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Title: Healthcare access for Maternal Mental Health care problems in formal and informal settings in south western Uganda: Lived experiences of patients and caregivers

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Abstract

Maternal Mental Health (MMH) disorders are a public health concern causing adverse effects to mothers and the children. Healthcare access by vulnerable populations like those with MMH problems is challenging in low resource settings like Uganda. There is a dearth of information on access to healthcare and lived experience of women with MMH in Uganda. This study explored the experiences of MMH patients and their caregivers regarding health care access to care in Uganda.

We used a qualitative study design, in-depth interviews were conducted among women who recovered from MMH problems, ever recorded in hospital records in two referral hospitals in south western Uganda; a total of 22 respondents (n=7); their family care givers (n=11) and mental healthcare workers as key informants (n=4) gave lived experiences of having or dealing with MMH problems and desired healthcare needs. Thematic analysis was done.

The findings indicated that MMH patients never identify their need to seek healthcare as they reported not understanding what was going on at the time of the illness. They were only helped by their family caregivers, who determined where to take them for care when symptoms worsen or persist. Frequently, they are first taken to witch doctors or for prayers before opting for hospital care due to beliefs that they are bewitched and family spirits, promiscuity during pregnancy which are not managed in formal health care facilities. Others escape from the hospital settings before recovery searching for alternative means of intervention. Challenges related to health care seeking included; lack of money to purchase prescribed medications which may not be available at health facility, complications of medicines, delay to seek for health care and lack of deep understanding of the cause and management of MMH problems among patients, and their caretakers.

In conclusion, results indicate delayed access to hospital health care, due to patients and family care giver beliefs. There is need to increase awareness about MMH problems in communities and healthcare workers especially those in maternity settings to increase diagnostic coverage and improve lived experiences of patients and their caregivers.

Biography

Gladys is a PhD student, aged 36 years at University of Ibadan, Pan African University of Life and Earth Sciences Institute, College of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. She is currently a Lecturer and the Head of Department of Nursing, Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara, Uganda. She has over 6 publications in reputable peer reviewed journals. She is still passionately writing and conducting more research in the area of Maternal mental health. She



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research with the aim of disseminating findings through publication to improve health care and wellbeing, especially in maternal health.

Recent publication:

1. **Nakidde, Gladys & Kumakech, Edward & Mugisha, John.** (2023). Maternal mental health screening and management by health workers in southwestern Uganda: a qualitative analysis of knowledge, practices, and challenges. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*. Doi:23.10.1186/s12884-023-05763-7.
2. **Gladys Nakidde, Eve Katushabe, Ronald Kamoga, Knowledge and Practices of Self-Care among People with Diabetes in Mbarara City, South Western Uganda: A Cross Sectional Study in the Regional Referral Hospital.** *Students' journal of Health Research, Africa*
3. Ronald Kamoga, **Gladys Nakidde, Kintu Mugagga: Grace Muwanga, Amadi O. Ihunwo** (2021): Anatomical Variation and Distribution of the Vagus Nerve in the eosophageal hiatus in a Ugandan population. *Surgical and Radiologic Anatomy* 43:1243–1248
4. Ronald Kamoga, Godfrey Z. Rukundo, Edith K. Wakida, **Gladys Nakidde, Celestino Obua & Stephanie S. Buss** (2019): Dementia assessment and diagnostic practices of healthcare workers in rural southwestern Uganda: a cross-sectional qualitative study. *BMC Health Services Research* 19(1):1005. doi: 10.1186/s12913-019-4850-2
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