

“Affiliate stigma among caregivers and treatment outcomes among people with mental illness in southwestern Uganda”

By Dr. Alain Favina, psychiatry department

Abstract

Background: The stigma surrounding mental illnesses is widespread. Caregivers can face affiliate stigma due to their association with a person with a mental illness. Studies conducted in other places have shown that more than half of caregivers suffer from stigma. Despite a prevalence of 24.3% of mental illness in Uganda, few studies have been conducted to assess the affiliate stigma, the factors associated and its effect on patient outcomes. This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of affiliate stigma among care givers of patients with mental illness and associated factors in southwestern Uganda, and to assess the association between affiliate stigma and patient outcomes including treatment adherence and quality of life among patients with mental illness.

Method: We used a cross sectional study design and enrolled 385 dyads (Patient and caregiver) in the study. We collected information on affiliate stigma scale using the affiliate stigma scale, quality of life using the WHOQOL, adherence to treatment using the adherence scale for chronic disease, social support using the social provision scale, and depression using the patient health questionnaire 9. We run linear multivariable regression models to assess for the factors associated with affiliate stigma among caregivers as well as the association between affiliate stigma and quality of life and treatment adherence among patients with mental illness.

Results: The prevalence of affiliate stigma was 65.97%. Factors associated with affiliate stigma included caregiver caregiver (Adj Coef: 0.59, CI: 0.48 - 0.69; $p < 0.001$), having only one patient to care for (Adj Coef: -0.38, CI: -0.73 - 0.03; $p = 0.032$), having many caregivers for one patient (Adj Coef: -0.12, CI: -0.22 - 0.01, $p = 0.027$), and patient social support (Adj Coef: -0.33, CI: -0.47 -0.20; $p < 0.001$). Affiliate stigma was associated with a reduction in the level of adherence to treatment (Adj coef: -0.14, 95%: -0.19, - 0.06; $p < 0.001$), and quality of life of the patients with mental illness in the physical domain (Adj coef: -0.17, 95% CI: -0.33 -0.02; $p = 0.029$), psychological domain (Adj coef: -0.21, 95%: -0.37 -0.05; $p = 0.009$), and social domain (Adj coef: -0.33, 95% CI: -0.54 -0.13; $p = 0.001$).

Conclusion: The prevalence of affiliate stigma among caregivers of patients with mental illness is high in southwestern Uganda. Affiliate stigma affects treatment adherence and quality of life of patients with mental illness. Considering the important role played by the informal caregivers, more studies are necessary to inform interventions to reduce affiliate stigma and contribute towards improved outcomes among people with mental illness.