



April 12, 2023

# PROFESSOR MUTEPFA RECEIVES MENTAL HEALTH BEST RESEARCHER AWARD

University of Botswana Faculty of Social Sciences, Psychology Lecturer Professor Magen Mutepfa recently received Mental Health Best Researcher Award at National Research Excellence Awards 2023, hosted by the Ministry of Communication, Knowledge and Technology (MCKT) at Gaborone International Convention Centre (GICC).

Professor Mutepfa was honoured as the ultimate winner in the mental Health category in recognition of her research work titled: Influences on mental health and Mental Health disorders on Older People in Botswana (60 years +). The aim of the awards was to recognise and reward research excellence towards sustainable research for a knowledge-based economy and to raise profile of research conducted in Botswana.

Speaking during the interview, she said her study has shown that mental health disorders are a growing concern among older people in Botswana. She further highlighted that mental health encompasses an individual's state of psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing, which includes positive aspects such as resilience, social engagement, and life satisfaction. She also noted that mental health disorders refer to a range of conditions that affect an individual's mood, thinking, behaviour, and overall functioning.

Furthermore, she observed that research findings suggest that depression, anxiety, somatization, social impairment and substance use/misuse are the most prevalent mental health disorders affecting older people in Botswana. In addition, she said these disorders are compounded by several factors, including poverty, limited access to quality healthcare services, cultural beliefs and stigma, surrounding mental illness, and social isolation.

To address these challenges, she said research findings suggested for the need of increased funding for mental health services and the development of culturally appropriate interventions that can effectively address the mental health needs of older people in Botswana.

She further stated that there is need for collaboration between policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders to raise awareness about mental health and reduce stigma, improve access to quality and appropriate care, and provide targeted interventions to improve the mental health and wellbeing of older people in Botswana.

"By prioritizing mental health and promoting positive aspects of mental wellbeing, we can improve the quality of life of older people in Botswana and enhance their overall wellbeing through the provision of resources and services (e.g., finances, inculcating life skills, security, leisure, and healthy physical environments) so that the geriatric population can age with rights," said Professor Mutepfa.