



## PERCEPTION ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG FRESHMEN

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**ABSTRACT** A descriptive study to assess the perception about mental illness among freshmen in selected college. The objectives were to assess the perception about mental illness and to assess the association between perception about mental illness and the selected demographic variables. Majority (61.8%) had positive perception about mental illness. Few of the demographic variables had significant association with perception about mental illness.

**KEYWORDS :** Perception, mental illness

## INTRODUCTION

Psychiatric disorders are a major burden of disease worldwide. Mental health is an essential component of health and is a resource to help to deal with the stresses and challenges of everyday life. The way that the mentally ill are treated by the people influences the health and welling of the mentally ill. The behavior of the community is influenced by their knowledge and attitude on mental illness.

People with mental health problems living in the community experience rampant harassment due to negative beliefs leading to discrimination (Liselotte et al., 2015; Attitudes to Mental Illness - 2011 survey report, 2011). The belief that misuse of drugs cause mental illness elicits condemnation rather than understanding or sympathy (Suzy, 2016).

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the perception about mental illness among freshmen.
- To assess the association between perception about mental illness

and the selected demographic variables.

## METHODS

Non experimental quantitative descriptive design was used. The study was conducted at selected college, Tamil Nadu, India among fresh men. A Convenience sampling techniques was used to select the samples. Total population was 100. Fourteen samples were excluded due to incomplete answering techniques. The final sample size was 86. Demographic data and structured questionnaire were UTILIZED. THE STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE HAS 34 STATEMENTS ON A LIKERT SCALE.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Majority of the samples were 18 years old (54.7%), were females (51.2), fathers (41.9%) and mothers (41.9%) had high school education, fathers were coolie workers (36%), mothers were home makers (50%) and minority had family history of mental illness (15.1%).

**Table I: The perception about mental illness N=86**

S. No	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	“Psycho” and “maniac” are okay terms for mental illness	16	18.6	12	14.0	7	8.1	31	36.0	20	23.3
2	People with mental illness are hurt by slang names for their disorders	3	3.5	13	15.1	19	22.1	29	33.7	22	25.6
3	Mental illness is not a very serious problem	15	17.4	21	24.4	19	22.1	21	24.4	10	11.6
4	Parents are usually to blame for a child's mental illness	15	17.4	26	30.2	20	23.3	16	18.6	9	10.5
5	People with mental illness are often treated unfairly	14	16.3	14	16.3	12	14.0	31	36.0	15	17.4
6	Mental illness is often shown in negative ways on TV and in movies	21	24.4	22	25.6	5	5.8	30	34.9	8	9.3
7	Psychological treatment (such as talking to a psychologist or counselor) is useful	0	-	14	16.3	24	27.9	35	40.7	13	15.1
8	People with mental illness tend to be violent and dangerous	22	25.6	25	29.1	11	12.8	13	15.1	15	17.4
9	People with mental illness are more likely to lie	22	25.6	19	22.1	26	30.2	13	15.1	6	7.0
10	People who have had mental illness include astronauts, presidents, and famous baseball players	24	27.9	13	15.1	23	26.7	19	22.1	7	8.1
11	Mental illness is often confused with the effects of drug abuse	20	23.3	18	20.9	11	12.8	26	30.2	11	12.8
12	Mental illness is caused by something biological	8	9.3	27	31.4	28	32.6	17	19.8	6	7.0
13	Giving medicine is a useful way to treat mental illness	14	16.3	16	18.6	14	16.3	34	39.5	8	9.3
14	Mental illness and mental retardation are the same thing	13	15.1	23	26.7	23	26.7	20	23.3	7	8.1
15	A person with bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder acts overly energetic	19	22.1	21	24.4	15	17.4	18	20.9	13	15.1
16	Most people with severe forms of mental illness do not get better, even with treatment	19	22.1	13	15.1	25	29.1	21	24.4	8	9.3

17	Schizophrenia involves multiple personalities	30	34.9	18	20.9	13	15.1	18	20.9	7	8.1
18	People with mental illness deserve respect	7	8.1	18	20.9	25	29.1	21	24.4	15	17.4
19	We should do more to help people with mental illness get better	10	11.6	13	15.1	19	22.1	24	27.9	20	23.3
20	Jokes about mental illness are hurtful	15	17.4	16	18.6	20	23.3	25	29.1	10	11.6
21	It is important to learn about mental illness	9	10.5	11	12.8	17	19.8	37	43.0	12	14.0
22	A person with mental illness is able to be a good friend	13	15.1	9	10.5	22	25.6	29	33.7	13	15.1
23	It is a good idea to avoid people who have mental illness	27	31.4	16	18.6	27	31.4	11	12.8	5	5.8
24	I would be comfortable meeting a person with a mental illness	14	16.3	8	9.3	34	39.5	20	23.3	10	11.6
25	People with mental illness are able to help others	20	23.3	12	14.0	14	16.3	27	31.4	13	15.1
26	I would be frightened if approached by a person with mental illness	11	12.8	15	17.4	33	38.4	22	25.6	5	5.8
27	If I had a mental illness, I would not tell any of my friends	15	17.4	19	22.1	24	27.9	24	27.9	4	4.7
28	If any friends of mine had a mental illness, I would tell them not to tell anyone	16	18.6	18	20.9	29	33.7	9	10.5	14	16.3
29	Keeping people with mental illness in the hospital makes the community safer	16	18.6	23	26.7	26	30.2	15	17.4	6	7.0
30	Only people who are weak and overly sensitive let mental illness affect them	14	16.3	18	20.9	22	25.6	23	26.7	9	10.5
31	It would be embarrassing to have a mental illness	28	32.6	23	26.7	11	12.8	16	18.6	8	9.3
32	Students with mental illness shouldn't be in regular classes	11	12.8	13	15.1	38	44.2	16	18.6	8	9.3
33	I have little in common with people who have mental illness	25	29.1	19	22.1	15	17.4	17	19.8	10	11.6
34	Students with mental illness need special programs to learn	10	11.6	11	12.8	31	36.0	16	18.6	18	20.9

Significant association was found between perception that “people with mental illness are hurt by slang names for their disorders” and father’s occupation ( $p=.023$ ); “mental illness is not a very serious problem” and mother’s occupation ( $p=.000$ ) & history of mental illness in the family ( $p=.015$ ); “mental illness is often shown in negative ways on TV and in movies” and gender ( $p=.037$ ); “psychological treatment (such as talking to a psychologist or counselor) is useful” and father’s occupation ( $p=.010$ ) & occupation of the mother ( $p=.026$ ); “people with mental illness tend to be violent and dangerous” and family history of mental illness ( $p=.048$ ); “people with mental illness are more likely to lie” and mother’s occupation ( $p=.005$ ); “people who have had mental illness include astronauts, presidents, and famous baseball players” and family history of mental illness ( $p=.050$ ); “mental illness is caused by something biological” and father’s occupation ( $p=.027$ ); “schizophrenia involves multiple personalities” and father’s education ( $p=.056$ ); “people with mental illness deserve respect” and father’s education ( $p=.057$ ) & mother’s occupation ( $p=.035$ ); “we should do more to help people with mental illness get better” and family history of mental illness ( $p=.058$ ); “jokes about mental illness are hurtful” and family history of mental illness ( $p=.040$ ); “it is important to learn about mental illness” and father’s occupation ( $p=.008$ ) & mother’s occupation ( $p=.046$ ); “a person with mental illness is able to be a good friend” and father’s occupation ( $p=.007$ ) & mother’s occupation ( $p=.019$ ); “it is a good idea to avoid people who have mental illness” and age ( $p=.023$ ), father’s occupation ( $p=.031$ ) & mother’s occupation ( $p=.022$ ); “people with mental illness are able to help others” and gender ( $p=.050$ ), father’s occupation ( $p=.038$ ), mother’s occupation ( $p=.042$ ) & family history of mental illness ( $p=.059$ ); “I would be frightened if approached by a person with mental illness” and father’s occupation ( $p=.050$ ), mother’s occupation ( $p=.000$ ) & family history of mental illness ( $p=.043$ ); “if I had a mental illness, I would not tell any of my friends” and mother’s occupation ( $p=.007$ ); “if any friends of mine had a mental illness, I would tell them not to tell anyone” and mother’s occupation ( $p=.008$ ) & family history of mental illness ( $p=.051$ ); “only people who are weak and overly sensitive let mental illness affect them” and mother’s occupation ( $p=.031$ ); “students with mental illness shouldn’t be in regular classes” and mother’s education ( $p=.041$ ) and “students with mental illness need special programs to learn” and mother’s education ( $p=.009$ ).

## CONCLUSION

Mental health problem result in reduced quality of life and possibly loss of life. The way that the mentally ill are treated by the community influences their health. The behavior of the community is influenced by their knowledge and attitude on mental illness.

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