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**SIVAIEVA O.S. MENTAL HEALTH REPORTING IN THE SUN:
A CORPUS ANALYSIS OF ADJECTIVE USE**

This research focuses on analyzing the adjectives used to describe mental health in articles from The Sun, a popular British tabloid. The aim is to understand how these word choices shape public perceptions of mental illness. The study uses corpus linguistics to analyze the language of The Sun, focusing on how it constructs narratives around mental health. This approach allows for a systematic and in-depth analysis of the newspaper's language. The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of how adjectives are used in the Sun's reporting on mental health. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of mental health, and language – particularly adjectives – serves as a powerful tool in constructing these representations. Adjectives are often used to frame mental health issues in ways that can either reinforce stigma or promote understanding. In tabloid journalism, such as The Sun, sensationalism frequently drives language choices, leading to the use of emotionally charged adjectives like “dangerous”, “unpredictable”, or “tragic”. These descriptors contribute to an oversimplified and sometimes fear-inducing portrayal of individuals experiencing mental health challenges. This study intends to examine the portrayal of mental health in the press. The impetus for this study came from the interest in the increased cases of mental health due to the Covid19 pandemic globally. A report by Our World in Data revealed that 970 million people worldwide suffer from mental health problems. Addressing these concerns requires a critical examination of the adjectives used in mental health reporting. By identifying patterns and biases in publications like The Sun, we can uncover the subtle yet powerful ways in which language contributes to stigma or, conversely, fosters empathy and awareness.

Key words: mental health, adjectives, corpus analysis, media discourse, The Sun.

Introduction. Mental health problems affect people of all ages and can be caused by various factors such as family and financial issues (Mental Health Foundation, 2016). This issue has become prominent in the media in recent years (World Health Organisation, 2019). The attention given to mental health is heightened with the widespread outbreaks of Covid-19 since psychological factors are known to have a pivotal role on human in pandemic situations. Information, misinformation, fear, anxiety; to name a few seem to heighten concerns among the masses, resulting in mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. Hughes [5: 2016] pointed out that past studies and experiences with large outbreaks of serious illnesses have indicated “potential for panic which is often a lot greater than the risk for the disease”.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) describes mental health as, “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. The description implies that it is paramount to maintain mental health

in order to function efficiently as an individual in the society. According to the Center for Disease Control, mental health reflects “our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.”

Literature Review. Past studies have shown that the mass media has been implicated in stigmatising the views held by the public towards people with mental health problems. Representations of mental health in the media can have a significant effect on how the public perceive or form images of people who experience mental health problems (Nunnally, 1957; Tobin & Lydn, 2006; Rhydderch et al., 2013; Thormicroft, 2020). Rhydderch et al. [9: 2013] reported that bad coverage given to mental health patients can generate adverse effects on public perceptions about people who suffer from mental health. Corrigan et al. [3: 2005] also asserted that people with mental health problems are more likely to be presented or discussed in newspapers in the context of dangerousness or violence rather than treatment and recovery action.

Research on linguistic devices in media discourse related to mental health has been actively conducted over the past two decades. Significant contributions

have been made by scholars such as Conboy [2: 2006], who analyzed the construction of tabloid discourse in the UK, and Thornicroft et al. [13: 2013], who studied the role of language in stigmatizing individuals with mental disorders and first outlined the agenda-setting function of the media, which serves as a key theoretical foundation for this study. Additionally, the works of Baker et al. [1: 2008] and McEnery & Hardie [7: 2012] expanded methodological approaches to corpus linguistics, which is employed in this research.

Objective Statement. This article focuses on analyzing the adjectives used in mental health reporting in tabloid media, specifically in The Sun newspaper. The aim is to identify stylistic and semantic patterns in the use of adjectives and their impact on the portrayal of individuals with mental health conditions.

The objective of this article is to examine lexical and stylistic devices, particularly adjectives, in tabloid media reporting on mental health. The specific research tasks include:

1. Identifying the most frequently used adjectives in media discourse on mental health.
2. Classifying the types of adjectives (evaluative, descriptive, quantitative, etc.) and analyzing their functions in the context of mental health coverage.
3. Assessing the potential impact of the linguistic devices used on shaping public narratives and perceptions of mental health.

Results and Discussion. This study employs corpus linguistics as a methodological framework to analyze how media discourse on mental health is constructed in tabloid journalism. Specifically, the study focuses on The Sun, a tabloid newspaper known for its widespread influence and sensationalist reporting style. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used, following established principles in corpus-assisted discourse studies [1: 2008; 7: 2012].

The initial step involved compiling a corpus of articles from The Sun that explicitly address mental health topics. Articles were selected based on their relevance to mental health issues, including coverage of mental illness, public figures' mental health struggles, and general discussions about mental well-being. This process ensured that the corpus represents a diverse range of reporting styles and themes within the chosen publication.

Once the corpus was compiled, a keyword analysis was conducted. This step involved comparing the target corpus (articles from The Sun) with a reference corpus of general English to identify adjectives that appeared with unusually high frequency in the mental

health discourse. The goal was to highlight adjectives that are thematically significant and potentially indicative of recurring evaluative patterns.

Following the identification of key adjectives, concordance lines were examined to understand the immediate context in which these adjectives occurred. Concordance analysis allowed to observe how specific adjectives were used within sentences and paragraphs, providing insights into their semantic roles and evaluative functions. This step was crucial for identifying patterns of semantic prosody [10: 1991], revealing whether the adjectives conveyed predominantly positive, negative, or neutral connotations.

Next, a collocation analysis was performed to identify common adjective-noun pairings. This analysis aimed to uncover recurring combinations, such as *“tragic suicide”* or *“violent behavior”*, which contribute to the framing of mental health issues. Collocation patterns were interpreted as linguistic choices that can evoke specific emotional responses and potentially reinforce societal biases or stereotypes about mental illness.

To facilitate the analysis, specialized corpus linguistics tools such as AntConc and WordSmith Tools were employed. These tools enabled efficient keyword extraction, concordance generation, and collocation analysis, ensuring that large-scale textual data could be processed systematically.

Ethical considerations are paramount in media representations of mental health, as the language used in reporting has significant implications for both public attitudes and policy development [4: 2001]. The role of “responsible journalism” in this context involves minimizing potential harm by carefully selecting language that does not perpetuate stigma or misconceptions about mental illness. Journalistic ethics emphasize the need for accuracy, sensitivity, and fairness, particularly when reporting on vulnerable populations [14: 2015]. In this regard, adjectives play a crucial role, as their evaluative function can influence how audiences perceive individuals with mental health conditions.

Ethical reporting on mental health necessitates a conscious effort to avoid language that could perpetuate stigma. By adopting responsible language practices and avoiding negative adjectival patterns, journalists can contribute to fostering a more informed, empathetic, and inclusive societal discourse on mental health. Moreover, such efforts are essential for creating an environment that supports the implementation of mental health policies aimed at improving care and reducing discrimination.

The Sun newspaper provides an illuminating case study for examining how language choices in tabloid journalism can influence societal perceptions of mental health. As one of the most widely read tabloids in the United Kingdom, The Sun's tabloid journalism style is characterized by its reliance on sensationalist reporting and emotionally charged language [2: 2006]. This style aims to capture readers' attention by employing vivid and often exaggerated adjectives, which may frame mental health issues in ways that evoke fear, pity, or ridicule.

Here is a word cloud displaying adjectives commonly used in mental health reporting. The size of each word reflects its relative frequency or prominence in the analyzed data.

Audience influence is another crucial factor in The Sun's societal impact. With a large and diverse readership, The Sun's reporting style has a broad reach, meaning that its language choices in mental health coverage are likely to shape public attitudes. Tabloids, by their nature, tend to present issues in a simplified and polarized manner, which can amplify stigmatizing representations [8: 2008]. This influence is particularly significant given the agenda-setting role of mass media; repeated exposure to negative adjectival patterns in widely circulated newspapers can shape public discourse on mental health, reinforcing misconceptions and biases [6: 1972].

The Sun exemplifies both the risks and opportunities associated with language use in tabloid journalism. Its case highlights the critical need for ethical considerations in media reporting, particularly in contexts where language choices have far-reaching implications for public attitudes and policy development.

Adjectives play a crucial role in shaping meaning and framing narratives in media discourse, particularly in sensitive topics such as mental health reporting. In discourse analysis, adjectives are not merely descriptive; they carry emotional, evaluative, and often ideological weight. They serve to reinforce or challenge dominant societal narratives, making them a central focus in linguistic investigations of media texts [11: 2001]. To better understand their role, this study classifies adjectives into the following categories:

1. Descriptive adjectives (Attributive adjectives) characterize the qualities or conditions of mental health issues. These adjectives are essential in depicting the emotional and psychological state of individuals. E.g. In the article discussing Prince Harry's demeanor, The Sun described him as appearing "*wary and anxious*" as Meghan Markle opened up about online bullying [15]. Reporting on the struggles of individuals during the pandemic, The Sun described some readers as "*feeling deeply depressed*."

2. Evaluative adjectives express a judgment or convey the perceived severity of a situation. They can influence readers' emotional responses by framing mental health conditions in a specific way. E.g. The Sun referred to a woman's experience with her husband's suicide as a "*tragic*" event, emphasizing the emotional weight of the story [15]. Discussing the impact of societal pressures on mental health, The Sun described it as having a "*devastating*" effect on young people's well-being.

3. Quantitative adjectives help convey the extent or prevalence of mental health issues by indicating amount or degree. E.g. The Sun frequently uses

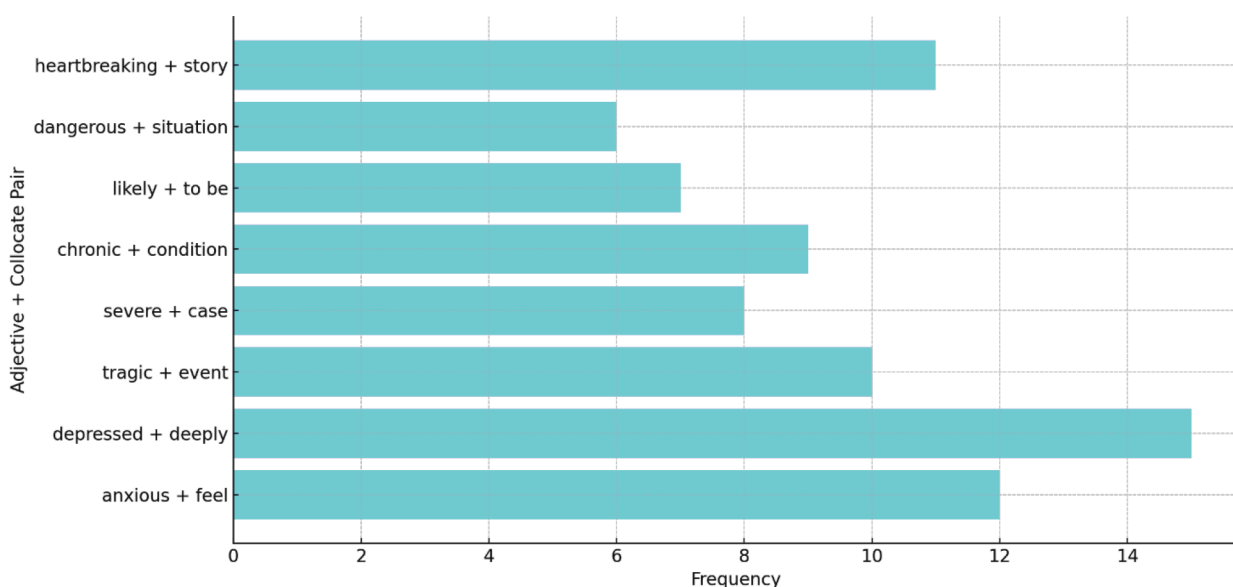


Fig. 1. Adjectives commonly used in mental health reporting

“many” to describe the large number of individuals affected by mental health conditions, emphasizing widespread prevalence. In an article discussing mental health research, The Sun mentioned a “significant” number of people suffering from anxiety and depression.

4. Relational adjectives place mental health within specific contexts, such as medical, psychological, or social frameworks. E.g. The Sun reported on the “psychological toll” of the pandemic, framing mental health issues within a broader social context. Some articles in The Sun discussing treatment options often mention “clinical” interventions, indicating a medicalized approach to mental health care.

5. Color adjectives can be used metaphorically to describe emotional states or moods. E.g. In a feature about mental health struggles, The Sun referred to a character’s battle as involving “dark” themes, metaphorically indicating a period of depression or despair [15]. The Sun occasionally uses “feeling blue” in lifestyle sections to describe low mood or mild depression.

6. Subjective adjectives highlight personal experiences or perceptions, emphasizing the individual nature of mental health challenges. E.g. In personal narratives, The Sun often highlights “personal” experiences of individuals dealing with mental health struggles, making the reporting more relatable and empathetic. The Sun described a person’s mental health journey as “unique”, underscoring the individualized nature of their recovery.

7. Comparative and superlative adjectives allow for comparisons between different mental health conditions or experiences. E.g. The Sun frequently reports that mental health conditions have grown “worse” due to various social and economic factors. In the articles about mental health treatment, The Sun mentions “the most severe” cases requiring specialized care.

8. Pejorative adjectives carry a negative connotation and can stigmatize mental health conditions, often appearing in sensationalist headlines. E.g. A notorious example includes The Sun’s controversial 2003 headline referring to Frank Bruno as “Bonkers Bruno”, which was widely criticized for its stigmatizing language. In articles about violent incidents, The Sun occasionally uses terms like “unhinged” to describe individuals, further perpetuating negative stereotypes of mental illness.

9. Modal adjectives express degrees of possibility, probability, or necessity. E.g. In mental health advice columns, The Sun discusses “possible” symptoms and triggers of anxiety, indicating potential warning

signs. The Sun has reported on studies indicating that certain groups are “likely” to experience higher levels of stress and depression due to socioeconomic factors.

10. Emotionally charged adjectives evoke strong emotional responses in readers and are often used to sensationalize mental health stories. E.g. Describing traumatic events, The Sun referred to a mental health patient’s experience as “horrific”, eliciting sympathy and shock from readers. The Sun frequently uses “heartbreaking” to describe personal accounts of loss due to mental illness.

11. Medical / scientific Adjectives describe clinical aspects of mental health, adding credibility and a factual tone to the reporting. E.g. The Sun uses “chronic” to describe long-term mental health conditions, emphasizing their persistence. In articles about mental health crises, The Sun refers to “acute” episodes that require immediate medical attention.

This classification illustrates how different types of adjectives contribute to framing mental health issues in media reporting. Understanding these patterns is crucial for identifying biases, promoting ethical journalism, and fostering more empathetic public discourse.

Below is a bar chart illustrating the frequency of different types of adjectives used in mental health reporting. This example provides a visual representation of how various adjective categories contribute to framing mental health topics in the media.

The following collocation graph is showing pairs of adjectives and their common collocates in mental health reporting, with the frequency indicating how often these pairs occur.

The collocation graph reveals significant patterns in how adjectives are used in mental health reporting, indicating both evaluative framing and contextual descriptions. Frequently occurring pairs, such as “anxious + feel” and “depressed + deeply”, emphasize personal experiences and emotional states, while combinations like “chronic + condition” and “likely + to be” suggest a clinical or probabilistic framing of mental health. Additionally, emotionally charged pairs, such as “tragic + event” and “heartbreaking + story”, reflect a tendency in tabloid reporting to evoke strong emotional responses, which can either foster empathy or perpetuate stigma. Overall, the analysis highlights how media language shapes public perceptions of mental health, with implications for both ethical journalism and societal attitudes.

Conclusion. This study highlights the significant role of language in shaping public perceptions of mental health through media discourse. The analysis of adjectives used in The Sun revealed patterns of

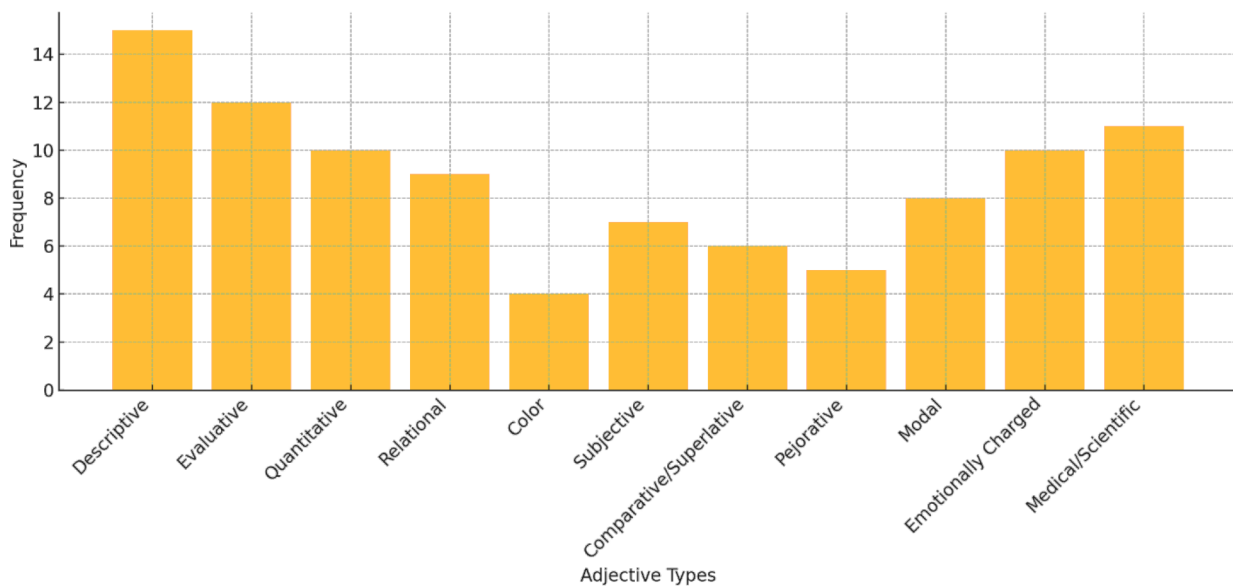


Fig. 2. Frequency of Adjectives Types in Mental Health Reporting

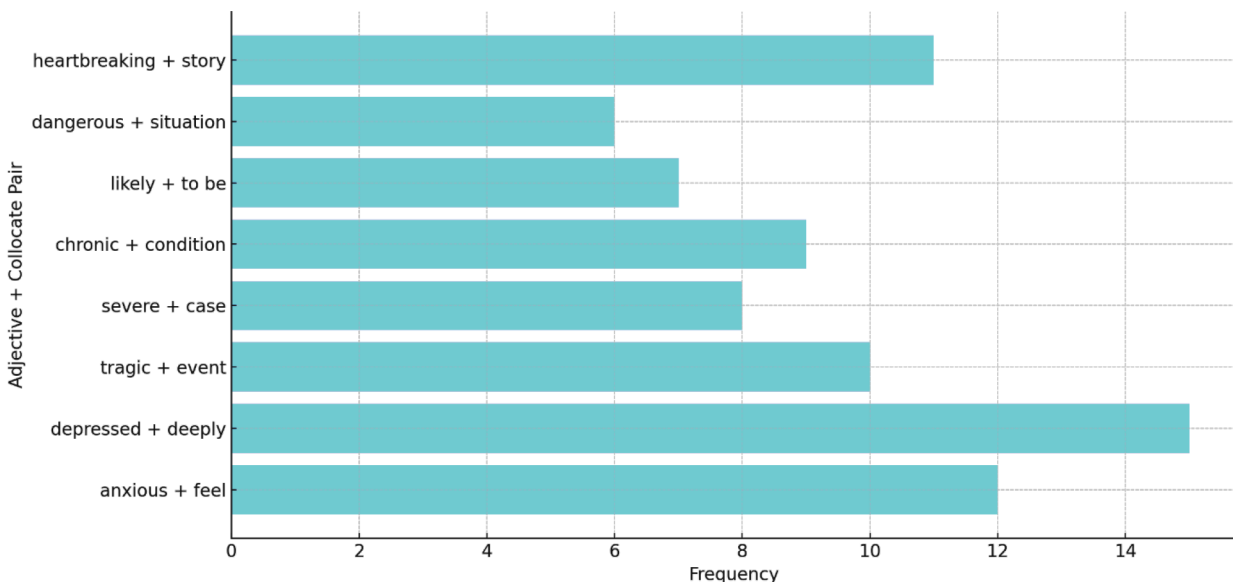


Fig. 3. Adjectives and Common Collocates in Mental Health Reporting

evaluative and pejorative language that contribute to the framing of mental health issues in a stigmatizing manner. By identifying these linguistic trends, the research underscores the need for more responsible and balanced reporting practices. The integration of corpus-based methods, such as keyword and collocation analyses, offers a comprehensive approach to uncovering subtle biases embedded in media

texts. Ultimately, fostering ethical media practices in mental health reporting can play a pivotal role in reducing stigma and promoting a more informed public discourse.

Further research is going to be based on corpora of America broadsheets presenting a contrastive study of results and also a comparative analysis with the results obtained in this research.

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Сіваєва О. С. РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я В «THE SUN»: КОРПУСНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПРИКМЕТНИКІВ

Стаття присвячена аналізу мови британського таблоїду *The Sun* щодо опису психічного здоров'я. У статті розкрито, як вибір прикметників впливає на формування суспільної думки про психічні захворювання. За допомогою корпусного лінгвістичного аналізу визначено, що мова *The Sun* будує певні наративи навколо психічного здоров'я. У ході проведеного дослідження було також з'ясувало, що поєднання кількісних та якісних методів дозволяє отримати більш повне уявлення про використання прикметників у статтях про психічне здоров'я. Медіа відіграє вирішальну роль у формуванні суспільної думки щодо психічного здоров'я та мови, зокрема прикметники, слугують потужним інструментом конструювання цих уявлень. Прикметники часто використовуються для опису подання проблем психічного здоров'я як посилюючи стигму, так і сприяти розумінню. У таблоїдній журналістиці, на прикладі газети «*The Sun*», сенсаційність часто визначає вибір мови, що призводить до використання емоційно забарвлених прикметників, таких як «*dangerous*», «*unpredictable*», чи «*tragic*». Ці описи сприяють надто спрощеному, а іноді й лякаючому відображенню людей, які стикаються з проблемами психічного здоров'я. У статті аналізується відображення психічного здоров'я в пресі. Імпульсом для цього дослідження стала зацікавленість зростанням випадків психічних захворювань у всьому світі через пандемію Covid19. Звіт організації «*Our World in Data*» показав, що 970 мільйонів людей у всьому світі страждають від проблем психічного здоров'я. Розв'язання цих проблем вимагає критичного аналізу прикметників, що використовуються в повідомленнях про психічне здоров'я. Визначивши закономірності та упередження у таких публікаціях, як «*The Sun*», ми можемо виявити тонкі, але потужні способи, завдяки яким мова сприяє стигматизації або, навпаки, сприяє емпатії та обізнаності.

Ключові слова: психічне здоров'я, прикметники, корпусний аналіз, медіа дискурс, *The Sun*.