Healthcare

Volume 12

Issue 12

Nursing Students' Attitudes toward Working in Mental Health Facilities in Saudi Arabia: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract
(1) Background: There is a global demand for more psychiatric nurses, with nursing students' attitudes toward mental illness and working in mental health facilities playing a pivotal role in their career choices. This study aims to evaluate attitudes toward working in mental health facilities among undergraduate nursing students in Saudi Arabia, both before and after exposure to psychiatry courses, and examine their relationship with perceptions of mental illness. (2) Methods: A quantitative descriptive and correlational cross-sectional design was employed. Nursing students' attitudes toward working in mental health facilities were assessed using the Attitude Toward Psychiatry 18 (ATP-18) questionnaire and the Beliefs Toward Mental Illness (BMI) scale. (3) Results: No significant relationship has been found between the frequency of negative views of both ATP-18 and BMI, and exposure to the psychiatry course. However, nurses who completed the psychiatry course held more positive views towards psychiatrists and found psychiatric patients less demanding, were less likely to view psychological disorders as dangerous, more confident in trusting mentally ill colleagues, and felt less embarrassed by the term "psychological disorder" compared to those who had not taken the course. (4) Conclusion: Based on our findings, it is evident that exposure to psychiatric courses and training enhances the potential of nursing students to contribute effectively to the psychiatric field. Therefore, integrating mental health and illness community services training into nursing education programs can play a pivotal role in raising awareness and attracting students who may hold negative attitudes towards individuals with mental illness.

Keywords:
psychiatric; mental health; attitude; nursing student; mental illness; psychiatric nurse; Saudi Arabia

Biography:
I am an Associate Professor of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). My academic journey began with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) in 2011 from KAU, followed by a Master of Science in Nursing Education (Psychiatric Mental Health) in 2016. I earned my PhD in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University in 2019.

Currently, I focus on teaching and research in mental health nursing, self-awareness, and psychological resilience. My professional experience includes working as an Emergency Registered Nurse and contributing to nursing education and practice improvement.
I have participated in various research projects and community activities, including workshops and symposiums. My work is published in journals such as *Healthcare* and *INQUIRY*, with recent studies addressing attitudes toward mental health facilities and dementia care.
I am also actively involved in community service, delivering workshops and lectures on topics like self-awareness in nursing, mental health interventions, and enhancing patient interactions.
Certifications include training in Clinical Simulation Instruction and passing the NCLEX-RN exam.
My goal is to continue improving psychiatric mental health care and empowering nurses through education and research.

Reseach topic:
This study explores nursing students' attitudes toward working in mental health facilities in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the impact of psychiatric course exposure on these attitudes. It highlights that while students with psychiatric training showed more positive views toward mental illness and less stigma, there was no significant overall correlation between education and negative perceptions. The findings emphasize the need for enhanced psychiatric education, clinical exposure, and stigma reduction strategies to attract nursing students to mental health specialties.

About institution:
The **College of Nursing at King Abdulaziz University (KAU)** is one of the leading institutions in Saudi Arabia dedicated to advancing nursing education, research, and practice. It offers undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students for diverse roles in healthcare, emphasizing evidence-based practice, patient-centered care, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The college is committed to excellence in education and is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, fostering innovation and skill development. With a strong focus on areas like psychiatric mental health nursing, community health, and leadership, KAU Nursing College plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of nursing professionals in the region.

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