

## Mental Health Status of Visually Impaired Patients in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, South-Western Nigeria

Susannah Temitope Adepoju<sup>1</sup>; Joshua Owoeye<sup>2</sup>,  
Yinka Ologunsua<sup>1</sup> and Olukayode Abayomi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Ophthalmology, LAUTECH Teaching Hospital, Ogbomoso, Oyo State.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Ophthalmology, University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin, Kwara State.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Mental Health, LAUTECH Teaching Hospital, Ogbomoso, Oyo State.

**Corresponding author:** Adepoju S. T.,  
Email: susanade2013@gmail.com;  
Tel: +2348062178117

**Introduction:** Loss of vision may have negative psychosocial consequences that affect everyday life. Poor mental health may potentially affect an individual's capacity to take care of his general health<sup>1</sup>, including his eyes. Therefore, poor mental health and visual impairment may form a vicious cycle. The aim of this study was to assess the mental health status of patients presenting with visual impairment to tertiary eye clinic in Ogbomoso, South-Western Nigeria.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study carried out at the Ophthalmology Department of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Teaching Hospital, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, South -Western Nigeria. Study participants were individuals with visual impairment (defined as best corrected visual acuity 6/9 or worse in one eye or both eyes) seen in the out-patients' eye clinics of the hospital during the study period.

Eligible patients had their visual acuity checked by an ophthalmic nurse upon presentation at the general ophthalmology clinic and those with unaided distant visual acuity of 6/9 or less in one or both eyes had undergone refraction. Subsequently, those with best corrected distant visual acuity of 6/9 or less in one or both eyes

had their names listed on each clinic day and systematic random sampling was then carried out. Questionnaires were administered to obtain information on socio-demographic characteristics and mental health. Test for association was done using Chi-square. Participants with a total score greater than or equal to 4 in the 28-items of the Mental Health General Health Questionnaire were considered to have some form of mental ill-health.

**Results:** Two hundred and fifty subjects were studied, of which 126 (50.4%) had mental ill-health. Older age ( $p=0.001$ ), illiteracy ( $p=0.020$ ), low income occupations i.e. artisans and farmers ( $p=0.001$ ), shorter duration of visual impairment ( $p=0.001$ ) and sudden visual impairment ( $p=0.001$ ) were associated with a higher risk of mental ill-health among study subjects. Those who lost their vision less than two years prior to the time of the study had higher risk of mental health morbidity. Those with sudden loss of vision were 3.48 times more likely to have mental health morbidity compared with those with progressive loss of vision.

**Conclusion:** Prevalence of mental ill-health among people with visual impairment is high (50%), similar to findings in other studies<sup>2, 4, 5</sup>. Associated factors included level of education, occupation and duration of visual impairment. Various studies found different factors associated with the mental health of subjects with some overlapping factors<sup>2, 3, 5, 6</sup>. Predictors of good mental health included younger age group, higher level of education, being employed, longer duration of loss of vision and progressive pattern of visual impairment. Ophthalmologists should pay attention to the mental health status of visually impaired patients, especially those with the factors associated with poor mental health; and those found to have symptoms suggestive of mental ill-health should be referred promptly and appropriately.

## References

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**Table 1:** Factors associated with the mental health status of subjects

Variables	Mental health Present	morbidity Absent	Chi-square/Odds ratio	p-value
<b>Age groups</b>				
<20 years	16(28.6)	40(71.4)	$\chi^2 = 14.713$	*0.001
21-54 years	55(60.4)	36(39.6)		
55 years and above	55(53.4)	48(46.6)		
<b>Level of education</b>				
No formal education	35(60.3)	23(39.7)	$\chi^2 = 11.479$	*0.020
Completed primary	25(52.1)	23(47.9)		
Completed JSS	10(28.6)	25(71.4)		
Completed SSS	24(44.4)	30(55.6)		
Completed Tertiary	32(59.3)	22(40.7)		
<b>Occupation</b>				
Civil servant	18(50.0)	18(50.0)	$\chi^2 = 32.308$	* 0.001
Professional	2(33.3)	6(66.7)		
Artisan	34(81.0)	8(19.0)		
Student	21(28.8)	52(71.2)		
Trader	20(45.5)	24(54.5)		
Farmer	10(62.5)	6(37.5)		
<b>Duration of visual loss</b>				
<2 years	43(76.8)	13(23.2)	$\chi^2 = 49.184$	* <0.001
2 – 5 years	51(58.6)	26(41.4)		
> 5 years	32(27.4)	85(72.6)		
<b>Pattern of visual loss</b>				
Sudden	27(75.0)	9(25.0)	Odds Ratio = 3.48	*0.01
Progressive	99(46.3)	115(53.7)	95% C.I. 1.56 – 7.76	

95% C.I. = 95% Confidence interval

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