Representation of Invisible Illnesses in Nigeria Newspapers (June 2023 – June 2024): A Mixed-Method Study

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ABSTRACT

Invisible illnesses, such as mental health conditions, chronic fatigue syndrome, and fibromyalgia among many other medical conditions with no symptom visibility. These invisible conditions are often misunderstood due to their lack of visible symptoms, and also low representation on many media of communication which have failed in term of sensitization and informing audiences about these conditions. This study used two research methods by combining content analysis and survey research, to examine the representation of invisible illnesses in Nigerian newspapers. The findings reveal disparities in Nigeria Newspapers coverage, with predominantly neutral tone with some negative tones taking few percentages stance, and a focus on news stories with limited personal narratives in the coverages. The survey results show low public awareness and understanding of invisible illnesses, with perceived negative and stigmatizing media coverage. The study highlighted the need for increased sensitization, balanced representation, and personal stories to promote understanding and empathy. The findings have implications for media reporting, public health education, and support for individuals affected by invisible illnesses.

Keywords: Public awareness, invisible illnesses, Stigma, health perception, Newspaper.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding invisible illnesses isn't overstretched with its name and how low its popularity is among people continues year to year. Bassler (2014), even describes Invisible illnesses as a distinct challenge to disability and societal perceptions, as they do not have visible symptoms or outward manifestations, making it difficult for others to recognize or acknowledge the individual's disability status. Due to these invisible symptoms, it has continued to cause misconceptions and stigma for victims from all walks of life. Among many types of invisible illnesses, Goldman & Lewis (2008), singled out Mental illnesses as a predominant concept among many invisible illnesses that impact many individuals' lives, and significantly impact daily functioning and relationships of victims—characterized as an invisible disability, mental health conditions

which often go unrecognized, leading to misconceptions about their impact on behavior and performance. Notably, mental illnesses manifest in apparent misconduct, poor work performance, or strained interpersonal relationships, highlighting the need for increased awareness and understanding.

Mental illness might need understanding and awareness to help victims get better, but contrarily, Carroll et al. (2020), also identified how these invisible illnesses go beyond causing work or family sore depicting how Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) being an invisible illness is often shrouded in misconceptions and stigma, affecting not only the children diagnosed with the condition but also their caregivers and the medical professionals involved in their care. This shared experience, marked by a lack of awareness and understanding, can significantly impact the overall quality of life of these individuals, underscoring the need for increased education, support, and empathy to mitigate its effects.

However, the need to understand other areas of invisible deemed Pilkington (2020), to share another sphere of invisible illnesses, chronic fatigue syndrome, and myalgia encephalomyelitis as a debilitating, long-term condition marked by unexplained, persistent fatigue that is not alleviated by rest and is often accompanied by a range of additional symptoms, including muscle pain, joint pain, headaches, and cognitive difficulties, resulting in substantial disability that affects victims' daily life. The position of personal experiences of invisible illnesses varies and it could go beyond the pain felt but more life-challenging issues. Moore (2013), further described the deprivation of normal well-being caused by these invisible illnesses with major doubts on the condition, as the author's experience with illness invisibility flare-up sparks a reflection on the impact of illness on an athletic body in a sports culture that values risk-taking. This prompts questions about the legitimacy of invisible chronic illnesses in a culture that often doubts their validity. However, many researchers compounded the glaring solution on the cultural and medical perception of these illnesses.

Gualano, et al. (2023), suggested the use of Virtual Reality tools as a panacea to solve conflicting situations around medical conditions, which include invisible illnesses. He further addressed this solution as an opportunity to eradicate the stigmatization and further victims' chance to speak more about their conditions.

This research on Newspaper representation of invisible illnesses aim to address the knowledge gap that has been left for so long, even though fewer researchers have ventured into giving an academic touch of research to invisible illnesses in the area of health communication. Souza (2020), gave considerable research on invisible illnesses and their victims but failed to address the media interest in his research. However, the research also left a contextual gap by it inability to address a definite society or population.

Furthermore, the understanding of Invisible illnesses cannot be described as static rather, Ropski (2023), suggested the renaming of invisible illness as 'dynamic' which is a step towards reducing stigma, but this research failed to define the importance of examining and transforming the representation of invisible illness in mainstream media, which has a significant impact on public perception and understanding, and advocating for more authentic and inclusive portrayals that capture the diverse experiences of individuals living with such conditions, this research is going to find out about. Despite numerous studies on invisible illnesses (II) focusing on coping mechanisms, support systems, cultural attitudes, and stigmas, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding the media's role in shaping public understanding and support for individuals affected by (II). This research aims to address this oversight by exploring the media's representation of (II), including often-overlooked conditions like Fibromyalgia and Chronic pain, and examining the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin media portrayals of (II). Through the investigation of media's potential to educate and inform, this study seeks to promote more accurate and empathetic representations of II, ultimately fostering greater understanding and support for those affected.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The understanding of Nigeria citizen about their health is shallow, with millions of Nigerians living with

little or no understanding of what invisible illnesses are. These illnesses are glaring right before our eyes yet it is qualified with cultural, spiritual or social excuses.

This has led to several research gaps with which this research intends to fix. In-view of these, this research work intends to understand the portrayal of invisible illnesses on Nigeria newspapers. Through careful analysis of the experiences, misconceptions and stigmatization of these conditions as reported by several selected newspapers.

Furthermore, there may be a gap in understanding of public on invisible illnesses relating to the perceptions and attitudes towards individuals living with invisible illnesses in Nigeria, which could influence social support and healthcare access, which the research intends to also find out.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is important as it seeks to bridge the gap between the representation of invisible illnesses in Nigeria newspapers and the actual experiences of individuals living with these conditions or anyone with relatives with this condition invisibility.

By exploring public perceptions and attitudes towards invisible illnesses, this study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of how these conditions are perceived in society and how they can be better represented in the media to reduce stigma and increase awareness.

This research finding will help in fixing the social gap of knowledge for health care practitioners, and also help government to develop policies that will support people with this condition and combat stigmatization around it.

Finally, this will improve the knowledge and perception of people about the existence of this condition against usual cultural perceptive of the medical condition.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the portrayal of invisible illnesses in Nigeria newspapers and identify any patterns or biases in representation.
2. To examine public perceptions and attitudes towards individuals living with invisible illnesses in Nigeria.
3. To assess the impact of media representation on public understanding of invisible illnesses and its implications for individuals with these conditions.
4. To provide recommendations for more accurate and sensitive representation of invisible illnesses in Nigeria newspapers to promote awareness, empathy, and support for affected individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

REPRESENTATION OF INVISIBLE ILLNESSES

Many studies described the representation of invisible illnesses abysmally, as it should be given a better edge in the media, writing, and literature. Fios (2018), supported this by characterizing the successes of the portrayal of invisible illnesses yet its dwindling representation remains. Souza (2020), further stated that only a few research works have been done on invisible illnesses, which in turn has led to viral misinformation and stigmatization. He further aligned this low representation as the reason many victims have shown lesser interest in showing their condition and also people showing low solidarity for them due to lack of information. Researchers have yet to explore how people with invisible disabilities want to self-

represent (Ria Gualano, 2023).

While several studies generalize the position, status, and information of Invisible illness, Souza (2020) suggested a better and clearer differentiation and discussions on Invisible illnesses fused with the belief that introducing individualization would place the condition better for those suffering from the condition and the people for better understanding. However, other studies argued the need for writers to endeavor to invest in disability studies in other to help push a better and standardized representation of invisible illnesses than the status quo.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Construction of Illness

The proposed research was suggested by Gergen in 1985, and is of utmost importance, firmly rooted in the Social Construction of Illness Theory. This theory provides a strong theoretical background that enables the possibility of finding the interaction between complex views, which range from public views, media portrayals, and the live realities of those with invisible illnesses. It is a crucial field of research with the potential to significantly impact how we view health and illness in our society, influencing public opinion, perception, and understanding. The significant finding around this theory is that our understanding and perception of different health disorders, especially those that are not visible or "invisible," are crafted by socio-cultural processes unlike the biological view.

This theoretical approach explains how people create the prevailing cultural narratives and public attitudes about various illnesses. Examples include patient advocacy groups, healthcare professionals, and media sources. The definition of the concept medicalization and de-medicalization, refers to the processes of categorising and treating certain conditions as medical issues, which are described by the Social Construction of Illness Theory. This dynamism affects how the public and the medical community perceive, understand, and treat invisible illnesses significantly.

Furthermore, the theory investigates how the social construction of sickness can result in the marginalisation and stigmatization of those with specific medical illnesses, especially those that are unclear to others or not readily seen (Invisible Illnesses). In the context of invisible illnesses, where misunderstandings, prejudices, and biases can have a concrete impact on the lives and well-being of those affected, this is an essential factor to take into account.

The suggested research on how invisible illnesses are portrayed in the media is consistent with the Social Construction of Illness Theory. It offers a thorough, multidisciplinary framework by including ideas from sociology, public health, and media studies combined. The Frameworks to work with include:

1. Analyze how the media shapes public perceptions of invisible illnesses and the prevailing cultural narratives around them. This will entail a critical examination of how different media sources contribute to the social construction of these medical conditions through their reporting and framing.
2. Examine the role various personalities, including medical professionals, patient advocates, and media experts, have in creating and propagating stereotypes about invisible illnesses. This will clarify the relationships and conflicting interests around how the media covers these health-related stories.
3. Examine how invisible illnesses are medicalized and de-medicalized, and how the media portrays these conditions to affect their social, cultural, and political viewpoints.
4. Learn how stigma, misunderstandings, and marginalization of people with invisible diseases are perpetuated by media representations of these conditions and how this affects their access to resources and experiences.
5. Provide suggestions for more truthful, sympathetic, and inclusive media portrayals of invisible illnesses. These suggestions may increase public awareness, lessen stigma, and improve the general well-being of individuals who are impacted. This research holds great promise for positive change

since it has the potential to significantly improve the lives of people with invisible illnesses.

Newspaper

Newspapers have long been considered a vital source of information for the general public. Throughout centuries, they have functioned as a medium for providing news on significant events to readers. According to Abcteach (2008), a newspaper is a publication that is issued either daily or weekly, containing a diverse array of content, including local and international news stories, advertisements, announcements, opinions, cartoons, sports news, and television listings. Newspapers continue to be an integral part of everyday life, even with the advancements in computer technology.

It is essential to understand the various sections of a newspaper and the type of information each one contains. The front page typically features the most significant stories of the day, with each story having its own "headline" and "by-line" identifying the reporter who authored it. News stories generally follow a specific structure, where the first paragraph addresses the most important of the 5 W's and H's (who, what, where, when, why, and how), and the subsequent paragraphs provide additional details and context.

While not all news stories can be neatly categorized, there are common elements in the structure of most news stories. These include 1) the opening paragraph answering the key 5 W's and H; 2) the following paragraphs elaborating on the information provided in the lead and offering more details; 3) the inclusion of background information to provide context for the story; 4) the incorporation of quotations or statements to explain the significance of the news story; and 5) the organization of details into paragraphs, each focusing on a specific aspect of the story.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the representation of invisible illnesses in Nigerian newspapers and the perceptions of newspaper readers. In a study by Aramo-Immonen (2013), mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the whole research problem thoroughly. The advantages of this research design are that it creates a connection between various data and enhances understanding of the research hypothesis, which Poth and Munce (2020) emphasized more.

This study employed two research methods: content analysis and survey research. The earlier focused on examining how invisible illnesses are portrayed in Nigerian newspapers, looking at frequencies, types, tones, and sources. Due to time constraints, the analysis was limited to content analysis, and thematic analysis was not included. However, we chose newspapers for content analysis: The Punch, Leadership, Daily Trust, and Vanguard Newspapers. These newspapers were selected for their extensive readership and balanced coverage of Nigeria's geopolitical zones. These newspapers were picked as our sample size due to their popularity and wide readership among many other Nigerian newspapers using purposive sampling.

The survey research method, on the other hand, investigated the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of newspaper readers regarding invisible illnesses. A sample size of 150 respondents using online sampling was selected across Nigeria, and an online questionnaire powered by Google Forms was used to collect data. Closed-ended questions were developed to ensure definable answers. The survey sample was selected from different parts of Nigeria to ensure collectiveness and equal representation.

SAMPLING METHOD

While our population is Nigeria, with large publics, we started off by selecting newspapers from different geopolitical zones in Nigeria regarding the content analysis method, and using Google Forms distributed in

large social media groups for the questionnaire. Which we sampled through the combination of purposive sampling (Newspapers that serve all part of the country), and convenience sampling methods (distributing questionnaire using internet platform which would in turn be easy to analyze).

Purposive sampling was employed when selecting newspapers from various geopolitical zones to ensure representation from different regions of Nigeria. This method allowed the researcher to deliberately choose newspapers that are widely read and influential in specific areas, such as Daily Trust and Premium Times in the North, as well as Punch and Vanguard in the South.

Convenience sampling was utilized when distributing your questionnaire through Google Forms in large social media groups. This method involves selecting participants based on their availability and accessibility, making it convenient to reach a large number of respondents quickly through online platforms like social media groups.

By using a mix of purposive and convenience sampling methods, the research findings were able to strategically use four (4) major newspapers for content analysis and efficiently reach a broad audience using the social media tool Google Form for questionnaire distribution and analysis, which ensure diversity in sample and maximize quality responses in the research.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Frequency of representation of invisible illnesses in Nigeria Newspapers.

TOTAL NUMBER OF INVISIBLE ILLNESSES MENTIONED	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
PUNCH	42	31.1%
VANGUARD	26	19.3%
LEADERSHIP	27	20%
DAILY TRUST	40	29.6%
TOTAL	135	100%

Result from fig & table 1.0. Indicates that there is a noticeable difference in how invisible illnesses are portrayed in the four newspapers sampled (Punch, Vanguard, Daily Trust, and Leadership), according to the findings. Punch Newspaper had the highest percentage (31%), closely followed by Leadership (20.2%) and Daily Trust Newspaper (29.6%), with Vanguard having the lowest (19.2%). This disparity implies that certain newspapers give invisible illnesses a higher priority than others. Between July 2023 and July 2024, there were 135 mentions of invisible illnesses in all four National Newspapers, which suggests that these conditions are often discussed in the media. However, the unequal distribution is questionable. Which is likened to questions such as: Is it because of the stigma that particular disorders carry in society? What is the available knowledge, or editorial priorities? The popularity of Punch and Daily Trust in covering invisible illnesses could point to a stronger link to sources with information on these conditions or a greater dedication to health journalism. On the other hand, Vanguard's lesser coverage might be the consequence of scarce resources or an emphasis on other newsworthy issues.

This was supported by a 2020 study conducted by the Nigeria Press Council, which researched the areas covered in Nigerian newspapers. Health reports accounted for 8.2% of the total, while those on crime and sports accounted for 36%. The public's knowledge and comprehension of invisible illnesses are affected by this disparity in coverage. The media has a significant influence on how people perceive health issues, and differences in how different topics are covered can lead to misunderstandings or ignorance regarding particular health conditions.

THE REPRESENTATION OF INVISIBLE ILLNESSES IN NIGERIA NEWSPAPERS.

MENTIONED INVISIBLE ILLNESSES IN EACH NEWSPAPER	MENTAL HEALTH	CHRONIC PAIN	FIBROMYALGIA	ANXIETY
PUNCH	38	4	0	0
VANGUARD	23	2	0	1
LEADERSHIP	25	2	0	0
DAILY TRUST	35	3	2	0
	121	11	2	1
PERCENTAGE	89.6%	8.1%	1. 5%	0. 8%

MENTIONED INVISIBLE ILLNESSES ON EACH NEWSPAPERS (HIGHEST-LOWEST)
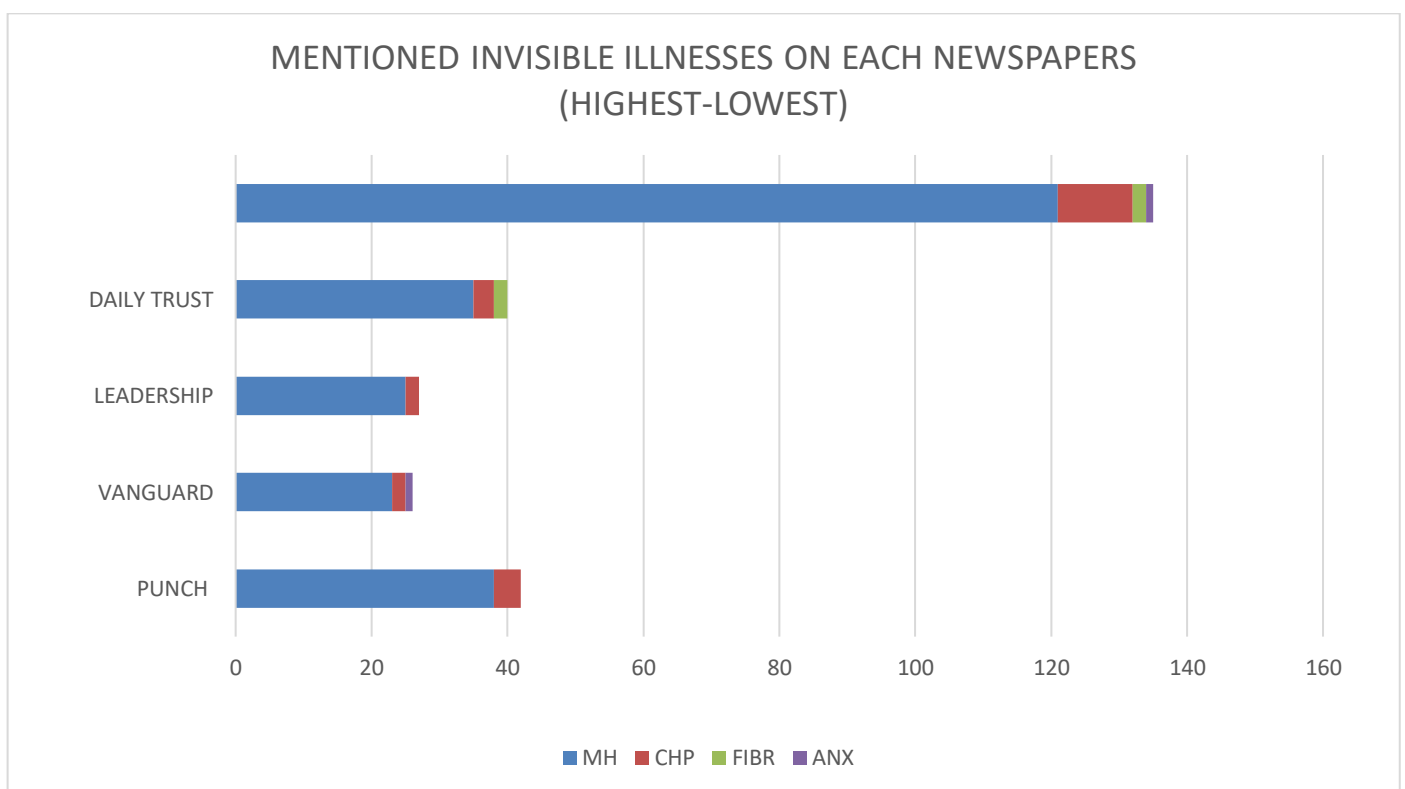
According to the study displayed in Table 1.1 & figure 1.1, some invisible illnesses are discussed more than others in Nigerian newspapers. Mental health (illness) is the most often covered, making up 89.6% of the information published. This intense attention to mental health may be a reaction to growing concerns about mental wellbeing or a sign of Nigerians' increasing awareness of its significance. By comparison, only 8%, 1%, and 0.7% of coverage are allocated to chronic pain, fibromyalgia, and anxiety, respectively. These disparities questioned whether certain conditions are marginalized or are underreported. Are they thought to be less important or noteworthy by Nigerian viewers?

The prevalence of mental illness may also indicate a change in public perceptions, with mental health progressively being acknowledged as a vital component of general well-being. But ignoring other invisible illnesses, including anxiety and fibromyalgia, could lead to stigma, false beliefs, or insufficient care for those who need it. This unequal coverage affects people's knowledge, comprehension, and ability to support those who suffer from a variety of invisible illnesses. A more knowledgeable and compassionate society may result from the media's emphasis on mental health, but current health disparities may be made worse by its relative disregard for other illnesses.

THE TONE OF REPRESENTED INVISIBLE ILLNESSES ON NIGERIA NEWSPAPERS.

TONE	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
PUNCH	17	14	11
VANGUARD	16	5	5
LEADERSHIP	15	5	7
DAILY TRUST	19	13	8
TOTAL	67	37	31
PERCENTAGE	49.6%	27.4%	23%
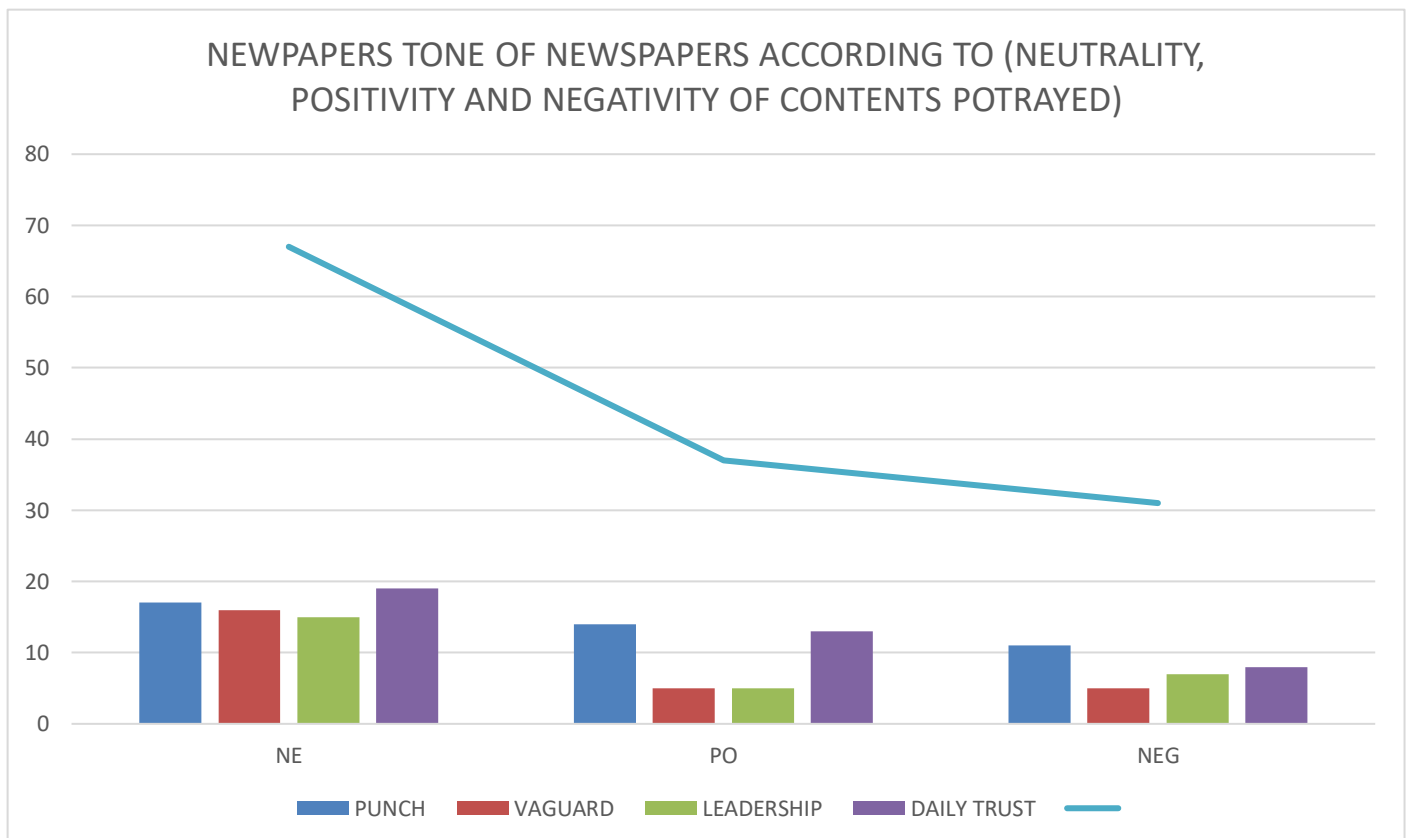
The tone analysis of the newspapers, as shown in Table 1.2, demonstrates a complex reporting environment about invisible illnesses. A dedication to accurate reporting, delivering information free from emotional bias or sensationalism, is indicated by the neutral tone that predominates (49%) in the data. This strategy aids in preventing stigmatization, fostering understanding, Present the facts to the victims without using demeaning language to show support.

The encouraging positive tone (27%) indicates an attempt to inspire and encourage victims impacted by invisible illnesses. This tone can assist in lowering stigma and encourage optimism and resiliency. Encourage the development of a caring community. Nonetheless, the negative tone (22%) raises concerns since it could support discrimination, stigma, and unfavorable stereotypes. The negative tone draws attention to the necessity of ethical reporting techniques, making sure that the media does not exacerbate the suffering of those with invisible illnesses. Although there is still an opportunity for improvement, the tone analysis generally indicates that Nigerian publications are attempting to report on invisible illnesses responsibly. A more knowledgeable, compassionate, and inclusive society can be greatly aided by the media's promotion of a supporting and fair tone.

FRAMING OF REPRESENTED INVISIBLE ILLNESSES ON NIGERIA NEWSPAPERS.

FRAME	NEWS STORY	FEATURE STORY	EDITORIAL
PUNCH	25	17	0
VANGUARD	17	9	0
LEADERSHIP	23	3	1
DAILY TRUST	25	15	0
TOTAL	90	44	1
PERCENTAGE	66.7%	32.6%	0.7%

According to the framing study, news stories (66.6%) are the main way that information about invisible illnesses is presented in Nigerian publications. This implies that these situations are frequently covered by the media as current, factual happenings rather than in-depth profiles of people with interest or editorials with strong opinions.

The frequency of news articles could suggest an emphasis on:

– Spreading knowledge about health conditions that are invisible through reporting on current events or research.

-Giving the audience accurate information on invisible illnesses.

The comparatively low usage of editorials (0.7%) and feature stories (32.5%), however, would indicate a lost chance for a more thorough examination and thoughtful investigation of these complicated issues. Personal narratives, professional views, and analysis can all be found in a feature story; while opinion-driven points and advocacy can be found in editorials.

The notable absence of editorial coverage with (0.7%) which account to questions about whether newspapers are using their opinion sections to influence public opinion or push for societal changes about invisible illnesses. The framing analysis as a whole pointed to the need for a wider narrative techniques and opinionated articles to balance the prevalent news story structure. Nigerian media can offer a deeper understanding of invisible illnesses and their effects on people by including more information in editorials and feature stories.

SOURCES USED BY THE REPRESENTED INVISIBLE ILLNESSES IN NIGERIA NEWSPAPERS.

SOURCE	EXPERT	STATISTICS	PERSONAL STORY	NONE	EXPERT & PERSONAL STORY
PUNCH	34	5	2	1	0
VANGUARD	22	0	3	0	1
LEADERSHIP	21	2	4	0	0
DAILY TRUST	35	2	1	1	1
TOTAL	112	9	10	2	2
PERCENTAGE	82.9%	6.7%	7.4%	1.5%	1.5%

According to the source findings, the main sources of information about invisible illnesses in Nigerian newspapers are experts (82.9%). This implies that to present reliable and authentic information about these medical conditions, the media organizations mostly implore expert voices, such as physicians and psychologists. The use of expert sources could be a sign of dedication to professional and well-informed

reporting.

The reporting is made more objective and measurable by the use of statistics (6.6%), which also contributes to a better understanding of the extent and consequences of invisible illnesses. Personal story (7.4%) offers a crucial human component by enabling victims to speak about their experiences and spread information of the conditions'. On the other hand, the comparative small number of personal narratives implies that there are more chances to making the voices of individuals impacted known to the public. Disparities in sourcing or a need for more storytelling techniques may be indicated by the tiny percentages of "None" (1.4%) and "Experts and Personal Story" (1.4%). However, the source analysis expressed how Nigeria media adopt the use of professional/Expert touch in their delivery on Invisible illnesses. Which has led to development of a deeper, more understanding of these invisible conditions, however more sourcing and storytelling techniques should be adopted.

Nonetheless, the survey results meanwhile provide valuable insights into public awareness and perceptions of "invisible illnesses" in Nigeria. Most respondents (63.3%) reported being unfamiliar with invisible illnesses, which mean there is need to raise awareness and understanding of these often-misunderstood health conditions. Among the 36.7% of participants who were familiar with invisible illnesses. Mental health conditions, and chronic pain was fond to be the most widely recognized with 76.7% and 44.2% of respondents respectively among other selected categories of invisible illnesses. This underscores the importance of raising awareness about these conditions and ensuring access to appropriate support and treatment. However, the survey also revealed a lack of understanding of other invisible illnesses, such as fibromyalgia (29.5%) and chronic fatigue syndrome (3.1%), indicating a need for more media attention and public education on these medical conditions. Despite the lack of awareness, only a small number (14%) of respondents knows an individual with an invisible illness. This suggests a general lack of media attention, discussion, and dialogue about these conditions in Nigeria media spaces. This finding is particularly concerning, as it may contribute to the continuous misconception and create a sense of isolation to individuals living with these invisible illnesses.

The survey also examined the role of Nigerian media in shaping public perceptions of invisible illnesses. Although over 40% of participants claimed to read Nigerian newspapers regularly, the findings reveal a contraction between media coverage and the public. Nearly half of respondents (40%) reported rarely or never encountering articles about invisible illnesses. Moreover, those who had noticed such coverage were divided in their assessment, with only 12% perceiving the media portrayal of invisible illnesses as positive and empowering. while (36%) felt it was negative and stigmatizing.

However, respondents indicated several key areas when asked about the specific aspects of invisible illnesses that Nigerian newspapers tend to focus on. (50.7%) claimed mental health and well-being, the challenges and barriers faced by those with invisible illnesses (36%), and treatments and management strategies (36.7%). Notably, 30% of participants seek for more personal stories and experiences, suggesting a need for a more human approach in reporting, that will help amplifies the voices and perspectives of those living with these conditions.

Respondents pointed several key areas when asked how Nigerian newspapers could improve their coverage of invisible illnesses. Approximately 30% suggested an increase in sensitization and awareness efforts, while 36.7% called for a greater focus on solutions and management strategies. Many participants also believed more balanced and empowering representation would be impactful, with one respondent underscoring the need for sensitization and quality representation.

Conclusively, the survey findings suggest that while there is a growing recognition of invisible illnesses in Nigeria, more media representation needs to be done in Nigeria media spaces. Getting these done the media spaces should include bridging the awareness gap, normalizing invisible conditions, and ensuring that the

media plays more role in shaping public understanding and supporting those affected. Nigerian newspapers should shoulder the responsibility infusing meaningful progress in this critical area of public health and well-being by adopting active, solution-oriented, and sympathetic approach in their coverage on invisible illnesses in their reportage.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the representation of invisible illnesses in Nigerian newspapers using content analysis and Survey research methods, the content analysis focusing on frequency, tone, framing, and sources. The findings revealed the disparities in the media coverage, with Punch and Daily Trust Newspapers leading with high coverage on invisible illnesses, while Vanguard trailed behind. Mental health dominated the coverage, with other conditions like chronic pain and fibromyalgia receiving scanty attention in their media spaces. The tone analysis showed a dominated neutral tone, with positive tone getting a notable weight in the analysis, but there is concerned negative tone. Furthermore, news stories according to the findings is primary framing device, with lack of editorials and feature stories. However, experts are the main sources, with statistics and personal stories also present.

The study nonetheless, raised important questions about the driving forces behind coverage, stigma, knowledge, and editorial priorities. It pointed the need for more diverse sourcing, delivery approaches, and comprehensive understanding of invisible illnesses. The media's influence on public perception and knowledge is significant, and this study emphasized the importance of responsible reporting to promote a more informed, compassionate, and inclusive society.

On the other hand, the survey method–questionnaire findings revealed an important lack of awareness situation and understanding of invisible illnesses among Nigerians, with 63.3% of respondents unfamiliar with Invisible illnesses. While mental health conditions and chronic pain are relatively well-known, other conditions like fibromyalgia and many others are poorly understood. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, but current coverage is inadequate, with a focus on challenges rather than proffering solutions. To address this, Nigerian newspapers should prioritize sensitization, balanced representation, and in-depth delivery, amplifying the voices of those living with invisible illnesses. By doing so, they can contribute to a more informed and supportive discussion, which would improve the lives of individuals affected by these conditions.

This research contributes to the understanding of how Nigerian newspapers represent invisible illnesses and highlights areas for improvement to ensure more comprehensive and empathetic coverage, also indulges the understanding and perception of the Nigerian population concerning the concept of (II). However, future research could explore the underlying reasons for the differences in coverage and impact on public perception of invisible illnesses. Also looking keenly into disparity in coverage and health outcomes.

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