

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing attention is now focused on the concept of health system governance (HSG). The goal of HSG is:

- ✦ To encourage the establishment and strengthening of functionally strong platforms for the planning, organization and implementation of health care services.
- ✦ To include policy formulation, implementation and the general functioning of the health care system at national and sub-national levels.

Very few studies have explored HSG focusing on mental health system governance in low- and middle-income countries.

OBJECTIVES

Explore the mental HSG situation in Nigeria.

Identify the challenges and opportunities for strengthening the mental health system.



METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as part of the project, Emerging Mental Health Systems in Low and Middle Income Countries (Emerald). A multi-method study design was utilized to evaluate the mental HSG status of Nigeria.

Situational Context

Provided by a document review.
Aimed to provide country-specific background context.
Utilized the WHO checklist for mental health policy, plans and legislation.

Classification based on Stages Heuristic framework

Output of the situational analysis based on the stages.
The four stages are agenda setting, formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Qualitative Interviews

Conducted at national, regional and district levels.
Aimed to explore the challenges, opportunities and derivable strategies for HSG implementation in Nigeria.

FINDINGS

- ✎ Complete exclusion of mental health in key health sector documents.
- ✎ Existing challenges and opportunities within the system were identified.

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strategic direction and legislation

- ✎ Ensure the effective dissemination and implementation of the revised Mental Health Policy, into the National Health Sector Strategic Development Plan.
- ✎ Strengthen the national mental health desk officer with support from professional bodies and organizations and encourage multi-sectoral collaboration.

2. Effectiveness and responsiveness

- ✎ Ensure the roll-out of the country version of the Mental Health Gap Action Programme – Intervention Guide (MHGAP-IG).
- ✎ Incorporate greater mental health content in the curriculum and involve mental health specialists for training primary care workers.
- ✎ Lobby for a budget line for mental health at national and state levels and a periodic audit of mental health expenditure.

3. Information, accountability and transparency

- ✎ Develop and integrate mental health indicators into the health management information system (HMIS) as well as periodic monitoring of performance.
- ✎ Produce an annual report on the mental health status of the country's population.
- ✎ Ensure compliance with the MH Policy through existing civil service rules and regulations.
- ✎ Enhance SERVICOM's track record of monitoring quality of services and patient satisfaction.

4. Participation and collaboration

- ✎ Build on collaborations with ministries and government agencies such as National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), professional bodies; and other sectors.
- ✎ Involve service user groups in mental health planning and decision making, advocacy and awareness raising through training and supportive collaborations.

5. Ethics and equity

- ✎ Encourage the growth of community-based insurance schemes and increased coverage of mental health conditions.
- ✎ Engage with the community and stakeholders to promote awareness about mental illness and reduce stigma.

6. Capacity building

- ✎ Emerald activities will provide targeted interventions directed at service users and caregivers, researchers and policy makers.