

Beyond Recognition: Beliefs, Attitudes, and Help-Seeking for Depression and Schizophrenia in Ghana

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Abstract : Background: There is a paucity of mental health research in Ghana. Little is known about the beliefs and attitudes regarding specific mental disorders in Ghana. Method: A vignette study was conducted to examine the relationship between causal attributions, help-seeking, and stigma towards depression and schizophrenia using lay Ghanaians (N = 410). This adapted questionnaire presented two unlabelled vignettes about a hypothetical person with the above disorders for participants to provide their impressions. Next, participants answered questions on beliefs and attitudes regarding this person. Results: The results showed that causal beliefs about mental disorders were related to treatment options and stigma: spiritual causal attributions associated positively with spiritual help-seeking and perceived stigma for the mental disorders, whilst biological and psychosocial causal attribution of the mental disorders was positively related with professional help-seeking. Finally, contrary to previous literature, belonging to a particular religious group did not negatively associate with professional help-seeking for mental disorders. Conclusion: In conclusion, results suggest that Ghanaians may benefit from exposure to corrective information about depression and schizophrenia. Our findings have implications for mental health literacy and anti-stigma campaigns in Ghana and other developing countries in the region.

Keywords : stigma, mental health literacy, depression, schizophrenia, spirituality, religion

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