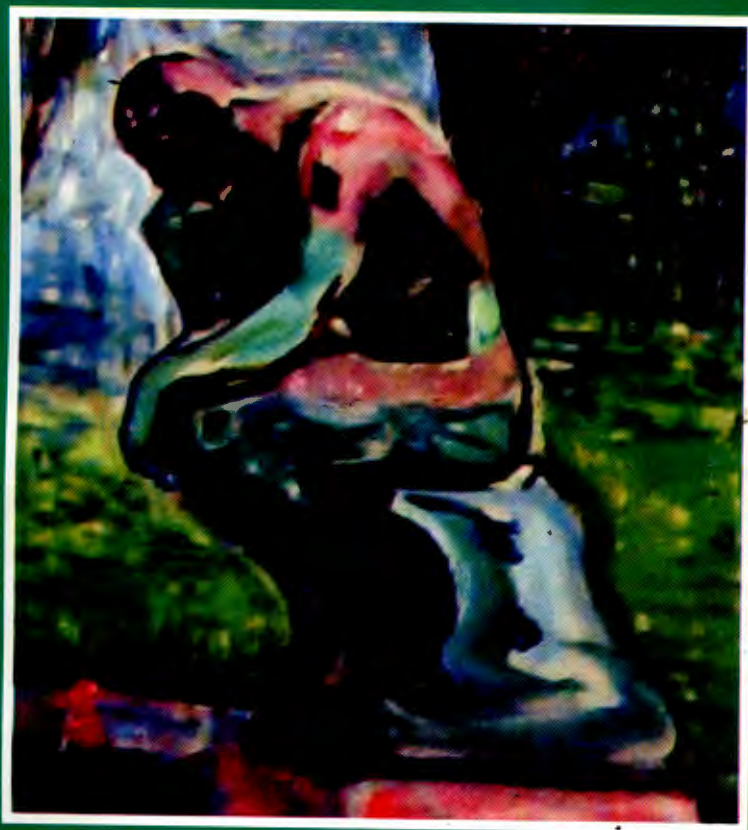


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CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION AND THEME OF LOSS IN A TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

By

Gboyega E. Abikoye & Muyiwa A. Sholarin

Abstract

Globalization has contributed immensely to the modern society in many respects, especially in technological, economic and industrial development; and is without doubt, desirable. The negative effects it has on culture and society, however, need to be considered. In today's globalized world, cities are becoming clones of each other, and people are converging into fake stereotypes with so many countries and people losing their identity. Gone are the unique cities that carry so much history and culture in every corner; lost are the enriching cultural differences and specificities that make a society uniquely what it is; Abuja is striving to look like Paris which looks like Madrid; beautiful traditional clothing is lost between the new bulk-made looks created by the big brands; people look alike, eat alike and dress alike whether they're in New York, New Delhi, Abuja or Cairo. Implicit in all these is a deep-rooted sense of loss of identity: the uniqueness in us; that which makes us special and allows us to stand out from the crowd. Because globalization exerts particularly pervasive effects on the peoples and cultures of developing world and given the pitiable socioeconomic indicators of these societies, themes of loss resulting

from globalization are more pronounced and portend serious psychopathological implications for peoples of such societies. In conclusion, cultural exchange is good and should be valued dearly, but should not be taken to mean a wholesale jettisoning of our unique cultures to adopt a unified, fake, money-driven one.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization refers to the increasing unification of the world's economic order through reduction of such barriers to international trade as tariffs, export fees, and import quotas. The goal is to increase material wealth, goods, and services through an international division of labor by efficiencies catalyzed by international relations, specialization and competition. It describes the process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through communication, transportation, and trade. The term is most closely associated with the term economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology, and military presence (Bhagwati, 2004). However, globalization is usually recognized as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural, political, and biological factors (Croucher, 2004). The term can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation (Conversi, 2009).

The process of globalization has effects on human well-being (including health and personal safety), on the environment, on culture (including ideas, religion, and political systems), and on economic development and prosperity of societies across the world (Globalization101.org; 2011). Most studies of globalization tend to focus on changes occurring in the economic and political spheres. The details of those issues, such as tariff rates and international agreements, have fallen within the traditional province of government bureaucrats and political leaders. However, the dramatic changes wrought by globalization have forced policymakers to respond to public pressures in many new areas. Observers of globalization are increasingly recognizing that globalization is having a significant

impact on matters such as local cultures, matters which are less tangible and hard to quantify, but often fraught with intense emotion and controversy.

Culture is regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. Culture encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture can also be understood as communication, in the sense that all the involving features stated before are trespassed inside the social groups through both direct and subtler ways of communication. In a broader sense, culture enriches communication itself. Culture is the reason some levels of close communication between social groups can be reached.

Generally speaking, issues surrounding culture and globalization have received less attention than the debates, which have arisen over globalization and the environment, economy, or labour issues. This is partly because cultural issues are more subtle and sensitive, and often more confusing.

CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION: THE GAINS

Increase in information flows between geographically remote locations. Arguably this is one of the biggest gains of globalization. Technological advances that came with the advent of cultural globalization has turned the world into a global village through fibre optic communications, satellites, and increased availability of telephone and internet.

Cultural globalization has facilitated communication among different peoples of the world. The most popular second language is undoubtedly English, the *lingua franca* of globalization: about 35% of the world's mail, telexes, and cables are in English; approximately 40% of the world's radio programs are in English; English is the dominant language on the internet (Colls, 2009). Cultural globalization and the adoption of the English language as the *lingua franca* by most countries of the world has broken down the hitherto strong language barriers and makes it possible for people to communicate more freely and conveniently.

Growth of cross-cultural contacts: Cultural globalization has also led to the growth of cross-cultural contacts, leading to new categories of consciousness and identities which embodies cultural diffusion, the desire to increase one's standard of living and enjoy foreign products and ideas, adopt new technology and practices, and participate in a "world culture".

Promotion of peace and understanding between / among peoples of the world. The process of globalization has broken many interracial and interpersonal barriers, thereby reducing prejudices, racial discrimination, hatred, and other phenomena capable of segregating people. Globalization has also brought up such global and regional bodies as World Health Organization (WHO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), African Union AU), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), among many others. At different times in the past and even presently, these bodies have intervened to avert crises, wars, epidemics, and other potentially catastrophic occurrences.

Greater international travel, tourism and immigration: WHO estimates that up to 500,000 people are on planes at any one time (Guardian, 2009). In 2008, there were over 922 million international tourist arrivals, with a growth of 1.9% as compared to 2007 (World Tourism Organization, 2009). The world bank recently reported that remittance flows to developing countries reached \$328 billion in 2008.

Development of a Global Information System, and greater trans-border data flow: Using such technologies as the Internet, communication satellites, submarine fiber optic cable, and wireless telephones, Cultural globalization has led to the development of a global information system, and greater trans-border data flow which increased the number of standards applied globally (e.g., copyright laws, patents and world trade agreements). Cultural globalization has also affected Legal/Ethical norms such as the creation of the

international criminal court and international justice movements, crime importation and raising awareness of global crime-fighting efforts and cooperation, the emergence of Global administrative law.

Capacity Building: Through cultural globalization, there has been increased capacity building and international integration, especially with the development of the system of non-governmental organizations as main agents of global public policy, including humanitarian aid and developmental efforts. In addition, cultural globalization has led to the spread and increased interrelations of various religious groups, ideas, and practices and better understandings of the meanings and values of particular spaces. Spread of local consumer products (e.g., food) to other countries (often adapted to their culture).

THEMES OF LOSS IN A CULTURALLY GLOBALIZED SOCIETY: THE NIGERIAN EXAMPLE

Language: Language is both a product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty (Onwubiko, 2011). Language among members of the human race is also a phonetic symbol of the expression of communication thought and feelings even as scholars opine that all groups of human beings have a well-ordered language. In fact, no tribe, ethnic group or race has ever been found without a language (Onwubiko, 2011). Language is closely related to thinking and behaviour, and a person can only think and behave according to his or her language repertoire. The advent of cultural globalization has, no doubt taken a heavy toll on the languages of different peoples in Nigeria. Children in many families are taught to speak in English language to the peril of their mother languages. Thus, we now have Nigerians, born and raised in Nigeria, who either do not understand or cannot speak their mother languages.

The danger that the influence of cultural globalization portends is not limited to the possibility of language extinction of the original languages of the people. Perhaps, more devastating is the effect of the globalized language on the psyche of the people. For instance, the norms of etiquette that are usually embedded in the

traditional languages (especially Yoruba) are now becoming things of the past. Thus, "you" in English may refer to another person (irrespective of age) or two or more persons. In the Yoruba language, the phrase used in referring to a younger person than oneself is different from one used when referring to an older person. Similarly, different phrases are used when referring to one person and when referring to more than one person. Things that were considered as taboos and sacrilegious in the traditional African systems are now garbed in stylistic phrases and considered less reprehensible, especially by the youths.

An example that readily comes to mind is the Advance Fee Fraud (stylistically dubbed *yahoo-yahoo* by most youths). Any fraudulent act or semblance of same is known in Yoruba as *jibiti* and practitioners of such acts are usually ostracised. But youths of today gleefully proclaim themselves as *yahoo-yahoo boys* without much public condemnation. In fact, many sympathize with yahoo-yahoo boys while some justify their actions in various ways. Because the globalized language for these fraudulent behaviours does not carry culturally-relevant negative connotations, people do not readily adjudge the behaviour appropriately. If you call a Yoruba man *onijibiti* (a fraudster), he is likely to be very mad at you; whereas if you call him a *yahoo-yahoo man* (a fraudster) he would not be as offended. A popular musician dedicated an entire bestselling album (*yahooze*) to *yahoo-yahoo* and extolled the practice to the highest level. The cultural erosion is so profound that a sitting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria invited the *yahooze* crooner to sing the *yahooze* lyrics at the presidential hosting of a victorious national football team! If the song were translated to the local language, it is doubtful if the singer would sell a dozen copies.

Daily Champion Newspaper of March 11, 2011 reports that February 21 of every year has been declared as "Mother Tongue Day" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote and help save dying languages. The declaration by the UNESCO is necessitated by various empirical reports available to it to the effect that half of the world's 6000 to 7000 languages are in danger of extinction. The world Mother Tongue Day is to remind people across the world of the dangers in abandoning their mother tongues. According to UNESCO's Goodwill

Ambassador for Languages and former president of Iceland, Vigdis Finbogadottir, "everybody loses if one language is lost because then, a nation and culture lose their memory, and so does the complex tapestry from which the world is woven and which makes the world an exciting place".

Loss of Identity: It has been argued that cultural globalization, especially through pop culture, is perpetrating a kind of cultural genocide on the world—that the largest, most dominant cultures are becoming larger and more dominant at the expense of many others. In this view, globalization is in fact another word for Americanization. However, others argue that globalization offers the potential to enrich the world culturally. To these people, the notion that the opportunities for cultural exchange brought about by globalization can help promote tolerance and diversity is very attractive. Their vision is the multi-cultural "global village," where ideas and practices can be freely exchanged and appreciated. The potential enlightenment of the global village can be contrasted with the way people tended to view other nations and cultures ages ago. Irreversible social and cultural change in individual and cultural identity, which are often the aftermaths of cultural globalization, can result in acute experiences of emotional loss.

According to Marris (1996), experiences of loss of identity fundamentally disrupt the ability to find meaning, and can be evoked by any situation where the ability to make sense of life is severely disrupted. The resulting psychological processes are therefore extremely similar to the processes experienced in reaction to the loss experienced in personal bereavement. Attachment is essential to a sense of emotional security for all human beings, and therefore any loss which robs someone of an attachment profoundly disrupts their ability to experience life in the same meaningful way as before. This occurs no matter how "rational" or "beneficial" change may seem to another person who does not have the same intensity of attachment. The process of grieving in reaction to the loss of something to which a person has been intensely attached can be seen in all cultures (Murray-Parkes, 1998), and can be a reaction to change in any area of someone's life, not only in response to death. The severity of grief is

directly dependent upon the person's intensity of emotional attachment to what has been lost, not the actual object of attachment.

Loss of Bonding: In the 18th century, Adam Smith, the father of economic theory, noted the detachment of emotion caused by distance. Africans are communal people by nature and in the past, such social bonding ensured that our forefathers shared their pains, gave and received maximum social support and intimacy. The advent of globalization has, however, put paid to that. These days we seem so absorbed with the busy-ness of the demands of our daily lives that we cannot seem to take time to meet with friends even though we 'lol' their statuses on Face book all the time. These days, it is considered more expedient to Skype for five minutes than paying our loved ones a visit. Our mutually busy schedules and the erosion of the sense of communality has led to a situation where people would rather exchange brisk text message to confirm that they are still alive and doing well rather than paying visits. Many times, even when with family members and loved ones, we were busy chatting and listening to voices of other friends; 'friends' whom we have not met in the flesh but have been joined to us by Face book or other social networking media. An angry wife recently collected and smashed the phone of her husband into pieces because the man was always receiving lengthy calls at unholy hours, denying the wife the necessary attention. The way we are going, a time will probably come when fathers will send emails to their sons in the next room and the only place we will ever be families or a proper community is by being 'friends' on Face-book, LinkedIn, Netlog, and other internet social networking media. A time might even come when mothers would communicate with foetuses by email. How many times do those of us in the cities go to our neighbours' houses and ask after their health like our grandparents did in African villages? Some of us don't even know who lives on the other side of the fence. Our fences are high and when we really need people to play with, we turn on the TV or the internet. The fact is that Nigerians are no longer communal beings who gather in village squares and drink palm-wine and ask after the children of their neighbours but are, rather, tending towards individualistic self-centeredness, a pale shadow of authentic African culture.

Loss of Privacy and Increased Criminality: Among other factors,

cultural globalization has created threats not only to the privacy and security of individuals but also to the security of entire nations. Computers and modems can be used (or misused) in terrorism and warfare to cripple the infrastructure of a society and tamper with military information and communication operations. Cultural globalisation has, thus, contributed to the incidence of crimes, violence and terrorism in a transitional society like Nigeria. Cases of bombing, suicide bombing, gun running, and widespread violence are now occurring in Nigeria at alarming rates. While it is true that there are other contributing factors to the problem of violence and terrorism in Nigeria, the fact is that the local criminals and terrorists derive the impetus for their activities from the events and organizations outside the country. It has been widely reported in the news media, for instance, that the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria has important links with the dreaded Al Qaeda Terror networks. It was also widely reported that the Niger Delta militants had sponsors outside the country. In other words, perpetrators of criminal activities can now, more than ever before, obtain their weapons more readily and learn more sophisticated modes of carrying out their operations without necessarily leaving their rooms. Enhanced communication (telephones and the internet, especially) has facilitated co-ordination of activities, removing many logistic problems which could, hitherto, have hindered the operations of gangs and other criminal groups.

Loss of Values: Good as it is, the advent of globalization has taken a huge toll on the African values and virtues. Because globalization has reduced face-to-face interactions among people, it is now more convenient for people to tell lies through telephones, internet, and other electronic media. The imported culture is more permissive than the traditional African culture and people have taken advantage of this to commit crimes. Although there were criminals before the advent of cultural globalization, the rate of criminal activities have risen to an unprecedented high level, coupled with the seeming impunity with which people commit criminal acts these days. In the past, people left their valuables in the open and returned several days later to find them intact. Then, people were kept in check by the fear of attack and repercussion by such African gods as 'sango', 'ogun', 'ayelela', etc. But because people feel that the modern

imported religions do not carry such dreadful potentials, they commit all sorts of atrocities.

Alienation and Deskilling: As technology continues to play an important role in the workplace, and as transitional societies continue to import the globalised culture, wholesale, workers may feel there is no creativity in what they do (they feel alienated). The movement from mechanisation to automation to cybernation increasingly removes individuals from the production process, often relegating them to flipping a switch, staring at a computer monitor, or entering data into a system. Not only are these activities routine, boring and meaningless, they promote deskilling, that is, "when labour requires less thought than previously required, giving workers fewer decisions to make" (Perrolle, 1990). Deskilling stifles development of alternative skills and limits opportunities for advancement and creativity as old skill sets becomes obsolete. Furthermore, since workers spend most of their waking hours at work, feeling of unhappiness (occasioned by alienation and deskilling) can significantly compromise workers psychological well-being.

Economic Exploitation and Inequality: Income inequality, both between and within nations, is increasing as a result of the process of globalization. Wade (2001) found that, in 7 out of 8 metrics, income inequality has increased significantly in the last 30 years. Also, "incomes in the lower deciles of world income distribution have probably fallen absolutely since the 1980s". The article was skeptical of the World Bank's claim that the number of people living on less than \$1 a day has held steady at 1.2 billion from 1987 to 1998, because of biased methodology (Wade, 2001). A chart that gave the inequality a very visible and comprehensible form, the so-called 'champagne glass' effect (Gorostiaga, 1995) was contained in the 1992 United Nations Development Program Report, which showed the distribution of global income to be very uneven, with the richest 20% of the world's population controlling 82.7% of the world's income (United Nations Development Programme: UNDP, 1992).

Economic arguments by fair trade theorists claim that unrestricted free trade benefits those with more financial leverage (i.e. the rich) at the expense of the poor. A 2005 UNESCO report

showed that cultural exchange is becoming more frequent and that Western countries are still the main exporters of cultural goods. So, in a sense, cultural globalization is a lop-sided phenomenon which has further impoverished and enslaved the poor countries of the world (including Nigeria) rather than helping them in solving their socioeconomic problems. Cultural globalization has also brought along with it the "winner-takes-all" syndrome in virtually every facet of life. Apart from the widening socioeconomic gaps among the rich countries of the world and their poor counterparts, further exacerbated by globalization, similar gulf in socioeconomic milieu can be observed among the people of different countries. More than ever before, the rich are getting richer (because they occupy a vantage position from which they manipulate technology, corporate organizations and other aspects of cultural globalization to their advantage) while the poor are getting poorer (partly because they do not have as much access to the various tools with which they can manipulate cultural globalization to their advantage).

PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Globalisation means crossing borders. All of the social and economic forces driving globalisation relate to the opening or dismantling of borders: instant communication, easy travel, deregulation of commerce and widened access to information and technology. The internet is often hailed as a good example of globalisation, as it allows people in far-flung corners of the planet to communicate rapidly with each other regardless of their geographical location. Other examples include the establishment of supranational political bodies, enhanced cross-border cultural interaction and globalized approaches to environmental issues.

The altering patterns of culture as a consequence of globalisation and media homogenisation have been illustrated by Becker, Burwell & Gilmal (2002), who found that rates of eating disorders in Fiji went up as a result of the introduction of television. Mahadevia (2002) highlights an important factor relating to urbanisation by suggesting that the loss of public space to private owners contributes to urban stress. The links between languages and the boundaries of humanity have shaped the ideas of literature, the

cultures of scholarship and civilisation itself. The growing 'Anglicisation' of the world is obvious. Kelly (2003) notes that it is possible that such cultural globalisation may be causing cultures to become more fundamentalist and restrictive, which might contribute further to stress and psychological morbidity.

Globalisation affects the pattern of occurrence of mental illness and, through migration, has had a significant effect on the epidemiology of psychopathology. Migration is known to have significant effects on health, with migrants showing higher rates of both physical (Gleize, Laudon, & Sun 2000) and mental illness (Gavin, Kelly & Lane, 2001). Studies have shown that Irish, Caribbean and Pakistani immigrants in the United Kingdom have significantly higher rates of suicidal thoughts and deliberate self-harm than individuals born in the country (Nazroo, 1997). Egyptian and Asian immigrants in the UK have increased rates of bulimia and anorexia nervosa (Bhugra & Jones, 2001). Schizophrenia is six times more common in African-Caribbeans living in the UK than in the native population (Harrison, 1990) and four times more common among migrants to The Netherlands (Selte, Sleats & Khan, 1997). The increased diversity of mental health service users presents an urgent challenge to service providers in many countries of the world (Kelly, 2003). People from different ethnic backgrounds often have different views about mental health and are accustomed to substantially different models of care. This can result in a damaging mismatch between the needs of patients and the services provided.

The more culturally globalized the world becomes, the higher the incidence of psychopathology appears to be. The culturally globalized Nigeria of today is characterized by an unprecedented increase in the following social ills, among others: Violence: (eg. the Jos crisis, the boko haram debacle, Niger-Delta unrests); Corruption and bad governance; Fraudulent activities; Election rigging; Fake religious practices; Oppression; Aggrandizement and ostentatious lifestyles; Callousness, insensitivity and outright wickedness; and Poverty.

The upward surge in these social ills implies that there would also be increase in the incidence of psychopathology. Indeed, this has been reported to be the case. The Sun Newspaper of Tuesday, August 09, 2011 reported the disclosure by the Chief Medical Director

(CMD) of the Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta, Dr. Adegboyega Ogunlesi, over the frighteningly increasing number of Nigerians with psychiatric problems.

The 2008 figure of World Federation of Mental Health (WFMH) had earlier reported that mental disorders affect nearly 12 percent of the world's population. According to the Federation, about 450 million or one out of every four persons around the world is likely to experience a mental illness that would require diagnosis and treatment.

Nigeria has a severe shortage of clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, medical sociologists and social workers and other mental health professionals. Available records show that Nigeria has 130 psychiatrists, four neuro-psychiatric nurses and eight neuro-psychiatric hospitals that attend to 140 million Nigerians. The ratio of psychiatrist to patients stands at 1:1 million patients as against 1:25 patients in the western world. Ironically, of the 506 African psychiatrists in the United Kingdom, 214 are Nigerians.

There is no doubt that stressful socio-economic conditions in the country can, indeed, induce mental illness in the citizenry. The bad governance experienced at virtually all levels of government in the country can easily dispose people to depression and other psychiatric cases. Experts link the onset of mental disorders to poverty, violence, social exclusion and constant insecurity. All these social vices abound in Nigeria.

The combination of poor social ties and large, unpredictable events evokes the concept of 'anomie'. This term was famously used by Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, to describe a state in which norms are confused, unclear or absent, and where there are large-scale social changes that the individual cannot understand, let alone control (Durkheim, 1947). Anomie is traditionally related to suicide, but the concept has also been suggested as one of a range of factors that might help to explain the increased incidence of psychopathology in progressively globalized groups. The concept of anomie has renewed importance in an era of globalisation. Changes in society are increasingly occurring on a global level and the magnitude of such change is greater than ever before. International political bodies are introducing directives and legislation over which many individuals

feel they have little or no control. The threat of international terrorism is greater than ever and many individuals feel that they cannot effectively defend themselves or their families. Increasingly, the world of the individual is shaped by global events that appear to lie beyond the individual's control.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no disputing the fact that globalisation in its various ramifications have revolutionise humans' personal, social, economic, political and other lives. However, cultural globalisation is, to many a cause of anguish and stress. This has serious psychopathological implications, suggesting crucial roles for psychologists and other social scientists in mitigating the deleterious impacts of cultural globalisation on individuals and societies.

Apart from providing medical care to all mental illness patients, government should provide social safety-nets to cushion the effects of the prevailing harsh economic realities in the country. The aged and the unemployed should be given social security allowances. While it is necessary to deploy more resources to mental health research, there is the need to make the field of mental health attractive to young Nigerians. Individuals manifesting "milder" forms of mental disorders such as anxiety, depression and phobia, amongst others, should be encouraged to seek prompt medical attention, and there should be an up-to-date, valid, and periodically reviewed database on psychopathology in Nigeria.

Rebuilding social capital is a key stage in reducing feelings of anomie. This is important for society in general, but has added urgency in relation to mental illness. The reduction of the stigma of mental illness is a particularly important step and is best accomplished through a multi-disciplinary approach over a sustained period. Community treatment programmes and social skills courses have critical roles to play in reducing stigma, increasing community reintegration and rebuilding social capital. This process would be advanced by a strong return to the principles of biopsychosocial model of psychopathology, which takes a systematic, multi-dimensional approach to treating mental illness (Gabbard & Kay, 2001).

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