

FACTORS INFLUENCING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG ADULTS IN BENIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The study examined mental health awareness: a global public health problem, examining three key research questions. Using a descriptive survey design, data was gathered from 400 respondents via structured questionnaires. Findings indicate that mental health awareness is essential yet hindered by stigma and limited access to care. Addressing this challenge requires global efforts that include awareness campaigns, policy reforms, and community-based interventions. A dynamic approach integrating mental health into school curricula, promoting open dialogue, and enhancing healthcare systems can reduce stigma and improve resource access. The study recommends prioritizing mental health services, especially for underserved and marginalized communities, to foster early intervention and overall well-being.

Introduction

Globally, mental health disorders affect millions of people, spanning all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia not only pose significant challenges to individual well-being but also place a substantial burden on healthcare systems and economies (McKinley, 2019). Moreover, mental health issues often intersect with other public health concerns, such as substance abuse, homelessness, and interpersonal violence, exacerbating their impact on communities. Mental health refers to a state of well-being in which an individual can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social aspects of a person's life, influencing how they think, feel, and behave on a daily basis (Burns and Green, 2019). Mental health is not solely the absence of mental illness but rather a continuum, ranging from optimal well-being to severe mental health disorders. It is influenced by various factors, including genetics, biology, environment, and life experiences. Maintaining good mental health is essential for overall well-being and quality of life. It enables individuals to navigate challenges, build resilience, and cope with adversity effectively. Positive mental health contributes to healthy relationships, productivity at work or school, and a sense of fulfillment and purpose in life. Conversely, poor mental health can have profound consequences, affecting all aspects of a person's life, including their physical health, social interactions, and ability to function in daily activities (McKinley, 2019).

Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and substance use disorders, are common and can significantly impair an individual's functioning and quality of life if left untreated. These disorders are characterized

by persistent patterns of thoughts, emotions, or behaviours that cause distress or impairment (Lanese, 2019). Mental health disorders can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing mental health as a global public health priority. Promoting mental health involves creating supportive environments, fostering resilience, and ensuring access to mental health services and support. This includes raising awareness about mental health issues, reducing stigma and discrimination, promoting mental health literacy, and integrating mental health into broader health and social policies (Japhet, 2018). By prioritizing mental health promotion and prevention efforts, communities and societies can work towards creating a culture of understanding, empathy, and support for mental well-being, ultimately improving the lives of individuals and families worldwide.

Mental health awareness encompasses a multifaceted effort to increase understanding, reduce stigma, and promote support for mental well-being within individuals, communities, and societies. At its core, mental health awareness involves recognizing the prevalence and impact of mental health conditions, acknowledging their significance as public health concerns, and fostering empathy and understanding towards those affected (Evans, Holkar and Murray, 2017). This awareness extends beyond simply recognizing the existence of mental health disorders; it encompasses a deeper understanding of the complexities of mental illness, its manifestations, and its intersection with various aspects of life. Central to mental health awareness is the destigmatization of mental illness. Historically, mental health conditions have been surrounded by stigma, discrimination, and misconceptions, leading to shame, silence, and barriers to seeking help. Mental health awareness initiatives aim to challenge these attitudes and beliefs, encouraging open dialogue, empathy, and acceptance (McKinley, 2019). By fostering an environment of understanding and support, individuals living with mental health conditions are more likely to seek help, access appropriate treatment, and engage in recovery-oriented activities.

In response to these challenges, there has been a growing emphasis on mental health awareness as a cornerstone of public health initiatives. Governments, international organizations, and civil society groups have increasingly prioritized mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment efforts. This includes campaigns to reduce stigma, increase access to mental health services, and integrate mental health into broader healthcare frameworks (McKinley, 2019). However, despite these efforts, significant gaps remain in mental health care provision, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where resources are limited. Management of Mental Health care needs remains a challenging task. A special effort should be made to improve access to needed health care services. Mental Health disorders among adolescents are often unrecognised and untreated. Once identified, only 1 in 5 adolescents with Mental Health problems receive health treatment, and the absence of health insurance coverage plays a critical role in access to health care services (Lund, 2018).

Mental health over the years has been a point of concern for academic in several discipline and how it affects the wellbeing of man. Over time, there has been a growing recognition of the prevalence and impact of mental health disorders, stigma, misinformation, and inadequate resources continue to hinder effective mental health awareness and support

initiatives. Furthermore, the research problem explores the impact of cultural, socio-economic, and systemic factors on mental health awareness and access to care. Mental health stigma and discrimination vary across cultures and societies, influencing help-seeking behaviours and attitudes towards mental illness. Additionally, disparities in access to mental health services, particularly in low and middle-income countries, exacerbate the burden of mental health disorders and contribute to significant gaps in mental health awareness and support. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies that address the diverse needs of populations worldwide. Also, few studies have examined the use of psychiatric emergency services, although emergency services can be considered an interesting place of observation and intervention. Most studies have been conducted in countries in which citizens have universal health coverage. The evaluation and management of cases in the Nigerian health care system, by contrast, especially in psychiatric emergency services, may contribute to a particularly valuable analysis of their needs. It has also been found that majority of the mental abnormalities encountered are due to a variation of factors such as cultural, socioeconomic, and systemic factors which have not been critically looked into. It is against this background that this research is conducted to examine mental health awareness; a global public health problem, a case study of Benin metropolis.

Methodology

Survey research design was used in this research. According to Olaitan and Sowande (2008) survey research design is directed towards people, their opinions and behaviours. Survey research design is therefore suitable for this since information was collected from respondent on mental health awareness: a global health perspective. The population for the study consist of all residents in Benin metropolis Benin metropolis comprises four local government areas (Ovia North East local, Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba Okha) of Edo State. There are total of 2,412,911 persons in Benin Metropolis (Edo State Ministry of Information, 2025). The sample size of 400 respondents was used as the sample for the research work by adopting purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was first be used by the researcher to select only men and women of adult age, who were perceived to have adequate knowledge of mental health. Next, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents from each of the four (4) local government areas in Benin metropolis making a total of 400 respondents used as the sample for the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was designed along with the Likert scale. The instrument was divided into two sections A and B. Section A consist of students' demographic data while section B contains items designed to elicit answers to the research questions. Each item in section B has a four point Likert response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 4, 3, 2, and 1 weight respectively. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the test re-test method was adopted. To this end 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents that are not part of the sample of the study, and after two weeks, another set of 20 questionnaire were also sent to respondents that are

not part of the sample of the study which were tested using the Pearson Moment Correlation analysis. A reliability value of 0.79 was obtained which showed that the instrument is reliable. The returned questionnaire were coded, inputted into the computer and analysed using the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics and Regression analysis were used to analyse the respondents' opinion. The descriptive statistics (simple percentage and frequency count) was used to analyse the demographic information of the respondents. Furthermore, the regression analysis (ANOVA) was used to analyse the research questions at 0.05 (5%) level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of cultural factors on mental health awareness among men and women in Benin metropolis?

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. Change	
1	.002 ^a	.0004	.0001	.5211	.0002	.001	.763	1.802

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.000	1	.000	.001	.0302 ^b
	Residual	10132	99	.267		
	Total	10132	100			

From the regression tables above, it can be seen that cultural factors significantly influence the level of awareness of mental health among persons living in Benin metropolis. This is seen with an R-square value that shows the extent to which the independent variables explain the variations (or changes) in the dependent variable. The positive R-square value indicates a reasonably strong ability of the model to provide explanations, suggesting that it was meticulously and accurately developed. And as such, its outcomes are trustworthy in arriving at a conclusion. The Durbin-Watson statistic serves as a signal for detecting auto-correlation issues within the model. Following its criterion, the value of 1.802 signifies the absence of auto-correlation problems in the model. As a result, the model's effectiveness is assured. It had a p-value of 0.0302 which is less than 0.05 level of significance showing that cultural factors significantly influence mental health awareness in Benin metropolis.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of socio-economic factors on mental health awareness among men and women in Benin metropolis?

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. Change	
1	.002 ^a	.0004	.00012	.3401	.000	.001	.534	1.794

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.000	1	.000	.004	.0400 ^b
	Residual	11.127	99	.291		
	Total	11.127	100			

The tables above shows that that socio-economic factors has significant influence on mental health awareness of persons living in Benin metropolis. The Durbin Watson value of 1.794 signifies the absence of auto-correlation problems in the model. As a result, the model's effectiveness is assured. Also, the f-statistic of 0.004 and p-value of 0.04 which is less than the 5% (0.05) level of significance shows that socio-economic factors significantly influence mental health awareness in Benin metropolis.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of systemic factors on mental health awareness among men and women in Benin Metropolis?

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. Change	
1	.002 ^a	.0042	.0012	.434	.000	.001	.500	1.820

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	.000	1	.000	.033	.0392 ^b
Residual	11.007	99	.242		
Total	11.007	100			

From the tables shown above, that Systemic factors significantly influence mental health awareness in Benin metropolis. The Durbin Watson value of 1.820 signifies the absence of auto-correlation problems in the model. As a result, the model's effectiveness is assured. Also, the f-statistic of 0.033 and p-value of 0.0392 which obviously is less than the 0.05 (5%) level of significance shows that systematic factors significantly influence mental health awareness in Benin metropolis.

Discussion of findings

From the study carried out, it was discovered that culture factors cultural beliefs, Cultural stigma, cultural practices, Cultural norms, and Cultural diversity goes a long way in influencing the level of metal health awareness among residents in Benin metropolis. This is in line with Burns and Green (2019) who stated that Cultural factors exert a profound influence on mental health awareness by shaping individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding mental health. Cultural norms, values, and traditions often dictate how mental health issues are perceived, discussed, and addressed within communities. Stigma associated with mental illness may vary across cultures, with some societies viewing it as a taboo subject and others as a normal part of life. Burns and Green (2018) asserted that cultural practices and rituals may serve as coping mechanisms for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. According to Lanese (2019), the availability and accessibility of mental health resources and services may be influenced by cultural beliefs and socioeconomic factors, impacting individuals' access to information and support. Also, it was discovered that socio-cultural factors goes a long way in influencing mental health awareness. This is in line with Ambikile, and Iseselo (2017) who stated that socio-economic factors wield considerable influence on mental health awareness by shaping individuals' access to resources, information, and support systems. Higher socio-economic status often correlates with greater access to quality healthcare, education, and social support networks, facilitating increased awareness and understanding of mental health issues. Conversely, Japhet (2018) asserted that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face barriers such as limited access to mental health services, financial constraints, and higher levels of stigma surrounding mental illness, which can impede awareness efforts. Socio-economic disparities also intersect with other systemic factors, such as racial or ethnic

inequalities and healthcare policies, further exacerbating disparities in mental health awareness and education.

Lastly, systematic factors to a large extent significantly influence mental health awareness. This was supported by Newson (2018) who stated that systemic factors play a pivotal role in shaping mental health awareness by influencing the availability, accessibility, and prioritization of mental health resources and initiatives within societies. Healthcare policies, funding allocations, and institutional practices can significantly impact the integration of mental health services into healthcare systems, affecting individuals' access to information and support. Evans, Holkar and Murray (2017) opined that stigmatizing attitudes perpetuated by media portrayal and institutional biases may hinder open discussions about mental health, contributing to low awareness levels. This was also supported by the finding of Lund (2018) who stated that disparities in healthcare access, driven by systemic inequalities such as racial or ethnic biases, exacerbate disparities in mental health awareness and education. Also, McKinley (2019) stated that legislative policies and government initiatives are instrumental in driving mental health awareness campaigns and allocating resources, highlighting the importance of systemic interventions in promoting understanding, acceptance, and access to mental health services within communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mental health awareness emerges as a critical global health concern with far-reaching implications for individuals, communities, and societies worldwide. The pervasive stigma surrounding mental illness, coupled with systemic barriers to access and treatment, underscores the urgent need for concerted efforts to address this issue on a global scale. As evidenced by the influence of cultural, socio-economic, and systemic factors on mental health awareness, it is evident that a multifaceted approach is essential, one that encompasses awareness campaigns, policy reforms, and community-based interventions. By fostering open dialogue, promoting understanding, and prioritizing mental health within healthcare systems and public health agendas, we can work towards destigmatizing mental illness, improving access to resources, and ultimately enhancing the well-being of individuals across diverse contexts. As we collectively recognize mental health as a fundamental aspect of human flourishing, it is imperative that we continue to advocate for comprehensive strategies that address the complexities of mental health awareness as a global health imperative. The following recommendations were made based on the conclusion of the study:

Incorporating mental health education into school curricula and community outreach initiatives can help foster awareness, reduce stigma, and promote early intervention. These programmes should cover a range of topics, including mental health literacy, coping strategies, and accessing support services. By equipping individuals with knowledge and skills to recognize and address mental health concerns, we can empower communities to support one another and seek timely assistance when needed.

Governments and healthcare organizations must prioritize the expansion and enhancement of mental health services, particularly in underserved areas and marginalized

communities. This includes increasing the availability of affordable and accessible mental health care facilities, as well as investing in trained professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, and social workers. Additionally, developing community-based support networks and helplines can provide individuals with resources and guidance during times of distress, facilitating early intervention and ongoing support.

Advocacy efforts at local, national, and international levels are essential for driving policy reforms that prioritize mental health awareness and support. This includes advocating for increased funding for mental health research, prevention, and treatment initiatives, as well as policies that protect the rights of individuals with mental illnesses and promote inclusion and equality. Furthermore, fostering collaboration among governments, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, and the development of best practices for addressing mental health challenges on a global scale. By working together, we can effect meaningful change and create a world.

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