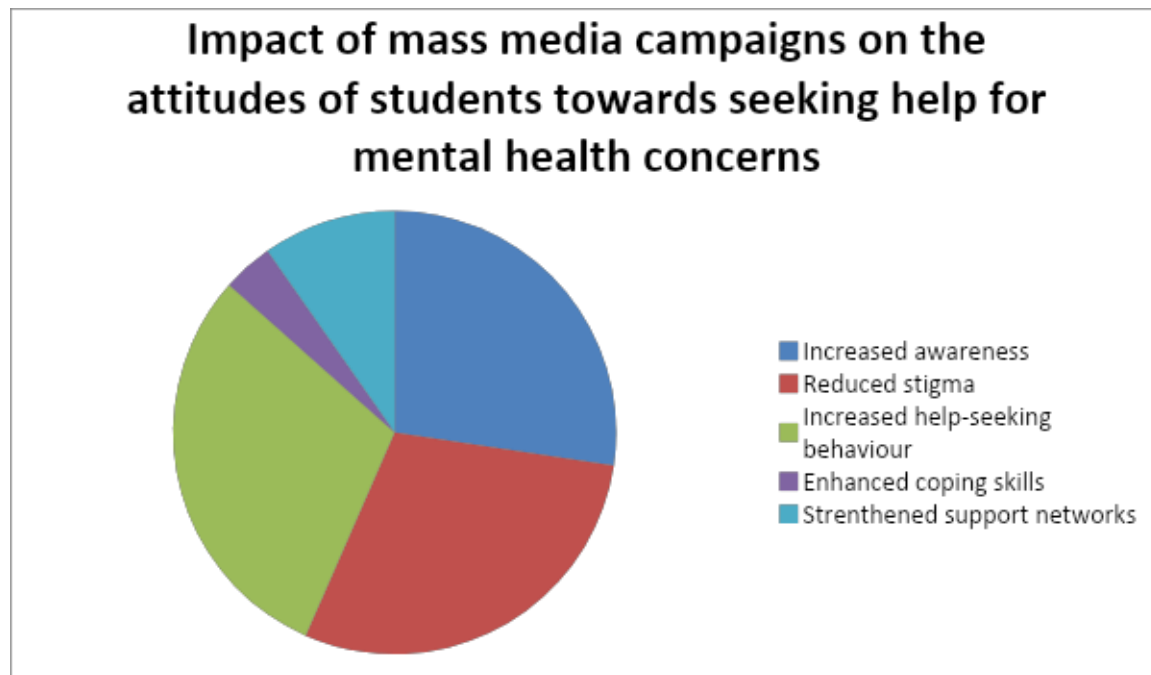
(Figure 1)

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (31%) rated their level of awareness of mental health issues as very high as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns on the subject. This was followed by 29% of the respondents who rated their level of awareness as high while 23% of the respondents rated it as moderate. Also, 12% of the respondents rated their level of awareness of mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns as low while 5% rated theirs as very low.

Table 2: Impact of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental health concerns

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Increased awareness	104	27.4	27	27
Reduced stigma	111	29.2	29	56
Increased help seeking behaviour	114	30.0	30	86
Enhanced coping skills	14	3.7	4	90
Strengthened support networks	37	9.7	10	100
Total	380	100	100	

(Source: *Field Survey, 2023*)



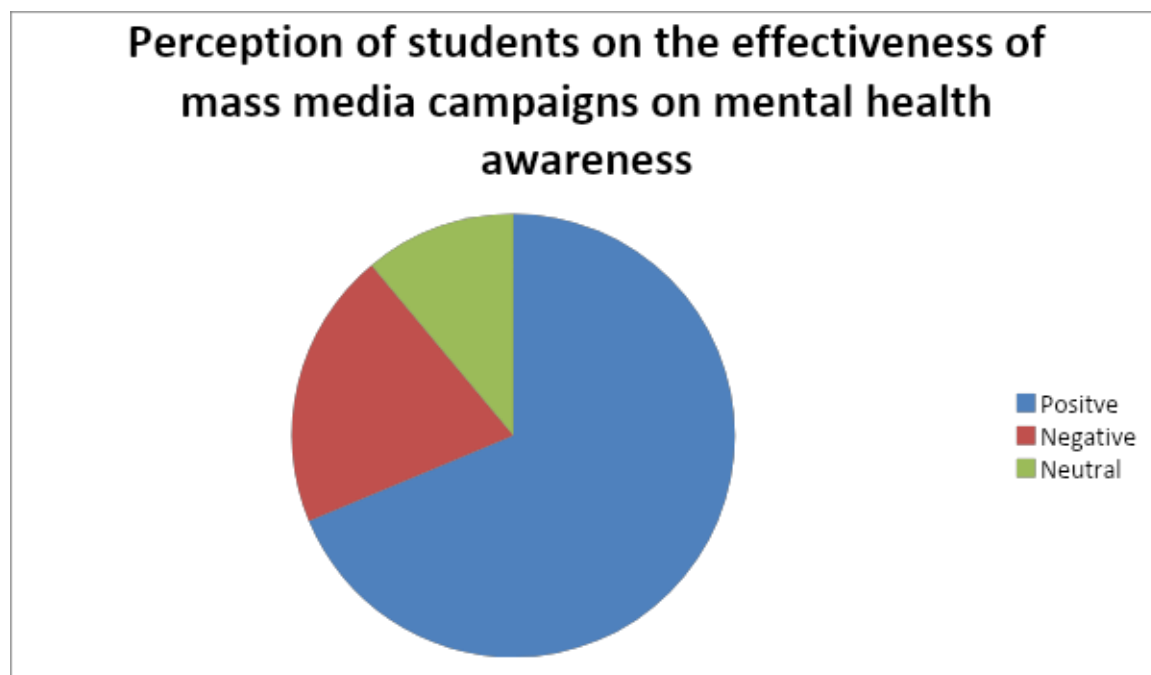
(Figure 2)

The data in Table 2 and Figure 2 reveals that the majority of the respondents (30%) noted that one of the impacts of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental concerns is that these campaigns have increased help-seeking behaviour among students. This was followed by 29% of the respondents who noted that these campaigns have helped reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges while 27% of the respondents noted that these campaigns have increased the awareness of students on mental health challenges in order for them to seek help. Additionally, 10% of the respondents noted that these campaigns have helped strengthen support networks and 4% noted that the campaigns have enhanced their coping skills.

Table 3: Perception of students on the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Positive	261	68.7	69	69
Negative	77	20.3	20	89
Neutral	42	11.0	11	100
Total	380	100	100	

(Source: *Field Survey, 2023*)



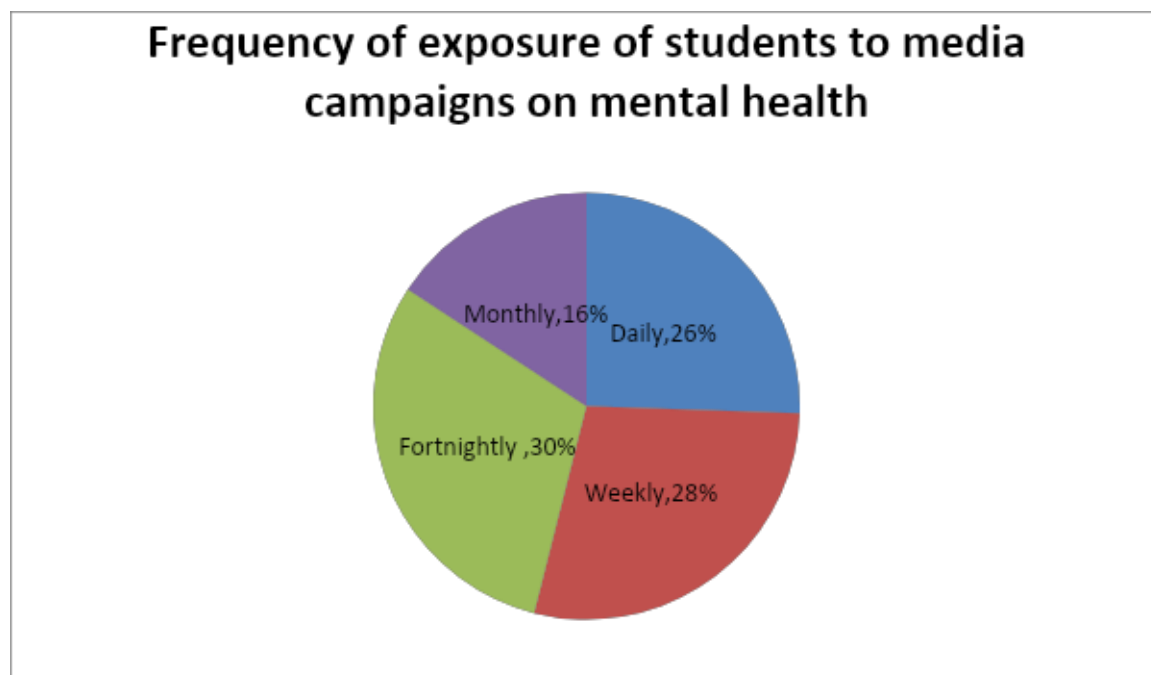
(Figure 3)

The data on Table 3 and Figure 3 reveals that 69% of the respondents which constitute a majority of the respondents perceived the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness among students as positive while 20% of the respondents perceived it as negative and 11% of the respondents could not tell if it is positive or negative; so, they decided to stay neutral.

Table 4: Frequency of exposure of students to media campaigns on mental health

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Daily	97	25.5	26	26
Weekly	108	28.4	28	54
Fortnightly	115	30.3	30	84
Monthly	60	15.8	16	100
Total	380	100	100	

(Source: *Field Survey, 2023*)



(Figure 4)

The data in Table 4 and Figure 4 reveals that a majority of the respondents (30%) are exposed to media campaigns on mental health fortnightly. This was followed by 28% of the respondents who are exposed to these campaigns on a weekly basis while 26% of the respondents are exposed to them on a daily basis and 16% of the respondents are exposed to these campaigns on a monthly basis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of students on mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns?

The objective of this research question is to assess the level of awareness of students on mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns. The data in Table 1 was used to answer this research question. The data reveals that the majority of the respondents (31%) rated their level of awareness of mental health issues as very high as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns on the subject. This was followed by 29% of the respondents who rated their level of awareness as high while 23% of the respondents rated it as moderate. Also, 12% of the respondents rated their level of awareness of mental health issues as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns as low, while 5% rated theirs as very low.

Based on the above, the level of awareness of students on mental health issues is very high as a result of their exposure to mass media campaigns. The reason for this exposure is due to the fact that mass media channels have an extensive audience. These channels allow mental health campaigns to reach a broad and diverse audience. Also, effective mental health campaigns



often use consistent and clear messaging across various media outlets. This repetition helps in reinforcing the message and increasing awareness.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental health concerns?

The objective of this research question is to examine the impact of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental health concerns. The data in Table 2 were used to answer this research question. The data reveals that a majority of the respondents (30%) noted that one of the impacts of mass media campaigns on the attitudes of students towards seeking help for mental concerns is that these campaigns have increased help-seeking behaviour among students. This was followed by 29% of the respondents who noted that these campaigns have helped reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges while 27% of the respondents noted that these campaigns have increased the awareness of students on mental health challenges in order for them to seek help. Additionally, 10% of the respondents noted that these campaigns have helped strengthen support networks and 4% noted that the campaigns have enhanced their coping skills.

Based on the above, effective media campaigns can challenge stereotypes and stigmatizing attitudes towards mental health, helping students feel more comfortable seeking help and discussing their concerns openly. Also, exposure to positive messages about seeking help for mental health concerns through the media can encourage students to be more proactive in seeking support when they are struggling. Media campaigns can also provide students with information about coping strategies and self-care techniques, empowering them to take steps to manage their mental health and seek assistance when needed.

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria?

The objective of this research question is to ascertain students' perception of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria. The data on Table 3 was used to answer this research question. The data reveals that 69% of the respondents, which constituted a majority of the respondents, perceived the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness among students as positive while 20% of the respondents perceived it as negative and 11% of the respondents could not tell if it was positive or negative; so, they decided to stay neutral.

One of the reasons students perceive the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria is due to the fact that a successful mass media campaign can contribute to a positive shift in cultural attitudes towards mental health in Nigeria, making it more acceptable for students to prioritize their mental well-being and seek assistance when needed. Also, mass media campaigns often involve community engagement and participation, which can create a sense of solidarity among students and contribute to a positive perception of the campaign's effectiveness as students feel more equipped to address their own mental health needs.



Research Question 4: What is the frequency of exposure of students to media campaigns on mental health?

The objective of this research question was to determine the frequency of exposure of students to media campaigns on mental health. The data on Table 4 was used to answer this research question. The data reveals that the majority of the respondents (30%) are exposed to media campaigns on mental health fortnightly. This was followed by 28% of the respondents who are exposed to these campaigns on a weekly basis while 26% of the respondents are exposed to them on a daily basis and 16% of the respondents are exposed to these campaigns on a monthly basis.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed both positive and negative aspects of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness among students and it has also examined the perception of students on the effectiveness of mass media campaigns on mental health awareness in Nigeria. On the positive side, the campaigns have been successful in raising awareness, promoting understanding, and reducing the stigma associated with mental health in the country. Through various media channels such as television, radio, print media, and social media platforms, factual information about mental health conditions, symptoms, and available treatments has been effectively disseminated. This has helped to combat misconceptions and address the prevailing stigma surrounding mental health. The campaigns have also played a significant role in encouraging help-seeking behavior among individuals facing mental health problems. By providing information on available mental health services, helplines, and support groups, the media campaigns have motivated individuals to seek professional help and support. This has led to early identification and intervention, potentially improving mental health outcomes for those affected.

Furthermore, mass media campaigns have fostered conversations about mental health at both the individual and societal levels. Through personal stories, interviews and talk shows, individuals have been given platforms to share their experiences, challenges, and successes in dealing with mental health issues. This has created a sense of community, solidarity, and empathy among individuals facing similar struggles and has encouraged open discussions about mental health in families, schools, workplaces, and communities.

However, there are some limitations and challenges in evaluating the effectiveness of these mass media campaigns. One major challenge is the varying reach and accessibility of media platforms across different regions of Nigeria. Rural areas often have limited access to television, radio, and internet services, which may result in disparities in the extent to which these campaigns have reached and influenced different segments of the population. Additionally, while the campaigns have been successful in raising awareness and reducing stigma, there is still a need for sustained efforts to address the structural and systemic challenges in the mental health sector in Nigeria. This includes improving access to quality mental health services, increasing the number of trained mental health professionals, and integrating mental health into primary healthcare systems. Media campaigns alone cannot substitute for comprehensive and accessible mental health services.



Mass media campaigns have proven to be effective in addressing mental health issues in Nigeria by raising awareness, promoting understanding, and reducing stigma. They have successfully disseminated information, encouraged help-seeking behavior, and fostered conversations about mental health. However, challenges such as disparities in media access and the need for systemic improvements in the mental health sector must be addressed. A multi-faceted approach involving media, government, healthcare providers, and communities will be crucial to sustaining and expanding the impact of mass media campaigns on mental health in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Producers of media messages should recognize the cultural and regional diversity within Nigeria and tailor mass media campaigns accordingly. Mental health issues may be perceived and addressed differently across various communities; therefore, the producers of media messages should produce campaigns that resonate with different cultural backgrounds, languages, and social norms to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.
- ii. While mass media campaigns are crucial, they should also facilitate two-way communication. Establish helplines, online forums, or community-based support systems that allow individuals to seek information, share their experiences, and access mental health resources. Encourage dialogue and provide avenues for people to ask questions and seek help confidentially.
- iii. Collaborate closely with local mental health organizations, community leaders, and healthcare providers. Engage them in the campaign's design and implementation. Local stakeholders can provide valuable insights, ensure cultural sensitivity, and help bridge the gap between the campaign and on-the-ground mental health services.
- iv. The management of various tertiary institutions in Nigeria should have a designated centre where students with mental health challenges can get proper counselling.

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