
The Essential Role of Media in and for Mental Health

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A total of 970 million people globally suffer from any mental health or substance use disorders (Statista, 2022). Actually, the 31% of adults worldwide say mental health is the biggest health problem facing people in their country (Statista, 2022) and around the 20% of the world children and adolescents have a mental health condition (World Health Organization, 2021). Already in 2019, among all diseases, depression was the second cause of global burden of disease and suicide was the second main cause of death in people aged 15-29 (Goldberg et al., 2021). This global prevalence and situation is higher since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Nochaiwong et al., 2021).

Abrupt changes in daily habits, disconnection from nature and modifications of family roles sometimes resulted in high levels of stress that potentially led to anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions with long-lasting impact (Winter and Lavis, 2022; Goldberg et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In this context, media and social media played a crucial role on dissemination of information and in connecting people (Su et al., 2021). However, research highlights connections between mental health and viewing media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting the anxiety reflected on television, computer and smartphone was negative for psychological well-being (Holman et al., 2020). At the same time, fear of contagion and social restrictions brought isolation from society, and from an “other” who was perceived in some cases as a threat (Álvarez-Rementería et al., 2021).

If the media representation of people affected by mental health disorders was already a challenge before COVID-19 —then, evidence suggested that media coverage of mental health disorders tended to focus on specific issues, such as violence or crime (Carmichael et al., 2019; Schomerus et al, 2012)—, the pandemic and the role of media during it also seemed to have fueled discriminations and social stigma, among several age groups and at a global level.

Tripodos issue number 52 aims to give answers to some of the challenges that emerged in the above explained situation. We gather here manuscripts that cover

the most recent research on the topic within the wide diversity of both media formats and mental health affections that are influential and relevant nowadays.

Beginning in Spain and with newspapers, Isidro Jiménez Gómez, Javier Garcés Prieto, and Samuel Martín Sosa delve into the phenomenon of eco-anxiety by analysing the media coverage and impact of those new concepts addressing the effects of climate change on mental health. The authors also aim to document their birth and evolution in the Spanish-language press in recent years.

Antonio Sanjuán Pérez, José Juan Videla Rodríguez, Teresa Nozal Cantarero, and Sandra Martínez Costa focus their research on the TV coverage of mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. They did it examining 24-hour television broadcasts of five channels throughout 16 months, coding the content to identify trends and reach the main conclusions. Still in the audiovisual form but looking into the field of cinema, the article by Célia Belim and Beatriz Mota Duarte aims to understand how anxiety disorders are represented in the films *Eighth Grade* and *Silver Linings Playbook*. With this objective, the authors conduct a filmic analysis, also to better understand how characters with anxiety are created and represented and how they cope with the disorders.

In Portugal, Adalberto Fernandes studies how the discipline of psychology can present itself in media as the legitimate speaker about mental health issues. Specifically, the author presents a case study of the media coverage of the story undergraduate student that “attempted” to commit mass murder in a higher education centre, delving into how certain coverage of mental health issues could lead to the prejudice to criminality.

Finally, and looking into the digital sphere, Musthafa Mubashir and Thanveera Nasrin construct a systematic review mapping how academic inquiries responded to the concept of cyberbullying among adolescents that invariably affect mental health. The systematic review confirms that cyberbullying is a global phenomenon, prevalent among all cultures and geographies, and enhances its frequency due to technological advancements.

In short, this compilation of articles try to enlighten the complex global reality societies are living nowadays through the lens of media and thinking specifically on a kind of health disorders that could seem silent but that strongly affect people’s wellbeing, as mental ones are.

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