

**To Study the Attitude of Medical and Nonmedical Students towards Mental Illness**

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**Abstract** This research paper investigates the adverse attitudes of medical and nonmedical students towards mental illness. Stigmas associated with mental illness are a universal phenomenon and represent a significant barrier to the provision of mental health services. The study aims to assess the attitudes of medical and nonmedical students, as well as male and female students, towards mental illness. Conducted in the Nanded district of Maharashtra, the study involved 60 participants (30 medical and 30 nonmedical students), with an equal number of females in both groups. The medical students were from the Ayurvedic department, while nonmedical students had a social work background. Data collection tools included a self-developed checklist and field observations. The findings revealed significant differences in areas such as Nature, Cause, Aftereffect, and Community Mental Health Ideology, with notable differences between male and female students as well. These findings underscore the importance of including psychiatry in academic curricula to address stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

**Keywords:** Mental illness, Psychiatry, Stigma, Discrimination, Community Mental Health Ideology, Cause, Aftereffect, Nature

**Introduction** Mental health is a critical component of overall health and essential for human societal development. Mental illness is often associated with a lack of knowledge, negative attitudes, and avoidant behavior towards affected individuals. Classical labeling theory highlights how stereotyping and rejection lead to demoralization and social exclusion. Stereotypes around mental illness include perceptions that individuals with mental illnesses are dangerous, unpredictable, irresponsible, or incompetent. These stereotypes affect cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes.

Examples of cognitive aspects include stereotypes like "people with mental illness are dangerous," while emotional reactions often involve fear or prejudice, such as "Yes, people with mental illness are dangerous, and I am afraid of them."

Attitudes towards mental illness influence public resource allocation, staff retention in mental health settings, quality of care, and fundraising for mental health organizations (Kadri & Sartorius, 2005; Pescosolido et al., 2010; Stuart, 2005). State-level factors such as unemployment, access to mental health services, and resource availability further shape public attitudes and merit deeper study.

**Problem Statement** Mental health enables individuals to experience sustained joy, work

productively, interact meaningfully, and face adversity without losing their capacity to function physically, psychologically, or socially. Its absence represents a significant burden on a nation's economic, political, and social systems.

Mental health refers to inner harmony, while social health represents an individual's external harmony and adjustment to residential and financial circumstances. Indian mental health professionals (Shah, 1982) have emphasized the inadequacy of trained professionals and mental health facilities in the country. This shortage necessitates innovative approaches to mental health care delivery systems.

Understanding community views, beliefs, and attitudes toward mental health facilities is essential. Researchers must also consider community awareness and sensitivity in planning mental health services.

**Literature Review** This study examines the attitudes of college students towards mental illness, focusing on differences between students from medical and nonmedical backgrounds. Leyones and Hayes (1993) hypothesized minimal attitudinal differences between occupational therapy and psychology majors but significant differences compared to accounting majors due to the latter group's lack of clinical exposure and curriculum on mental health.

Medical and dental students demonstrated more accepting attitudes toward individuals labeled as mentally ill compared to social science and engineering undergraduates.

Students with prior contact with mentally ill individuals showed more positive attitudes, particularly among medical students. However, social science and engineering students' attitudes were not significantly influenced by prior contact experiences. This suggests that individual factors, including career choice and personal empathy, mediate attitudes towards mental illness.

Our findings highlight the importance of structured exposure to mental health issues in educational curricula to foster positive attitudes and reduce stigma. Previous studies indicate that integrating mental health education and providing opportunities for direct contact with individuals experiencing mental illness can improve perceptions and decrease discrimination.

**Summary:**

Study was conducted among the college student those who are having medical and nonmedical background with the aim to uncover attitude of students towards mental illness.

In conclusion, the study found that knowledge about mental illness is poor among the nonmedical subjects in the present study. Knowing someone with a mental illness while studying within an academic field that medical student has emphasis relating to psychological wellbeing yields more comprehending and favorable attitudes.

Overall, findings of this study suggest that reducing the stigmatization of mental illness continues to be an important goal for mental

health professionals. Although the generalizability of our findings may be limited by our dependence on student participants, it is likely that medical students are in fact more comfortable with mental illness and more concerned about patients with mental illness in terms of nature, cause, after effect than the nonmedical student, which means non medical student has shown positive attitude towards mental illness on item of community mental health ideology which is results of their awareness of community and field work exposure help them to maintain this attitude.

The role of medical students see themselves playing in the healthcare system also seems to have an impact on the perception and attitude towards the patients with mental illness, whereas the role of nonmedical student see themselves playing in the community based system also seems to have impact on their perception and attitude towards patients with mental illness. There is also a need to better educate the students from both groups, especially for patients with mental illness. As compare to nonmedical student. The present study reported that difference in attitude among male and female participants

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