



CLINICAL PLACEMENT IMPACT ON THE ATTITUDE OF NURSING STUDENTS TOWARDS MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

Nursing

Mr. Abin Varghese

Bhopal Nursing College, Bhopal Memorial Hospital And research centre, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health And Family Welfare ,Government of India, Raisen By pass Road, Bhopal ,Madhya Pradesh India 462038

Mrs. Gigini George*

Bhopal Nursing College, Bhopal Memorial Hospital And research centre, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health And Family Welfare ,Government of India, Raisen By pass Road, Bhopal ,Madhya Pradesh India 462038 *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Student nurses have a preconceived set of attitudes and beliefs towards patients with mental illness. Majority of them are fearful or believe that mentally ill are dangerous in some way. However the clinical placement has some role in altering the attitudes and beliefs of students towards mentally ill people.

Aims and Objectives: The study was undertaken to assess the impact of psychiatric clinical placement on the attitude of students towards mentally ill patients.

Material and Methods: A quasi experimental study design was used to collect data from thirty three baccaulerate nursing students using beliefs towards Mental Illness Scale (BMIS) before and after the clinical placement.

Results: A significant change was found in the attitude of students towards mentally ill patients after the clinical placement.

Conclusion: Clinical placement in psychiatric nursing should be mandatorily carried out by all institutions offering nursing programs as it can provide a good morale for student nurses to pursue higher studies in Psychiatric nursing and helps to render effective care for mentally ill people.

KEYWORDS

mental illness, clinical placement, nursing

INTRODUCTION:

Mental illness has become quite common throughout the world. The estimates from World Health Organization reminds that there are 450 million people in the world suffering from different kinds of mental illness constituting around 14% of the global burden of disease (WHO, 2008). Moreover India has a high prevalence of mental illness which further on adds to the health burden. (Math, SB, 2007). The societal stigma and discrimination towards patients with mental illness has made a long way in keeping aside the profession of Psychiatry as well as psychiatric Nursing. The paucity of psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists are well acknowledged facts in Indian Scenario. Furthermore the negative attitude towards mental health nursing as a career option has been identified as a barrier in creating a sustainable psychiatric nursing work force. (Gough B & Happell, 2008). Clinical Placements of students in psychiatric nursing helps to make a harmonious intermingling of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain by establishing a therapeutic relationship with the patient. However the areas focusing on the attitudes of nursing students towards mentally ill patients based on clinical placement is being neglected. Hence forth the current study was undertaken to assess the impact of psychiatric clinical placement on the attitude of students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was quasi experimental study carried out at a nursing college of a referral hospital. Participants were selected through convenient sampling. Study criteria included a) Third Year B.Sc nursing students where Psychiatric Nursing Subject was offered as a subject with clinical placement (b) students those were willing to participate. A sample of 33 students was enrolled for the study.

MEASURES

1. Semi structured proforma which included socio-demographic data (age, sex, semester, marital status, residence, religion, and socioeconomic status), Exposure to psychiatric patients
2. Beliefs towards Mental Illness scale (BMI). The BMI is a 21-item self-report measure of negative stereotypical views of mental illness. There is a Total Score and three subscales based on factor analysis: dangerousness, poor social and interpersonal skills, and incurability. The poor social skills subscale also taps feelings of shame about mental illness and the perception that the mentally ill are untrustworthy. Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 'completely disagree' (0) to 'completely agree' (5), with higher scores reflecting more negative beliefs. In the primary validity study, Cronbach's alpha was high among American (0.89) and Asian students (0.91). The measure holds promising evidence of validity.

PROCEDURE

All nursing students received didactic teaching on psychiatric nursing (90 hours) as a part of the curriculum. Following the theoretical instruction the students undergone mental health clinical placement for 8 weeks where they had exposure to patients with various mental disorders. Data was collected through self administered questionnaire. The primary and secondary investigator briefed the thirty three students about the aims and methods of the present study. The initial data was collected after the completion of lectures in psychiatric nursing before the clinical placement and the final data was obtained after the completion of Psychiatric clinical nursing placement. Students those were willing to participate were asked to complete the questionnaires. They could complete both questionnaires in about 15 min. Data collection tools contained no identifying information (such as name, address, mobile number, etc.) and therefore kept the individual responses confidential.

Ethical considerations

Permission was obtained from the administrators of the colleges where the study was conducted. Participants were introduced to the aims and procedures of the study to decide if they would like to participate. After they had agreed to participate verbally, the researchers gave them the confidential questionnaire. Participants were given freedom to withdraw from the study at any part of the procedure.

Statistical analysis

The *t*-test was used to determine whether significant differences of attitude towards mentally ill existed pre and post clinical placement of psychiatric nursing. Statistical significance was assumed at $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS

The present study sample comprised of 33 nursing students (Table 1) who were not exposed to psychiatry training. A majority of students were females (96.96%) and unfamiliar about persons with mental illness (100%). A significant difference was found between the pre and post clinical placement attitude of students towards mentally ill patients. (Table 2)

Sl. No.	Variable		Frequency(%)
1.	Sex	Male	1(3.03)
		Female	32(96.96)
2	Age(years)	20-25	26(78.78)
		26-30	7(21.21)
		>30	nil

3.	Religion	Hindu	26(78.78)
		Christian	4(12.21)
		Muslim	3(9.09)
4.	Marital status	Married	nil
		Unmarried	33(100)
5.	Exposure to mental illness	Yes	nil
		No	33(100)

Table 2: The mean pretest and post test score on attitude towards mentally ill

S.No.	Attitude score (Mean+ _SD)	Range	Std. Error Mean	Significance
Pretest	88.94+-5.297	82-96	.936	.000*
Post test	46.97+ 6.572	36-64	1.162	

*Statistically significant

DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to assess the impact of clinical placement on the attitude of baccalaureate nursing students towards mentally ill patients through a quasi experimental method. A significant change in the attitude was found after the clinical placement favoring a good therapeutic relationship with the patient. Obviously this reinforces the concept of implementing a clinical based curriculum along with the theoretical instruction. However the limited facilities for psychiatric placements for an enormous number of nursing students remains a concern for the majority of nursing institutions in the country which can be tackled by introducing various forms of psychiatric simulations into the curriculum. Furthermore similar findings are observed in the studies done by Haspell & Gaskin(2013), Slimmer et al.(1990), Keane (1991), Evagelou et al., (2005) wherein the students who have more exposure to theoretical as well as clinical placement had developed a favorable attitude towards mentally ill patients. However many other studies have shown concern over the degree of attitude change by mere clinical placement in psychiatric wards since the hospital settings focus is on symptom relief, medication and stabilization. Moreover the hospitalized patients will be acutely or severely ill requiring more restrictive measures to ensure their safety (Torgalsbøen, 1999., Wykes et al., 2018; Stuhlmiller, 2005a, 2005b). Obviously the current study has taken over this concern by having clinical placements in psychiatric outpatient department for two weeks where they used to interact with patients who are more stabilized with respect to their clinical condition. The clinical placements in psychiatric nursing has been considered as an important arena in baccalaureate curriculum to imbibe knowledge, skills and attitude for nursing students to engage with patients suffering from various mental health problems(Henderson et al ,2007) however the negative experiences the students may encounter during the placements should be effectively tackled by a preceptor or clinical instructor.

CONCLUSION

The clinical placement in psychiatric nursing has an impact on changing the attitude of nursing students towards mentally ill patients. The curriculum should be designed in such a fashion that the students receive sufficient theoretical instruction before the clinical placement. Moreover the nurse educators should have the sufficient skills to tackle difficulties the students may encounter in the interpersonal relationship with mentally ill patients.

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