



Service Priorities and Programmes
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A survey on stigmatizing attitudes towards individuals with mental illness in HA staff and general public: A deeper thought in recovery journey

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Introduction

Stigmatization from public, particularly in Chinese society, resulted in social isolation of people in recovery and limited their ability to deal with the illness. Social stigma is a major problem faced by people with mental illness (MI) when reintegrating into the community. They may experience various discrimination in daily lives and hindered their recovery process.

Objectives

1. Provide up-to-date empirical findings of stigmatizing attitudes towards individuals with MI in community 2. Illustrate the impacts of stigmatization on their lives for further recovery intervention

Methodology

A 31-item Questionnaire on mental illness measuring public attitudes and Level of Contact Subscale were administered. It was distributed and self-completed by the professional and supporting staff in HA, staff working in mental health field in NGOs and general public. Descriptive statistics were obtained. The percentages of positive, negative, and neutral responses were calculated for each item. Analysis on the feedback from respondents with different occupations and educational level was also conducted.

Result

160 completed questionnaires were collected. On the positive side, the majority of respondents possessed some knowledge about MI and could aware that there were many difficulties confronted people with MI and their relatives. Furthermore, most of them recognized that alienation and discrimination would adversely affect the recovery from MI. Over 90% of respondents agreed that discrimination could affect recovery and more funding or resources should be allocated for psychiatric rehabilitation service. Over 70% of them agreed that stigmatization hindered people

with MI from having practical care and employment and increased their emotional burden. They characterized mentally ill people as able to contribute to society (52.1%), introverted (38.5%) and similar to normal people (38.5%). On the other hand, some non-professional respondents with less education held negative attitudes towards MI. Around 20%-30% of them agreed people with MI was associated with hostility and aberrant in various questions. Nearly 30% of them disagreed for openness and acceptance towards MI in working and accommodation environment. Misbeliefs about MI were also obvious that they described mentally ill people as introverted (45.3%), quick-tempered (32.8%) and low self-esteem (32.4%) Social stigma has tremendous impacts on the recovery of individuals with MI. More educational program and promotion campaign of anti-stigmatization to community is recommended for more openness and acceptance towards MI. Providing more contact experience with each other is also important for both service users and general public to diminish stigmatization.