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Assessing the Practice of Nurses while Caring for Patients with Mental Illness

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A B S T R A C T

Mental illness is a communal term that covers different psychological manifestations that an individual experiences due to a variety of diseases. Physical aspect of health among persons with psychological disparities, is a multidimensional, multivariate, and universal concern. They usually have an augmented jeopardy of somatic diseases, along with compromised reach to required healthcare services. This study aimed to assess the practice of nurses while caring for patients with mental illness. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at different mental health institutes. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select the 150 nurses. A self-administered research instrument was utilized. The questions/items were divided into 2 components: 1) Demographic characteristics: Inquiring about age, gender, marital status, qualification, and work experience. 2) Practical skills and knowledge. Responding to the questionnaire, 52% of subjects disagreed that patients with mental health problems get the same attention as patients with other physical problems; 61% of subjects agreed that all patients with mental illness are kept in complete isolation. Sixty-three percent (63%) of nurses agreed with the statement that patients with mental illness are dangerous for the people around them and 50% of nurses find it difficult to speak to patients with mental illness and 50% of them rated it troublesome to interact with such patients. Most healthcare personnel tend to ignore the psychological aspect of the disease process. Hence, there is a dire need to devise strong policies and standard operating procedures to restructure our mental health facilities and their operations to deal with mental health problems more effectively at individual and institutional levels

Keywords: mental illness, psychological, manifestation, disparities, clinical practice.

Introduction

Mental illness is a communal term that covers different psychological manifestations that an individual experiences due to a variety of diseases (Leng et al., 2020). Physical aspect of health among persons with psychological disparities, is a multidimensional, multivariate, and universal concern. They usually have an augmented jeopardy of somatic diseases, along with compromised reach to required healthcare services (Firth et al., 2019). Life expectancy among persons established with a diagnosis of schizophrenia (a psychological disorder) or bipolar disorder is reduced by 15–20 years than healthier individuals (Nielsen, Banner & Jensen, 2020). Human beings has a unique trait to counter the misery of their fellows around with compassion and social efforts to lighten disparities (de Waal and Preston, 2017). For different healthcare specialists, in particular, the mitigation of distress is an occupational business (Kohrt et al., 2020). Patients with severe psychological disorders working at some institutions might have difficulties requesting breaks from their employers and might not have appropriate policy cover investigations and treatment of their illness (Druss, 2020). Healthcare personnel face exceptional situations while caring for patients having psychological disorders in acute healthcare settings (Weare et al., 2019). Numerous ethical contests are very common in clinical nursing practice, particularly mental health problems can place nurses in such ethical encounters more readily, and that can lead to undesirable feelings and psychosomatic activations, injurious to their psychological health (Jia et al., 2021). An institute can empower and boost self-care by offering incentives to their workforce and different operational provisions to facilitate optimistic cultures at workplace that are favorable to self-care training (Hofmeyer & Taylor, 2020). In current times, numerous protuberant segments of community are willing to cuddle the prospective artificial intelligence, but healthcare institutes are reluctant to embrace it as it lacks traits like empathy, trust and accountability (Metz & Smith, 2019). According to findings of a study conducted by Graham et al., 2019, artificial intelligence (AI) possess pronounced potential to transmute mental healthcare and impending consequences.

This study aimed to assess the practice of nurses while caring for patients with mental illness.

Methodology

Research design: A descriptive cross-sectional study design was utilized.

Research Setting: This study has been conducted at two mental health facilities in Lahore, Pakistan.

Target Population: This study targeted nurses to assess the practice of nurses while caring for patients with mental illness as nurses can create a huge difference in the provision of quality care to such patients.

Sampling method: A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select the sample.

Sample size: Data was collected from a total of 150 nurses.

Inclusion Criteria: Those nurses meeting the following criteria were included in the sample:

1. Nurses between the age group of 20-40 years.

2. Nurses who have been dealing with patients experiencing any kind of mental illness for more than 1 year.

Exclusion Criteria: Those nurses meeting the following criteria were not considered in the sample:

1. Nurses having any physical/mental sickness or disability.

Research Instrument: A self-administered research instrument was utilized. The questions/items were divided into 2 components:

1) Demographic characteristics: Inquiring about age, gender, marital status, qualification, and work experience.

2) Practical skills and knowledge: Investigating the nurses' practice while caring for patients with mental illness e.g. how do they think of such patients, if they are comfortable while interacting to patients with mental illness, do they deal with such patients empathetically? Etc.

Data Analysis: The measured responses were analyzed for descriptive statistics; frequency and their percentages were calculated and presented in the tables.

Results

Nurses play a vital role in the care of patients in the healthcare settings and patients are vulnerable to psychological breakdown because of the disease process. Hence, it is very important to determine how nurses deal with psychologically affected patients highlighting an opportunity for intervention to improve the quality of care and prognosis of the patients. A total of 150 nurses working at the psychiatric units and mental asylums were approached and their responses were recorded through a questionnaire. Of all the participants, 85% of them were females, 80% of nurses were between the age group of 20-30 years, 68% of the participants were single, and 39% had a qualification of BSN. Table 1 below lists the demographic characteristics of the subjects.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of subjects

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	26	15%
	Female	124	85%
Age	20 - 25	65	43%
	26 - 30	55	37%
	31 - 35	21	14%
	36 - 40	9	6%
Marital Status	Single	103	68%
	Married	43	32%
Work Experience	General Nursing	33	22%
	BSc Nursing	59	39%
	MSc Nursing	2	1%
	Post Basic Specialization	56	37%

Responding to the questionnaire, 52% of subjects disagreed that patients with mental health problems get the same attention as patients with other physical problems; 61% of subjects agreed that all patients with mental illness are kept in complete isolation. Sixty-three percent (63%) of nurses agreed with the statement that patients with mental illness are dangerous for the people around them and 50% of nurses find it difficult to speak to patients with mental illness and 50% of them rated it troublesome to interact with such patients. When asked if they follow the progress of their patients referred to other

departments, 38% responses negated the statement and 39% remained neutral. Less than half that is 44% of the participants considered their facilities appropriately equipped for treating patients with mental illness and 68% of them responded that our country does not pay much attention to mental health problems. Table 2 below illustrates the participants'' responses in terms of percentage.

Table 2. Participants' responses to the items in the questionnaire

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Mentally sick sufferers are entitled to the same interest in the fitness core as other general patients in the current facility.	22%	16%	10%	37%	15%
2	All the patients suffering from mental illness are not usually kept in total isolation.	29%	32%	9%	20%	10%
3	Mentally sick persons are termed to be dangerous and may cause harm to others around them.	16%	47%	5%	21%	11%
4	Do you find it tough to discuss or talk to anybody who suffers from a mental health problem?	29%	21%	15%	23%	12%
5	Is it difficult for you to interact with somebody who has any sort of mental disturbance?	16%	29%	20%	18%	17%
6	After referring someone to the psychiatric department, did you take feedback on the individual?	9%	14%	39%	29%	9%
7	Do you think that the place that you work in is able to accommodate care of the individual and their mental illness?	18%	26%	21%	29%	6%
8	Do you think that our country pays attention to mental illness?	6%	15%	11%	49%	19%

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study patients with mental health problems are not paid as much attention as they require. Furthermore, our facilities and healthcare workers are not well prepared to deal with such patients. Most healthcare personnel tend to ignore the psychological aspect of the disease process. Hence, there is a dire need to devise strong policies and standard operating procedures to restructure our mental health facilities and their operations to deal with mental health problems more effectively at individual and institutional levels. Nurses must maintain the integrity of the profession by utilizing the basic traits of the profession like accountability, empathy and trust etc.

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