

EPP0437

Cross-cultural comparison of attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help : A Multinational Population-Based Study from 16 Arab Countries and 10,036 Individuals

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Introduction: There has been an increasing interest in people's attitudes toward seeking psychological help. Although recent research has shown a rise in the number of people seeking help from psychological services, there is still a significant number who choose not to see a mental health specialist.

Objectives: The aim of the current study was to examine the attitudes toward help-seeking psychological help among Arab population and to investigate factors related to these attitudes in the whole sample.

Methods: We carried out a multinational cross-sectional study using online self-administered surveys in the Arabic language from June to November 2021 across 16 Arab countries. The Community Attitudes toward the Mentally Ill scale, the Mental Health Knowledge Schedule scale and the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form were administered to participants from the general public.

Results: The study sample was predominantly female (77%), married (41%), educated (89% with tertiary education), living in urban areas (85%), with a mean age of 29.6 ± 10.8 years.

Participants tended to have a higher preference to seek help from a psychologist or a psychiatrist (85.7%) and primary care physicians (80.7%). We also found that family members represented a preferred source of help in 80.4% of the cases.

In bivariate analyses, help-seeking attitudes positively correlated with attitudes ($r=.265$) and knowledge ($r=.121$). Besides, multivariate regression analyses revealed that being female, older, having higher knowledge and more positive attitudes toward mental illness, and endorsing biomedical and psychosocial causations were associated with more favorable help-seeking attitudes; whereas having a family psychiatric history and endorsing religious/supernatural causations were associated with more negative help-seeking attitudes.

Conclusions: Attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help are intricate. Determining factors associated with help-seeking attitudes may guide interventions in order to avoid delays in help-seeking.

Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

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Perceptions of Causes and Treatment of Mental Illness Among Traditional Health Practitioners in Johannesburg, South Africa

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Introduction: Mental disorders are among the most poorly treated illnesses in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that 70-80% of South Africans consult Traditional Health Practitioners (THPs) for the treatment of psychological ailments. Few studies have examined the perceptions of THPs regarding causes of mental illness and whilst we know little about their practices, THPs maintain a strong role in assessing and treating patients with mental illness.

Objectives: This research aims to be among the first studies to identify perceived causes and treatment modalities for mental illness among THPs in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Methods: Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 THPs in Johannesburg, South Africa between January and May, 2022. Interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Data was managed using NVivo 12 software and thematically analyzed.

Results: THPs interviewed generally perceived mental illness to be of supernatural causation, either as a result of bewitchment, a calling for the patient to become a THP themselves, due to angry ancestors, or due to natural causes. THPs identified eight primary treatments that they use for treating mental illness. Among these were: throwing of bones (*tinhlolo*) to start communicating with ancestors, steaming (*ukufutha*) to start the cleansing process, sneezing (*umbhemiso*) to forcefully dispel the spirit causing the illness, vomiting (*phalaza*) and laxatives (*mahlabekufeni*) to remove the spirits poisoning the body as well as animal sacrifice to purge spirits and communicate with ancestors. This is all followed by cutting (*ukucaba*) which is the final part of treatment that ensures that the evil spirit cannot return.

Conclusions: This study is among the first to examine the perceived causes and treatments for mental illness used by THPs in Johannesburg, South Africa. As the vast majority of South Africans continue to seek help for mental illness via THPs, it is important to understand what forms of care healers are providing to patients. Future research should continue to document ways in which THPs approach healthcare as well as investigate interventions that can foster collaboration between THPs and biomedical professionals.

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A psychiatric mobile clinic in rural Ghana as a model to deliver professional services to a huge catchment area, review of 12 years experience

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Introduction: The population in remote areas in Ghana as in other low- and middle- income countries (LMIC's) are known to suffer from limited access to quality mental health services. The