

Abstract

Title: Stigmatizing Attitudes of Health Professionals Towards People with Mental Illness in A Referral Hospital in Uganda: A Case of Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital

Background: Worldwide, health professionals in primary care settings show stigmatizing attitudes towards people with mental illness (PMI). Due to undermined quality of care delivered by the health professionals with stigmatizing attitudes towards these patients, there is resultant low recovery, poor social re-integration and poor quality of life of the PMI. Despite the negative effects of these stigmatizing attitudes on people with mental illness, information is scarce on stigmatizing attitudes of health professionals towards PMI in Uganda. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the level of stigmatizing attitudes towards PMI and its associated factors among health professionals in Uganda.

Method: We conducted a cross-sectional study among 254 health professionals attending to all patients at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital. The study employed the Community Attitude towards Mental Illness-2 (CAMI-2) scale to assess stigmatizing attitudes and collected data on professional quality of life, mental health knowledge, social demographics, and clinical characteristics. Linear regression was used to identify factors associated with levels of stigmatizing attitudes.

Results: The results showed that the CAMI mean score of the participants was 91.1 ± 16.6 although nurses/midwives had a significantly higher total CAMI score ($p = <0.001$, mean difference = 8.9 ± 2.1) compared to doctors. Doctors compared to clinical officers had significantly lower authoritarian attitudes $p = <0.004$, mean difference = -4.3 ± 1.3) and nurses/midwives had higher authoritarian attitudes than doctors ($p <0.001$, Mean difference = 3.4 ± 0.6). Nurses/midwives had higher malevolent and non-acceptance attitudes of PMI in the community compared to doctors i.e. ($p = 0.011$, Mean difference = 1.8 ± 0.6) and ($p = 0.021$, Mean difference = 2.1 ± 0.8 , respectively. Being male, increase in compassion satisfaction and increase in mental health knowledge were significantly associated with

lower levels of stigmatizing attitudes, while being a non-psychiatry health professional was significantly associated with higher levels of stigmatizing attitudes toward PMI.

Conclusions: This study found that health professionals exhibit moderate levels of stigmatizing attitudes towards PMI and that stigmatizing attitudes were more among nurses/midwives. Various steps including providing education and training on mental illness, and advocating for policies that enhance compassion satisfaction of health professionals in Uganda, can be taken to reduce stigmatizing attitudes of health professionals towards PMI

