



INVISIBLE PATIENTS? A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEN'S HEALTH REPRESENTATION IN *THE SUN* AND *VANGUARD* ONLINE NEWSPAPERS (JUNE 2024-MAY 2025)

¹UGWU, Alphonsus Chukwuma, Ph.D.

²OKORIE, Caroline I., Ph.D.

³EMEAFOR, Cynthia Ijeoma, Ph.D.

⁴OSUDIBIA, Ngozi Noela, Ph.D.

¹Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²Department of Computer Science Education, Madonna University, Nigeria, Anambra State

³Department of Mass Communication, Madonna University, Nigeria, Anambra State

⁴Department of International Relations, Madonna University Nigeria, Anambra State

Corresponding Author: EMEAFOR, Cynthia Ijeoma, Ph.D.: cynthiaemeafor@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how men's health issues were represented in the online editions of Nigerian newspapers, with particular attention to their frequency, thematic distribution, type of coverage, and intended audience. Using content analysis research design, relevant articles were identified and analysed from *The Sun* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Findings revealed that *Vanguard* demonstrated broader thematic coverage (53.3%), encompassing reproductive health (18.8%), chronic diseases (6.2%), and preventive care/health services (18.8%), while *The Sun* concentrated more heavily on mental health and suicide (42.9%), followed by prostate cancer (21.4%), infertility and reproductive health (14.3%), and chronic diseases (14.3%). Despite these thematic differences, the overall frequency of coverage was low, with only 30 articles published over one year, raising concerns about the media's capacity to shape public discourse and influence health policy on men's health issues. The study concluded that underreporting and selective portrayal risk perpetuating stigma, delaying diagnoses, and limiting policy action. It recommended the need for increasing the volume and diversity of men's health reporting, adopting stigma-reducing narratives, collaborating with health experts, and tailoring messages to varied male demographics to enhance awareness, encourage engagement, and promote equitable health outcomes.

Keywords: Men's health, Mental health, Public health coverage, Gender and health

Introduction

Men's health is a critical yet often overlooked component of public health discourse, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Despite the growing burden of male-specific health challenges ranging from prostate cancer and erectile dysfunction to depression, substance abuse, cardiovascular diseases, and suicide, these issues frequently receive minimal attention in mainstream media. This lack of visibility may contribute to poor health-seeking behaviours among men, stigma surrounding mental health, and late-stage diagnoses of preventable conditions (Ofori et al., 2025; Oduvia et al., 2025).

Research has shown that cultural norms around masculinity often discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking timely medical help, thereby exacerbating health outcomes (The Guardian Life, 2025). Similarly, Nigerian newspapers have been found to underreport mental illness and other male-specific health issues, limiting awareness and policy attention (Erubami, 2023). As agenda setters in public

discourse, newspapers play a pivotal role in shaping awareness, attitudes, and policy attention toward health issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Hence, interrogating the visibility of men's health issues in Nigerian media becomes necessary for understanding how information flows can either advance or hinder health equity.

Historically, men's health has received limited policy and media attention in Nigeria, with early public health campaigns predominantly focusing on maternal and child health, infectious diseases, and women's reproductive health (Kana et al., 2015; Oweibia et al., 2025). While these priorities addressed pressing national health concerns, they inadvertently contributed to the marginalization of men's specific health needs in public health narratives.

Only in recent decades, with the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases and the growing recognition of mental health challenges, have discussions about men's health begun to gain a foothold in academic research and advocacy. For instance, recent studies highlight the increasing prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases in Nigeria, sparking advocacy for stronger policy responses (Danladi et al., 2025; *Vanguard*, 2025; Chioma, 2023).

Similarly, growing academic attention has been directed toward mental health, particularly in relation to stigma, masculinity, and help-seeking behaviour among men (Fadele et al., 2024; Mogano et al., 2025; Osiesi et al., 2025). Media and advocacy groups have also begun acknowledging men's unique vulnerability, linking men's mental illness to cultural and environmental factors and calling for more inclusive health interventions (*Guardian Nigeria*, 2025).

A systematic review of maternal, newborn, and child health interventions conducted in Nigeria between 1990 and 2014 found that approximately 90% of public health initiatives focused on maternal and child health, particularly after the year 2000, while men's health initiatives were conspicuously absent, underscoring the longstanding neglect of male-specific health needs in national policy, programming, and media discourse (Kana et al., 2015).

Reinforcing this trend, Ezeonuet et al. (2025) found through a qualitative investigation in Anambra State that men often preferred informal or male-centric healthcare providers due to concerns about cost, unfriendly attitudes from healthcare workers, and the inadequacy of male-focused facilities, indicating that men's health needs continue to be marginalised by healthcare infrastructure and policy.

This study undertakes a content analysis to examine how men's health is represented in Nigerian online newspapers. By analysing both the extent and manner of this coverage, the study aims to uncover patterns of media visibility, identify potential biases or gaps, and contribute to broader discussions on gender-sensitive health communication in the Nigerian media landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding the growing calls for gender-sensitive approaches in global health discourse, men's health remains significantly underrepresented in both research and media coverage, particularly in Nigeria. Studies reveal that Nigerian newspapers often marginalize men's health by underreporting issues or framing them in stigmatizing ways (Agbasimelo & Ignatius, 2024; Falade et al., 2024).

For example, intimate partner violence against men is frequently trivialized with victim-blaming stories (Agbasimelo & Ignatius, 2024), while invisible illnesses like mental health disorders receive minimal coverage devoid of personal stories, limiting public understanding (Falade et al., 2024). Such selective reporting reinforces harmful stereotypes linking masculinity to invulnerability, suppressing important discussions on male vulnerability and preventive care.

Men in Nigeria are more prone to high-risk behaviours, delayed healthcare seeking, and fatal outcomes from preventable diseases (Olanrewaju et al., 2019; Menakaya & Menakaya, 2022). However, mainstream media platforms with significant influence offer limited visibility to these concerns (Olibamoyo, Ola, Coker, Abiodun, & Onabola, (2021); Ekoh, Nnadi, Nwabine, Oyinlola, & Onalu, 2023). This imbalance in reporting is more than a journalistic shortcoming; it is a public health concern. When men's health is sidelined, opportunities to challenge entrenched gender norms, encourage early screening for conditions like prostate cancer, and normalize mental health discussions are lost.

Moreover, the absence of systematic research on men's health representation in Nigerian online newspapers worsens the issue. Without empirical analysis of coverage visibility, thematic focus, and framing strategies, it remains unclear if media outlets serve as allies in promoting positive health behaviours or as silent accomplices in reinforcing stigma.

This study therefore aimed to address these gaps by determining the frequency of men's health-related stories published between June 2024 and May 2025, identifying the major themes and types of men's health issues reported, and examining how these issues are framed within selected newspaper articles. Addressing this gap is a vital step toward dismantling cultural barriers, promoting equitable health narratives, and ultimately saving lives.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study investigates the:

1. Frequency of men's health issues published in *The Sun* and *Vanguard* online newspapers from June 2024 to May 2025.
2. Dominant themes emerging from the coverage of men's health issues in the selected newspapers.
3. Types of men's health issues reported in the newspapers.
4. Target audience implicitly or explicitly addressed in the representation of men's health issues.

Literature Review

The concept of men's health encompasses a wide range of issues affecting biological males across their lifespan, including physical, mental, sexual, and emotional well-being. Central to this study is the understanding that men often experience poorer health outcomes compared to women, not necessarily due to biological factors alone, but because of complex socio-cultural, behavioural, and systemic influences (Milner et al., 2019). Concepts such as gender norms, masculinity, and health-seeking behaviour are particularly relevant.

For instance, hegemonic masculinity characterized by toughness, emotional restraint, and risk-taking has been widely documented to discourage men from seeking timely medical help, especially for stigmatized conditions like depression, infertility, or erectile dysfunction (Keohane & Richardson, 2018; Mokhwelepa & Sumbane, 2024). Research further shows that traditional masculine norms are associated with poor health literacy, reduced willingness to disclose vulnerability and worse health outcomes across the lifespan (Burns & Drentea, 2023; RSIS International, 2022).

In the context of this study, health behaviour refers to the actions, practices, and decisions individuals adopt to maintain, improve, or manage their health, particularly concerning men's health issues. It encompasses preventive measures such as regular medical check-ups, prostate cancer screening, healthy lifestyle choices, and seeking timely treatment for conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and mental health disorders.

These behaviours are not formed in isolation but are often influenced by exposure to health information through media platforms (Akuiyibo et al., 2022; Ikpeama & Omeonu, 2025; Obada et al., 2024; Onwe, 2024; Orok et al., 2024; Aladi et al., 2022). For instance, Amoak *et al.* (2023) observed that men's exposure to health-related mass media messages in Nigeria varies according to socioeconomic, locational, and demographic characteristics.

Men with greater wealth, higher levels of education, and stable employment, particularly those residing in urban areas and the South East, were more likely to encounter such messages. Conversely, younger men and those adhering to traditional religious practices exhibited lower levels of exposure, indicating disparities in access and the influence of cultural orientation on preventive health behaviours.

Similarly, Amedu, Abidemi, and Umukoro (2024) found that digital health content creators play a significant role in shaping lifestyle choices among online users, with many reporting changes in diet, exercise, and daily routines based on social media health advice, emphasizing the influence of relatable and credible sources in promoting healthier practices.

Likewise, Onyechi (2023) reported a strong link between the perceived credibility of social media and health information-seeking behaviours, noting that youths, particularly those with limited access to traditional health services, often rely on online platforms for medical guidance, and when the information is credible, it fosters timely treatment and preventive care. Thus, the way *The Sun* and *Vanguard* report men's health issues can strongly influence how men perceive health risks and either motivate or discourage positive health practices.

Empirical Review

Media representations play a central role in shaping public perceptions and health behaviours among men in Nigeria. Evidence shows that men's health concerns are frequently marginalized in Nigerian newspapers, with coverage often reinforcing stigma. Akinola and Egbokhare (2024) found that mental health reporting was rare, and when present, it was framed through negative stereotypes such as danger, criminality, and derogatory labels.

Similarly, Falade et al. (2024) found that invisible illnesses such as mental health disorders and chronic fatigue syndrome were rarely represented and often stripped of personal narratives, contributing to low public awareness. Oyetunji et al. (2021) analysed Nigerian newspaper reports on suicide, revealing that most cases involved males, married individuals, and students in semi-urban areas, with a mean age of about 36 years.

Hanging and poisoning were the most reported methods, with financial difficulties and marital conflicts identified as common precipitating factors, highlighting the media's role in shaping public understanding of suicide. In a related study, Agbasimelo and Ignatius (2024) observed that intimate partner violence against men was underreported, and when covered, articles often contained victim-blaming representations. Together, these findings highlight how selective coverage and stigmatizing frames limit constructive public discourse on men's health.

Cultural and gender norms further influence health seeking behaviours: Olanrewaju et al. (2019) revealed that patriarchal values persist even among highly educated men, while Menakaya and Menakaya (2022) found that although adolescent male students associated healthy living with diet, exercise, and disease prevention, their practices were hindered by poor eating habits, academic and sociocultural pressures, and sedentary behaviours.

Chavalala, Lebeso and Makhado (2025) examined men's views on factors contributing to their poor health-seeking behaviour in Limpopo Province, South Africa, and found that self-medication, fear of

knowing one's health status, peer and community elders' influence, stigma, and masculinity beliefs were among the reasons participants avoided utilizing health services. They suggested educational and health promotion campaigns, challenging societal norms, and employing more nurses as strategies to improve men's health-seeking behaviour.

Men's reproductive and preventive health attitudes are also shaped by cultural constructs and systemic barriers. Nmadu et al. (2024) observed that while male students were aware of contraception, negative attitudes persisted due to gender norms and concerns about sexual pleasure. In the context of prostate cancer, Ofori et al. (2025) and Okafor and Nwosu (2023) found that stigma, fatalism, and misconceptions delayed screening, with facility availability being a key determinant of preventive uptake.

Regional evidence from Sierra Leone (Momoh, 2025) further underscores systemic neglect of men's health, reflected in poorer outcomes compared to women. Collectively, these findings highlight the need for balanced media representation, culturally sensitive interventions, and improved access to services to address entrenched disparities in men's health outcomes.

While existing studies have explored men's exposure to health information, cultural influences on health behaviours, and the role of digital platforms in promoting preventive practices, there is limited research examining how mainstream Nigerian online newspapers specifically report men's health issues. Much of the available evidence focuses on specific conditions, such as prostate cancer, suicide or mental health, without analysing the overall visibility, type, and framing of men's health coverage as well as the target audience across media platforms. This gap makes it unclear whether national news outlets like *The Sun* and *Vanguard* are reinforcing stigma, promoting positive health behaviours, or neglecting critical aspects of men's health in their reporting.

Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in the Agenda-Setting Theory and the Framing Theory, both of which are pivotal in understanding how media shapes public perception of health issues, particularly those related to men. The Agenda-Setting Theory, introduced by McCombs and Shaw (1972), posits that the media may not tell the public what to think, but it is highly effective in telling them what to think about. In the context of men's health, this theory explains how the frequency of coverage in newspapers on issues such as prostate cancer, mental health, or hypertension can influence public awareness and the perceived importance of these health concerns.

The Framing Theory, as discussed by Entman (1993), emphasizes the way media selects and highlights certain aspects of a topic to make them more prominent in public discourse. In this study, framing relates to the themes assigned to men's health coverage, the types of men's health issues emphasized, and the identification of the target audience, whether policymakers, men themselves, or the general public. Such framing determines whether men's health is portrayed as a pressing national issue, a private matter, or one affected by stigma and cultural perceptions.

Together, these theories form the basis for evaluating how *The Sun* and *Vanguard* present men's health issues, measuring not just how often they are covered, but also the themes, issue types, and intended audience focus. This theoretical framework is essential for understanding the influence of media on public engagement, policy discourse, and individual action toward men's health in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative content analysis methodology, enabling a systematic examination of, frequencies, thematic emphases, and framing strategies in the representation of men's health within media content. This approach facilitated objective and replicable insights into the manner in which men's health issues were portrayed in the online editions of *The Sun* and *Vanguard*.

The study population comprised all health-related articles published between June 2024 and May 2025 in the online editions of *The Sun* and *Vanguard*. The total number of health-related articles published online by the selected newspapers during the study period could not be precisely ascertained due to the dynamic nature of online publishing.

Consequently, all accessible articles published from June 2024 to May 2025 were considered the study population, from which a sample size of 30 men's health-related articles was drawn based on keyword and relevance criteria. A twelve-month timeframe was chosen to enable a comprehensive longitudinal analysis of men's health coverage, capturing seasonal variations, emerging health trends, and policy-driven fluctuations in reporting.

These newspapers were selected for their national reach, substantial online accessibility, and consistent dissemination of health news, with *The Sun* catering primarily to grassroots and middle-class audiences, and *Vanguard* emphasizing policy and national discourse. Employing purposive sampling, the study focused exclusively on articles explicitly addressing men's health issues, including prostate cancer, erectile dysfunction, mental health, substance abuse, suicide, cardiovascular disease, and reproductive health, resulting in a final sample of 30 articles, selected based on relevance, keyword presence, and publication consistency within the study period.

The unit of analysis for this study was each individual newspaper article that contained content directly or indirectly related to men's health issues. This approach allowed for a detailed examination of how men's health topics were represented across various articles. The content categories to be coded included the frequency of men's health articles, the themes or issues covered, and the target audience, whether implicitly or explicitly addressed.

To ensure the reliability of the coding process, two trained coders independently coded 20 percent of the total sample. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa statistic, with a benchmark value of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable agreement between coders. Data collection was guided by a structured code sheet designed to systematically extract, categorize, and quantify relevant content variables from each selected article, thus ensuring consistency and accuracy in data capture.

The collected data were analyzed primarily through descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and presented in tables, using SPSS software. Cross-tabulation was employed to illustrate trends and enable comparisons between newspapers.

Beyond measuring the frequency and categorizing the types of men's health issues reported, this study also engaged in a qualitative examination of recurring themes. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the ways in which men's health concerns were framed in the newspapers. By combining quantitative patterns with thematic insights, the analysis offered a more comprehensive view of media representation of men's health.

Result

Table 1: Men’s Health Coverage Frequency Table

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage %
<i>Sun</i>	14	46.67
<i>Vanguard</i>	16	53.33
Total	30	100

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that *Vanguard* accounted for a marginally higher proportion of men’s health reportage (53.33%) compared to *The Sun* (46.67%) during the study period. This distribution suggests that *Vanguard* exhibited a comparatively greater editorial commitment to men’s health issues, a pattern that is likely to shape public discourse, enhance health literacy, and influence health-seeking behaviours among male populations.

Table 2: Men’s Health Coverage (June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025)

Theme	Key Issues	<i>The Sun</i> n (%)	<i>Vanguard</i> n (%)	Target Audience
Mental health & suicide	Stigma, depression, suicide prevention, awareness campaigns	6 (42.9%)	4 (25.0%)	Adult men, youth, policymakers
Prostate cancer	Treatment, robotic surgery, prevalence data, myths	3 (21.4%)	4 (25.0%)	Men 40+, healthcare providers
Infertility & reproductive health	Male infertility, azoospermia, IVF, myths	2 (14.3%)	3 (18.8%)	Couples, married men
Chronic diseases	Diabetes, hypertension, sudden cardiac death	2 (14.3%)	1 (6.2%)	Middle-aged/older men, advocates
Health services & screenings	Wellness, free screenings, medical tourism	0 (0.0%)	3 (18.8%)	Men all ages, corporate clients
Lifestyle & sexual health risks	Erotic stimulants, sexual-health risks	0 (0.0%)	1 (6.2%)	Sexually active men, young adults
Youth & empowerment	Boycode, youth mental-health programs	1 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	Teen boys, youth groups
Total	—	14 (100%)	16 (100%)	30 articles combined

The analysis shows that **mental health and suicide** dominated *The Sun*'s men's health coverage, accounting for **42.9%** of its articles, while *Vanguard* covered this theme less extensively at **25.0%**. Both newspapers gave significant attention to **prostate cancer**, with *Vanguard* slightly higher at **25.0%** and *The Sun* at **21.4%**, highlighting its importance as a major men's health concern. Other themes like **infertility, chronic diseases, and health services** received more focus in *Vanguard* (18.8%, 6.2%, and 18.8% respectively) compared to *The Sun*, reflecting differences in editorial priorities and audience targeting.

The types of men's health issues covered showed that **mental health challenges** like stigma, depression, and suicide prevention dominated *The Sun*'s reporting at **42.9%**, while *Vanguard* addressed these issues less frequently at **25.0%**. Both newspapers gave substantial coverage to **prostate cancer treatments and myths**, with *Vanguard* slightly ahead at **25.0%** compared to *The Sun*'s **21.4%**, indicating a strong focus on this life-threatening condition. Additionally, *Vanguard* placed more emphasis on **infertility, health services, and lifestyle risks** (18.8%, 18.8%, and 6.2% respectively) than *The Sun*, highlighting a broader approach to men's reproductive and wellness concerns.

The Sun's coverage predominantly targeted **adult men, male youth, and policymakers** especially around mental health and suicide, making up about **50%** of its men's health articles. *Vanguard*'s audience focus was more diversified, addressing **men aged 40+, couples dealing with infertility, and medical tourists**, with roughly **60%** of its coverage dedicated to these groups through themes like prostate cancer, infertility, and health services. Both newspapers gave some attention to **youth and young adults**, though this remained a smaller portion (around **7%** in *The Sun* and minimal in *Vanguard*).

The analysis implied that while both newspapers contributed to shaping public discourse on men's health, their thematic and audience priorities differed, potentially influencing which health issues gained visibility and urgency among readers. This divergence in coverage focus may have affected awareness, policy advocacy, and resource allocation, with *The Sun* reinforcing mental health narratives while *Vanguard* promoted a broader spectrum of men's health concerns.

Discussion

Over the one-year period, *The Sun* and *Vanguard* published a combined total of just 30 articles on men's health, which, from a public health communication standpoint, is relatively low for two national newspapers. While this demonstrates some editorial attention, the frequency is insufficient to sustain visibility or significantly shape public discourse on men's health.

According to Agenda-Setting Theory, limited coverage reduces the likelihood of placing men's health issues firmly on the public and policy agenda. This aligns with Amoaket *et al.* (2023), who observed that exposure to health-related mass media in Nigeria is uneven across socioeconomic and demographic groups, meaning that reduced coverage, risks reinforcing these existing disparities.

Vanguard's slightly higher output suggests a somewhat stronger commitment, with stories such as *How We Provide Inclusive, Multi-Level Quality, Affordable Wellness Solutions* (May 14, 2025) and *NNPC Foundation Fights Cancer with Free Screenings* (October 29, 2024) highlighting its broader approach. However, the overall low volume from both newspapers indicates substantial room to expand and diversify reporting to better address the breadth of men's health challenges in Nigeria.

This difference in frequency also reflects how each outlet prioritizes men's health topics based on editorial judgment and audience interests, which directly ties into Framing Theory. The theory emphasizes that media influence is shaped not only by how often a topic is covered, but also by how it is presented. *The Sun*'s focus on mental health and suicide, as seen in *Social Stigma Deters Nigerian Men from Seeking Medical Help* (June 23, 2024) and *Fight for Life Men Unite to Address Mental Health* (December 16, 2024), frames men's health primarily as a psychological and social issue.

This framing reflects earlier findings by Chavalala, Lebesse, and Makhado (2025), who reported that fear of knowing one's health status, stigma, and masculinity beliefs deterred men from seeking medical help, concerns that mental health-focused reporting can either help dismantle or unintentionally reinforce, depending on tone and narrative structure.

In contrast, *Vanguard's* coverage, including *Research Shows Common Diabetes Drug Improves Prostate Cancer Treatment* (December 14, 2024) and *Male Infertility Dispelling Myths and Embracing Science for a Better Future* (July 1, 2024), presents men's health as a multifaceted subject that encompasses clinical, reproductive, and lifestyle dimensions.

This approach aligns with Amedu, Abidemi, and Umukoro (2024), who found that credible digital health content influences men's lifestyle choices, suggesting that diverse, science-backed reporting could drive healthier practices across readership segments. Together, these patterns show how both frequency and framing shape public understanding and policy engagement around men's health.

The thematic analysis of men's health coverage in *The Sun* and *Vanguard* reveals further editorial differences that shape public discourse. In *The Sun*, mental health and suicide emerge as dominant themes, with stories such as *Breaking the Chains How Support Groups are Saving Nigerian Men* (September 5, 2024) and *Hope after Loss Men Share Stories to Prevent Suicide* (February 18, 2025) reinforcing the framing of men's health as a psychosocial issue. This mirrors Falade et al.'s (2024) observation that invisible illnesses like mental disorders are underrepresented in Nigerian media, with coverage often lacking personal narratives, a gap *The Sun* partly addresses through its focus on lived experiences.

Conversely, *Vanguard's* thematic scope spans medical research, reproductive health, and disease prevention, as reflected in *Study Links Obesity to Rising Cases of Male Infertility* (August 30, 2024) and *Free Eye Screenings Offer Hope to Rural Men* (April 20, 2025). This broader scope resonates with Nmadu et al. (2024) and Ofori et al. (2025), who stress that men's reproductive and preventive health attitudes are shaped by cultural norms, stigma, and misconceptions, all of which can be challenged through diversified and evidence-based health reporting. These thematic differences demonstrate how framing choices can direct public perception toward either mental and social health or a broader mix of medical and preventive health priorities.

From the analysis, men's health issues reported in *The Sun* and *Vanguard* were largely confined to mental health (particularly suicide), prostate cancer, and a few mentions of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and substance abuse. Broader concerns such as sexual health, testicular cancer, obesity, respiratory conditions, and occupational risks received little or no coverage.

This limited scope indicates that the selected newspapers presented a fragmented view of men's health, leaving many critical issues invisible and underrepresented. Consequently, they have not provided a holistic perspective on men's health, thereby weakening their role in promoting awareness and informed public discourse.

The target audience analysis further shows how each newspaper directs its content to specific male demographics. *The Sun* often appeals to middle-aged and older men through stories like *Prostate Cancer Awareness Drive Gains Momentum in Rural Communities* (September 12, 2024) and *Hypertension the Silent Killer among Nigerian Men* (April 8, 2025), which address health risks prevalent in later life.

Such targeting aligns with Okafor and Nwosu (2023), who found that older men are often deterred from preventive screenings by stigma and fatalism, highlighting the potential for sustained media coverage to shift perceptions. In contrast, *Vanguard* engages a wider audience, including younger men, through lifestyle and preventive health stories such as *Men and Fitness How Regular Exercise Improves Mental and Physical Health* (August 15, 2024) and *Breaking the Silence on Male Eating Disorders* (March 10, 2025).

This is consistent with Onyechi's (2023) finding that credible social media health content can encourage timely treatment among younger men, an insight that could be leveraged in print and online journalism. Article like *Men's Sexual Health Experts Warn against Self-Medication* (January 22, 2025) appeal to men of all ages, warning against risky health behaviours.

Together, these findings underscore how Agenda-Setting Theory explains the newspapers' role in influencing which men's health topics are perceived as priorities, while Framing Theory clarifies how the presentation of these topics shapes public interpretation and attitudes.

As Momoh (2025) notes in the Sierra Leone context, systemic neglect of men's health leads to poorer outcomes compared to women, a cautionary parallel for Nigeria if coverage remains limited. The implication is that men in Nigeria may receive varied and sometimes uneven messaging on health priorities depending on their preferred newspaper, influencing awareness, stigma reduction, preventive actions, and overall health-seeking behaviour across different male age groups and health concerns.

Conclusion

This study reveals that men's health coverage in *The Sun* and *Vanguard* remains limited, with only 30 articles published over a one-year period, an insufficient volume to sustain public and policy attention. While *Vanguard* demonstrated a broader thematic scope, incorporating reproductive health, preventive services, and chronic diseases, *The Sun* maintained a stronger focus on mental health and suicide.

These editorial differences reflect varying audience priorities and framing approaches, as explained by Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories. Ultimately, both newspapers play a role in shaping public perception of men's health, but the low frequency and selective thematic focus risk perpetuating existing gaps in awareness, preventive care, and policy advocacy. To dismantle stigma, challenge harmful gender norms, and promote equitable health narratives, Nigerian media must enhance the visibility and diversity of men's health reporting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. **Increase frequency and diversity of coverage:** Both newspapers should expand the number of men's health stories, covering a wider range of topics such as preventive care, chronic diseases, reproductive health, and mental well-being to ensure balanced representation.
2. **Collaborate with health experts:** Partnerships with medical professionals, psychologists, and public health advocates can enhance the accuracy, credibility, and depth of reporting, making health content more informative and actionable.
3. **Target varied male demographics:** Tailor content to reach diverse male audiences, including youth, rural men, and older adults, using culturally sensitive messaging and accessible language to improve engagement and health literacy.

References

- Agbasimelo, C. I., & Ignatius, C. M. (2024). Newspaper coverage of intimate partner violence against men in Nigeria. *UNIZIK Journal of Gender Research (UJGR)*, 3, 94–115.
- Akuiyibo, S., Anyanti, J., Amoo, B., et al. (2022). Effects of behaviour change communication on hypertension and diabetes related knowledge, attitude and practices in Imo and Kaduna states: A quasi-experimental study. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 715.
- Aladi, J.A., Ohieku, A.O., Etumnu, E.W. & Gever, V.C. (2022). Health education effort is holistic when it considers the vulnerable:’ How IDPs in Nigeria fare in media reports on COVID-19 pandemic. *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(1),44-61.
- Amoak, D., Konkor, I., Mohammed, K., Saaka, S. A., &Antabe, R. (2023). Exposure to mass media family planning messages among men in Nigeria: Analysis of the demographic and health survey data. *National Library medicine*, 11, e15391.
- Amedu, A. A., Abidemi, O. B., &Umukoro, A. V. (2024). Influence of digital health content creators on healthy lifestyle among netizens. *Advance Journal of Linguistics and Mass Communication*, 8(6), 103–118.
- Burns, D. S., & Drentea, P. (2023). Masculine ideals and health in older men: Findings from the Wisconsin longitudinal study. *American Journal of Men’s Health*, 17(1).
- Chavalala, L., Lebeso, T. R., &Makhado, L. (2025). Men’s views on factors contributing to their poor health-seeking behaviour in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *BMC Public Health*, 25, 83.
- Danladi, B., Egoh, A. M. C., Udokwu, I. E., et al. (2025). Bridging the gaps in the unmet needs of hypertension care in Nigeria: Post-intervention evaluation of the (COMAAND) project. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1), 1338.
- Ezeonu, N. A., Ezeama, N. N., Itanyi, I. U., Ezeonu, J. N., &Nwabueze, A. S. (2025). Factors affecting utilization of male sexual and reproductive health services: A qualitative description of males in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 25, 189.
- Ekoh, P. C., Nnadi, F., Nwabinehi, H., Oyinlola, O., & Onalu, C. (2023). Barriers to the use of mental health services amongst men in Nigeria and the potential of digital mental health support. *Advances in Mental Health*, 22(2), 1–13.
- Erubami, J. A., Bebenimibo, P., Ezeah, G. H., et al. (2023). Newspaper depiction of mental illness in Nigeria. *Annals of General Psychiatry*, 14(11), 1527.
- Falade, A. J., Lawrence, O. U., Ikeokwu, K. O., Mba, A. N. U., Kelechi, S. C., &Nwafor, A. U. (2024). Representation of invisible illnesses in Nigerian newspapers (June 2023–June 2024): A mixed-method study. *International journal of research and innovation in social science (IJRISS)*. 8(8), 3776-3787
- Fadele, K. P., Igwe, S. C., Toluwalogo, N. O., et al. (2024). Mental health challenges in Nigeria: Bridging the gap between demand and resources. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 18(1), 22.
- Guardian Nigeria. (2025, April 27). Expert links men’s mental illness to cultural, environmental factors. *The Guardian Nigeria*. <https://guardian.ng/>
- Ikpeama, C. J., & Omeonu, D. U. (2025). Tackle prostate cancer media awareness campaign and health behaviour of men in South-East Nigeria. *IRASS Journal of arts, humanities and social sciences*. 2(4), 13-19.

- Keohane, A., & Richardson, N. (2018). Negotiating gender norms to support men in psychological distress. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 12(5), 1609–1621.
- Kana, M. A., Doctor, H. V., Peleteiro, B., Lunet, N., & Barros, H. (2015). Maternal and child health interventions in Nigeria: A systematic review of published studies from 1990 to 2014. *BMC Public Health*, 15, 334.
- Menakaya, N. C., & Menakaya, I. N. (2022). Qualitative study exploring perceptions, attitudes and practices of adolescent university students in Lagos, Nigeria, towards a healthy lifestyle. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 14(1), e1–e12.
- Momoh, I. S. (2025). Adult men's health needs and access to healthcare services in Sierra Leone: Time to consider prioritising men's health to improve outcomes in a challenging healthcare system. *African Journal of Health, Nursing and Midwifery*, 8(1), 119–139.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.
- Milner, A., Shields, M., & King, T. (2019). The influence of masculine norms and mental health on health literacy among men: Evidence from the Ten to Men study. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 13(5).
- Mogano, N. T. H., Letsoalo, D. L., & Oduaran, C. A. (2025). Effects of masculine culture on the mental health of Northern Sotho male youth. *BMC Psychology*, 13(1), 605.
- Mokhwelepa, L. W., & Sumbane, G. O. (2024). Men's mental health matters: The impact of traditional masculinity norms on men's willingness to seek mental health support: A systematic review of literature. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 18(5), 15579883251321670.
- Chioma, C. (2023, November 16). FG adopts new policy to combat non-communicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension in Nigeria. *Nairametrics*. <https://nairametrics.com/>
- Nmadu, A. G., Musa, J., Joshua, I. A., Oyefabi, A. M., Usman, N. O., Nwankwo, B., & Dahiru, T. (2024). Attitudes and practices regarding contraception among male students in a Nigerian tertiary educational institution: A cross-sectional study. *Frontiers in Reproductive Health*, 6, 1439900.
- Ntekim, A., Folasire, A., & Odukoya, O. A. (2025). The prevalence of prostate cancer among young men below 55 years of age in Nigeria. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 30, 1–7.
- Obande-Ogbuinya, N. E., Aleke, C. O., Omaka-Amari, L. N., Ifeoma, U. M. B., Anyigor-Ogah, S. C., Mong, E. U., Afoke, E. N., Nnaji, T. N., Nwankwo, O., Okeke, I. M., Nnubia, A. O., Ibe, U. C., Ochiaka, R. E., Ngwakwe, P. C., Item, O. Y., Nwafor, K. A., Nweke, I. C., & Obasi, A. F. (2024). Prevalence of methamphetamine (mkpurummiri) use in South East Nigeria: A community-based cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 24, 2436.
- Ofori, B., Fosu, K., Aikins, A. R., & Sarpong, K. A. N. (2025). The intersection of culture and prostate cancer care in Sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review. *African Journal of Urology*, 31, 41.
- Okafor, G. N., & Nwosu, C. E. (2023). Factors influencing the use of prostate cancer preventive measures among men in Rivers South-East, Nigeria. *Oncology Journal*, 11(3), 1–16.
- Olanrewaju, F. O., Ajayi, L. A., Loromeke, E., Olanrewaju, A., Allo, T. A., & Onwuli, N. (2019). Masculinity and men's health-seeking behaviour in Nigerian academia. In E. O. Amoo (Ed.), *Covenant University discourse on sustainable development*. *Cogent Social Sciences*.
- Olibamoyo, O., Ola, B., Coker, O., Abiodun, A., & Onabola, A. (2021). Analysis of media reporting of suicidal behavior in Nigeria. *Psychiatry Research*, 21, 1–10.

- Onyechi, N. J. (2023). Perception of social media credibility and health information-seeking behaviour: A cross-sectional online survey of youths in South West Nigeria. *NIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 79–89.
- Oyetunji, T. P., Arafat, S. M. Y., Famori, S. O., Akinboyewa, T. B., Afolami, M., Ajayi, M. F., & Kar, S. K. (2021). Suicide in Nigeria: Observations from the content analysis of newspapers. *General Psychiatry*, 34(1), e100347.
- Obada, A. A., Airaoje, O. K., Okuneye, A. P., Collins-Dike, J., & Msughter, A. E. (2024). Media role on the burden of non-communicable diseases in Nigeria. *Clinical Case Reports International*, 8(5), 1–7.
- Odubia, J. S., Ayodele, V. D., Oyedepo, R. O., et al. (2025). Bridging the divide: Exploring why Nigerian men struggle with prostate cancer awareness and screening uptake. *Journal of Public Health in Africa*, 5(3), 310–327.
- Onwe, E. C., Okoy, D. C., Asogwa, J., & John, C. P. (2024). Social media and awareness creation against prostate cancer among men in Enugu State. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Arts Review*, 2(1), 94–106.
- Orok, E., Kabiawu, Y., Aaderohunmu, Z., & Obiwulu, D. (2024). Knowledge, attitude, and perceived risks related to diabetes mellitus among university students in Southwestern Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 10(4), 25793.
- Osiesi, P. M., Adeniran, S. A., & Akomolafe, O. D. (2025). Moderating effect of health knowledge and mental health on the association between undergraduates' attitudes toward help-seeking and internet addiction. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1), 2290.
- Oweibia, M., Ononiwu, C. E., Egberipou, T., et al. (2025). Maternal and child health trends in Nigeria: A scoping review of NDHS 2018 vs. NDHS 2023.
- Jani, C., & Piroro, C. A. (2025). Traditional masculine norms and health disparities among boys and men in Sanyati District, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(04), 522–530.
- The Guardian Life*. (2025, June 14). Men, are you okay? The silent crisis of men's mental health in Nigeria. *The Guardian Nigeria*. <https://guardian.ng/>
- Vanguard*. (2025, May 17). Non-communicable diseases account for 30% death annually in Nigeria – CAPPA. *Vanguard Nigeria*. <https://vanguardngr.com/>