

Challenges Facing Mental Health in the 21st Century: A Summary of Scientific Evidences

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Dear Editor,

Industrialization and modern lifestyle have had an adverse effect on mental health, so that many people frequently experience mental disorders (1). Globally, a systematic review and meta-analysis reported 21.4% prevalence of sexual violence among female refugees and approximately one in five refugees or displaced women in complex humanitarian settings have experienced sexual violence (2). As a global health issue, mental health concerns both the rich and the poor, regardless of country of origin or gender. Family and society at large, mental fitness, physical soundness and social alertness are all vital elements of life, which are closely interwoven, and interdependent (3).

Problems related to beliefs and behaviors are now on the higher cargo of international health issues. About 12% of the global population is affected by mental illnesses, which contribute to the worldwide burden on socio-economic life of the people (4). There is a popular notion that every individual harbors abnormality. As true as this may sound, there is a great degree in the midst of individual's rank of deviation since mental illnesses show a discrepancy in severity and type. Mental health is simply defined as the state of psychological and emotional well-being of an individual; it may not necessarily be absence of mental disorder. Also, mental health can be defined as a state of stability, in which an individual recognizes his/her personality and can be able to adjust to the daily pressures of life and be able to meaningfully affect the society. Unfortunately, these criteria have been an unrealistic aim of every man as they are barely possible to accomplish. To achieve the mentioned functions, a mentally healthy individual must have some qualities such as courage, integrity, inspiration, tolerance and tenacity (ability to concentrate on a given job without allowing interruptions or delay to interject it). Shortness in any of them signifies an interference with ones' mental functioning.

The global epidemiology of mental illness is grow-

ing more than other diseases (5). Five in every 10 principal causes of frailty worldwide are mental disorders; e.g., major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, alcohol use and obsessive compulsive disorders, regardless of country of origin, socio-economic status, and level of knowledge. Moreover, there is a great probability that soon issues related to mental illness become a major challenge in the health care settings. Currently, in Nigeria, less than 5% of the budget allocated to the health sector is allotted to psychiatric asylum.

1. Mental Health Challenges: The Scientific Evidence So Far

1.1. Sexual Disorder

Sexual disorder is a type of mental illness associated with the exhibition of hypo/hyper-active behavior during a sexual cycle. The hyperactive form is characterized by uncontrollable and over reaction of an individual during a sexual cycle, or a frequent urge to initiate sexual action to self or to another, irrespective of gender. Most often, these abnormal behaviors are associated with parental upbringing and early exposure to sexual activities such as watching pornographic films and substance abuse, both of which could predispose an individual to the act of rape. Undoubtedly, substance abuse, due to its euphoric effect, bridges the gap between moral and immoral conduct among the abusers. This outcome could lead to premature sexual experience among boys and even young girls. Rape (biastophilia) is an act of having sexual intercourse with an unconsented live being. Constitutionally, no one under the age of eighteen is qualified to give consent for a sexual act, but this varies from country to country. Nonetheless, even in this modern world reports of sexual harassment, especially among young girls, are no longer surprising due to its global incidence and prevalence. The surprising part is 'incest' (sexual relations between those classed as being

too closely related to marry each other, such as father and daughter, brother and sister, house cleaner and father of the house), in which the executors and the sufferers usually deny it. This mysterious behavior is gaining ground day by day, mainly due to an increase in paraphilic disorders such as voyeurism in males and exhibitionism in females. Some people are now behaving like animals as they engage in sexual acts in public. Unfortunately, it seems that some people are not morally concerned about their sexual actions. Can madness go beyond this?

1.2. Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is increasing among the general population, and the time of introduction usually occurs during adolescence. The most common abused substances include but not limited to alcohol and alcohol beverages, cigarette, cannabis and cocaine. The recommended daily intake of alcohol varies from country to country, depending on the drink. In Nigeria, for instance, a can of beer contains 33 cl, which projects a standard drink of 17.16 g per day. However, more than half of the alcohol consumers, particularly teenagers, drink more than four cans (68.64 g). A documented proof (6), has reported that the elicited drug abuse and heavy drinking among persons aged 12 or older was 9.4% in 2013. Psychiatric complications that usually follow substance or alcohol abuse are immediate (confusion, memory loss, unproductive argument, family conflict and absenteeism from work) and long-term (imbalance in neurotransmitters leading to psychosis and neurosis).

1.3. Fostering Care and Poor Parent-Child Relationship

Nowadays, the quest for high education and white-collar work due to economic recession and civilization have created domestic role conflicts among women; consequently, it has increased child fostering leading to hard labor. A significant ill-treatment association exists in early child detachment from biological parents (such as sexual abuse, physical abuse and rejection or discrimination), which predisposes children to psychological issues, affecting their general wellbeing. Children exhibit five traits: Preciousness, helplessness, imperfection, codependence, and immaturity, and it is the parents' responsibility to shape their children's personality in the right way (7). Any alteration in these striking qualities can be classified as venomous on a child. Emotional abuse is more common among children in foster care, which exposes them to mental problems such as depression and low self-esteem (8). Low self-esteem is more prevalent among adolescents living with a guardian compared to those living with biological parents. Adolescents living with a caregiver other

than biological parent(s) are more likely to express injurious parental style such as controlling. Furthermore, adolescents raised by controlling parents-harsh but not warm-are likely to develop noticeable lower self-possession, self-competence, and complex emotional distress of all kinds.

Parental relationship is the major cause of adolescent depression (9). Because a reduction in parents-child interpersonal relationship can lead to manifestation of symptoms of low self-esteem and depression.

Unfriendly relationship between close relatives/caregiver and children has absolute consequences on adolescent's emotional behavior, and its overall reason is the over-reproductivity among lower class families that cannot provide sufficient care for their children. This can only be prevented through health education and reinforcement of family planning programs that focus on this target group.

2. Factors Challenging Mental Health Services

Despite the extensive development of health care systems across the globe, mental health still lacks the necessary growing curve. There is a popular saying: "prevention is better than cure". Prevention is not only better, but also cheaper than cure. Preventive services, such as health education through audio-visual aids, are always rendered by healthcare professionals, largely by the nurses. Unfortunately, nursing shortage, especially in mental health, has been a worldwide problem that does not seem to be solved anytime soon, and this imposes a great burden on the patients, especially those with mental illness, as incidence and prevalence of chronic behavioral problems are increasing year by year. In addition, the followings have been identified as contributing factors to this setback:

- Inadequate research coverage on incidence and prevalence of mental health;
- Poor policy and implementation on the side of the political leaders;
- Lack of proper upbringing of children on the side of parents;
- Lack of political policies;
- Prejudice associated with misconceptions on the cause and treatment of mental health by different religions;
- Inadequate human resources (man power) to care for the asylum;
- Financial constrains/economic recession/unemployment;
- Inadequate sensitization campaign by the health care agencies.

3. Implication to Nursing Care

The most important and beneficial part of medicine is disease prevention. The prerequisite to this is providing health education on the cause and preventive measures for chronic and hard to cure disorders through public enlightenment campaign by the nurses.

The review of these challenges will serve as a road map for the nurses and other healthcare practitioners in policy formulation, practice, and healthy decision-making in various settings.

4. Conclusion

Mental health problems have become a great challenge worldwide. The prevailing factors to this unpleasant dispute have been anchored on the increase in substance use among adolescents and adult population, lack of proper upbringing of children, and poor distribution of information on the health implications of these factors.

4.1. Recommendation

The health professionals should provide appropriate health education on the causes and consequences of inability to control sexual urge, abuse of substance and improper nurturing of children at home in high prevalence areas. Moreover, government agencies should effectively monitor the production and sale of commonly used substances.

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Footnotes

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