



**AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS BY PEOPLE  
RESIDING IN SELECTED AREAS OF CHANDIGARH**

**Dazy Zarabi, Ph. D.**

*Department of Community Education & disability Studies,  
Panjab University, Chandigarh*

**INTRODUCTION**

**MEANING OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in thinking, emotion or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities. Mental illnesses can take many forms. Some are fairly mild and only interfere in limited ways with daily life, such as certain phobias (abnormal fears). Other mental health conditions are so severe that a person may need care in a hospital.

**TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

There are many different conditions that are recognized as mental illnesses. The more common types include:

**Depression**

Depression is a feeling of low mood that lasts for a long time and affects your everyday life. It can make you feel hopeless, despairing, guilty, worthless, unmotivated and exhausted. It can affect your self-esteem, sleep, appetite, sex drive and your physical health.

**Anxiety disorders:**

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Occasional anxiety is a normal human experience. But if your feelings of anxiety are very strong, or last for a long time, they can be overwhelming. You might also experience physical symptoms such as sleep problems and panic attacks.

### **Bipolar disorder**

Bipolar disorder mainly affects your mood. With this diagnosis you are likely to have times when you experience: manic or hypomanic episodes (feeling high); depressive episodes (feeling low); and potentially some psychotic symptoms. Everyone has variations in their mood, but in bipolar disorder these swings can feel very extreme and have a big impact on your life. In between, you might have stable times where you experience fewer symptoms.

### **Schizophrenia**

Views on schizophrenia have changed over the years. Lots of people question whether it's really a distinct condition, or actually a few different conditions that overlap. But you may still be given this diagnosis if you experience symptoms such as: psychosis (such as hallucinations or delusions) ;disorganised thinking and speech ; feeling disconnected from your feelings ;difficulty concentrating ; wanting to avoid people ;a lack of interest in things ;not wanting to look after yourself.

### **WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?**

Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is not known, it is becoming clear through research that many of these conditions are caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors.

- **Genetics (heredity):** Mental illnesses sometimes run in families, suggesting that people who have a family member with a mental illness may be somewhat more likely to develop one themselves. Experts believe many mental illnesses are linked to abnormalities in many genes rather than just one or a few and that how these genes interact with the environment is unique for every person (even identical twins). That is why a person inherits a susceptibility to a mental illness and doesn't necessarily develop the illness. Mental illness itself occurs from the interaction of multiple genes and other factors -- such as stress, abuse, or a traumatic event -- which can influence, or trigger, an illness in a person who has an inherited susceptibility to it.
- **Psychological Factors:** Coping with past or current traumatic experiences such as abuse, bereavement or divorce will strongly influence an individual's mental and emotional state which can in turn have an influence on mental health.
- **Environmental Causes:** Certain stressors can trigger an illness in a person who is susceptible to mental illness. Living in poverty or social isolation, being unemployed or highly stressed in your work can all put pressure on an individual's mental health.

## **Mental Health Stigma**

Mental health stigma can be divided into two distinct types: social stigma and self stigma.

Social stigma is characterized by prejudicial attitudes and discriminating behaviour directed towards individuals with mental health problems as a result of the psychiatric label they have been given. In contrast, self-stigma is the internalizing by the mental health sufferer of their perceptions of discrimination.

In relation to social stigma, studies have suggested that stigmatising attitudes towards people with mental health problems are widespread and commonly held.

The various commonly held stigma's in relation to mental illnesses are:

- (1) The most commonly held belief was that people with mental illnesses were dangerous.
- (2) People believed that some mental illnesses such as eating disorders were self inflicted.
- (3) A significant proportion of members of the public considered that people with mental health problems such as depression or schizophrenia were unpredictable, dangerous and they would be less likely to employ someone with a mental health problem.
- (4) Most people who live with mental illness have, at some point, been blamed for their condition. They've been called names. Their symptoms have been referred to as "a phase" or something they can control "if they only tried." They have been illegally discriminated against, with no justice.

**What factors cause stigma?:** The social stigma associated with mental health problems almost certainly has multiple causes.

1. Throughout history people with mental health problems have been treated differently, excluded and even brutalized. This treatment may come from the misguided views that people with mental health problems may be more violent or unpredictable than people without such problems.
2. Even the medical model of mental health problems is itself an unwitting source of stigmatizing beliefs. The medical model implies diagnosis, and diagnosis implies a label that is applied to a 'patient'. That label may well be associated with undesirable attributes (e.g. 'mad' people cannot function properly in society, or can sometimes be violent), and this again will perpetuate the view that people with mental health problems are different and should be treated with caution.

**Consequences of stigma:**

Many people with serious mental illness are challenged doubly. On one hand, they struggle with the symptoms and disabilities that result from the disease. On the other, they are challenged by the stereotypes and prejudice that result from misconceptions about mental illness.

Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. Worst of all, stigma prevents people from seeking the help they need. For a group of people who already carry such a heavy burden, stigma is an unacceptable addition to their pain. And while stigma has reduced in recent years, the pace of progress has not been quick enough.

Mental health problems and prejudiced attitudes toward mental illness have common risk factors. The pervasive negative public beliefs about mental illness, in turn, create an environment that impedes both treatment seeking and recovery. The public express that the people with mental illness are unpredictable and dangerous. Thus, the knowledge and attitude towards mental illness bears profound impact on the person with psychiatric illness.

The above factors highlight the importance of conducting research to assess the public awareness and attitude towards mental illness. Only few studies have been reported in India in regard to the knowledge and attitudes of the public towards people with mental illness. Hence, the aim of the present study is to assess the awareness about mental illness and attitude of public towards people with mental illness.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

On the basis of background enshrined above, two objectives are set for the present study.

1. To determine the level of awareness of the respondents regarding mental illness.
- 2 To determine the attitude of respondents towards mental illness

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

- 1) For the present study, a self-prepared questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection. The questionnaire was closed ended and contained 26 questions.
- 2) The collected data is presented in the form of tables and bar graphs. Percentages were computed from the collected data.
- 3) A descriptive survey approach has been followed in the present study.
- 4) The data has been collected from the people residing in two societies namely :  
The New light Society, Sector 51 ;  
The Progressive Society, Sector 50 ;

The above societies were chosen on the basis of convenience sampling.

5) The total number of respondents taken for the study are 50. The data was collected from the respondents who gave the consent for the present research without any prompting.

### **DELIMITATIONS**

Due to constraints of time, the sample size is restricted to 50 and respondents are also chosen from two societies of Chandigarh namely The New light Society, Sector 51 and The Progressive Society, Sector 50.

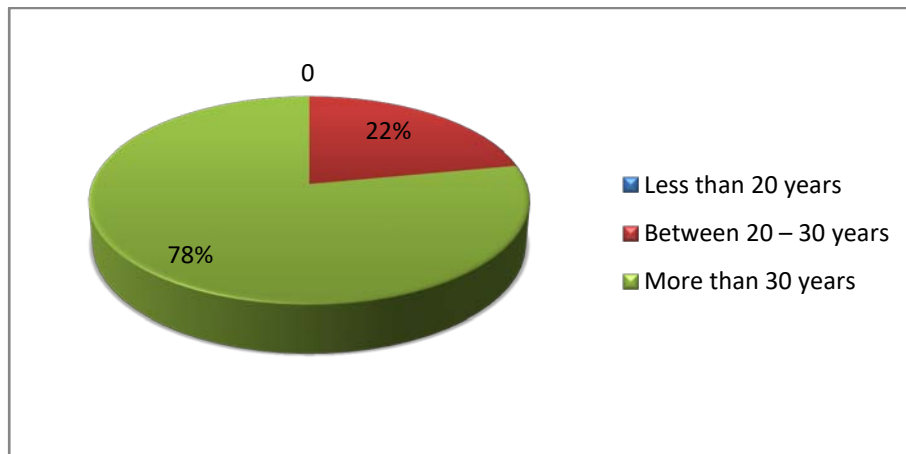
### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Section 1 : General Information about the respondents**

##### **Distribution of respondents on the basis of age**

**Table No. 1**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 20 years	-	0
Between 20 – 30 years	11	22 %
More than 30 years	39	78 %
Total	50	100 %



**Figure 1**

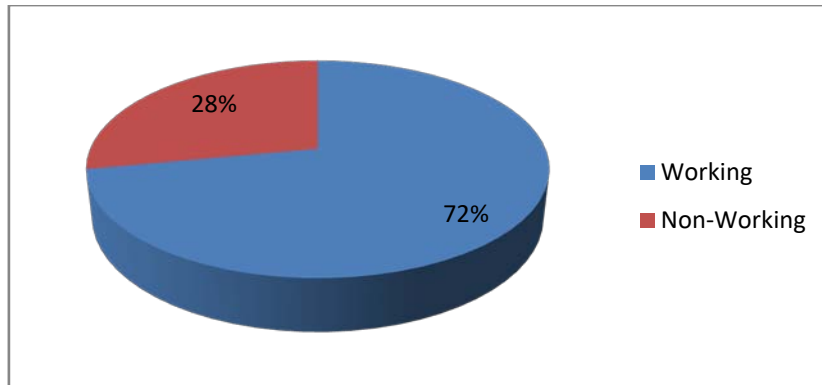
Thus, it is evident from the above table that only 22 % of the respondents are between 20 – 30 years and a majority of respondents i.e. 78 % being more than 30 years.

##### **Distribution of respondents on the basis of occupation.**

**Table No. 2**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Working	36	72 %
Non - Working	14	28 %

Total	50	100 %
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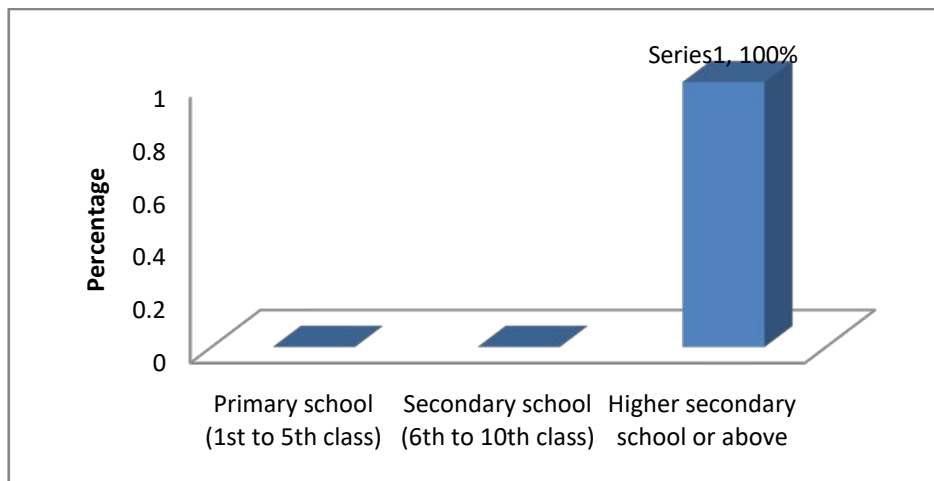
**Figure 2**

It is apparent that 28% of the respondents who filed the questionnaire are non-working in comparison to 72 % who are working.

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of educational status.**

**Table No.3**

Educational Status	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school (1 <sup>st</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> class)	Nil	Nil
Secondary school (6 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> class)	Nil	Nil
Higher secondary school or above	50	100%
Total	50	100 %



**Figure 3**

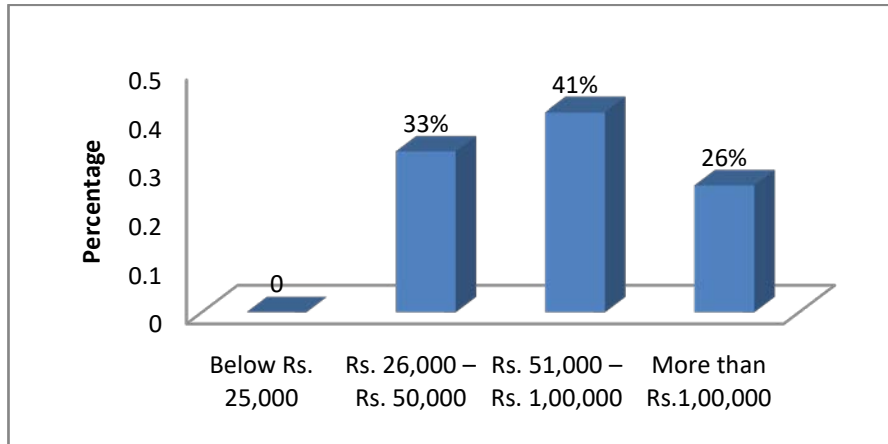
Thus all the answering respondents have studied higher secondary school or more.

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of monthly family income**

**Table No.4**

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs. 25,000		0

Rs. 26,000 – Rs. 50,000	17	33 %
Rs. 51,000 – Rs. 1,00,000	20	41 %
More than Rs.1,00,000	13	26 %
Total	50	100 %



**Figure 4**

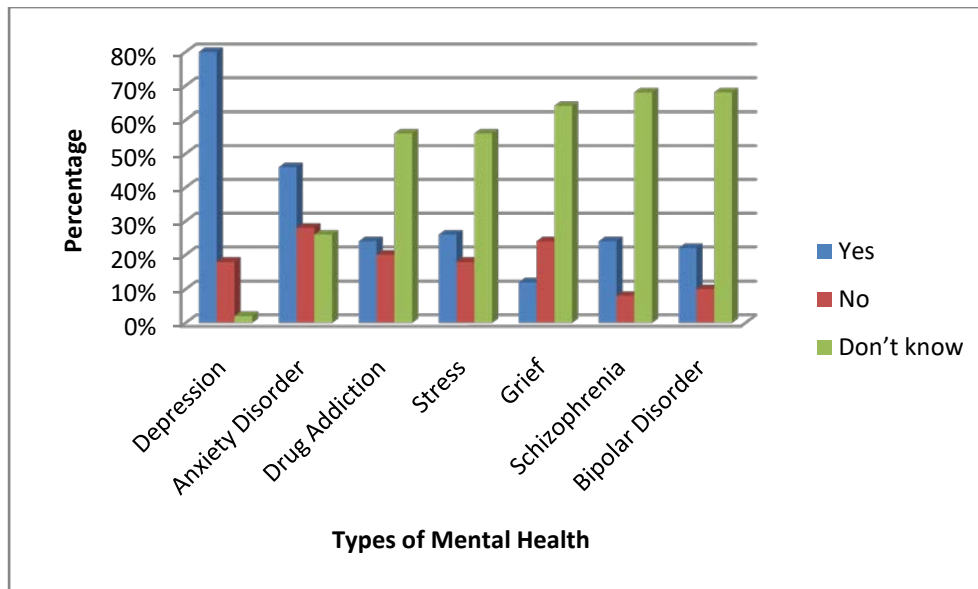
It is evident from the above table and bar graph that maximum number of respondents fall in the income bracket of Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 (41 %) followed by 33 % in Rs. 26,000 – Rs. 50,000 and 26 % being more than Rs. 1,00,000.

**AWARENESS REGARDING MENTAL ILLNESS**

**SECTION 2 : Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view regarding types of mental illness.**

Table No. 5 N=50

Sr. No.	Types of Mental Illness	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Depression	40 (80 %)	9 (18%)	1 (2%)
2	Anxiety Disorder	23 (46 %)	14 (28%)	13 (26%)
3	Drug Addiction	12 (24%)	10 (20%)	28(56%)
4	Stress	13 (26%)	9 (18%)	28 (56%)
5	Grief	6 (12%)	12 (24%)	32 (64%)
6	Schizophrenia	12 (24%)	4 (8%)	34 (68%)
6	Bipolar Disorder	11 (22%)	5 (10%)	34 (68%)



**Figure 5**

From the above table and graph, the following points can be deduced :

1. Regarding depression, a vast majority of the respondents (80%) are aware of it as a mental illness.
2. Regarding anxiety disorder, nearly half of the respondents are aware of it being a mental illness, followed by 28 % who are not aware of the same.
3. Regarding, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, only a minority of the respondents are aware of the same being mental illnesses. Though, a majority of the respondents have opted for the option of don't know.
4. Regarding, drug addiction and stress, only a small percentage of the respondents are aware of the fact that both drug addiction and stress are not mental illnesses. However, nearly half of the respondents have opted for the option of don't know. And nearly, one fourth percentage of the respondents believe that drug addiction and stress are mental illnesses.
5. Regarding grief, nearly one fourth percentage of the respondents are aware of the fact that grief is not a mental illness. A majority of the respondents have opted for don't know. And only a minority i.e.12 % of the respondents believe that grief is a mental illness.

### **SECTION 3**

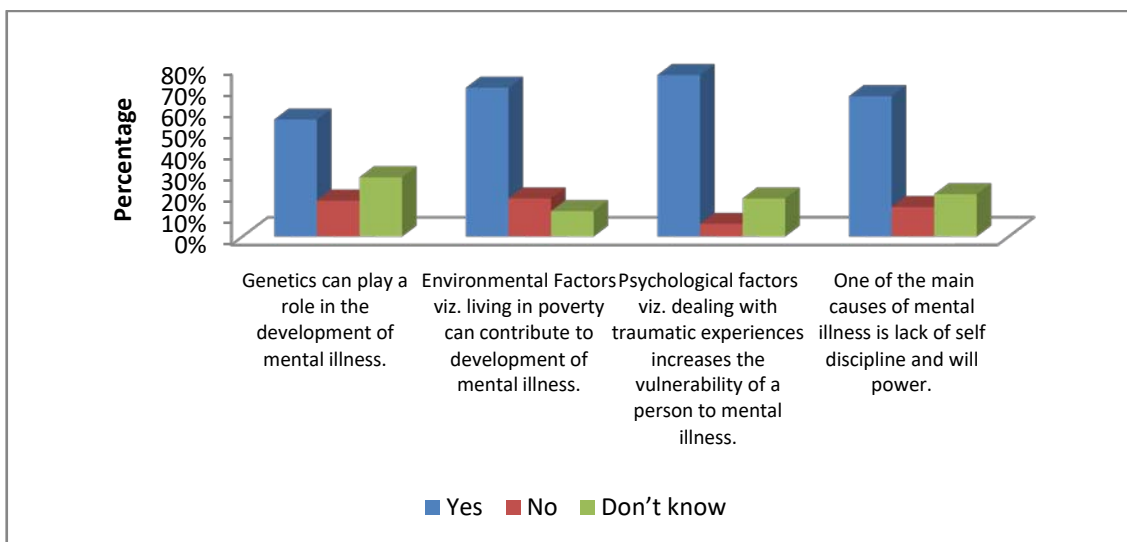
**Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view regarding causes of mental illness.**



**Table No. 6**

N=50

Sr. No.	Causes of Mental Illness	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Genetics can play a role in the development of mental illness.	28 (55%)	8 (17%)	14 (28%)
2	Environmental Factors (viz. living in poverty) can contribute to development of mental illness.	35 (70%)	9 (18%)	6 (12%)
3	Psychological factors (viz. dealing with traumatic experiences) increases the vulnerability of a person to mental illness.	38 (76%)	3 (6%)	9 (18%)
4	One of the main causes of mental illness is lack of self discipline and will power.	33 (66%)	7 (14%)	10 (20%)



From the above table and bar graph, the following points are deduced:

Nearly fifty percentage of the respondents have answered in the affirmative that genetics can play a role in the development of mental illness. The rest are either unsure or do not believe in the same.

Furthermore, a majority of the respondents i.e. 70% believe that environmental factors can contribute to the development of mental illness. The rest of the minority is either unsure or do not believe in the same.

A vast majority also believes that psychological factors can increase the vulnerability of a person towards mental illness.

However, it is extremely surprising to note that 66% people believe that one of the main causes of mental illness is lack of self discipline and will power. It is followed by 20% of the respondents who are unsure and only 14% of the respondents who believe that the same cannot be the cause.

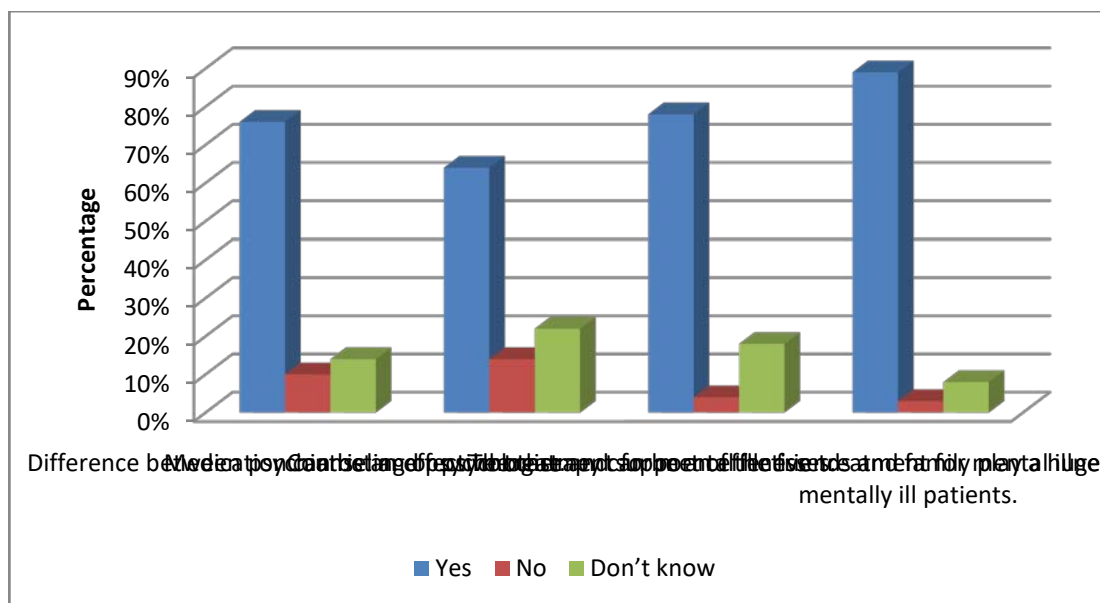
**SECTION 4**

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view regarding treatment of mental illness.**

**Table No. 7**

N=50

Sr. No.	Treatment	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Difference between psychiatrist and psychologist.	38 (76 %)	5 (10 %)	7 (14 %)
2	Medication can be an effective treatment for mental illnesses.	32 (64 %)	7 (14 %)	11 (22 %)
3	Counseling or psychotherapy can be an effective treatment for mental illness.	39 (78 %)	2 (4 %)	9 (18 %)
4	The care and support of the friends and family play a huge role in the recovery of mentally ill patients.	44 (89 %)	1 (3 %)	4 (8 %)



Herein the vast majority is aware of the difference between psychiatrist and psychologist. Furthermore, 64 % of the respondents believe that medication can be an effective treatment for mental illness. It is followed by 22 % who are unsure and then, 18 % who do not believe in the same.

A vast majority believes that counseling can be an effective treatment for mental illness. And most importantly, a majority of respondents i.e. 89 % do believe in the fact that the care and support of the friends and family play a huge role in the recovery of mentally ill patients.

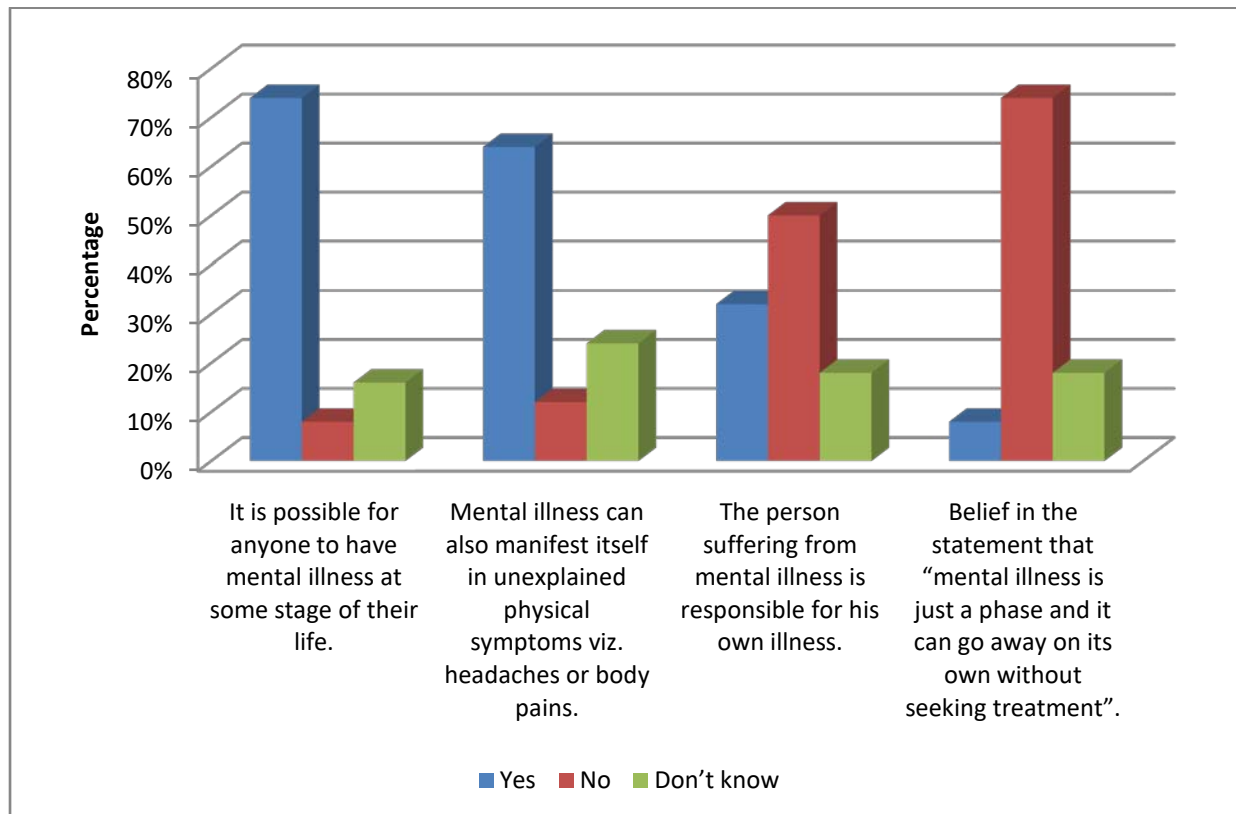
**SECTION 5**

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view about some other questions regarding awareness of mental illness.**

**Table No. 8**

N=50

Sr. No.	Awareness	Yes	No	Don't know
1	It is possible for anyone to have mental illness at some stage of their life.	38 (74 %)	4 (8 %)	8 (16 %)
2	Mental illness can also manifest itself in unexplained physical symptoms (viz. headaches or body pains).	32 (64 %)	6 (12 %)	12 (24 %)
3	The person suffering from mental illness is responsible for his own illness.	16 (32 %)	25 (50 %)	9 (18 %)
4	Belief in the statement that "mental illness is just a phase and it can go away on its own without seeking treatment".	4 (8 %)	37 (74 %)	9 (18 %)



**Figure 8**

From the above bar graph and the table, following points are deduced :

A majority of the respondents i.e. 74 % are aware of the fact that it is possible for anyone to have mental illness at some stage of their life. It is followed by 16% who are unaware of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, 64 % of the respondents are aware of the fact that mental illness can also manifest in unexplained physical symptoms.

It is surprising that though in minority but still 32 % of the respondents believe that the person suffering from mental illness is responsible for his illness. And 50 % of the respondents rightfully do not believe in the same.

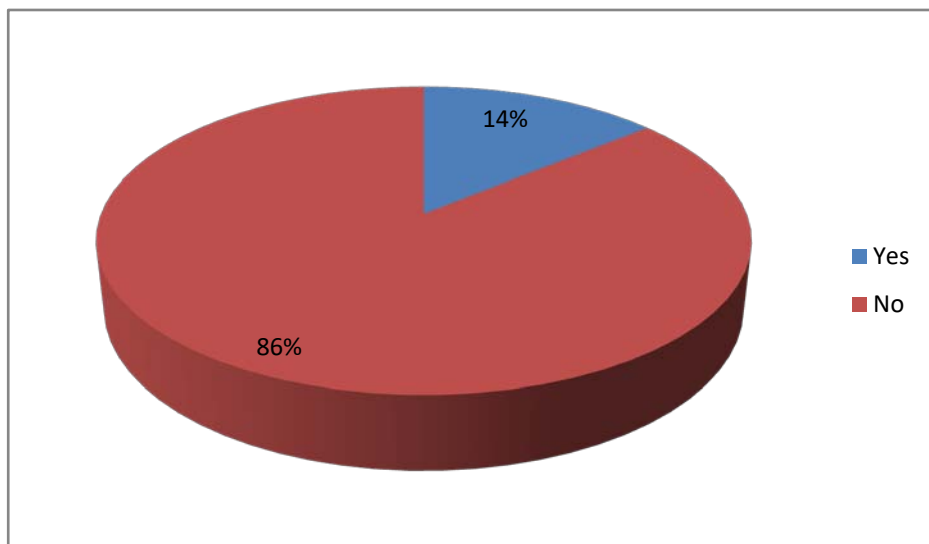
It is relieving to find that a majority of the respondents i.e. 74 % do not believe in the statement that mental illness is just a phase and it can go away on its own without seeking any treatment.

## **SECTION 6**

### **Distribution of respondents on the basis of their awareness about Mental Health Care Act, 2017.**

**Table No. 9**

	Yes	No
Mental Health Care Act, 2017.	7 (14%)	43 (86%)



**Figure 9**

Herein, 86 % of the respondents are not aware of the Act which is followed by 14% who are aware of the Act.

## **ATTITUDES OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS**

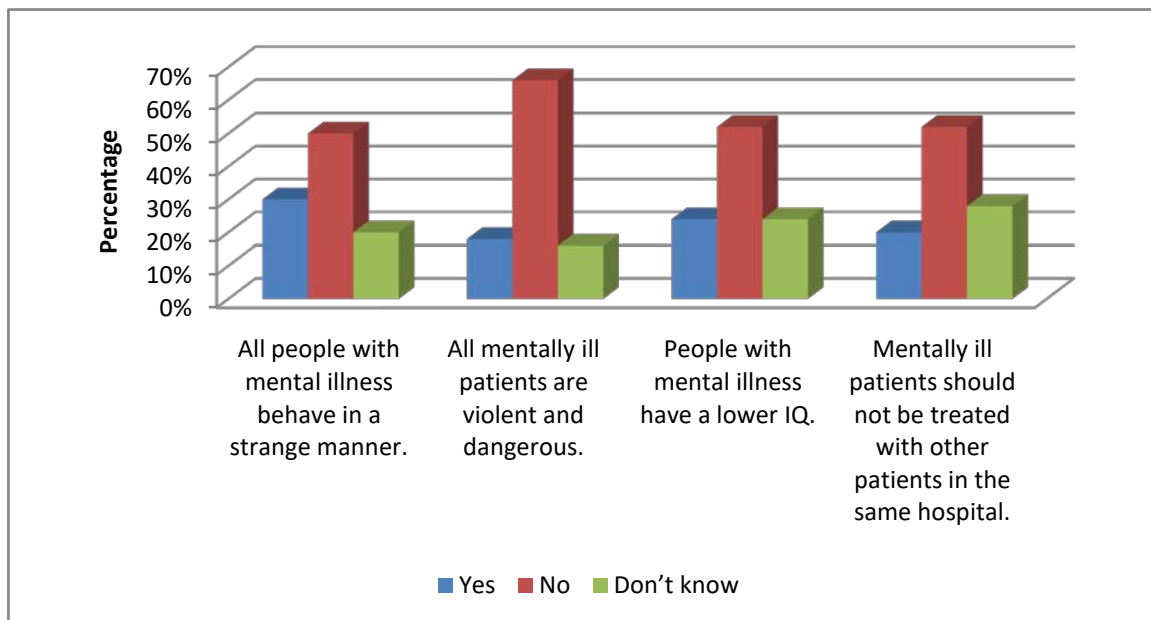
### **SECTION - 7**

#### **Distribution of respondents regarding their view about characteristics of persons with mental illness.**

**Table No. 12**

N=50

Sr. No.	Characteristics of persons with mental illness.	Yes	No	Don't know
1	All people with mental illness behave in a strange manner.	15(30 %)	25(50 %)	10(20 %)
2	All mentally ill patients are violent and dangerous.	9 (18 %)	33 (66 %)	8 (16 %)
3	People with mental illness have a lower IQ.	12 (24 %)	26 (52 %)	12 (24 %)
4	Mentally ill patients should not be treated with other patients in the same hospital.	10 (20%)	26 (52%)	14 (28%)



**Figure 12**

Herein, half of the respondents do not think that all the people with mental illness behave in a strange manner. It is followed by 30% of the respondents holding the view that all the mentally ill patients behave in a strange manner.

Furthermore, a majority of the respondents do not believe that all mentally ill patients are violent and dangerous.

However, though in minority but still 24% of the respondents believe that people with mental illness have a lower IQ. Though, half of the respondents are aware of the fact that this is not true.

Additionally, though in minority but still 20% of the respondents believe that mentally ill patients should not be treated with other patients in the same hospital. Though, half of the respondents do not believe in the same.

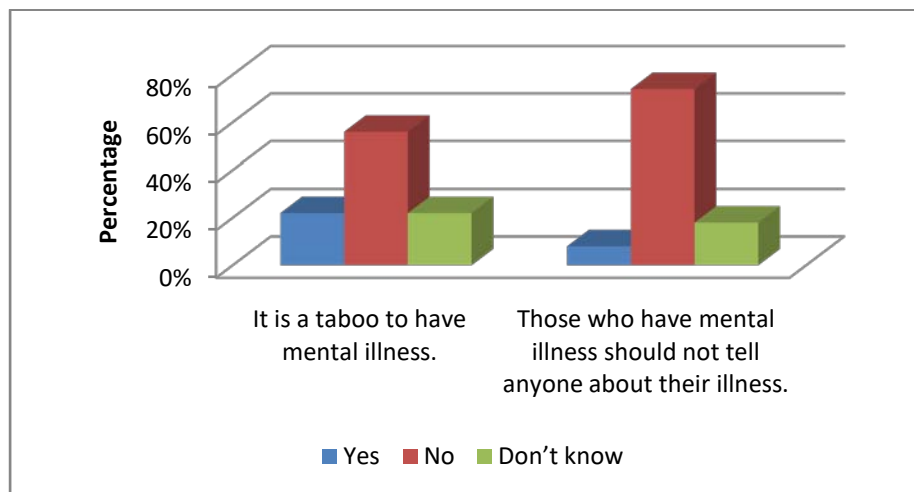
**SECTION 8**

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view regarding stigma attached to mental illness.**

**Table No. 13**

(n=50)

Sr. No.	Stigma attached to mental illness.	Yes	No	Don't know
1	It is a taboo to have mental illness.	11 (22 %)	28 (56 %)	11 (22 %)
2	Those who have mental illness should not tell anyone about their illness.	4 (8 %)	37 (74 %)	9 (18 %)



**Figure 13**

The above table reaffirms the findings of other researches that people still believe that it is a taboo to have mental illness. Though in minority, but still 22 % of the respondents believe that it is taboo. And a majority of the respondents do not think that it is a taboo.

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents do not believe that those who have mental illness should not tell anyone about their illness.

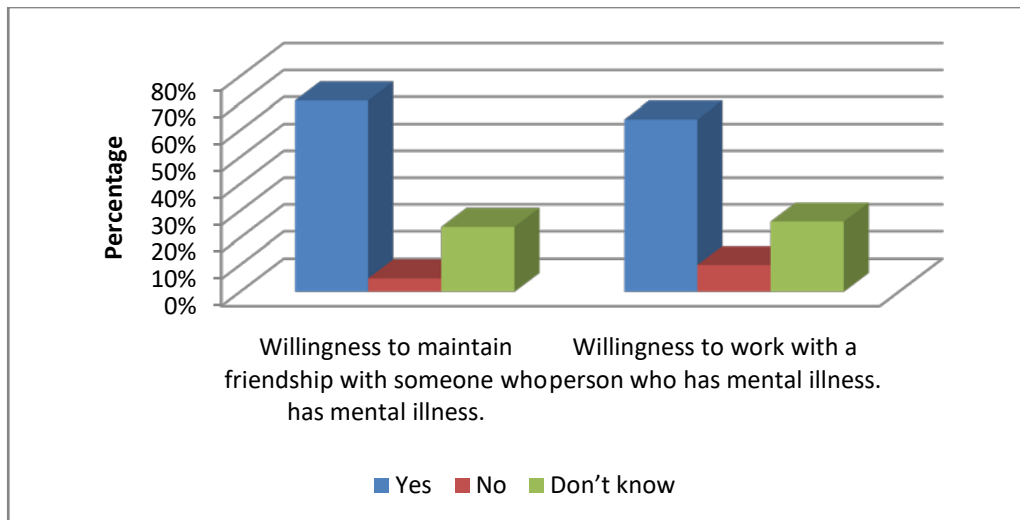
**SECTION 9:**

**Distribution of respondents on the basis of their view regarding relationship with persons with mental illness.**

**Table No. 14**

N=50

Sr. No.	Relationship with persons having mental illness.	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Willingness to maintain friendship with someone who has mental illness.	35 (71 %)	3 (5 %)	12 (24 %)
2	Willingness to work with a person who has mental illness.	32 (64 %)	5 (10%)	13 (26 %)



**Figure 15**

Herein a majority of the respondents are willing to maintain friendship and also work with someone who has mental illness.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

On the basis of above facts and figures, the following points can be concluded as given under:

1. At the outset, it is mentioned that the knowledge of the respondents qua the different mental illnesses is low. Though, a majority of the respondents are aware of depression being a mental illness. This can be attributable to the acceptance of depression by various persons on the media. However, the knowledge regarding the existence of other mental illness viz. anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder is low amongst the respondents.
2. Furthermore, only a minority of the respondents are found aware of the fact that drug addiction, stress and grief are not mental disorders.  
Thus, it can be summed up that regarding the awareness about types of mental illness, there is an urgent need to spread the awareness and dispel the myths attached with the same.
3. Majority of the respondents in the study are aware of the fact that the environmental factors viz. living in poverty and psychological factors viz. death of a loved one , contribute to the development of mental illness. However, regarding the role of genetics in the development of mental illness, only half of the respondents are aware of the same.

It is a known fact that for the proper understanding for any illness, it is pertinent to know the causes of the illness. The same analogy is applicable to the mental illness.

4. The present study has again highlighted the lack of understanding about the mental illness. Since a majority of respondents believe that one of the main causes of mental illness is lack of will power and self-discipline.

Thus, the proper understanding about the causes of mental illness are all the more important to shed light on the myth regarding connectivity of mental illness with lack of will power.

5. The present study highlights that the majority of the respondents are aware of the treatment for mental illnesses i.e. medication and psychotherapy. It is relevant to mention that all the respondents in the study have studied higher education and above. Thus, the awareness about the treatment cannot be accounted for less educated people here.

6. Though it is relieving that a majority of respondents are aware of the fact that for the treatment of mental illness, the family and friends can play a huge role.

7. A majority of the respondents are aware of the fact that it is possible for anyone to have mental illness at some stage of their life. Furthermore, though 64 % of the respondents are aware of the fact that mental illness can also manifest in unexplained physical symptoms.

However, it can be deduced that there is a need to spread awareness about the connection of mental health with physical health. It would further help to combat the problem of low detection of mental illnesses in our country.

8. The present study also reaffirms the myths in our society qua the fact that the person suffering from mental illness is responsible for his own illness. Though in minority, but 32 % of the respondents believe in the same.

9. Furthermore, the present study reaffirms the myths associated with the problem of stereotyping all the mentally ill patients in one category. Though in minority, but respondents hold the view that all mentally ill patients are violent and the mentally ill patients should not be treated with other patients in the same hospital.

10. The study also shows the lack of understanding about I.Q. in connection with mental illness. Nearly, one fourth of the respondents believe that people with mental illness have a lower I.Q.

Thus, there is a growing need to spread awareness regarding the fact that people with mental illness have normal I.Q's.

11. Furthermore, the study shows that a minority of respondents believe that mentally ill patient should not be treated with other patients in the same hospital. This finding can



be connected to the myth amongst people that all mentally ill patients are violent and dangerous.

12. Regarding the question relating to stigma attach to mental illness, 22% of the respondents believe that it is a taboo to have mental illness. And the equivalent percentage have opted for the do not know option.

Hence, the above finding reaffirms the problem of stigma attached to mental illness which also contributes to the no or low detection and treatment of mental illness.

13. A majority of respondent believe that people with mental illness must share their condition with others. This further helps to deal with the problem of stigma attached to mental illness.
14. Furthermore, a majority of respondents have expressed their willingness to maintain friendship and work with a person with mental illness. However, one fourth of the respondents have opted for the option of do not know.

This finding also reaffirms the existence of stigma attached with mental illness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

At the end, it can be stated that in order to increase awareness about mental illness and combat the problem of stigma related to mental illness, mental health education can play a paramount role. Such education must be started from the elementary school itself in order to help students develop healthy attitude towards mental illness. Furthermore, various agencies of mass media viz. television, magazines can play a pivotal role. Lastly, the social health worker can run campaigns to spread awareness about mental illness.

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