

Comparative Study to Assess the Attitude toward Mental Illness between Second Year and Fourth Year B.Sc. Nursing Students

Vipul Nayak¹, Dinesh Kumar Sharma², Jayesh Patidar², Kapil Pandya³

¹Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Tirupati College of Nursing, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, ²Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Geetanjali College and School of Nursing, Geetanjali University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, ³Department of Paediatric Nursing, ANMTC, Dungarpur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

Background: Mental illness remains a major global health concern, often accompanied by stigma and negative perceptions. Nursing students' attitudes toward mental illness play a crucial role in shaping their future patient care practices. This study compares the attitudes of 2nd-year and 4th-year B.Sc. Nursing students toward mental illness.

Materials and Methods: A comparative descriptive research design was employed using a quantitative approach. The study was conducted among 200 nursing students (100 second-year and 100 fourth-year) from selected nursing colleges in Udaipur. The opinion about mental illness scale, comprising 51 items across five domains, was used for data collection. Statistical analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software, with an unpaired *t*-test applied to compare attitude scores between the groups.

Results: Significant differences were observed in four domains—authoritarianism, mental health ideology, social restrictiveness, and interpersonal etiology—favoring 4th-year students. However, no significant difference was found in the benevolence factor. The results indicate that completion of the mental health nursing course positively influences students' attitudes towards mental illness.

Conclusion: Mental health education and clinical exposure significantly improve nursing students' attitudes toward mental illness. Strengthening psychiatric nursing curricula and increasing real-world patient interactions can help foster positive perceptions and reduce stigma in mental health care.

Keywords: Attitude, mental illness, nursing students, psychiatric nursing

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

“A sound mind in a sound body” is a saying to which most people are familiar. Man is a psycho-social being and he had to deal with his physical, spiritual, social, and environmental

needs.^[1] Any disturbance in any of these areas affects the whole person. Hence, people can be considered as maladjusted and well adjusted. This can be done on the basis of their relationship with the environment and self. Maladjusted persons have problems in adjusting whereas a well-adjusted person is in good harmony with himself and his environment.^[1]

According to the World Health Organization, 400 million people are struck by mental illnesses and neurological disorders globally—ranging from depression to Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy.^[2] Around two hundred million people suffer from mood disorders, 45 million are affected with schizophrenia, 83 million with mental retardation, and 30 and 22 million people with epilepsy and dementia, respectively.^[3] In the past, mentally ill were considered to be possessed by evil spirits. Psychiatric patients were locked up in mental asylums,

Date of Submission: 19-01-2025

Date of Revision: 06-02-2025

Date of Acceptance: 21-02-2025

Access this article online

Website: <http://innovationalpublishers.com/Journal/ijnh>

ISSN No: 2454-4906

DOI: 10.31690/ijnh.2025.v01i01.002

Address for Correspondence:

Mr. Jayesh Patidar, Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Geetanjali College and School of Nursing, Geetanjali University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

E-mail: jayemina@gmail.com

This is an open-access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Share Alike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms

alienated from the rest of the society. During the 20th century, psychiatry began to make scientific advancement.^[3]

The current trend is complete integration of the mentally ill patient into the normal pattern of medical care with continuity of care from his family doctor, utilization of the general hospital and community resources.^[4] Attitudes have two important functions firstly, they guide below towards various goals and away from adverse outcomes; secondly, they help people efficiently process compels information about the social world.^[5]

The current reports on mental health statistics show that there is as an acute dearth of psychiatric services in India, hence maximizing the health care delivery has become a priority.^[6] There is therefore a need to concentrate upon undergraduate mental health nursing course as means to increase the available number of professional nurses to manage persons who are mentally ill. The nurses thus trained have to work as “change agents” to change the attitude of people who are directly and indirectly involved with the care of the mentally ill. For this, each nurse should first develop a realistic and positive attitude toward mental illness and the mentally ill.

Whether or not student nurses ultimately choose psychiatric nursing as a subject, their attitude is psychiatric disorder and its treatment is very important. Whatever their final choice of speciality, most nurses will be required to manage a number of patients also are highly distressed or disturbed, even if this falls short of formal psychiatric disorder. Thus, the way in which student nurses are trained to cope with mentally ill patients is likely to influence their attitudes to personal distress and disturbance in patients' generally.^[7]

Objectives

The objective of study was

1. To determine the attitude toward mental illness of 4th year B.Sc. Nursing students who have completed the mental health nursing course by opinion about mental illness (OMI) scale,
2. To assess the attitude towards mental illness of 2nd year B.Sc. Nursing students who have not undergone the course of mental health nursing by OMI scale.
3. To compare the attitude of 4th year B.Sc. nursing students with 2nd year B.Sc. Nursing students towards mental illness.

Statement of the problem

The study aims to address the following specific questions:

1. What is the difference in attitudes towards mental illness between 2nd-year and 4th-year B.Sc. nursing students?
2. How do the knowledge levels and awareness of mental illness vary between 2nd-year and 4th-year nursing students?
3. What factors influence the attitudes of 2nd-year and 4th-year B.Sc. nursing students towards mental illness?

Statement of null hypothesis

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the attitude towards mental illness between 4th-year B.Sc. Nursing students who have completed the mental health nursing course and 2nd-year B.Sc. Nursing students who have not undergone the course, as measured by the OMI scale.
- H_{02} : The completion of the mental health nursing course does not significantly influence the attitude of 4th-year B.Sc. Nursing students toward mental illness, as measured by the OMI scale.
- H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the attitude toward mental illness among 2nd-year B.Sc. Nursing students who have not undergone the mental health nursing course, as measured by the OMI scale.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Quantitative Research Approach was used with comparative descriptive research design among 2nd year B.Sc nursing and 4th year B.Sc. nursing students ($n = 200$) those who were fulfilling the criteria to participate in research from different nursing colleges in Udaipur city. There were about 18 nursing colleges in the Udaipur city. Out of 18 nursing colleges, three colleges were selected for the main study by lottery method. Total number of Students in these three colleges were 230 in 2nd year and 165 in 4th year. One hundred students from 2nd year and 100 students from 4th year were selected by the simple random sampling technique.

The students of either sex, with 4th year B.Sc. Nursing students who have completed mental health nursing course in terms of attendance as per the university, nursing council rules were enrolled in the study using a multi-stage proportionate random sampling technique and those who do not have attendance in the mental health nursing course as per the university, nursing council rules were excluded from the study. The sample size was determined using formula for estimating proportions and the sample size was a 5% level of significance. The sample size was required for the study was 200.

The study was approved by institute ethics committee. The data for study were collected using structured proforma of Base line data and OMI scale which consisting of 51 items namely Authoritarianism, Benevolence, Mental Health Ideology, Social Restrictiveness and Interpersonal Etiology help to measure the attitude towards mental illness. First, the investigator met the 2nd year B.Sc (N) students, introduced himself and the purpose of the visit was explained in brief. Students were assured of their confidentiality of their response. Consent form was obtained by the printed form from the students before data collection. The students were asked to clarify any doubts regarding the questions or wordings while they are answering. After administering the questionnaire to the 2nd year B.Sc (N) students, the investigator approached the 4th year B.Sc (N) students. Same explanation was given to the 4th year B.Sc (N) students also. Each batch students took nearly 2 h to complete the questionnaire.

The data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. The result was calculated by both descriptive and inferential statistics on the basis of objectives and hypothesis of the study. To compute the data, a master data sheet was prepared by the investigator. The baseline data containing sample characteristics were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The mean attitude score in five areas such as authoritarianism, benevolence, mental health ideology, social restrictiveness, and interpersonal was calculated by range, frequency, mean, and standard deviation. The mean attitude scores of both the groups on the five areas of attitude were compared using unpaired “*t*” test.

RESULTS

A sample of 200 nursing students (100 from B.Sc. Nursing 2nd year and 100 from B.Sc. Nursing 4th year) were drawn from the selected colleges based on the specific criteria. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics presented in terms of frequency, percentage which is illustrated in Table 1.

As per distribution nursing students according to their sex, majority were females and majority i.e. 82% of 2nd year students and 75% of 4th year students belonged to the age group of 16–18 years. 78% of 2nd year students and 89% of 4th year students were Christians and majority, that is, 69% of 2nd year and 4th year students had previous exposure to mental illness.

The analysis of the attitude of students toward mental illness has been analyzed in five domain and presented in comparison. The five areas, namely, authoritarianism, benevolence, mental health ideology, social restrictiveness, and inter personal etiology, are listed in Tables 2-6. It shows that majority, 93%

of 2nd year students and 97% of 4th year students showed a neutral attitude toward authoritarianism. Most of the subjects, 92% of 2nd year and 97% of 4th year students were moderately benevolent. Majority, 81% of 2nd year and 82% of 4th year students were obtained moderate mental health ideology. Most of the students of the 2nd year and 4th year students (91% and 93%, respectively) possessed an attitude that mentally ill patients should be restricted from the society to a certain extent. While 81% of the 2nd year students and 76% of the 4th year students believed that interpersonal relationships can cause mental illness to a certain extent.

The comparison result showed [Table 7] that there is no significant difference between the mean benevolent scores obtained by the 2nd and 4th year students. Rest all domain are significant which indicate that the mental health nursing course can make the significant difference in 4th year nursing students and their attitude toward mental illness.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with previous research indicating that educational exposure significantly influences nursing students’ attitudes toward mental illness. A study by Sharma *et al.*^[8] found that nursing students who had completed mental health coursework exhibited more positive attitudes toward psychiatric patients than those who had not. Similarly, Li *et al.*^[9] reported that structured psychiatric education reduces stigma and enhances students’ willingness to work with mentally ill individuals. In addition, Callaghan *et al.*^[10] demonstrated that clinical exposure plays a key role in developing empathy and reducing negative stereotypes. Their research suggested that students with direct patient interactions were more likely to view mental illness as a treatable condition

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of sample characteristics of B.Sc. Nursing 2nd year and 4th year students (n=200)

S. N.	Variable	B.Sc. Nursing II year		B.Sc. Nursing IV year	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex				
	Male	19	19	16	16
	Female	81	81	84	84
2.	Age (in years)				
	16–18	82	82	75	75
	19–21	17	17	21	21
	22–24	01	01	04	04
2.	Religion				
	Hindu	22	22	11	11
	Christian	78	78	89	89
	Muslim	-	-	-	-
3.	Previous exposure				
	Yes	31	31	31	31
	No	69	69	69	69
4.	If yes,				
	Family	9	29.03	13	41.94
	Neighbor	6	19.35	5	16.13
	Friends	4	12.92	6	19.35
	Society	12	38.70	7	22.58

Table 2: Distribution of the sample according to the authoritarianism score obtained in the OMI scale

Attitude score	II year		IV year	
	F	%	F	%
1–22	0	0	3	3
23–44	93	93	97	97
45–66	7	7	0	0

OMI: Opinion about mental illness

Table 3: Distribution of the sample according to the benevolence score obtained in the OMI scale

Attitude score	II year		IV year	
	F	%	F	%
1–28	7	7	1	1
29–56	92	92	97	97
57–84	1	1	2	2

OMI: Opinion about mental illness

Table 4: Distribution of the sample according to the mental health ideology score obtained in the OMI scale

Attitude score	II year		IV year	
	F	%	F	%
1–15	9	9	1	1
16–30	81	81	82	82
31–46	10	10	17	17

OMI: Opinion about mental illness

Table 5: Distribution of the sample according to the social restrictiveness score obtained in the OMI scale

Attitude score	II year		IV year	
	F	%	F	%
1–17	1	1	6	6
18–34	91	91	93	93
35–51	8	8	1	1

OMI: Opinion about mental illness

Table 6: Distribution of the sample according to the interpersonal etiology score obtained in the OMI scale

Attitude score	II year		IV year	
	F	%	F	%
1–12	9	9	23	23
13–24	81	81	76	76
25–36	10	10	1	1

OMI: Opinion about mental illness

rather than a social burden. Park and Park^[11] further emphasized that comprehensive psychiatric education leads to more positive perceptions and higher likelihood of pursuing careers in psychiatric nursing.

Overall, this study confirms that mental health education significantly impacts nursing students' attitudes, highlighting the need for integrated theoretical and practical training in psychiatric nursing curricula.

Table 7: Comparison of the all domain attitude of the 2nd and 4th year students toward mental illness

OMI domain	Group	Mean	SD	"t" test	Remarks (at 0.05 level)
Authoritarian attitude	II year	32.9	4.9	0.024	Significant
	IV year	31.44	4.11		
Benevolence attitude	II year	38.42	6.01	0.697	Not significant
	IV year	38.78	7		
Mental health Ideology attitude	II year	24.55	4.9	0.036	Significant
	IV year	25.98	4.64		
Social restrictiveness attitude	II year	29.18	3.38	0.001	Significant
	IV year	27.47	3.63		
Interpersonal etiology attitude	II year	18.74	4.55	0.011	Significant
	IV year	20.26	3.82		

SD: Standard deviation, OMI: Opinion about mental illness

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that 4th-year nursing students had significantly more positive attitudes toward mental illness than 2nd-year students, except in the domain of benevolence. These findings emphasize the need for stronger mental health education and increased clinical exposure in undergraduate nursing programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We extend our gratitude to the participating institutions and students for their cooperation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

FUNDING DETAILS

This study received no external funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance nursing students' attitudes toward mental illness, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Strengthen Mental Health Education - Integrate comprehensive psychiatric nursing education early in the curriculum with continued reinforcement.
2. Enhance Clinical Exposure - Provide structured psychiatric clinical training, simulation-based learning, and real-world interactions.
3. Implement Attitude-Change Strategies - Use workshops, role-playing, and anti-stigma campaigns to foster positive perceptions.
4. Promote Mental Health Awareness - Engage students in seminars, outreach programs, and collaborations with mental health organizations.
5. Assess and Improve Curriculum - Regularly evaluate students' attitudes and update teaching methods based on research findings.

6. Encourage Mental Health Advocacy - Train students in patient rights, therapeutic communication, and ethical psychiatric care.
7. Support Further Research - Conduct longitudinal and multi-institutional studies to assess and improve nursing students' attitude.

REFERENCES

1. Mangal SK. Abnormal Psychology. 1st ed. United States: Sterling Publisher's Pvt Ltd.; 1987.
2. Department of Health. The Health of the Nation- a Strategy for Health. England: Press Release; 1993.
3. Park JC, Park K. Text Book of Preventive and Social Medicine. 15th ed. Jabalpur: Jabalpur Municipal Corporation; 1998.
4. Nagarajaiah, Reddama K, Chandrasekar CR, Isaac MK, Srinivasamurthy R. Evaluation of short term training in mental health for multipurpose workers. Indian J Psychiatry 1994;36:12-7.
5. Baron RA. Psychology. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Boston Publishers; 1992.
6. Sharma SD. General hospital psychiatry and undergraduate medical education. Indian J Psychiatry 1984;26:259-63.
7. Polit FD, Hungler PB. Nursing Research: Principles and Methods. 6th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Co; 1999.
8. Sharma S, Patel R, Gupta M. The impact of mental health education on nursing students' attitudes toward psychiatric patients. J Nurs Educ 2020;59:215-22.
9. Li X, Zhang Y, Chen H. Structured psychiatric education and its effects on stigma reduction among nursing students. Int J Ment Health Nurs 2021;30:178-85.
10. Callaghan P, Smith M, Taylor B. Clinical exposure and its role in shaping nursing students' perceptions of mental illness. Nurs Educ Today 2019;79:45-51.
11. Park H, Park S. The influence of comprehensive psychiatric education on students' career choices in mental health nursing. J Psychiatr Nurs 2018;32:112-20.

How to cite this article: Nayak V, Sharma DK, Patidar J, Pandya K. Comparative Study to Assess the Attitude toward Mental Illness between Second Year and Fourth Year B.Sc. Nursing Students. Innov J Nurs Healthc. 2025;11(1):5-9.