

Eurasian Journal of Media and Communications 		Youth Mental Health Reportage Among Selected Newspapers In Nigeria.
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ABSTRACT	The rate at which Nigerian youths are showing different traits of mental health defects is a matter of great concern. This is despite the fact that this fraction of any nation’s population is a strong determinant for both the economic and social development emancipations. Hence, this study, therefore, examined newspaper reportage of youth mental health in selected Nigerian newspapers between 2015 and 2025 to identify the extent of youth mental health reportage in selected Nigerian Newspapers. Agenda-Setting and Social Cognitive Theories were adopted framework with content analysis research design. Multistage sampling procedure was employed for four purposively selected national newspapers: Daily Trust, Nigerian Tribune, Vanguard, and The Sun; selected based on their national circulation and editorial diversity. Analysis showed low representation of youth mental health reportage by Nigerian Newspaper as Daily Trust recorded lowest proportion of youth mental health reports 19.0% from its 322 reports, followed by The Sun 29.9%, Vanguard 31.8% and Nigerian Tribune recorded highest reportage with 53.2%. Lack of prominence with 96% articles tucked on the inside pages, 2.2% reports were on the front pages of Daily Trust and Nigerian Tribune, 3.1% for center spread, 9.5% for inside front page and 2.1% for back page, while frequency revealed occasional publication on annual mental and world drug day with 87.5% and regular coverage with 27.3%.	
	Keywords:	Youth Mental Health, Newspaper Reportage, Mental-related issues, Journalism

Introduction

Nigerian newspapers have played a central role in informing citizens about public issues and shaping national discourse, functioning not just as news providers but as agenda setters and interpreters of national conversations (Nigerian Newspapers and the Rhetoric’s of Reporting, 2025). Also, Kperogi (2021) notes that, the Nigerian press from the colonial to post-colonial era has historically functioned as a discursive parliament for the articulation, ventilation, and circulation of transformative and politically consequential national discourses, energizing

popular support for major issues of the time, setting the stage for public debate on national priorities.

The news media has a key role to play in normalizing discussions of mental health and making them as central as other common public health issues in conversations about the overall well-being of the societies. This is corroborated by Popoola (2014) that “the importance of press in dissemination of information for development cannot be over emphasized.” Responsible reporting and writing with respect, truthfulness, cultural humility, nuance, and

accuracy, can reduce the prevalence of sensationalized and inaccurate information that fuels ridicule, prejudice, stigmatization, stereotype and discrimination of persons with mental health challenges.

The Carter Center (2024) opined that in an age where much talk about mental health has migrated into the free-for-all on social media, the role of journalists in setting standards of accuracy is more important than ever. Notably, “through fair and factual reporting, they can nudge readers away from fearful biases toward people with mental health conditions and disorders and make them aware of possibilities for change,” (Carter Centre 2024). Over the years, the mass media, specifically the newspaper has been a primary source of information for the teeming population and a vital agent in shaping perception and public understanding of health issues, including mental health. Therefore, the media’s role in framing and agenda setting agenda-setting and framing means that how issues are reported influences public perception, priorities, and policy debates.

In respect of mental health, media message are capable of either reinforcing stigma or promoting help-seeking behaviour, as well as propagate stereotypes (Carter Center 2024). It is therefore worrisome, the rate at which the youths; the leaders of tomorrow are confronted with mental health disorders. Nigerian Independent newspaper reports that “Nigeria stands at a dangerous crossroads, one defined not only by economic hardship and insecurity but also by an invisible epidemic eating away at its future: the mental health crisis among its youth.” The youth mental health being the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of individuals aged between twelve and twenty-four and up to thirty has globally been the focal point of media discourse.

Reports revealed that nearly one in six youths aged 15-24 are estimated to experience mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders, against a backdrop of severe shortages in mental health resources and professionals (Inquirer Nigeria, 2025). The World Health Organization explains that

depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of disability in young people, while suicide is the third leading cause of death for those aged 15–29 (WHO Suicide Key Facts). Mental health conditions, therefore, significantly undermine educational attainment, social functioning, and the transition to productive adulthood with lifelong implications for economic participation and social integration, it further stated. The key facts by the World Health Organization says the need for action on mental health is indisputable and urgent. The youth mental health has therefore emerged as one of the most critical public health and social challenges of the 21st century.

The overconcentration on general mental health, with reportage rarely differentiating between specific disorders or age-related challenges, thereby limiting the informational and educational value of such coverage and a cursory examination of existing studies on mental health revealed the dearth of youth centered studied on newspaper reportage of youth mental health in Nigeria. It is against this background that the study examined newspaper reportage of youth mental health in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025, coupled with the increase in the rate of youth mental health disorders. These among others underscored the need to explore the extent of reportage of youth mental health by newspapers in Nigeria between 2015 and 2025, and how such reportage shapes public understanding, policy debates, mental health interventions and stigmatization.

Research Questions:

1. What is the extent of youth mental health reportage among selected newspapers in Nigeria?
2. What is the pattern for youth mental health reports by placement and story space allocation across the selected newspapers?
3. How frequent are the stories of youth mental health reports appearing across the selected newspapers in Nigeria

Conceptual Clarification

Print Media: An Overview

Print media refers to communication channels that disseminate information to audiences through printed materials, particularly newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters and other periodical publications. Historically, newspapers have served as important institutions for informing citizens, interpreting public events, providing platforms for public debate and documenting social developments. In Nigeria, the development of modern print media can be traced to the establishment of a missionary printing press in Calabar in 1846, followed by the emergence and growth of newspapers that became significant instruments of political, social and cultural communication.

Contemporary Nigerian print media comprises numerous national and local newspaper titles, including *The Punch*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *The Sun* and *Daily Trust*. Although the media environment has expanded to include television, radio, online news platforms and social media, print newspapers continue to constitute an identifiable component of Nigeria's news ecosystem (Apejaye & Mutsvaio, 2024; Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2026).

The print media perform several important functions within the society, while the Newspapers provide information about political, economic, educational, health, cultural and social issues, while also interpreting events through news reports, editorials, features, opinion articles, interviews, photographs, cartoons and other journalistic forms. Through the selection and prominence given to particular issues, newspapers can contribute to the visibility of social problems and influence the subjects that receive sustained public attention. This function is particularly relevant to public-health issues such as mental health, because newspaper coverage can provide information about conditions, causes, symptoms, treatment, prevention and sources of assistance. In addition, newspapers can provide space for experts, government agencies, professionals, advocacy organisations and affected individuals to participate in public discourse.

Newspapers and other legacy media continue to have a role in providing information and maintaining perceptions of journalistic authenticity, even as audiences increasingly encounter news through digital platforms (Anyanwu, Imiti, & Anyanwu 2024). However, the print-media has experienced considerable technological and economic change. With the expansion of the internet, smartphones; the social-media platforms has altered how audiences obtain, share and interact with the news. Recent evidence in Nigeria indicates that traditional print media are experiencing decline in its circulation as the digital and social-media sources increasingly shape news consumption. While every media organization, including the newspapers have responded by developing websites, e-paper editions and social-media channels (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2025, 2026). Studies revealed that newspaper circulation and patronage in the Southwest Nigeria have been affected due to digital disruption, economic difficulties, infrastructure problems and the availability of free online news (Daranijo, 2024). Studies on digital transformation also indicated that Nigerian newspapers are confronted with inadequate technological resources, skills gaps, power-supply problems, declining advertising revenue and the financial costs associated with maintaining digital operations (Olagoke & Israel, 2025).

Despite these challenges, It is worthy of note that the contemporary print media should not be seen as disappearing; rather, it is increasingly operating within a hybrid media environment. The transformation which allows the print and digital forms to coexist. Nigerian newspapers are adjusting their traditional publishing practices by supplying contents to websites, social-media platforms, mobile applications and electronic editions. A research on *Aláròyè*, for example, validates how a Nigerian newspaper has used digital platforms to engage audiences while trying to maintain aspects of its traditional print identity and business model (Salawu & Adeyeye, 2025). With this revolution in newspaper, stories which had originally been published in print now has the capacity to circulate through multiple digital

channels, potentially increasing their reach and audience interaction. Therefore, an overview of the Nigerian print media further provides insight about functions of the print media as a traditional media that serve as source of information dissemination and platform for public discourse and its changing relationship with digital journalism.

Newspaper Reportage as Social Surveillance and Socialization

Newspaper reportage remains an important mechanism of social surveillance since it systematically observe, investigate, document and communicate events occurring within society. Newspapers secured public attention to activities of governments, institutions, businesses and other social actors through news reports, investigative stories, editorials and feature articles. Besides, social surveillance does not necessarily mean technological monitoring; rather, it refers to the journalistic process of monitoring societal developments and providing information about them publicly. This is carefully executed by determining which events deserve prominence, while newspapers help citizens identify issues requiring public attention. Newspapers demonstrate monitoring function in the coverage of major social and security issues, whereby editorial discourse has been used to represent and interpret developments in the wider society (Osisanwo, 2025). Similarly, contemporary agenda-setting research shows that news organisations continue to influence the salience of issues and their attributes within wider public discourse (Su & Xiao, 2024).

The surveillance function of newspaper is paramount as it contributes to accountability and the watchdog role of journalism. Newspapers expose institutional failures, corruption, social injustices, and violations of rights, insecurity and deficiencies in public services through investigative reporting. Such reporting provides citizens with information that may enable them to question institutions and demand explanations from those exercising social or political authority. In Nigeria, this role has remained relevant despite the expansion of digital media. Recent research on Nigerian media and public oversight demonstrates that

civil-society actors and journalists can contribute to monitoring powerful institutions and drawing attention to issues of public accountability (Idowu, 2026). Successively, newspaper surveillance connects citizens with events and institutional activities which they may not personally witness and provides documented record through which social problems can enter public discussion known performs a social-information function.

Besides surveillance, newspapers also perform an important socialization function by transmitting norms, knowledge, values and interpretations through which individuals understand the society. Socialization involves the progression through which people gain knowledge about acceptable behaviours, social expectations, institutions and cultural values. Newspaper reportage contributes to this process through the repeated presentation of a particular idea, personalities, social problems and interpretations of events. The selection and framing of news can therefore influence how readers understand issues such as education, health, family relationships, crime, gender, youth development and mental health.

The concepts of social surveillance and socialization provide useful analytical perspectives. Newspapers can act as social surveillance institutions by identifying mental-health problems, reporting cases, monitoring governmental responses, highlighting service gaps and bringing the experiences of young people and professionals into public discourse. Newspaper organization socialize readers by communicating particular understandings of depression, anxiety, suicide, substance use, stigma, treatment and help-seeking. The consequence of this role is heightened by the continuing presence of news media in Nigeria; although print media have experienced declining reach as digital platforms have expanded, Nigeria still has a considerable number of national and local print titles (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2024).

Social surveillance and socialization in respect of newspaper reportage of youth mental health requires attention not only to what newspapers report, but also to what they make socially

visible, whose voices they publish, which norms they reproduce, and how their representations may contribute to public understanding of youth mental health. Newspapers also perform a surveillance and watchdog function by monitoring societal activities, exposing problems, and drawing public attention to issues requiring accountability and institutional response (Aja, Chukwu, Obichili, Odoh, Ngene, & Opara, 2024). Newspaper reportage denotes the systematic gathering, selection, framing, and presentation of news content in print and online newspaper platforms. This involves headline construction, story, placement, source selection, narrative framing, and visual representation. Newspaper reporting has been central to Nigeria's socio-political development, serving not only as a vehicle for information dissemination but also as an instrument of political advocacy, resistance, and identity formation (Alimi, 2024).

Since inception in the mid-19th century to the contemporary digital age, Nigerian newspapers have traversed colonial censorship, independence struggles, military repression, and democratic transitions. The development of newspaper reporting in Nigeria, highlights the key milestones, influential publications, and contextualizing its broader role in shaping public national consciousness, discourse and political transformation. Although, newspaper reporting in Nigeria has historically been much more than information dissemination but served as vehicle for political mobilization and liberation, especially during colonial and nationalist struggles. It amplified indigenous voices and contributed to anti-colonial consciousness (West African Pilot; Nigerian journalism under the digital and democratic crossfire). While serving as agent of accountability and democratic engagement, during in post-independence and democratic epochs, newspapers functioned as watchdogs inspecting governance and advocating transparency.

Similarly, it remains a forum for social dialogue and cultural expression, newspapers have documented social issues, cultural transformations, and public sentiment across decades. Newspaper reporting shaped civic

engagement and accountability in a nascent democracy, as media outlets reported on legislative actions, economic policies, and social issues (Aja et. al., 2024). The military overthrow of the First Republic in 1966 marked the beginning of systematic repression of the press. Throughout successive military regimes (1966–1979; 1983–1999), the press was perceived by authorities as a threat to political stability and was subjected to censorship, arbitrary detentions, and closure of critical publications (Nigerian journalism under the digital and democratic crossfire). Journalists were often harassed or imprisoned, and editorial independence was compromised by authoritarian decrees that restricted freedom of expression.

The return of Nigeria into civilian rule in 1999 brought newspaper reporting to a new phase characterized by greater press freedom and diversification of content (Olukotun, 2004; U.S. Department of State, 2000). The Guardian (founded 1983) continued to play significant roles in democratic discourse, covering human rights, governance, and civic issues despite periodic confrontations with state censorship (The Guardian Nigeria, 2022). Institutional protections for freedom of expression expanded the space for investigative journalism and editorial critique.

The upsurge of the internet in the 21st century saw the advent of online newspaper platforms that redefined news reporting in Nigeria. Premium Times, founded in 2011, became known for investigative journalism and participation in global collaborations such as the Panama Papers exposé (Egwu, 2023; Premium Times, n.d.). Also, Peoples Gazette, launched in 2020, gained national prominence for hard-hitting investigative reporting and challenging political harassment (Peoples Gazette). Online newspapers have broadened the reach of reporting, making news more accessible and enabling real-time dissemination. These digital platforms also reflect evolving audience expectations for immediate, multimedia content compared to traditional print cycles (Adeyemo, 2025; Ayobolu, 2024).

Youth and Youth Fragmentation Composite in a Healthy Society

The relevance of youth in any nation's population cannot be over emphasized, therefore their emotional and psychological well-being must never be undermined in view of their capacity to contribute meaningfully into the economic and social stability of such a nation. Youth mental health, therefore refers to the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of individuals (typically aged 12–24 or up to 30), encompassing their ability to cope with stress, build relationships, and function effectively (WHO 2025). It is a proactive state of flourishing-not merely the absence of illness-essential for development and positive, meaningful participation in society (WHO 2025). Scholarly definitions emphasized that youth mental health is more than the absence of disorder; but equally encompass positive functioning, emotional well-being, social connectedness, and life satisfaction.

Positive mental health among youth, therefore includes; interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and personal growth (Vaingankar, Subramaniam, Seow, Chang, Sambasivam, Luo, Verma, Chong & van Dam 2022). Emotional well-being reinstates positive emotions, resilience, self-esteem, and supportive relationships, influenced by antecedents such as nurturing social environments and stable family connections (Courtwright, Makic & Jones, 2020). The above submissions align with an integrated model of mental health as a dynamic balance of cognitive, emotional, behavioural, social, and contextual factors rather than simply symptom absence (Coronel-Santos & Rodríguez-Macías, 2022).

Youth Mental Health Burden

Youth mental health is a vital component of healthy development because adolescence and young adulthood represent formative stages through which emotional, psychological, social and behavioural capacities are established and linked. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) emphasized that supporting adolescent mental health and well-being is essential for a healthy transition from childhood to adulthood and for laying the foundation for

productive adult lives (UNICEF, 2025). In a similar vein, WHO (2025) reported that approximately one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 years experiences a mental health condition globally, with depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders among the leading causes of illness and disability in this age group, while one out of six youths suffers mental health condition.

WHO and UNICEF (2024) further stress that early intervention is particularly important because approximately one-third of mental health conditions emerge before age 14 and about half before age 18. Consequently, promoting youth mental health is expected to extend beyond treating diagnosed disorders but should include prevention, early identification, psychosocial support, positive relationships, supportive family and school environments, and accessible youth-friendly mental health services. UNICEF (2025) also identified mental health and psychosocial well-being as integral to sustainable development and reports that its programmes increasingly integrate mental health support across health, education and child-protection systems.

Positive mental health is equally important because youth well-being involves more than the absence of mental illness. It encompasses the development of emotional regulation, resilience, healthy interpersonal relationships, coping and problem-solving abilities, self-efficacy and the capacity to participate meaningfully in family, educational and community life. From a Nigerian perspective, Gureje (2024) emphasized that social conditions have key implications for the initial course and recovery from mental illness, while noting that people's living environments, social relationships, access to resources and broader socioeconomic circumstances can influence emotions and behaviour.

Forthwith, mental-health promotion, prevention, advocacy and mental well-being further reflects the importance of addressing youth mental health through preventive and community-oriented approaches rather than relying exclusively on clinical treatment (Abdulmalik, 2025). The media as one of the stakeholders occupies a vital position on

advocacy and health promotion. UNICEF identifies anxiety and depressive disorders as major contributors to the burden of mental disorders among adolescents, alongside conduct disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (UNICEF, 2025). Similarly, WHO (2025) identifies anxiety, depression, behavioural disorders, eating disorders and psychotic disorders among conditions affecting adolescents, while suicide remains a major concern among older adolescents and young adults. The media specifically the newspaper could assist in strengthening youth mental health, which requires an integrated approach for positive psychological well-being, thereby preventing avoidable mental health problems.

Theoretical review

This study on newspaper reportage of youth mental health in Nigeria is anchored on the Agenda-Setting and Social Cognitive Theories. The agenda setting theory explains the emphasis that media places on specific issues which can stimulate policy action. In this regard, when newspapers consistently highlight health concerns such as mental health, maternal mortality or infectious disease outbreaks, public awareness and political pressure will be intensified (McCombs, 2014). In the Nigerian context, where public health infrastructure and policy responses are challenged by resource constraints, media attention to youth mental health could potentially stimulate greater governmental and institutional responsiveness. The agenda theory acknowledges that agenda-setting effects are influenced by competing media narratives, audience predispositions, and the sociopolitical environment (McCombs, 2014; Funk & McCombs, 2015). In developing nations, these dynamics are further shaped by cultural beliefs, limited health journalism expertise, and editorial prioritization of political and economic news over social health concerns. The social cognitive theory on the other hand is highly relevant to the study on newspaper reportage of youth mental health in Nigeria as it explains how media messages influence individuals' belief, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Newspaper reports serve as sources of observational learning through its

presentation of stories about mental illness, recovery, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and psychological well-being. Through repeated exposure to these stories, readers may develop new understandings of mental health, adopt positive coping behaviours, or become more willing to seek professional assistance.

The theory also expounds that newspapers can either reinforce or reduce stigma depending on how mental health issues are framed. Stakeholders have continued to argue that reports that emphasize recovery, expert guidance, and available mental health services are likely to promote help-seeking behavior and improve self-efficacy. Besides, reports that sensationalize suicide, portray individuals with mental illness negatively, or associate mental disorders with violence may discourage young people from seeking treatment and reinforce societal prejudice (Akinola & Egbokhare, 2024; WHO, 2025). Therefore, social cognitive theory provides a robust psychological framework for examining how newspaper coverage contributes to the formation of mental health attitudes, influences help-seeking intentions, and shapes public understanding of youth mental health in Nigeria. It complements communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing theory by explaining the psychological mechanisms through which media messages affect audience behaviour.

Methodology

This study on newspaper reportage of youth mental health in Nigeria adopted content analysis through the use of quantitative method. The design became appropriate as it enabled the researcher to systematically scrutinize both the manifest and latent contents of newspaper reports published in some selected national newspapers between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2025. The population of the study comprised all editions of the four selected national newspapers: Daily Trust, Vanguard, Nigerian Tribune and the Sun published between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2025 (16,060 newspaper editions). These newspapers were carefully selected due to their national circulation, editorial influence, consistent publication history, and accessibility of archival materials.

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique involving sequential sampling procedures to identify the final units of newspaper articles analysed. At the first stage, purposive sampling was employed to select four national newspapers Daily Trust, Vanguard, Nigerian Tribune and the Sun. The newspapers were selected based on their national circulation, editorial credibility, digital presence, regular publication, geographical spread, accessibility of archival records from the Leadcity University Library, The Nigerian Tribune Library, Vanguard Library and all E-copies of Daily Trust Newspapers were

accessed from the National office coupled with the recognised influence of these newspapers in shaping public discourse on national issues. The careful selection equally ensured representation of different ownership structures across the geo-political zones and editorial orientations within the Nigerian newspaper industry. The unit of population consisted of every newspaper edition published within the study period. Since the study covered eleven calendar years, the total population was estimated based on one edition per newspaper per day as follows:

Findings

Table 1:
Distribution of Reported Youth Mental Health among the Selected Newspapers
Reported Youth Mental Health

Status	Vanguard %	Tribune %	Daily Trust %	The Sun %
Yes	31.8	53.2	19.0	29.9
No	68.2	46.8	81.0	70.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1 presents the distribution of youth mental health reports across the selected newspapers. The findings reveal that youth mental health issues received relatively low or limited attention in the sampled newspapers, as 19.0% newspaper articles reported youth mental health from the 322 synthesized articles on mental health from the *Daily Trust* newspaper, while its overwhelming majority of sampled contents (81.0%) did not report on youth mental health, only 29.9% focused on the subject in the *Sun* newspaper. Across the individual newspapers, *Tribune* recorded the highest proportion of youth mental health articles (53.2%), indicating a comparatively stronger editorial commitment to reporting mental health issues affecting young people

which is a pointer to the complementary efforts from its mental health column being managed by a psychiatrist. Similarly, *Vanguard* (31.8%) and *The Sun* (29.9%) devoted less than one-third of their sampled reports to youth mental health.

These findings suggest that although youth mental health has emerged as an issue of increasing public concern, it is yet to occupy a prominent position within the editorial agenda of the selected newspapers. The relatively low level of reportage across the newspapers further implies that youth mental health remains an underreported public health issue, with considerable opportunities for the media to expand and sustain coverage in ways that enhance public awareness and understanding.

Table 2:
Distribution of Youth Mental Health Reports by Placement and story space allocation across the Selected Newspapers

Placement				
Status	Vanguard %	Tribune %	Daily Trust %	The Sun %
Front Page	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.0
Inside front Page	4.5	9.5	.3	4.1
Inside Page	95.5	66.8	96.0	77.3
Back Page	0.0	2.1	0.0	1.0
Inside back page	0.0	18.4	0.0	4.1
Centre Spread	0.0	2.6	1.2	3.1
Editorial Page	0.0	.5	.3	8.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Story Space				
Status	Vanguard %	Tribune %	Daily Trust %	The Sun %
Full page	50.0	25.8	16.1	14.4
Half Page	36.4	51.6	33.9	43.3
Quarter Page	9.1	6.3	17.4	36.1
Tiny Page	4.5	16.3	32.6	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2 presents the placement of youth mental health stories across the selected newspapers. The findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of the reports were tucked in the inside pages of the newspapers. Specifically, *Daily Trust* recorded the highest proportion of inside-page placement (96.0%), followed closely by *Vanguard* (95.5%) and *Tribune* (66.8%), while *The Sun* also devoted the majority of its reports (77.3%) to inside pages. Equally, very few stories appeared on the front page, with only *Daily Trust* recording 2.2%, while both *Vanguard* and *Tribune* had no

front-page reports. Similarly, placements on the back page, centre spread and editorial page were minimal across the selected newspapers.

This pattern suggests that despite the minimal youth mental health reportage, it was generally not accorded high news prominence within the newspapers. The concentration of reports on inside pages implies that youth mental health was treated with lack of prominence and as secondary issue, receiving coverage without being prioritised as a leading news agenda capable of attracting immediate public attention.

Meanwhile, in the aspect the distribution of youth mental health reports according to the amount of newspaper space allocated to the stories. The study shows that half-page stories constituted the most frequently utilised format across the selected newspapers. *Nigerian Tribune* allocated over half of its reports to half-page stories (51.6%), while *The Sun* (43.3%) and *Vanguard* (36.4%) also demonstrated a preference for this

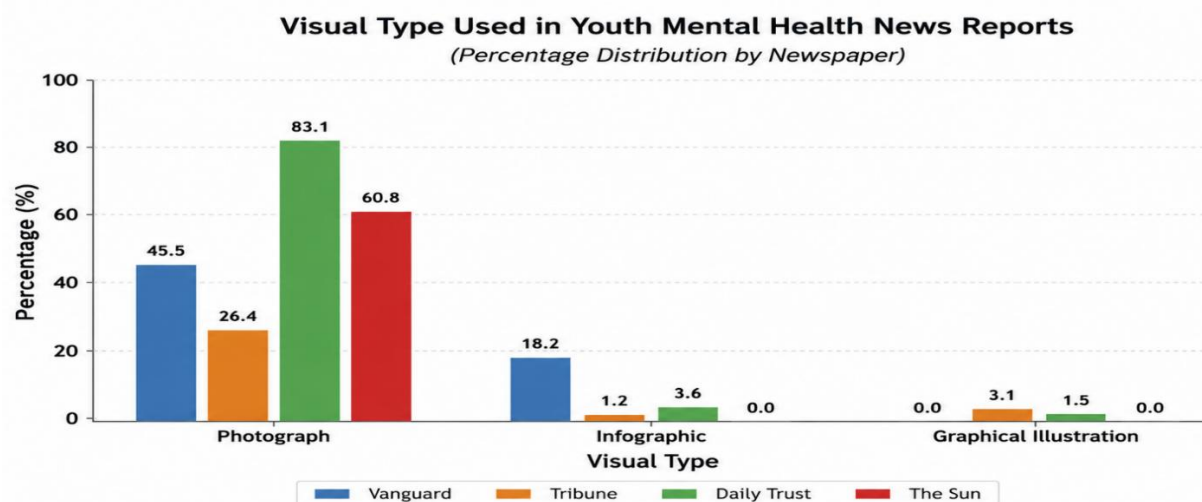
format. However, *Vanguard* recorded the highest proportion of full-page reports (50.0%), indicating a greater willingness to dedicate substantial editorial space to selected youth mental health issues. In contrast, *Daily Trust* allocated a relatively higher proportion of its stories to tiny pages (32.6%), suggesting a more economical use of space for mental health reporting.

Table 3:
Distribution of Youth Mental Health Reports by Frequency of Story across the Selected Newspapers

Frequency of Story				
Status	Vanguard %	Tribune %	Daily Trust %	The Sun %
Occasional publication (Annual World Mental Awareness / Drug Day)	54.5	17.4	87.5	27.8
Recurrent/ Regular coverage (same issue reported multiple times)	27.3	22.1	4.4	16.5
Unwanted occurrence	18.2	35.8	4.7	43.3
Follow-up story	0.0	24.7	3.4	12.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3 also answers the research question on extent of reportage of youth mental health, showing the frequency with which youth mental health stories were reported across the selected newspapers. The findings indicate that the reportage of youth mental health was largely occasional during world mental health days and world drug free day or suicide reporting rather than sustained reportage. *Daily Trust* recorded the highest proportion of occasional publications (87.5%), while *Vanguard* also reported more than half of its stories (54.5%) on an occasional basis, suggesting that coverage was often linked to specific events or commemorative occasions rather than continuous editorial attention.

Conversely, *Tribune* recorded the highest proportion of unwanted occurrence stories (oddities) 35.8% and also showed the greatest percentage of follow-up reports (24.7%), indicating a relatively stronger effort to revisit mental health issues after their initial publication. Recurrent or regular coverage remained generally low across the newspapers, with only *Vanguard* recording 27.3% and *Tribune* 22.1%, while *Daily Trust* reported just 4.4%. Overall, the findings suggest that youth mental health reportage was predominantly event-driven, with limited evidence of sustained or continuous media attention capable of keeping the issue consistently within public discourse.



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of visual elements accompanying youth mental health news reports across the four selected newspapers. The findings indicate that photographs were the predominant visual type used by all the newspapers. Within Daily Trust, photographs constituted 83.1% of the visual materials used, representing the highest proportion among the newspapers. This was followed by The Sun (60.8%), Vanguard (45.5%), and Tribune (26.4%). The result suggests that photographs were the preferred visual device for illustrating youth mental health stories across the selected newspapers. The use of infographics was comparatively limited. Vanguard recorded the highest proportion of infographics (18.2%), while Daily Trust (3.6%) and Tribune (1.2%) made minimal use of this visual format. The Sun did not employ infographics in the sampled reports. Similarly, graphical illustrations were rarely utilised in the reportage of youth mental health. Tribune recorded the highest proportion (3.1%), followed by Daily Trust (1.5%), whereas Vanguard and The Sun did not employ graphical illustrations in the sampled articles.

Discussion of Findings

Conclusion and Recommendations

Drawing from the findings, the study concludes that newspaper reportage in Nigeria is relatively low on youth mental health related issues, indicating that the matter of youth mental health is yet to occupy a prominent position within the editorial agenda of the selected newspapers. To this end, youth mental health reportage is a predominantly event-driven

matter in Nigerian newspaper circle, with limited evidence of sustained or continuous media attention capable of keeping the issue consistently within public discourse. The position and placement of reportage suggests that youth mental is not accorded high news prominence within the newspapers. The concentration of reports on inside pages implies that youth mental health was treated with lack of prominence and as minor issue, while the story space equally suggests a more economical use of space for mental health reporting. It is therefore recommended that media organisations should therefore facilitate continuous training to institutionalise specialised mental health reporting, capable of strengthening journalists' capacity development and increased level of reportage of youth mental health.

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