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## A Qualitative Study on Treatment Approaches and Culturally Sensitive Mental Health Care for African Immigrants in the U.S

Ajabeyang Amin

Northwest University's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, USA

Although the population of African immigrants in the U.S. continues to increase (Anderson, 2017), there is limited research on effective mental health treatment for this group. The purpose of this study was to understand the strategies that African immigrants utilize when dealing with emotional and psychological distress and in maintaining their overall wellbeing. The study also sought to obtain information on important aspects mental

health professionals should consider in providing culturally sensitive treatment to African immigrants. Results from in-depth interviews with 13 participants from the states of Washington and Georgia demonstrated four factors that are beneficial to this group include: 1) sense of community, 2) spirituality, faith, and religion, 3) meaningful recreation, and 4) cognitive strategies. When working therapeutically, participants emphasized the importance of cultural relevance, collaboration, clarifying expectations, hospitality, and incorporating their values and interests. Other essential factors for mental health professionals to consider are their roles within their families in the U.S. and abroad, and their need for assistance navigating life in the U.S. particularly when they initially arrive. Study findings

also demonstrated that African immigrants' perceptions of mental health and distress are highly influenced by cultural beliefs from their native countries. African immigrants in the current study had diverse ways of dealing with mental and emotional distress, which portrayed high resiliency. Recommendations are given to assist mental health professionals to better serve African immigrant populations.

### Biography

Ajab successfully completed her dissertation (presented here) in July 2018 and is currently doing a clinical internship at Frostburg State University. She will complete her PsyD in Counseling Psychology in May 2019 from Northwest University. Ajab has a Master in Public Health from University of Michigan. She has worked with various populations in the U.S. and abroad (Cameroon, Ghana, and France). She aspires to continue conducting research on African and African immigrant populations while providing psychotherapy to youth and adults in the U.S. and in Cameroon.

*ajabeyang@gmail.com*