





ORIGINAL

Attitudes of Nursing Students towards Individuals with Mental Illness before and after Attending the Mental Health Nursing Course: comparative study

Actitudes de los estudiantes de enfermería hacia las personas con enfermedad mental antes y después de asistir al curso de enfermería en salud mental: estudio comparativo

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: psychiatry nurses are an integral component of a multidisciplinary mental health-care team. This study aims to investigate the level of attitude toward mental illness among nursing students before and after psychiatric nursing course.

Method: a descriptive design was utilized in this study. Total sample was 303 nursing students the sample included all 3rd and fourth year students who did not study psychiatric nursing course 103 nursing student and 200 study psychiatric nursing in west bank university. tools were utilized to measure the variables of the study: personal data questionnaire, attitudes toward mental health nursing.

Results: nursing students who did not attend the psychiatric course reported a moderate level of attitude toward mental illness. While, the study showed that the nursing students who attended the psychiatric nursing course reported a high level of attitudes toward mental illness. The study also found that there are significant statistical differences among nursing students who have taken the psychiatric course and who have not taken the course regarding attitudes toward mental illness, when the differences were in favor of the students who have attended the psychiatric nursing course. Results showed that gender, age, place of residence, and university were not significant variables among nursing students, who did not attend the psychiatric course, while experience with someone who suffering from mental health conditions was a significant variable. Whereas, gender, age, university, and experience with someone who suffering from mental health condition were not significant variables among nursing students who attended the psychiatric course, but Place of Residence showed significant differences, in favor of students who are living in camps.

Conclusions: the need for the psychiatric nursing course to be mandatory educated for nursing students and other healthcare professions. Due to its importance into providing enrich and empower information for students.

Keywords: Nursing Students Attitudes; Mental Illness; Palestinian Universities; Psychiatric Course.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las enfermeras de psiquiatría son un componente integral de un equipo multidisciplinar de atención a la salud mental. Este estudio pretende investigar el nivel de actitud hacia la enfermedad mental entre los estudiantes de enfermería antes y después del curso de enfermería psiquiátrica.

Método: en este estudio se utilizó un diseño descriptivo. La muestra total fue de 303 estudiantes de enfermería. La muestra incluía a todos los estudiantes de tercer y cuarto curso que no habían realizado el curso de enfermería psiquiátrica: 103 estudiantes de enfermería y 200 estudiantes de enfermería psiquiátrica de la universidad de West Bank: cuestionario de datos personales, actitudes hacia la enfermería de salud mental.

Resultados: los estudiantes de enfermería que no asistieron al curso de psiquiatría informaron de un nivel moderado de actitud hacia las enfermedades mentales. Mientras que, el estudio mostró que los estudiantes de enfermería que asistieron al curso de enfermería psiquiátrica informaron de un alto nivel de actitudes hacia la enfermedad mental. El estudio también reveló que existen diferencias estadísticas significativas entre los estudiantes de enfermería que han realizado el curso de psiquiatría y los que no lo han realizado en lo que respecta a las actitudes hacia la enfermedad mental, cuando las diferencias eran a favor de los estudiantes que han asistido al curso de enfermería psiquiátrica. Los resultados mostraron que el género, la edad, el lugar de residencia y la universidad no eran variables significativas entre los estudiantes de enfermería que no habían asistido al curso de psiquiatría, mientras que la experiencia con alguien que padecía enfermedades mentales sí era una variable significativa. Mientras que el género, la edad, la universidad y la experiencia con alguien que padece una enfermedad mental no fueron variables significativas entre los estudiantes de enfermería que asistieron al curso de psiquiatría, pero el lugar de residencia mostró diferencias significativas a favor de los estudiantes que viven en campamentos.

Conclusiones: la necesidad de que el curso de enfermería psiquiátrica sea de formación obligatoria para los estudiantes de enfermería y otras profesiones sanitarias. Por su importancia para enriquecer y potenciar la información de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Actitudes de los Estudiantes de Enfermería; Enfermedad Mental; Universidades Palestinas; Curso de Psiquiatría.

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, .2023), the results of the Psychological Conditions Survey in Palestine for the year 2022 showed that more than half of the Palestinian society suffers from depression, (71 % in the Gaza Strip and 50 % in the West Bank), and 58 % of them are over 18 years old, while levels of depression were similar between women and men. People with mental illness are common across the world, with 14 % of the global burden of disease.⁽¹⁾ On the other hand, people with mental illness are among the most stigmatized and vulnerable groups of patients in the healthcare setting Putman, S. (2008). Mental health nurses are an integral component of a multidisciplinary mental healthcare team. They play a critical role in psychiatric treatment and safeguarding the human rights of persons with mental illness both in the hospital and in the community.⁽¹⁾ Available evidence clearly demonstrates that psychiatric nursing was not a desirable career choice for undergraduate nursing student.⁽²⁾

Educational programs that prepare student nurses for the professional nursing role have the obligation to foster positive attitudes towards people with mental illness (American Nurses Association⁽³⁾ students in baccalaureate programs are required to take a course in Psychiatric/Mental health nursing which includes objectives that focus on decreasing healthcare disparities and stigma towards people with psychiatric diagnosis (American Association of Colleges of Nursing.⁽⁴⁾ Research highlights negative views regarding psychiatry's scientific basis, treatment efficacy, and societal perceptions of psychiatric patients, including perceptions of danger and incompetence. Such stigmatizing attitudes extend to healthcare providers, affecting job satisfaction and contributing to psychiatry's lack of appeal. Despite psychiatry's intellectual challenges, negative perceptions persist, affecting healthcare professionals' care provision and patient outcomes.⁽⁵⁾ Among healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, attitudes towards individuals with mental health problems vary, with some studies indicating negative perceptions while others report positive attitudes. However, nurses' attitudes profoundly affect patient care and the therapeutic environment, influencing treatment-seeking behaviors and patient outcomes.⁽⁶⁾

Nursing students' attitudes and perceptions toward psychiatric nursing are critical factors that influence their educational experiences, clinical practice, and mental health care delivery. Studying these attitudes and perceptions provides valuable insights into nursing students' readiness to actively participate in psychiatric nursing practice, and also helps design evidence-based interventions and curriculum improvements to address potential challenges and promote positive attitudes toward psychiatric nursing.⁽⁷⁾ Undergraduate nursing programs provide opportunities to influence nursing students' attitudes toward people with mental illness through theoretical preparation and appropriate clinical exposure in mental health nursing.⁽⁸⁾

The attitude could be defined as a predisposition to respond positively or negatively towards a social object,⁽⁹⁾ or as a tendency to evaluate a particular "attitude object" with some degree of factor or disfavor.

⁽¹⁰⁾ This illustrates the degree of acceptance or refusal for a certain subject as a result of previous experience, mainly belief and knowledge about that subject. Attitude takes the individual behavior towards that subject positively or negatively. Social psychologists have divided attitude into three classes: cognitive reactions, affective reactions, and behavior.^(5,6)

Perception is defined in Psychology “as the process or result of responsiveness to objects, relationships, and events via the senses, which incorporates such activities as recognizing, observing, and discriminating”. These activities enable organisms to organize and interpret the stimuli received into meaningful knowledge and to act in a coordinated manner.⁽¹¹⁾ This study aimed to examine and compare nursing students’ attitudes toward people with mental illness after and before psychiatric course.

METHOD

Research Design

A descriptive comparative study design was used to achieve the aim of the study to examine and compare nursing students’ attitudes toward people with mental illness after and before psychiatric course.

Sampling Method

A convenience sampling method was used to select nursing student that taken psychiatric course and not take psychiatric course. We mean by convenience the availability of the sample during data collection period. In addition, the convenience sampling method was used to select nursing student from four-university student.

Study Population

This study used a non-probability convenience-sampling plan to obtain participants. The target population for this research study included all nursing students currently enrolled in a baccalaureate-nursing program. From different academic years. The study population included all nursing student who received psychiatric course from the four university in west bank. It also included all nursing student who not received psychiatric course at four university. Since this group of students readily reflected the desired research population, all students currently enrolled in an accredited baccalaureate nursing program at the four mentioned universities were eligible for the study. Any unwilling students or those who do not submit the survey were excluded.

The sample size for this study was calculated based on 95 % CI and a 5 % margin of error by using the Raosoft sample size calculator,⁽¹²⁾ and the recommended sample was 320. The research team has distributed 320 questionnaires among nursing students, while the responses were 303 nursing students, within a response rate (94,6 %).

Study Settings

In order to consider the sample from different representative areas of the West Bank with varying demographic backgrounds that reflected the nursing student population as a whole. The setting for this study included three large university institutions. From the South- Palestine Polytechnic University; Bethlehem University from the middle- al-Quds University; from the North- An Najah National university. All the universities agreed to participate in the study. Due to the war and situation and transition to online learning, data collection for the entire sample was recruited electronically.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

All nurses’ student third year and fourth years. The students are regular students.

The Exclusion Criteria All nurse’s student upgrade students. All nurse’s student work in mental center. Nursing students studying 1st year and 2nd year.

Instrument

Demographic data: the demographic form consists of items to seek the background of the participants in the study that includes “Gender, Age, and Place of residence, University Name, and Experience with someone who suffer from mental health condition”.

Attitudes scale: attitude scale for mental illness (ASMI) the ASMI-a valid and reliable, self-report measure of attitudes-was administered to students along with a brief demographic form. The ASMI section has 34 items and measures the general attitude to mental illness. Respondents were given the choice of five response categories to tick based on their feelings from totally disagree to totally agree (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5) accordingly. It consists of six conceptual factors: benevolence, separatism, stereotyping, restrictiveness, pessimistic prediction and stigmatization. Benevolence was intended to measure the paternalistic and sympathetic views of the respondents. Separatism: this factor was intended to measure the respondents’ attitude of discrimination. Stereotyping: this factor was intended to measure the degree of respondents’ maintenance of social distance toward the mentally ill. Restrictiveness: this factor was intended

to measure viewing the mentally ill as a threat to society. Pessimistic prediction is the negative evaluative component toward the mentally ill. This factor was intended to measure the level of prejudice toward mental illness. Stigmatization is the feeling of disgrace or discredit, which sets a person apart from others. This factor was

Data Collection

Due to the war and the transition to online learning, it was difficult to reach all nursing students manually. Therefore, in order to give an equal opportunity to all nursing students to participate in the study, the researcher e-mailed the three universities to participate in the study after explaining the necessary details to understand the study, the universities were also informed that the data could be collected electronically due to the war. After all, of the four universities agreed to participate in the study, the researcher mailed the link of the questionnaire (Google Form link) to the universities, and they distribute the questionnaire electronically. The questionnaire was also electronically distributed to nursing students groups on social media platforms to increase the number of respondents. All the data were collected from 1st April -29th April 2024.

Consent form explaining the purpose, nature and requirements for the study was attached to the questionnaire. The time to fill out the questionnaire was less than 20 minutes, and individuals were informed that no identifying information would be included on the survey (Anonymity) and the risks for participation were minimal; therefore, they were encouraged to respond to the survey as accurately as possible. It was also explained that completion of the survey represented consent for the study. Individuals were then instructed to complete the survey if they wished to participate in the study. The email of the researcher was also written on the consent, in the event that the research needs to be clarified further. To avoid missing data in the study, the survey was designed in such a way that the student could not submit his answers if some information were missing.

RESULTS

What is the level of attitudes of nursing toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course?

In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics has been used toward revealing the level of attitudes of nursing toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course. In other words, the level of attitude for nursing students who did not attend the psychiatric course, as table 1 shows:

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely.	103	3,6602	1,55648
The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated.	103	3,6505	1,40523
People with mental illness have unpredictable behavior.	103	3,6117	1,10465
It is possible for anyone to have a mental illness.	103	3,5146	1,40632
After a person is treated for mental illness, they can return to their former job position.	103	3,2913	1,15156
Corporations and the community should offer jobs to people with mental illness	103	3,2816	1,30171
When a spouse is mentally ill, the law should allow for the other spouse to file for divorce.	103	3,2816	1,24788
The best way to help those with a mental illness to recover is to let them stay in the community and live a normal life.	103	3,1942	1,29144
If people become mentally ill once, they will easily become ill again.	103	3,1650	1,03939
People with mental illness tend to be violent.	103	3,1553	1,02668
People are prejudiced towards those with mental illness.	103	3,0777	1,18561
Mental patients and other patients should not be treated in the same hospital.	103	3,0583	1,34911
It is not appropriate for a person with mental illness to get married.	103	3,0291	1,11546
It is harder for those who have a mental illness to receive the same pay for the same job.	103	2,9417	1,29725
Those who are mentally ill should not have children.	103	2,9126	1,21354
People with mental illness can hold a job	103	2,8835	1,08737
It is hard to have good friends if you have a mental illness.	103	2,8641	1,22913
All people with mental illness have some strange behavior.	103	2,8350	1,07646
After treatment it will be difficult for the mentally ill to return to the community.	103	2,8155	1,16944
People with mental illness are dangerous.	103	2,7961	1,06972
You can easily tell who has a mental illness by the characteristics of their behavior.	103	2,7961	1,06972
People with mental illness should be feared.	103	2,6408	1,07425
Those who have a mental illness cannot fully recover.	103	2,5825	1,06204
I suggest that those who have a mental illness do not tell anyone about their illness.	103	2,5437	1,46044

Even after a person with mental illness is treated, I would still be afraid to be around them.	103	2,5243	1,08325
There is no future for people with mental illness.	103	2,5146	1,16201
It is easy to identify those who have a mental illness.	103	2,5146	1,14502
After people with mental illness are treated, they are still more dangerous than normal people.	103	2,4757	1,10120
People with mental illness have a lower IQ.	103	2,4369	1,14335
It is seldom that people who are successful at work have a mental illness	103	2,3204	1,12209
After people with mental illness are treated and rehabilitated, we still should not make friends with them.	103	2,1942	1,17205
If a mental health facility is set up in my street or community, I will move out of the community.	103	2,1748	1,21613
Mental illness is a punishment for doing bad things.	103	2,0194	1,20441
It is shameful to have a mental illness.	103	1,9320	1,28538
Total Degree	103	2,8438	1,1949

Table 2 indicates that nursing students reported a moderate level of attitude toward mental illness before taking the psychiatric nursing course at university ($M=2,8438$, $SD=1,1949$). Since the most important items were “We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely” within ($M=3,6602$, $SD=1,5564$), followed by item “The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated” within ($M=3,6505$, $SD=1,4052$). While, the lowest mean was for the item “It is shameful to have a mental illness” within ($M=1,9320$, $SD=1,2853$).

What is the level of attitudes of nursing toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course?

In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics has been used toward revealing the level of attitudes of nursing toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course. In other words, the level of attitude for nursing students who attended the psychiatric course, as table 2 shows:

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and numbers of nursing students who attended the psychiatric nursing course in a descending order

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely.	200	3,7700	1,28661
The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated.	200	3,7100	1,28223
People with mental illness have unpredictable behavior.	200	3,6100	1,07409
It is possible for anyone to have a mental illness.	200	3,5350	1,30279
Corporations and the community should offer jobs to people with mental illness	200	3,4950	1,12976
After a person is treated for mental illness, they can return to their former job position.	200	3,4050	1,09406
The best way to help those with a mental illness to recover is to let them stay in the community and live a normal life.	200	3,1700	1,09870
People with mental illness can hold a job	200	3,1700	1,09411
If people become mentally ill once, they will easily become ill again.	200	3,1650	0,99636
You can easily tell who has a mental illness by the characteristics of their behavior.	200	3,0650	1,08010
People are prejudiced towards those with mental illness.	200	3,0500	1,16373
People with mental illness tend to be violent.	200	3,0450	0,99394
When a spouse is mentally ill, the law should allow for the other spouse to file for divorce.	200	3,0450	1,15744
Mental patients and other patients should not be treated in the same hospital.	200	3,0150	1,25405
It is hard to have good friends if you have a mental illness.	200	3,1700	1,09311
All people with mental illness have some strange behavior.	200	3,1620	0,99636
It is not appropriate for a person with mental illness to get married.	200	3,0630	1,08010
It is harder for those who have a mental illness to receive the same pay for the same job.	200	3,0500	1,17373
It is easy to identify those who have a mental illness.	200	3,0450	0,98394
People with mental illness are dangerous.	200	3,7200	1,28233
After treatment it will be difficult for the mentally ill to return to the community.	200	3,6200	1,07010
Those who are mentally ill should not have children.	200	3,5530	1,30279
Those who have a mental illness cannot fully recover.	200	3,5240	1,12886
It is seldom that people who are successful at work have a mental illness	200	2,4550	1,11092
People with mental illness should be feared.	200	4,4400	0,92774
After people with mental illness are treated, they are still more dangerous than normal people.	200	4,3700	1,07652
Even after a person with mental illness is treated, I would still be afraid to be around them.	200	4,3700	1,04333

I suggest that those who have a mental illness do not tell anyone about their illness.	200	4,2700	1,25097
People with mental illness have a lower IQ.	200	3,7200	1,28233
After people with mental illness are treated and rehabilitated, we still should not make friends with them.	200	3,6200	1,07009
There is no future for people with mental illness.	200	3,5530	1,30289
If a mental health facility is set up in my street or community, I will move out of the community.	200	3,5250	1,12996
It is shameful to have a mental illness.	200	3,4250	1,09806
Mental illness is a punishment for doing bad things.	200	3,1800	1,09890
Total Degree	200	3,4906	1,0736

Table 3 revealed that the nursing students who attended the psychiatric nursing course reported a high level of attitudes toward mental illness within ($M=3,4906$, $SD=1,0736$) as total degree. When the most important items were “We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely” ($M=3,7100$, $SD=1,2866$); “The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated” ($M=3,7100$, $SD=1,2822$); “People with mental illness have unpredictable behavior” ($M=3,6100$, $SD=1,0740$). While, the lowest mean score was for the item “Mental illness is a punishment for doing bad things” ($M=1,9100$, $SD=1,0806$).

Is there different between the attitudes of nursing student before and after psychiatric course?

In order to answer this question, the T-test has been conducted, in order to measure the differences between nursing students who have taken the psychiatric nursing course and nursing students who have not take the course regarding attitudes toward mental illness, and the table below showed the results:

Taken Psychiatric course	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
Yes	200	3,4906	0,49357	0,974	0,001
No	103	2,8439	0,51115		

The table above indicates that there are significant statistical differences among nursing students who have taken the psychiatric course and who have not taken the course regarding attitudes toward mental illness (F Value=0,974, P Value= 0,001), which p value is less than 0,05. Therefore, the differences were in favor of the students who have attended the psychiatric nursing course ($M=3,4906$, $SD=0,49357$).

Hypothesis Testing

The main first hypothesis: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to demographic variables.

This hypothesis has been divided on 5 hypothesis as following:

H1: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Gender.

The T-test has been used toward examining the differences among nursing students regarding the attitudes toward mental illness before taking the psychiatric nursing course due to their gender, and table 4 shows the results:

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	P Value
Male	26	2,940	0,474	1,165	0,250
Female	77	2,811	0,522		

Table 4 indicates that there are no statistical difference at at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Gender; as P value=0,250, which is above than 0,05.

H2: there is no statistically significant correlation at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ between age and the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course.

The Pearson correlation coefficient has been used toward examining the correlation between age of participants and the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course, and the results were as following:

Table 5. Pearson correlation between age and the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing courses

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
Age* Level of Attitudes toward mental illness	103	-0,109	0,273

Table 5 indicates that age variable is not significantly correlate with the level of attitude among nursing students regarding mental illness. As the P value is 0,273 that is higher than 0,05.

H3: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence.

In order to examine the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence, the research team has used the One-Way ANOVA test, and the results were as following:

Table 6. One Way ANOVA test for the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence

Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
City	43	2,742	0,571	2,966	0,056
Village	46	2,856	0,436		
Camp	14	3,116	0,467		

It is obvious from the above table that there are no statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence, as the p value is 0,056, which is higher than 0,05. While it is observed that there might be differences in favor of camp residents based on the means difference with city and village.

H4: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to University.

In order to examine the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to university, the research team has used the One-Way ANOVA test, and the results were as following:

Table 7. One Way ANOVA test for the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to university

Universities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
Al-Quds University	26	2,7035	0,42206	1,009	0,392
An-Najah National University	30	2,8667	0,53242		
Bethlehem University	14	2,8457	0,43502		
Palestine Polytechnic University	33	2,9330	0,57893		

It is obvious from the above table that there are no statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to university, as the p value is 0,392, which is higher than 0,05.

H5: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to Experience with someone who suffer from mental health condition.

The T-test has been used toward examining the differences among nursing students regarding the attitudes toward mental illness before taking the psychiatric nursing course due to their experience with someone who suffering from mental health condition, as table 8 shows the results:

Table 8. Results of T-Test for the differences among nursing students regarding the attitudes toward mental illness before taking the psychiatric nursing course due to their experience with someone who suffering from mental health condition

Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	P Value
Yes	45	3,495	0,393	-1,142	0,040
No	58	2,894	0,589		

Table 8 indicates that there are statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to experience with someone who suffering from mental health condition; as P value=0,039, which is lower than 0,05.

The Main Second Hypothesis: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to demographic variables.

This hypothesis has been divided into 5 sub-hypothesis as following:

H1: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Gender.

The T-test has been used toward examining the differences among nursing students regarding the attitudes toward mental illness after taking the psychiatric nursing course due to their gender, and table 9 shows the results:

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	P Value
Male	50	3,4006	0,501	-0,366	0,715
Female	150	3,5306	0,541		

Table 9 indicates that there are no statistical difference at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Gender; as P value=0,715, which is higher than 0,05.

H2: there is no statistically significant correlation at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ between age and the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course.

The Pearson correlation coefficient has been used toward examining the correlation between age of participants and the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course, and the results were as following:

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
Age* Level of Attitudes toward mental illness	200	-0,059	0,403

Table 10 indicates that age variable is not significantly correlate with the level of attitude among nursing students regarding mental illness after taking the psychiatric nursing course. As the P value is 0,403 that is higher than 0,05.

H3: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence.

In order to examine the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence, the research team has used the One-Way ANOVA test, and the results were as following:

Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
City	98	3,306	0,485	4,422	0,013
Village	90	3,206	0,521		
Camp	12	3,7006	0,769		

It is obvious from the above table that there are statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence, as the p value is 0,013, which is lower than 0,05. Therefore, the differences found in favor of students who are living in camps, based on the means difference with city and village.

H4: there is no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to University.

In order to examine the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to university, the research team has used the One-Way ANOVA test, and the results were as following:

It is obvious from the above table that there are no statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to university, as the p value is 0,894, which is higher than 0,05.

Table 12. One Way ANOVA test for the differences in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to university

Universities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
Al-Quds University	92	3,506	0,444	0,204	0,894
An-Najah National University	44	3,3061	0,637		
Bethlehem University	23	3,4006	0,541		
Palestine Polytechnic University	41	3,3306	0,590		

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to assess the level of attitudes toward mental illness among nursing at universities in the West Bank who have healthcare professions faculties, for both who attended the psychiatric nursing course and who did not attend the course. For students who did not attend the course “before taking the psychiatric course” the results revealed that nursing students reported a moderate level of attitude toward mental illness before taking the psychiatric nursing course at university. which might be related for emotions and feelings that students have toward people who has mental illness, in other words the psychiatric course considered as a supplementary material for nurses toward dealing and treating with people suffer from mental illness, but in the case of students who did not attend the course, they rely on their human emotions and empathy that form their survival instinct.⁽¹³⁾

Since the most important items of the scale for students who did not attend the course, were “We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely”, followed by item “The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated”. While, the lowest mean was for the item “It is shameful to have a mental illness”. This indicates that students who do not attend the course, have positive attitudes toward mental illness. As number of studies revealed that nursing students have positive attitudes toward mental illness by emotions and instinct.^(13,14)

Moreover, the results revealed that the nursing students who attended the psychiatric nursing course reported a high level of attitudes toward mental illness. This result means that the psychiatric course is an important material that enhance the awareness of nursing students toward mental illness, in which they can accept and respect the people suffering from mental illness. As well, the course might provide nursing students with field training in mental health departments, which contributes into decreasing their negative attitudes and increasing the positive attitudes, throughout treatment with those people and know more about the mental illness. This result is consistent with the study,⁽¹⁵⁾ who found that clinical and theory class positively influenced the students’ feelings of preparedness and levels of anxiety and negatively impacted perceptions of mental health nursing course.

Since the most important items from the perspectives of nursing students who attended the psychiatric course were: “We should not laugh at the mentally ill even though they act strangely”; “The care and support of family and friends can help people with mental illness to get rehabilitated”; “People with mental illness have unpredictable behavior”. While, the lowest mean score was for the item “Mental illness is a punishment for doing bad things”. It is obvious that those responses indicated for positive attitude more than students who did not attend the course. This means that students who attended the psychiatric course have wider knowledge about the mental illness and the circumstances that people with mental illness have lived before, which led to let them suffer from mental illness.^(13,16) Therefore, those students are able to treat with people who have mental illness better than those who did not attend the course. In addition, the students after taking the course would be more effective to provide those people with needed healthcare, and would be more careful into treating with people who suffer from mental illness, thus they can control their behaviors.

The previous results are supported with the result of there are significant statistical differences among nursing students who have taken the psychiatric course and who have not taken the course regarding attitudes toward mental illness, when the differences were in favor of the students who have attended the psychiatric nursing course.^(11,16) This means that students who attend the psychiatric course showed higher level of positive attitudes toward mental illness than those who did not attend the course “who rely on their emotions and feeling against mental illness.

This result is consistent with the study of^(13,17) who found that having taken mental health courses significantly predicted more favorable attitudes toward people with mental disorders, and better knowledge of mental health stigma. And consistent with^(10,18) who revealed that negative attitudes and perceptions decreased significantly after the course. As well, the result consistent with,^(13,17) who found that there were improved scores on the ATP-30 subscales indicated reduced stigma towards psychiatry. While the result is inconsistent with the study of,^(13,19) who found that minimal positive changes observed in students’ beliefs and attitudes toward mental health. And there was no significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores, indicating a moderate impact of the internship.

In other context, results showed that there are no statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness before psychiatric nursing course due to gender, age, place of residence, university. While there were statistical differences due to experience with someone who suffering from mental health conditions. This can be explained as students who witnessed the experience with someone with mental health illness, have more positive attitudes toward mental illness, because the student see and treat with mental illness symptoms and practices, which let the student have more knowledge toward dealing with mental illness from emotional and experiential aspects. This result is consistent with the studies.^(13,17,20,21)

Moreover, the study revealed that there are no statistical significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to gender, age, university, and experience with someone who suffering from mental health condition. Whereas, the results showed that there are statistical differences at $\alpha \leq 0,05$ in the level of attitudes of nursing students toward mental illness after psychiatric nursing course due to Place of Residence, in favor of students who are living in camps. Those differences might be occurred because of the environment in camps might be more object to increasing number of mental illness. As well, this might relates to the higher levels of stress and anxiety that people live in camps suffer from, as nursing students who attended the psychiatric course and live in camps, would be witnessed more cases of mental illness and treat with them. This means that students live in camps have more positive attitudes toward mental illness than who live in cities and villages. This result is consistent with the study of^(13,20) who found that there were differences between nursing students after attending the psychiatric course due to their place of living in favor to rural places.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion of the results, research team can conclude that psychiatric nursing course has a vital importance into raising up the level of attitudes among nursing students toward mental illness. In which, the students learn the issues related to the mental illness such as characteristics, circumstances, reasons, and treatment forms with people who have mental illness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the aforementioned discussion of results, research team recommends the following:

- The need for the psychiatric nursing course to be mandatory educated for nursing students and other healthcare professions. Due to its importance into providing enrich and empower information for students.
- The need for health professions faculty to merge the theory of the psychiatric course with practical and clinical training for students, in order to emphasize that students have benefits from the course. Which will contribute into mitigating the negative beliefs that mental illness is a stigma.
- The need for re-considering the content and subjects of the psychiatric course, toward adapting with the current development in the number of people with mental illness.
- Further future studies are needed toward assessing the knowledge, attitude, and practice among nursing students toward mental illness. In addition, future studies are needed for identifying the reasons beyond mental illness, and what themes or dimensions should be added to the psychiatric course.

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