PRIORITIZING THE EFFECT OF MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH PERCEPTIONS

ABSTRACT

Currently most of the media's presentation of mental health and mental illness/disorder are more stigmatizing than realistic. This study will look at how media can influence the public's perception of mental illness. A survey, based on the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) approach, will be used to determine if there is a type of media that has a greater influence over other types.

Keywords*:* mental illness, media, stigma, analytic hierarchy process

1. Introduction

The purpose of the proposed study is to take a closer look at the extent and forms of media that have the bigger impact in forming negative perceptions or views of mental illness (NMIV); namely news media, entertainment media, or social media. The hope is that the findings from this study can be used to develop awareness and help make changes to the way media portrays mental illnesses to stop the stigmatization of those suffering from mental illnesses.

2. Literature Review

Stuart (2006) found that media, whether it was news, social or entertainment, have contributed to the skewed perception/representation of mental illnesses and caused a negative effect on the viewers. Similarly, Fawcett (2015) found that various studies had been conducted and showcased that much of the public's knowledge of mental illness/disorders came from mass media. No study has been made about the different effects based on the type of media.

3. Hypotheses

H1a: The more Media Consumption Extent (MCE) a person has, the more likely they are to hold a negative MIV.

H1b: News (MCE-N), entertainment (MCE-E) and social media (MCE-S) will have varying intensity effects on the extent of negative MIV (NMIV).

4. Research Design/Methodology

The proposed study will utilize a two-part survey to collect data and compare media usage to metal illness knowledge and perceptions held by the participant. The first section of the survey will utilize an AHP-based questionnaire to prioritize the media types used by the participants (Saaty & Wei, 2016). This section will focus specifically on where the participant's perceptions are based on by measuring how much more a person uses one form of media over the others focused on in this study. The second section of the survey will be used to collect data of the participants' extent of negative perception (NMIV) they hold. The study survey will be conducted virtually on social media and other websites. The participants will be of various ages, educational backgrounds, and careers.

5. Data Model/Analysis
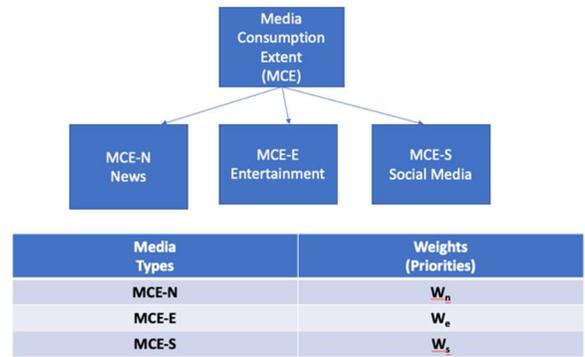
Figure 1 – AHP hierarchy to prioritize media types

MCE score = Wn*(MCE-N) + We*(MCE-E) + Ws*(MCE-S) for H1a statistical analysis.

H1a – MCE increases NMIV	H1b – Different media types have different intensity effect on NMIV
Regression simple: NMIV = b0 +b1*MCE	Regression multiple: NMIV =b0 + b1*(MCE-N) + b2*(MCE-E) + b3*(MCE-S)
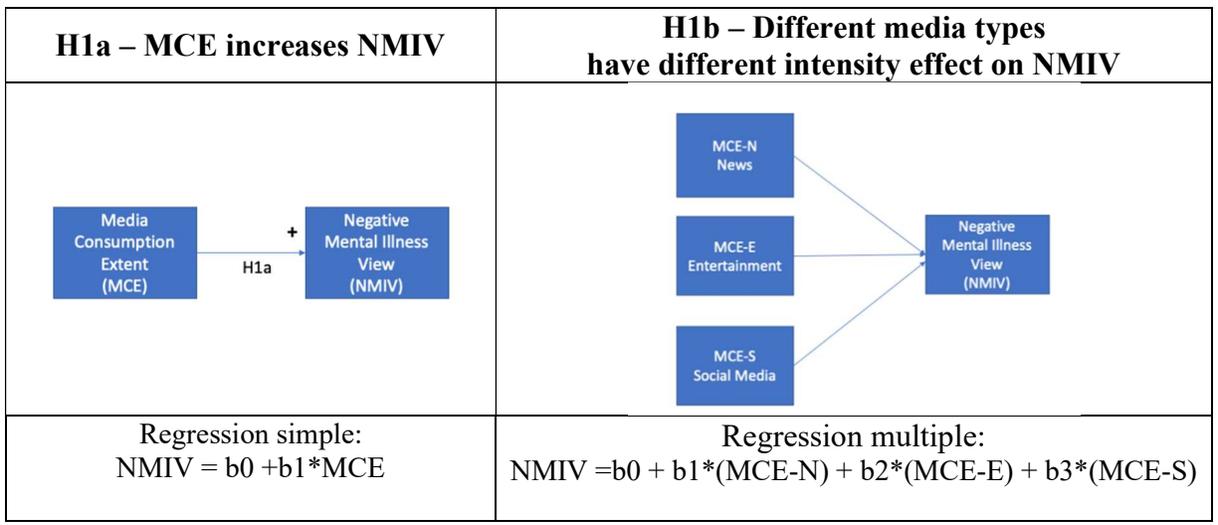
Figure 2 – Research Conceptual Model for H1a and H1b

6. Implications/Limitations

The findings of this study will contribute to slowly pushing for changes in how mental illness is addressed in media sources to help improve the public's perception of mental illnesses and thus increase the likelihood that those who suffer from mental illnesses seek treatment without fear of stigmatization. A future study would be to look at each media type and its subtypes to determine if there is a specific form of a media type that has more impact than others like it. For example- social media is a very broad category in this study and will look at social media as a whole. In a future study, one may choose to look at different types of social media, such as Facebook or Instagram, to determine if one form of social media has more impact than the other. The major limitation for this study, given that it will be volunteer based, is there is little ability to control for false/random answers from the participants.

7. Conclusion

Most psychological studies on the research topic has been investigated using surveys based on Likert scales. This study provides a methodological contribution by using an AHP-based survey instrument to explore the relative importance of the different media types (News, entertainment and social media) for each participant. The weighted sum of the extent of consumption of the different media types becomes the overall

MCE score. This is more accurate than traditional unweighted sum of Likert ordinal values to obtain the overall score of a variable. Also, an AHP approach is used due to its increased ability to elicit tacit knowledge as shown in Whitaker's essay on validation within the Analytic Hierarchy Process (2007). For this reason, we posit here that this methodology should be more widely used in Psychological studies.

8. Key References

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9. Appendix

Sample Survey Questions

Survey Section I

Design based on 'Should the UK Have Brexited the European Union?' (Saaty & Wei, 2016)

Media Consumption Extent (MCE)—Estimated amount of time a person spends each day looking at media sources such as TV, social media applications like Facebook, or viewing/reading news reports. It is composed, for this study, of three areas:

> **Media Consumption Extent- News Media (MCE-N)** – Estimated amount of time a person spends daily either reading or watching news reports.
> **Media Consumption Extent- Entertainment Media (MCE-E)** – Estimated amount of time a person spends daily watching entertainment-based media such as movies or T.V. shows.
> **Media Consumption Extent- Social Media (MCE-S)** – Estimated amount of time a person spends daily using social media-based applications, such as Facebook or Instagram.

In the following section: with respect to your media consumption please select which type of media (a or b) you watch more. Next, indicate -by selecting the proper value from 1 to 9 - how much more you use one media over the other.

1. **Which media type do you use/watch more: News Media or Entertainment Media?**
   a. News Media
   b. Entertainment Media

How much more do you do it?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Equally		Moderately		Strongly		Very Strongly		Extremely

2. **Which media type do you use/watch more: Entertainment Media or Social Media?**
   a. Entertainment Media
   b. Social Media

How much more do you do it?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Equally		Moderately		Strongly		Very Strongly		Extremely

3. **Which media type do you use/watch more: News Media or Social Media?**
   a. News Media
   b. Social Media

How much more do you do it?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Equally		Moderately		Strongly		Very Strongly		Extremely

Survey Section II

Question design based on information collected from 'The 5 Most Common Misconceptions About Mental Illness' (Morin, 2015) and 'Six Myths and Facts about Mental Illness' (Ross, 2019) as well as experience/training from the author while pursuing graduate degree in psychology.

In the following section: rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. **People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. **Mental illness is a sign of weakness.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. **Mental health problems are forever.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. **People with depression are suicidal.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. **People with schizophrenia are dangerous to themselves and those around them.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

6. **Psychiatric medications are bad.**

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree