ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Mental Health Literacy among Students of Gujranwala Division of Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Background: Treatment of either physical or mental illnesses is not as effective if the knowledge and awareness of the patient is inadequate.
Study design: Descriptive study.
Methodology: A total number of 240 students through convenient sampling who responded to the questionnaire. The ethical approval was obtained from review ethical committee, after completing and submitting the research proposal. The research instrument for data collection was, "structured questionnaire" developed by using 2 scales, the mental health literacy scale (MHLS) and modified scale. Data was analyzed by SPSS version 23. Chi-square test was applied for categorical variables to find the differences in knowledge and practices by dental professionals with p-value ≤0.05 as significant.
Results: Almost 86.7% of students were able to identify major depressive disorder. 8.3% thought such disorders are punishment by God, 38.3% of students considered mental illness as inherited trait. According to 47.5% treatment of mental illness caused addiction, 37.1% were unsure and 15.4% disagreed.
Practical Implication: This study helped researchers in exploring role of multiple factors in changing mental health literacy and how it can help in reducing those barriers and promoting mental health literacy in students. This also added to local literature regarding mental health. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that mental illness needs recognition and awareness campaigns for mental health literacy needs to be conducted.
Keywords: Mental Health, Knowledge, Awareness, Attitude and Individual Performance.

INTRODUCTION

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" as revealed by literature review.[1] According to this idea, there are three aspects of health however, mental health can't be emphasized enough.

A healthy individual realizes his or her own abilities, cope-up with normal stresses of life, work productively and is able to make a contribution towards his own community.[2] Literature review revealed that mental illness is a collection of all diagnosable mental disorders-health conditions that produce significant changes in thinking, emotion and behavior towards normal activities of life. In other words any deviation from a state of normal mental health is mental illness[3].

According to one estimate, almost 792 million people globally have suffered mental health disorders with prevalence of 10.7%.[4] This health issue mainly affects females more in comparison to males as shown by Ratio of 9.3%:11.9%.[5] One study showed that one in every four people are effected by mental illness at some point of their life while two-thirds never seek help from professionals. This health issue is considered as stigma in most societies. They also reported that the prevalence of disabling mental illness in children and adolescents was 20% globally[6]. One previous study revealed that mental health burden was maximum for depression followed by anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar disorders[7].

Considering that treatment of either physical or mental illnesses is not as effective if the knowledge and awareness of the patient is inadequate so new concept of health literacy was employed many years ago. With advancement in medical sciences, this concept of mental health knowledge evolved significantly not only in developed but also in developing countries.

According to one study, there are several components of mental health literacy that include: (a) The ability to recognize specific disorders, (b) Knowledge and beliefs about risk factors and causes, (c) Knowledge and beliefs about self-help interventions, (d) Knowledge and beliefs about professional help available, (e) attitudes which facilitate recognition an appropriate help seeking, and (f) Knowledge of how to seek mental health information[8].

There is a complex relationship between mental health and individual performance and stability, which is probably not properly understood by many people due to lack of knowledge about benefits of mental health being. Hence, the current study was planned to determine the knowledge and practice regarding health literacy among students at a basic level.

Objective of the study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of students towards mental illness.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study targeted 240 students through convenient sampling who responded to the questionnaire. The ethical approval was obtained review ethical committee, after completing and submitting the research proposal. The research instrument for data collection was, "structured questionnaire" developed by using 2 scales, the mental health literacy scale (MHLS) and modified scale[9,10]. Online consent was taken. All baseline information was taken in a specialized perfoma. Unwilling students and school going children were excluded.

Statistical analysis: Data was analyzed by SPSS version 23. Chi-square test was applied for categorical variables to find the differences in knowledge and perception by students with p-value ≤0.05 as significant. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for demographic data.

RESULTS

Enrolled students were categorized into three age groups while maximum students were from 18-30 years as shown in table-1 and figure-1. Other baseline parameters like gender and residence were also presented in table-1. Majority of the individuals were females while residing in urban areas. Educational institution, online sources with 35.4% and 27.1% respectively were the major sources of knowledge about this topic. A lot of people 25.8% didn't even hear about the topic as shown by figure-2.

Knowledge and perception regarding health illnesses were summarized into table -2 depending on various different questions. Majority 45.4% students think that mental illness is due to

personal weakness. On the other hand, 36.3% don't attribute mental illness towards personalweakness as shown in table-2.

Table-1: Baseline Parameters of enrolled population (n=240)

Age in Groups (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
less than 18	11	4.6
18-30	227	94.6
above 30	2	0.8
Gender		
Male	52	21.7
Female	188	78.3
Residence		
urban	180	75.0
rural	60	25.0

Figure-1 showed distribution of individuals according to age
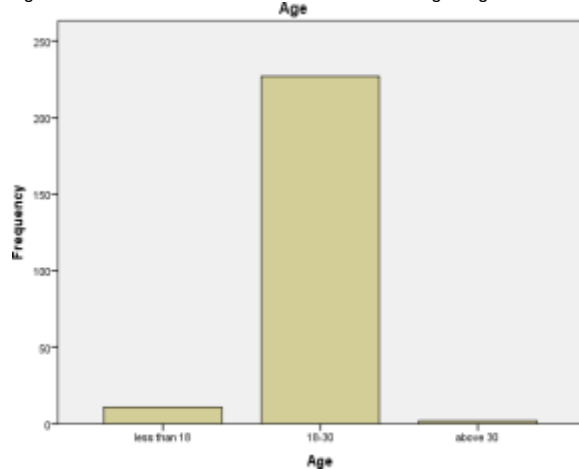
Table-2: Perception of enrolled students (n=240) regarding mental illnesses

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Q-1: Whom do you think is more likely to develop mental illness?		
Men	15	6.3
Women	60	25.0
Others	3	1.3
Q-2: Low mood for ≥02 weeks with Change in appetite and sleep: Any depressive Disorder?		
Very unlikely	32	13.3
very likely	208	86.7
Q-3: A mental illness is a sign of personal weakness?		
Strongly disagree	87	36.3
Neutral	44	18.3
Agree	109	45.4
Q-4: Mental illness is due to possession by evilspirits?		
Yes	19	7.9
No	150	62.5
Maybe	71	29.6
Q-5: Mental illness can be punishment fromGod?		
Yes	19	7.9
No	151	62.9
Maybe	70	29.2
Q-6: Medications used to treat mental illness causeaddiction		
Yes	114	47.5
No	37	15.4
Maybe	88	37.1

Almost 34.2% students remained neutral while 33% disagree with the statement and 32.9% agree that mentally ill person is dangerous. Different people have different opinion regarding sufferers of mental diseases in terms of "dangerous" as shown in figure-3.

Different people have different opinion regarding sufferers of mental diseases in terms of "genetic inheritance" as shown in figure-4. Almost 38.3% agreed that inheritance can be the cause, 38.3% were unsure and rest 23.3% disagreed. Genetics play an important role in many aspects of healthy life.

Different people have different opinion regarding "seeking help towards mental health professionals" as shown in figure-5. Almost 60.4% of students don't agree with the above statement, 14.2% remained neutral while 25.4% agreed.

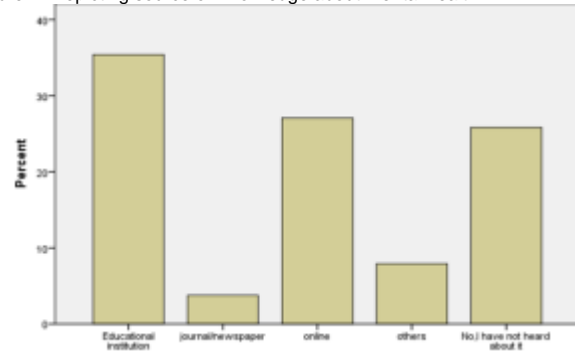Figure-2: Depicting source of Knowledge about mental health

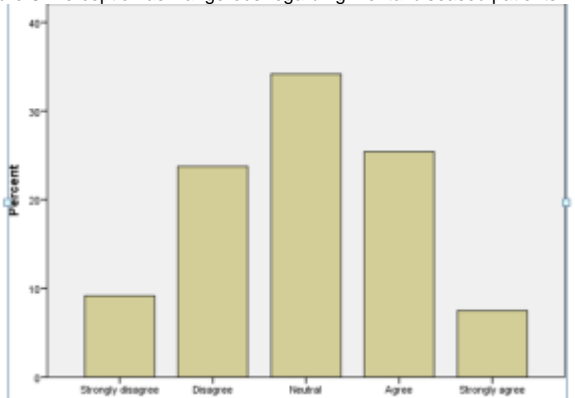Figure-3: Perception as Dangerous regarding mental diseased patients

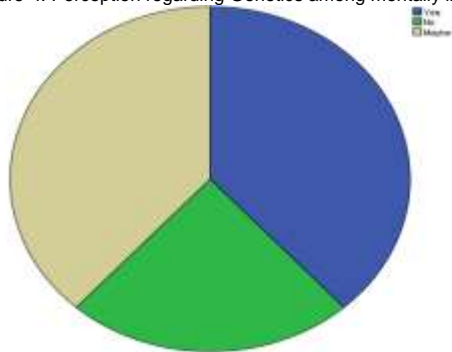Figure-4: Perception regarding Genetics among mentally ill patients
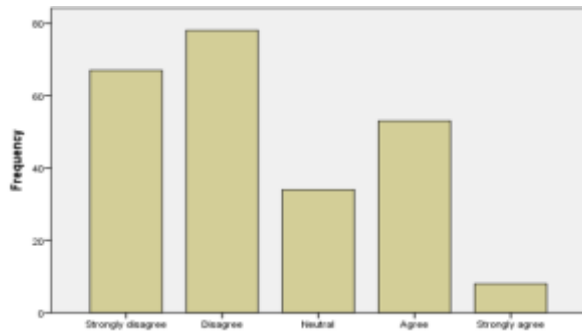

Figure-5: Perception regarding seeking help from health professionals

DISCUSSION

We carried out research on mental health literacy among the students of university andcollege in Gujranwala division. Main goal of this survey was to compare the knowledge about mental illness, beliefs and disbeliefs about mental illness and help seeking attitude in students. For this purpose we used 2 scales, MHLS (mental health literacy scale) and a modified scale to measure stigma related to mental illness[9,10]. We made an online Questionnaire with google documents and shared it online. Majorly females participated in the survey. Majority of the students belonged to urban areas with upper middle/high socio-economic class.

According to this survey overall ability to recognize common mental illness in university students is satisfactory. Many students had heard about the topic of MHL. Around two-third of the participants considered mental illness real and considered everyone to be equally susceptible to mental illness. Aside from some positive facts there are some areas that need improvement. As about one-fourth of participants were not even familiar with the name of MHL. That speaks about the need to start educational campaigns. Majority students were of the opinion that mental illness is due to personal weakness and treatment medication will cause addiction. Some considered evil spirits and punishment by God to be the cause of illness. These problems need to be addressed because according to old researches, as discussed earlier, people with such beliefs incline towards religious healers for treatment and avoid medical treatment.

Our results were similar to other studies when compared in terms of different perceptions regarding mental health. According to our participants, major mental health was depression followed by anxiety and bipolar disorders. This pattern was seen in many other previous studies that documented depression being more common mental illness[11-13].

Most students opted for Friends and family as the first choice for help. Some considered psychiatrists but majority selected more than one options. Similar results were shown by other study that reported that seeking medical aid regarding mental health is totally fine and acceptable[14,15]. In present study, majority agreed with idea to seek help rather than fighting alone against mental illness as it worsens it. This means along with campaigns to promote MHL, there is also a need to educate general population and family members to help them develop a positive and supportive attitude towards mentally ill patient.Also awareness campaigns are needed to make people aware of the treatment options and proper counseling.

Women all over the world including Pakistan suffer a greater burden from mental health than their male counter-parts[16]. This means females need special attention in this area and awareness campaign must be held related to mental illness in females. Prior explanation of mental health literacy identifies several key contributory factors including lack of public mental health education and awareness and severe stigma related to mental illness. A broad strategy incorporating awareness of mental health and prevention of mental disorder is required to improve recognition of specific mental illnesses as well as to improve knowledge and promotion of mental health literacy. Large scale campaigns and seminars are needed for this purpose.

Limitations: As the time frame was limited and convenience sampling was used, making sample unrepresentative. Data should be collected from students using random sampling so that findings can be generalized. Environmental and some situation specific facets were not considered and were not explored in this study.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that there was significant difference in knowledge and perception towards mental health literacy between students. Thus mental illness needs recognition and awareness campaigns for mental health literacy needs to be conducted.

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