

Exploring the Role of Mental Healthcare Practitioners in Family Caregiving: A Qualitative Enquiry in Eastern Cape, South Africa

Lwazi Tilolo

North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Hlengiwe Gwebu

North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Abstract

Background: Mental healthcare practitioners are tasked with the responsibility of imparting knowledge and skills to family caregivers for effective care of individuals with mental illness. The absence of clear and implementable guidelines hinders the integration of family-focused approaches into mental health services and perpetuates a cycle of caregiver burnout, user relapse, and service inefficiency.

Research Objectives: To explore and understand the role of mental healthcare practitioners (MHCPs) in family caregiving (FCG). Explore current practices used by mental healthcare practitioners to support family caregivers. To develop evidence-informed guidelines that can be used by mental healthcare practitioners to improve caregiving outcomes in community based mental healthcare.

Methods: The proposed study will adopt a qualitative research method that is exploratory and contextual in nature. Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with professional nurses employed in wards or units responsible for discharging or granting leave of absence to mental healthcare users (MHCUs), who are subsequently cared for by family caregivers. A purposive sampling approach will ensure diverse perspectives. Data will be analyzed using the Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. All professional nurses from a Tertiary mental health institution in the Eastern Cape will be part of the study. The sample size will be determined by data saturation, which can take place within a range of 10-15 participants.

Expected Outcomes: The ability of mental health practitioners to capacitate family caregivers well is thus strengthened. Evidence informed guidelines to be developed.

Keywords

Mental healthcare practitioner, Family caregiver, Explore.