

# A Descriptive Study to Assess the Knowledge about Misconceptions Regarding Mental Illness among the People Attending the Psychiatric OPD, SGRD, Hospital Amritsar

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## ABSTRACT

Many mentally ill people are the victims of stigma and misconceptions. This leads to additional suffering and humiliations. The knowledge of these misconceptions helps in management of mentally ill in our society. The present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge about misconceptions regarding mental illness among the people attending the psychiatric OPD, SGRD, Hospital, Amritsar. The objective of the study was to assess the knowledge about misconception regarding mental illness. The data was collected from 30 subjects by convenient sampling technique attending the psychiatric OPD with the help of misconception regarding mental illness interview schedule. Descriptive design was adopted for the study. The data was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The major finding of the study revealed that more than half (60%) subjects had below average knowledge about misconception regarding mental illness, 33.3% had average knowledge and only 6% had good knowledge. The findings of the study revealed that majority below average knowledge about misconception regarding mental illness. It is recommended to conduct similar study on large sample of subjects and further can be conducted in community setting.

**Keywords:** *Mental illness, Misconception*

## INTRODUCTION

Many people with serious mental illness are challenged doubly. On one hand, they struggle with the symptoms and disabilities that result from disease. On the other, they are challenged by the stereotypes and prejudice that result from the misconceptions about mental illness. As a result of both, people with mental illness are robbed of the opportunities that define a quality life: good jobs, safe housing, satisfactory health care, and affiliation with a diverse group of people.<sup>1</sup> In rural areas of India, many villagers still believe mental illness is caused by evil spirits angry that the sick person had killed a cow during a past life.<sup>2</sup>

Many mentally ill people are the victims of stigma and misconceptions. This leads to additional suffering and humiliations. Negative stereotypes and pre judicial attitudes against them are often reinforced by their media representation as unpredictable, violent and dangerous. Hence the importance of the study of these misconceptions helps in the management of the mentally ill in our society.<sup>3</sup>

In our society the persons with psychiatric illness often received as unwanted elements and societal stigma prevents them from seeking help and treatment. In recent years the awareness about mental illness has been changed a lot, even still the misconceptions about mental illness still present in society. Many studies done by WHO and other agencies point the need of awareness programs in the society for eradicating stigma. The Indian Mental Act, 1987, is an amendment of the Indian lunacy act, 1912 recognize the crucial role of treatment and care of mentally ill persons. But still in some part of our country mental illness considered as a sins and witch craft, these believes prevent them from seeking medical help.

Mental and behavioral disorders account for approximately 7.4 percent of the global burden of disease and represent the leading cause of disability worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Medical health professional can play a major role in prevention of misconceptions among communities.<sup>3</sup> According to department of health and family welfare census report (2001), 1.7% of the Punjab's population is suffering from mental illness.<sup>6</sup>

**OBJECTIVE**

To assess the knowledge about misconceptions regarding mental illness among people attending psychiatric OPD.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

The study was conducted in the psychiatric OPD of SGRD Hospital, Amritsar, Punjab in May 2014. A descriptive research design was used and 30 subjects were selected by convenient sampling technique. Data was collected by using self structured interview schedule which includes 18 items on misconceptions regarding mental illness. The reliability of tool was calculated by test retest and Karl Pearson coefficient method and it was 0.8.

**RESULTS**

The socio demographic variable includes data related to age, gender, hostility, type of family and previous knowledge regarding misconceptions. The most of subjects (40%) were belonged to age group 47-55 years. Half of subjects (50%) were higher secondary passed, followed by 26.6% were illiterate. More than half of subjects (63.3%) were females and 36.6% were males and 70% had rural habitat. As per type of family 63.3% subjects were from nuclear family and half of subjects (50%) were private job holders. Majority of subjects (76.6%) had not any previous knowledge about misconceptions regarding mental illness.

Sr. No.	Level of knowledge	Scoring	F	Percentage
1.	Good	13-18	2	06.6
2.	Average	07-12	10	33.3
3.	Below average	00-06	18	60

Table1. shows the level of knowledge regarding misconceptions regarding mental illness divided into 3 levels good (13-18), average (07-12), below average (00-06). The more than half of subjects (60%) had below average, 33.3% had average and only 6.6% had good level of knowledge about misconceptions regarding mental illness.

**DISCUSSION**

**Recommendation**

- Conduct study on large population by involving more hospitals.

- Assess correlation between demographic variables and misconceptions regarding mental illness.
- Conduct survey regarding awareness in community.

**CONCLUSION**

This study was conducted with the motive to assess level of knowledge about misconception regarding mental illness among people attending psychiatric OPD. As the general population play important role in early detection and preventing from misguiding of society with superstitions. So it's necessary to assess their awareness level and plan according to that for creating awareness regarding mental illness. This study present that still majority of people are having below average knowledge about mental illness and only 6.6% that is too less and indicate that society needs an community based awareness programme to create awareness in general public.

**Ethical Clearance:** Written permission was obtained from Head of department of psychiatry, Sri Guru Ram Das Hospital, Amritsar. Written consent was obtained from each subject after giving assurance of confidentiality.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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