Author’s response to reviews

Title: Perception and Beliefs about Mental Illness among Adults in Karfi Village, Northern Nigeria

Authors:

Mohammed Kabir (mdkabir@ecnx.net)
Muktar H Aliyu (mhaliyu@uab.edu)
Iliyasu Zubair (izubair@yahoo.co.uk)
Isa S Abubakar (abumusadieg@yahoo)

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The BioMed Central Editorial Team
BMC Int Health Hum Rights

We thank the Editorial team BMC Int Health Hum Rights and the reviewers for their time and effort in reviewing our manuscript titled "Perception and Beliefs about Mental Illness among Adults in Karfi village, Northern Nigeria". We have carried out the revisions as suggested by the reviewers as documented below.

REVIEWER 1: CHRISTOPHER LAUBER
We thank the reviewer for acknowledging our study deals with an important, yet understudied topic. We are also pleased to state that we have included several other additional references suggested by the reviewer including Adebowale and Ogunlesi (reference 8).

Major Revisions
1. Uniqueness of the study - this has now been fully addressed in the introduction section, paragraph 3, page 4.
2. Description of sample population: the sample population is now fully described in the results section 1st paragraph, page 7.
3. The reference to "psychotic" symptoms has now been removed to guard against confusing the readers. In addition, we have now corrected all the responses and percentages (the percentages now correspond to the responses in the tables).
4. The background to the Nigerian National Mental health policy and its relationship to the objectives of our study is now explained in the Introduction (last paragraph, Introduction, page 4.)

Minor revisions
1. We have now cited several other studies from Western and Asian countries, including India (ref 14), New Zealand (ref 18), Greece (ref 17), and Hong Kong (ref 19), among others.
2. We have also added several references from other than African countries on attitudes and beliefs about mental illness in the discussion section.

REVIEWER 2: SAMIR ALL-ADAWI
We have now fully addressed issues of focus and organization of the paper as detailed below.

Major revisions
1. The development of the semi-structured questionnaire including piloting and constituent items are now explained in detail in the methods section (Instrument description/ Data collection, page 5-6).
2. We have extensively re-written the discussion section to conform with our findings. Furthermore, Table 5 (influence of literacy level) now includes odds ratios and their 95% confidence intervals for clarity purposes. This has also been explained in the results section (5th paragraph, page 8)

Minor revisions
The references are now consistent and in order. We thank the reviewer for pointing this out.

Discretionary revisions
1. We now explain fully what we mean by "positive feelings" in the results section page 6 thus: "Attitudes such as fear, avoidance, anger, suspicion, mistrust, hostility were considered negative, whereas sympathetic attitude, willingness to care for a mentally ill relative or friend and tolerance were considered positive attitudes."
2. We have now discussed in the last paragraph of our discussion section the relevance of our study
findings to the mental health fraternity especially in relation to designing and implanting mental health programs and reads thus:

"This study demonstrates the need for educational programs aimed at demystifying mental illness. A better understanding of mental disorders among the public would allay fear and mistrust about mentally ill persons in the community as well as lessen stigmatization towards such persons. Our findings may be of utility to health policy makers in the design of community mental health education programs and community mental health care services in existing primary health centers in Nigeria."

Finally, on behalf of the co-authors, I thank the reviewers and the editorial team for their thoroughness and look forward to a favorable response soon.

Yours Sincerely,

Muktar H. Aliyu MD, MPH