Overview

Summary of Findings

News Media Coverage Analysis

Social Media Tracking & Analysis

Overall Misconceptions about Mental Health

Conclusion

Recommendations

Annex I: Media Clippings

Annex II: Researched Reports
OVERVIEW

News media coverage is a key source of information about mental health and plays an important role in influencing the public’s knowledge and attitudes towards individuals diagnosed with mental illnesses. In parallel, the eruption of social media channels coupled with 24-hour access to unregulated information and breaking news, amplifies the exposure to mental health conversations and depictions of mental illness.

News media and social media channels can be instrumental in portraying accurate, informative, and “stereotype-challenging” conversations about mental health to positively influence public beliefs about mental disorders. However, research indicates that there are concerns around portrayals of mental illness in the news and potentially stigmatising conversations on social media which can have profound implications on the wellbeing of people with mental conditions and those who care for them.

Stigma towards mental health conditions not only affects a person’s willingness to seek help, but also delays their recovery processes and overall opportunities in life.

The SpeakUp Campaign is part of a three-year project implemented by Basic Needs Basic Rights Kenya (BNBR) whose overall objective is to generate evidence-based approaches to empower youth with mental health problems and to create stigma-free society in the area of mental health.

It is in this regard that P&L Consulting undertook a media trawl, studying a 12-month period from February 2020 to February 2021 with a view to assess the stigma levels and highlight new trends on how mental health issues are portrayed in news media reports and social media posts. The trawl also presents the share of voice for all organization supporting mental health awareness.
WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE?

This study aims to broaden an understanding of:

1. Media landscape in terms of reporting on mental health
2. Social media dialogues in relation to mental health
3. Level of awareness of the public
4. Share of voice of mental health issues
5. Brand visibility
6. Competitor analysis to determine peer positioning, profiling, notable developments and partnership opportunities

The findings can be used to inform the SpeakUp Campaign’s positioning strategy.
Overall public’s awareness of mental illnesses is still wanting. Appropriate education is needed to sensitize the public about mental health and the impact of stigma towards vulnerable individuals.

Both media channels have displayed continued use of stigmatizing words and phrases when discussing mental health related topics.

Both social media and news media heavily influence the society’s perception towards people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

The country is currently facing a mental health crisis and urgently needs the intervention of programmes such as SpeakUp campaign.

The SpeakUp campaign has made significant strides in its efforts towards creating a stigma-free society, but there is room for growth.
We analysed a total of 2000 news stories from print, electronic and online platforms reported in the last one year to determine the share of voice of mental health stories compared to other popular topics. Below is a graphical presentation of the findings.

Key Observations
- Coronavirus, School reopening and BBI related stories were most frequently reported in the news
- Mental health related stories were among the least discussed topics in the news standing at 4%
- Majority of the mental health-related stories were linked to crime and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Overall, there was no lack of coverage of mental health issues, but it is clear that more can be done
There were no media mention on BNBR or the SpeakUp campaign over the last one year. We however highlighted other mental health organizations captured in the media.

72%  
Task Force on Mental Health – appointed by President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2019 with the mandate of studying the status of mental health in Kenya. So far the Task force has made worrying observations which will be highlighted later in this report.

15%  
Mental Health Champions – A support programme that recently launched its first online training aid to help bridge the gaps for mental health professionals in the country. The programme also awards mental health champions with certificates of achievement following trainings on how to provide preventative mental illness tools to society.

13%  
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Kenya – An organization seeking to support the holistic management of mental health issues. One of the ways they use to ensure availability of quality information around mental wellness is through a podcast where they hold various discussions focusing on the society’s and mental wellness.
Out of the 2,000 news articles studied, we captured stories that mentioned identified keywords with the aim of tracking how frequently reporters used stigmatising words to depict issues related to mental health.

### Key Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Disorder</th>
<th>Mad</th>
<th>Suicide</th>
<th>Schizophrenia</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Mentally Ill</th>
<th>Insane</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>Bipolar</th>
<th>Mentally fit</th>
<th>Mentally Unstable</th>
<th>Schizophrenic</th>
<th>Dementia</th>
<th>Mentally Disturbed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

Suicide, Depression, Anxiety, Schizophrenia were the most frequently mentioned mental conditions in the news.

Stigmatising words and phrases such as “mad”, “insane”, “disturbed” “schizophrenic” and “mentally unstable” were widely used especially in online articles while print and electronic news articles maintained the use of terms such as “mentally fit/ill” and “mental disorder/health” when referring to mental health-related issues.
The study shows that more than half the news reports standing at 52% were negative in nature. Mental health articles linked danger, violence and criminality to mental illness which may mislead the public into linking individual diagnosed with mental illness to criminal actions. In addition, stigmatising phrases were frequently used in the headlines of news articles.

33% of the news reports appeared neutral because they were not stigmatizing any group but highlighted gaps of mental health in the country while at the same time proposing solutions for improvement. It is interesting to note that among the gaps highlighted in the media, stigma towards mental conditions was not included.

Positive articles that covered on wellbeing, care, prevention and recovery of mental health issues made up a smaller proportion of only 15%.

The subsequent pages provide a more detailed coverage analysis of the negative, positive and neutral media reports.
POSITIVE NEWS COVERAGE
15%
CELEBRATING THE RECOVERY OF INDIVIDUALS DIAGNOSED WITH MENTAL.

The media reported on some encouraging stories through profiling individuals who recently battled various mental health conditions but managed to seek help, share their recovery process and are now leading normal lives.

Such stories provide hope for those who live in fear of seeking help over mental condition.

In comparison to how the media reports on survivors of other illnesses such as cancer, or HIV, more can do towards highlighting and celebrating the untold stories about mental health recovery.
INCLUDING EXPERT OPINIONS FROM MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A number of reports featured a mix of expert advice or opinions from mental health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors. Such articles provided more clarity and were accurate in reporting mental health conditions.

Very few reports went as far as including appropriate helplines and resources at the end of articles.
Positive News

INFORMATIVE STORIES ON SELF-CARE, PREVENTION AND WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Some of the news reports gave self-care tips with an emphasise on early treatment to aid in recovery.

The articles also gave advise to family members or close friends with regards to signs to watch out for with a loved one and when to seek help.
A few media reports did not perpetuate negative stereotypes of those with a mental health condition.

They focused on providing hope and challenging stereotypes that society continues to hold on to.

MENTAL ILLNESS CAN BE CURED

He mentally ill are the most neglected people in society and have no one to take care of them.
NEUTRAL NEWS
33%
Neutral stories painted a picture of the state of mental health in the country while at the same time called for appropriate action to improve mental health issues. Key observations include:

**ALARMS OVER MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

01. Was attributed to the impacts of COVID-19 with suicide and depression being on the rise - The uncertainties and economic shocks brought about by the pandemic were reported to have greatly diminished the mental wellbeing of many individuals.

**POOR MENTAL HEALTHCARE FACILITIES**

02. There were reports about inadequate funding and poor maintenance of facilities for mental healthcare which dehumanizes persons with mental health conditions. There were proposals to renovate these facilities, offer mental health services in all hospitals and not just in Mathari as well as calls for the government to incorporate mental health in the universal health coverage similar to HIV, Malaria and TB.

**COUNTRY IN DIRE NEED OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

03. Including psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors. There were reports of people being forced to seek help from informal community structures such as places of worship or traditional healers due to cultural beliefs.

04. There was a proposal to decriminalize suicide recommended by The National Mental Health Taskforce.

05. There were urgent calls for intervention through the roll out programmes to address gaps in mental health services.
Mental health crisis: The state of mental health in Kenya as Kenyans bear brunt of issues in silence

March 2, 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to highlight the need to address gaps in Kenya’s public healthcare systems.

More than ever, Kenya requires robust healthcare solutions to save lives even when the coronavirus is long gone.

Having borne the brunt of corona, the need to recast our priorities by combining short-term necessities with long-term targets cannot be gainsaid. There are hitherto forgotten causes of preventable deaths that call for urgent attention.

Poor mental health has, for instance, resulted in many preventable deaths or diminished quality of life for thousands of Kenyans. As the world marks the Mental Health Day today,

---

Roll out robust programmes to address gaps in mental health

By EDITORIAL | October 10th, 2020 at 09:00:00 GMT +0300

The Covid-19 global pandemic continues highlighting the need to address gaps in Kenya’s public healthcare systems.

More than ever, Kenya requires robust healthcare solutions to save lives even when the coronavirus is long gone.

Having borne the brunt of corona, the need to recast our priorities by combining short-term necessities with long-term targets cannot be gainsaid. There are hitherto forgotten causes of preventable deaths that call for urgent attention.

Poor mental health has, for instance, resulted in many preventable deaths or diminished quality of life for thousands of Kenyans. As the world marks the Mental Health Day today,

---

Health

Suicide, depression and related mental illnesses on the rise

The whole world is struggling with the new normal brought about by Covid-19. At first, everyone was concerned about health implications and the desire to stay alive.

The world, however, became more aware of economic repercussions. As we struggle to keep the economy afloat, how much effort are we putting towards mental health? In March, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic, and health authorities worldwide have been acting to contain the virus.

However, this time crisis in growing stress on the population. Families are locked up together, finances are running out, people are dying and access to medical care is difficult. Pressure is building up, leaving some with mental health disorders. According to Health CS Mutahi Kagwe, one in every 10 Kenyans suffers some mental disorders.

We attributed increased gender-based violence to psychological issues. There are many people who now suffer from mild mental illnesses due to the pandemic.

According to a Kenya Medical Association report, many Kenyans are now facing mental health issues due to the pandemic. The report indicates that the pandemic has led to an increase in mental health cases.

---

Make Mathari a modern hospital, report advises

According to a report from the facility built in rubbish, the facility now has modern facilities.

In a survey conducted by the National Council of the deaf Kenya, over 90% of the respondents said they were satisfied with the modern facilities.

The report also highlighted the need to improve the quality of care, which has led to an increase in the number of patients coming to the hospital.

The report recommended that the hospital should be expanded to accommodate more patients. It also recommended that the hospital should be equipped with modern medical equipment.

--

Suicide, depression and related mental illnesses on the rise
OVERALL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

There were reports that the public lacks an overall understanding of mental health conditions and related issues.

Some articles proposed that mental health education be included in the school curriculum to help people better understand themselves and their loved ones who are battling with mental illnesses.
NEGATIVE NEWS
52%
USE OF STIGMATISING PHRASES

We found a number of stories that used stigmatizing words and phrases in the headlines which could hinder the readers from understanding the context of the story because the headlines already formed stereotypic views for the readers. Examples of stigmatizing words used include mad and insane. We however noted that stigmatizing words were mostly used on online blogs compared to print and electronic platforms.

Stigmatizing words negatively affects the person being reported on due to lack of consideration of their dignity or consent to be characterized that way.
LINKING MENTAL ILLNESSES TO VIOLENT CRIMES

The study revealed that it is very common for the media to pass on the impression of a solid relationship between mental illness and violent crimes. Mental Health Conditions were frequently mentioned in the headline of a crime story which further perpetuated the stigma that mental health conditions lead to violent behavior.

Such reports were backed by defense lawyers who would sometimes cite a mental health condition in mitigation for those who pleaded guilty as if to imply that the offender committed the offence because of a mental health condition.
TRIGGERING AND INSENSITIVE IMAGES

The media used triggering or explicit images to depict mental conditions. For example, when reporting on suicide, reporters would use images of a hanging rope or an individual holding pills in their hand. In addition, media reports sometimes go into details about the suicide methods which could encourage suicidal behavior.

In some instances the media would publish images of individuals deceased as a result of suicide. Some footages did not include a trigger warning at the start to alert viewers so that they may opt on whether to continue watching the video or not.

According to WHO’s guidelines for reporting on suicide, graphic content may adversely affect vulnerable audiences as it creates additional trauma. Another illustration of individuals with mental conditions were images of individuals confined to chains or looking dirty as an implication that all individuals with mental illnesses are not well kempt and are likely to be violent.
GLAMOURIZING SUICIDE

Some reports risk unintentionally glamourizing suicide when reporting suicide as a gift or reporting a reward following someone’s attempt to take their own life.

The potential for influencing vulnerable persons to mimic suicide is greater in such cases, especially when they are undergoing similar situations.

Excessive and repeated features may be too much exposure and can have a negative effect on vulnerable persons.
LACK OF CONSIDERATION FOR THOSE BERIEVED BY SUICIDE OR AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

When reporting on mental conditions, most reports fail to show consideration for caregivers or close family members by publishing the victims’ details as well as the caregivers’ identifiable information. This shows a lack of respect for the individuals' privacy.

In addition, reading such media reports may negatively affect family members by bringing back memories of what may have been a traumatic experience.
Top Reporters

The table below presents key journalists who recently reported on mental health-related stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>MEDIA HOUSE</th>
<th>JOURNALIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Standard</td>
<td>Mercy Adhiambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kepher Otieno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Star</td>
<td>Elizabeth Ngigi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wilfred Nyangaresi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>BBC News</td>
<td>Anne Ngugi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basillion Mutahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Business Daily</td>
<td>Jackson Biko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>People Daily</td>
<td>Rebecca Mutiso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Tuko Talks</td>
<td>Lynn Ngugi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>NTV</td>
<td>Grace Msalame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From an editor’s perspective, positive recovery stories and hopeful features may sometimes be mundane and not so newsworthy.

I think most journalists are largely unaware of how our work could have such a stigmatising effect.

Most Editors favor stories based on crime, conflict, celebrity or controversy because such stories capture most readers’ attention.

As journalists, we not only want to be objective and accurate, but also want to tell it as it is. This involves telling not just what happened, why and how but also who’s involved. At times this involves publishing identifiable information and images to help our readers better understand the story.

Media professionals with greater knowledge of mental illness should speak up and mentor others on appropriate reporting of mental illness.
More Sentiments from Reporters

“I think most journalists would be open to some training on responsible reporting of mental illness related to crime.”

“We frequently point out to colleagues where they have made misleading statements about mental illnesses.”

“Some journalists especially those that are fresh out of college may need professional help after covering a traumatic story but opt not seek it.”

“Newsrooms could nominate a champion in their media house who is available to advise on best practice for reporting on mental illness and crime.”

“We could learn so much from a guide on the appropriate language to use when reporting on mental illnesses. It should be accessible to all newsrooms because it pains me to think of the number of times we might have fallen short.”
Declare mental health a national disaster

Mental health services are underfunded. Kenya has about 100 psychiatrists and only 10 hospitals that can handle mental illness. Mathari hospital - the only mental health referral facility is understaffed and unable to manage the emerging challenges.

Summary of insights captured:
- Many celebrities are opening up and creating awareness about mental health.
- If stressful situations aren’t resolved or resilience is low, then depression ensues.
- Enacted or external stigma can lead to self-stigmatisation, which can result in worsening of symptoms, such as withdrawal.

Depression is treatable and most people are able to continue with their normal life after treatment. Having attempted to take his own life six times, Victor has started his initiative to help out any man who was facing challenges with depression.

Societal expectation weighing on an individual can push them to attempt suicide.

Below are some of the mental health professionals whose expert opinions have recently been captured in the media providing advise on how to improve mental healthcare:

DR. FRANK NJENGA
Psychiatrist and Chairman of The Taskforce on Mental Health in Kenya

Summary of insights captured:
- Declare mental health a national disaster
- Mental health services are underfunded
- Kenya has about 100 psychiatrists and only 10 hospitals that can handle mental illness. Mathari hospital - the only mental health referral facility is understaffed and unable to manage the emerging challenges.

SYLVIA RAYWE
Consultant clinical psychologist at Aga Khan

Summary of insights captured:
- Many celebrities are opening up and creating awareness about mental health.
- If stressful situations aren’t resolved or resilience is low, then depression ensues.
- Enacted or external stigma can lead to self-stigmatisation, which can result in worsening of symptoms, such as withdrawal.

VICTOR KHAMIS
Mental Health Advocate

Summary of insights captured:
- Depression is treatable and most people are able to continue with their normal life after treatment.
- Having attempted to take his own life six times, Victor has started his initiative to help out any man who was facing challenges with depression.
- Societal expectation weighing on an individual can push them to attempt suicide.
IRENE WANJIRU WAINAINA
Counseling Psychologist

Summary of insights captured:
- Currently seeing three to four patients per week as opposed to pre-covid times when there would be one or no patients per week
- There is a lot of anxiety because people do not know what tomorrow holds
- There are challenges accessing drugs and care due to lockdown leading to relapse
- A strong support system is critical for quick recovery

HARRIET MUSIMBI
Medical Psychologist and Mental Health Advocate

Summary of insights captured:
- People should be compassionate and look out for people who are behaving in a funny way
- Cases of depression have increased over the last six months

DR. REV. DAVIS GATUA
Psychologist consultant at the Kenyatta University

Summary of insights captured:
- To overcome fear and anxiety, Kenyans must have a critical evaluation of the information they consume on social media
- When there is a high level of anxiety, people develop different coping mechanisms and some may indulge drugs
- When people are spiritually bankrupt, they are emotionally drained and seek messages of encouragement from their pastors

DR. ZACHARY KARIUKI
Nakuru County Executive Committee Member for Health

Summary of insights captured:
- It is very expensive to treat mental disorders due to the high cost of drugs
- Mental health facilities are overwhelmed by low income patients, thus there is a need for more public facilities to boost the private ones which are frequented by the middle income earners
Below is an outline of researched reports that were recently published in the media:

**40%**

*Inpatients suffer from a mental illness*

**ORGANIZATION:** The Taskforce on Mental Health in Kenya  
**REPORT TITLE:** State of Mental Health Kenya  
**YEAR OF RELEASE:** 2020  
**More findings:**
- 25% of outpatients patients suffer from mental health issues such as depression  
- On average, at least one in 10 people in Kenya struggle with a mental illness  
- Only 14 counties out of the 47 have functioning mental health units

**75%**

*Kenyans are not able to access mental healthcare*

**ORGANIZATION:** WHO & Ministry of Health Kenya  
**REPORT TITLE:** Mental health and wellbeing towards happiness and national prosperity  
**YEAR OF RELEASE:** 2020  
- Kenya among the 28% member states that lack a separate budget for mental health  
- Common mental illnesses in the country are depression and suicide, substance abuse, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other psychoses.  
- 11% of seemingly healthy Kenyans have a diagnosable mental disorder  
- Kenya is ranked at number four in Africa with an estimated 1.9 million people suffering from depression  
- Majority of Kenyans cannot distinguish the different kinds of mental illnesses  
- There is poor documentation of mental illnesses by health workers
Young people suffer from a mental illness

ORGANIZATION: Access to Medicine & Tinada Youth Organisation
REPORT TITLE: Not Indicated
YEAR OF RELEASE: 2020
More findings:
- Mental illnesses are on the rise among youth in Kisumu, Kakamega, Bungoma and Vihiga
- Causes of mental illness among the youth are drug abuse, teen pregnancy, trauma, distress and gender-based violence

Number of Psychiatrists in the public service

ORGANIZATION: Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
REPORT TITLE: Silenced Minds: The systemic neglect of mental health system in Kenya
YEAR OF RELEASE: 2011
In 2009, there were only 46 psychiatrists in the public service, with 28 of them based in Nairobi County
MENTAL HEALTH RELATED CONVERSATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
We analysed a total of 2000 social media conversations from Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Google. The graphs below highlight the tonality of sentiments captured in general and by channel.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Majority of the sentiments towards mental health were negative standing at 48% followed by positive 31% and neutral 21%

- Analysis of the sentiments by channel found that most negative sentiments were on Twitter while Instagram was dominated by positive comments.
We also found that Twitter and Google were the platforms frequently used to have conversations about mental health.
We tracked different topics under mental health to establish the kind of issues that were frequently discussed and whether there was use of stigmatizing words or phrases.

**Key Observations:**

Mental health, Depression, Anxiety and suicide had the highest mentions standing at 1300, 1100, 838 and 898 respectively.

34 posts used the word “lunatic” and generated 102,000 impressions. Other stigmatizing impressions did not have specific name calling but showed a lack of sensitivity to persons dealing with mental health conditions.

Posts related to Depression and Anxiety had the highest number of impressions standing at 61.8 million and 69.8 million respectively.
## Top Influencers by number of posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>emcihubtechltd.co.ke</td>
<td>@MentalHRetweet</td>
<td>The Star, Kenya</td>
<td>Ebru TV Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standardmedia.co.ke</td>
<td>@DamianJuma1</td>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>BNBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the-star.co.ke</td>
<td>@leujonson</td>
<td>Capital FM Kenya</td>
<td>KTN News Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kenyamoja.com</td>
<td>@Itsericmaina</td>
<td>Eve Woman Magazine</td>
<td>KENYA News Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nairaland.com</td>
<td>@KSUS1John</td>
<td>Citizen TV Kenya</td>
<td>KNA News Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kenyans.co.ke</td>
<td>@ZKiberenge</td>
<td>KBC Channel 1 TV</td>
<td>Kenya CitizenTV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuko.co.ke</td>
<td>@robykenya</td>
<td>CGTN Africa</td>
<td>Kenya Digital News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mtkenyatimes.co.ke</td>
<td>@Shirley_Sein</td>
<td>KBC Channel 1</td>
<td>The Star Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capitalfm.co.ke</td>
<td>@TinadaOrg</td>
<td>Pulse Live Kenya</td>
<td>Tuko / Tuco - Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kbc.co.ke</td>
<td>@BNBR</td>
<td>GrowthAfrica - Group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Churchill Show comedian Njoro starts therapy days after disclosing he is depressed

Njoro informed fans that he will be away for about three months as he heads for therapy.

- The comedian had earlier confirmed to the public he was struggling with depression.
- His plight was first aired by fellow comedian Denny who said he was dealing with hardship in Nakuru.

Witty Churchill Show comedian Njoro has disclosed he will be taking a break to focus on his mental health.

The hilarious comedian said he will be away for about three months for therapy.

He disclosed that he suffers from bipolar disorder and has been living with it for a long time, running his life without the aid of any medication to counter it.

The comedian said he was dealing with it alone until he sought help.

"I suffer from bipolar but bipolar has been there for a long time running my life without me having any control over it and in that process, I became very depressed and almost suicidal. I'm talking about that because there could be someone here sitting and wondering what we are all doing here. Believe me, it's not that something is wrong with you, you could be going through depression," he said.

The comedian said before he realized he was suffering from bipolar disorder and depression, he took his family down and also lost his spot at the office as a politician in the city.

"...because when I went into depression, I took my family down, I lost my strength and ground as a politician just because I did not know, I was not sure, and I was not conscious," he added.

The comedian said he had been courted by many people in the industry to step into the public eye,

"I consider myself to be a comedian, but I have had people telling me that I can do this, and I can do that and I should, and I should... but I cannot do it because it is not me," he said.

The comedian said he was not sure if he would be able to do what people expected of him and it was this that prompted him to seek help.

He said that despite the trauma he had endured, he was at peace with his decision to focus on his mental health.

"I am at peace with what I have done, and I am at peace with myself," he said.

He urged those dealing with similar issues to seek help and not hide their problems.

"I want to encourage people who are dealing with similar problems to not hide from it. We need to ask for help and reach out for assistance," he said.

The comedian said he was looking forward to returning to work and his fans had been very supportive.

"I have been getting a lot of support from my fans and I am looking forward to returning to work," he said.

He said that he was not sure how long he would be away for therapy, but he was looking forward to getting back to work soon.

"I don’t know how long I will be away for therapy, but I am looking forward to getting back to work soon," he said.
Public's Reactions

**Bears, Beets, Battlestar Galactica!** @allansisqo8 - Jan 5
Opening up to your wife is a scam. Ona daddy Owen aliachwa after kusema he is depressed.

Pray for married niggas

**RICHARD MAHAMOUD** @RichiMahamoud - Feb 4
Daddy Owen is embarrassing my gender, its the other gender who get depressed when they are left. For men when the main departs, you promote another one from the back up class. Kareekoeel @WamboiEvelyne @Gideon_Kitheka @Classic105Kenya

**Omboga Eric** @Ombogaeric2 - Mar 4
Bipolar ilikua na shebesh now imeshika sonko does it mean its sexually transmitted watoe picha na shebesh sonko has been behaving fun

**Ketty-Agu** @AguKetty - Mar 7
Repyling to @gabrieloguda Shebesh I am bipolar.
Kenyans: Shebesh says she's mad.

**Ni Hulis!** @Hulis._ - Feb 4
How do you know you're depressed?

Daddy Owen says he's been depressed for 3 years.

**MICHAEL OLLINGA** @michollinga - Feb 16
"She has a mental psychiatric problem called bipolar. That's why we never stayed together. She breaks things, shouts and loose memory for even a week." - Lamu Senator Anwar Loitiptip and ex-lover to Mike Sonko's daughter Saumu Mbuvi. Saumu had accused the senator of being violent

**The Blood Pressure Champion** 🇺🇸 @zablonorina1 - Jul 21, 2020
I am going for my evening run. When I come back, we talk about depression and how we can help identify people who are depressed around us so we offer help. Depression is an illness that requires treatment. Many around us are depressed. #njoro Churchill.
Key observations from the public’s reaction to high profile individuals who opened up about a mental health condition

- Majority of Kenyans cannot distinguish the different kinds of mental illnesses.

- There are some Kenyans who sympathized with individuals who have mental health conditions by sharing encouraging messages and offering to support financially or emotionally.

- Most Kenyans do not take mental health seriously and tend to mock or shame persons dealing with mental health conditions.

- Many Kenyans are suffering in silence. A lot of celebrities who opened up in public expressed that they received overwhelming private messages from fans experiencing similar mental health conditions.

- Stigmatising terms used in news media are often picked up and repeated on social media day-today interactions.
Key findings

- It was found that there was one mention on the SpeakUp Campaign and 3 mentions of BNBR.

- The mentions generated 754 impressions.

- All mentions were positive

- The SpeakUp campaign has a low share of voice in comparison to peers focusing on similar projects.
How peers are positioning themselves

- **Mental Health Kenya** – A platform that is available for Kenyans to reach out when they need help concerning Mental Health. They have set aside a team of people willing to help support Kenyans facing challenges with mental health conditions to gain recovery.

- **Speak Mind Love Foundation** – Focuses on creating safe spaces and awareness on mental health. The foundation also advocates for suicide prevention, resilience building and strengthening support systems.

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Kenya** – The organization seeks to support and holistic management of mental health issue by ensuring the public receives quality information about mental wellness. They have a podcast where they hosts various topics of discussion relevant to the society’s mental wellness.

- **Youth Changers** – Promotes mental health and other issues that concern young people including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.

- **Depression Anxiety Kenya (DAK Family)** – An organization that offers free help to youth facing mental health issues.
### Overall Misconceptions about Mental Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misconceptions</th>
<th>Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone with a mental health condition is likely to be violent and commit</td>
<td>Many people diagnosed with a mental health condition have no history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health is not curable and people’s condition only gets worse once</td>
<td>Treatment for mental health conditions is available and most people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with similar mental health diagnosis go through similar experiences</td>
<td>Mental health experiences are unique to everyone and not everyone will face the same symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain groups of people are more likely to experience an identified mental</td>
<td>Mental health conditions can affect anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with mental health conditions physically appear different from others</td>
<td>There is no difference in their appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions are caused by demonic possessions and can be cured</td>
<td>Mental health conditions can be diagnosed by a professional and treated accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through spiritual intervention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study offers a strong support for the contention that stigmatising media reports and decreasingly controlled social media conversations about mental health, heavily influence the society’s perception towards people with lived experience of mental health conditions. It is evident that stigmatising conversations also creates an environment where people with mental health conditions are not receptive towards seeking treatment.

Media professionals should exercise caution in reporting on mental health conditions through balancing newsworthy content and the public’s right to know against the risk of causing harm to individuals affected by mental health problems.

More projects such as the SpeakUp Campaign focusing on the potential effects of stigma towards individuals living with mental conditions have only started quite recently and the evidence for the benefits of these type of efforts are currently emerging.

The SpeakUp Campaign has the opportunity to bring more positive stories that are honest and compelling to the limelight. The SpeakUp Campaign can also play a significant role in fighting long-held misperceptions and fears surrounding mental health. This will go a long way in encouraging the society to embrace the unique experiences of mental illnesses and educate them on various symptoms and types of mental health conditions as well as when to seek help.
While media is not the only influence in changing the public’s opinion about mental health, there is no doubt it plays a significant role in shaping beliefs, educating and destigmatising persons with mental health conditions. We therefore recommend that BNBR arranges for regular media training sessions to create awareness among the journalists. In addition, BNBR could come up with a guide for reporters on stigmatizing phrases and words they should avoid.

We recommend identifying champions within the newsroom who will help guide other reporters on the appropriate ways of reporting on mental health.

There are opportunities for BNBR to partner with high profile individuals and mental health influencers to help address the stigma and educate the public.

It is clear that more can be done for the public to hear more encouraging stories about people recovering from or managing mental health issues.

SpeakUp Campaign has covered significant ground in adding a voice to the efforts to reduce stigma against mental illness. However, a lot more needs to be covered and this project intervention presents a fertile ground to galvanize multiple stakeholders and redefine joint community owned approaches.
ANNEX I

MEDIA CLIPPINGS

1. My Son saved me from Suicide – Maureen Waititu
2. Finally, the voices in my head are silenced
3. Covid stress pushing more people to suicide
4. What the psychiatrist says
5. Seek Medical Opinion on bipolar mood disorder
6. Better ways of treating depression
7. How young people can manage stress effectively
8. Mental illness can be cured
9. Mental Health Crisis: The state of mental health in Kenya as Kenyans bear brunt of issues in silence
10. Kenya lacks budget for mental health yet many Kenyans are depressed
11. Suicide, depression and related mental illness on the rise
12. Make Matahari a modern hospital
13. Roll out robust programmes to address gaps in mental health
14. Kenyan Society has little understanding of mental health
15. Provide mental health education to avert crisis
16. Mind your mental health, the road to insanity is very short
17. Nairobi CBD: Mother breaks down after finding son turned madman
18. Ghanaian man’s wife runs mad after bagging her degree
19. Woman accused of killing her four children committed to mental institution
20. Mentally ill man hijacks ambulance hits oil tanker
21. Marriage cut short by murder and suicide
22. Main suspect in Kiambu murders not mentally fit
23. Role of school and parents in preventing suicide
24. Dear parents here’s what you should know about suicide
25. Inside Coptic church prayer centre for mentally ill patients
26. Suicide as a birthday gift to a mother
27. Girl 13 who threatened suicide over lack of fees gets sponsors
28. Alarm over surge in depression
29. Woman who died in Bahrain committed suicide – Embassy
1. Silenced minds: The systemic neglect of mental health system in Kenya
2. State of Mental Health in Kenya
3. Final Mental Health Report
4. Mental health and wellbeing towards happiness and national prosperity
5. Additional Reports