



Attitude of Medical Students at Sultan Qaboos University toward Psychiatry

Ali Al Qubtan¹, Jaber Al Lawati¹, Mohammed Al Alawi² and Hamed Al Sinawi^{2*}

¹Medical Student, College of Medicine and Health Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman

²Behavioral Medicine, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, Muscat, Oman

Abstract

Objectives: To examine the attitude of medical students at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) toward Psychiatry and the impact of factors such as age, gender, curriculum, clinical level, Psychiatry training, and experience of mental illness in self or family.

Methods: This is a cross sectional study conducted among medical students at the college of Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman. All students from the Pre-clerkship, junior-clerkship and 7th year students were invited to participate in this study. The 30 items Attitude toward Psychiatry survey (ATP-30) was used. Data was analyzed using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 19.

Results: A total of 269 students participated in the study (37% males and 63% females). The Attitude towards Psychiatry (ATP) was moderately positive and the positivity increased among the students who completed psychiatry rotation. The impact of demographic factors on the attitude was not statistically significant.

Conclusion: This study showed that medical students at Sultan Qaboos University have a positive attitude toward psychiatry.

Keywords: Attitude; Survey; Psychiatry; Medical students; Mental health stigma; Oman

Introduction

Psychiatry is defined by the national health services of United Kingdom (UK) as “a medical field concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental health conditions” [1]. Countries around the world are developing their mental health services because of a high prevalence of Psychiatric disorders [2]. According to the WHO global observatory data report released in 2014, there is only one psychiatrist available to help every 100,000 people in 45% of the countries around the globe [3].

Therefore, the need for more trained psychiatrists is vital [4]. Knowing the attitude of medical students “who are the next workforces for Oman in the medical field” toward psychiatry is an essential step to promote psychiatry as an appealing option among other medical specialties. Worldwide, several studies examined the factors that influence student’s attitude toward Psychiatry. A study from Nigeria, found that teaching methods affected student’s attitude toward psychiatry [5]. In Kenya, a study found that, students exposed to Psychiatry had more negative attitude than those who did not [6].

Another study from Pakistan showed that female’s medical student had more positive attitude toward Psychiatry than males [7]. In the UK, Wilkinson et al. showed that students who complete Psychiatry training had more positive attitude toward Psychiatry [8], while Al-Ansari and Alsadadi from the Kingdom of Bahrain reported a negative relationship between a student age and ATP [9].

During this study period, the college of medicine and health science at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) had two different curricula for teaching medical students [10]. The old curriculum had 6 hours of behavioral science over two semesters in pre-clinical years whereas the new curriculum, which was implemented in 2008, did not have a separate behavioral science course in pre-clinical years. Therefore, in this study, the 7th year medical students are the only students who studied in the old curriculum.

Al-Adawi et al. [11] conducted a survey that examined the attitude

of medical students at SQU before and after their clinical rotation in psychiatry during the period of 2002-2004 using a 26 item questionnaire developed by Das and Chandrasena. The study reported that female students had more positive attitude than male students, however, there was no significant difference in students’ attitude before and after Psychiatry rotation.

This study differs from Al-Adawi study in that, it focused on academic and personal factors that may influence students’ attitude. It also included students from different curricula.

The objective of this study was to examine medical students’ attitude toward psychiatry and the impact of gender, completion of Psychiatry training, and experience of mental illness in self or family on Student’s attitude.

Method

This study followed STROBE (The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) reporting guidelines for observational studies [12].

Study design

This was a cross-sectional study.

***Corresponding author:** Dr. Hamed Al Sinawi, Department of Behavioral Medicine, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, P.O. Box 35, Al-Khoudh 123, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, Oman, Tel: (+ 968) 2414 4419; Fax: (+ 968) 2441 5419; E-mail: drhamed@hotmail.com

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