

**IMPACTS OF PSYCHIATRIC CLINICAL
POSTING ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS
PSYCHIATRY, MENTAL ILLNESS, CAREER
CHOICES, AND HELP-SEEKING INTENTIONS:
A MIXED-METHODS STUDY AMONG NURSING
STUDENTS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

NJAKA STANLEY

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

NJAKA STANLEY

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATP	Attitudes towards Psychiatry
MHP	Mental Health Professionals
MICA	Mental Illness Clinician Attitudes
GHSQ	General Help Seeking Questionnaire
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia

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**IMPAK PENEMPATAN KLINIKAL PSIKIATRI TERHADAP SIKAP
MENGENAI PSIKIATRI, PENYAKIT MENTAL, PILIHAN KERJAYA, DAN
NIAT MENCARI BANTUAN : KAJIAN KAEDAH CAMPURAN DALAM
KALANGAN PELAJAR KEJURURAWATAN DI NEGERI EBONYI,
NIGERIA**

ABSTRAK

Persepsi negatif terhadap penyakit mental dan psikiatri masih berterusan di peringkat global, terutamanya dalam kalangan profesional penjagaan kesihatan dan pelajar. Kajian menunjukkan peningkatan stigma dan penurunan minat terhadap psikiatri sebagai kerjaya dalam kalangan pelajar kesihatan. Kajian campuran ini menilai Impak penempatan klinikal psikiatri terhadap sikap pelajar kejururawatan terhadap psikiatri, pilihan kerjaya, dan niat mencari bantuan di Negeri Ebonyi, Nigeria. Fasa kuantitatif menggunakan skala standard (ATP-18, MICA4, dan GHSQ) dalam penilaian praujian dan pascaujian ke atas 400 pelajar. Fasa kualitatif melibatkan wawancara separa berstruktur dengan 12 peserta yang dipilih secara bertujuan. Analisis data menggunakan SPSS 26 untuk data kuantitatif dan NVivo untuk tema kualitatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam sikap terhadap psikiatri ($p<0.001$), penyakit mental ($p<0.001$), dan niat mencari bantuan ($p<0.001$), walaupun pilihan kerjaya dalam bidang psikiatri kekal tidak berubah ($p=0.653$). Status perkahwinan ($p=0.002$) dan sekolah responden ($p<0.001$) menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan sikap terhadap psikiatri. Sebaliknya, sikap terhadap penyakit mental mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan sekolah ($p<0.001$), jantina ($p=0.031$), dan pendapatan keluarga ($p=0.01$). Penentu utama pilihan kerjaya dalam psikiatri termasuk kepuasan kerja ($p<0.001$),

minat terhadap psikiatri ($p=0.044$), pengaruh keluarga ($p=0.013$), dan minat terhadap perkhidmatan komuniti ($p=0.014$). Tambahan pula, faktor yang mempengaruhi niat mencari bantuan untuk gangguan mental ialah sekolah ($p<0.001$), tahap pengajian ($p<0.001$), dan pendedahan kepada kuliah psikiatri ($p<0.001$). Fasa kualitatif kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa pandangan pelajar terhadap psikiatri, penyakit mental, pilihan kerjaya, dan niat mencari bantuan dipengaruhi oleh tingkah laku profesional kesihatan mental serta pengalaman mereka dalam persekitaran penjagaan psikiatri. Kajian ini merumuskan bahawa penempatan klinikal psikiatri memberikan impak positif terhadap sikap terhadap psikiatri, penyakit mental, dan niat mencari bantuan. Oleh itu, kajian ini memberikan pandangan berharga untuk meningkatkan pendidikan kesihatan mental dan mengurangkan stigma, dengan implikasi dalam menangani cabaran tenaga kerja dalam bidang psikiatri.

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HELP-SEEKING INTENTIONS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY AMONG
NURSING STUDENTS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

ABSTRACT

Negative perceptions of mental illness and psychiatry persist globally, especially among healthcare professionals and students. Studies showed increasing stigma and declining interest in psychiatry as a career among health students. This mixed-method study evaluates the impact of clinical psychiatry postings on nursing students' attitudes towards psychiatry, career choices and help-seeking intentions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The quantitative phase employed standardized scales (ATP-18, MICA4 and GHSQ) in pre and post-test assessment of 400 students. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with 12 purposively sampled participants. Data analysis utilized SPSS version 26 for quantitative data and NVivo version 10 for qualitative themes. Results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in attitudes towards psychiatry ($p<0.001$), mental illness ($p<0.001$) and help-seeking intentions ($p<0.001$), though career choice in psychiatry remained unchanged ($p=0.653$). Marital status ($p=0.002$) and school of the respondents ($p<0.001$) were significantly associated with attitudes towards psychiatry. In contrast, attitudes towards mental illness had significant associations with school ($p<0.001$), gender ($p=0.031$) and family income ($p=0.01$). The primary determinants of a career choice in psychiatry included job satisfaction ($p<0.001$), interest in psychiatry ($p=0.044$), family influence ($p=0.013$) and interest in community services ($p=0.014$). Additionally, factors influencing help-seeking intentions for mental disorders were

school ($p<0.001$), level of study ($p<0.001$) and exposure to psychiatry lectures ($p<0.001$). The qualitative phase of the study revealed that the student's experiences in posting had three themes (posting was interesting, posting was educative, posting was a tedious experience). Their views on psychiatry and mental illness formed three themes (Nature of psychiatry, behaviour of mental health professionals and Nature of care setting) while career choices and help-seeking intentions were influenced by the themes (behaviour of mental health professionals, nature of psychiatry, educational exposure and Interest). This study concluded that clinical psychiatry postings positively impact attitudes towards psychiatry, mental illness and help-seeking intentions. Therefore, it provides valuable insights for improving mental health education and reducing stigma, with implications for addressing workforce challenges in psychiatry.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mental health disorders are a pressing global health concern, with nearly three-quarters of the burden arising from developing countries (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017; Baminiwatta et al., 2020). Mental health is vital to overall health and has increasingly gained recognition. It was added to the Sustainable Development Goals, a notable shift from the traditional emphasis on communicable diseases (WHO, 2018). The prevalence of mental health disorders varies globally but remains high; for instance, in Malaysia, 29% of individuals are affected by mental health issues (Ning, 2020), and the United States reported 52.9 million cases in 2020 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2020).

In Nigeria, reliable data on mental health are scarce due to the absence of a national mental health registry and a national survey of the disorder. However, estimates indicate high levels of depression, substance use, and anxiety disorders (Njaka & Chinwe, 2020). Despite the growing recognition of mental health, the rates of mental disorders are projected to increase by 2030. However, most developing countries lack adequate resources, policies, and workforce to manage this rise (Kamimura et al., 2018).

Psychiatry has long been a critical branch of medicine, yet it faces persistent social and professional stigma, often perceived as a pseudoscience, ineffective, and emotionally taxing (Roberts & Bandstra, 2012). The field is frequently associated with a high risk of emotional strain and harm due to close interaction with individuals suffering from mental illnesses (Probst & Peuskens, 2010). This stigma

extends to healthcare professionals and students, who often hold negative attitudes toward psychiatry and individuals with mental illnesses. A synthesis of studies across developed nations highlights these stigmatizing views among healthcare students, revealing widespread bias and devaluation of psychiatry (Economou et al., 2017; Alzahrani, 2019; Seera et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, mental health services are limited, and funding shortages, a lack of professionals, and limited awareness hamper psychiatric practice. Only eight regionally located and poorly funded mental health service centres are in Nigeria (Chijioke et al., 2024). As future healthcare providers, nursing students are crucial in shaping the mental health workforce and addressing these challenges. However, evidence suggests that nursing students, like other healthcare trainees, often harbour stigmatizing views, which may deter them from pursuing careers in psychiatry or supporting mental health initiatives. Stigmatizing behaviours of healthcare personnel towards people with mental disorders have been found to impede access to treatment and treatment delivery to people with mental disorders. It also has deleterious implications on the national policies and programs on mental health (de Witt et al., 2019). Potential health professionals may decide on a career in psychiatry before, during, or after medical school. Across literature the main factors that attract participants to the career were a desire to help other people and having more information about the role, often through direct experience (McKenzie, 2021). Clinical psychiatry postings may serve as a transformative experience, potentially altering these attitudes and increasing career interest in psychiatry.

However, limited data exist on how these postings impact nursing students' attitudes in Nigerian contexts, underscoring the need for studies that explore the effect of clinical psychiatry exposure on students' attitudes, help-seeking intentions,

and career choices in mental health, specifically within developing nations like Nigeria.

Local Background:

The nursing program in Nigeria is categorized into basic nursing program (Diploma program based in schools of nursing), Bachelor degree program (University based) and postgraduate programs in nursing (Masters, PhD) with curricular differences as in other countries (Deng, 2018). In Nigeria the curriculum for training of health sciences students have been reported to be inadequate because it is filled up with courses that add little or no value to healthcare delivery thereby consuming the time for core courses (Osoba et al., 2021). Nursing program in the university level is a five years program with curricular design that emphasized on theoretical knowledge through classroom-based teachings prior to clinical placement in all areas of nursing excluding psychiatry. The curriculum for training of the nursing students at the university level generally consist of three years of detailed classroom teachings on the theoretical basis of the aspects of science and human being then followed by two years of intensive training focusing on nursing core courses. In the first semester of 400 level, the students are generally given overview orientations on what psychiatry and mental illness is all about usually for one or two weeks but not in-depth teachings. After this, the students are posted to psychiatric hospitals for four weeks psychiatry clinical experiences under the supervision of mentors (Uwakwe, 2019; Farooq et al., 2014; Samari et al., 2017). This curriculum of nursing differs from that of other countries wherein lectures are given across all areas prior to clinical posting (Bosek, 2007; Deng, 2018). At the end of the five years program, the students are licensed to practice nursing and awarded bachelor degree in Nursing.

For those students in the schools of nursing, the training period is usually three years with curriculum that emphasizes clinical based training with little emphasis on classroom teaching. Majority of the three years training period is usually spent on clinical areas on different aspects of nursing with the belief that the students should be trained focusing on problem solving rather than sound knowledge of the theoretical basis followed by clinical skills. At the end of the three years program, students are licensed to practice nursing as diploma nurses. The students are usually posted to the psychiatric hospitals for clinical experience of four weeks duration but without prior teachings on psychiatry and mental illness (Akpabio, 2011). This creates a disparity between the two programs yet no existing study has assessed the effectiveness of this psychiatric clinical posting on the attitudes of the two group of students as to determine its effectiveness

In Nigeria, clinical psychiatry postings are typically brief, lasting only four to six weeks for nursing students as against the international standard of 12 weeks, raising questions about their sufficiency in influencing deeply ingrained attitudes and biases. These curricular disparities calls for empirical evidence upon which educational, curricular reform and policy drafting would be based as to make training approaches for nursing students in Nigeria align with the international recommendation. Hence need for this study to determine the effects of clinical posting on the attitudes of the students towards mental illness and psychiatry, career choice in psychiatry and help seeking intentions among nursing students in Ebonyi state Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of Problems

The global burden of mental disorders is significant, with nearly three-quarters of cases occurring in developing countries (World Health Organization

[WHO], 2017; Baminiwatta et al., 2020). Despite the growing acknowledgement of mental health as critical to overall well-being, individuals with mental disorders often face barriers in accessing mental health care especially in Nigeria. The availability of mental health services is grossly inadequate. This barrier is primarily due to stigma, a shortage of mental health professionals, and inadequate funding (WHO, 2022). Negative attitudes toward mental illness and psychiatry are not limited to the general public but are also prevalent among healthcare professionals, including nursing students (WHO, 2022). This attitude is mainly due to limited understanding of mental health pathophysiology and misconceptions regarding the effectiveness of psychiatric care (Rathid et al., 2017; Uwakwe, 2019; Carrara et al., 2019; Alzahrani, 2019; Kihumuro et al., 2022). This deficiency in knowledge has been attributed to curricular inadequacy hence need for empirical data to stimulate educational reform, curricular adjustment and policy formulation in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, Mental health care is constrained by a critical shortage of mental health professionals, fear of stigma, and poor funding (Uwakwe, 2019; Soroye et al., 2021). Globally, over 71% of people with diagnosed mental disorders do not have access to mental healthcare, and this situation is even worse in low-income countries, where less than 12% of people with these disorders have access to healthcare services (WHO, 2022). In Nigeria, only about 0.6% of individuals with mental disorders receive professional care. This lack of access to professional care is due to lack of mental health professionals, stigma and its far-reaching effects.

Evidence has shown poor mental health care delivery in Nigeria due to limited resources while the field remains a poorly chosen career among nursing students (Jack-ide et al., 2018). In Nigeria there are only 2.4 mental health nurses per 100, 000 people as compared to 10.8 mental health nurses in South Africa (Jack-ide

etal., 2018). Despite the huge disparity, psychiatry is not a choice among nursing students in Nigeria hence need for empirical evidence on their career choices and associated factors.

Although nursing students represent a crucial segment of the future healthcare workforce, they frequently hold stigmatizing views toward mental illness and psychiatry (Farooq et al., 2014; Agyapong et al., 2020; AL-beittawi et al., 2021; AlOsaimi et al., 2019; Njaka et al., 2023). The cultural dispositions in Nigeria have significant impacts on the students' views and perception. This view potentially affects their career choices and willingness to seek help for mental health issues despite evidence of having mental health challenges (AL-beittawi et al., 2021; AlOsaimi et al., 2019). Though an alarming rate of mental disorders has been reported across literature on Nursing student in Nigeria, studies evaluating their help seeking intentions remains inadequate. It is therefore very vital that measures especially training modalities like clinical psychiatric posting on help seeking intentions are examined as to enhance their willingness to seek help and advocacy for people with mental illness.

The curriculum of nursing program in Nigeria lays emphasis on clinical based learning especially in psychiatry where class room lectures at the school level is grossly limited, made worst by lack of faculty members in the training institutions (Lawrence and Grace, 2024). In some schools, psychiatric nursing is regarded as easy to understand topics hence assigned to non-professionl to teach or left to students to self study(Jack-ide et al., 2017). Despite the roles of clinical psychiatric posting in improving attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness, research exploring the impact of such postings on nursing students' attitudes, career choices, and help-seeking intentions remains very few in Nigeria (Clement et al., 2015; de Witt et al.,

2019). Evidence highlights the urgent need for educational interventions to address these pressing issues, with clinical psychiatry postings identified as a potentially transformative experience for students (Moktan & Mehta, 2020). This is because training period has been identified as a crucial time for attitudinal modifications.

Studies from other regions have yielded mixed findings on the impact of psychiatric postings on Nursing students' attitudes (Adebawale et al., 2012; Dawood, 2012; Inan et al., 2019; Groove et al., 2019). Some studies reported positive shifts in students' perceptions of mental illness following clinical exposure, while others observed minimal changes (Blanc et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2019). These inconsistencies were due to varying lengths and structures of clinical placements. In Nigeria, the duration is even shorter hence need for empirical evidence on its effectiveness as to stimulate educational reforms. Additionally, all the existing studies utilized quantitative design with mixed results. As known, quantitative design has its limitation in the limited range of answers the participants have to give hence the choice of mixed method design in the current study. Consequently, there remains a gross deficiency in nursing training curriculum in Nigeria especially regarding psychiatry, there is a substantial gap in understanding how clinical psychiatric experiences shape nursing students' views on psychiatry, help-seeking intentions, and career interests in mental health, especially in settings where mental health resources are scarce like Nigeria. Hence, this study is needed.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Research Questions (Phase 1 Quantitative study)

1. What are the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness and its associated factors among Nursing students in Ebonyi state, Nigeria?

2. What are the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on the choice of a career in psychiatry and its associated factors among nursing students in Ebonyi state, Nigeria?
3. What are the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on the help-seeking intention for mental disorders and its associated factors among nursing students in Ebonyi state, Nigeria?

1.3.2 Research questions for Phase 2 (Qualitative study)

1. What are nursing students' experiences during psychiatry clinical posting in Ebonyi state, Nigeria?
2. What factors shape attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness, career choices and help seeking intentions for mental disorders among nursing students

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objectives:

This study evaluates the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on attitudes towards psychiatry, mental illness, help-seeking intentions, and career choice among involving quantitative and qualitative designs among nursing students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives: Phase 1(Quantitative study)

The following objectives guided phase 1 of this study.

1. To assess the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on attitudes towards mental illness and psychiatry and its associated factors among Nursing Students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

2. To determine the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on choices of a career in psychiatry and its associated factors among the Nursing students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. To determine the impacts of psychiatric clinical posting on help-seeking intentions for mental disorders and its associated factors among nursing students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

1.4.3 Specific Objective Phase 2(Qualitative study)

The phase 2 of this study was guided by the following objective:

1. To explore the experiences of nursing students during a psychiatric clinical posting in Ebonyi State Nigeria.
2. To explore factors shape attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness, career choices and help seeking intentions for mental disorders among nursing students.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

1. H1A: There is a significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
H1O There is no significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
2. H2A: There is a significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' choice of career in psychiatry in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
H2O: There is no significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' choice of career in psychiatry in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.
3. H3A: There is a significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' help seeking intentions in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

H3O: There is no significant impact of psychiatric clinical posting on nursing students' help-seeking intentions in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

4. H4A: There are factors significantly associated with attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness among Nursing Students in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

H4O: There are no factors significantly associated with attitudes towards psychiatry and mental disorders among Nursing Students in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

5. H5A: There are factors significantly associated with Nursing Students' choice of career in psychiatry in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

H5O: There are no factors associated with Nursing Students' choice of a career in psychiatry in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

6. H6A: There are factors significantly associated with Nursing Students' help-seeking intentions for mental disorders in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

H6O: There are no factors significantly associated with Nursing Students' help-seeking intentions for mental disorders in Ebonyi state, Nigeria

1.6 Conceptual/Operational Definitions of Terms

Terms	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Attitude	According to Oxford English Dictionary (2010) attitude is a settled way of thinking or feeling about something	In this study attitude is related to actions, inactions, feelings and thoughts towards psychiatry and mental illnesses measured by ATP-18 (Wilkinson et al., 1983)
Psychiatry Clinical Posting	This is defined as any clinical placement or internship or clinical experience the students embark on as part of their professional training in school (John, 2014)	In this study psychiatry clinical posting is related to stretched period of posting in psychiatric hospitals or units involving supervised contacts between students, mental health professionals and people with mental disorders lasting for 4 weeks
Mental illness	According to American Psychiatrist Association (2018) Mental illness are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking, or	In this study, mental illness is related to disorders of the human mind, emotion or behaviours resulting in ineffective functioning on daily activities as assessed using MICA .

	behaviours	
Psychiatry	Psychiatry is a branch of medicine concerned with diagnoses, management and prevention of emotional, mental and behavioural challenges (APA, 2018)	In this study Psychiatry is an aspect of health care that deals with people with mental health problems (with focus on mental health nurses and psychiatrist) as referred to in ATP-18
Career choice	Career choice is defined as a long-term plan that includes specific jobs that leads to a desirable occupation (Caroline, 2021).	In this study career choice are areas or aspects of healthcare system one wishes to tour as a health professional as assessed by the section A of the scale for this study.
Nursing Students	Someone who is undergoing training to become a nurse.	In this study nursing students are seen as those being trained to become nurses in both University and schools of nursing in Ebonyi state Nigeria as indicated in the section A of the scale for this study. They constitute those in 400 level in University and 200 level in schools of nursing.
Impact of psychiatry Clinical Posting	This means effect or influence that participating in a clinical rotation or posting in a psychiatric/mental health unit has on students	In this study impacts of clinical psychiatric posting means improvement of worsening of attitudes, career choice and help seeking intentions following posting in psychiatry as measured by ATP=18, GHSQ and Career choice questions.

1.7 Significance of the study

The outcome on the determinants of career choice and attitude formation towards psychiatry will enhance implementation of educational programs designed to enhance the attitudes of future healthcare professionals toward psychiatry and mental health in Nigeria. Such program include enriched teachers training on need to foster

positive attitudes towards all areas of healthcare in the course of training the students. Consequently, through enhanced health workforce distribution, this research will address the current mental healthcare personnel shortage in Nigeria.

By focusing on the modification of the training curriculum for healthcare students, this study aims to identify the underlying factors responsible for both positive and negative attitudes toward mental illness and psychiatry among students. Understanding these factors will provide a baseline for developing educational strategies and curricular modifications to promote quality education in line with international practices in nursing training.

Furthermore, evidence has shown that many nurses lack career mentorship, threatening the healthcare workforce's equitable distribution (Ossai et al., 2016). By understanding the career intentions of healthcare personnel and the factors influencing these decisions, this study will provide reliable evidence to motivate health educators in Nigerian nursing institutions to develop career guidance tools which make all aspects of health care acceptable to all. Healthcare system planning includes evaluation of human resources needed in the system and recruitment measures to fill the gap. Through knowledge of career choices among prospective health professionals, health administrators would make policies centering on staff welfares as to stimulate the interest of the students in the areas hence combating future shortages of personnel.

Additionally, the findings of this study will offer empirical evidence for public health experts advocating for mental health policies in developing countries where such policies are often non-existent. The World Health Organization has urged policymakers worldwide to improve mental healthcare availability and accessibility, enhance attitudes towards mental health, and address its determinants (WHO, 2022).

The insights from this study will support these policy initiatives, particularly in regions affected by psychological traumas such as the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, banditry, and kidnapping. These policy changes will improve mental health services and better overall health outcomes.

The nursing profession in Nigeria stands to benefit from this study, as its findings can spur leaders into action to make necessary curricular adjustments that improve attitudes towards psychiatric and mental health careers and the overall nursing education. A continuous professional development program based on the study's findings could make mental health an appealing field through creation of awareness, reorientation programs, and advocacy for work incentives.

Moreover, the study's findings will benefit clinical psychiatric care by improving human resource availability and fostering positive attitudes toward psychiatry and patients. By exploring measures to enhance attitudes and addressing associated factors, the study aims to improve the acceptance of people with mental illness and psychiatry, thereby increasing access to treatment and helping to achieve universal health coverage and sustainable development goals related to healthcare.

The Nigerian government will also benefit from the study's evidence in developing policies on mental health care and improving funding to promote the mental well-being of its citizens. The WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2030) recently emphasized the need to improve values and commitment towards mental health, reshape environmental factors influencing mental health care, and strengthen mental health care delivery. This study will provide empirical evidence to support the implementation of these action plans, especially regarding human resources and attitudes towards mental health and psychiatry.

Finally, this study will contribute to the existing literature hence building worldwide research evidence across different countries and cultural contexts. It will help form a multidimensional understanding of the factors influencing attitudes toward mental illness and career choices in psychiatry, thereby advancing knowledge in this field. This enhanced understanding will be invaluable for shaping future research, policy, and educational practices in mental health care globally. The cultural context of the country Nigeria especially as it affects negative connotation against mental health may need some modification via public re-orientation as to promote access to mental healthcare and prevent the overwhelming burdens of mental disorders among the citizens.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the background of the study and the statement of problems addressed. It presented the justification for this study based on the existing literature and prevailing local circumstances. It also highlighted the objectives, research questions, operational definition of terms, and significance of the study.

The chapter below presents an extensive review of relevant literature related to this study and the conceptual and theoretical framework. It also presented the summary of the chapter and laid foundation for the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction.

The literature related to this study was reviewed based on the objectives of this study to address the research questions posed by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the literature initially to understand the phenomenon under study and later to refine the research questions and the identified gap in knowledge. Some key concepts guided the literature search and research. These concepts include concepts of psychiatric posting, the concept of attitudes towards psychiatry, the concept of attitudes towards mental illness, the level of human resources for mental health care in developed and developing countries, concepts of choice of career in psychiatry, effects of clinical posting on attitudes towards psychiatry, mental illness, and choice of psychiatry as a career. The review included factors affecting attitudes towards psychiatry and mental illness and factors affecting career choice in psychiatry: theoretical review, conceptual framework, and summary of literature review.

The literature search was done using the following databases to ensure adequacy in the literature review. The databases were ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Psych Info, Google Scholar, Cumulative Index for Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Textbooks, and dissertations. The researcher explored the above literature sources to become acquainted with the phenomenon and address the research questions. The literature search was limited to English and peer-reviewed publications of at least ten years old except where necessary, such as theoretical reviews.

2.2 Psychiatric clinical posting among nursing students

2.2.1 Concept of clinical posting in Nursing workforce training

Across healthcare literature, there was no universally adopted definition of clinical psychiatric posting. However, there are different opinions on the definition of clinical posting, with the common theme being the experience of students, which has to do with the period of practice under supervision in a healthcare setting. Psychiatric clinical posting or experience is a fundamental aspect of training for Nursing students. During this period, learning and skill building are enhanced through direct, real-life experience of the healthcare delivery approaches being part of the healthcare team (Jyoti, 2021). According to Kimberly (2015), clinical Psychiatric posting involves in-hospital experiences in which healthcare students or professionals are involved in supervised or coordinated healthcare practices as a way of learning in a specialty hospital called Neuropsychiatric hospital.

Evidence across research studies in different countries showed that clinical psychiatric posting among nursing students had varied duration (Blanc et al., 2020; Adebowale et al., 2012; Economou et al., 2012; 2017; Grover et al., 2019; Issa et al., 2009; James et al., 2012). Majority of the studies reported that psychiatric posting often lasts up to 6 months at a stretch, with the least being 6 weeks duration (Blanc et al., 2020). Posting duration varies based on the type of posting and local context. For instance, psychiatric posting for nursing students has been reported to last for six months in India, while same students had psychiatric posting lasting for six weeks at a stretch (Dessai et al., 2019; Bakare et al., 2021). In Nigeria, literature showed psychiatric posting last for 4 to 6 weeks for nurses. It is usually interspersed between classroom activities to ensure uninterrupted clinical experience for each semester (Jha, 2020; Bakare et al., 2021).

Knowledge and skills acquired in class and in the clinical areas are the determinants of competence in nursing. Training nursing students involves both theoretical and clinical posting, complementing each other (Jamshidi et al., 2016). Clinical environments for healthcare provide an all-important avenue for students to apply theoretical knowledge and skills in professional practice while acquiring more skills (Tickle et al., 2018). To an extent, training healthcare professionals, including nurses, utilizes clinical posting. The earlier training method in most countries started in the clinical setting with a problem-based curriculum. In nursing schools, clinical posting forms more than 50% of the curricular contents while in the university-based nursing program, it is about 30-40% of the teaching hours (Yousefy et al., 2015).

Factually, nursing as a profession is performance and practice-oriented. Therefore, clinical psychiatric posting is a veritable part of training potential nurses since it enhances professional skill acquisition, attitudinal building, and competence. Clinical posting allows the students to build on requisite clinical skills, such as cognitive and psychomotor skills. They learn physical assessment, professional-specific tasks such as medication administration, critical thinking, and developing a nursing care plan (Kalkhoran et al., 2011; Jonsen et al., 2013). Based on the apparent roles of clinical posting in the training of nursing students, it is pertinent that the relevance of the posting be explained to further the need for adequacy in its preparation and implementation.

2.2.1b Concept of Psychiatric Clinical Posting in Nigeria

Psychiatric clinical posting in Nigeria is a vital training modality for nursing students just as it is in other countries. It involves a stretched clinical posting in specialty hospitals called psychiatric hospitals regionally located. It last for 4 to 6 weeks depending on school factors. According to the regulatory body, the posting is

designed to last for atleast 6 weeks (three weeks orientation and three weeks patient centred clinical care) but the school management often influence the duration as to enable them meet up with other training activities (James, 2019, Endurance & Lawrence, 2022; Lawrence et al., 2024).

In Schools of nursing, the clinical psychiatric posting starts in the second semester year two while for University nursing program, the psoting occurs in second semester of 400 level. The focus of the clinical posting is to expose the students to as many details as possible regarding psychiatric nursing since most schools of nursing curriculum makes no provision for classroom lectures in psychiatry prior to posting (Jack-idle et al., 2018). Therefore, in Nigeria psychiatric clinical psoting is a major training modality for nursing students just as reported by research that in other countries, 50% of the curricular contents is clinically based while in the university-based nursing program, it is about 30-40% of the teaching hours (Yousefy et al., 2015).

Challenges of clinical psychiatric posting in Nigeria

Psychiatric nursing faces several challenges, starting from the educational environment where nursing students are first exposed to this field. It's not unusual for parts of the psychiatric nursing curriculum to be taught by educators who lack both practical experience and formal training in psychiatric care (Bruckner et al., 2011; Lunn et al., 2011; Jack-idl, 2018). Relying on non-specialized nurses to teach this subject does a disservice to the profession. Instead, having seasoned psychiatric nurse educators can significantly enhance the learning experience by providing in-depth knowledge and sharing real-world insights. This therefore makes the orientation

phase of the clinical posting uneventful and reportedly boring due to lack of proper theoretical preparation ahead of the posting

There's a common misconception that mental health is a simple subject, and that personal emotional experiences qualify someone to teach it (Jack-idl, 2018). This mindset is often likened to trying to fit a "square peg into a round hole." In such cases, students end up receiving superficial lectures from instructors who cannot provide meaningful, experience-based learning. As a result, these instructors may unintentionally portray mental illness and psychiatric nursing in a negative or inaccurate light, discouraging students from considering it as a career path. This further explains the poor presentation of psychiatry in the nursing training curriculum in Nigeria. Happell (2019) highlights the need for thoughtful integration of both theory and practical aspects of psychiatric nursing education to prevent negative biases. This is crucial in influencing students' career choices. Therefore, nursing education programs must prioritize psychiatric nursing and recognize the vital role of knowledgeable, creative educators who can effectively inspire and prepare future nurses in this specialty.

Additionally, the lack of uniformity in duration of psychiatric clinical posting for nursing students in Nigeria constitute a major challenge. Most studies on the concept of clinical psychiatric posting reported variable duration in the posting ranging from 4 to 6 weeks (James, 2019, Endurance & Lawrence, 2022; Lawrence et al., 2024). This is in contrary to the 8 to 12 weeks commonly seen in the western worlds and the 10 weeks reported in India (Blanc et al., 2020)

Though clinical posting is a vital part of nursing training modalities across countries, evidence suggests that student nurses and other healthcare students are

usually very nervous at the first instance of the posting. This nervousness is due to the knowledge gap and perception of self-inadequacy. Therefore, students should be taught in class and prepared adequately regarding things to expect in the clinical areas to ensure improved experience and unhindered learning (Hell et al., 2011; Malau-Aduli et al., 2020).

Moreover, the psychiatric orientation schools in Nigeria are in six geopolitical regions, meaning the entire country has only six centres for psychiatric posting of the students. Each centre with a capacity of fifty students at a particular period and sometimes inadequate resources for their training. Evidence has shown that nursing schools admit up to one hundred students or more, exceeding the orientation facility's carrying capacity. This over-admission tends to make the posting experience less educative, overwhelming to the educators and ineffective (Osoba et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Relevance of clinical psychiatric posting on the training of nursing students

Empirical evidence showed that clinical psychiatric posting plays a vital role in the healthcare training of professionals like nurses and has been a critical part of the training program for nurses (Jamshidi et al., 2016; Jyoti, 2021). It helps mould the students' skills, attitudes, and interpersonal and interprofessional roles as healthcare team members (Jamshidi et al., 2016). Research studies reported that clinical posting is crucial in acquiring vital skills, courage, attitudes, and knowledge for effective and efficient nursing practice (Jha, 2020; Bakare et al., 2021). Psychiatric clinical posting, being the first clinical exposure of the nursing students to real-life experience and care for people with mental illness, provides an excellent opportunity to test the efficacy of the speciality and form the right attitudes

(Baminiwatta et al., 2020). Psychiatric clinical posting contributes significantly to career intentions among healthcare students, especially with more extended periods of posting (Bakare et al., 2021).

According to available evidence, nursing students would have excellent professional care competence and decide on career choices. Contacts with patients and professional colleagues and getting involved in healthcare activities in different healthcare areas help shape the student's view of the different specialities in Nursing (Desai et al., 2019). If the experiences in the health setting during the prolonged posting are well utilized and the contacts with professional fellows and patients led to a worthwhile experience, the students would choose psychiatry as a career pathway (Upadhayay, 2017; Jha, 2020).

A study evaluating students' perception of the effectiveness of their clinical posting in Bhutan showed significant improvement in three major areas of training students. These include exposure to clinical areas, socialization with patients and professional colleagues, connecting theoretical knowledge to clinical knowledge, and learning by participating in clinical healthcare and decision-making (Moktan & Mehta, 2020). A similar study has revealed that clinical experience or posting among nursing students plays a vital role in the immediate transition of graduate nurses from schools to the clinical practice area as employees following licensure. This transition is only made possible by the competence, skills, familiarity, and connection between theoretical knowledge and practices established by the students during training (Sophie, 2019).

2.2.3 Conclusion on concept of clinical posting for nursing students

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights that clinical postings are a critical component of nursing education, essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The key findings indicate that these postings, varying in duration across different countries, provide invaluable real-life experience and skill development under supervision. However, there needs to be a more universally accepted definition of clinical postings and a standardization of their duration and structure. This lack of universality suggests further research to establish best practices and optimize training outcomes. Addressing these gaps could enhance the effectiveness of clinical postings, ensuring that nursing students worldwide receive comprehensive and consistent training that prepares them adequately for their professional roles.

2.3 Psychiatric clinical posting and attitudes toward psychiatry among nursing students.

2.3.1 Concept of attitudes towards psychiatry

Psychologists have defined attitude as a learned tendency to view or evaluate something, person, or event in a particular way. The evaluation can often be positive or negative, but it can also be neutral or uncertain sometimes. This attitude could also manifest in three ways: affective (feelings), cognitive (thoughts), and behavioural (Cherry, 2022). According to Richard (2016), attitude is a psychological concept, a mental and emotional entity that characterizes a particular person or their personal view of a given person, thing, or event. From the preceding, attitudes toward psychiatry are defined as personal views, perceptions, beliefs, actions, and inactions toward psychiatry as a speciality.

Empirical evidence has shown that people, both educated and uneducated, held one form of attitudes towards psychiatry across nations. Studies from the western part of Europe and the United States of America have shown that negative attitudes towards psychiatry and related components were not limited to rural areas but also occurred among the developed nations (Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Samari et al., 2019). Similarly, studies from Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan reported the same trend of negative attitudes and attachment to psychiatry among the general public (Subramaniam et al., 2016; Hanafiah & Bortel, 2015; Thornicroft, 2013). The story has been reported similarly in the African context but in a greater dimension. As reported in a study assessing the attitudes to psychiatry and mental illness in African countries and America, the attitudes of the Americans were more positive and less pronounced than the grossly harmful views reported in Africa. This difference was due to cultural diversity (Louis & Robert, 2012). In Nigeria, evidence showed that psychiatry and people with mental illness often face stigmatization from the public and the prospective health professionals alike (Ogunwale et al., 2023). The cultural orientation of the people in Nigeria has been implicated as favouring negative view of the psychiatry and the patients thereof (Ogunwale et al., 2023). Nigerian people belief that mental illness has underlying spiritual aetiology as a result of disobedience to the gods of the land. Hence the people with mental disorders are considered evil and should be cast away.

Several studies have reported negative attitudes towards psychiatry and mental health among the general public across countries of the world, with clear-cut differences in the rate of occurrence (Louis & Robert, 2012; Thornicroft, 2013; Hanafiah & Bortel, 2015; Subramaniam et al., 2016; Samari et al., 2019). Evidence from empirical studies has shown that the negative attachment and stereotypical view

of psychiatry has extended to professionals in the form of associative stigma (Verhaeghe & Bracke, 2012; Samari et al., 2019; Njaka, 2021). Mental healthcare professionals, especially psychiatric nurses, are often seen by other healthcare professionals and the general public as being ill, incompetent, less respected, not being dynamic, unskilful, less valuable, and other negative ascriptions. This view results in emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, lack of appeal of psychiatry to society and prospective healthcare workers, and gross negative impacts on care delivery (Verhaeghe & Bracke, 2012; Henderson et al., 2014). With this evidence on the ground, there is a need to assess the attitudes of healthcare students towards psychiatry.

2.3.2: Attitudes of nursing students towards psychiatry

As research studies showed, opposing views and attitudes towards psychiatry were initially found among the general public across countries, but the stories have taken a different dimension, beginning with the ascription of negative attributes to mental health professionals by other healthcare givers (Samari et al., 2019; Njaka, 2021). Although psychiatry and mental health have distinguished themselves scientifically as a very sound and practical specialty, it continues to evoke numerous negative thoughts and ascription in both social and professional settings and even among students (Roberts & Bandstra, 2012).

Stigma towards psychiatry is not limited to the general public but also among healthcare professionals and nursing students (Thompson et al., 2010), Internship candidates (Kodakandla et al., 2017), Nursing students (Alzahrani, 2019) and Nurses (Shahlf et al., 2019). Globally, divergent reports have been given through research on the attitudes of health science students towards psychiatry as an area of health, with