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### **Letter to the Editorial Office**

#### **Employing Psychologist Assistants in Ghana: A Needful Cry**

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#### ***Novelty:***

This letter argues for the employment of psychologist assistants in Ghana. Also, it illuminates the benefits Ghana will gain by recruiting psychologist assistants.

#### **Abstract**

Psychologist assistants in Ghana are graduates with bachelor's degrees in psychology who have been registered by the Ghana Psychological Council. They work under professional psychologists to deliver psychological services and are effective in providing basic psychological first aid in many work settings. Though a common practice in countries like the United Kingdom and United States of America to recruit psychologist assistants, not much has been done in Ghana. By recruiting psychologist assistants, it will provide them the opportunity support licensed psychologists in fields such as education, health, business, security and sports. Thereby, providing a source of employment. In addition, this effort will serve as a means to gain relevant work experience for postgraduate training in psychology. This will decrease the unemployment rate of graduates with psychology and advance the discipline of psychology in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Employment, Ghana Psychological Council, Ghana, Letter, Psychologist Assistants.

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### **Dear JARE Editors,**

Psychology as a field is becoming a popular area of study in Ghana. With the increasing number of graduates in Ghana, it is common to identify a person with a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Education in psychology. Yet, most of these graduates end up being employed in jobs that are not related to psychology or are unemployed at all. Though employment issues haven't been dealt so well regarding the general profession of psychology in Ghana (Dziwornu et al., 2016), the scope of psychologist assistants (PAs) cannot be ignored also.

To become a PA in Ghana, one must have a bachelor's degree in psychology and be registered with the Ghana Psychological Council (GPC). This provision is supported by The Health Professionals Act, 2013, (Act 587 of 2013) (GPC, 2018). Holders of bachelor's degree in psychology at the undergraduate level read foundational courses in clinical, cognitive, community, counselling, developmental, educational, industrial and social psychology. With, the knowledge acquired in the aforementioned areas, PAs are very useful in many organisations under a licensed psychologist (Monsen, et al., 2009).

In developed countries, PAs are very useful in many fields. In the case of Ireland and United Kingdom (UK), PAs worked in mental health, intellectual disability, forensic, educational, counselling, organisational and neurological sectors. In both countries, most PAs worked in mental health sectors (Hughes et al., 2015). Additionally, employing PAs according to Monsen, et al. (2009) "prepared them well for applying for professional training courses" (p. 369). Fundamentally, majority of PAs in Ireland and UK chose to work in their sectors because they wanted to gain experience to continue professional graduate education. Additionally, employment opportunities for PAs will offer them opportunities for financial gains (Hughes et al., 2015).

Approximately, 650,000 and 2,166,000 of the 21.6 million people living in Ghana are suffering from a severe mental disorder and a moderate to mild mental disorder respectively. This ratio leaves a treatment gap of 98 % of the total population who are likely to have a mental disorder (World Health Organization, 2018). As Ghana cries about mental health problems in the country, employing PAs will be an innovation to bridge this treatment and psychological support gap.

To conclude, Ghana stands to gain by employing PAs in various sectors. Ghana will benefit through the employment of PAs as more future psychologists will be groomed through this means. Though mental issues and psychological care remain challenging, this will be a step in the right direction to bridge a high treatment gap. Furthermore, formal recruitment of PAs will aid development of psychology as a discipline and profession. Thus, graduates of psychology will be useful in the society and this will enhance access to psychological care.

### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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