Gender as a risk factor for schizophrenia among men in Nigeria

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Abstract

***Statement of the problem*:** Schizophrenia is reported to be higher among males compared to females [1]. In the United Kingdom, research has shown high rates of schizophrenia among African men [2]. In Nigeria, estimates indicate that there are more males than females living with schizophrenia [3, 4]. Studies of schizophrenia across Africa also reflect the higher male incidence in Ethiopia [5] and South Africa [6]. Explanations for the higher rates in schizophrenia incidence vary, but past research suggest that this could be influenced by adherence to traditional masculinity [7]. The study explores gender as a risk factor for schizophrenia among men in Nigeria. ***Methodology*:** Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 30 male out-patients and 10 mental health professionals recruited through Nigerian psychiatric hospital clinics. A thematic approach informed analysis of the data collected. ***Findings*:** Explanations for schizophrenia among Nigerian male outpatients suggests that social factor related to traditional gender expectations is of key importance. This was illustrated through these men feeling they should be head of the household. Within this male provider expectations around the domestic roles, a man was expected to be married and find employment to raise money for the financial expectations associated with being head of a family. However, it was evident from the study that the men's risk of developing schizophrenia, was associated with the pressure of living up to these traditional gender expectations. ***Conclusions & Significance*:** The negative impact of gender demonstrated in this study has practice implications for understanding risk factor associated with onset of schizophrenia. Community gender transformative programs are required to engage service users and their families in discussion relevant to facilitating change in traditional gender expectations. Research is needed to further explore impact of gender associated with risks of developing schizophrenia.

Reference

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Biography

Bello Utoblo (PhD) is keen on developing perspectives for a more understanding of schizophrenia among African men and determinants of health following the mental illness. My research interests are in areas of masculine gender expectations in Nigeria and among African men in United Kingdom. In particular, I am interested in further exploration of traditional social expectations and its association to mental illness (social construction of illness). Also, I like to explore contemporary views of gender relations and its link to mental health (social determinant of health).

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Track Name: Psychiatry Disorders
Type of Presentation: Oral

Notes/Comment