Review

What Does Media Say about Mental Health: A Literature Review of Media Coverage on Mental Health

Hao Zhang and Amira Firdaus *

Department of Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia; horus.zhanghao@gmail.com
* Correspondence: amira_firdaus@um.edu.my

Abstract: As global attention to mental health issues increases, its media portrayal becomes increasingly important. This literature review explores the representation of mental health in the media. The study found that the media plays a key role in shaping the public’s views on mental health issues. Positive media reports can help increase public awareness, reduce stigma, and promote help-seeking behaviors and policy improvements. However, negative reports may deepen misunderstandings and prejudices, increase stigma, and hinder people from seeking help. Several topics including violence and threats have become common themes in media reports on mental health issues. In addition, the portrayal of mental health on social media is emphasized, which provides a platform for discussing mental health issues, but also brings challenges to information authenticity and privacy protection. Social media interactions can provide support for mental health issues, but negative comments and cyberbullying may exacerbate the problem. The significance of this literature review is to provide theoretical support for improving media coverage and formulating public strategies, calling on media practitioners to report mental health issues in a responsible manner to promote healthier public attitudes and more effective policy interventions.

Keywords: literature review; mental health; media; social media

1. Introduction

The description of mental health issues by the media has received continuous attention from scholars. The media plays a crucial role in shaping the public’s perception and understanding of mental health through various media platforms such as movies, television programs, books, and social media (McCrae et al. 2019). The media’s portrayal of mental health challenges shame and arouses awareness, but it may also lead to biases (Flodgren et al. 2019). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in media coverage of mental health, reflecting the growing public awareness of the importance of mental health and calling for an increase in awareness of the prevalence and impact of psychological problems. Positive descriptions of treatment, medication, and support networks can encourage individuals to seek help and reduce shame associated with mental health care. On the other hand, negative or misleading statements may prevent people from seeking treatment or lead people to believe that mental health issues are a manifestation of weakness or moral decay for a long time (Ponnou and Gonon 2017). Diverse cultural beliefs and limited awareness of modern therapy also hinder people from seeking psychiatric assistance (Al-Krenawi 2005). One of the key aspects of mental health representation in the media is the description of individuals with mental health issues. These descriptions may vary, from accurate and detailed descriptions that emphasize the complexity of mental health challenges to sensationalized or stigmatized descriptions that reinforce stereotypes (Bowen and Lovell 2013).
care, media coverage promotes advocacy and policy changes aimed at improving the mental health care system (Barry et al. 2017). In this article, we will explore numerous ways in which media describes mental health, the impact of these expressions on public awareness and policies, and the elaboration and presentation of this topic in the media field.

Strict systematic search and screening criteria do not constrain narrative literature reviews and can, therefore, cover a wider range of the literature. This flexibility and breadth enable researchers to explore various sources of and perspectives in the literature, thereby obtaining a more comprehensive and diverse understanding. This method focuses more on exploring concepts rather than just summarizing the number of research and data statistics. This article uses academic databases (i.e., Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar) to search for research focusing on the media’s presentation and description of mental health. Use of keywords was employed to search for research on major thematic intersections: imagery and representation (e.g., image, representative, representative, and portrayal); mental health (e.g., mental health, psychology, psychological issues, or problems); and media (e.g., television, news, newspapers, magazines, movies, TV dramas, and social media). Based on search results, this article discusses media research on the presentation of mental health issues from six aspects. By delving into these aspects, our goal is to review research on current media representations of mental health issues, both in traditional news coverage and on social media, to promote more informed and constructive discussions about mental health. Our goal is to identify prevalent stereotypes and biases, highlight accurate and empathetic representations, and examine research that suggest how the media can promote positive changes in public perceptions and attitudes toward mental health.

2. The Influence of Media on Mental Health Attitudes and Public Strategies

Mental disorders are commonly regarded as public health issues, and news media is the primary source of information related to psychological and mental health issues (Chapman et al. 2017; Gu and Ding 2023). News media transforms professional knowledge into popular information, spreading knowledge about health issues to the public through media institutions or individuals who disseminate health-related information (Yücel 2023). The crucial role played by the media in the public’s description and understanding of mental health has been documented in multiple studies. Wallington et al. (2010) and Su et al. (2021) found that media-reporting frameworks and strategies for mental health issues affect the way people view atypical mental and spiritual functioning patterns. And Park and Reber (2010) emphasized the role of media coverage in raising public awareness of mental health issues. Hildersley et al. (2020) argue that the mainstream news media shape public attitudes towards mental illness and assume responsibility for the metrics that reflect public opinion. Lack of real-life experience drives people to rely on the media for information about mental health issues (Srivastava et al. 2018). McTernan et al. (2023) proposes that television conveys knowledge about the rules of behavior and the treatment of people with mental illness by teaching or reinforcing social conventions. Gerbner et al. (2002) argues that people living in virtual worlds may perceive the “real world” based on images and depictions on screens, and that people who spend a lot of time watching television may adopt inaccurate perceptions of mental illness from television. This viewpoint is consistent with the findings of Granello and Pauley (2000), who found that an individual’s negative perception of mental disorders is directly proportional to the amount of time they spend watching television, and that those who regularly watch television have more negative perceptions. Keal et al. (2022) found that the media can positively influence people’s perceptions of mental health by directly quoting those with mental health issues or including experiences of recovery. McCrae et al. (2019) and Saadatjoo et al. (2021) argue that mass media has a powerful influence in shaping public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior about contemporary topics. Dixon (2019) argues that cognitive connections between specific social communities and stereotypical traits embodied in the media may influence public perception, attitude, or behavioral decisions.
Multiple studies have also demonstrated the role of news media promotion in addressing public health issues in society. Bou-Karroum et al. (2017) argued for the influence of the media in intervening in public health policy by raising public awareness, expanding advocacy, and mobilizing policymakers. Foster (2006) and Prosser (2010) elaborated on the impact of media representation of mental health on the formulation of public policies in the field of mental health, while Major (2018) explained that media frameworks related to mental health news influence public support for policy proposals. Ohlsson (2018) believes that media portrayal, as sources of social representation, helps to reconstruct social mental health knowledge. However, a study on how government-controlled mass media diverts health policy from the primary goal of promoting public health found that the lack of stable management and the low quality of health programs undermined the outcomes of health policymaking, and that the conflict between modern medicine and knowledge of traditional medicine made it difficult for media health policymakers [sic] to achieve their strategic goals (Aghaei and Mowlaei 2023).

In addition, several studies have shown that the reporting orientation and attitude of the mass media towards mental health issues are influenced by multiple factors. Srivastava et al. (2018) argued that as the direct producers of news media, journalists’ own mental health background has a potential impact on their dissemination of news content and portrayal of psychological issues. Aoki et al. (2013) emphasized that the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is high among journalists, and there are obstacles to disclosing mental health issues in the workplace. Based on the current debate about the news media is losing public trust, a study indicated that statistical information and visual information in their reports is conducive to increasing credibility (Henke et al. 2020). Far from reducing the reading pleasure of the article, these pieces of information enhance the vividness of the article in the eyes of news users. Gallagher et al. (2023) found that in recent years, the number of feature news articles written by mental health professionals has decreased, which may have an impact on the attitude of mental health reporting articles and the construction of media frameworks. Gu and Ding (2023) conducted a bibliometric analysis of 130 published studies on media coverage of mental disorders and found that media coverage of mental health is influenced by reporters’ sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and cultural values. In addition, different newspaper formats, including broadsheet and tabloids, have been recorded to report differently on mental health issues (Gallagher et al. 2023; Li et al. 2021; Scott 1994). As a result, interventions are adopted to educate editors and journalists of different newspaper types to reduce stigmatizing coverage of mental illness. (Li et al. 2021).

3. The Topic of Mental Health Issues in The Media Coverage

Studies analyzing the impact of media coverage of mental disorders on stigma from different national and cultural perspectives have been documented. Danger (i.e., dangers of mental illness) has been found to be a major characteristic of the media when constructing content related to mental health issues. Philo (1997) found that danger, overtaking positive recovery or achievement of people with mental illnesses, was the most common theme in media coverage of mental health issues. Wahl (2003) found that although the emphasis on danger has decreased, it still dominates. This conclusion is also confirmed by Bowen and Lovell (2013), who found that newspapers over-linked mental health with risky behavior in their coverage and exaggerated the correlation. A review of 21 studies found that media portrayals of mental health were based on traditional layperson’s understanding of madness and portrayed individuals with mental health problems as threatening (Nairn 2007). Stuart (2006) concluded that the risk characterization is one of the distorted images presented by the media when reporting on mental health issues.

Violence and crime have also been found to be terms often used in media coverage of mental health issues (Gallagher et al. 2023; McCrae et al. 2019). Rose (1998) highlighted that television programs highlight the link between violence and people with mental disorders. Corrigan et al. (2005) found that 39% of front-page news stories in mainstream American
newspapers involved violent elements related to mental disorders, which may increase stigma. Foster (2006) linked mental health issues with violence, portraying mental health service users as passive and pitiful. Caputo and Rouner (2011) pointed out that people with mental disorders are often portrayed as victims of violence in TV dramas or movies. Whitley and Berry (2013) concluded after a survey of Canadian newspapers that 40% of articles about mental disorders had a direct theme of danger, violence, and crime. Media coverage of mental health is often sensational, such as dramatic descriptions of mentally ill people deliberately committing violent attacks and murders (Srivastava et al. 2018). A study of British newspapers found that news reports tended to associate violent behavior with mental health problems rather than physical health issues (Chen and Lawrie 2017). Liu et al. (2021) found that media exaggeration and distortion of people with mental health problems as being violent and unpredictable led to fear and avoidance among the public. Bilkay et al. (2023) found that Turkish newspapers linked mental disorders to crime and violence. However, Francis et al. (2004) came to the opposite conclusion based on a study of Australian newspapers. They found that Australian media reported more extensively on mental health and paid less attention to crime and violence. Although studies have pointed to mental disorders as one of the reasons for the increase in violence among children and adolescents (Kemal et al. 2023), the media has not shown the public that only a minority of people with mental disorders commit serious crimes, and that there are fewer incidents of violence than the general population (Bogerts 2021).

In addition, themes such as accusations (McCrae et al. 2019), mental health policies and programs (Francis et al. 2004), diseases (Kenez et al. 2015), and gender opposition (Klin and Lemish 2008; Srivastava et al. 2018) are common expressions in media coverage of mental health issues. McCrae et al. (2019) found that one quarter of articles in Saudi Arabian newspapers focused on criticism when reporting on mental health, which may lead to the continued stigmatization of the issue. Francis et al. (2004) focused on the Australian media’s portrayal of mental health and found that mental health policies and program initiatives were prominent themes, followed by the causes, symptoms, and treatment of mental illness. Kenez et al. (2015) concluded that the three major Australian daily newspapers discussed mental disorders together with deviant behaviors in their coverage of mental health and tended to report on illness rather than health. Another study found that only a small number of mental health reports mentioned treatment-related measures or suggestions, and rarely cited patients’ real experiences (Whitley and Berry 2013). Therefore, there is a need for more balanced and informative coverage of mental health issues in the mass media (McCrae et al. 2019). In addition, another distorted portrayal of mental disorders in the mass media is the sexist stance imposed on mental disorders. Srivastava et al. (2018) found that in media portrayals, men are overrepresented as suffering from severe mental illnesses such as psychosis or personality disorders, while women are more likely to be described as having sexual dysfunction, neurosis, etc. Klin and Lemish (2008) argued that there is a gender gap among professionals as news sources, with a higher proportion of male experts in the field of mental health mentioned in mass media. Clarke and Miele (2016) studied the similarities and differences in the descriptions of mental illness in male and female stories in popular North American magazine articles from 1983 to 2012 and found that traditional magazines linked mental illness to hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininity, reflecting gender-based oppression and suffering. Yang et al. (2017) compared the descriptions of mental illness in male and female lifestyle and health magazines from 2009 to 2013 and found that, compared with male magazines, female magazines reported mental illness more positively and preferred to use humane words and expressions such as hope. The differences in media coverage of mental health based on gender reveal that stereotypes are still prevalent. Given the ubiquity of the media, the long-term exposure of individuals to the media, and the role of the media in shaping beliefs, attitudes, and expectations (Santoniccolo et al. 2023), reducing gender differences and biases should be taken seriously in the portrayal of mental health in media.
4. Negative Attitudes towards Mental Health Issues in Media

The presentation of mental health in the media involves a variety of depictions and different attitudes. Several studies have pointed out that while there is diversity in the representation of mental health issues in the media (Bowen and Lovell 2013), there is a pervasiveness of news associated with negative coverage, and the portrayal of mental health issues in the media is characterized by distorted fact (Johnson and Olson 2021). An early analysis of attitudes towards articles on mental health issues in British newspapers showed that articles describing mental health issues in a negative tone and attitude dominated the newspapers (Scott 1994). More than 20 years later, Chen and Lawrie (2017) conducted research on UK newspapers and discovered that only one in five reports covered mental health, but more than half of the articles had a negative tone. Similar research findings were found in a study of Canadian newspapers, where Whitley and Wang (2017) found that stigmatizing content accounted for a higher proportion than articles with a positive attitude. Henson et al. (2010) investigated the attitudes adopted by Australian television news in reporting mental issues, and found that, compared to adults, reports related to young people had a significantly lower frequency of positive themes, while negative themes were more frequent. Ohlsson (2018) concluded through an analysis of two prominent Swedish newspapers that negative topics such as controversy and biased language descriptions are prevalent in mental health reporting. Li et al. (2021) compared UK tabloid and broadsheet coverage of mental health and found that stigma was 32% more likely to be present in tabloid coverage than in broadsheet coverage. Gallagher et al. (2023) confirmed this finding, indicating that UK tabloid coverage of mental health was more likely to be critical or sensational. Bilkay et al. (2023) reviewed 230 news articles on mental disorders in Turkey and concluded that newspaper articles on mental disorders were described as stigmatizing and misleading with negative concepts. Ma (2017) conducted a systematic literature review of 41 empirical studies and found that the media still heavily reported on mental illness in a negative form, resulting in the persistence of stigma surrounding mental illness. To further explore themes and trends in published research, Gu and Ding (2023) conducted a systematic bibliometric analysis of 130 published media reports on mental disorders and found that negative media coverage of mental problems was very common.

In addition to individuals experiencing mental health issues themselves suffering from prejudice and discrimination as propagated by the media, the distorted image of professionals and health care providers in the media sphere has also been documented. Several studies have shown that mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, caregivers, mental health professionals, etc., can also be the target of stigma due to the influence of associative stigma (Chaimowitz et al. 2021; Njaka et al. 2023; Shi et al. 2023). Associative stigma is when individuals hold negative attitudes towards others not because of their own characteristics, but because of the features of others with whom they relate (Njaka et al. 2023). As healthcare facilities’, the media’s, and the public’s focus on vulnerable groups grows, any stigma against these groups and its possible consequences is critical (Chaimowitz et al. 2021), as it significantly impacts the career development and well-being of psychiatrists and the health of their patients (Shi et al. 2023). Srivastava et al. (2018) found that the media stigmatized male psychiatrists, portraying them as villains and eccentric clowns with negative images such as lasciviousness, revenge, madness, sexual decline, and repression. Female psychiatrists, on the other hand, were portrayed as individuals who lacked love and satisfaction, were controlling, and were emotionally repressed. Metzl and Angel (2004) argued that psychotropic drug advertising has deepened the unfair portrayal of psychiatrists. In recent decades, with the dramatic increase in the accessibility of television and film, the sensitive and stigmatized topic of psychiatry has aroused strong public interest and remains a source of entertainment. The image construction of mental health service providers in mass media such as television and film has been criticized and is often presented to the public in a negative and sensationalized image. Kilciksiz et al. (2023) argued that psychiatrists are subject to stereotypes and negative images as a major theme of film, but being completely focused on the screen and immersed in the relevant
characters, the public can easily forget the impact of these depictions on unconscious biases and perceptions. Mental health providers are often portrayed as dubious or exploitative individuals in entertainment media (Stuart 2006), and many films demonize or caricature people with mental illness as violent criminals or threats to society, even though they are more likely to be victims than perpetrators (Dean et al. 2018). Byrne (2009) found that psychiatrists, like mental issues themselves, are rarely portrayed realistically or positively in film, and this negative portrayal and stereotype reinforces society’s misconceptions about psychiatry (Damjanović et al. 2009).

5. The Impact of Negative Media Representations on Public Attitudes

Multiple studies have highlighted that, for many years, the media portrayal of mental health, particularly mental illness, has been criticized as sensational and stigmatizing, and that the spread of mental health issues in the media sector is rife with misinformation and stereotypes (Gallagher et al. 2023; Hasan and Musleh 2018; Li et al. 2023, 2021). The media, as an influential source of mental health information and perspectives, may exacerbate the fear of family shame by negatively portraying mental disorders (McCrae et al. 2019). This argument is likewise confirmed by Gu and Ding (2023), who founds that the current media portrayal of mental health is persistently biased and discriminatory, exacerbating stigma against people with mental disorders. The negative portrayal that prevails in the media may shape the public’s negative attitudes and negative impressions of mental health, leading to social stigma of mental health (Gallagher et al. 2023). Social stigma occurs when the general public engages in discriminatory behavior toward people with mental health problems based on shared beliefs about the illness and the negative emotions it produces (Zamorano et al. 2023). Wahl (1995) proposed that the media use exaggerated, inaccurate, and comical images to depict patients with mental illness and provide erroneous information about mental illness, thereby promoting the shame of mental illness. McGinty et al. (2016) found that negative portrayals of mental health problems exacerbate social stigma and self-denial in this group and are detrimental to public policy support for mental health issues. Srivastava et al. (2018) and Corrigan et al. (2005) explain that stereotypes generated by long-term media exposure may lead to negative evaluations, structural shame, and discrimination against specific social groups, leading to long-term stigmatization of groups with mental health problems and being associated with criminal behavior. Keal et al. (2022) proposed from the perspective of media coverage of mental health in the sports field that although media coverage of athlete mental health is mixed, it still widely holds a stigmatized view. The negative portrayal of athletes by the media and the expectations of the public have caused immense pressure on athletes with mental health problems, leading them to not disclose mental health-related diagnosis, as this may lead to stigma. Negative descriptions of mental health are not conducive to seeking healthy behaviors and comprehensive recovery, and more positive media narratives are needed (Stuart 2006). The portrayal of groups with mental health problems by mass media is not conducive to their seeking rehabilitation, nor is it beneficial for the community to provide high-quality care services (Nairn 2007). Therefore, it is suggested that media institutions should play an active role in promoting mental health communication, providing a more open environment, encouraging groups suffering from mental health problems to seek help, and improving society’s perception of mental health, reducing the negative impact of media promotion.

6. Positive Media Coverage of Mental Health Issues

The potential adverse effects of negative media portrayal on public and community attitudes on mental health have been discussed in previous sections, and multiple studies have emphasized the need to improve media coverage of mental health and suggest utilizing it in future media strategies (Francis et al. 2004; Hildersley et al. 2020; Ross et al. 2022; Su et al. 2021). For many years, stigmatization of mental health has caused social concern and sparked many anti-stigmatization movements (Gallagher et al. 2023). Surprisingly, the tone and content of media articles covering mental health issues have
improved over time, and some improvements in reporting on mental health issues have been evident in recent years, particularly in providing a voice for people with mental illness, which is related to the guidelines issued (Chen and Lawrie 2017). Henson et al. (2010) analyzed how mental illness in children and adolescents is portrayed in Australian television news, using first-person and holistic news perspectives to determine media reporting attitudes. The results showed that the media that portrayed young people with mental disorders were mixed, with neutral attitudes narrowly leading positive and negative expressions in media coverage reporting of mental health. Kenez et al. (2015) used a mixed approach combining content and thematic analysis to analyze reports on mental health issues in three Australian newspapers over 12 weeks. They pointed out that positive mental health information is often presented, especially in tabloid reports, which seem to emphasize wellness more. The reason for this result is related to the better implementation of Mindframe Resource’s guidelines on negative reporting. This guideline stipulates that journalists should be careful not to highlight someone’s mental illness in articles unrelated to reporting and should avoid using terminology that may reinforce people’s stigmatized views of mental illness. Therefore, mental health professionals and organizations should continue building relationships with journalists and educating them to ensure responsible reporting continues to dominate. Whitley and Wang (2017) evaluated more than 20 best-selling Canadian newspapers from 2005 to 2015 regarding topics such as mental illness or schizophrenia and found that the number of articles with a positive tone nearly doubled over the decade, while articles with stigmatized content decreased by one-third. The research also indicated that there was much more positive coverage in front page articles as well as articles in broadsheet. This study suggested that the improvement in media coverage of mental illness may be related to MHCC’s implementation of targeted strategies aimed at reducing stigma and increasing media coverage. McCrae et al. (2019) examined the depictions of mental disorders in four of the most popular Saudi Arabian newspapers and found that advocacy, action, and attention as the most common topics in reporting may have a positive impact by raising public awareness, while many reports on the topic of treatment and rehabilitation may break down barriers to seeking help. Hildersley et al. (2020) conducted a study spanning a decade, searching and evaluating articles on mental health in 18 different newspapers, and found significant improvement in stigmatized content related to mental health. Keal et al. (2022) used two British online newspapers as samples to analyze the themes and attitudes of articles on mental health related to the Tokyo Olympics from 2019 to 2021. The study found that the media’s description of mental health at the Tokyo Olympics was generally positive, and the mental health status received widespread media attention. A recent study showed that after examining the tone, content, and terminology used in 735 articles or titles containing psychiatric related materials, it was found that most articles had a supportive or factual tone, showing a more optimistic trend in news reporting (Gallagher et al. 2023). However, Kenez et al. (2015) suggested that progress in improving mental health reporting in Australian newspapers has been slow and recommended that mental health professionals and organizations continue to build relationships with and educate journalists to ensure responsible reporting continues to prevail. Interaction between psychiatrists and the media is essential to improving depictions of mental health and raising awareness of mental health (Gallagher et al. 2023). It is recommended that mental health professionals, patients, and family caregivers collaborate to develop guidelines for more accurate reporting of mental health issues (McCrae et al. 2019).

7. Mental Health in Social Media

Research has shown that coverage of mental health issues has shifted from traditional media to social media, from general descriptions of mental disorders to specific descriptions of mental disorders (Gu and Ding 2023). Social media has become essential for mental health communication, where objective and informative descriptions of mental health help improve mental health literacy and reduce stigma (Ma 2017). With the prevalence and
The popularization of social media, users directly or indirectly reflect their life experiences by posting on social media (Budenz et al. 2022). Social media places a high priority on mental health especially in assessing public attitudes towards mental illness (Pavlova and Berkers 2022). However, the discourse on platforms is also not immune to the influence of more stigmatized frameworks (Budenz and Massey 2019; Pavlova and Berkers 2022; Robinson et al. 2019). Quintero Johnson et al. (2017) argue that the presence of first-person recommendations in mental health information on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter may lead to a decrease in critical thinking about sources and reduced message processing. Pavalanathan and De Choudhury (2015) found that anonymous accounts on social media platforms often exhibit negativity. Budenz et al. (2022) argued that users choose a second anonymous account to disclose information more comprehensively. However, Thompson (2012) pointed out that people are shifting towards more positive, health-centered discourse, especially in terms of visual expression. Despite the challenges, language related to mental health in social media posts can still help identify those who require urgent attention (Gkotsis et al. 2016).

The studies of mental health depictions on Facebook reveal a complex and multifaceted picture. On the one hand, the presentation of personal identity and image is documented by research. Twomey and O’Reilly (2017) found an association between self-presentation on Facebook and mental health and personality variables, while unreal self-presentation was associated with low self-esteem and social anxiety. Pavalanathan and De Choudhury (2015) explored the role of identity in social media mental health discussions, finding that anonymity leads to increased negativity and self-focus. Egan et al. (2013) found that college students have different reactions to mental health references on the platform, and closer relationships lead to more direct interactions. College students’ awareness of mental health references on Facebook may provide opportunities for future peer intervention work. In addition, Bazarova et al. (2017) examined the interaction between psychological distress and emotional expression on Facebook and found that higher distress was associated with the use of depressive language and lower satisfaction with responses. These studies collectively indicate that mental health is a multifaceted and constantly evolving topic on Facebook, influenced by personal and social factors.

The study on mental health descriptions on Instagram reveals complex situations. Lee et al. (2020) found that exercise, healthy eating, anxiety, and depression related to mental health are the most popular mental health themes on Instagram. While Lindgren and Johansson (2023) emphasized that the platform tends to emphasize posts on casual snapshots of individual rehabilitation. Griffith et al. (2021) found that figurative art and artists’ experiences are used as a means of raising awareness of individual mental health. Although, the study has found that posts that mention at least one type of mental health issue seek peer support and engagement from other users at a higher rate than posts that do not mention mental health disorders or topics (Lee et al. 2020). However, a study by Budenz et al. (2022) showed that participants exhibited aversion to posting mental health information on Instagram, stating that public and self-shame were barriers to disclosure.

Negative portrayals of mental health in the YouTube platform are emphasized. Gordon et al. (2015) found that videos on psychiatry on YouTube are mostly negative and may lead to stigmatization of mental illness. Nour et al. (2017) found that most videos lacked accurate and educationally useful depictions of schizophrenia and highlighted the need for more accurate and balanced representations of mental health on YouTube. Oliphant (2013) found that videos containing personal narratives and experiential knowledge on YouTube generated the most user engagement and were the preferred source for users searching for mental health information, suggesting that regardless of the authority of video creators, librarians and information professionals play an important role in helping users determine which mental health information is accurate, authoritative, and reliable. MacLean et al. (2017) focused on video content related to generalized anxiety disorder, pointing out that most of the most popular videos on YouTube are produced by consumers, so a better understanding of what information is available and popular online can help...
mental health professionals help patients and media. Devendorf et al. (2020) found only 9% of videos are uploaded by mental health organizations, which indicates that mental health issues are an important but overlooked research area that can reduce shame, increase awareness of depression, and ultimately improve help seeking behavior. These studies overall indicate that YouTube is a platform where personal narratives and experiences play a key role in shaping mental health images.

Research into mental health depictions on TikTok reveals a complex picture. Basch et al. (2022) highlighted the popularity of mental health content on TikTok, with a focus on general mental health, and with many videos gaining high engagement. Schaadhardt et al. (2023) emphasized that members associated with mental issues often use humor to establish and maintain a positive, mutually supportive community, which is provided by TikTok. This conclusion is consistent with the research findings of Milton et al. (2023), which suggested that TikTok’s community structure is permeable, allowing for self-discovery and understanding. However, diverse communities and content engagement have also raised concerns about the credibility of mental health information and the potential for harmful content. Moreover, the portrayal of mental health on TikTok is not without its challenges, which is shown by the stigmatization and misleading description of mental disorders (Bilkay et al. 2023). These studies indicate that although TikTok can serve as a platform for positive mental health content and community building, there are also challenges and potential risks that need to be addressed.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

This literature review emphasizes how mental health was portrayed in traditional and social media. The review indicates that the media significantly influences the public’s attitudes and public strategies towards mental health. Although the frequency and diversity of coverage on mental health topics have increased, negative descriptions continue to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and stigma. These negative reports have a profound impact on public attitudes, often leading to discrimination and misunderstandings about mental health issues. However, positive media coverage can offset these impacts by cultivating awareness, empathy, and support. In addition, social media has become a powerful platform for spreading awareness and continuing stigma, highlighting the dual role of digital media in shaping public discourse on mental health. The results of this literature review emphasize that the media must prioritize accurate and compassionate reporting to promote a more informed and supportive society.

When analyzing the impact of media on mental health attitudes and public strategies, it is evident that while media narratives may promote understanding and support, they may also reinforce negative stereotypes and misinformation. The exploration of the theme of mental health issues in media reports highlights a promising trend of discussing mental health issues more frequently and in a more diverse manner. However, this progress is often undermined by the negative attitude of the media towards mental health issues, which perpetuates shame and fosters an atmosphere of fear and misunderstanding. The impact of negative media portrayal on public attitudes must emphasize the far-reaching consequences that these representations may have, including exacerbating discrimination and reducing the willingness of affected individuals to seek help. This clearly reminds us that the media has the power to perpetuate, as well as discourage, harmful ideas. On the contrary, positive media coverage of mental health issues indicates that the media has the potential to become a catalyst for change, promoting empathy, awareness, and supportive attitudes. These positive expressions can challenge a prevailing sense of shame and encourage people to seek a more nuanced understanding of mental health. The development of social media has provided opportunities for mental health communication, providing a space for awareness and support, but also promoting the rapid spread of misinformation and shame. This duality in digital media impact on attitudes towards mental health emphasizes the necessity of careful consideration and responsible content creation. Stigma is associated with different diagnoses of mental illness.
In summary, although the media and social media has made significant progress in fair portrayal of mental health issues in terms of inclusiveness and awareness, there is an urgent need for sustained efforts to ensure accurate, compassionate, and supportive reporting and content creation. By leveraging the influence of media, society can move towards a more informed and empathetic approach to mental health, ultimately reducing shame and improving public mental health outcomes. Given that stigma is differently associated for different diagnoses of mental illness, as found by Hazell et al. (2022), future studies can thus further explore media coverage and social media representations of different forms of mental illness and examine nuances in media portrayals of vast spectrum and diverse ranges of mental health issues and diagnoses.

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