

Otherness and blame: a comparative news media analysis of mpox outbreaks in Italy, Nigeria and the UK

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BACKGROUND

- The 2022–2024 Mpox outbreaks revived global attention to health communication.
- Media play a crucial role in shaping disease narratives, often reproducing stigma and exclusion.
- We conducted a comparative media analysis of Mpox in three socio-culturally distinct countries using the postcolonial theory of *Othering* (Said, Spivak).

NEWSPAPERS SELECTION:

Inclusion	Country		
	Italy	Nigeria	UK
Dates	01/05/22- 31/12/22	01/01/17-31/12/23	01/05/22-31/05/22
Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• La Repubblica• Il Corriere della sera	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Sun• Punch• The Vanguard• The Guardian• The Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guardian• Sun• Times• Daily Mail• Daily Mirror
Articles included, (before review)	52	71 (354)	81 (480)

AIMS:

- Analyse how media narratives reproduce geographical, moral, and epistemic Othering.
- Compare how Othering manifests across three different national contexts.

METHODS

- 204 articles from 9 national newspapers.
- Thematic analysis by in-country teams using inductive coding.

REFERENCES

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- Spivak, G. C. (2023). Can the subaltern speak? *Imperialism*, Routledge: 171-219.
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KEY FINDINGS



UK:

- Mpox was framed as "African," exotic, contagious.
- MSM communities were portrayed with moral suspicion.
- Recurrent practice of silencing affected voices despite public health warnings about stigma.



Italy:

- Europe was depicted as as "epicentre under threat" of a disease that originate in Africa
- MSM vaccine prioritisation raised ethical concerns about reinforcing stigma.
- There as a strong echoes of HIV-era representations.



Nigeria:

- The blame was shifted to *rural communities* and to "bushmeat practices".
- References to the LGBTQ+ community was largely omitted and replaced instead with a focus on moral panic, conspiracy, and spiritual framing.
- Eloquent example are the recurrent references to bushmeat sanitised narratives; the claims of miraculous healing; and the soldier conspiracy.

CONCLUSION

- Exclusionary narratives were prominent within news media in endemic and non-endemic regions during the 2022-23 mpox outbreak.
- - Media narratives were shaped by colonial legacies and histories of HIV stigmatization
- - Our data demonstrats how "othering" persists in global health communication
- - News media is a critical actor in global public health, but has the power to further marginalize and stigmatize communities.
- - Emphasizes need for for more inclusive, respectful, evidence-based and historically-situated outbreak reporting.

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