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Examining Associations between Mental Health and Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (C-NCDs) among Older Adults in Wakiso, Uganda

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Background: Globally, the prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases (C-NCDs) and occurrence of multi-morbidity specifically, has been increasing and will continue to rise as life expectancy increases. The burden of mental health disorders has also been rising globally. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), literature on these health issues, which are interrelated, is scarce. This study assesses the prevalence of C-NCDs, and depressive and anxiety symptomology and examines the relationship between these issues among a sample of older adults in Uganda.

Methods: Between 2021- 2022, 604 consenting adults aged 35 years and older were surveyed on a broad range of health issues for the ongoing AMBSO Population Health Surveillance (APHS) cohort study in Wakiso district. Descriptive analyses were performed to characterize the burden of C-NCDs (e.g. diabetes, hypertension), depression (PHQ-9 using a cutoff of <5 scores for minimal/no and 5+ for mild to severe symptomology) and anxiety (GAD-7 using a cutoff of 5+ scores for mild to severe symptomology). Bivariate analysis

and multivariable logistic regression models were built using STATA software version 16.0 to examine associations between mental health disorders and having at least one C-NCD. Our exposures of interest were depressive and anxiety symptoms and our outcomes of interest was presence of C-NCDs.

Conclusion: C-NCDs were prevalent in older adults, particularly among those experiencing mental health symptoms. Screening for C-NCDs and mental health disorders should be integrated into routine health care for older adults in the country. Early screening and identification of these health issues through primary health care could significantly reduce the public health burden attributable to mental health disorders and the incidence of multi-morbidity in Uganda.

Biography

Robert M. Bulamba is affiliated with AMBSO and Uro Care Limited in Wakiso and Hoima, Uganda. His work focuses on mental health and chronic non-communicable diseases among older adults. He contributes to research through conceptualization, data curation, and manuscript review, aiming to inform health interventions in Uganda.