



Causes of Mental illnesses: A Survey on Attendants of Mentally ill Patients

Atif Abbas ^{*1}, Waqas Ali Haider ², Ali Shan³

^{*1}Corresponding author: House Officer, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, 00923217130422, atifabbas217@gmail.com

² House Officer, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, 00923214646444, waqasali@hotmail.com

³ House Officer, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, 00923213110311, alishan@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of the current work was to examine the beliefs of the attendants relating to the mental illness cause of their patients.

Place and Duration of Study: This study was carried out during January 2019 at Fauji Foundation Hospital, Lahore.

Materials and Methods: For getting the 500-sample size non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied. Criteria for inclusion was the written informed consent from the adult attendants. Attendants who were excluded were having medical illness, psychiatric illness and delusions. Attendants were asked to express their view about the causes of their patients' mental illness. SPSS version 17 was used to analyse the collected data.

Results: The male attendants were 263(55.80%) and female were 217(45.20%). Men were having 32.75 ± 10.12 mean age and women were having 28.27 ± 9.38 mean age. Most of the them were illiterate, married and having rural background. There were 190 (39.58%) who were having family history of mental illness. The belief of the attendants relating to mental illness cause were as; evil spirits 131 (27.29%) medical illness 99 (20.62%), head injuries 38 (7.91%), attention seeking 72 (15%) drug abuse 55 (11.45%) disturbed relations 52 (10.83%), curse of God 22(4.58%) and loss of loved ones 11 (2.29%).

Conclusion: 131 (27.29%) attendants out of 480 were of the view that main reason of their patients' mental illness was evil spirits. According to 99 (20.62%) medical illness was also the reason. In view of 72 (15%) the reason for mental illness was attention seeking therefore they are changing their behaviour to get attention by their own.

Key Words: Attitude, Mental illness, Stigma, Mental health beliefs

INTRODUCTION

The definition of mental illness is that the disorders and diversity of mental health condition which affect the behaviour, thought and mood. Typically, mental health professionals carried out the study of public attitude relating to mental illness and people having mental illness e.g., psychiatrist and psychologist. There are different thoughts from individuals of different walks of life such as illiterate, literature, old and young.

There is positive and negative attitude of the people relating to mental illness. The individuals from the related area have false and misguided beliefs about mental illness. According to the research carried out in Singapore revealed that negative attitude in the society have dominating position about the mental illness. In earlier times, people having mental illness were injured, removed from house and sometime death penalty was considered for soul relieves. According to the research carried out by the nurses and journalists of Nigeria revealed that curse of God, supernatural forces, witches and evil spirits causing mental illness and people having mental illness were considered as risky, threatening, careless, unreliable and brutal. According to research carried out in America that the public attitude had been changed by the false beliefs towards the people having mental illness who were being discriminated in housing, jobs, availing medical treatment and socially as well. Mental health service funding also got affected by the negative attitude due false beliefs. At certain time, a small group of professionals was believed to involved in condemnation of people having mental illness or those not having improvement confidence would change from positive to negative social connections.

On the other hand, there is positive attitude of health care professional for people having mental illness based on well organised contact comparing general public. Presence of positive attitude in Americans research was also reported by the study conducted by Americans. People of Lahore, Pakistan may be found with negative attitude and lack of knowledge towards people having mental illness. No research has been carried out in Lahore on this issue, as per our information. The aim of the current research is to examine the belief of the attendants about the causes of their patients' mental illness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out at Fauji Foundation Hospital, Lahore. The study was finalised in Psychiatry Department having whole week OPD and indoor running. In 2019, the current research was carried out on the attendants who were with their mentally ill patients in the hospital. The research was carried out in indoor and OPD as



well. One attendant was permitted to answer. The study was cross-sectional. They used non-probability convenience sampling technique. G-Power calculator was used to calculate the size of sample. Permission was obtained from the institutional ethical review committee. They followed the guidelines enumerated in Declaration of Helsinki. They explained title and object of the research to every attendant. They approached to 500 individuals, but the consent was refused by 20 people. The demographic variables were not quite dissimilar from the other attendants. The criterion for including participants was the written informed consent. They excluded the attendants from the study, who did not provide informed consent and who were with medical illness, psychiatric illness, in delirium and having delusions. After the application of exclusion and inclusion criteria they included 480 attendants and obtained written informed consent. They explain the title and object of the study to the attendants. They prepared a data sheet. Written informed consent was added in the first portion of the sheet, person's demographic detail was added in second portion of the sheet and the third portion of the sheet was carrying the open-ended questions. A list of option shown in the result was given to a person if he was unable to answer. They asked the attendants to mark tick to the options. Complete data sheet was read out by

the data collector for illiterate attendants and they tick the options as per their choice. SPSS version 17 was used for analysing data after its collection.

RESULTS

The study was conducted on 480 attendants and out of them the male attendants were 263(55.80%) and female were 217(45.20%). Men were having 32.75 ± 10.12 mean age and women were having 28.27 ± 9.38 mean age. The participants were divided into 3 groups according to their age, as first age group between 18 to 29 years, second age group between 30 to 40 years and third group above 40 years of age. There were 164 (34.16%) participants in the first age group, in second age group there were 183(38.12%) participants and in third age group there were 133 (27.70%) participants. The contributors from rural background were 285 (59.37%) whereas from urban background there were 195 (40.62%). Among them married were 277(57.70%) and single were 203(42.29%). There were 3 groups as per the status of education. First group was for illiterate 241(50.20%), second group was up to 10 years of education 121(25.20%) and third group was above 10 years education 118 (24.58%). 190(39.58%) were having family history of mental illness whereas there was no family history among 290(60.41%) as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of participants

Variable	Number (Percentage)	
Gender	Male	263 (55.80)
	Female	217 (45.20)
Age in years	10-29	164 (34.16)
	30-40	183(38.12)
	Above 40	133 (27.70)
Background	Rural	285 (59.37)
	Urban	195 (40.62)
Marital status	Married	277 (57.70)
	Not married	203 (42.29)
Education	Illiterate	241 (50.20)
	Matric	121 (25.20)
	Above matric	118 (24.58)
Affiliation with other family members	Yes	190 (39.58)
	No	290 (60.41)

131(27.29%) attendants of the patients of mental illness were of the view the main cause is evil spirit. 99 (20.62) attendants considered the cause is medical illnesses. According to 72 (15%) attendants, the patients are attention seekers therefore the behaviour change is for getting attention. Mental illness is caused by the drug abuse considered by 55(11.45%). Disturbed relations are the reason of mental ailment according to 52(10.83%) attendants. Head injuries are the cause of mental illness is the view of 38 (7.91%) attendants. It is believed by 22(4.58%) attendants that the mental capacity is affected by the curse of God. The loss of loved ones was considered as caused of mental illness by 11 (2.29%) attendants as shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2:** Causes of mental illness according to attendants (N=480)

Cause	Number (Percentage)
Medical illness	99 (20.62)
Head injury	38 (7.91)
Drug abuse	55 (11.45)
Curse from God	22 (4.58)
Attention seeking behaviour	72 (15)
Evil spirits	131 (27.29)
Loss of close ones	11 (2.29)
Conflictual relationships	52 (10.83)

DISCUSSION

The current research has revealed that there are 3 basic elements causing mental ailment i.e., evil spirits 131 (27.29%), medical illness 99 (20.62%) and attention seekers 72 (15%). The current research has also shown the dominance of married as 277 (57.70%), rural as 285 (59.37%), male as 263 (55.80%) and illiterate as 241 (50.20%). The evil spirit supremacy might be the reason that majority of the attendants 213(54.47%) were having rural background. According to the research carried out by the nurses and journalists of Nigeria revealed that curse of God, supernatural forces, witches and evil spirits causing mental illness whereas the current study has shown the main mental illness causes are evil spirits, medical illness and attention seeker as the leading causes of mental illness. Among Pakistanis and Americans, disturbed relations have also significant cause for mental ailment. According to the research carried out in Singapore revealed that negative attitude about mental ailment is from old age, male, lower education and socio-economic status which is supporting the current study wherein mostly attendants are men, having rural background and are illiterate. in the society have dominating position about the mental illness. As per 55 (11.45%) attendants of the current research considered substance abuse and drug as main

reason for mental ailment which is similar to a research carried out by Nigerians as the main causes for mental illness are drinking alcohol, drugs, substance abuse injurious to health, trauma and job with stress. In the current research, the attitude of the participants who were having mental illness family history was very positive when they were asked about causes of mental ailment in their patients. According to them, the main causes was medical illness or the side effects of drug but there was no room for evil spirits as it was found in the research carried out in Singapore which shows that professionals having family history of mental illness or mental illness is diagnosed to their close friend is predicted less social distance relating to who have mental ailment. The easy method to conduct and simple questionnaire use for collection of data is the strength of our research. The limitations of the present study were hospital based and cross-sectional nature.

CONCLUSION

131 (27.29%) attendants out of 480 were of the view that main reason of their patients' mental illness was evil spirits. According to 99 (20.62%) medical illness was also the reason. In view of 72 (15%) the reason for mental illness was attention seeking therefore they are changing their behaviour to get attention by their own.

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