

Global Congress on **NEUROSCIENCE, PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL DISORDER**

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The power of sharing our mental health lived experiences as a resource to fighting the mental health stigma**Rebecca Cherop***The Semicolon Nation, Uganda*

Statement of the problem: Stigma and discrimination against people living with mental health problems are a global public health issue and can have substantial negative impacts on all aspects of a person's life. Practices and outcomes of stigma differ across cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and meaningful comparison across cultural settings may not be achievable with cross-cultural measures. In Africa, people with mental illness experience poorer physical health and early mortality due to the stigma and discrimination. It is sad that half of people with mental illness don't receive help for their disorders. This is because stigma, prejudice and discrimination against people with mental illness are still very much a problem. Lived experience involvement increases social confidence and boosts self-esteem to both patients and those that have recovered. It focuses on identifying people who have recovered from mental illness to give perspective, educate communities about mental health using their own experiences as a tool to fight stigma and discrimination.

Conclusion and significance: Including people with lived experience in fighting mental health stigma can enhance the experience of not only people suffering from mental health issues but also researchers, clinicians and all people involved. There is a need to focus on identifying survivors and people who are willing to share their mental health experiences to give perspective and as a result fight the stigma associated with mental health. Recommendations need to be made to have more people speak out about their mental health experiences because majority still do not prefer sharing due to continued stigma and discrimination.

Biography

Rebecca A. Cherop is a researcher, mental health advocate, inspirational speaker and author. Her personal experience of undergoing mental disorders (depression & Anxiety) as a result of loss of parents, child abuse and neglect during her formative years. She is the founder of The Semicolon Nation a Non-governmental organization that focuses on inspiring and empowering the youth on mental health, help fight stigma to the affected and also advocating for the safeguarding of Mental Health of every person. She is passionate about causing positive change in every community and transforming lives through her story.