

## Knowledge of general public towards mental health disorders

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### Abstract

Life circumstances can influence one's mental health from birth. Individuals who experience positive circumstances are generally emotionally secure and successful in school and are able to establish healthy interpersonal relationships. Negative circumstances such as poverty, poor physical health, unemployment, abuse, neglect and unresolved childhood loss generally precipitate feelings of hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness. Hence, a study to assess the knowledge of public was conducted by the researcher towards mental health disorders. The samples were selected through non-probability quota sampling and they were given a structured questionnaire related to mental health disorders. 100 samples were selected from five groups from the public. With regard to the knowledge, it could be seen that there was a significant difference in the mean knowledge scores between the public who are graduates and those who are secondary school educated.

**Keywords:** knowledge, public, mental health, mental health disorders

### Introduction

Bodily conditions can affect mental functioning in a normal healthy human. For example, increase in blood pressure leads to mental over activity. Similarly, our mind too affects bodily functions. Mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, affect people's ability to participate in health-promoting behaviours. Our emotions and strong feelings affect the body inwardly and outwardly, for example, emotional conflicts are responsible for various illnesses like peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis etc. Studies with cancer patients have shown that people with a positive outlook to life have a higher recovery rate <sup>[1]</sup>.

Mahto R (2009) <sup>[3]</sup> in his study had stated that mental health plays a major role in people's ability to maintain good physical health. In turn, problems with physical health, such as chronic diseases, can have a serious impact on mental health and decrease a person's ability to participate in treatment and recovery <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Need of the study

According to a report in the 34th Annual conference of Indian Psychiatric Society, Mumbai city is a realistic representation of health problems, economic constraints, political attitudes, poverty and diversity. The fast life, modernization and urban city make Mumbai a city of advantages and equal disadvantages. Rapid cultural changes, breaking family units, loosening of value systems and individualistic philosophy all weaken the general wellbeing of people in the city. Here mostly the government hospitals cater to a large population of mentally ill patients, where every year there are about 33,000-40,000 newly diagnosed cases and 1.8lac -2lac follow up patients with common mental disorders. The private sector hospitals serve three times more than the

patients seen in the government sector do. This shows the magnitude of the psychiatric disorders in the city of Mumbai <sup>[3]</sup>.

### Statement of problem

A study to assess the knowledge of general public towards mental health disorders in selected areas of Mumbai.

### Objectives of the study

1. To find out the knowledge of the general public to mental health disorders
2. To compare knowledge of the general public towards mental health disorders with regard to selected demographic variables.

### Research approach

A descriptive exploratory approach was used in this study.

### Research design

Survey design was used in this study.

### Setting

The study was conducted in selected central area of Mumbai.

### Population

General public included teachers, maids, students, policeman, and housewives in Mumbai were chosen as the population.

### Sample and sample size

In this study, the samples were teachers, students, house cleaners, homemakers, police officer and who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The sample size was 100; twenty samples were selected from each of the above-mentioned groups.

### **Sampling technique**

Non-probability quota sampling was used in this study.

### **Inclusion criteria**

1. All general public above 18 years of age.
2. All general public who could understand and speak in English, Hindi or Marathi.
3. All general public who were willing to participate in the study.

### **Exclusion criteria**

1. General public suffering from any mental health disorder.

### **Tools & techniques**

The structured interview schedule was used to elicit the knowledge. In this study, interviewing technique was used.

### **Validity of tool**

The content validity of the structured interview schedule was established by giving it to eleven experts, which included three psychiatrists, five nursing experts, two psychologists and one social worker.

### **Reliability**

For assessing the reliability of the tools were administered to thirty samples; five samples from each group. The calculated value of  $r$  for the structured interview schedule was established using the Karl Pearson coefficient of correlation formula which was 0.8.

### **Analysis of data**

#### **Significant findings of the study**

#### **Findings related to the distribution of samples with regard to their demographic data**

**Age:** With regard to the age, 32 per cent of the samples belonged to the age group of 18-25 years, 24 per cent to 26-40 years and 38 per cent to the age group of 41-60 years. The Study samples of the age group above 60 years comprised of only six per cent. Thus, it was seen that most of the samples belonged to the age group of 26 - 60; this could be due to the reason that in most of the workplaces majority of the people belong to this age group.

**Gender:** The numbers of male samples (63%) were more than the females (37%). This was because male population dominated most of the groups except for teacher's group.

**Religion:** Majority of the samples (62%) belonged to the Hindu religion, Muslim (12%), Christian (17%) and other religions were nine per cent. This could be because Hindu population probably dominated most of the areas selected.

**Education:** Out of the 100 samples, 52 per cent of them had completed their graduation and 18 per cent of them had done their post-graduation. The samples who had completed their primary and secondary education comprised of 12 per cent and 18 per cent samples respectively.

#### **Findings related to the analysis of the knowledge of samples in relation to mental health disorders**

It could be seen that the students scored very well (52%) in concept of mental health disorders whereas getting good scores in the other areas. The police officer got good scores in

all the areas. The teachers got excellent scores (64%) in concept of mental health disorders and very good scores in the other three areas. It was seen that the house cleaner scored average scores in all the four areas. Thus, it could be inferred that samples from the students, teachers had better knowledge compared to house cleaners and police officer.

#### **Findings related to the comparison of knowledge scores of public towards mental health disorders in relation to selected demographic variables**

It was seen that there is a significant difference between the mean knowledge scores of the male and female samples towards mental health disorders.

It was seen that there was no significant difference between the mean knowledge of public from the three age groups with regard to mental health disorders.

With regard to the knowledge it could be seen that there was a significant difference in the mean knowledge scores between the public who are graduates and those who are secondary school educated.

### **Discussion**

Similarly a survey was carried out for the public health department of New Zealand by Fearn A, Goodman K and Wyllie A (2004)<sup>[4]</sup> to compare the knowledge and attitudes of public towards mental health and mental illness from a similar survey conducted in 1997. The researcher concluded that, a lot of the findings were very consistent between 1997 and 2004 and that the research showed that the change in some knowledge could be linked to the content of a mental health awareness campaign, and that has not generalized to other attitudes towards people with mental illness<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed at assessing the knowledge of general public towards mental health disorders. The study also revealed that the teachers, students had better knowledge related to mental health disorders compared to the police officer and house cleaners. The study also brought about the need for increasing the awareness of the general public towards various aspects of mental health disorders.

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