Reviewer's report

Title: Internalised stigma among patients with schizophrenia in a low income country: a cross-sectional facility-based study

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Reviewer: Megan Grant

Reviewer's report:

The authors present the results of their analysis of internalized stigma within a population of individuals with schizophrenia, noting that there is currently a lack of such research that has addressed this matter in Ethiopia. The article is well organized, with the purpose and rationale for the study clearly stated. Relevant research is discussed in a manner that explains this rationale. The authors discuss the implications for their findings as well as some of the limitations of their work. The following comments are offered in the interest of further increasing the quality of this article:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It seems necessary to further detail a number of aspects of the methodology that was employed for this study. Further information is needed with regard to the inclusion criteria used to select participants. Under the “Participants” heading of the Methodology, for example, it is unclear what exactly constitutes a “significant level of substance abuse.” Furthermore, it is mentioned in the Discussion section that “patients with significant cognitive impairment, substance dependence, and impaired insight,” were excluded, though there is no information provided on how these determinations were made. It seems essential to note whether these factors were evaluated using relatively objective measures/criteria or through more subjective means. This information not only allows for the evaluation of claims made given the results of this study, but would also be an important consideration in replicating the work done here by the authors.

2. Similarly, it would be beneficial to detail the procedure that was used for asking participants the questions about medication adherence and suicide attempts, and perhaps the associated rationale for using this procedure. It was unclear whether the researchers had used a standardized questioning format for addressing whether stigma was a contributing factor to medication non-adherence, for example. The manner in which this question was asked, as well as whether the issue was discussed beyond simple questioning with each participant, seems relevant in this case. Were participants required to give yes/no responses to a direct question about stigma, for example, or did the researcher explain and/or discuss the issue of stigma before the participant gave a response that was later dichotomized into yes/no categories? This information seems necessary when evaluating whether response style could have influenced the observed results, and again, is important when considering replication of the
Minor Essential Revisions

1. There is a slight grammatical error in the second sentence in the “Results” section of the Abstract. This sentence could either read “46.7% had a moderate to high mean stigma score,” or “had moderate to high stigma scores.”

2. There is a period missing at the end of the second sentence under the “Assessment” heading in the Methodology section.

3. It seems that the section of the Discussion on the top portion of page 15 could benefit from a review with a focus on sentence structure and quality. There are a number of instances where the word “this” is used without a clear sense of what it is referencing. Some of the sentences (e.g., “This may have an impact on help seeking, families attempting to hide the patient away.”) require revising to clarify their meaning and connection to the ideas being presented.

Discretionary Revisions

1. At the authors’ discretion, there are a few sections that could benefit from added detail and further explanation. One such instance is in the Discussion section at the top of page 14. It is not entirely clear what the authors meant when they said “having characteristics attributable to a European culture.” While this statement is likely related to the points discussed earlier in this particular paragraph (i.e., income, education level, etc.), the author’s may wish to consider their word choice in this sentence and perhaps consider identifying the characteristics they are referring to directly.

2. The paragraph of the discussion on page 15 (before the “Limitations” section) presents a great number of ideas and references to relevant literature. While the reader is aware that these ideas are related to the results and to the implications noted by the authors, the statements seem limited by their brevity and somewhat disjoint presentation. It would be beneficial to expand on these ideas to further highlight the connections between previous research, the current findings, and implications for future work, as well as to increase the sense of logical flow between these ideas.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests