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Predictors of Contraceptive Use in Ghana: Role of Religion, Region of Residence, Ethnicity and Education

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Abstract

Effective contraceptive use prevents most reproductive health challenges. The aim of this study is to identify the demographic predictors of contraceptive usage in Ghana. Using a logistic regression analysis, a sample size of 4916 women of the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) 2008 were selected. Results showed that religion is the most important predictor among the demographic factors. Ethnicity of the women, level of education and region of residence were also found to be statistically significantly. Contraceptive health promotion should be intensified as the best option for preventing unintended pregnancies in the respective variables.

Keywords: Contraceptive Use; Reproductive Health; Religion; Region of Residence; Ethnicity; Education; Logistic Regression; Ghana.

Introduction

Reproductive health issues have become pivotal in global development. Notwithstanding global efforts made over the years, about 19% of women in sub-Saharan Africa use modern methods of contraception, the lowest regional contraceptive prevalence rate in the world today (Population Reference Bureau, 2011). Family planning in the sub region has not yielded much result while Ghana's contraceptive usage rate had been observed as needing further expansion (Ahiadeke, 2005).

Ghana has not experienced much improvement in modern contraceptive usage in recent times. For example, about 13% of married women were using contraceptive method in 1988. This increased to 25% by 2003 and declined to 24% in 2008 (Ghana Statistical Services [GSS], 2008). Similarly, the use of modern methods has decreased in recent times after rising for a while. Undeniably, the use of modern methods nearly doubled for about a period of 15 years from 10% in 1993 to 19% in 2003. However, this declined in 2008 to 17% and has ever since remained so (GSS, 2008).

Unsafe abortion related death is 800 times higher than child delivery related death which is 460 per 100,000 births in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2011). The need for effective contraceptive use has become increasingly necessary in recent times for ensuring maternal reproductive health, women empowerment and avoiding induced abortion as Ghana seeks to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Unplanned pregnancy is the root cause of

abortion. It is estimated that more than 4 million unsafe abortions are performed in Africa each year (Brookman-Amisshah, & Mayo, 2004).

The need to boost the rate of contraceptive coverage as a way of enhancing reproductive health is much needed as 2015 approaches. This calls for an active study to identify key predictors to enhance policy and other social reforms. As observed in previous studies, some significant demographic characteristics associated with contraceptive use include education (Adjei, Sarfo, Asiedu, & Sarfo, 2014; Kasarda, Billy, & West, 1986; MacPhail, Pettifor, Pascoe, & Rees, 2007; Robey, Rutstein, Morris, & Blackburn, 1992), marital status (Adjei et al., 2014; Finer, & Henshaw, 2006), work status (Adjei et al., 2014; Tawiah, 1997), ethnicity/descent (Adjei et al., 2014; Buor, 1994; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987) and religion (Adjei et al., 2014; Coale, 1986).

Ghana's Contraceptive Use and Millennium Development Goals Achievement

The desire to limit birth has increased from 23% in 1988 to 35% in 2008, 19% of married women want to give birth now. About 36% of currently married women would like to wait for 2 or more years for the next birth, and another 36% do not want to have another child or are sterilized (GSS, 2008). Again, it is not surprising to know that more than 37% of pregnancies in Ghana are either mistimed or unwanted (GSS, 2008). It may be right to attribute this situation to the low prevalence rate of contraceptive use in recent times. The simple conclusion one can draw from this is that women who are not using any method of contraception yet want to delay or limit the next birth and at the same time want to have sex are at a higher risk of having unintended or unwanted pregnancy. It is more likely that such women would not be able to achieve their reproductive health goals.

The need for effective contraceptive use has become increasingly necessary in recent times for ensuring maternal reproductive health and women empowerment as Ghana seeks to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Countries with known cases of "population pressure" have been defined to have issues with development. These countries are not able to meet the high demand for socio-economic needs (Singh et al., 2004). There are some doubts that if the prevalence rate of contraceptive use remains unchanged, Ghana will be far from achieving the millennium development goals due to the increasing number of people in need of health and education, among other public goods. This effect will also create an impediment towards the realization of the reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, achievement of universal primary education, environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases as part of the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] (Cleland et al., 2006; Health Policy Initiative, 2007).

Interestingly, it has been concluded that widespread use of contraception does not only contribute to permanent decline in abortion rates but has also been found to be a major source of maternal and child health. It is the surest way of reducing unintended pregnancies. It is estimated that 90% of abortion related, 20% of pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality, and 32% of maternal deaths could be prevented by the use of contraception (Cleland et al., 2006). Contraceptive use should be recognized as an effective tool in meeting the millennium development goals at this critical moment. A study in Kenya by Moreland and Talbird (2006) shows a greater influence of family planning on the achievement of the MDG. Regardless of the unmet needs, the investigation showed that family planning needs in Kenya could prevent 14,040 maternal deaths and 434,306 child deaths by the MDG target date of 2015.

In view of these, this study aims at designing a demographic model for developing social marketing programmes for the promotion of contraceptive usage among women in developing countries who share similar socio-economic settings like Ghana.

Method

The data for this paper was derived from the 2008 Ghana demographic and health survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service as part of the world-wide Demographic and Health Survey programme of the Institute for Resource Development/Macro Systems. The 2008 GDHS survey was designed to allow for reliable estimation of key demographic and health indicators such as fertility, contraceptive prevalence and other demographic factors. The 2008 GDHS collected key information from all 4916 women age 15-49 in Ghana.

Administratively, Ghana is divided into 10 regions. Each administrative region is subdivided into districts and each district is divided into localities. During the 2000 Population Census, each locality was subdivided into convenient areas called census enumeration areas (EAs). The list of EAs includes census information on households and population information, all grouped by administrative unit. The 2000 Population Census was used as the sampling frame for the 2008 GDHS, and the stratification process for the 2008 GDHS sample used the census administrative subdivisions for data gathering.

Analysis is based on information on current contraceptive use provided by 4916 women. The independent variables selection procedure for the binary logistic regression was “enter” method. This procedure was selected because it yielded stronger significant levels for the independent variables. Indicator variable coding was used to select reference categories for independent variables. The coefficient for each of the remainder categories of an independent variable represented the effect of each category compared to a reference category. For example, No religion was chosen as the reference category for the independent variable for “Religion”.

Data Analysis

Analysis was generally based on binary logistic regression. The independent variable selection procedure was “enter” method. Indicator variable coding was used to select reference categories for independent variables. The coefficient for each of the remainder categories of an independent variable represented the effect of each category compared to a reference category. Only one model was used for this paper. In the model all variables including the control variables (selected socio-demographic characteristics) were included in the equation. The overall correct prediction of the model was 73%. The unit of analysis was pregnant women for the last five years (women who have had life births for the last five years).

Results

The table below shows a binary regression analysis of some socio-demographic variables as they predict current contraceptive usage. Interestingly, all the categories under religion in the Table 1 were all statistically significant with Catholics ($P= 0.001$) being more than 60 times as likely as women of ‘No religion’ to use contraception. This was followed by Muslim ($P= 0.004$) and then Other Christians ($P= 0.004$) who were both more than 30 times as likely as the reference category to use contraceptive method. It was observed that all the other categories such as Pentecostal ($P= 0.004$), Protestant ($P= 0.007$), Traditional/Spiritual ($P= 0.009$) and Other ($P= 0.036$) were strong predictors of current contraceptive use which were about 10 times as likely as ‘no religion’ to use contraceptive method.

The table also shows the significant effect of women’s ethnic background as an important variable to contraceptive usage. It was observed that among the various categories of ethnic groups in Ghana, Grussi ($P= 0.041$) was the only ethnic group which was statistically significant. People of that ethnic group were two times as likely as people of no ethnic group to use current contraceptive method. Surprisingly other ethnic groups have no significant effect on current contraceptive use.

Education has been identified by many researchers to have a strong significant relationship with current contraceptive usage (GSS, 2008). It is therefore not surprising to see that women with primary education were about twice as likely as the reference category to respond to contraceptive usage. It was observed that primary education ($P= 0.029$) was the only category with statistically significant relationship with contraceptive use.

Surprisingly, at the regional level Upper East and Upper West were the only regions that were statistically significant with current contraceptive use. The Table shows that while women in Upper West region were more than 20 times as likely as women in Western Region (RC) to use current contraceptive use women in Upper East Region were only about 7 times as likely as the reference category to use contraceptive.

Table 1: Binary Logistics Regression Background Characteristics and Contraceptive Usage

VARIABLES	B	S.E	SIG	EXP (B)
Religion No religion (RC)	0.000			1.000
Catholic	4.154	1.298	0.001*	63.708
Protestant	3.288	1.214	0.007*	26.796
Pentecostal	3.477	1.212	0.004*	32.372
Other Christian	3.440	1.208	0.004*	31.180
Moslem	3.502	1.218	0.004*	33.167
Traditional/Spiritual	3.167	1.219	0.009*	23.736
Other	2.582	1.234	0.036*	13.227
Ethnicity Akan (RC)	0.000			1.000
Ga/Dangme	0.011	0.335	0.973	1.011
Ewe	-0.193	0.373	0.604	0.824
Guan	-0.216	0.369	0.559	0.806
Mole-Dagbani	-0.178	0.492	0.718	0.837
Grussi	0.881	0.431	0.041*	2.412
Gruma	1.521	0.801	0.057	4.576
Mande	0.729	0.636	0.251	2.073
Other	15.287	1246.96	0.990	4356549.80
Education No Education (RC)	0.000			1.000
Primary	0.759	0.348	0.029*	2.135
Middle/JHS	0.020	0.297	0.947	1.020
Secondary/JHS	0.089	0.269	0.740	1.093
Higher	0.127	0.142	0.373	1.135
Region Western (RC)	0.000			1.000
Central	0.721	0.647	0.265	2.057
Greater Accra	0.448	0.642	0.486	1.565
Volta	-0.245	0.620	0.692	0.782
Eastern	0.443	0.652	0.497	1.557
Ashanti	0.424	0.633	0.503	1.528
Brong Ahafo	-0.255	0.612	0.677	0.775
Northern	0.147	0.630	0.816	1.158
Upper East	2.021	0.795	0.011*	7.543
Upper West	3.021	1.414	0.033*	20.517

Source: Computed from DHS 2008 dataset, Nagelkerke r Square=0.670 or 67.0%, RC = reference category, $P < 0.05$, Constant: -31.912, * = significance

Discussion

It is not surprising to see that all the other categories of religion were statistically significant to current contraceptive use. For example studies of the European fertility transition have revealed the importance of religious values on contraceptive use and the fertility transition (Coale, 1986; Lesthaeghe, 1980). In reviewing the results of the European Fertility Project, for instance, Coale (1986) argued that the church played an important role in influencing the speed and timing of the fertility transition in Europe. He argues that the moral acceptance of birth control was one of the necessary conditions for a major decline in marital fertility. Again, Caldwell & Caldwell (1987) have emphasized the importance of heritage and descent in indigenous African Religion on low contraceptive use among African societies. They argue that among the Traditional African religion, ancestors are honoured and their spirits appeased through the bearing of children as descendants. It was observed that within African Traditional Religion, high fertility is morally good and brings divine approval. Traditional African Religion tends to identify large family size with virtue (Caldwell, & Caldwell, 1987). Addai (1999) argued that the faith provides members support with upward wealth flow from younger to older generation.

Traditional religious women might have got enough reasons and better understanding of contraceptive use compared to other religious groups in recent times. They might have been greatly convinced about the necessity of contraceptive use to their reproductive health than any other religious body. It is quite intriguing, since traditional religion was not so much receptive to contraceptive use (Lesthaeghe, 1989). However, their perception might have changed overtime. It is generally known that certain beliefs and practices which enforce pronatalist attitudes such as “bragro” (a practice within the Akan traditional group to initiate the young woman into marriage) have changed overtime to be more receptive towards contraceptive use in recent times. As observed from the data analysis, it is quite surprising to find a high predicted value of Catholic women to use a contraceptive method. Previous studies have shown that the Catholic faith has a strict stand on artificial methods however flexible on natural methods (Coale, 1986; Blake, 1984; Fagley, 1967). This stand generally ties women of this faith to the use of natural methods (Lesthaeghe, 1989). However, in recent times, things might have changed. The current modern trends of education across various media might be able to explain some of this increasing need to limit births and high dependency burden in Ghana. The results indicate that women affiliated to the Muslim faith were also more likely to use contraceptive method compared to women of no religion. This is also interesting because the faith seems to admonish its followers to procreate and abound in number (Chamie, 1981; Caldwell, 1968; Fagley, 1967; Kirk, 1967). However, the Muslim faith does not prohibit family planning; in fact many Islamic scholars approve of family planning especially where the well-being of the family may be compromised (Kirk, 1967).

Among the ethnic groups, Grussi ethnic group is shown to have low predicted contraceptive usage. Grussi ethnic group is predominantly found in the northern part of Ghana where contraceptive usage rate has been low for some time now (GSS, 2008). Cultural reasons could be a plausible explanation to how women of that ethnic group respond to contraceptive usage. For example, if the values of the cultural practices are positively associated with high birth, women are not likely to use contraceptive methods compared to those who do not cherish large families. It is not surprising to find that the Mole-Dagbani ethnic groups are not so much receptive to contraceptive use. They are mostly found in the Northern part of the country where Islamic religion is predominantly the main religion. Since the religion generally accepts large families, women within that religion are not likely to use contraceptive methods compared to those living in the southern part of the country because of the faith’s position on procreation (Chamie, 1981; Caldwell, 1968). This finding is consistent to the 2008 Ghana Demographic and health Survey report. Northern region where Mole-Dadganis mostly live was found to have the lowest contraceptive prevalence rate (GSS, 2008).

The findings also show education as an important variable for contraceptive usage. The finding is in agreement with other findings. Tawiah (1997) argued that certain educational threshold is needed to trigger appreciable use of contraceptive. According to the study, female education does not only improve women status but also important for achieving their reproductive health needs. Thus, women who had higher education were three times likely to be contraceptive users compared to their counterparts who have no education. Similarly, according to the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey report, women who have secondary education were found to be more than twice as likely to use contraceptive method as women with no education (GSS, 2008).

The study revealed low likelihood of Upper West and Upper East to respond to current contraceptive usage. Cultural factors could be accounted for this reason since both regions seems to hold similar cultural values. Research confirms the similarities of fertility preference that exist between similar cultural values with reference to birth control. It has been affirmed by research that, different cultural settings change fertility behaviour with respect to birth control and the decision surrounding contraceptive usage (Das, & Deka, 1982).

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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Survival Outside Home: Sexual Behaviour of Homeless and Runaway Young Adults in Ghana

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Abstract

Although homeless young adults are often seen on the streets of Ghana, little research had examined the nature of sexual behaviour among these homeless and runaway young adults. Due to the culturally sensitive nature of such studies in the Ghanaian setting, only fifty (50) respondents agreed to participate in the study. A thirty-five (35) item questionnaire, comprising of twenty-eight (28) closed-ended and seven (7) open-ended questions was used for data collection. The findings indicated poverty, inability of parents to cater for the young adult's needs, peer pressure and lack of parental acceptance as the main causes of homelessness. Consequently, the findings also showed a trend of school dropout, teenage pregnancy and use of illicit drugs as effects of homelessness. These findings have implications for future studies, policy reform and care for homeless young adult.

Keywords: Sexual Exploitation; Homeless Young Adults; Runaway Young Adults; Teenage Pregnancy; Rape; Poverty; Parenting; Ghana.

Introduction

The world is changing with many variations in global market trends. This transition has brought on board several challenges especially in socioeconomic trends. Among those extremely affected by this transition is the young adult. Homeless young adults are prone to various hazards with a higher tendency for violence, diseases, risky behaviours and death (Clatts, & Davis, 1996). The arguments concerning the causes and consequences surrounding homelessness can be complex. This may occur from the interplay of several factors beginning from disrupted personal backgrounds, socioeconomic difficulties, increased housing problems and squatting with various forms of unstable housing options (Fitzpatrick, 1998; 2000).

Homelessness is currently growing on the streets of most developing countries just like other developed nations. In Canada for example, a study over two decades ago showed that homeless young adults were drawn from all backgrounds (O'Reilly-Fleming, 1993). Though there is no consistent statistics about the actual global magnitude and distribution of homeless people, a projected figure of 3.5 million unaccompanied young American adults experience homelessness.

This concept is sometimes called the “runaway young adult”. These individuals account for a population ranging from 575,000 to 1.6 million annually with ages between 16 to 22 years old (Clatts, & Davis, 1996).

Homeless young adults are at a high risk to be exploited sexually or to engage in risky sexual behaviours than their peers who are housed (Rotheram-Borus et al., 1992; Tyler et al., 2000a; Tyler et al., 2000b). These young adults are also prone to high rates of sexually transmitted infections and diseases (Goodman, & Berecochea, 1994; Halcon, & Lifson, 2004). Similarly, past sexual abuse history prior to leaving home makes homeless young adults vulnerable to exploitation and other unsafe sexual practices (Tyler et al., 2000a). In addition to these, other risky lifestyles like substance or illicit drug use had been noted among them (Chen, Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2004; Klee, & Reid, 1998). Nonetheless, the presence of a family support in the network of homeless young adults tends to reduce these sexual and drug related behaviours (Tyler, 2008).

Although several studies have been done among homeless young adults, little has been done among West African populations. The present study aimed at describing the existing sexual behaviour patterns among homeless and runaway young adults in Ghana.

Method

Participants

The research was carried out on the streets and slums in the Greater Accra Region where these homeless young adults reside to engage in menial jobs. A sample size of 50 participants, comprising of 41 (82%) females and 9 (18%) males was selected for the study using both convenience and snowball techniques. Majority 34 (68%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20-25 years. Another 13 (26%) of them were between the ages 16-19 years with 3 (6%) between the ages of 11-15 years.

The educational level of the respondents showed that 16 (32%) of these homeless young adults were school drop outs. This was followed by 9 (18%) respondents who have had formal education up to the senior high school level. Eight (16%) of them also had formal education up to kindergarten level while 6 (12%) had other forms of non-formal education like carpentry and dress making. However, minority 4 (8%) of them had their highest education up to primary school.

Religion played an essential support among the homeless as Christians formed the majority with 38 (76%) respondents while the remaining 12 (24%) worshipped as Muslims.

In addition, majority of the respondents, 27 (54%) had been homeless for less than 6 months during the time of data collection. Twelve (24%) had also been homeless between 7 to 12 months. Another 6 (12%) of them had been homeless between 13 to 16 months while 5 (10%) had been homeless for more than 16 months.

Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was made up of 35 questions. Twenty-eight questions were closed-ended with 7 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was made up of 3 sections. Section A of the questionnaire constituted the biographic data of participants. The Section B also focused on the causes of homelessness with the Section C describing their sexual behaviour and other consequences of homelessness.

Procedure

The study used the cross-sectional survey design for data collection. Observing all necessary ethical considerations needed for human research, the data collection took place among scattered homeless people in the metropolitan streets and slums in Accra. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic under study, not many participants willingly showed up for the study.

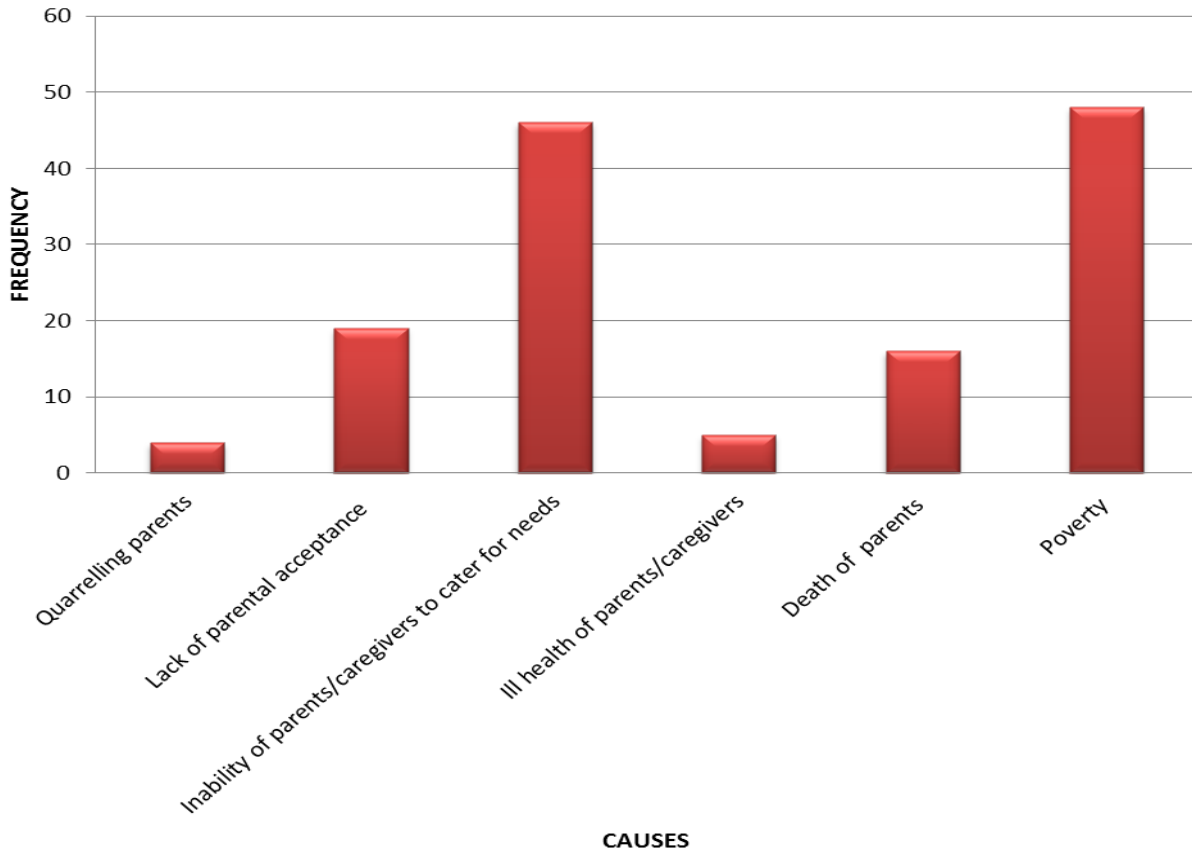
Results

Causes of Homelessness

Figure 1 described the main causes of homelessness among the respondents. Respondents were allowed to answer by ticking from a multiple rated set of answers in order to indicate the causes of homelessness. Forty-eight (96%) of the respondents forming the majority claimed that poverty was the chief cause of their homelessness. This was followed by poor family or parental

support which was rated by 46 (92%) of the respondents. Lack of family/parental acceptance or neglect also accounted for the third cause with ratings from 19 (38%) homeless respondents.

Figure 1: Specific Main Causes of Homelessness



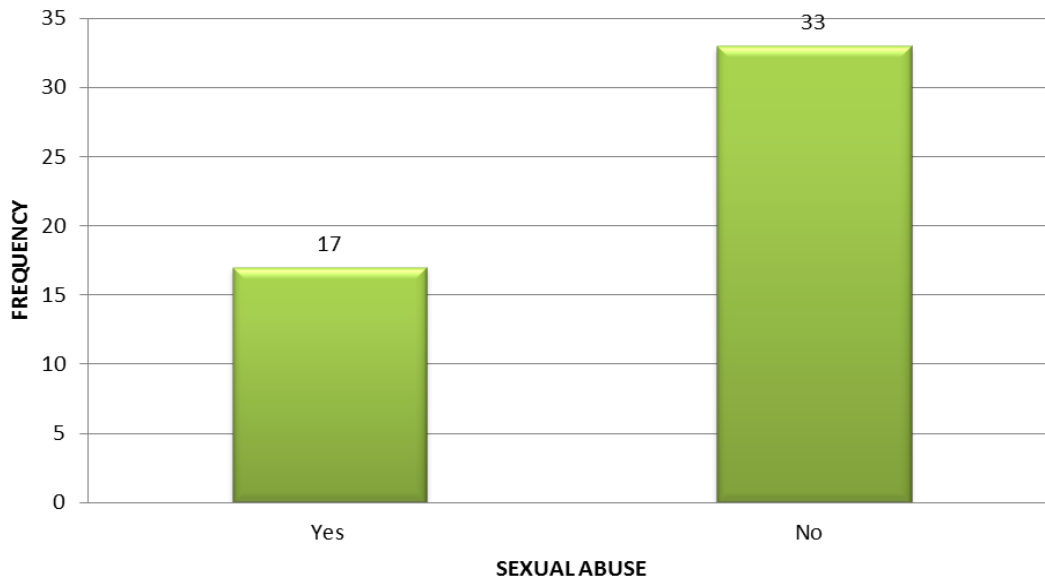
The fourth cause was rated by 16 (32%) of the respondents, attributing it to the death of one or both parents. The fifth cause of homelessness was related to the ill health of parents or significant others by 5 (10%) of the respondents. Four (8%) of the respondents however attributed their homelessness to quarrelling parents which have led to divorce or separation.

Notwithstanding these main issues, respondents also attributed other enabling influence as a motivation to leave home or to remain on the streets. Forty-three (86%) of the respondents denoted that their peers influenced their choice to leave home aside their own personal challenges at home while the rest declined. Likewise, 24 (48%) of the respondents have ever had a parent or both parents having a history of homelessness. Thus, it served as some form of unseen motivation, giving them the hope to survive somehow “outside a home”.

Sexual history and behaviour patterns of homeless young adults

Figure 2 described the sexual abuse history of respondents. Seventeen (44%) of them had been sexually abused [*this figure is disturbing considering the small sample size and high number of females*]. Nonetheless, 13 (26%) of the respondents did not know about the existence of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Units (DOVVSU) in Ghana where they could seek help.

Figure 2: History of Sexual Abuse

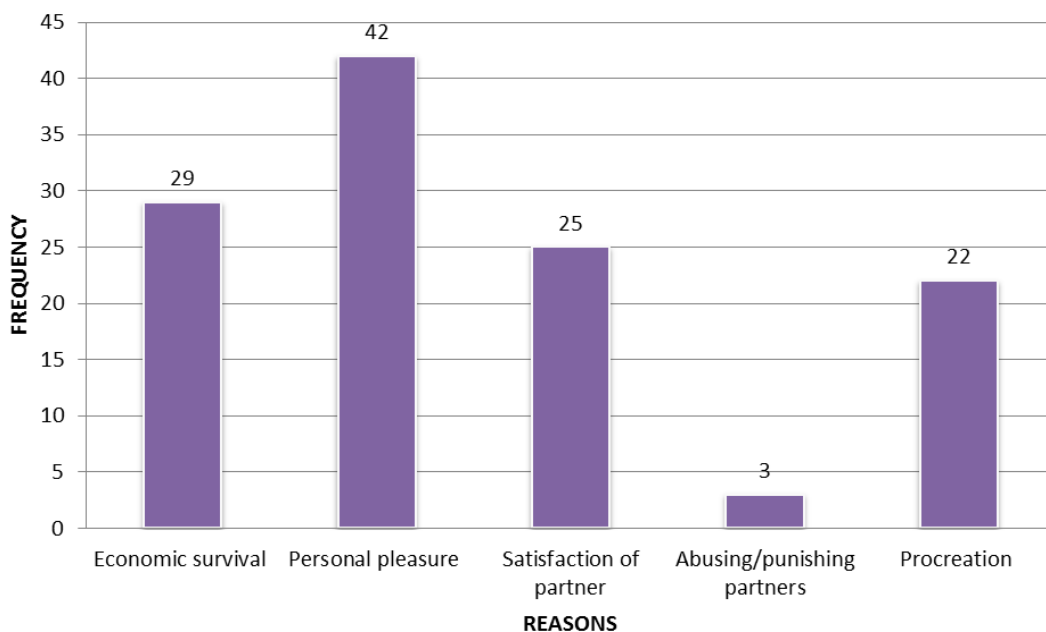


Reasons for engaging in risky sexual activities

Observing from Figure 3, homeless young adults engaged in risky sexual behaviours for numerous reasons. Since respondents were allowed to opt for more than one reason, the classification for a particular motivation is based on the number of responses.

According to 84% of the respondents, they engaged in risky sexual activities for their personal pleasure. The next option, which was mainly for socioeconomic survival [*the use of sex as a trade for money*] was selected by 58% of the participants. Again, 50% of the respondents added that they engaged in sexual activity for partner satisfaction [*these individuals had some form of sexual partners in their network*]. Nevertheless, 44% of the respondents engaged in sex for procreation notwithstanding the fact that they were homeless. Strangely, 33% of the male respondents only, however used sexual activity as a means of punishing other homeless females in their network [*mostly in the form of rape*].

Figure 3: Reasons for engaging in a sexual behaviour



Consequences of homelessness

From the data, all the respondents had experienced some forms of physical and verbal abuse. In addition, all the respondents were unemployed with 62% of them indulging in alcohol abuse. Moreover, 24% respondents abused illicit drugs like marijuana and cocaine with 30% of them engaging in cigarette smoking. Due to the nature economic hardship, 26% worked illegally as prostitutes with 30% of the females having a history of teenage pregnancy.

Notwithstanding their fears related to sexually transmitted infections and diseases, 24 (48%) of the respondents did not always use contraceptives during their sexual activities. Also, 16 (32%) of the respondents had never used any form of contraceptives in their sexual activities while 10 (20%) of them however always used some form of contraceptives.

Discussion

Findings from the study showed that poverty and lack of family or parental support were the highest causes of homelessness. As a result, these homeless young adults depended on their peers as their immediate social network rather than their family (Fitzpatrick, 1998; 2000; Tyler, 2008). This breakdown of support is very crucial in putting the life choices of the young adult into the hands of their peers (Rice, Milburn, & Rotheram-Borus, 2007).

Again, the results revealed that 48% of the respondents had a history of parental homelessness. It is possible that these homeless young adults might have been motivated to some degree by their parents (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Likewise, similar findings were noted by Dickens and Woodfield (2004) who attributed homelessness to some form of disability in the family system. Another area of concern is that, 10% of the respondents mentioned ill health of parents or caregivers as their reason for leaving the home. Looking at the high cost of living in developing countries like Ghana, these young adults were forced by their state of penury to take up the challenging job of survival.

Homelessness comes with a lot of challenges. These include risky sexual behaviour and substance abuse. Among the homeless young adults who took part in the study, 44% of them reported to have been sexually abused by people or peers in their network. Tyler (2008) however noted a more reduced trend once the homeless young adult has a family member in his or her network.

One important consequence noted in this study was the fact that homelessness may decrease a person's tendency to care for personal health and safety issues. Although majority of the respondents knew about the existence of Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), they all failed to report any form of abuse. A similar pattern was observed among their complete refusal or less use of contraceptives during their sexual activities. These serious challenges have been noted in a study by Rotheram-Borus and Koopman (1991). Other illegal activities like the use of illicit drugs and prostitution may have serious impacts on their health and further impair national development (Chen et al., 2004; Klee, & Reid, 1998; Tyler, 2008).

It is noteworthy that homelessness is occurring in Ghana with many challenges. There ought to be national reforms to curb the situation by the government and other stakeholders. Future studies must explore the current health and socioeconomic status of these homeless young adults in Ghana.

Limitations

The gender bias observed from the sampling frame was only determined by the available and willing respondents, who were mostly females. Thus, the data ought to be interpreted within this scope. Since this study sought to only describe the existing situation, the results can serve as a good picture for future studies.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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Social Relationships among Women in Ghana: “A Blessing” or “A Curse” to their Psychological Well-being?

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Abstract

The study seeks to find out the impact of social relationships on the psychological well-being of women in Ghana. A total of two hundred (N=200) women from diverse socio-economic background living in Accra at the time of data collection were conveniently and purposively sampled for the study. Ninety-two (46%) of the participants had a history of various mental illnesses and were reporting for review at the Accra psychiatric and Pantang hospitals. One hundred and eight (54%) had no history of mental illness and reside or work in Adenta, Madina and Legon communities. The psychological well-being sub scale of the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-38) was used to assess psychological well-being of the participants. Social support and social negativity were assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Social negativity Questionnaire respectively (SNQ). Results from Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a non-significant relationship between Perceived social support and psychological well-being, but social negativity had a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being. History of mental illness did not make any significant difference in participants' level of perceived social support and social negativity.

Keywords: Social Relationships; Social support; Social negativity; Psychological well-being; Ghana.

Introduction

Africans like other collectivist cultures place so much emphasis on social relationships. Most African cultural values can be said to revolve around social relationships. For instance, humanity, brotherhood and collectivism are important African cultural values (Gyekye, 1996) which are reflected in some social structures such as clan, the extended family and other multifaceted networks of social relationships (Belgrave, & Allison 2010). Moreover, human interaction or exchange targeted towards the well-being of the individual is very important to Africans. This is expressed in maxims such as “it is the human being that is needed” and “it is the human being that counts; I call upon gold, it answers not; I call upon cloth, it answers not; it is the human being that counts” (Gyekye, 1996; p. 25). Individuals are socialized to think about themselves in relation to their relatives (both nuclear and extended family members) and they are responsible to seek the well-being and harmony of the family (Belgrave, & Allison, 2010). This means that each member of the family is expected to provide and receive some sort of support, and this goes a long way to reiterate the importance of social relations in the African society.

It is however noteworthy that social relationship has both positive and negative sides. The positive side is what has been conceptualized mostly as social support while the negative aspect has been conceptualized as social negativity (Bertera, 2005) and, in some cases, negative social interactions.

Trends in Social Relationship

There is a rapidly increasing evidence of the importance of social relationships on physical and mental health (Cohen & Janick-Deverts, 2009; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Research in the past had however focused on the beneficial aspects of social relationships (Finch, 1998). There is recent evidence that negative socio-emotional interactions and interpersonal stress also affect mental health (Bertera, 2005; Zhang, 2012).

The benefits of social support are well known; for instance, it has been established that perceived social support can function as a pain-buffering mechanism which promotes increased self-efficacy and optimism as well as reduced loneliness in the face of stress. This may in turn protect an individual from mood disorders such as depression and anxiety as well as other forms of mental disorders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008; Southwick, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2005). Social negativity in relationships on the other hand has been linked to negative physical and mental health indicators, including depression (Finch, Okun, Pool, & Ruehlman, 1999; Whisman, 2013; Zhang, 2012).

Whisman's (2013) examination of the connection between relationship discord, prevalence, incidence and treatment of psychopathology found relationship discord to be significantly correlated with prevalence of psychiatric disorders and predictive of the incidence of mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders and increases in depressive symptoms. Such evidence indicates that perception of negativity in social relationships can have dire consequences for the individual. It is therefore imperative to consider both positive and negative sides of social relationships in studying their effects on mental health outcomes such as psychological well-being.

Different measures have been used in assessing social negativity. However, according to Finch et al. (1999), the most potent measure of negative social interactions for mental health is the frequency of negative socio-emotional exchanges. Bertera (2005) in her study assessed social negativity using frequency of negative socio-emotional exchanges from three sources; spouse, friends and family.

The present study seeks to find out whether social support and social negativity have significant influence on the psychological well-being of women and the dynamic of the association. The study hypothesized that social support will have a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being while social negativity will have a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being.

Method

Participants

Women living in Accra during the period of the study were the target population for the study. Accra is highly populated and made up of diverse ethnic groups (AMA, 2011), hence it is more representative of the Ghanaian society than other cities and towns in Ghana.

Two hundred women (N=200) were purposively and conveniently sampled from Adenta, Madina, Legon, Accra Psychiatric Hospital and Pantang Hospital. This was to ensure that those with history of mental illness are also represented.

Measures/Instruments

Demographic characteristics such as age, educational level, income etc. were assessed using a demographic questionnaire. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support [MSPSS] (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988) was used to assess social support. It is a 12-item scale that measures an individual's perception of how much outside social support he or she receives from three different sources—family, friends and significant others—on a 7-point likert scale from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree. Scores ranged from 7 to 84 with higher scores reflecting higher levels of perceived social support. It has been widely used in both clinical and non-clinical samples of different ages and cultural background and has been reported to be valid and reliable. Good Cronbach's alpha has also been reported, ranging from .81 to .98 for non-clinical samples and .92-.94 for clinical samples (Zimet et al. 1988; Zimet, Powell, Farley, Werkman & Berkoff, 1990). Sample items are: "There is a special person who is around when I need help", "my family really tries to help me" and "I can count on my friends when things go wrong".

The next instrument is the Social negativity questionnaire [SNQ]. According to Finch, Okun, Pool, and Ruehlman (1999), the most potent measure of negative social interactions for mental health is the frequency of negative socio-emotional exchanges. Based on this assertion, the

following six (6) questions about the frequency of perceived negative socio-emotional interactions were used to assess social negativity. Example of items include; *“how frequently do you argue with your relatives or friends or significant others”, “how often do your relatives or friends or significant others criticize you”*. These questions were repeated three times to assess social negativity from three sources; family, friends and significant others so that the sources of social negativity corresponds with that of social support. The items were scored on a 4-point likert scale (1= never 2= rarely 3= sometimes 4= often). Higher scores on the questionnaire indicate higher levels of social negativity and scores range from 18 to 72. Factor analysis confirmed three factors in the present sample; social negativity from friends, significant others and family or relatives.

Psychological well-being was assessed using the psychological well-being sub scale of The Mental Health Inventory (MHI-38) which was developed by Veit and Ware (1983). It is a 38-item scale which asks about respondent’s feelings during the past month (Vilchinsky & Kravetz, 2005). Sub scales on the test can be grouped into two global sub scales namely; psychological well-being and psychological distress. The psychological well-being sub scale includes scales on General Positive Affect, Emotional Ties and Life Satisfaction. Each item is scored on a 6-point likert scale in exception of two items; 9 and 28 which are scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Example of items on the scale is: *“During the past month, how much of the time have you generally enjoyed the things you do”*.

Procedure and Design

The cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data. The research began with the researcher obtaining ethical approval from the Internal Review Board of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR). Once the approval was granted, a pilot study was conducted using 10 participants to test the questionnaires on a section of the sample to ascertain their reliability among the sample and whether the items on the questionnaires are well understood by the participants. Data collection commenced after the pilot study by the principal investigator and two research assistants. Participants were required to complete an informed consent form, indicating their willingness to participate in the study before proceeding to fill the questionnaires. These forms described the topic and methods of the study and the voluntary and confidential nature of participation. Once the forms were signed, each of the participants went on to fill the questionnaires. Items on the questionnaires were read out to respondents who were unable to read. Throughout the administration of these procedures, the researcher and research assistants were available to answer questions from respondents.

Results

Demographic characteristics

Forty-six percent of the sample had history of mental illness and had received treatment prior to data collection in either Accra Psychiatric Hospital or Pantang Hospital. 54% had no history of mental illness. About 83% aged from 18 years to 49 years, about 16% attained primary or below level of education, 18% and 20% of them attained junior and senior high school education respectively while 29% attained tertiary level education and 17% attained postgraduate level of education. For the women’s income levels, majority were earning below GHC500 (65%) though most of them were employed either in the formal or informal sectors of employment (58%). For the respondents’ marital status, there were more single women in the sample (49%) compared to married women (32%), 14% were separated/divorced and 5% were widowed.

The means, standard deviations and Cronbach’s alpha (internal consistencies) of variables and scales are summarised in Table 1

Table 1: Means, Standard deviations and Cronbach’s of alpha of variables and scales

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
Social Support	57.26	16.89	.92
Social Negativity	39.32	9.22	.87
Psychological Well-Being	58.88	11.30	.86

The Pearson Product Moment was used to test the hypotheses. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation matrix representing relationship among variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Social Support	-	-	-	-
2. Social Negativity	-.06	-	-	-
3. Psychological Well-Being	.07	-.21**	-	-
4. History of Mental Illness	-.07	.01	-.19**	-

** Significant at .01 level of significant (1-tail)

Table 2 reveals that social support did not have a significant relationship with psychological well-being but social negativity had a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being. Results also show that history of mental illness had no significant relationship with social support and social negativity but a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being. This suggests that history of mental illness did not influence the level of social support or social negativity among the sample.

Discussion

The study aimed at investigating the influence of social relationships on psychological well-being. An interesting finding is that social support had no significant influence on psychological well-being but social negativity had a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being. This finding could be attributed to the reason that even though several studies report positive influence of social support on mental health outcomes, it has been noted that the positive influence of social support may be influenced by the quality of the relationship, thus the positive influence of perceived availability of support may be compromised by conflict in the relationships that may provide the support (Miller & Ray, 1994; Pierce, Sarason & Sarason, 1992). Vangelisti (2009) also illustrated that even though individuals may perceive the consequences of receiving support as positive, the cost of receiving such supports may sometimes be seen to surpass the benefits, or perhaps the processes involved in receiving the support may be considered as adverse. In other instances, the available sources of support may be perceived as incapable of giving the help needed; consequently, the positive influence of perceived support might not be felt by the individual.

Considering the fact that Ghana is a collectivist culture whereby communalism and brotherhood are emphasized (Gyekye, 1996), individuals are more likely to perceive the availability of social support from at least one source (no matter how low) hence the influence of perceived social support would largely depend on whether the available support is helpful or not. From the above precept, it could be inferred that women in the present study may not consider the social support available to them as helpful; hence it did not have a significant impact on their psychological well-being or perhaps they perceive or experience unpleasant interactions from the same sources of support which overshadow the benefits of the support they perceive/receive. This finding implies that the aspect of social relationship most pertinent to the psychological well-being of women in Ghana is social negativity rather than social support.

Due to the emphasis on harmonious living in the Ghanaian culture, individuals' expectation of social interactions is that of pleasantness, negative interactions therefore deviate from this expectation. Consequently, the effects of these negative interactions will be more deleterious compared to the positive effects of positive interactions (Zhang, 2012).

Limitations

The use of cross-sectional design does not permit inferences about causal relationships among the variables. The sample used is also relatively young and urban; it is therefore difficult to generalize findings to older and rural populations. Despite the limitations, the study makes important revelations about the role social relationships play on the psychological well-being among women and sets the pace for more research in this area.

Recommendations

Following from findings of the study, it is recommended that African cultural values such as brotherhood, humanity, mutual help and respect should be strengthened at the community level in order to improve the quality of social relationships which in turn has the potential of reducing the experience of social negativity among this population, as the perception of frequent negative interactions in relationships could affect psychological well-being negatively and overshadow the positive influence of social support.

In addition, there should be campaigns on social awareness on positive communication at the community level to reduce the experience of social negativity. Families would also benefit from psycho-education on the influence of negative social interactions on mental health.

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The Soviet State Social Policy in the Sphere of Development of the Material Culture of the Southern Russian Peasants in the 1920-ies

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Abstract

This article discusses the problems of formation of the Soviet state social policy transformations in material culture of the southern Russian peasants in the 1920-ies. The necessity of studying the Soviet state social policy in Russia in the period of 1920-ies the historical aspect is determined by several factors. First, in the study of Russian history of the XX century, one of the main directions of national historiography was and remains the study of social problems at various stages of its development. In this regard, relevant is the consideration of the main challenges for social development at country and regional level. Secondly, in the formation of a new concept of social development of the country increases the need to adequate understanding of the role and importance of the Soviet state in the modernization of Russian society. One of the fundamental principles of state social policy is the principle of state responsibility for creating the conditions necessary for the development of society and the individual. In this regard, special scientific and practical interest becomes the problem of the essence of social policy in different historical periods, especially in the 1920-ies the history of the Soviet state, when it formed the Soviet system. In the analysed time clearly showed different approaches to solving social problems: in the framework of the state ideology and assumptions in Economics elements of private property (1921-1929).

Keywords: The Soviet State Social Policy; Material Culture; House Building; Rural Inhabited Construction; Dwelling; Hut.

Introduction

Material culture housing south of the Russian peasantry was in the early 1920's stronghold in the traditional way: hata (Kuban hut called wattle and daub dwelling structure, tuloksia, and other mud-dwelling). In particular, the researchers rightly indicate that in the architectural appearance of the Kuban house combined features of the dwellings of the steppe and forest-steppe areas of Ukraine, and in the Eastern districts of Kuban was influenced by the "dispensation of the Don Cossacks and the population of the southern regions". [1]

The first steps of the Soviet government in the housing sector of the southern Russian village were as shifts in many other areas of the peasant everyday life, almost negative. The Civil War was one of the inevitable consequences of large-scale destruction of housing. This was especially noticeable in the South of Russia (in particular, on the Don, where the vast majority of the Cossacks made against the Bolsheviks and where, therefore, were the most fierce battles and the front not once moved in one direction and then in another hand. No wonder that such a violent confrontation village of Kazanskaya, for example, was "destroyed to the root"[2] like many other villages and stanitsas. Their contribution to the growth of the housing crisis has made famine of 1921 - 1922, at that time contemporaries testified as a result of the extinction of entire families and the flight of the population in the more prosperous areas "houses are abandoned", and "courts were thrown". [3] Orphan housing, of course, was bought for construction materials and fuel by the local population and, thereby, the housing stock continued to decline. Before the Soviet state began the task of rebuilding housing, improvement of its quality.

Materials and Methods

The article is based on historical, journalistic, monographic materials that reveal the condition of the material culture of South-Russian peasantry in the 1920-ies. Methodological basis of the work was the method of historical comparison preserved state information of peasant housing in the study period and the first measures of the Soviet government's social policy to restore not only the economy but also to increase the level of life of the peasant population.

Discussion

The Soviet government at the end of the Civil War tried to implement measures for the repair and reconstruction of housing in relation to the representatives of those social layers and groups which were its allies and support. In this case, the demonstration that took place in October 1920, the Congress of the Kuban-black sea regional and divisional committees to assist farms of red soldiers expressed the intention "to take all measures to repair buildings" in those farms. [4] It is obvious, however, that in the post-war devastation such measures could not have any wide distribution; moreover, it was often that all the help had been limited only to declarations.

After the transition to civilian life and the proclamation of the NEP from the peasants and representatives of party and Soviet leadership came opportunities for restoration and expansion of housing stock and modernization of the housing sector. However, the analysis of sources allows us to assert that the representatives of the ruling in the USSR party and administrative structures, on the one hand, and the main mass of the peasantry on the other, were different positions on the question of whether to introduce innovations in the economy and how much to do it.

The greatest degree of innovation in the housing sector was visible in the collective farms, the first of which appeared in Soviet Russia in October 1917 [5] In contrast to individual farmers, collective farmers practiced common forms of living. Typically, this differed Communards, uniting not collectives or PC (*partnership cultivation*), and in the communes, which were characterized by a maximum socialization of production and life. In particular, the Kuban Communards and working farmers did not live in private homes but "in rooms of socialized houses, which in the past belonged to the military Cossack authorities or large landowners. The apartments workers and Communards walls were decorated with posters, portraits of the heroes of the revolution. Russian stove, unnecessary in the case of public catering, was replaced by a small oven - Dutch stove or stove". [6] In the commune "Communist lighthouse" of George region Tersky district of the North Caucasus territory in 1928, its members lived in a shared house, where for each family was allocated a "tidy and well cleaned separate apartment" and two rooms for boys and girls. [7]

If the commune was based on the empty place and its members could not settle in any empty manor, they built dormitories by themselves. So did the members of the commune "Future" Labinsk area, Armavir district of the Kuban region in 1922, erecting the first time adobe building with five living rooms and one big room for school". [8] When in the spring of 1923 in Kushevskaya district of South-East Russia emerged emigrant (Estonian) commune "Coit" ("dawn"), the Communards for a short time built, in addition to a number of outbuildings, two-storey residential building type community".[9]

Not always, however, the Communards had at hand roomy accommodations or the ability to build them. In such cases, they had to settle for any housing, regardless of its condition and even despite the fact that it was not appropriate for collective life. Thus, according to the Kuban regional subdivision of farms, in the early 1920s, 75 % of the members of local agricultural cooperatives and even communes lived in dilapidated huts, houses or hastily constructed huts, leading to increased morbidity: for example, in farm artel "General labor" three quarters of the team suffered from malaria. [10]

During the era of the NEP "housing" in the communes of Soviet Russia (the Soviet Union) became less urgent because as the organizational-economic strengthening of a number of collective farms and the elimination of many weak and unstable collective associations. But, at the end of the 1920s, this issue has again become acute in the total collectivization, when the pointer and under pressure of the authorities on an empty place there was mass hasty and failed farms, many of which had no business premises and housing for its members. So, for example, the commune "Bolshevik" Blagodarnenskiy district of the Stavropol district of the North Caucasus region in 1929 "placed its members in the barns", [11] and similar collective farms were many.

Despite all the exceptions to the rule, similar to the above, housing in collective farms (communes) significantly differed from the traditional household in villages and villages of the South of Russia. As for the individual farms in the 1920s, they showed a different balance between tradition and innovation in the housing sector.

It should be emphasized that the authorities and the ideologists of Bolshevism in the 1920s, urging farmers to restore destroyed by the war economy and, in particular, to repair old and build new housing, constantly recommended them as widely as possible apply non-traditional villages materials (bricks, concrete, tiles etc.) and building technology (construction comfortable brick houses and so on). Actually, these recommendations were not new: long before the Bolsheviks with similar councils was Zemstvo. Propaganda apparatus of the Communist party only provided a rational propose a new ideological motivation, which boiled down to the fact that the Soviet countryside, first, should become immeasurably richer and stronger than autocracy and, secondly, it must be converted by the pattern of the city and, eventually, turn into its exact likeness.

The last requirement was dictated by the Bolshevik (Marxist) ideology, with positions that the city and living there factory workers were the ideal modern (of course, for that historical period) of industrial civilization and the basis of socialism-communism and peasantry was hopeless outsider historic race mired in the "idiocy of rural life". [12] Even more important was the fact that eliminating differences between village and city helped to transform peasants into workers and, thereby, strengthen the social base of the Communist regime (in more generally, as argued Bolshevik theorists, the rebuilding of the village on the model of the city was "of paramount importance for the construction of communism") [13].

If not proceed from ideological dogmas, but quite practical calculations, the fact that the pre-Soviet and Soviet authorities to the peasants proceeded similar calls to modernize the field of economy and Economics, was explained by the presence in the village era of NEP serious unresolved domestic problems, such as a modest residential area rural houses, poor sanitary and hygienic conditions in them.

In those years, enthusiasts, such as A. Skachkov in the newspaper "New village" offered pre-kolkhoz village, a new method of housing construction, namely, the construction of houses of solomit and canes. Modern technology, wrote Skachkov, "invented a way to do the straw, dry and completely covered with clay, fireproof material, namely "solomit"". [14] That new building material was a "made on special presses the plates or mats of dry not mint straw, tightly drawn two rows of wire; series wire tightened special wire hooks". The usual thickness of this straw plate was 5 - 10 cm, a width of 1 m, the length is slightly more than 2 m, and the last two parameters could be of any size to order. Just looked and canes, with the only difference that it, as the name implies, was made not of straw and reeds. [15]

Skachkov gave a flattering description of solomit, noting that this material is very durable and yet lightweight, different fire resistance, low heat conductivity.[16] Undoubted advantage of solomit was its cheapness: if, for example, the cost of 1 square fathoms cork plate thickness of 1 inch was 75 rubles, the same size piece of felt in three layers - 36 rubles, the same parameters for the plate solomit thickness of 1.5 inches is only 8 to 12 rubles Moreover, Skachkov argued that such a low price can be significantly reduced, "solomit currently still relatively expensive and cheaper when the peasants themselves will establish themselves in its production". [17]

The disadvantages of solomit were: minimum resistance (solomit afraid of water and it is impossible to make a roof for the roof, though for thermal insulation of ceiling it was quite good); high probability of damage by rodents - rats and mice (therefore, before use in construction dolomit plates were encouraged to dip in a solution of iron sulphate or stand in strong wormwood water); low density, resulting in solomit very poorly kept clogged nails ("solomit you can drive anywhere, nails, but these nails to hold will not and the big weight hang impossible. To do this, you must first be nailed to the posts tesino and nails). [18] It was obvious, however, that the merits of solomit were noticeably more, and its limitations were relatively easy to overcome.

Among the most important advantages of solomit were ease of use in the economy. The construction of the house using solomit resembled the construction process turluk hut: there also first collected the wooden frame, which, however, was not daubed with clay, and trimmed dolomit (reed) plates. Those plates could easily be cut and it was equally easy to tack nails to a wooden base (but the nail could easily completely away in the straw plate, and therefore the experts advised to put under the hats of nails "shaibochki of roofing iron") [19]. Sheathing wooden frame solomit

could be had for the day and ready solomit wall should be plastered, and pre-treatment or upholstery it felt was not required. Recommended inside cover solomit "alabaster or clay solution, and outside lime, cement or mixed (calcareous cement)". [20]

As stated in the press, solomit was invented in pre-revolutionary Russia. Already in 1915, two plants near Moscow had produced about 2 thousand cubic yards of this valuable building material". [21] The first method of manufacturing solomit was kept secret, but in 1924 the machines and the right production solomit were sold construction engineering organization of cooperative Barybinsky partnership (cooperative farm), which, in turn, resold them Mospromstroy (the Office of the state industrial construction, located in Moscow). There and began to make solomit in the era of NEP, and they did it on a large and complex machine weighing about 100 pounds, for a service which had 15 people. Prices 1925, the cost of the machine was 7 thousand rubles, which was not allowed farmers or cooperatives to buy it: "this amount [was] not under force." [22]

Of course, all this prevented widespread solomit in the Soviet countryside. Skachkov, however, optimistic argued that there are already simple and cheap machines (for example, authorship technique F. A. Gogin), and indeed, "solomit curried in many places of the Union of artisanal on cheap machines, and in Novorossiysk and other southern cities were made canes. [23] In General, solomit was interpreted as a modern, efficient and very convenient building material, which was confirmed by using its foreign counterparts in France and Belgium when restoring destroyed during the First World War settlements. [24]

We emphasize that the representatives of the party and Soviet bodies and technical experts advised the villagers to upgrade and improve the economy and home life not only new, but traditional methods and materials, primarily from the same clay. It was recommended, for example, to build a mud-thatched and mud-brushwood (*wooden-earthen*) construction, [25] use of clay to cover the fire shingle [26] and straw [27] roofs, etc.

Such calls might seem inconsistent with the spirit of modernization of the housing sector of the Soviet pre-kolkhoz village, for such involved the introduction of new (or at least not widely used in pre-Soviet times) materials and technologies. However, they were motivated not by the desire of the authorities to preserve the tradition, but rather to provide all of the same upgrades, but a cheaper price.

In fact, few of the farmers in impoverished post-revolutionary and post-war Soviet Russia could afford to build a brick house, or at least to cover the roof of the house not straw or shingles, because it had cost a pretty penny (especially in terms of devastation price of construction materials had risen). Yes, actually, and had suffered greatly during the war industry was not in the state to provide the country with capacity of materials (and the authorities had no means and opportunities for a radical reconstruction of the housing sector pre-kolkhoz village on the model socialist city). The use of traditional materials - clay, straw, brushwood, etc., that was allowed to reduce, simplify and speed up construction. Skachkov, for example, noted that mud-brushwood construction cost the farmer "very cheap, as the material on them is the cheapest and not the purchase, namely: clay, wood, straw, and sometimes just a little bit of lime". The walls of such buildings are erected "twice the speed of the individual stones or bricks, you can build for "5 or the biggest 10 days". [28]

However, traditional materials and technologies were used so that with their help the task was run modernization of peasant economy and housekeeping. The same mud-thatched building, it was possible to give a more substantial volume than single-chamber a log hut (increasing, thereby, the living space), make it large windows that contributed to the creation of favorable sanitary conditions; this building was characterized by increased resistance, etc. That is, the use of traditional materials was not contrary to modernization, and reduced it (although, of course, it still was a coercive measure).

In any case, in the 1920s, part of the rural population listened carefully to the recommendations of the authorities on the application in the economy of modern materials and technologies and, moreover, sought those recommendations were to perform. In particular, in 1925, the press stated intention of some rural residents to build a "tree-concrete huts", which had a high resistance and were relatively cheap: if the construction of "medium wood-concrete huts" was 1,7 thousand rubles, traditional huts, log - 8,1 thousand rubles, and brick house - 8,1 thousand rubles [29]

Rustic enthusiasts with more or less success tried to produce modern materials and construction of their homes. In 1927 one of these enthusiasts wrote in the "New village" to engineer A. I. Skachkov, as he with companions, placed in the magazine's advice and started making concrete blocks. [30] In response to the demand from the peasantry on bricks, tiles and other materials, agricultural cooperative associations were created appropriate workshops. In 1926, for example, credit farmer organization in the village Scrotum Kaluga province was opened a workshop for the production of tiles; the main consumers of its products were farmers and it was significant that there were many orders, as a result, as witnessed by his contemporaries, machine tools of workshop "work hard". [31]

But, the vast majority of people pre-kolkhoz village, for a number of reasons (not always willingly, but under the pressure of circumstances), followed the tradition in the economy and living arrangement. This trend was dominant in the 1920s in the USSR and, including, in the South of Russia.

Conclusion

The causes which influenced the traditional practice of dispensation in South Russian pre-kolkhoz village remained were diverse. Select those that, in our opinion, were the most important. First of all, let us note an acute shortage of those building materials, without which the building of modern wooden and brick houses was not possible: wood, brick, tile, roofing iron, etc. This deficit was a stable phenomenon throughout the 1920s, and was felt even in the Central, North-Western and other, more or less wooded, regions of the USSR; and as for the steppe region of Southern Russia, where brick and wooden houses before and were a little bit, lack of such materials had killed the idea of modernization of the economy on to.

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16. Speaking of high strength solomit, Skachkov explained that this is achieved by a dense baling straw plates. Despite this, tightly pressed plate solomita was relatively easy: it was "poods are many, many inches in thickness solomit". For example, the plate is longer than 2 meters, 1 meter wide and 5 cm thick weighed only 33,3 kg. Fire of solomit has been proven by tests: "many times when testing dolomit plate was soaked in kerosene and set alight. They were not burned, and only the top quarter inch was charred, the middle of solomit was always quite strong. Solomit

plastered no damage if the fire had not been". The thermal conductivity of solomit was lower than that of wood: outdoor solomit wall thickness of 2.5 vershok, plastered on both sides, as well kept the house warm, like a wall of logs in 5 vershok or bricks in the 16 vershok. (Skachkov A. I. What should know the farmer about solomit // New village. 1926. No. 13. P. 43 - 44).

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25. Mud-thatched buildings were constructed by pouring clay solution ("mash") in a wooden form, where before it was put straw (Skachkov A. I. Mud-thatched buildings // New village. 1927. No. 19. P. 40 - 43). "Mud-brushwood buildings were constructed in a similar fashion: first, did the formwork, then she applied a layer of clay mass ("honemade"), which was pressed layer of brushwood. Then the operation was repeated until the wall until he reached the desired height (Skachkov A. I. Mud-brushwood rural fire resistant residential buildings // New village. 1927. No. 13. P. 31).
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International Financial Reporting Standard's (IFRS) Adoption in Ghana: Rationale, Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) was adopted by Ghana in 2007. The study assessed eighteen (18) professional accountants from listed firms on the Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE), to measure the benefits and challenges of IFRS. The study revealed that IFRS improved the access of local companies to international markets. It was also observed that the local firms gained more credibility, transparency, acceptance and consolidation following its adoption. However, most respondents believed that decreasing information cost, competitive leading edge, and integration of accounting Information Technology system were not major benefits as proposed by literature. Nonetheless, some of these local companies after the migration faced challenges like coping with the sophistication of the new standard, lack of qualified personnel, and additional operational cost. Nevertheless, most of the respondents disagreed with the proposition that IFRS had a negative impact on their firms' balance of retained earnings.

Keywords: International Financial Reporting Standards; Accounting; Balance of Retained Earnings; Financial Statement; Financial Reporting; Local Companies; Ghana.

Introduction

The adoption of IFRS in many countries across the world is one of the most significant regulatory changes in accounting history. Rapid globalization of financial markets has also given rise to demands for more internationally comparable financial reporting. Bodies such as International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC) now International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) has since its establishment, played significant role through pronouncement of a number of standards that seeks to guide accountants globally on financial statement preparation and presentation (Larson, & Street, 2004). This also led to the facilitation of the reproduction and diffusion of specific accounting and accountability practices across the world by international organizations such as the World Bank [WB] and International Monetary Fund [IMF] (Chand, & White, 2007; Graham, & Neu, 2003; Nolke, 2005; Richardson, 2009; Unerman, 2003; Lehman, 2005).

Consequently, these international institutions have pushed for the adoption of IFRS by developing and transitional countries as part of their restructuring programs. This move has been regarded as essential to command the confidence of investors (Mir, & Rahaman, 2005).

On the 1st January, 2007, Ghana adopted the IFRS following the Reports on Standards and Codes [ROSC] issued by the WB in March 2006. The adoption by Ghana has significantly increased

investors' confidence and acceptance within the international financial community. According to Joshi and Al-Basketi (1999), the WB and the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) rely on the full adoption of IFRS as the most appropriate for developing countries. Thus, it can be noted that the continuous promotion by the WB towards the implementation of IFRS (Mir, & Rahaman, 2005), is based on economic rationalist principles designed to accomplish a sound system of "global harmonization" in accounting reporting (Lehman, 2005). On the other hand, the relevance of IFRS to developing and transitional countries have been condemned as not specifically beneficial since these countries have little control over such a foreign standard of accounting (Mensah, 1981; Longden, Luther, & Bowler, 2001). In addition, the adoption of IFRS may be both irrelevant and harmful to developing countries due to the differences between the accounting system of developed and developing countries (Samuels, & Oliga, 1992).

Over the years, few empirical studies have been conducted to assess the impact of the IFRS adoption. Previous assessments basically consider the implementation, impact and the challenges facing the global fronts (Lehman, 2005). The issue here lies with the fact that even though some research had been conducted in other countries, what is the situation in Ghana? Apart from the benefits of IFRS, an economic perspective on its expectations and the premise that, IFRS provides quality corporate reporting and comparable statement raises significant concerns. Thus, have these migrating countries taken into consideration the economic consequences of IFRS reporting after its adoption? Furthermore, there has not been enough research to assess the impacts, challenges and possible remedies on the financial statement of these countries. Moreover, these few studies on the adoption of IFRS were mostly based on developed countries with less attention paid to the developing countries. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to look at the existing state of local companies in Ghana after IFRS's adoption.

Method

Instruments

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique since the population of interest involved professional accountants working with listed firms on the Ghana Stock Exchange [GSE] who were recognised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants (Ghana) [ICAG].

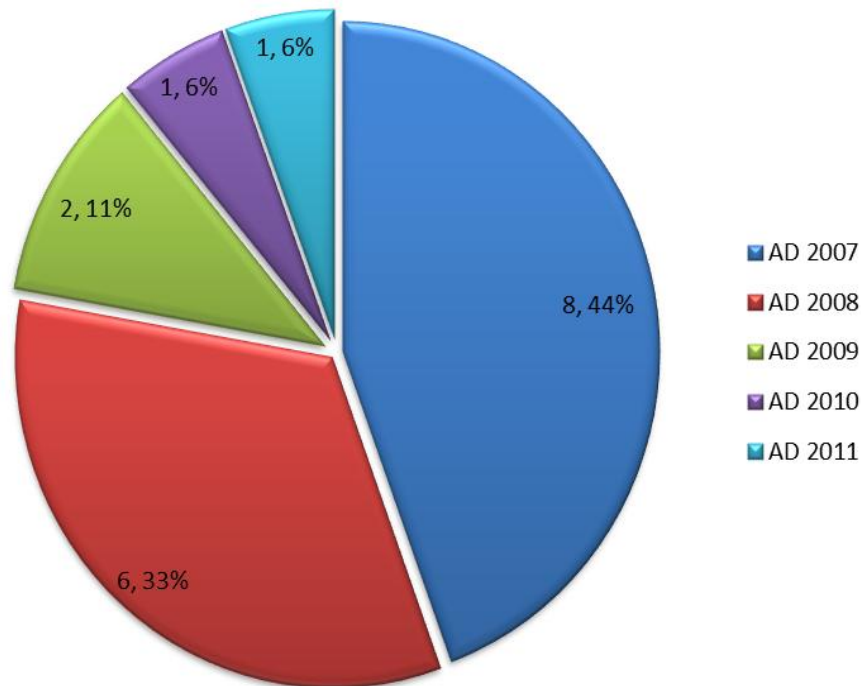
The questionnaire for data collection contained three (3) main parts. The first section consisted of demographic data of participants. The second and third sections of the questionnaire also sought to evaluate the existing challenges and benefits of IFRS in Ghana respectively. Although the questionnaire was made up of closed-ended questions, open spaces were allowed for other additional comments.

Participants

Eighteen (18) professional accountants agreed to take part in this study. Among these participants, 55.6% worked with manufacturing companies. Additional 16.7% were from financial institutions. Mining and Insurance firms recorded 5.6% respondent each respectively. All companies were noted to have been in operation in Ghana for more than 15 years. Majority 72.2% of them stated that their listed companies used the Ghana National Accounting Standard (GNAS) before the adoption of IFRS.

Results

Though all listed firms were mandated to adopt IFRS in 2007, not all the listed firms were able to migrate since they had to go through series of transitions and accompanying cost burden. Figure 1 depicts the year in which the selected companies finally adopted IFRS in Ghana.

Figure 1: The specific year of IFRS adoption

Sectors of Positive Change after IFRS adoption

Since the introduction of IFRS, there had been several positive changes in some sectors of financial reporting. In Measurement, majority of the participants, 88.9% affirmed a change, 5.6% denied any changes while 5.6% were not certain about any significant change in measurement comparing with their old financial standards.

Under Disclosure, all the participants affirmed a change. Regarding Comparability, 94.4% confirmed an evidence of change while 5.6% denied any changes. Reliability also recorded an evidence of change among 72.2% participants while 22.2% saw no changes vis-à-vis their old standard. Additional 5.6% of the participants were not sure about any significant changes in the reliability of the financial statement outcomes.

With respect to changes in Credibility, 83.3% firms confirmed it while 11.1% declined it to be the same. Additional 5.6% of the participants were uncertain with any change in the Credibility of financial statements after IFRS's implementation.

Suitability of the adoption of IFRS

The entire participant from the selected listed firms confirmed IFRS as generally suitable. The authors sought to probe further for specific areas of IFRS's suitability. With Measurement, 77.8% of them confirmed its suitability while 22.2% declined.

However, all the participants supported Disclosure as a suitable merit of IFRS. With regards to its Comparability, 88.9% of the respondents supported its suitability while 5.6% declined. However, 5.6% of the participants were indifferent to this claim.

Again, IFRS's suitability with regards to Reliability was supported by 83.3% of the total sample. However, 5.6% of them declined its suitability with respect to Reliability while 11.1% participants were indecisive.

IFRS's suitability with respect to Credibility was accepted by 88.9% of the participants while 11.1% of them declined this feature.

Distribution of Benefits of the Adoption of IFRS

This section of the analysis sought to describe the existing benefits enjoyed by listed companies after the adoption of IFRS in Ghana. Detailed descriptive analysis can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1 showed that, majority of the respondents agreed that IFRS improved their companies' access to the international markets. It also improved the comparability, transparency, eased consolidation and promoted consistency in financial reporting.

Majority of the participants however, strongly agreed to the view that IFRS improved the credibility of their companies' financial statement.

Nonetheless, majority of the participants were also indifferent to the view that IFRS decreased their companies' information cost, offered a leading edge advantage and integrated their information technology [IT] system.

Table 1: Distribution of Benefits of the Adoption of IFRS

BENEFITS OF IFRS	SD	D	NAD	A	SA
Improves access to international market	11.1%	0%	16.7%	55.6%	16.7%
Improves comparability of financial statement	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	55.6%	27.8%
Improves transparency of financial statement	5.6%	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	16.7%
Improves credibility of financial statement	5.6%	5.6%	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%
Decreases information cost	11.2%	22.2%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%
Offers a leading edge advantage	5.6%	16.7%	66.7%	5.6%	5.6%
Integrates IT System	5.6%	5.6%	44.4%	33.3%	5.6%
Eases consolidation	11.1%	5.6%	16.7%	44.4%	22.2%
Has a consistency	11.1%	11.1%	5.6%	38.9%	33.3%

Notes: SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, NAD: Neither Agree nor Disagree, SA: Strongly Agree.

Challenges Faced After the Adoption of IFRS

The summary of responses about the challenges facing the adoption of IFRS in Ghana is shown by the Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Benefits of the Adoption of IFRS

CHALLENGES OF IFRS	VL	L	MOD	H	VH
IFRS is Sophisticated	5.6%	11.1%	5.6%	61.1%	16.7%
Less number of Professional with IFRS know-how	22.2%	16.7%	22.2%	33.3%	5.6%
IFRS has Additional Cost	22.2%	11.1%	27.8%	16.7%	22.2%
IFRS has a negative balance of retained earnings	38.9%	27.8%	16.7%	11.1%	5.6%
Conflict between state laws and IFRS	5.6%	22.2%	38.9%	27.8%	5.6%
Differences in IFRS's implementation process	16.7%	16.7%	22.2%	33.3%	11.2%
Lack of Internal IFRS Experts	22.2%	22.2%	22.2%	11.1%	22.2%

Notes: VL: Very Low, L: Low, MOD: Moderate, H: High, VH: Very High

From the table, majority of the participants rated very high, the view that their companies lacked internal IFRS experts. Likewise, the participants rated the differences in IFRS's implementation process, the less number of Professionals with IFRS know-how and its sophistication as high. Majority of the participants were indifferent to the perception that IFRS lacked internal experts, conflicted with some state regulatory laws and had additional cost.

Nonetheless, majority of the participants rated as very low, the challenge that IFRS has a negative balance of retained earnings.

Discussion

The rationale behind the adoption of IFRS in Ghana was based on the desire to promote development, standardization of financial statements, and serve as a channel of attracting international market. Ghana being a member of International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), and Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) needed to adopt a standard that is internationally accepted. Furthermore, the study also realised from a participant that, "*Ghana National Accounting Standards [GNAS] was an abstract from International Accounting Standard [IAS] in 1973. Ever since, the GNAS had never received any revision. However, the IAS has undergone numerous revisions. Since GNAS has not been revised over the years, it brought about some differences that were identified in the ROSC, 2004. It could then be said that Ghana did not have the capacity and the will power to revise its standards leading to the full adoption of IFRS*". Again, it was recognised that using IFRS makes a firm's financial statement credible, and potential investors have interest in financial statements that were reported using internationally recognised standards. Ghana adopted IFRS because there was the need for transparency. Since IFRS goes with significant disclosure, it offered transparency and upheld the fair value of the accounting system. These findings were different from the suggestion that, the key drive of developing countries to adopt IFRS was as a result of pressures from multinational corporations or the WB (Irvine, & Lucas, 2006). Indeed, the local companies in Ghana reported of their need to join this system of financial reporting due to their own observable challenges.

IFRS was also perceived as beneficial in many dimensions. One of the primary merits was the access it provided to international markets (Peavy, & Webster). Similarly, IFRS improved the comparability of the financial statements of local companies. It made provision of a more understandable, and reliable scope for financial statements (Ball, 2006). Evaluating IFRS's tendencies to improve the transparency and credibility of financial statement, most firms deems it as beneficial. This response is consistent with the findings of several studies on IFRS's implementation in developing economies (Abd-Elsalam, & Weetman, 2003; Irvine, & Lucas, 2006). From the study, IFRS was also described as an effective mechanism to ease the consolidation of financial statements among the participants. This response was no different from what is known in literature (Larson, & Street, 2004). The consolidation of financial statements also brings about some degree of formal convergence. Cost is one of the most important elements to every company. Information is also critical to the survival any company. Therefore, the cost of information is a worry for all institution. The WB and IOSCO believed that the adoption of a known international standard helped decrease information cost, thus, being appropriate for developing countries (Joshi, & Al-Basketi, 1999). This was clearly indicated by the study that information cost was reduced drastically since the introduction of IFRS. This is because the same platform was used to prepare and present the financial statements.

Nonetheless, the study revealed that respondents were indecisive about the benefits of IFRS with respect to its competitive leading edge and integration of accounting Information Technology (IT) system. This was contrary to the findings of a previous study (Joshi, & Al-Basketi, 1999). This result may have arisen because of the weakness in the advance development of information technology in Ghana. Over all, the challenges identified in the study were possible to be present since most respondents agreed to the fact that IFRS is sophisticated and its implementation is quite difficult. According to Choi and Mueller (1984), IFRS is sophisticated and difficult to implement. This was due to the fact that, it conflicted and surpassed existing local business requirements and structure. Factors such as economic growth, sociocultural dynamics, legal and educational environment may also influence its implementation.

However, the results showed that IFRS had a rather positive impact on the balance of retained earnings of listed firms. This is clearly against the position held by literature which stated that there could be a potential fall in a firm's reported balance of retained earnings. Therefore, restricting its ability to pay dividends and subsequently impacting on share price (Picker, 2003; Ravlic, 2003). In addition to the challenges noted, the adoption of IFRS can bring significant short-term cost to businesses, such as paying external accountant specialist, and training of staff (Ravlic, 2003). The analysis of the data does not clearly depict the observation made by literature. This may

be for the reason that, additional cost to the company may depend on the company's existing structures, expertise, needs and financial standing. Some companies have external parentage and would be easier to adopt the new format for the local branch with little cost. Also, lack of expertise and the underdeveloped accounting profession is one of the biggest challenges facing IFRS adoption. The practices of qualified professionals and enforcement of regulations by mandated bodies are essential to the successful implementation of IFRS in Ghana.

Conclusion

The research findings confirm the position of most previous studies done in the area of IFRS. The main reason why Ghana adopted IFRS was because of its membership in the global community. The need to adopt a standard which was internationally recognised was needed for comparison, credibility and transparency in order to increase investors' confidence. The study also disclosed that IFRS improved the transparency of financial statements, credibility of financial statement and made consolidation easier. On the other hand, IFRS was described as sophisticated and cumbersome. The study showed that most respondents agreed that IFRS had a positive impact on a firm's balance of retained earnings which was contrary to literature. Finally, the results of the study contradict with the position that the adoption of IFRS in Ghana was due to pressures from the WB and IMF.

Recommendations

Based on the study undertaken on IFRS adoption in Ghana, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Government should support and strengthen the standards' setters so that they can try to set standards which are applicable to the Ghanaian environment.
- b. Professional education and training should also be strengthened as well as raising the awareness of the importance of IFRS and compliance with accounting requirements
- c. Necessary steps should be taken to strengthen the capacity of regulators including Securities and Exchange Commission to enable them deal effectively with accounting and financial reporting practices of the regulated entities.
- d. Future studies on IFRS suitability could consider industry-specific studies.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors affirm that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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Positive Image of the USSR and Soviet Characters in American Films in 1943–1945

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Abstract

In the article the author performs a hermeneutic analysis of cultural context, i.e. investigation of media texts interpretation, cultural and historical factors influencing the views of the agency / author of a media text and the audience, on specific examples of positive image of the USSR and soviet characters in American films in 1943-1945. The author bears in mind that the hermeneutic analysis of a media text comprehension involves a comparison with a historical, cultural tradition and reality; insight into its logic; comparison of media images in historical and cultural contexts combined with the historical, hermeneutical analyses of the structural, plot, ethical, ideological and iconographic / visual analyses of media stereotypes and media text characters. The analysis of these media texts, in the author's opinion, is especially important for media education of future historians, culture experts, art critics, social scientists, philologists, psychologists and teachers.

Keywords: Russian Image; Film Studies; Media Text; Hermeneutic Analysis; Russia; USA; Media Education; Media Literacy; Media Competence; Movie.

Introduction

In one of my previous books [Fedorov, 2010] I analysed a rather adverse image of the USSR on the western screen in the epoch of ideological confrontation (1946-1991). However there was a short period in the history of Soviet-American relations, when the image of the Soviet country and its citizens on the American screen was positively charged: 1943-1945, the time when Americans and Russian were allies in the WWII.

Materials and Methods

During that period of time 7 feature films (and several documentaries as well) were produced in the USA, which main characters were "good" Soviets: *Mission to Moscow* (1943), *The boy from Stalingrad* (1943), *North Star* (1943), *Three Russian Girls* (1943), *Song of Russia* (1944), *Days of Glory* (1944), *Counter-Attack* (1945). Meanwhile majority of these films were directed by prominent directors, an Oscar winner, the author of a legendary *Casablanca* (1942) Michael Curtiz (1988-1962) and the author of the drama *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) Lewis Milestone (1895-1980) among them. Moreover, such Hollywood actors as R. Taylor and G. Peck starred in some of them. Soviet cinema only answered this unprecedented "film-goodwill" gesture with documentary films, positively evaluating American and British participation in the fight against Nazi Germany. Feature cinema industry of the USSR didn't take part in that, due to the inevitable need of presenting the lifestyle in allied countries.

The first step in the series of oversees allied friendship was *Mission to Moscow*, premiered in the USA at the end of April, and in the USSR - on the 26th of July of 1943. The only European country that ventured to screen this pro-Soviet film in the war years, was neutral Sweden, where in November and December of 1944 (when the outcome of the war was already clear) were screened two American films about the USSR - *Mission to Moscow* and *Days of Glory*.

Mission to Moscow was somewhat an order of the state, a screen adaptation of the book by an ex-ambassador to the USSR (1936-1938) Joseph E. Davies. However while the book was rather positive about presenting events in the USSR and Stalin's policy on the whole, its screen version was only concentrated on the rosy view of the Soviet lifestyle. Not only were the Soviet achievements in industry and agriculture, but also "demonstrative" lawsuits against enemies of the state shown in *Mission to Moscow* in a really advantageous way for Kremlin. The screen features a bright, prosperous Moscow. The film also justifies the USSR's attack against Finland in 1939, as well as the August 1939 Pact between Germany and the USSR.

This is why of all pro-Soviet Hollywood films it was *Mission to Moscow* that was honoured to be shown on Soviet screens. It is worth noting that later on it was for such a clear positive support of the Soviet regime that the authors of the film were accused of during the 1947 House Un-American Activities Committee, investigating anti-American activity.

Meanwhile the authors of *Mission to Moscow* flattered the Soviet authority. The minister of foreign affairs M. Litvinov proves his point to the American ambassador Joseph E. Davies that "there is no security for any of us as long as there is no security for all". M. Kalinin jokingly mentions that "his favourite sin is American cigarettes". V. Molotov, Marshal Timoshenko and prosecutor Vyshinsky are portrayed favourable as well. J. Davies in one of the final episodes of the film calls Stalin as "the great builder for the benefit of mankind"...

A considerable part of the screen time is dedicated to the travel of J. Davies across the USSR: Kharkiv, Odessa, Donbas, Dneproges, Baku..."Tractors, coal, electricity, steel, amazing, astonishing, wonderful!" Mr. Davies is speechless. "I can't find another example in the history of mankind, when so much was done in such a short period of time", - Davies says to Molotov. "What great people! Patriots! And women! They work in the mines - because they have equal rights with men, they drive trains, assemble tractors. The work is humming, tractors are being assembled, but in case of the war, in case of the military actions, the same plant will produce tanks. Amazing, astonishing, wonderful!" [Lemkhin, 2012].

Inherently, *Mission to Moscow* was a kind of a diplomatic tool for the USA, the tool that was supposed to bribe a military ally.

Certainly, the screening of *Mission to Moscow* (which by the way was a box-office failure in the USA) raised not only favourable reviews but also critical ones in American press. Bennet [Bennet, 2001] cites numerous opinions of that kind.

On the other hand, judging by the reviews in Soviet papers such as *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Vechernyaya Moskva*, *Izvestia*, this film was an act of friendly gratitude of the USA to the Soviet Union and Red Army.

However for American policy the fact that by demonstrating a high standard of living in the USA, "Hollywood started to compete with the communist party for hearts and minds of the Soviet audience... *Mission to Moscow* became a weapon of "soft power", its public release opened the way to previously banned in the Soviet Union legions of Hollywood films" [Bennet, 2001].

Another pro-Soviet Hollywood film of 1943 was *The North Star* (it was shown in Sweden in March 1945). June 1941. A quiet Soviet village is attacked by Nazi aviation. Soon it is occupied by its army. A Nazi doctor (played by legendary Erich Oswald Stroheim) decided to use local children for blood transfusion for German soldiers. But Soviet men able to hold weapon in hands, become partisans and do everything to hinder him.

Indeed, a rural life is depicted on the screen in a grotesque way, but on the whole the story is told with a great deal of compassion and sympathy for the USSR and Soviet people. Therefore, no wonder that after the end of the war, both *Mission to Moscow* and *The North Star* were declared as pro-Soviet propaganda by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

A sympathetic pathos was characteristic of the film *The Boy from Stalingrad* (1943) where country teenagers start the fight against occupants, along the way saving Tommy, the son of the British consul, who lost his parents during the evacuation attempt from Stalingrad, attacked by the Nazis.

The main stake of the pro-Soviet Hollywood in 1944 was a melodrama *Song of Russia*. The leading male role of an American band-master was played by a famous American actor Robert Taylor (1911-1969) who had to explain himself and find excuses for this work in front of the same Committee after the war.

This film turned out to be a fatal one for him. According to the plot, Taylor's character comes to Moscow on tour in 1941 and falls in love with a pretty Russian girl Nadya, a talented country pianist. As it sometimes happens on film sets, Taylor (who was married to an American star Barbara Stanwyck at the time) really had an affair with a charming actress who played Nadya - Susan Peters (1921-1952). However unlike the film characters, actors didn't reach the happy ending: not being able to divorce, Taylor went to serve in the army. S. Peters married another man, in 1945 was wounded accidentally during the hunting, paralyzed and died in 1952.

Like *Mission to Moscow* and *The North Star, Song of Russia* was also full of grotesque idealization of life in the USSR. Having graduated from the country music school, Nadya comes to Moscow to see the concert of an American conductor, and impresses him with her piano performance. Everyone in her village is keen on classical music! Mikhail Chekhov who played Nadya's father, a tractor driver and a musician, did not manage to make this melodramatic popular print more realistic..

In a very favorable to the USSR melodrama *Days of Glory* (1944) the leading male role was played by a Hollywood star Gregory Peck (1916-2003). His brave character is the leader of partisans. He hides in the woods and commits acts of sabotage against Nazis. Naturally all women partisans, one played by a Russian ballet dancer Tamara Tumanova, were in love with such a handsome and courageous man.

Almost on the eve of the Nazi's Germany defeat – in the end of April, 1945- American screens featured another pro-Soviet film – a drama *Counter-Attack*, where Soviet and Nazi soldiers find themselves in one vault.

Conclusion

Accessibility of the majority of the above mentioned films due to their DVD and Internet releases, makes it possible to analyse media stereotypes of the positive image of the USSR and Soviet characters in American films of 1943-1945 at the media literacy classes with students according to the following scheme.

Structure of the stereotypes of the positive image of the USSR and Soviet characters in American films of 1943-1945

Structure of the stereotypes of drama genre films (as exemplified in *Mission to Moscow*, the USA, 1943)

Historical period, location: relatively short period of time between the 1930s-1940s; the USSR, the USA, Germany, some other countries.

Environment, everyday objects: impressive Soviet plants and electrical stations, war parades and diplomatic receptions, rather decent houses and possessions of Soviet characters, comfortable housing and possessions of western characters.

Means of representation: quasi-realistic, only advantageous portrayal of Soviet lifestyle.

Characters, their values, ideas; clothes, appearance, lexis, body language:

- good characters - Americans who believe in democracy, and find themselves in the USSR (the Ambassador and his family in the first place), Soviet state leaders (Stalin, Kalinin, Molotov) and common Russian people, aimed at creating the new society, patriotism and struggle for peace. They look nice, speak with pathos, Soviet women look pretty, they are well-dressed and even go shopping for perfume;

- villains - have anti-humane, military ideas (Nazis), traitors and terrorists (arrested Trotsky's supporters and other enemies of Stalin regime).

The characters are divided by both social and material status. Villains are on the whole portrayed as unpleasant people with appalling voice timbre. However some of the Soviet negative characters (for example, Tukhachevsky) at first look rather presentably.

A crucial change in characters' life: villains are going to implement their anti-humane ideas (Nazis are preparing to attack the USSR, and oppositionists - Trotsky's supporters are plotting a scheme).

A problem occurred: life of good characters as well as life of whole nations and countries are in danger.

Searching for the problem solution: struggle of good characters with bad ones (American ambassador and good Soviet state leaders are doing their best to prevent the war by diplomatic means; open for foreign visitors Soviet court convicts Trotsky's followers and other plotters).

Solving the problem: condemning villains; armed struggle of the USSR troops against Nazi army; anti-Nazi alliance between the USSR and the USA.

Structure of stereotypes of melodrama genre films
(as exemplified in *Song of Russia*, the USA, 1944)

Historical period, location: short period of time between the 1941 and 1944; the USSR, the USA.

Environment, everyday objects: modest but decent dwelling and possessions of Soviet characters, even rural ones (although the set where the main female character lives looks rather unusual for the Russian eye as it contains elements of American architecture); spacious concert halls.

Means of representation: quasi-realistic, only favourable view of Soviet lifestyle.

Characters, their values, ideas; clothes, appearance, lexis, body language: male and female characters have contrasting ideological and social status. He is a famous American conductor. She is a beautiful country girl, brilliantly playing the piano. All characters in the film are only shown in positive light. Main characters look slim, attractive, they're dressed in good taste. They are emotional, their gestures are sometimes expressive, lexicon is rich.

A crucial change in characters' life: the meeting of the man and the woman, love between them.

A problem occurred: ideological and social misalliance, start of the war, temporary separation of characters.

Searching for the problem solution: characters overcome ideological and social barriers between them.

Solving the problem: the wedding/love harmony (noticeably, the two main characters are getting married in Russian orthodox church), the final reunion after the separation, caused by the war, mutual decision to move to the USA in order to give concerts together, performing Russian classical music.

Structure of the stereotypes of comedy genre films (as exemplified in *Three Russian Girls*, the USA, 1943)

Historical period, location: short period of time from 1941 to 1943; the USSR.

Environment, everyday objects: modest housing and possessions of Soviet characters, war hospital, located in an old mansion.

Means of representation: quasi-realistic, only positive portrayal of Soviet lifestyle.

Characters, their values, ideas; clothes, appearance, lexis, body language: American pilot who voluntarily decided to go to the USSR during the war and Soviet citizens with contrasting ideology and social status. All characters are portrayed in a favourable light. Main characters look attractive, especially girls. Their clothes are tasteful. They're optimistic, patriotic, emotional, sometimes expressive gestures, facial expressions and lexis.

A crucial change in characters' life: American pilot John, wounded in battle with Nazis, finds himself in a Soviet hospital, and naturally, falls in love with the beautiful Natasha.

A problem occurred: culture shock, mutual misunderstanding, German troops' attack threat.

Searching for the problem solution: after a series of funny/eccentric situations characters overcome communication and understanding barriers.

Solving the problem: love harmony.

Certainly, the cold war of the second half of the 1940s-1950s crucially changed the orientation of the western screen towards the USSR. However even in 1948 thriller *Berlin express* the Soviet officer was shown rather with compassion than with suspicion.

A true mass western film attack against the USSR was yet to come...

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Role of Clinical Neuropsychologists in the Evaluation and Management of Diabetes Mellitus in Ghana: A Position Statement

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Abstract

Ghana's Ministry of Health is gradually improving the state of mental health among patients with biomedical conditions. Nonetheless, many recent studies have showed that some chronic medical conditions present cognitive deficits that need specialist evaluation and care. The aim of this paper is to provide a summary analysis regarding the current need for neuropsychologists in Ghana's diabetes care. The rationale is to move for a paradigm shift with regards to the current state of diabetes care in Ghana. Thus, it advocates for policy reform in the management of DM and the inclusion of neuropsychologists among Ghana's existing structure for diabetes care.

Keywords: Neuropsychologist; Diabetes Mellitus; Ministry of Health; Mental Health; Ghana.

Overview of Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a common metabolic condition that has gained recent global concern. This condition is noted to show a prolonged state of hyperglycaemia, complemented by a disorder of food nutrients' metabolism as a result of allied problems in insulin secretion, insulin action, or both (American Diabetes Association [ADA], 2003). There are three main types of DM. These include Type 1 diabetes mellitus (DM1) [formerly called Insulin-Dependent Diabetes Mellitus], Type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM2) [formerly called Non-Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus], and Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (which occurs as a result of pregnancy). According to the clinical diagnostic protocol by the World Health Organization for DM, the individual shall record a range of blood glucose symptomatic of diabetes mellitus either by: a Fasting Venous Plasma Glucose [FPG] ≥ 7.0 mmol/l or Venous Plasma Glucose ≥ 11.1 mmol/l at two hours after a 75g oral glucose load {Oral Glucose Tolerance Test [OGTT]} (WHO & IDF, 2006).

Ghana is estimated to have a fast growing rate for diabetes. At the end of 2012, diabetic cases (between 20-79 years) in 1000s increased in Ghana from approximately 354.02 (IDF, 2012) to 440.00 at the end of 2013 (IDF, 2013). DM cases like all chronic conditions have become much of a concern due to its prolonged duration and huge national socioeconomic burden (IDF, 2012). In addition, studies have indicated that most chronic conditions often exhibit some significant neuropsychological deficits (Annweiler et al., 2011; Boeka, & Lokken, 2008; Ostrosky-Solis, Mendoza, & Ardila, 2001). Although cognitive deficits among individuals diagnosed with DM in Ghana may not be reported during routine medical check-ups, a recent study observed some significant deficits among Ghanaian participants (Sarfo, & Mate-Kole, 2014).

Neuro-psychopathology of Diabetes

The initial discovery of cognitive deficits among DM1 cases by Miles and Root (1922) gave the footing for many empirical studies in diabetes neuropsychological and neurological functioning. These studies included various techniques of data collection like brain imaging (Garde, Mortensoen, Krabbe, Rostrup, & Larsson, 2002; Van Harten, de Leeuw, Weinstein, Scheltens, & Biessels, 2006) and neuropsychological battery (Ryan, & Becker, 1999; Ryan, Longstreet, &

Morrow, 1985; Ryan, Vega, & Drash, 1985; Ryan, Vega, Longstreet, & Drash, 1984; Sarfo, & Mate-Kole, 2014).

Causal theories for these cognitive impairments have been offered by various researchers. The first assumption explaining the cognitive deficits among DM patients may be due to brain cellular losses or deaths due to poor glucose supply (Magistretti, & Pellerin, 1996). Brain imaging techniques have supported this assumption showing graphic areas of cellular deaths among DM patients (Garde et al., 2002; Van Harten et al., 2006). This assumption is followed by the relative effect of poor glucose supply, leading to imbalances in the supply and use of neurotransmitters like acetylcholine, glutamate and Gama Acetyl Butyric Acid (Schulinkamp, Pagano, Hung, & Raffa, 2000).

Another assumption has also been associated with negative consequences to excessively normalise metabolism among patients resulting usually into symptomatic or asymptomatic hypoglycaemia especially in DM1 cases (Ack, Miller, & Weil, 1961; Ryan, & Becker, 1999; Ryan et al., 1985; Ryan et al., 1985; Ryan et al., 1984). Although hypoglycaemia is the most implicated for cognitive declines in this area, some contrary studies have also associated hyperglycaemia with negative neurological effects. This is possible by its connection with diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) and hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state [HHS]. A study by Kitabchi, Umpierrez, Murphy & Kreisberg (2006) outlined hyperglycaemic to have some uncommon neurological declines among clinical diabetic samples. This resulted in cerebral oedema, a lethal case of prolonged hyperglycaemic complications mostly occurring in 0.7–1.0% among newly diagnosed children and 72-74% of young adults in their twenties. In both cases of DKA and HHS, all the clinical manifestations of hyperglycaemia are exhibited clinically with central nervous system dysfunctions that are characterised with incidents of seizures, pupillary deviations, incontinence, bradycardia (slow heart rate) and respiratory arrest. Notwithstanding these findings, Weinger and Jacobson (1998) observed both hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemia as having negative effects on cognitive functioning of diabetics. An explanation offered to this assumption is that, the central nervous system is dependent on a specific glucose intake for its energy and survival. Thus, an acute glycaemic imbalance (hypo or hyper) may be destructive (Brands & Kessels, 2009).

The final assumption has been attributed to various chronic conditions experienced by individuals with DM, such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease (Asimakopoulou, Hampson, & Morrish, 2002; Boeka, & Lokken, 2008), depression (Chau et al., 2011; Sarfo, & Mate-Kole, 2014), longer illness duration (Gregg et al., 2000) and normal aging (Ryan, & Geckle, 2000).

The Place of Neuropsychologists in Ghana's Diabetes Care

Clinical neuropsychologists have been at the vanguard of both clinical and scientific enterprises intended at detecting the clinical manifestations and other functional difficulties related to diabetes care globally. Considering the numerous existing and forthcoming studies in improving the neuropsychological functioning among individuals with DM, there is a need to advocate for similar advancement in Ghana's health system. Aside the differences in assumptions surrounding DM's neuro-psychopathology, there is yet, a lack of agreement over the neuropsychological functions that must be tested, as well as the needed assessment tools that should be employed (Clark, & Asimakopoulou, 2005).

Notwithstanding these difficulties, several cognitive processes have been studied recently in Ghana, comparing individuals with DM2 with a healthy control group [matched on age and education]. This maiden study also confirmed that Ghanaian samples like other DM cases globally share some significant cognitive deficits. Notable areas observed included executive function, learning and memory, visuoconstructional skills, visuospatial function and overall cognitive function (Sarfo, & Mate-Kole, 2014).

The complexity of both psychological and neurological dynamics relevant to diabetes care emphasizes the essential role of the neuropsychologist. Neuropsychologists or clinical psychologists who have been trained in neuropsychology in Ghana can contribute significantly to the development of standardized diabetes assessment tools, independent methods of symptom assessment and general management (Clark, & Asimakopoulou, 2005). This will not only enhance diabetes care in Ghana but allow much room to increase the use of local instruments, thus dealing with ecological concerns related with foreign tests.

The limited number of trained and licenced neuropsychologists in Ghana has led to queries about who should fill the spaces left in Ghana's health system. To address this gap, there ought to be collaborations among the Ministry of Health, Ghana Psychological Council, Ghana Psychological Association, training institutions and other stakeholders in diabetes care. There should also be legislation and other policy reforms that will require (a) the recognition, evaluation, and regulation of neuropsychologists or trained clinical psychologists with adequate training in the neuropsychology of diabetes in Ghana; and (b) compulsory cognitive assessment and possible referrals for DM cases, which is fully absorbed into the National Health Insurance System in Ghana.

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