

Attitude of Undergraduate Nursing Students towards Mental Illness

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Abstract— Background :Health care professionals are not immune to social prejudices and surprisingly share the general public's attitude attributed to people with mental illness. Recruitment and retention of mental health nurses is challenging. Undergraduate nursing students' attitude towards mental health nursing may influence whether they choose to practice in this speciality upon graduation. Nursing students are future health manpower. Research related to nursing student's attitudes towards mental illness is limited.

Objectives: The objective of the study was to assess the attitude of undergraduate nursing students towards mental illness of a selected nursing institution in an urban setting prior to their psychiatric clinical exposure.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the attitude of undergraduate nursing students towards mental illness prior to their clinical experience in psychiatric ward. Data was collected over a period of 02 week by administering a standardized attitude assessment scale. Attitude regarding mental illness was assessed and associated with demographic variables including age, type of family, religion, marital status of parent, family history of mental illness and previous knowledge regarding psychiatry.

Result: The study showed a highly negative attitude among undergraduate nursing students towards mental illness. The study showed that 33.34% undergraduate nursing students had more positive attitude and 66.66% were towards a higher negative attitude.

Conclusion: Within the limits of the study, the result assessed attitude of undergraduate nursing students towards mental illness prior to their psychiatric clinical experience.

Index Terms— attitude, undergraduate Nursing students, mental illness.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is great stereotype and prejudice in relation to mentally ill people. Not only nursing students but also the clinicians as a whole hold an unfavourable attitude towards mental health nursing as a career. Psychiatric nurses are an integral component of a multidisciplinary mental health team. Nurses play a key role in caring for the mentally ill in sickness and in rehabilitating the mentally ill after an episode of illness. According to WHO report, there are 0.05 psychiatry nurses per 1,00,000 people in India. Internationally the shortage of psychiatry nurses is attributed to negative attitudes of nursing students towards mental illness and the subsequent decisions to elect out of the psychiatric placements. Such negative attitudes have been shown to have a profound effect on the

therapeutic relationships and treatment outcomes. Unfortunately, the universality of harmful believes and subsequent negative attitudes toward mentally ill is not in doubt even among nursing students. Available evidence clearly demonstrates that undergraduate nursing students typically hold un favourable attitude toward psychiatry mental health nursing as a career. Further in view of the severe scarcity of mental health personnel, student nurses should develop a positive attitude towards psychiatric nursing and the mentally ill is more critical in Indian scenario.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional was conducted among 30 undergraduate nursing students in a selected institution in urban settings.

Samples were undergraduate nursing students who have no previous psychiatric clinical exposure. The sample size of the present study is 30.

Sampling technique: Simple Random : lottery method

Inclusion criteria

15 Nursing students of 1st year students

15 Nursing students of 2nd year students

Legal and ethical aspects

Permission was obtained from the administrators of the college where the study was conducted. Participants were introduced to the aims and procedures of the study to decide if they would like to participate. After they had agreed to participate verbally, the researchers gave them the confidential questionnaire. Participants were given freedom to withdraw from the study at any part of the procedure . Ethical clearance from IEC obtained.

Tool and technique

The data collection tool consisted of two parts.

The part I consisted of demographic variables such as age, year of study, type of family, religion, marital status of the parent, any history of mental illness in the family, whether has attended any kind of psychiatric courses.

The part II is a standardized tool to assess the attitude of the clinicians' towards people with mental illness. The tool used is **Mental Illness Clinicians' Attitude scale 4 (Mica 4)**. It is a likert scale consisting of 16 items regarding attitude of the clinicians'

III. RESULTS

- Majority of 60% of samples belonged to the age group 20-22 years, they were equally distributed among first year and second year basic BSc nursing course,

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90% of them belonged to nuclear family, 70% of them were Hindus, none of their parents were widowed, separated or divorced, none of them had family history of mental illness.

there is a increased percentage of 66.66% have a higher negative attitude towards people with mental illness where as 33.34% of them had a positive attitude towards the later.

- As per the analysis of part II i.e MICA 4, suggest that

Table :1: DISTRIBUTION OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS ACCORDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY(N=30)	PERCENTAGE(%)
1	Age		
	17-19yrs	12	40
	20-22yrs	18	60
	23-25yrs	0	
	Above25yrs	0	
2	Year of study		
	1 yr	15	50
	2 yr	15	50
3	Type of family		
	Nuclear	27	90
	Joint	3	10
	Extended	0	0
4	Religion		
	Hindu	21	70
	Muslim	0	0
	Christian	8	26.6
	Sikh	1	3.3
	Others	0	0
5	Marital status of parents		
	Married	30	100
	Widowed	0	0
	Separated	0	0
	Divorced	0	0
6	Any history of mental illness in family		
	Yes	0	0
	No	30	100
7	Has attended any psychiatry or psychology course		
	Yes	1	3.3
	No	29	96.6

Table 2. ATTITUDE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS USING MICA SCALE

SLNO	CRITERIA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	I just learned about mental health when ihave to ,and would not bother reading additional material on it		
	a) Strongly Agree	02	6.6%
	b) Agree	07	23.3%
	c) Somewhat Agree	03	10%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	05	16.6%
	e) Disagree	11	36.6%
	f) Strongly Disagree	02	6.6%
2	People with severe mentall ill can never recoverenough to have a good quality of life		
	a) Strongly Agree	1	3.33%
	b) Agree	1	3.33%

	c) Somewhat Agree	4	13.3%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	3	10%
	e) Disagree	8	26.6%
	f) Strongly Disagree	13	43.3%
3	Working in the mental health field is just as respectable as other field of health and social care		
	a) Strongly Agree	19	63.3%
	b) Agree	9	30%
	c) Somewhat Agree	0	
	d) Somewhat Disagree	1	3.3%
	e) Disagree	0	
	f) Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%
4	If I had a mental illness, I would never admit this to my friends because I would fear being treated differently		
	a) Strongly Agree	1	3.3%
	b) Agree	9	30%
	c) Somewhat Agree	6	20%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	4	13.3%
	e) Disagree	6	20%
	f) Strongly Disagree	3	10%
5	People with a severe mental illness are dangerous more often than not		
	a) Strongly Agree	2	6.66%
	b) Agree	10	33.3%
	c) Somewhat Agree	13	43.3%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	4	13.3%
	e) Disagree	1	3%
	f) Strongly Disagree	0	
6	Health/social care staff know more about the lives of people treated for a mental illness than do family members or friends		
	a) Strongly Agree	6	20%
	b) Agree	15	50%
	c) Somewhat Agree	2	6.66%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	6	20%
	e) Disagree	1	3.33%
	f) Strongly Disagree	0	
7	If I had a mental illness, I would never admit this to my colleagues for fear of being treated differently		
	a) Strongly Agree	2	6.66%
	b) Agree	12	40%
	c) Somewhat Agree	5	16.6%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	5	16.6%
	e) Disagree	3	10%
	f) Strongly Disagree	3	10%
8	Being a health/social care professional in the area of mental health is not like being a real health/social care professional		
	a) Strongly Agree	1	3.33%
	b) Agree	6	20%
	c) Somewhat Agree	1	3.33%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	2	6.66%
	e) Disagree	7	23.3%
	f) Strongly Disagree	13	43.3%
9	If a senior or colleague instructed me to treat people with mental illness in a disrespectful manner I would		

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	not follow their instructions		
	a) Strongly Agree	22	73
	b) Agree	6	20%
	c) Somewhat Agree	2	6.66%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	0	
	e) Disagree	1	3.33%
	f) Strongly Disagree	1	3.33%
10	I feel as comfortable talking to a person with a mental illness as I do talking to a person with physical illness		
	a) Strongly Agree	3	10%
	b) Agree	10	30%
	c) Somewhat Agree	8	26.6%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	5	16.6%
	e) Disagree	3	10%
	f) Strongly Disagree	1	3.33%
11	It is important that any health/ social care professional supporting a person with a mental illness also ensures that their physical health is assessed		
	a) Strongly Agree	18	60%
	b) Agree	7	23.3%
	c) Somewhat Agree	2	6.66%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	0	
	e) Disagree	3	10%
	f) Strongly Disagree	0	
12	The public does not need to be protected from people with a severe mental illness		
	a) Strongly Agree	0	
	b) Agree	4	13.3%
	c) Somewhat Agree	5	16.6%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	8	26.6%
	e) Disagree	9	30%
	f) Strongly Disagree	4	13.3%
13	If a person with mental illness complained of physical symptoms I would attribute it to their mental illness		
	a) Strongly Agree	0	
	b) Agree	3	3.33%
	c) Somewhat Agree	5	16.6%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	5	16.6%
	e) Disagree	11	36.6%
	f) Strongly Disagree	6	20%
14	General practitioners should not be expected to complete a thorough assessment for people with psychiatric symptoms because they can be referred to a psychiatrist		
	a) Strongly Agree	0	
	b) Agree	5	16.6%
	c) Somewhat Agree	4	13.3%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	5	16.6%
	e) Disagree	13	43.3%
	f) Strongly Disagree	3	10%
15	I would use the words 'crazy', 'nutcase', 'mad' etc to describe colleagues/people with a mental illness whom I have seen in my work		
	a) Strongly Agree	3	10%
	b) Agree	0	

	c) Somewhat Agree	2	6.66%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	2	6.66%
	e) Disagree	6	20%
	f) Strongly Disagree	16	53.3%
16	If a colleague told they had mental illness I would still want to work with them		
	a) Strongly Agree	7	23.3%
	b) Agree	12	40%
	c) Somewhat Agree	8	26.6%
	d) Somewhat Disagree	3	10%
	e) Disagree	0	
	f) Strongly Disagree	0	

Scoring the MICA: A person's MICA score is the sum of the scores for the individual items. For items 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 16 items are scored as follows: Strongly agree = 1, Agree = 2, Somewhat agree = 3, Somewhat disagree = 4, Disagree = 5, Strongly disagree = 6. All other items (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15) are reverse scored as follows: Strongly agree = 6, Agree = 5, Somewhat agree = 4, Somewhat disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1. The scores for each item are summed to produce a single overall score. A high overall score indicates a more negative (stigmatising) attitude.

IV. DISCUSSION

Studies on nursing students' attitude towards patients suffering from mental illness are very limited in India. These studies mainly highlighted the comparison of the effectiveness of the mental health course on attitudinal changes towards mentally ill patients. The authors tried to assess the attitudes of student nurses toward mentally ill prior to their clinical exposure in IIIrd year of the Basic BSc course. Thus, this scale helped us to analyse various aspects of belief and assumptions of these students. In the present study, the results showed that nursing students have significant negative attitudes towards mental illness where we can work on to intervene to change their attitude. Academic education in this field must be planned well in order to favour the change of the attitudes that includes greater utilization media, teachers with positive attitude and teaching strategies that challenge beliefs and assumptions and develop empathy in the students towards mentally ill & provide holistic care to people with mental illness. The more exposure that students have to mental health nursing through clinical experiences, [theory classes](#), and previous work in the field, the more prepared they feel about caring for persons with mental health issues.

V. CONCLUSION

Limitation of the present study is the small sample size. Recommend to conduct similar research in this area among students after completing academic education and perhaps comparing the students from other than nursing disciplines to see if there are any similarities and/or differences in the results.

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