“I AM NOT A WITCH”

Stigmatisation of People with Dementia in Ghana

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Stigmatisation
How can stigma be defined?

Erving Goffman (1963)

“Stigma is an attribute, behaviour, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way: it causes an individual to be mentally classified by others in an undesirable, rejected stereotype rather than in an accepted, normal one.” [Goffman 1963]

WPA; WHO (2002)

“Stigma results from a process whereby certain individuals and groups are unjustifiably rendered shameful, excluded and discriminated against.” [WPA, WHO 2002]
Stigmatisation
What else is associated with it?

"Our mother was never a witch and had never suffered any mental disorder throughout her life, apart from exhibiting signs of forgetfulness and other symptoms of old age."

[Smith 2010]
Methodology

Results

Literature Review (2014)

Quantitative Data (March 2012)

- **nursing students**
  - response rate 97.7 % (n=171)
  - sex
    - 59.6 % women
    - 40.4 % men
  - mean age 22.93 (n=166)

Qualitative Data (March 2012)

- **6 expert interviews**
  - 5 conducted in Ghana
    - Researcher (PhD - Population Studies)
    - Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare
    - HelpAge Ghana
    - Medical Director (Psychiatric Hospital)
    - Lecturer for mental health
  - 1 conducted in Germany
    - German historian

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<th>Table 1. Literature search in electronic data bases (2014)</th>
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Stigmatisation

Results – Literature

- Accusation of witchcraft
  - old woman [Aboderin 2006]
  - accusation after death of husband [ActionAid 2012]
  - missing support from relatives [Aboderin 2006]

- Life in witch-camps
  - 7 camps in northern Ghana [Badoe 2012]
  - remote locations [ActionAid 2012]
  - over 3,000 women are accused [Badoe 2012]
  - tiny thatched mud huts, limited access to food, electricity or even water [ARDAG 2012]
Stigmatisation

Results – Quantitative Data

“People neglect them due to problem associated with aging and relate it with witchcraft.”
[in answer to: Do you think old people need more attention in Ghana?]

98%
1%
1%

Figure 1. Need for more attention for older people (n=170)

“People associate signs and symptoms of dementia to witchcraft.”
[in answer to: Do you think Dementia disease need more attention in Ghana?]

95%
1%
4%

Figure 2. Need for more attention for dementia disease (n=170)
Lacking awareness about the process of aging

“We should take out of our minds, that when somebody gets old then the person is finished. I mean, is useless – you cannot do anything with that person.”
[Interviewee - MOESW 2012]

Missing knowledge about dementia

“[…] anything mentally abnormal in code is madness. That is the general definition.”
[Interviewee - HelpAge Ghana 2012]
Stigmatisation
Results – Quantitative Data

“Because old age is mostly not understood by people.”
[in answer to: Do you think old people need more attention in Ghana?]

“Because most of the Ghanaian communities or population has no knowledge in this condition and hence see’s it to be normal not knowing that it is a disease and need to be care for.”
[in answer to: Do you think Dementia disease need more attention in Ghana?]

“Because people don´t know the disease and associates it to witchcraft.”
[in answer to: Do you think Dementia disease need more attention in Ghana?]

Figure 3. Is or was dementia or Alzheimer´s Disease a topic in your education? (n=171)

- Yes: 93%
- No: 4%
- n/a: 3%

Dementia is content of nursing education
Demographical Aspects

Results – Quantitative & Qualitative Data

☐ Grandparents
  ▪ average age 80,74 (± 12,85)
    Min: 45, Max: 130
  ▪ with dementia 18% (n=78)
  ▪ average age (PwD) 84,04 (n=72)

“Now more older people living alone, because other family members migrated [...].”
[Interviewee - HelpAge Ghana 2012]

☐ Urbanisation

“People want their privacy; they do not want to go the standard family way. They want to go the nuclear family way.”
[Interviewee - Research 2012]

☐ Extended family system breaking apart

“Urbanisation

70,2 % (n=120)
35,2 % (n=56)

Figure 4. Contact with PwD
Conclusion
Trial of Ageing

(1) Inadequate ageing policy
(2) Lack of knowledge
(3) Accusation of witchcraft
(4) Exclusion from society

Growing population of old people

[VI] ARDAG

[IV] B. Holtzhausen
Conclusion
Future Perspective

- Research projects and reliable data about ageing and dementia
- Awareness and better education about the ageing process and dementia
- Specialists for people with dementia
- Nursing and medical care as well as insurance structures for the elderlies

“So it’s like, as of now, they are provided with general health care like any other age group.”
[Interviewee - MOESW 2012]
Conclusion

Future Perspective

The Witches of Gambaga

A film by Yaba Badoe

Winner Best Documentary Black International Film Festival 2010

2nd Prize Best Documentary FESPACO 2011

Salmata

Ma Hawa

Asara

[The Witches of Gambaga 2010]
Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Association of Ghana
Care and Support for Dementia

“Our vision is to create a society which is dementia friendly and dementia literate where a person with dementia can live with dignity and honour, which he/she deserves.”
Questions?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!
Literature


Kowal, P. et al. (2010): Ageing and adult health status in eight lower-income countries: the INDEPTH WHO-SAGE collaboration. In: Global Health Action, 3(2)


[VI] Don’t Worsen Their Trauma; by Alzheimer’s Ghana (2012)
