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Gender flexibility as a social factor in Nigerian male patients 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 12 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 studies have focused on sexual health. In contrast, men's experience of schizophrenia and the role of gender in influencing their beliefs about recovery have 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 analyzed for themes.

Findings: The presence of gender flexibility within household members, where their contributions changed over time, was associated with household poverty reduction, which was seen as influencing the men's ability to become involved in recovery from the mental distress. In particular, providing for the family needs becomes a shared responsibility, where the departure from traditional gender expectations imposes fewer family hardships. This was reported as having a bearing on the men's willingness to access mental healthcare.

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 mental health professional 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.

Recent Publications

1. Afolayan J A, Peter I O and Amasueba A N (2010) Prevalence of schizophrenia among patients admitted into neuro-psychiatric hospital Nigeria. *Continental Journal of Nursing Science*.
2. Esan O and Fawole O (2013) Comparison of the profile of patients with acute and transient psychotic disorder and schizophrenia in a Nigerian Teaching Hospital. *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*.
3. Odimegwu C and Okemgbo C (2008) Men's perception of masculinities and sexual health risks in Igboland Nigeria. *International Journal of Men's Health* 7(1):21-39.
4. Braun V and Clarke V (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*.

Biography

Bello Utoblo has studied mental healthcare and completed PhD in Mental Health from School of Health and Community Studies-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 experiences of male service users and their mental healthcare professionals within a community in Northern Nigeria. This approach highlights the occurrence of a transformation in men and women roles in contemporary Nigeria and provides insights into the link between gender as a social factor and men's management of their recovery in modern African context.

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