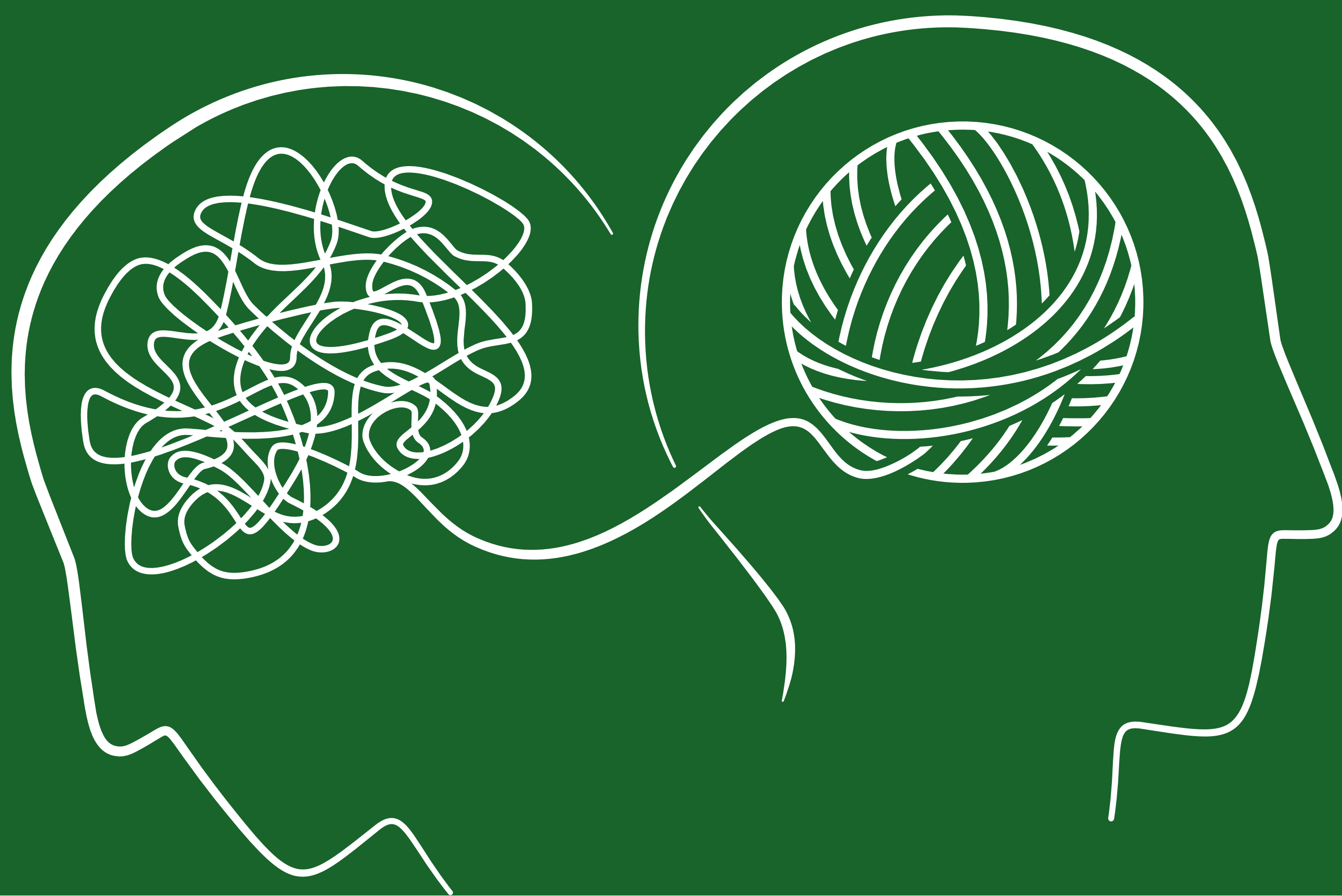


INVESTIGATING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF

MENTAL HEALTH DISCOURSE IN KENYA

Media Monitoring Report

2023



INVESTIGATING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF

MENTAL HEALTH DISCOURSE IN KENYA

Media Monitoring Report
June 2021 - June 2023

**Reported and Designed by:
Profit and Loss Consulting Limited**

We attribute all the images used in this document to Canva.

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Executive Summary

The SpeakUp Campaign is an integral component of a three-year mental health anti stigma initiative led by the NGO Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya (BNBR). The overarching objective of the SpeakUp media campaign is to empower young individuals grappling with mental health challenges and fostering a society free from the stigma associated with mental health conditions.

We know that media can either perpetrate mental health stigma or be a positive force in combating it, therefore a key component of the project was to understand what media discourse looked like and work with the Kenya Media Council to facilitate improved mental health reporting.

In April 2021, BNBR enlisted the services of P&L Consulting to conduct a comprehensive media analysis spanning the previous 12 months (baseline findings). The primary goal was to assess levels of stigma and identify emerging trends in the portrayal of mental health issues within news media reports and social media discussions. Fast forward to June 2023, BNBR has initiated a follow-up media monitoring exercise. This subsequent analysis seeks to determine any shifts or improvements in the reporting of mental health-related topics and subsequent discussions on social media. Moreover, it aims to evaluate the impact BNBR's initiatives has had on media discourse since the publication of the 2020/21 report.

This document serves to present the findings resulting from 24 months of media monitoring, spanning from June 2021 to June 2023, encompassing various media channels and social media platforms. The central focus of this endeavor is to assess the effectiveness of BNBR's SpeakUp campaign in shaping media outlets concerning reporting on mental health. The insights garnered from this analysis and evaluation will serve as a critical foundation for informed decision-making and strategic planning, further enhancing BNBR's endeavors within the realm of mental health discourse.

Methodology

- Analysis of content encompassing a randomized selection of 542 Kenyan news articles pertaining to mental health. These articles were published from June 2021 to June 2023
- Questionnaires: A targeted set of questions was also utilized to collect information from 20 randomly selected journalists

Summary of Key Findings

Mental health related news coverage increased over time, experiencing an increase from 4% in 2020/21 to 7% in 2022 and 12% in 2023

Significant increase in positive mental health stories over the study time period. Between June and December 2021, 15 percent of the news stories were positive, 52 percent were negative while 33 percent were neutral. Between January and June 2023, 50 percent of the stories were positive, 21 percent were negative while 29 percent were neutral.

Positive Shifts Towards Openness and Self-Care: A noteworthy positive change is evident in the narrative, where concepts like self-care and wellness have risen to prominence. The discourse now embraces an ethos of openness, where individuals are more willing to share their mental health experiences and engage in conversations centered around well-being. This marks a significant departure from the past stigma driven narrative and signals a growing willingness to address mental health with empathy and understanding.

Persistent Stigma and Media Influence: While progress has been made, certain challenges persist. Media coverage still tends to associate mental health with violence and crime, perpetuating stigma around these issues. The report highlights the need for responsible and accurate reporting to mitigate these negative associations. Additionally, certain stigmatizing visual stereotypes have endured in news reports, underlining the need for media to play a pivotal role in reshaping perceptions.

Demand for Government Intervention and Research-Based Evidence: A key finding is the increasing demand for government intervention and research-backed insights concerning mental health. As the discourse matures, there is an increasing recognition of the need for policy measures that support mental health initiatives and provide a conducive environment for open conversations. The call for research-based evidence underscores the hunger for a solid foundation on which to build effective interventions, destigmatize mental health, and improve overall public awareness.

Impact of BNBR's initiatives around Mental health: This report acknowledges the significant impact of Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya's (BNBR) strategic initiatives on the evolving mental health discourse. It was found that out of the 542 news stories reviewed, 104 were generated as a result of BNBR's initiatives. Through the implementation of effective campaigns, influencer engagement, and compelling content generation, BNBR's visibility has grown, contributing to the positive transformation of mental health conversations. These strategies have amplified BNBR's reach and influence, creating a wider impact within the evolving landscape of mental health discourse in Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Mental Health can no longer be relegated to the shadows.

Introduction

With an alarming statistic revealing that one in four adults in Kenya experiences mental illness, there is an increasing acknowledgment of mental health as an essential component of overall health.

Not too long ago, discussing mental health was regarded as a social taboo, shrouded in stigmatization, making it arduous for individuals to openly address their experiences. However, in 2023, mental health has evolved into more than just a topic of conversation. It has become a movement, driving an unprecedented number of individuals to embrace vulnerability and become candid about their own challenges.

This heightened level of discourse has been further amplified in recent times by numerous events such as the global pandemic and increased cost of living which have acted as catalysts, propelling mental health issues to the forefront of public consciousness. Consequently, we are witnessing a shift towards increased openness and dialogue regarding mental health.

Recognizing the importance of staying attuned to the shifting mindset, there is a demand amongst practitioners within the healthcare domain for a comprehensive qualitative analysis of these developments.

Objectives

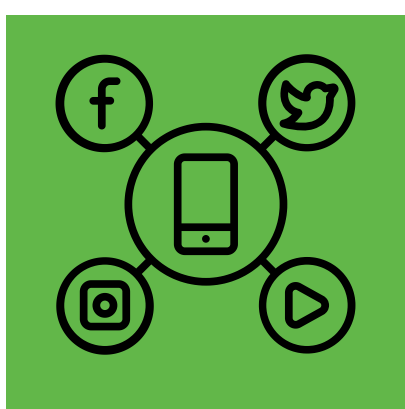
Our objective is to explore how the discourse on mental health has evolved over the past 24 months (June 2021-June 2023), particularly within the media landscape and digital space. We seek to understand how the public approaches the topic of mental health. An essential aspect of our investigation is to evaluate the effectiveness of Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya's (BNBR) SpeakUp Campaign in influencing public attitudes, behavior, and knowledge regarding mental health.

Throughout this report, we will provide insights into the portrayal of mental health across diverse media outlets and social media platforms, identify prevailing issues and perspectives, and critically assess the quality of information presented in media coverage. Our findings will serve as a robust foundation for informed decision-making and strategic planning, bolstering BNBR's initiatives in fostering a more compassionate and informed mental health conversation.

To achieve this comprehensive evaluation, we sought to answer three primary questions:



How has media coverage surrounding mental health changed over the last 24 months (June 2021-June 2023)?



How does the depiction of mental health vary across various communication channels?



To what extent has the SpeakUp campaign contributed to the evolving perception and attitudes towards mental health?

The Scope

The scope of this media monitoring entails the comprehensive assessment of media coverage and online discourse pertaining to mental health. Our primary objectives have revolved around discerning shifts in public sentiment through identifying prevailing themes and viewpoints, and evaluating the precision and adherence to reporting standards in the content disseminated.

The report encompasses a defined timeframe spanning from June 2021 to June 2023, affording a comprehensive synopsis of the SpeakUp campaign project's influence on public attitudes concerning mental health.



Methodology

Qualitative Approach:

Desk Review: A systematic monitoring and analysis of a diverse array of media outlets (print, electronic, online) and social media platforms was conducted throughout the specified period (June 2021- June 2023). Thematic elements of information conveyed in the media were carefully scrutinized, and the accuracy and adherence to quality standards in the shared information were assessed.

Questionnaires: A targeted set of questions was utilized to collect information from 20 journalists, who were randomly selected to assess their understanding and opinions regarding the mental health discourse. These questionnaires were administered through an online-based form to ensure confidentiality and encourage candid responses.

Sampling

We conducted a quantitative analysis of content encompassing a randomized selection of 542 Kenyan news articles pertaining to mental health. These articles were published or broadcasted by prominent print and television news outlets with substantial readership and viewership figures, spanning the period from June 2021 to June 2023. These outlets encompassed well-known entities including but not limited to Nation Media Group, Standard Media Group, Media Max, and Royal Media.

Keyword Selection Methodology

To compile this dataset, we meticulously examined the headlines of printed news articles as well as transcribed television broadcasts. Our search strategy involved utilizing a specific set of search terms, namely: "mental illness," "crazy," "lunatic," "mental health," "mental," "psych," "nutcase," "mentally weak," "depression," "schizophrenic," "bipolar," "anxiety," "PTSD," "ADHD," "attention-deficit disorder," "mad," "Psychiatric," "attention deficit disorder," "post-traumatic stress disorder," and "suicide." This search yielded a total of 1,068 news articles. Employing a process of simple random selection, we refined the dataset by excluding articles not centered around mental illness, ultimately culminating in an analytical sample size of 542 news stories. This sample incorporated articles disseminated across print, online, and electronic platforms.

REPORT FINDINGS

How do Kenyans talk about Mental Health?

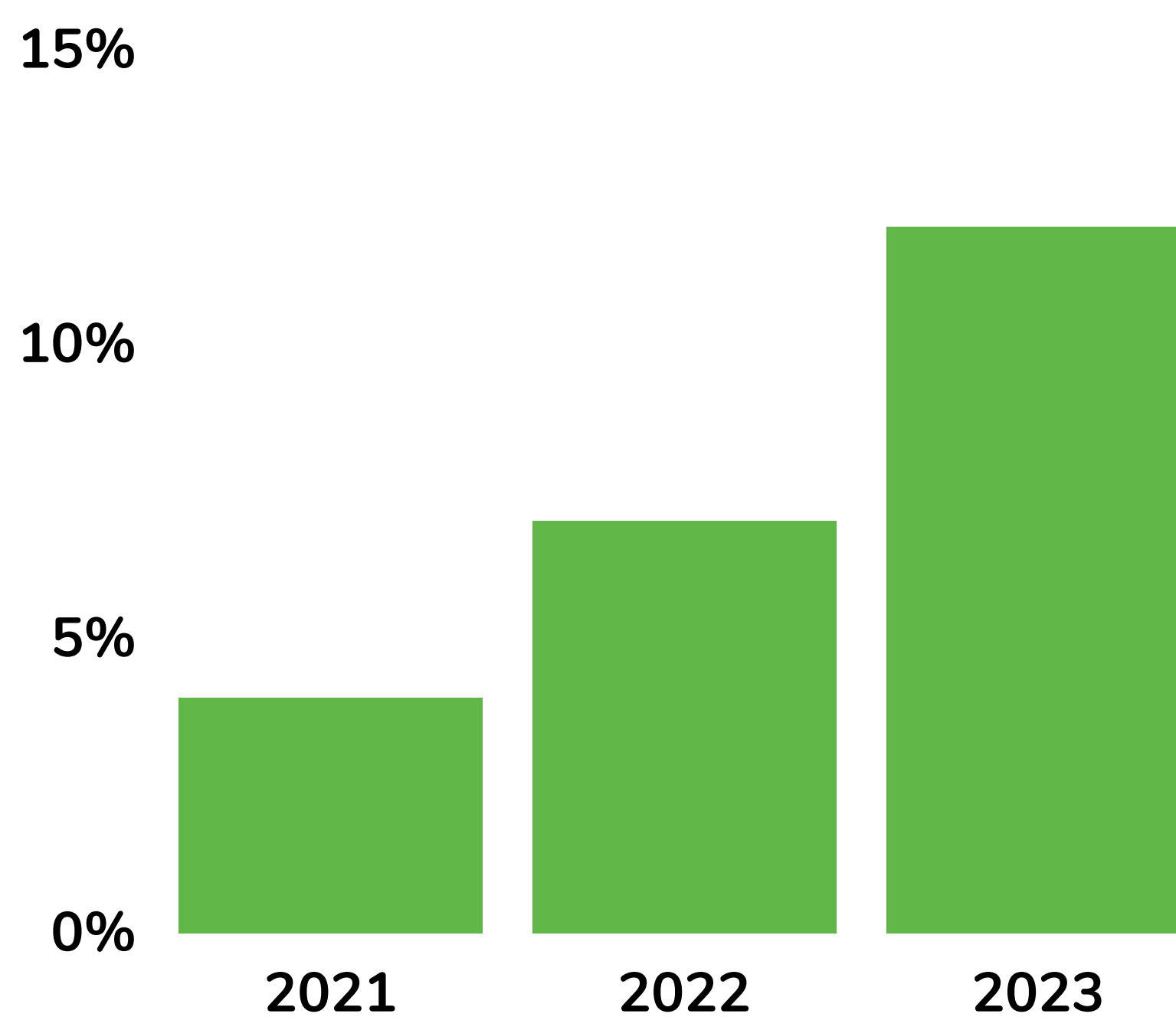
Share of Voice

The volume of news coverage related to mental illness exhibited an upward trend over time, with related topics experiencing a significant increase, to 7% in 2022 and 12% in 2023 from 4% in 2020/21. Among the most prevalent themes observed, politics and elections dominated with 19% of coverage, followed by economic hardships at 14%, and education at 12%.

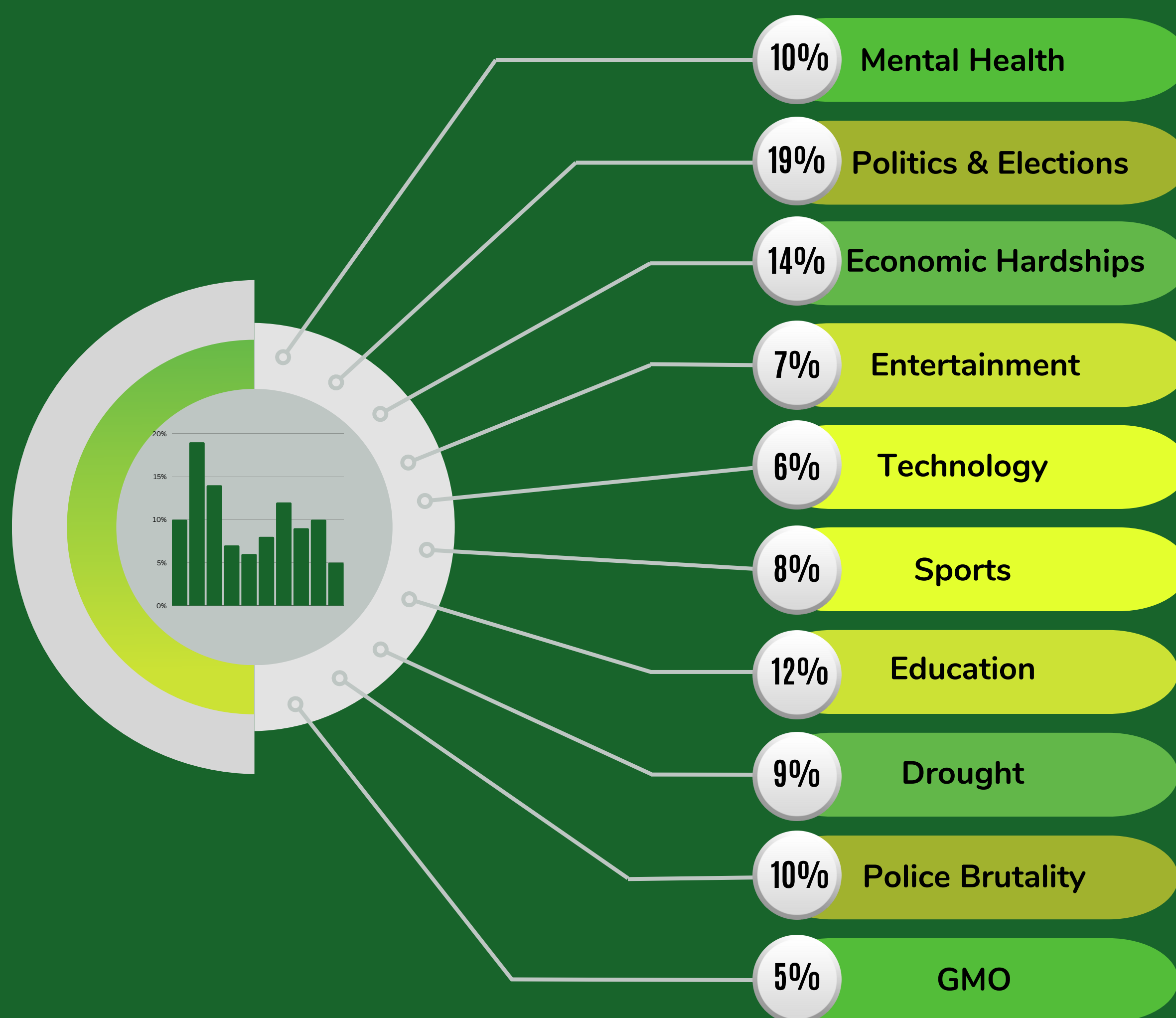
On social media platforms, a marked upswing in hashtags related to mental health was evident, with "depression," "addiction," "suicide", "help," and "recovery" experiencing a surge in usage. Notably, impactful social campaigns such as #mentalhealthmonth took center stage on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, featuring posts that actively promote awareness and share personal stories. This shift towards increased mental health discussions on social media is hardly surprising, as mental health is inherently a personal experience.



Share of Voice



Graph showing the increase in share of voice of Mental Health conversations over the period under review (June 2021-June 2023).



Graph showing a breakdown of other topics that received media's attention between June 2021 and June 2023. Mental Health related stories had a 10% share of voice.

Tonality

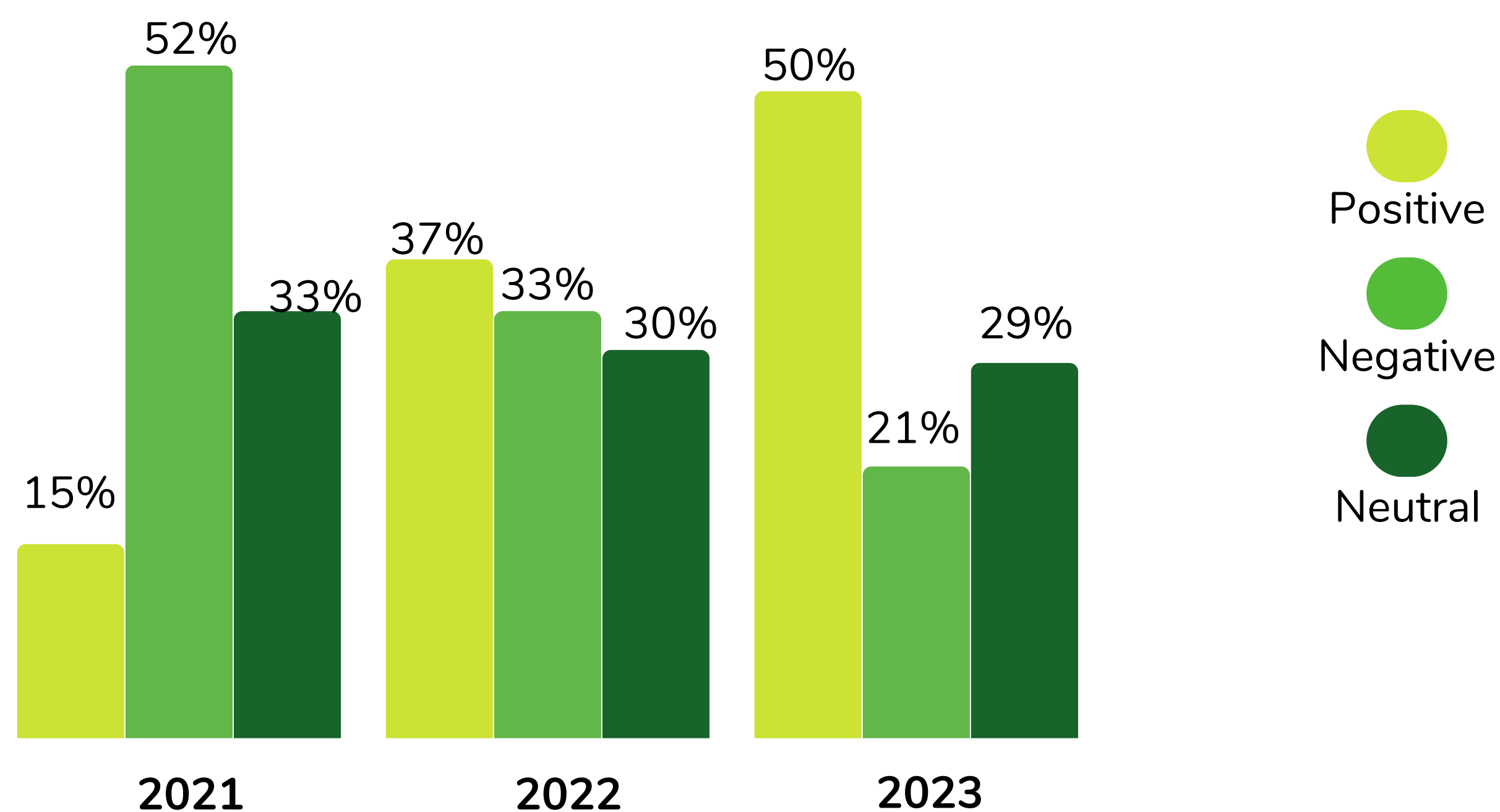
We analyzed a total of 542 stories across print, electronic and online platforms reporting on mental health. A year on year analysis showed that:

- Between June and December 2021, 15 percent of the stories were positive, 52 percent were negative while 33 percent were neutral.
- In 2022, 37 percent of the stories were positive, 33 percent were negative while 30 percent were neutral.
- Between January and June 2023, 50 percent of the stories were positive, 21 percent were negative while 29 percent were neutral.

This shows that within the period under review, negative stories gradually declined while positive stories increased with neutral stories maintaining the same momentum.

Negative stories were of media reporting on the rise of mental health issues in the country particularly extreme cases of suicide and depression. The negative narrative also involved attributing violent actions to a mental condition. Neutral stories related to stories urging for government/stakeholders intervention into mental health with little demonstration of action taken on the government's side. Positive stories related to stakeholders interventions towards addressing the issue and celebrations of milestones achieved towards addressing mental health. The media further captured success stories of individuals who are managing a mental health condition.

The graph below represents the data analyzed above. It shows a shift in tonality of media coverage over the period under review (June 2021-June 2023).



Year-on-Year Analysis

The year-on-year analysis of mental health conversations in Kenya's media and social media platforms reveals a notable evolution in the public's perception and engagement with this crucial topic.



2021

Discussions around mental health gained significant momentum as the experiences brought about by the pandemic spurred greater awareness and sensitivity towards the subject. As a result, conversations on various platforms, both in traditional media and social media, witnessed an increase. There was a collective efforts aimed at fostering a more supportive environment for individuals dealing with mental health challenges.

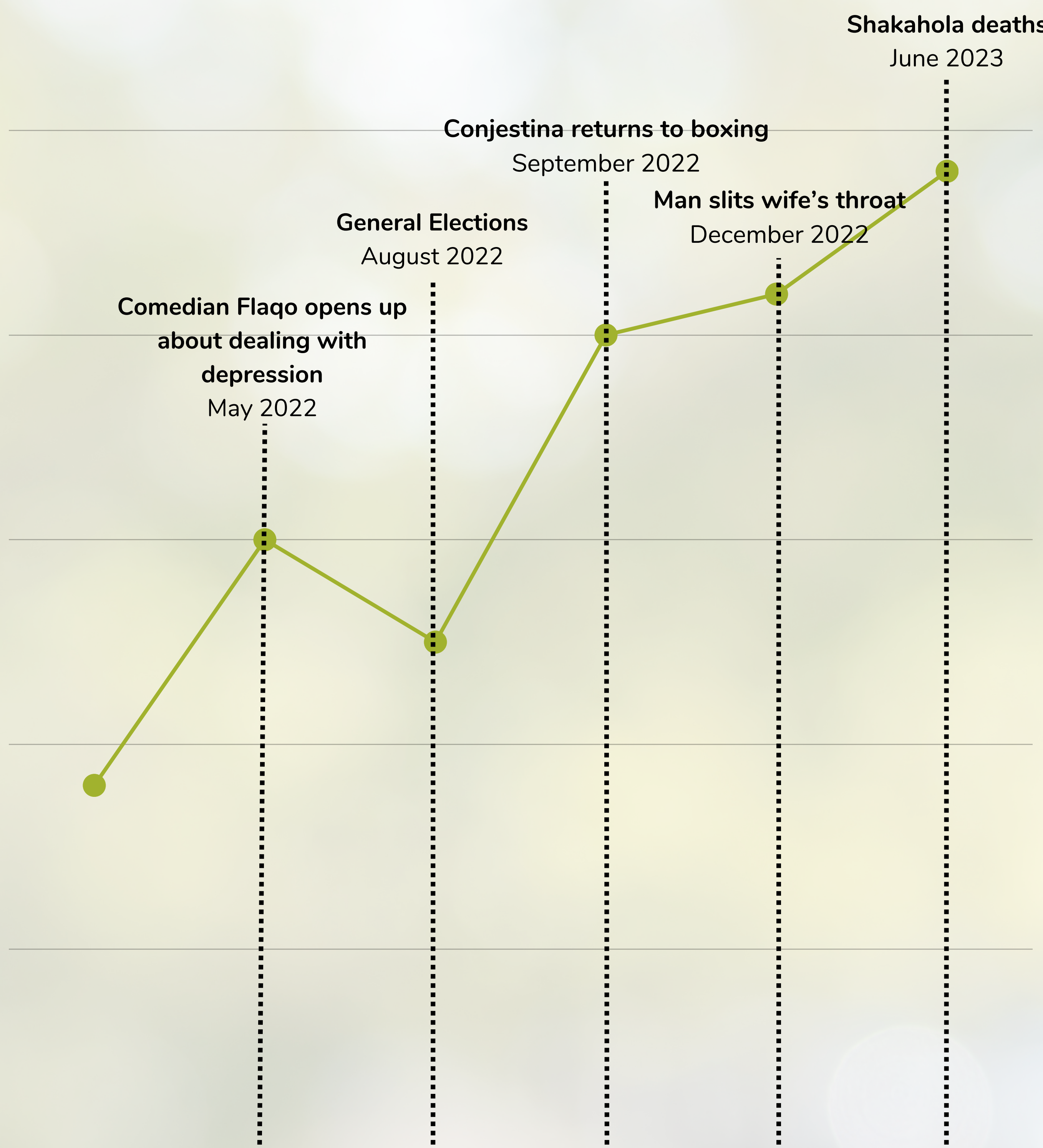
2022

Mental health conversations continued to entrench themselves in public discourse. Ongoing advocacy efforts, educational campaigns, and improved media representation of mental health issues contributed to a broader understanding and acceptance of the importance of mental health. Consequently, the stigma surrounding mental health began to diminish gradually. However, despite these positive advancements, there was a notable lack of significant commitment from the government regarding mental health support and policy changes. This lack of government involvement further reinforced the perception that mental health was not a priority in the public agenda.

2023

The increased awareness surrounding mental health has become more apparent in the form of vocal demands for improved healthcare, resources, support groups, and awareness programs. The call for relevant institutions, including the government, to take substantial action in addressing mental health issues has intensified. Mental health advocates and organizations are spearheading initiatives to challenge the prevailing stigma surrounding mental health and promote open dialogues. This growing demand reflects a shifting public sentiment that recognizes the urgency and importance of mental health as a fundamental aspect of overall well-being.

Incidents that shaped mental health conversations



The graph above illustrates our analysis of specific sample events that triggered heightened discussions around mental health. P&L Consulting observed a notable increase in mental health conversations in certain cases including instances where celebrities openly shared their personal experiences coping with mental health conditions, as well as high-profile incidents such as gruesome crimes that garnered extensive media attention.

Thematic Analysis

Over the course of the 24-month (June 2021-June 2023) analysis of news coverage, notable disparities emerged in the issues discussed in connection with mental health. In 2020/21, discussions often linked violence to mental health. While this portrayal remains evident, a discernible shift in the narrative has transpired, focusing more on fostering a culture of open dialogue and advocating for increased government attention to the matter. This shift is reflected in the growing emphasis on the establishment of additional support centers and treatment interventions aimed at providing assistance to individuals affected by mental health challenges.

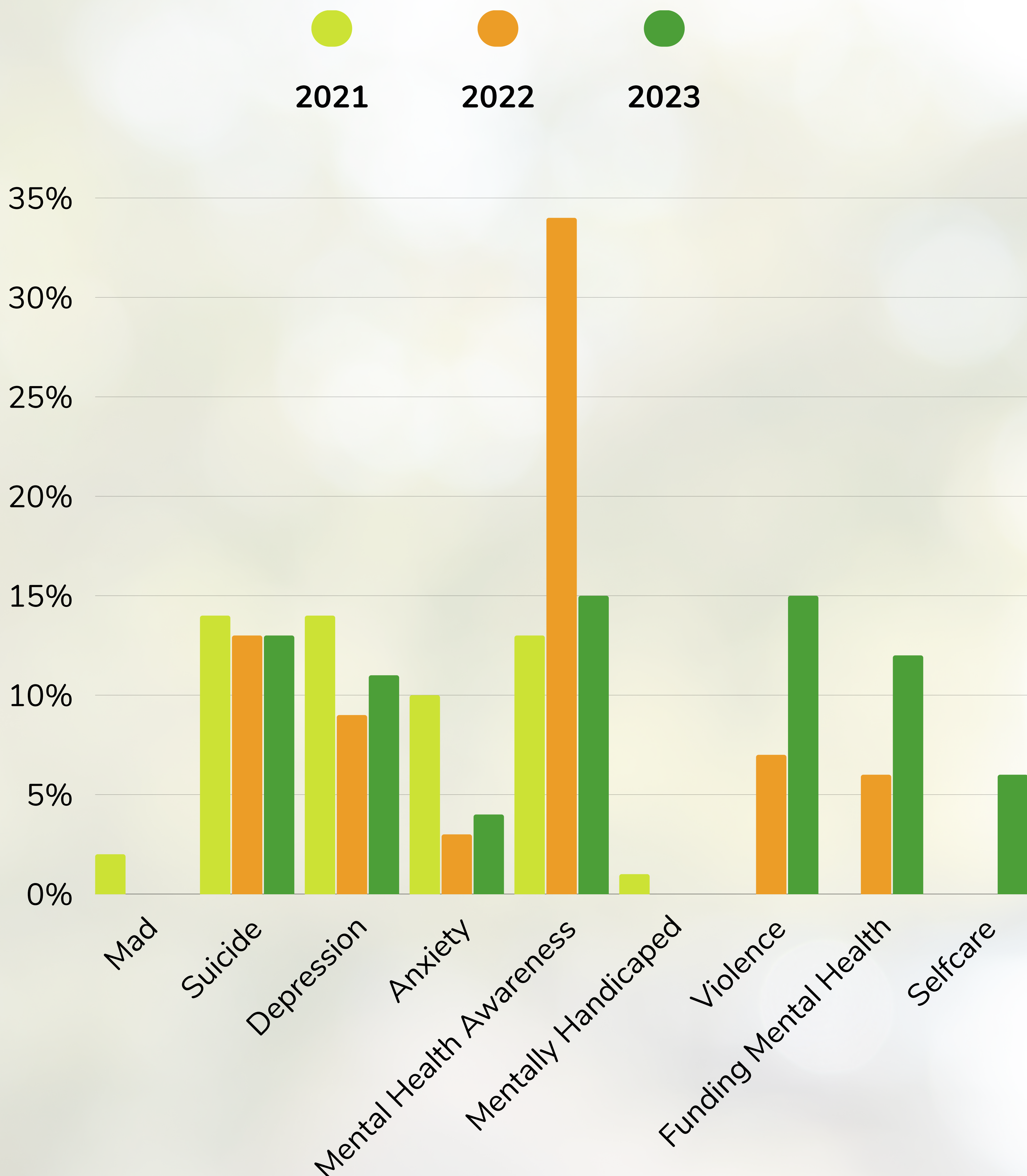


The Standard

May 20, 2023

18 percent of news stories mentioned suicide, while 17 percent mentioned depression as specific mental health conditions affecting majority. Additionally, 15 percent of the news stories discussed crime or violence linked to mental illness, and 11 percent focused on options for providing or successful mental health treatment.

Notably, there were reports highlighting the challenges of limited funding and inadequate encouragement for awareness and self-care initiatives related to mental health, accounting for a considerable portion of the coverage. Furthermore, 7 percent of the stories either highlighted stigma surrounding mental health or utilized stigmatizing language towards individuals with mental health conditions.



Graph showing Mental Health coverage themes. We noted the introduction of new terms such as “Selfcare” which was absent in in 2021, while stigmatizing words such as “Mad” and “Mentally Handicaped” were no longer being used in news stories from 2022 and 2023.

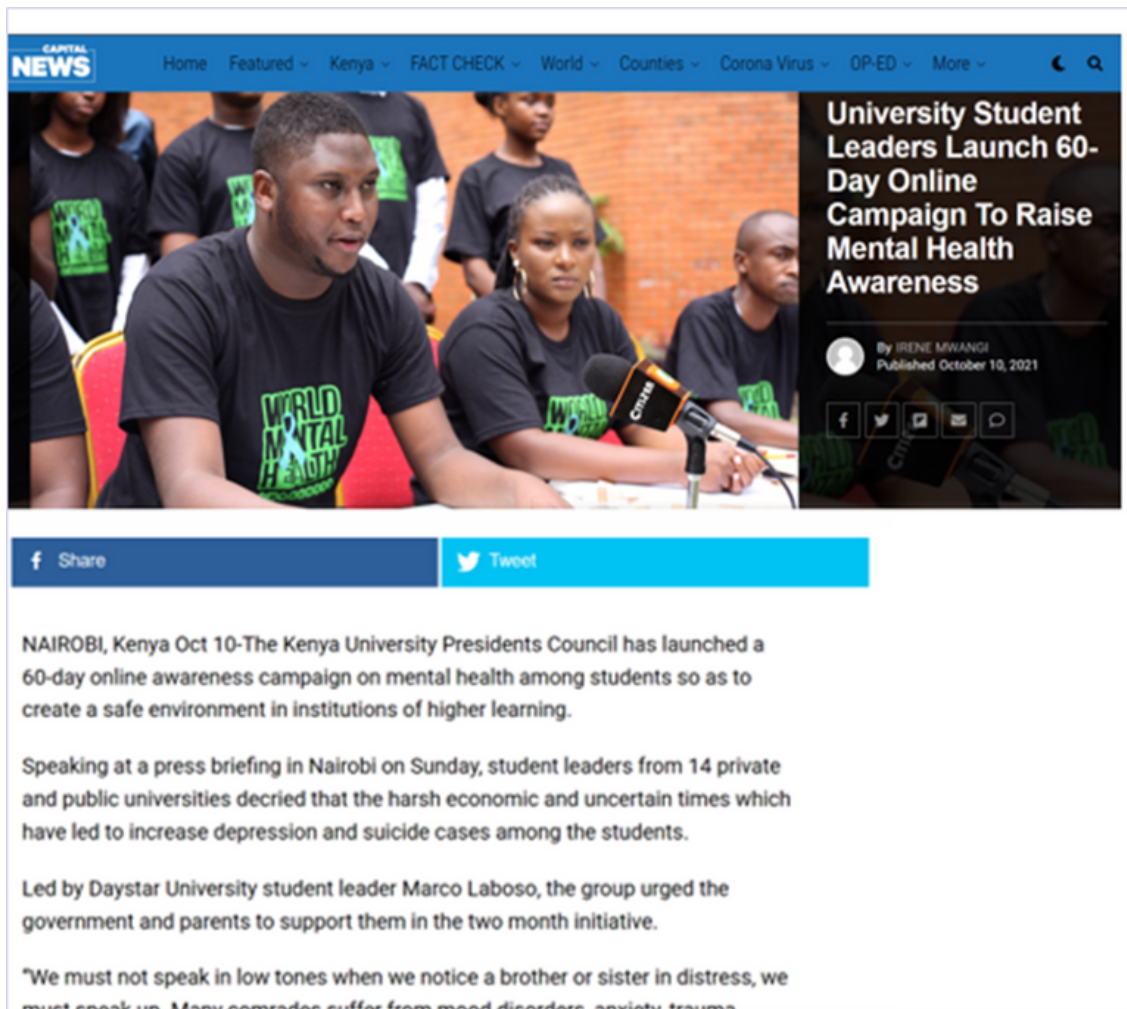
Demographic Analysis

The participation of Kenyans in mental health discussions exhibits variations influenced by factors such as socio-economic and cultural contexts, resource accessibility, and the level of awareness. Although comprehensive data on the demographic breakdown of participants in mental health discussions in Kenya is limited, there is an observable trend of engagement among diverse demographic groups. Over time, participation has evolved alongside the increasing awareness and understanding of mental health in the country.

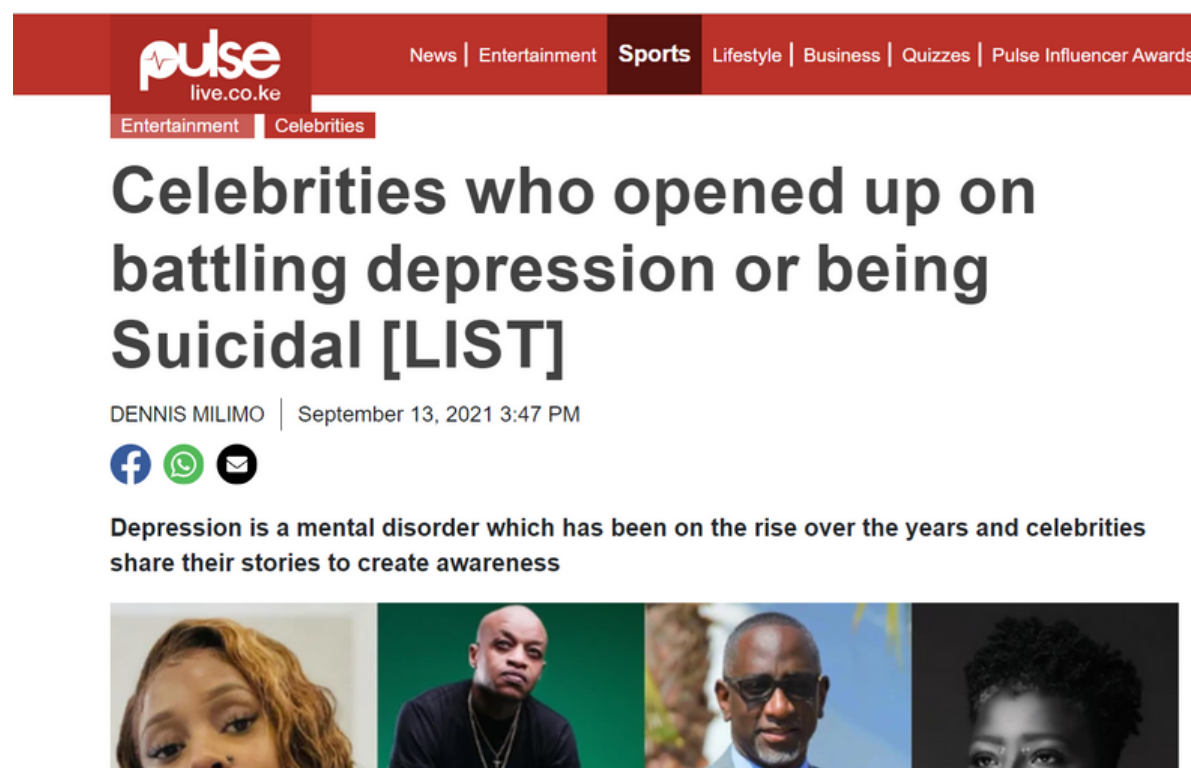
While some demographic groups have actively engaged in mental health conversations, others, including caregivers, and researchers, have been less vocal despite a growing demand for their input.



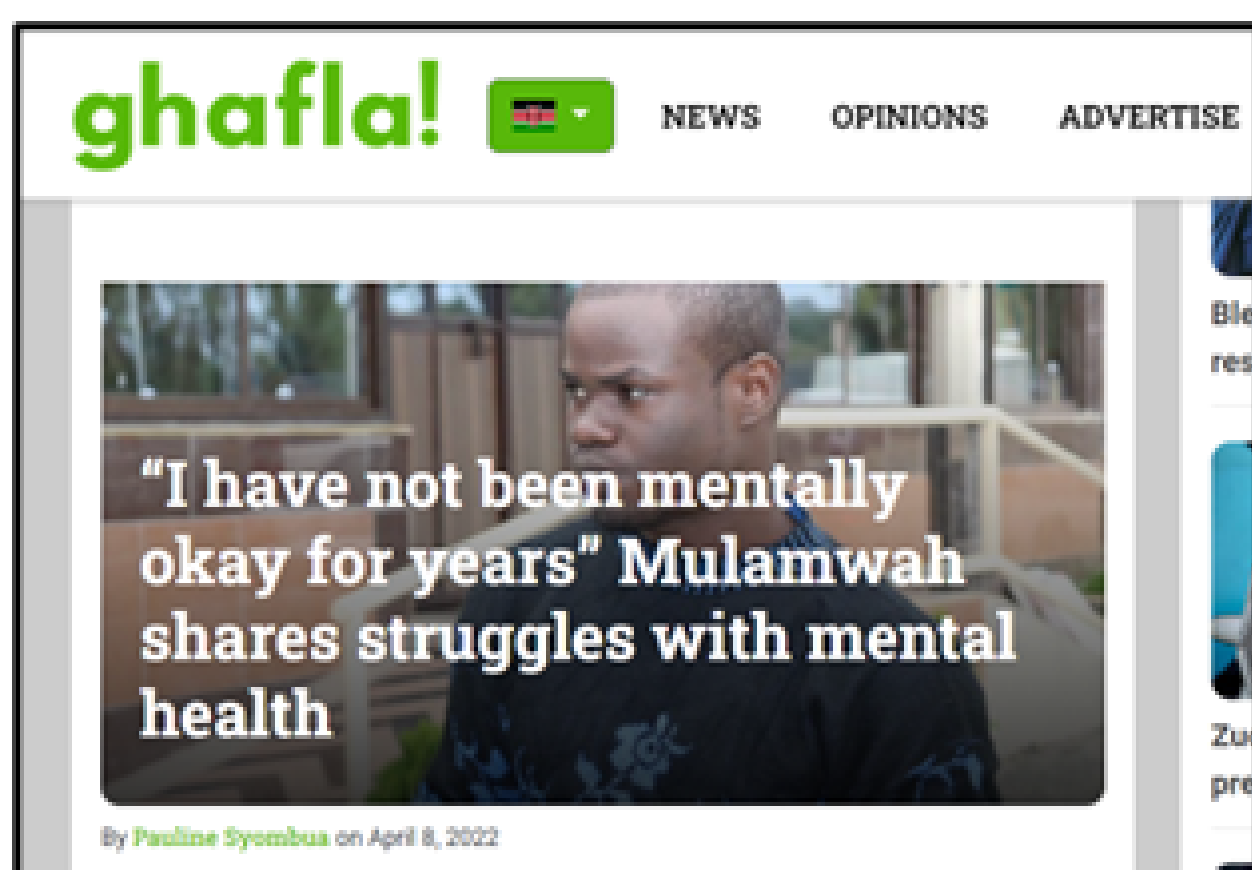
Demographic Analysis



Capital FM
October 2021



Pulse Live
September 13, 2023



Ghafla
April 8, 2022

Youth:

Young adults and adolescents are increasingly active in mental health conversations, utilizing social media platforms, online forums, and youth-led initiatives to share experiences and advocate for improved mental health support.

Influencers and Celebrities:

Influencers, public figures, and celebrities have been using their platforms and public presence, to contribute to the discussion by sharing personal experiences, promoting mental well-being, and encouraging open conversations.

Demographic Analysis



The Star
June 2023



The Standard
June 2023

Professionals, NGOs and Advocates:

Mental health professionals, including psychologists, counselors, and social workers, are playing an active role in mental health discussions across Kenya. They contribute their expertise, providing information, and advocating for improved mental health services. This is evident in how they are frequently quoted in the news media, providing expert insights, guidance, and resources to support individuals and contribute to the overall discourse on mental health. We also noted many advocacy organizations and NGOs organizing awareness campaigns, education initiatives, and community outreach programs, involving individuals with lived mental health experiences.

Women:

Women actively participate in mental health conversations by sharing their personal experiences. Cultural expectations may influence this involvement, as women are often encouraged to express emotions and seek help more openly. For instance, YouTube talk shows like the "Lynn Ngugi Show" or "Shared Moments with Justus" feature more women openly discussing their mental health challenges and seeking support compared to men.

Demographic Analysis



The Star
June 13, 2023

Employees:

We observed that one of the most vocal demographic groups in mental health conversations were employees. This is in contrast to the 2020/21 discussions, where they were relatively absent. Workplaces are becoming more aware of mental health concerns, with institutions recognizing the importance of cultivating a positive work culture. As a younger generation joins the workforce, acceptance of mental health becomes a priority. Additionally, we recorded increased conversations around employees whose jobs expose them to traumatic experiences, such as police and emergency responders.



Daily Nation
June 5, 2023



The Standard
June 2023

**MAINSTREAM MEDIA
COVERAGE ANALYSIS**

How has media
coverage around mental
health awareness
changed?

Mainstream Media Content Analysis

Take Off Guru

With the condition becoming a growing challenge, promoting healthy conversations, providing resources, and developing solutions to address the challenges faced by individuals suffering from these disorders is key, something that Josephine Macharia strives to do

Speaking out on silence in mental health matters

By Melior Muriuki

Josephine Macharia is a woman who has been finding it hard to talk about and discuss her mental health issues with others, including work colleagues and even her family, hence mental health remains a taboo subject.

"I believe that mental well-being is a fundamental aspect of our health and should be treated with the same importance as physical well-being," she says.

Creating awareness

With this initiative, she hopes to create an open dialogue about mental health, and to empower individuals to seek help and support. The goal is to empower individuals to seek help and support, and to break the stigma surrounding mental health.

AT A GLANCE

- 160 million children worldwide are involved in child labour
- 1 in every 10 children are affected by mental health issues
- 72 million children in Africa are involved in child labour




The People Daily
June 12, 2023

KENNEDY WAKOLI
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RESEARCH SPECIALIST, AMREF HEALTH AFRICA

Prioritise mental health issues by breaking the silence and stigma

Of collective understanding and acknowledgement of mental health have evolved significantly over the past years, yet we still have a long way to go. Mental health continues to be a topic often shrouded in silence and stigma, rarely getting the attention it deserves in our conversations.

Looking back at May - the month dedicated to mental health awareness - provides us with a valuable opportunity to re-examine our collective approach towards mental health. Have we effectively shifted our roles as individuals, communities, or policymakers in fostering mental health? Are we doing enough to ensure everyone has access to the care they need? These are pertinent questions we need to address to advance towards a mentally healthier society.

It's time we raise our collective voice for mental health - advocating for a society that is compassionate, supportive, and understanding. We need a holistic approach that includes individuals, communities, and policymakers in driving change.

First, we need to dismantle the stigma surrounding mental health. Stigma stems from a lack of understanding, and makes it hard for those struggling to seek help. It is crucial to understand that mental health conditions are not signs of personal weakness or a lack of willpower; they are medical conditions that require professional help. By fostering open conversations, educating ourselves, and challenging stereotypes, we can create a supportive environment for individuals to seek help without fear of judgment.

Secondly, we must ensure that mental health services are accessible and affordable. The current mental health services are often out of reach for many due to financial constraints or geographic limitations. There is an urgent need to bridge this treatment gap by increasing funding for mental health programmes, improving insurance coverage for mental health services, and integrating mental health services into primary healthcare systems. This includes advocating for subsidised options and expanding mental health services to rural and underserved areas.

Prevention and early intervention are vital in dealing with mental health issues. Mental health education should be part of the curriculum in schools and colleges and included in workplace training programmes. Teachers, counsellors, and employers should be trained to recognise and address mental health issues in their early stages. To effectively address mental health concerns before they escalate, it is important to establish supportive environments that prioritise emotional well-being.

Certain groups in our society, such as children, adolescents, women, and marginalised communities, face unique mental health challenges due to their circumstances. We need targeted support systems, culturally sensitive care, and specially designed programmes to address their specific needs. Inclusive mental health policies can ensure that no one is left behind in receiving the care they need.

Our lawmakers have a crucial role to play in this endeavour. Policymakers should prioritise mental health in legislation and policy-making. This includes mental health parity laws that require insurance coverage for mental health services to be on par with physical health coverage. Additionally, they need to promote policies that address social determinants of mental health, such as poverty, discrimination, and access to affordable housing and education.

There is also a need for continuous research, innovation, and investment in mental health. Future Kenya Demographic and Health Survey should include mental health indicators. Through dedicated research, we can gain a better understanding of mental health conditions, develop more effective treatments, and improve the overall quality of care.

In this digital age, technology can play a transformative role in mental health care. Mental health apps and online support communities can provide additional resources and enhance access to care. They can also help break down barriers of stigma, fear, and isolation, making it easier for individuals to reach out for help.

However, even with the best policies, strategies, and resources, it all comes down to us as individuals. How we treat someone struggling with their mental health can make a significant difference in their journey. Empathy, understanding, and support can mean the world to someone who is feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

In conclusion, mental health awareness shouldn't be limited to a month. It's a lifelong commitment, and it's essential to reach such by targeting the stigma, improving access to care, providing prevention strategies, supporting vulnerable groups, incorporating mental health into policies, and fostering research and innovation, we can build a society where mental health is understood, valued, and prioritised. Let's join hands and make mental health everybody's business.

It's time we raise our collective voice for mental health - advocating for a society that is compassionate, supportive, and understanding.

Why the mantra 'customer is always right' is wrong
PETROVILLA DENVER

Corporate social responsibility

It's part, an advert read "...as committed with a positive track record during their previous years and after release are encouraged to apply." The advert attracted backlash from the public because the organisation in question was contradicting public opinion of previously incarcerated individuals.

Organisations operate with their customers in mind. Not only are organisations extremely sensitive to perceptions from their customers, they are trying to make the most of the customer to conform to it in every step they take. "Customer is always right" is an adage that managers continuously sing to their staff. In fact, many managers have a conviction that the success of their organisation is pegged on catering for their customers' demands or wishes.

If customers - individuals or corporations - are in the free planning mood to consider global warming, organisations follow them religiously through corporate social responsibility in tree-planting exercises. Educating the poor, sponsoring sports, cleaning towns and donating food stuff to orphanage homes, are some of the corporate social responsibilities that organisations do.

The idea behind corporate social responsibility is that organisations are human beings and therefore have the moral obligation to a social cause by donating the profit-making goods alongside the interests of the public. There is no doubt that involvement in corporate social responsibility empowers communities and adds the lives of many people besides the branding of the organisation.

However, this motto should go further. Organisations should realise that occasionally, the "customer is wrong." Stuck with this reality, organisations should put on the armour of conscience and simply refuse and correct their customers. The need is not only to follow the public opinion by engaging in corporate social responsibility, but also to challenge their customer opinion through human resource social advocacy to a win-win for the organisation and the public in the long run.

Human resource social advocacy is an interventionist approach where the HR proactively engages in efforts aimed at further changing people's perceptions on social issues. HR focuses in changing opinions in done through corporate and communication of ideas as required by HR masters and public interest. A corporate communication artefact, HRSA is developed by the HR department with the aim of attaining social change through proactively shaping public perceptions toward major issues in society.

Organisations should tread carefully here though. This is because unlike corporate social responsibility, HRSA social advocacy is an attempt to shape the public opinion on an issue that is unpopular. This is exemplified by the imaginary slogan advert above. The reason organisations never consider such an advert is because of the negative perceptions towards previously incarcerated individuals in society.

This does not mean that organisations should not to engage in such corporate social responsibility when the end goal benefits all. What they need are effective strategies to counter initial resistance and negative publicity.

Jay Sewanee is a HR Professional, petrovilla-denver@gmail.com

The Standard
June 8, 2023

Open conversations

Over the past 24 months, media coverage surrounding mental health awareness has witnessed significant positive changes. Our analysis reveals a shift towards more open, relatable, and friendly conversations regarding mental illness. Notably, personal stories shared in news articles have played a pivotal role, with an increased usage of personal pronouns and terms like "speak out."

Positivity

Another encouraging trend is the portrayal of mental health discussions in a more positive light. Between 2021 and 2023, news stories increasingly depict individuals dealing with mental health challenges as resilient and strong, emphasizing the importance of mental well-being. This shift signifies a departure from perceiving mental health solely as an illness and underscores its significance in enhancing overall quality of life.

Mainstream Media Content Analysis



Sunday Standard
June 18, 2023



Daily Nation
June 20, 2023

Wellbeing

The concepts of well-being and self-care have also gained prominence in current mental health coverage. These terms, which form a relatively new vocabulary, highlight the close relationship between wellness and mental health. With the growing popularity of self-care and well-being movements, they are increasingly being used to describe various aspects of mental health.

Research

Furthermore, our analysis indicates a growing emphasis on the need for further research and reports on mental health topics. Terms such as "lack of research," "report," and "study" are more frequently mentioned in media coverage. This suggests a rising demand for new and comprehensive research to be conducted in the field of mental health, underlining the importance of evidence-based reporting.

Mainstream Sentiment Analysis

We engaged 20 journalists with a questionnaire to gain their perspective in reporting Mental Health related issues. These included 7 Health reporters, 4 Business reporters, 5 Crime reporters and 4 Lifestyle reporters. Here is our analysis of their responses:

Source of information used in maintaining reporting accuracy include:

- Story source,
- Doctors,
- Counsellors,
- Patients,
- Relatives,
- Community,
- Crime reporting guidelines

This shows that most of them do not refer to the guidelines for reporting on Mental Health

Challenges experienced in reporting mental health:

- Finding appropriate imagery,
- Limited information on how to cope with mental health challenges,
- Patients' unwillingness to go on record





25%

Of interviewed journalists admit to causing unintended harm through their choice of words.

30%

Of interviewed journalists admit that Mental Health related stories are often overshadowed by other topical issues.

25%

Of interviewed journalists refer to Mental Health reporting guidelines and medical terms when developing a story.

45%

Of interviewed journalists believe that it is not their role of to reduce stigma around Mental Health.



15%

Of interviewed journalists claim that their stories on mental health were met with mockery and a lack of seriousness.

50%

Of interviewed journalists claim that they maintain ethics through using anonymity of those who are affected, friendly language and avoiding victim shaming.

Interesting comments made during the media interviews

“It is not our role to reduce stigma. Our job is to stick to the facts, report accurately and allow the government and advocates to do their jobs.”

**Lifestyle Reporter,
The Star Newspaper**

“I’m motivated to cover mental health topics because I’m a survivor of a mental health condition”

**Health Reporter,
Mediamax Digital**

“What made me start taking mental health seriously is the Task Force’s report on the state of mental health in the country”

**Crime Reporter,
The Standard**

**SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT ANALYSIS**

How social media is
changing the way
Kenyans think about
mental illness

Social Media Content Analysis

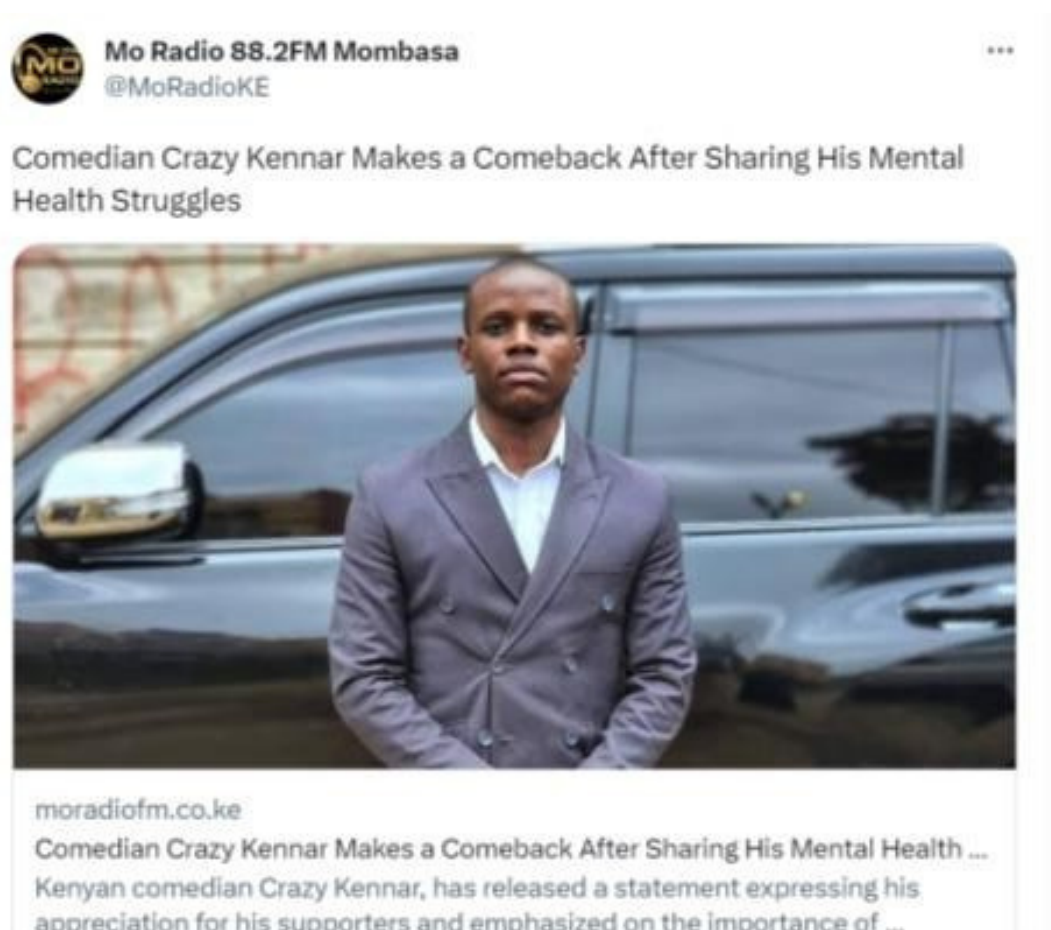
Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have significantly influenced the public's perception of mental illness. Through these online spaces, individuals find opportunities to share personal experiences, seek community support, and creatively address trauma. Our analysis indicates that mental health conversations on social media are becoming less stigmatized, as people feel more comfortable discussing these issues openly.



Post



Post



Post

Personal stories and de-stigmatization:

A major shift observed on these platforms is the prevalence of personal stories related to mental health. Such content humanizes mental health conditions and offers a fresh perspective on the reality of living with mental illness. For instance, in this [video](#), a lady describes various places where a person can access mental healthcare providers in the country. In this [video](#), another lady shares moments of her having what she describes as “mental breakdowns” in 2022. This increased use of honest and emotive language in public discussions suggests a gradual reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health.

The Role of Humor:

Social media platforms have also encouraged a unique approach to coping with and explaining mental illness, often incorporating humor. While this approach can be beneficial in making mental health more relatable, it is essential to recognize its limitations. Mental health conditions are complex and require proper diagnosis and treatment.

Social Media Content Analysis



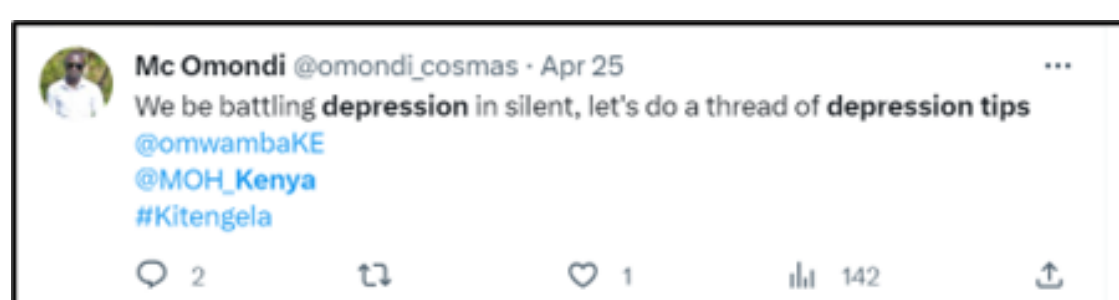
Post



Post



Post



Post

Mental Health Influencers and Celebrities:

A notable movement has emerged within the creator community, addressing burnout and mental stress experienced by influencers and celebrities. Prominent figures from pop culture, politics, and media have openly shared their personal experiences with mental health, serving as inspiration for others to share their stories.

The Problem of Self-Diagnosis:

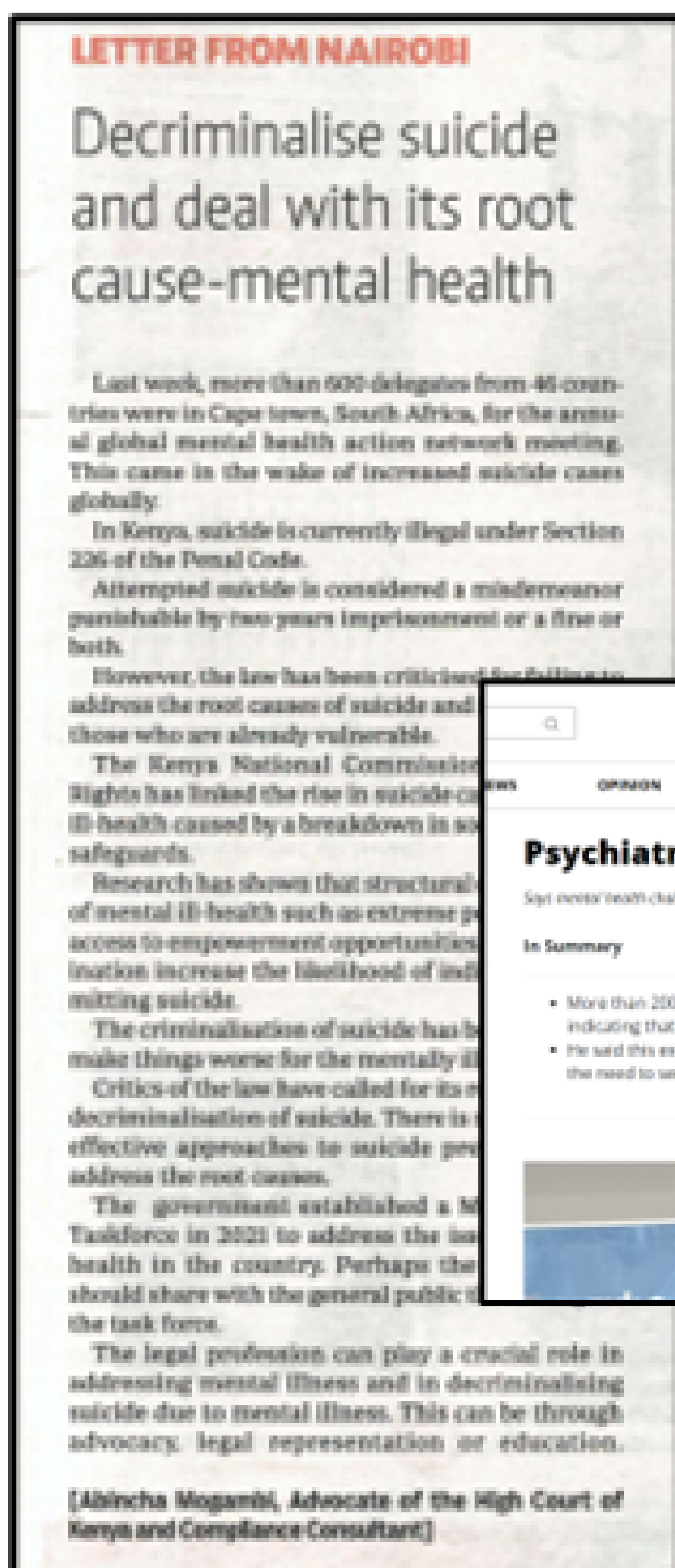
Despite the positive impact of social media on mental health awareness, there are challenges related to self-diagnosis. Some individuals, particularly young people, may self-diagnose based on posts they see on social media. Mental health-related content may inadvertently lead viewers to pathologize their experiences or invent symptoms that may not align with an actual mental health disorder. It is crucial to exercise caution and seek professional diagnosis and treatment, when necessary, as self-diagnosis can lead to misdiagnosis and inadequate or inappropriate treatment.

STIGMATIZATION IN
MASS MEDIA

To what degree has
stigma in news media
coverage of mental
health changed?

Stigmatization in Mass Media

Although the level of stigma in news media coverage of mental illness has diminished, we observed that the manner in which it presents itself has not changed much during the study period (June 2021-June 2023). The media continues to emphasize there being a direct link between violence and mental illnesses. It is still common for news stories to describe a gruesome crime by an individual with a history of mental illness significantly exacerbating already existing levels of social stigma toward people with mental illnesses.



The Standard
July 2023

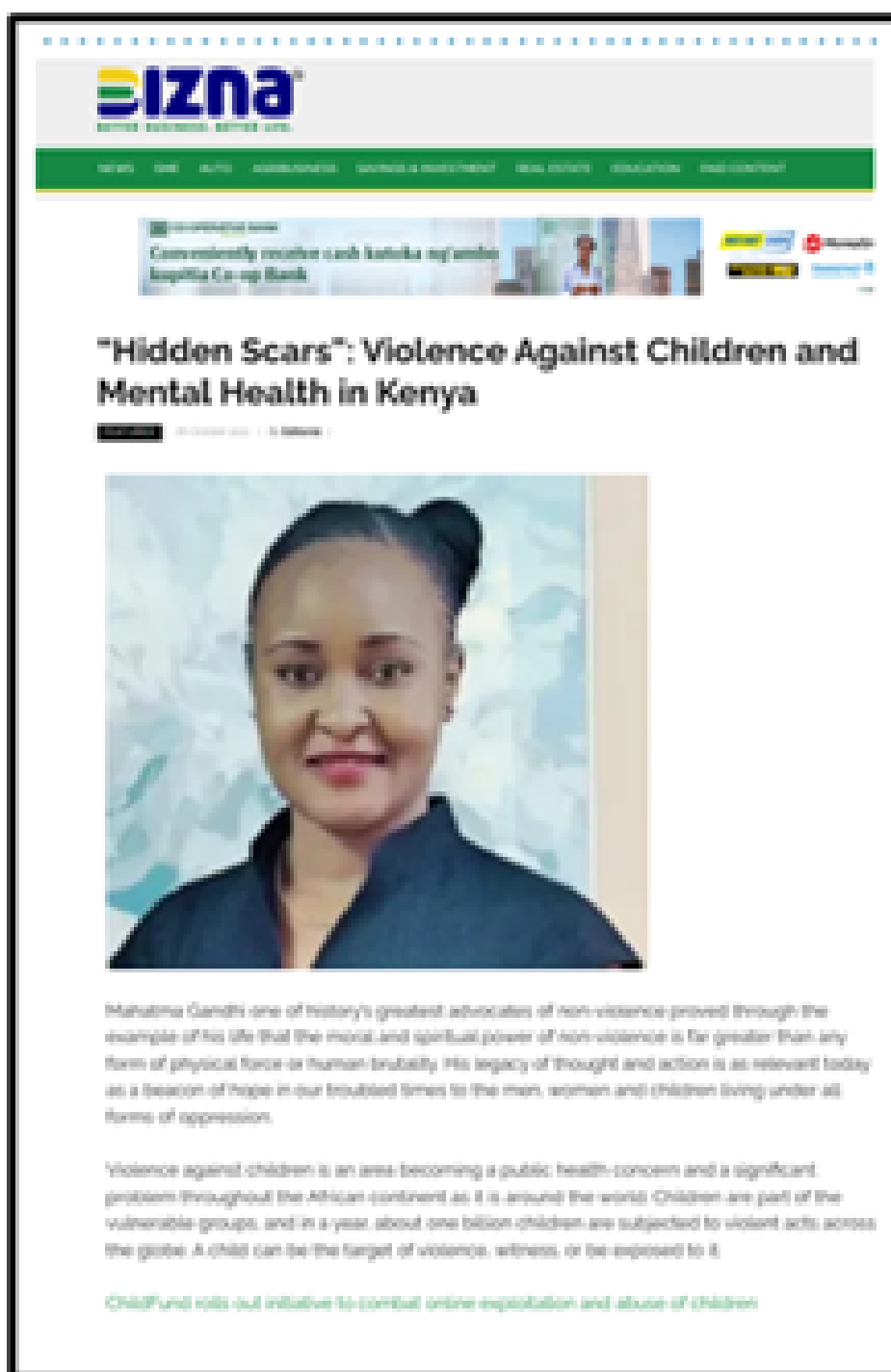


The Star
May 2023

Examples of how stigma is spread by Mass Media



The African Report



Bizna Kenya
 October 2022



Citizen TV
 July 2022

Criminalization of Mental Illness:

A news report discusses an incident of public disturbance, mentioning that the person involved was mentally ill. The report may not provide proper context about the individual's mental health condition, leading to the assumption that mental illness is the cause of the behavior. "Mentally Ill Man Goes on Violent Rampage in Nairobi". In this example, the media sensationalizes a violent incident involving an individual with a mental health condition. The headline emphasizes the person's mental health status, perpetuating the association of mental illness with criminal behavior. Such portrayals stigmatize mental health and contribute to misconceptions about individuals with mental illnesses.

Examples of how stigma is spread by Mass Media



The Standard
July 2023

8 NEWS BEAT

Depressed Nairobi doctor takes own life at parking

Suicide exposes personal problems and pressures facing professional in the medical field in the country

by Zaddock Angira
@ZaddockAngira

A depressed post-graduate medical student at the University of Nairobi committed suicide inside her car by injecting herself with anaesthesia-inducing drugs on Saturday afternoon at the Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) parking lot.

The death of Dr Lydia Wahura Kanyoro brings to the fore the rising cases of depression and personal health problems among medical students and doctors.

Kanyoro, 35, was a postgraduate student in Paediatrics at the UoN's School of Medicine in KNH is said to have written a suicide note and called some of her relatives to tell them where she was and what she had planned to do, before committing suicide. Police, however, declined to disclose the contents of the note.

The head of security at the School of Medicine, George Omyanga, said he spotted the body at the back seat of her car, a Mazda Verisa, within the hospital's parking lot on Saturday 1pm.

The body was immediately identified and matter reported at Capri Hill Police Station.

Recovered syringes

Officers visited the scene and recovered three syringes, a vial (small glass) of Ketamine, a drug used in inducing anaesthesia, and midazolam drugs, also used for inducing anaesthesia and sleepiness and to decrease anxiety.

"She was lying in the back seat and had injected a syringe on her left arm. Also found inside the car were vials of ketamine and midazolam drugs," police said.

Kilimani police Commander Andrew Muturi yesterday said the drugs had been taken to the Government Chemist for analysis.

"We are also in possession of a printed suicide note believed to have been authored by the deceased which will also be subjected to analysis to establish if it was indeed, among other things, written by the deceased," the OCPD said.

The deceased left behind a suicide note, printed from an email dated June 12 at 9am that detailed why she decided to commit suicide. Reports indicate so many medical staff are suffering depression and other mental-related illnesses, a fact that experts have attributed to the tough working conditions among other things.



Dr Lydia Wahura Kanyoro, a young doctor who is said to have committed suicide at the weekend. Her colleagues attribute it to tough working conditions. COURTESY

"Such cases have increased but remain largely under-reported, especially among the Masters students," a source at KNH told *People Daily*.

"The work load and academic demands for some of the doctors pursuing further studies are sometimes unbearable. Medicine is very tough and challenging and the sad thing is that doctors know what to take to easily end their lives," the source added.

A friend to the deceased, Carol Nthwa, yesterday said many trainee doctors were suffering from serious mental health issues which if not addressed, are a ticking time bomb.

"RIP Wahura Kanyoro, one day I will get the courage to tell my story, how I suffered at the hands of some women I worked with. It was the hardest time of my life, resigning in the middle of a pandemic," she wrote.

Colleagues said they undergo a lot of stress while in training.

"I don't think it is worth it. The stress

SUICIDE IN PARKING LOT

Dr Lydia Wahura Kanyoro 35, was a postgraduate student in Paediatrics at the UoN's School of Medicine in KNH

Officers visited the scene and recovered three syringes, a vial (small glass) of Ketamine, a drug used in inducing anaesthesia, and midazolam drugs

ing through something, a busy phase that with the right interventions will clear out.

In fact, we have some data, according to the World Health Organisation, Africa currently has the highest suicide rate in the world and employment health challenges. The scourge of mental health is a global one and we must actively recognise our time in the world. Get help and keep asking for it until you do. Of course, not from Google. Let's not self-medicate. Remember, a disease that has never been seen before cannot be cured with everyday pills.

Public awareness is the key to recovery.

Send your questions on career choice to career@peopledaily.co.ke

Lack of solutions:

Some articles for instance, talk about the rising rates of depression in Kenya but fail to mention available mental health services or resources for those seeking help. The report may focus solely on the problem without providing information on potential solutions or support.

Lack of diverse perspectives:

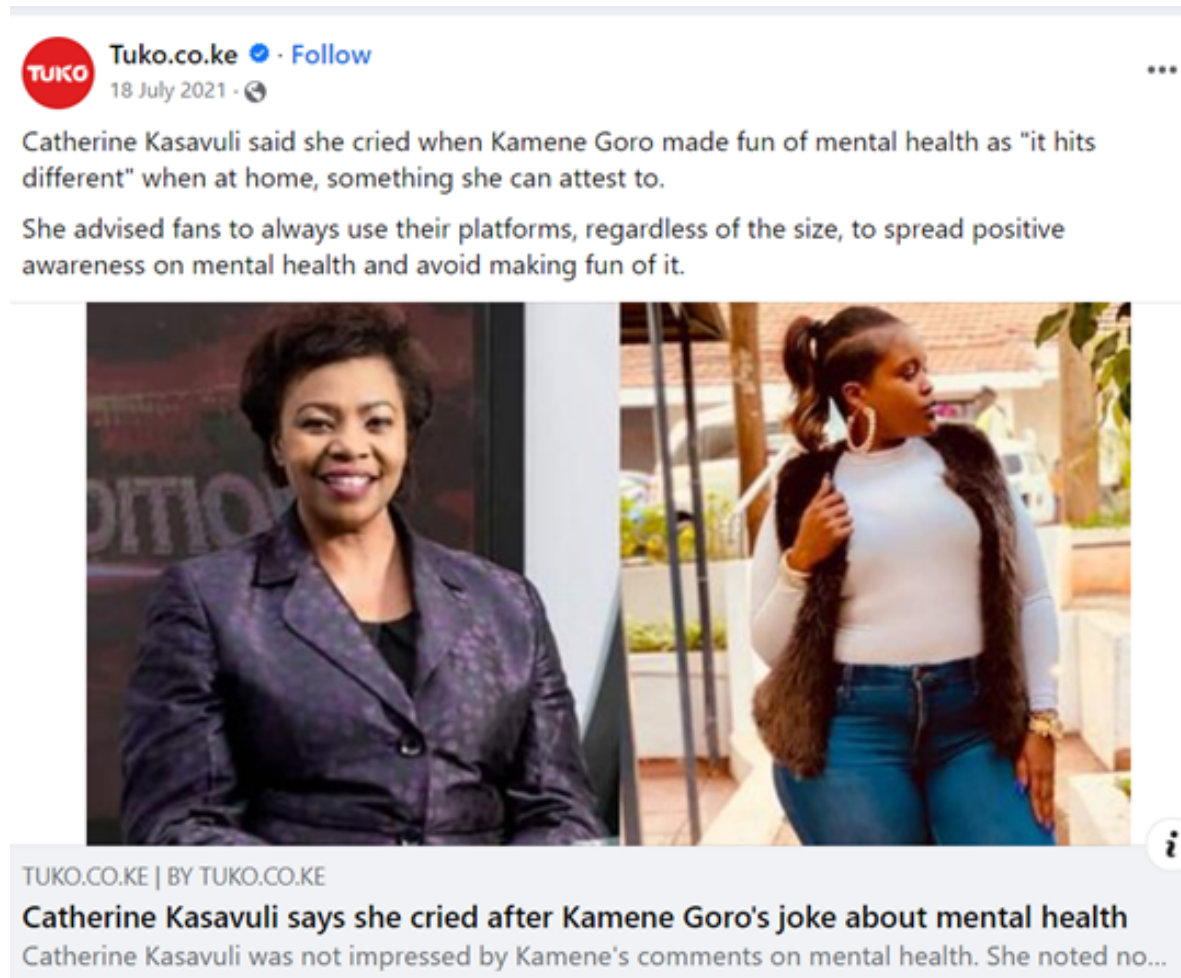
TV news segment discussing mental health in Kenya usually only features interviews with mental health professionals from urban areas. The report fails to include perspectives from individuals in rural communities or minority groups, leading to a lack of representation and understanding of diverse experiences.

Overgeneralizing Mental illness

We observed overgeneralization of mental health conditions in media portrayals where every person with a specific condition is expected to display the same characteristics or symptoms. For example, the media tends to depict that all people with depression are suicidal. The fact is, not all people with depression have had suicidal thoughts.

The People Daily
June 25, 2021

Examples of how stigma is spread by Mass Media



Post



Post

Oversimplifying mental illness

Some depictions tend to oversimplify mental health conditions which is a serious aspect of a person's wellbeing. This is evident in how some individuals make fun of others who share their experiences.

Self-diagnosis:

People might also be more likely to self-diagnose themselves based on advice published on media. In most cases, the information or diagnosis is shared by people who are not mental health professionals.

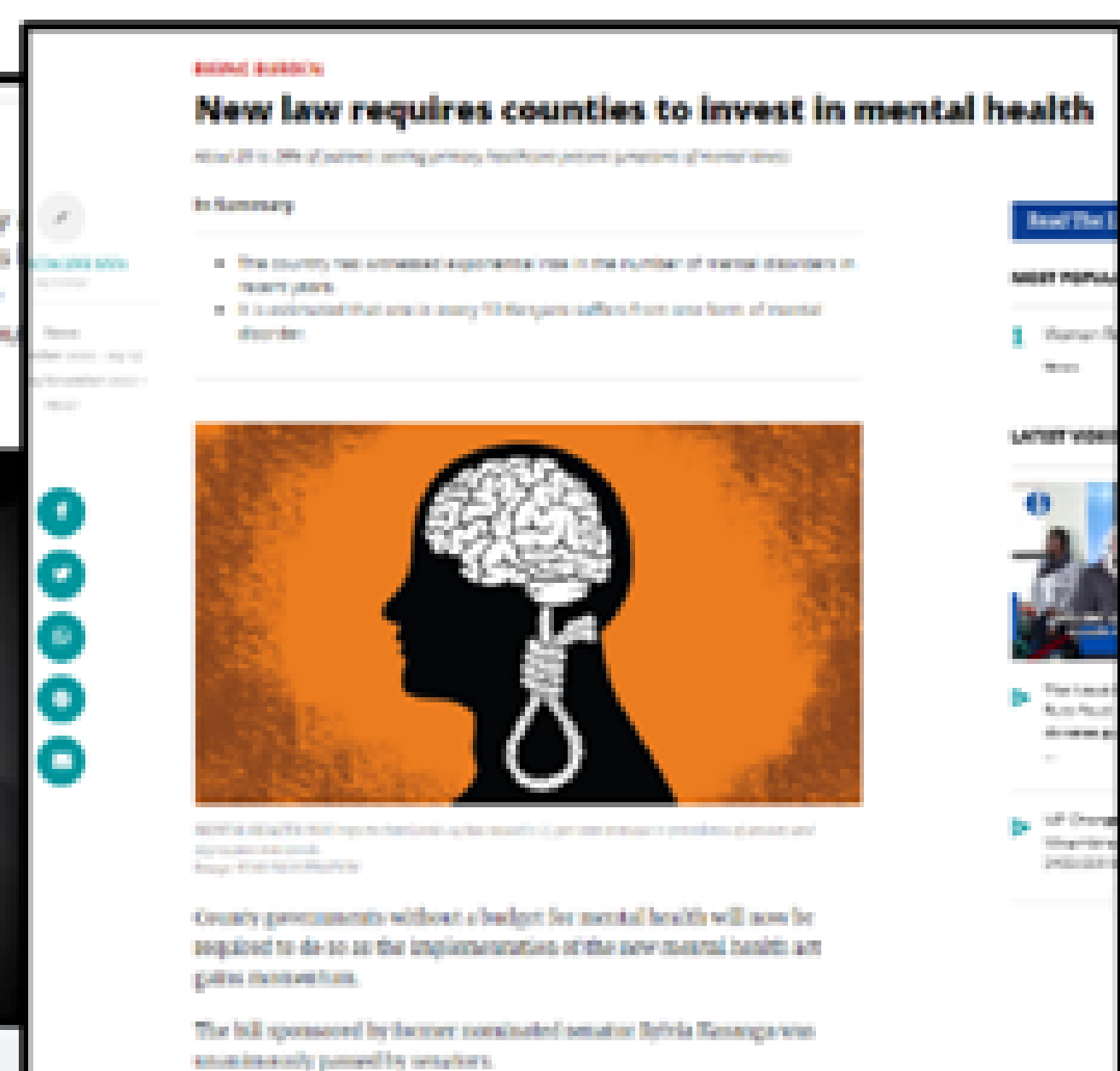
Misinformation:

As a result of media portrayals of mental illness, people often get inaccurate information about the symptoms of mental health conditions. A good example is the wide spread notion that OCD is a condition about excessive cleanliness. Symptoms like obsessive thoughts that drive their compulsions are often overlooked or absent.

Visual Representation of Mental Health

With the growing emphasis on mental health awareness in the media, it becomes imperative to assess the authenticity of mental health imagery used in various portrayals. Representing mental health visually poses challenges due to the complex nature of mental health conditions, which lack a singular face or expression that can encompass every individual's experience.

During our observation, certain visual stereotypes persisted in Kenyan media. For instance, suicide was often portrayed with a hanging rope, and "depression" was depicted with an over-exaggerated frown. Similarly, images representing "recovery" often resorted to clichéd depictions like yoga on the beach.



EVALUATION OF
BNBR'S IMPACT

Has BNBR made a
positive impact on
the discourse of
mental health in the
country?

Evaluation of BNBR's Impact

The media engagement initiatives undertaken by BNBR have shown significant growth and effectiveness. The campaign's performance has evolved positively over the years.

Between April 2020 and April 2021, the campaign had a modest start with only 4 mainstream media mentions. However, this changed drastically in the subsequent periods. From April 2021 to December 2021, the campaign generated 51 media mentions, indicating a substantial increase in media coverage. In 2022, the campaign generated 21 media mentions, followed by a further increase in 2023 with 32 media mentions. This consistent upward trend demonstrates the campaign's increasing impact and visibility. Out of the 542 news stories reviewed in this study, 104 focused on BNBR's initiatives.

On social media, we analyzed a total of 35 BNBR's social media posts on twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We noted that BNBR has successfully cultivated a significant following on Facebook, with 10,000 followers. The estimated average engagement rate of 9000 per post showcases the strong interaction and resonance the content has with the audience. Instagram and Twitter follow with a secondary role in engagement, having a following of slightly above 2000 each.

The various campaigns run by BNBR, such as #ItakuwaSawa, #Speakup254, and Mbusi and lion's awareness campaigns, have contributed significantly to brand reach. These campaigns collectively expanded the brand's reach to over 1,067,750 accounts and achieved 34,029 impressions. This is a remarkable improvement compared to the 754 impressions recorded in the earlier period of 2020/21. This substantial increase in reach and impressions highlights the campaigns' effectiveness in enhancing brand awareness and engagement.

Partnering with celebrities, influencers, Mental Health Champions and the Media Council of Kenya has proven to be a successful strategy for BNBR. The visually appealing and colorful posts, along with their focus on mental health awareness and encouragement for people to share their challenges, have resonated well with the audience. The inclusion of clear directives on where to find help adds practical value to the campaign.

Evaluation of BNBR's Impact

BNBR's social media posts mostly cover initiatives being undertaken by the organization in addressing mental health issues across the country.

The rest of the social conversations on mental health are related to negative effects of unaddressed issues of mental health such as suicide. The posts tell of the negative effects and have links referring to the main stories published on the platforms. Other posts highlight call out by organizations and concerned citizens to address the mental health issue, such posts are common in the months of May and October when mental health awareness month and week are marked, respectively.

The posts receive mixed reactions from viewers with most of the comments urging responsible organizations to react and address the mental health issues. The comments also urge people to open up and seek help when they experience the different signs of mental health issues.

BNBR in Numbers



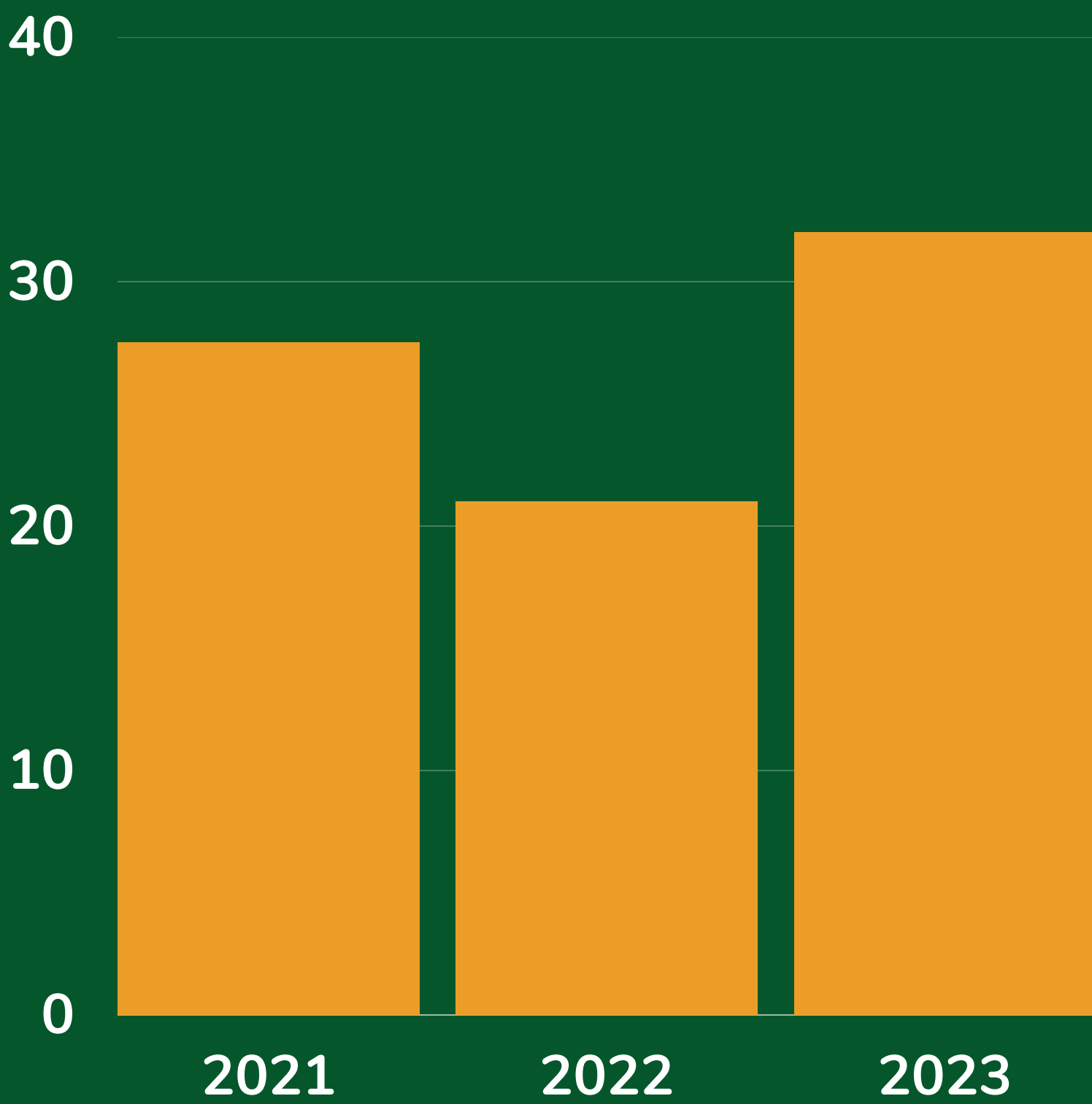
Positive Media Mentions within the period under review.

1,067,750

Estimated reach between March 2023 and July 2023

34,029

Total impressions in 2023 only



Increase in number of News Media Mentions from an average of 27 in the first half year 2021 to 32 in the first half year of 2023.



10,000
Facebook Community



2,424
Instagram Community



2,108
Twitter Community

Select Clipping of BNBR's initiatives

GATHARA: Kenyans must endeavour to understand mental health

Mental health is a crucial determinant of the overall health

In Summary

- According to the Kenya Mental Health Policy (2015-2030), mental disorders in Kenya continue to rise rapidly.
- Government statistics reveal that 1 in every 4 Kenyans has suffered from a mental illness at one point in their lives.

Read The 5-Page

MOST POPULAR

- Credit rating system might be much better

LATEST VIDEOS

The Kenya Brief

Summary Gathara, executive director of Basic Needs, Basic Rights Kenya

Image: HANDEU7

Mental health is a massive area of concern across the world. Kenya was recently ranked 4th in Africa with 1.9 million people with mental illness.

Basic Needs Kenya @BasicNeeds_KE · Oct 8, 2022

This year @BasicNeeds_KE is happy to be partnering with stakeholders from various parts of the country to commemorate #WorldMentalHealthDay2022 which will be observed globally on Monday 10th October #InclusiveCommunities #SpeakUp

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY
#Mental Health Matters

THEME: MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL - A GLOBAL PRIORITY

VENUE: RTI Grounds DATE: 10th OCTOBER 2022 FROM 8AM

THEME: Make Mental Health for all a Global Priority

VENUE: Mariakani Secondary - Mariakani Sub-County

THEME: Make mental health and well-being for all a global priority

Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya · Follow

25 October 2021

As we continue addressing the subject of mental health in an unequal society because with their experience they can give insights on how schools and other social places more open and inclusive. #SpeakUp

“
A mental health doesn't need to be a limitation. I am my business and in the...

Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya

5 April

Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya and CBM Global - Kenya in collaboration with Kilifi Department of Health and Sanitation Services have launched a Model Mental Health Clinic at Gongoni Health Centre, Kilifi County funded by Irish Aid. This is aimed at increasing access to services for persons with mental health conditions in the county by reducing the long distances that community members have to travel in order to access these services #InclusiveCommunities Segal Family Foundat... See more

KILINIKI YA AFYA YA AKILI
TAWIMU: WAKAZI ZAIDI YA 7,000 WANA MATATIZO YA AKILI KILIFI

11 likes, 1 comment

Rotaract Club of JKUAT @racjkuat · Oct 7, 2021

Hey you, yes you! 😊
How are you? 🌟
I mean, really, how are you? 🌟
Did you know that this week there will be a mental health awareness campaign? 🧠🗣️

Totally! Mental health has been a huge concern, especially among the youth in Kenya. 🧠🗣️

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

A focus on health beyond the physical, in a sustained way, in a world still struggling to fight the Coronavirus.

Mental Health in an Unequal world

basicneedsbasicrights · Follow

Community support is crucial for promoting mental health and well-being. Encourage individuals to reach out to their loved ones and build a supportive community. #SpeakUp254

Speak up
Mental Health Problems

8 likes
MARCH 29

Add a comment...

In the stories analyzed, the following organizations researched and championed mental health awareness in Kenya.

- **Tinada**

TINADA Youth Organization is a community-based organization working in the western part of Kenya focusing on integrated mental health rights education and campaigns, child and youth empowerment, sexual reproductive health and disaster risk-reduction.

Mention Link-The star

- **Shamiri Institute**

Shamiri Institute is a youth-led organization that is shaping the future of mental health by making it affordable for all, personalized to an individual's needs and circumstances, and integrated within existing systems of caregiving and community life.

Mention Link-Hapa Kenya

- **Kamili Health Organization**

Kamili Organisation provides affordable mental health services via 30+ clinics across Kenya. Our model clinic in Nairobi provides: accurate diagnosis, treatment, support to patients and their families and psychosocial care in the form of education.

Mention Link-Soko Directory

- **Afya Research Africa**

Afya Africa is a non-profit organization committed to fostering research in human health and promoting best practices in the provision of health care in Africa.

Mention Link-The Star

- **Brain and Mind Institute**

The Brain and Mind Institute is a new entity that operates across the Aga Khan University's multi-country campuses, connecting the rich tapestry of academic entities, and facilitating interdisciplinary research, education and related clinical programming in mental health and neurosciences

Mention Link-The Standard

- **Kenya Psychiatrist Association**

The Kenya Psychiatric Association is a professional association registered with the Registrar of Societies in 1986 as a non-political, non-religious, and non-profit making organization. The association over the years has achieved its aims and objectives through tremendous achievements and contributions, among them: technical contribution to development of policies and legislations such as The Mental Health Act 1989 and The Kenya Mental Health Policy 2015-2030.

Mention Link-The Star

- **Others**

News faces, New Voices-Mention Link

**CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Shape a more
compassionate and informed
future for mental health
discourse in Kenya

Conclusion

How has media coverage surrounding mental health changed over the last 24 months?

Positive developments are evident in the shifting narrative towards open conversations and destigmatization of mental health. Increased use of personal stories and authentic language has contributed to creating a more relatable and empathetic portrayal of mental health challenges. Social media platforms, in particular, have played a pivotal role in fostering discussions, raising awareness, and building supportive communities.

However, challenges remain in combatting the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and stigmatization associated with mental health conditions. Media representations linking mental illness to violence and criminality can contribute to misconceptions and hinder progress in reducing social stigma. Additionally, limited focus on diverse perspectives and overgeneralization of mental health conditions underscore the need for more comprehensive and nuanced reporting.

How does the depiction of mental health vary across various communication channels?

Our analysis reveals both progress and areas of concern in the way mental health issues are covered and discussed across various media platforms. The report sheds light on the varying themes and trends prevalent in media coverage of mental health which trickle into social media, indicating the need for continued efforts to address stigma, promote accurate representations, and advocate for increased support for mental health awareness and treatment.






To what extent has the SpeakUp campaign contributed to the evolving perception and attitudes towards mental health?

BNBR's media engagement initiatives have shown exceptional growth and effectiveness over time, as evidenced by the increased media mentions, substantial social media engagement, and the success of various campaigns. The brand's strategies of collaboration, compelling content, and practical guidance have collectively contributed to its positive impact on mental health awareness and support.




Notably, the evaluation of BNBR's SpeakUp campaign highlights missed opportunities in data-driven strategies, and collaborations with mental health organizations which can further amplify the campaign's impact and foster a more supportive environment for individuals with mental health challenges.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations for BNBR to further increase its impact and reach:

-  **Government Advocacy:** Leverage the brand's growing influence and media presence to advocate for greater government action and policy changes regarding mental health. Engage with policymakers, organize awareness campaigns targeting government officials, and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to drive systemic change in the mental health landscape.
-  **More Media Partnerships and Education:** Having recognized the existing information gaps within the media, there is need for increased partnerships with media outlets to address this issue. Offer more workshops, webinars, and information sessions for journalists and media personnel, educating them about mental health terminology, reporting guidelines, and ethical considerations. This can lead to more accurate and sensitive reporting on mental health topics.
-  **Maintain Interactive Content:** Develop more interactive content for social media platforms to encourage engagement and participation from the audience. Consider live Q&A sessions with mental health experts, user-generated content campaigns, and polls that involve the audience in discussions about mental health challenges and solutions.
-  **Collaboration with Schools and Universities:** Establish partnerships with educational institutions to integrate mental health education into curricula. Organize workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns within schools and universities to reach a younger audience, reducing stigma and promoting early awareness.
-  **Advocate for Workplace Well-being:** Extend efforts towards advocating for better mental health support within workplaces. Partner with companies to provide mental health resources, conduct seminars for employees, and encourage work environments that prioritize well-being.

Recommendations

-  **Data-Driven Insights:** Utilize data analytics to gain insights into which campaigns and content are resonating most with the audience. Tailor future initiatives based on these insights to ensure maximum impact.
-  **Multilingual Content:** Create content in multiple languages to cater to a diverse audience. This will make the information accessible to a wider range of people and communities.
-  **Leverage Influencers:** Continue to collaborate with celebrities and influencers who resonate with the target audience. These partnerships amplify the message and reach a wider demographic, facilitating relatable conversations about mental health.

THANK YOU

