

Exploring the Psychotherapy Experiences of Black African Men in Tshwane Region, Gauteng Province, South Africa.

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Black African men in South Africa are predisposed to mental health struggles due to the intersectionality, including but not limited to unemployment, financial expectations from family, societal pressure to fulfil traditional provider roles, exposure to violence, poverty, etc. Yet they remain underrepresented in psychotherapy in South Africa. Using an exploratory qualitative design, this study explored black African men's experiences with psychotherapy. This focused on cultural influences, barriers, motivating factors, and insights for other black African men. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with eight participants, and the data were analysed thematically. Findings showed that cultural expectations of masculinity often discouraged emotional openness, which usually led to the suppression of emotions before seeking professional help. Barriers to help-seeking included limited mental health literacy, scepticism, personal readiness, structural access challenges, and reliance on informal support, though some participants reported few to no obstacles. Factors influencing help-seeking were worsening psychological distress, social encouragement, awareness of psychotherapy, personal growth, and professional motivations. Participants generally experienced psychotherapy as a safe, non-judgmental space that supported self-reflection, insight, and emotional growth, with cultural and identity dynamics shaping psychotherapy engagement. Insights for other black African men highlighted the importance of openness, awareness, challenging misconceptions about psychotherapy and professional help-seeking, and promoting access to mental health services. These findings underscore the need for culturally responsive, accessible psychotherapy that addresses the unique experiences and needs of black African men.

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