

3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on

# Mental Health and Human Resilience

June 21-23, 2017 London, UK

## Men's recovery from schizophrenia in Northern Nigeria

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**Statement of the problem:** Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental illness that affects over twelve million males worldwide. In Nigeria, estimates indicate that there are more males than females living with schizophrenia. Although, there have been studies on men and health in Nigeria, these have focused on sexual health. In contrast, men's experience of schizophrenia and the role of gender in influencing their beliefs about recovery has not been studied. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors influencing men's recovery from schizophrenia in northern Nigeria.

**Methodology:** Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with, 30 male outpatients and 10 mental health professionals recruited through Nigerian psychiatric hospital outpatient clinics. Data were analysed for themes.

**Findings:** Participants in this study identified western medicine, traditional medicine, and family support as of significance to recovery from schizophrenia. The presence of gender flexibility within household members, where their contributions changed over time, was also a notion seen as influencing the men's ability to become involved in recovery from the mental illness. In particular, providing for the family needs becomes a shared responsibility, where the departure from traditional gender expectations imposes fewer family hardships, thus aiding the men's willingness to seek help, which rolls over to their recovery.

**Conclusions & Significance:** The influence of gender flexibility demonstrated in this study has implications for understanding men's management of recovery from schizophrenia. Recommendations are made for gender transformative programs for the men and those involved in their care that would help engage participants in discussions relevant to facilitate change in gender expectations. Future research is needed to further explore what aspects of gender can impact on men's mental health within the Nigerian and wider African context.

### Biography

Bello Utoblo studied Mental Healthcare and obtained MSc in Mental Health. He is currently a Doctoral student at the School of Health and Community Studies in Leeds Beckett University, UK. He is keen on developing the understanding of the cause of schizophrenia and approaches to its recovery. He has built this current approach through exploration of the perceptions and experiences of male services users and their mental healthcare professionals within a community in northern Nigeria.

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