

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS OF MENTALLY ILL PATIENT AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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Abstract. Human rights are applicable for everyone including those who are mentally ill. The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge and attitude of nursing students at Universiti Sains Malaysia regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted by a simple random sampling technique on 214 nursing students. The data were collected by a self-administered questionnaire consisting of demographic variables, the knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patients. The findings revealed that majority of nursing students in a public university Malaysia had good knowledge with percentage of 54.7% (n=117) and positive attitude with percentage of 94.4% (n=202) regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. Increasing the knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient among future nurses might help in better delivery of care as well as improving the quality of life of the patients.

Keywords: *knowledge, attitude, human right, mentally ill patient, nursing students*

Introduction

Human Rights are commonly understood as being those rights that are inherent to the human being. The concept of human rights acknowledges that every human being is entitled to enjoy their human rights without distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or another status (Rajratan and Lakshmi, 2017). Human rights are legally guaranteed by Human Rights Law, protecting individuals and groups against actions that interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity (World Health Organization, 2003a).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (World Health Organization, 2003b) was the first document that spelled out the basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human being should enjoy. The International Bill of Human Rights contain a comprehensive list of human rights that governments must respect and promote includes right to life, equality, security of person, freedom of movement and residence, right to adequate food, clothing and housing, right to education and right to health.

Citizens Commission on Human Rights in their article Mental Health Declaration of Human Rights, has listed down the human rights violation by psychiatry which are relentlessly investigated and exposed. The human rights include the right to full informed consent, no person shall be given psychiatric or psychological treatment against his or her will, no person, man, woman or child may be denied his or her personal liberty by reason of mental illness without fair jury trial by laymen and with proper legal representation, no person shall be admitted to or held in psychiatric institution, hospital or facility because of their political, religious or cultural beliefs and practices (Abukamil, 2016; Neilson and Chaimowitz, 2015; Hannon-Engel, 2011).

In Malaysia, Mental Health Act 2001 acts as a guideline to protect the human rights of mentally ill patient in Malaysia (Laws of Malaysia, 2001). To protect the rights of mentally ill patients in Malaysia, every mental health care facility and mental health staff must strictly adhere to this act. The medical director of any psychiatric facility has a particular responsibility under this act to ensure that all patients are given statements of their rights in a manner and language that they understand. Patients' rights statements must be shown prominently in the psychiatric facility (Khan et al., 2015).

Human rights belong to all, including people with mental illness. People with mental illnesses are among the most marginalised people in society (Iliadis et al., 2019). Protecting their human rights is the responsibility of health care professionals, especially those in the psychiatric field. They must be knowledgeable of the human rights of people with mental illnesses in order to do so (Punnoose, 2017; Cady, 2010).

Attitudes and belief about mental illness are shaped by personal knowledge about mental illness, knowing and interacting with someone living with mental illness, cultural stereotypes about mental illness, media stories, and familiarity with institutional practices and past restrictions. When such attitudes and beliefs are expressed positively, they can result in supportive and inclusive behaviour towards mental illness patient. However, when they are expressed negatively, they may result in avoidance, exclusion from daily activities and worst, exploitation and discrimination (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012).

Materials and Methods

A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted from December 2018 until February 2019. Nursing students selected as respondent based on the criteria of inclusion and exclusion as stated. Respondents were nursing students studying at School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. The inclusion criteria for this study is all undergraduate nursing students (males and females) at School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia that able to understand, speak and write in English and the exclusion criteria is postgraduate nursing students and student from other programmes. A simple random sampling technique was utilised to select 214 nursing students from School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire, which comprises of three sections. Demographic variables, knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient was adapted from the study done by Thapa and Samson (2017). Section A consist of socio-demographic data which comprises of four questions that include age, gender, level of education and exposure to psychiatric in nursing course. Respondents need to tick the answer in the space provided. Section B is about knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. It consists of nine questions. It is used to measure the level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. Respondents are being asked regarding few human rights of mentally ill patients. They will be asks to choose one correct answer whereas Section C consists of 15 questions to assess and identify the attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patients. Each item is rated on Likert Scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree and strongly agree according to their occurrence of behaviour. Higher score reflects good attitude towards human rights of mentally ill patients.

Data for this study was collected after receiving letter of approval from Research Ethics Committee (Human) of Universiti Sains Malaysia and dean of School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia before conducting the study. The respondent that fulfills the inclusion criteria was approached and written consent was obtained from respondents that are willing to take part in the study and completed questionnaire. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 24.0 and descriptive statistics were performed to identify the level of knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patients among nursing students in School of Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic data

A total number of nursing students participated in this study is 214 students. *Table 1* summarizes the socio-demographic data of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are age between 18 to 21 years old 57.5% (n=123), followed by respondents of age between 22 to 25 years old 40.2% (n=86) and respondents of age more than 25 years old 2.3% (n=5). Majority of the respondents were female with percentage of 90.2% (n=193) while male respondents was 9.8% (n=21). In term of level of education, 12.6% (n=27) respondents are degree first year students, 13.6% (n=29) respondents are degree second year students, 14.5% (n=31) respondents are from degree third year students as well as degree fourth year and diploma first year students. 15.4% (n=33) respondents are diploma second year students and 15% (n=32) respondents are diploma third year students. Majority of the respondents has exposure to psychiatric in nursing course with percentage of 64.5% (n=138). 35.5% (n=76) respondents has not received formal education in Psychiatric Nursing.

Table 1. *Socio-demographic data of the respondents (n=214).*

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
18-21	123	57.5
22-25	86	40.2
>25	5	2.3
Gender		
Male	21	9.8
Female	193	90.2
Level of education		
Degree 1	27	12.6
Degree 2	29	13.6
Degree 3	31	14.5
Degree 4	31	14.5
Diploma 1	31	14.5
Diploma 2	33	15.4
Diploma 3	32	15
Exposure in psychiatric in nursing course		
Yes	138	64.5
No	76	35.5

Knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient

The level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patients among nursing students in USM was measured by using the knowledge score. In this study, the knowledge questions consist of nine questions. For each question, the respondents need to choose one best answer. 1 point is given for 'True' answer and 0 point is given for 'False' answer. *Table 2* summarized the respondent's knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patients. Based on *Table 2*, majority of the respondents can answer most of the questions correctly except for question 6 and question 9 whereby the percentage of respondents who answers the two questions correctly were only 35.5% (n=76) and 38.3% (n=82) respectively.

Table 2. Respondents' knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (n=214).

No.	Item	True N (%)	False N (%)
1.	Definition of human rights	208 (97.2)	6 (2.8)
2.	Mental health law in Malaysia	134 (62.6)	80 (37.4)
3.	Nursing action regarding right to privacy and confidentiality	178 (83.2)	36 (16.8)
4.	Informed consent	204 (95.3)	10 (4.7)
5.	Nursing action regarding right to informed consent	189 (88.3)	25 (11.7)
6.	Criteria for adequate treatment	76 (35.5)	138 (64.5)
7.	Criteria that justify seclusion and restraint	195 (91.1)	19 (8.9)
8.	Criteria for involuntary admission	142 (66.4)	72 (33.6)
9.	Violation of patients' right	82 (38.3)	132 (61.7)

Attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient

In this study, the attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patients consists of 15 questions in which each question is rated on Likert scale of 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree according to their attitude. *Table 3* summarized the respondent's attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patients based on attitude aspects including behavior toward patients, seclusion and restraint, hospitalization, privacy and confidentiality, information on illness or treatment, treatment and civil rights. Based on *Table 3*, 163 respondents (76.2%) strongly agree that we should not exposed patients' details to the outsiders, 140 respondents (65.4%) strongly agree that nurses need to ensure that the patient does not suffer from any injury during seclusion and restraint and 138 respondents (64.5%) strongly agree that patient should know the treatment they are going through. Moreover, the study showed that 163 respondents (76.2%) strongly disagree that we can post patients' photo on social media, 151 respondents (70.6%) strongly disagree that nurse can act violently towards patient and 121 respondents (56.5%) that person with mental illness should be hospitalizes for the rest of their life.

Table 3. Respondents' attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (n=214).

No.	Item	1 N (%)	2 N (%)	3 N (%)	4 N (%)	5 N (%)
1.	Nurse can act violently towards patient	151 (70.6)	42 (19.6)	11 (5.1)	6 (2.8)	4 (1.9)
2.	Violent act towards patient can cause patient to act aggressively	4 (1.9)	12 (5.6)	24 (11.2)	110 (51.4)	64 (29.9)
3.	Patient should not be restraint if they are not aggressive	6 (2.8)	3 (1.4)	36 (16.8)	84 (39.3)	85 (39.7)
4.	Seclusion (isolation) of the patient should	50	60	43	48	13

	be done even if the patient did not cause harm to others	(23.4)	(28.0)	(20.1)	(22.4)	(6.1)
5.	Nurses need to ensure that the patient does not suffer from any injury during seclusion and restraint	-	2 (9)	9 (4.2)	63 (29.4)	140 (65.4)
6.	Any person who show sign and symptom of mentally ill should be forced to being hospitalized without being examine first	72 (33.6)	103 (48.1)	26 (12.1)	12 (5.6)	1 (0.5)
7.	Person with mental illness should be hospitalizes for the rest of their life	121 (56.5)	65 (30.4)	16 (7.5)	11 (5.1)	1 (0.5)
8.	We should not exposed patients' details to the outsiders	6 (2.8)	1 (0.5)	3 (1.4)	41 (19.2)	163 (76.2)
9.	We can post patients' photo on social media	163 (76.2)	24 (11.2)	8 (3.7)	2 (0.9)	17 (7.9)
10.	We should keep our patient anonymous from the outsiders	6 (2.8)	15 (7.0)	31 (14.5)	67 (31.3)	95 (44.4)
11.	Patient should know the illness they are suffering with	-	-	13 (6.1)	104 (48.6)	97 (45.3)
12.	Patient should know the progress of their illness	-	-	5 (2.3)	96 (44.9)	113 (52.8)
13.	Patient should know the treatment they are going through	-	1 (0.5)	2 (0.9)	73 (34.1)	138 (64.5)
14.	Nurses should force the patient to get treatment even if the patient refused	57 (26.6)	78 (36.4)	58 (27.1)	18 (8.4)	3 (1.4)
15.	People with mental illness are highly stigmatized and discriminated	35 (16.4)	25 (11.7)	65 (30.4)	52 (24.3)	37 (17.3)

Level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient

Table 4 shows the level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. Based on Table 4, it shows that majority of nursing students in Universiti Sains Malaysia has good knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient with percentage of 54.7% (n=117).

Table 4. Level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (n=214).

Knowledge	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Good	117	54.7
Moderate	91	42.5
Poor	6	2.8

Level of attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient

Table 5 shows the level of attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. Based on Table 5, it shows that most of the nursing students in Universiti Sains Malaysia has positive attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient with percentage of 94.4% (n=102).

Table 5. Level of attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (n=214).

Attitude	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Negative	12	5.6
Positive	202	94.4

The finding from this study shows that 117 (54.7%) of the students has good level of knowledge, 91 (42.5%) of the students has moderate level of knowledge and only six (2.8%) of the students has poor level of knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. A study in India had shown similar finding whereby 85% of the respondents have inadequate knowledge while only 15% of the respondent has adequate knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (Punnoose, 2017).

However, a study by Khan et al. (2015) in Iraq revealed that 36% of respondents knew the patients' rights. The other study done among nursing students shows that among 33 respondents, none of them has good knowledge, 28 (85%) of them has moderate knowledge and the rest of them five (15%) of them has poor knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (Chendake et al., 2014), supported by a recent study also shows inconsistent finding whereby their finding shows that majority of the nursing students has inadequate knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. 13.3% of the students has adequate knowledge, 23.3 has moderately adequate knowledge and 63.4% of the students has inadequate knowledge regarding human rights of mentally ill patient (Chendake et al., 2014).

In term of level of attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient, the finding from this study shows that 202 (94.4%) of the students has positive attitude meanwhile 12 (5.6%) of the students has negative attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. This finding is consistent with a study that shows the overall mean attitude score regarding human rights of mentally ill patient was 68.65% among the respondents (Thapa and Samson, 2017).

Conclusion

The study of knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient among nursing students in USM shows good knowledge and positive attitude towards human rights of mentally ill patient. Besides, there is no significant relationship between knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. The results may provide the importance of awareness regarding human rights of mentally ill patient among nursing students. The result also may help the educators to emphasizes the importance of delivery of care following the human rights of mentally ill patient to promote the quality of life of the patient.

The study results can be used as a baseline data to improve knowledge and attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient among nursing students. Based on the study findings, it showed that their level of knowledge is good, and they have positive attitude regarding human right of mentally ill patient. Even though majority of them shows good results, there are still some of them has poor knowledge and negative attitude regarding human rights of mentally ill patient. Since human rights is a legal issue, it is important for the future nurses to have a good knowledge and positive attitude. This is also important so that future nurses can deliver a good care without bias to the mentally ill patient despite their health problems. Thus, delivering a good care to the patient can improve their quality of life and may contribute to a better prognosis.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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