

**PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE
PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

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ABSTRACT

Background: What had been a very real but mostly undiscussed social issue had become a more visible social problem confronting a larger public. The attitude of the public toward mental illness and toward the patients raises a serious and sensitive issue that indirectly affects the development of community mental health services. Public awareness and education about mental health and illness can help in improving positive attitude and reduce stigma in the public. **Study Design:** a descriptive design of study was conducted amongst the students in a private university in Kuala Lumpur, to describe the public's views in terms of their perceptions and attitude towards mental illness, as well as to identify the beliefs in the causes of mental illness. **Method:** the data was collected by using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of four sections: demographic survey, common perceptions towards Mental Illness, Attitude about social distance to the people with mental illness and beliefs in causes of mental illness. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). **Findings:** a total of 100 respondents completed the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents 96% were Chinese. The scores represented a mild positive attitude towards mental illness and patients. **Conclusion:** This study suggests the need to incorporate anti-stigma educational programmes in to mental health policies in the communities, can include community education regarding the causation, manifestation, treatment and prognosis of mental illness.

Keywords: Mental illness, Public perceptions, attitude, stigma, discrimination.