

Innovative Partnerships and Barriers in Adolescent Mental Health Prevention: A Thematic Analysis from Northern Ghana



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Background

- Adolescent mental health is a significant concern in low-middle income countries
- Mental health promotion and prevention interventions are crucial to prevent long term morbidities
- Translating evidence-based practices into the real world is challenging due to the **limited local insights** on challenges and opportunities
- This study offers novel insights into barriers and facilitators in school- and community-based programs, providing **critical guidance** for **scalable, evidence-informed interventions** and **policy reforms**.

About Northern Ghana

- Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH) Ghana, is a tripartite partnership between New York University Grossman School of Medicine, University for Development Studies and Tamale Teaching Hospital aimed at **ensuring sustainable healthcare for all in Northern Ghana**
- Northern Ghana is faced with significant mental health challenges, including substance use and psychotic disorders [1]
- Tamale, the study area, is the primary urban center in Northern Ghana and the fastest growing city in West Africa [2]

Methods

- The study included semi-structured interviewed guided by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) with 25 program leaders from school-based Guidance and Counseling programs and community-based mental health organizations in Tamale, Ghana.
- The interviews were recorded and analyzed thematically using a rapid qualitative analysis approach

Findings

Table 1: Barriers and facilitators to implementation of mental health promotion and prevention interventions in Tamale, Ghana

| | Barriers | Facilitators |
|--|--|---|
| Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Inadequate resourcesLow mental health literacy among program leadersLack of allotted time for mental health programs in school schedules | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive leadership supportPartnerships with community-based mental health organizations |
| Community-based organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Competing organizational prioritiesLimited personnelInadequate funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adolescent engagementPassionate mental health advocates |
| Both schools and community-based organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">General lack of evidence-informed programs, structured data monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaboration with schools, community organizations and health facilities |

Selected Quotes- Barriers



Resource shortages (personnel): “.. But in some areas, they do not even have like staff, general nurses even attending to, you know, issues. How much more a mental health nurse or mental health person...” - CBO#7



Resource shortages (time): “..the current curricular activities in the school is making it difficult, very difficult, for the counselor to have engagement with the students. The timetable is so loaded, and after school students have..extra classes....” - GCC#5



Data M&E: “..[data] monitoring and evaluation is something that we don't really have so much expertise on. And that is very important in guiding and helping us to know how we are doing things, how we need to change things and all that...” - CBO#7

Selected Quotes- Facilitators



Leadership support: “..I will give a very big thanks to the teachers. The teachers will refer students to us and our headmaster is very understanding. When we go to him...he is able to give you the needed support to handle it...” - GCC#2



Collaborative partnerships: “.. One [facilitator] will be collaboration across sectors. Like I said, we don't work alone. So partnerships between healthcare providers, educators, policymakers and community organizations to leverage these resources and expertise to be able to provide support to survivors....” - CBO#5



Community support: “.. we have a lot of community support as well..some giving you their premises so that you don't even need to go and rent a space. Some of them also give donations..so community support is sometimes huge...” - CBO#8

GCC- Guidance and Counseling Coordinators; CBO- Community Based Organizations

Conclusion

- This study uncovers critical barriers to adolescent mental health prevention in northern Ghana.
- However, it also highlights the power of innovative, cross-sectoral partnerships in overcoming these challenges and addressing research and knowledge gaps
- Multilevel barriers must be addressed to develop sustainable, contextualized solutions to support adolescent mental health



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