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Perceptions and beliefs about mental illness (Schizophrenia) among adults in Ashanti region and its communities

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Concept of mental illness like schizophrenia is increasing and is particularly severe for people living in rural communities. Ghana adopted a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) for persons with mental illness to address the problem comprehensively. However, negative attitudes towards the mentally ill, stigmatization and discrimination constitute a serious barrier to CBR. The objective of the study was to assess societal beliefs and perceptions about people with schizophrenia, among the adult population in a rural community (Offinso, Obuasi and Nkawie) and other communities in the Ashanti Region. The study used a mixed method where both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed. A sample size was determined using a systematic approach. The respondents held fairly positive views about the mentally ill, despite a few negative authoritarian and socially restrictive attitudes and views. Though participants appeared to be knowledgeable about the possible physical, social and environmental causes of mental illness such as accidents and genetic factors, 96% of all participants thought mental illness could be due to witchcraft/evil spirits, and 60% felt that it could be a consequence of divine punishment. This is an indication that stigma and discrimination against the mentally ill were still widespread among the respondents. The widespread belief in supernatural causes is likely to act as a barrier to designing effective anti-stigma educational programs and as a result frustrating the implementation of CBR. There is a need in the Ashanti region and elsewhere to develop strategies to change stigma attached to mental illness at both the rural and urban community levels. This paper is one of the first to report to be made on attitudinal research on mental illness in the Ashanti region by selected areas and the places are Offinso municipal, Obuasi municipal and Nkawie district and other communities.

Biography

Kwarteng Yeboah is a first year student in Astrakhans State University. He received Diploma in Mental Health Nursing. He has worked as a Campaign Manager for Showers of Blessing Savings and Loans before proceeding to Study Mental Health at Ankarful Psychiatric Training Collage. He has also worked as Chief Coordinator in Ghana Methodist Students Union. After he completed his diploma in Psychiatric Nursing, he also worked with several hospitals and NGO foundation as health service provider, in Ghana, Ankaful psychiatric hospital for two year, ST Patrice hospital for two years and finally settled in Kumasi south hospital as psychiatric nurse and now he is pursuing BSc in psychology in Russia.

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