

Knowledge and Attitude of Bedouins' of Saint Catherine Towards Mental Disorders

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To assess knowledge and attitude of Bedouins towards mental disorders., 81 subjects from Saint Cathrine (South Sinai) were randomly and systematically recruited and interviewed with a semistructured technique to obtain a profile of their concepts and beliefs. Results showed that 89% of interviewee do not recognize the term schizophrenia (Fusam) and 66.6% refused to work with a patient known to have mental disorder. The implications of these finding suggest that programmes aiming at reduction of stigma of mental illness should target the knowledge and attitudes of various community subgroups.

(Egypt.J. Psychiat., 1999, 22: 287 - 295).

INTRODUCTION

The stigma attached to mental illness (and schizophrenia as a psychotic disorder), to people who suffer from it and their families creates a vicious cycle of alienation and discrimination. Studies and surveys have consistently shown that stigmatisation of those suffering from mental illness is prevalent throughout the world (WPA, 1999). It has consistently shown that stigmatisation has a direct and demonstrable effect on the medical treatment, legislative rights and potential for reintegration of patients into a more normal lifestyle.

El-Sherbini et al (1981) described the knowledge and opinions of Egyptian families about mental illness and mental patients to be very limited and greatly influenced by the stigma attached to

mental illness. Moreover, society attitude toward schizophrenia as a stigma contributed to factors leading to relapse and rehospitalization (Shama and Gad 1999).

AIM OF THE WORK

When considering bedouin's mental health as a goal, we made our primary aim to identify bedouins concepts about psychiatric disorders. Secondary aim included identifying their concepts about etiological factors related to psychiatric disorders, psychiatric hospital care, their social stigma of being mentally disordered, their trust in psychiatric doctor, and the association of all of this to governmental education.

SUBJECT AND METHODS

This study was done during May and June, 1999, 81 persons were taken as a simple random sample, aged more than

This study was carried out by Fifth Year Medical Students in Faculty of Medicine, Suez Canal University Under the Supervision of Dr. M.H. El-Defrawi, M.D. Professor and Chairman of the Neuropsychiatry Unit.

14 years. Saint Cathrine was chosen on a basis of feasibility. Data was collected in by 9 medical students from 5th year,

faculty of medicine, Suez Canal University, using pre - designed interviewing questionnaire sheet.

RESULTS

Table 1
Bedouins' Knowledge About the Most Common Psychiatric Disorders

Psychiatric Presentations	Percentage
Sadness and depression	40.7%
Convulsions	0%
Headache	11.1%
Disorganized behavior	11.1%
Rage and anxiety	20%
Do not know	22.2%

Table 2
How far Bedouins Know About the Etiology of Psychiatric Disorders and Association with Governmental Education

Bedouins Knowledge	Percentage from the total	Percentage from Highly educated	Percentage from the Moderately educated	Percentage from the illiterate
Psychological stresses	74.1%	0%	100%	60%
Organic brain disease	3.7%	100%	0%	0%
Magic and devils act	0%	0%	0%	0%
Do not know	22.2%	0%	0%	40%

Table 3
Bedouin's Opinion About the Way Psychiatric Disorders Should be Trated and Association with Governmental Education

Proper way of treatment	Percentage from the total	Percentage from Highly educated	Percentage from the Moderately educated	Percentage from the illiterate
Medical care	92.6%	100%	81.8%	53.3%
Magic	7.4%	0%	0%	13.3%
Quern	7.4%	0%	9.1%	6.6%
No cure	3.7%	0%	9.1%	0%
Do not know	29.6%	0%	9.1%	46.6%

NB. More than one modality of treatment might have been chosen by a given person

Table 4
Degree of Social Stigma as Evident by Their Acceptance to Work With a
Psychiatric Patient and Association with Governmental Education

Acceptance to work with a psychiatric patient	Percentage from the total	Percentage from Highly educated	Percentage from the Moderately educated	Percentage from the illiterate
Refuse absolutely	66.6%	0%	54.5%	80%
Refuse in dangerous case	7.4%	100%	9.1%	0%
Agree with precautions	14.8%	0%	18.2%	20%
Agree only after treatment	3.7%	0%	9.1%	0%

Table 5
Bedouins Concepts About how Much the Psychiatric Patients
Need to be Hospitalized and Association with Governmental Education

Bedouins concepts	Percentage from the total	Percentage from Highly educated	Percentage from the Moderately educated	Percentage from the illiterate
Hospitalization should be done	70.4%	0%	63.6%	80%
Hospitalization should be done	14.8%	0%	9.1%	20%
Hospitalization depends on dan- gerousness of the case	14.8%	100%	27.3%	0%

Table 6
Bedouins Trust in Psychiatric Doctors Ability to Treat Psychiatric
Patients and Association with Governmental Education

Bedouins trusts	Percentage from the total	Percentage from Highly educated	Percentage from the Moderately educated	Percentage from the illiterate
Trust	66.6%	100%	63.6%	66.6%
Do not trust	22.2%	0%	18.2%	26.6%
Do not know	11.2%	0%	18.2%	6.8%

figure (1). Distribution of sex among the sample among the sample

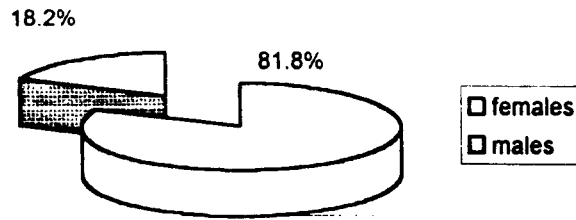


fig (2). Age groups of the sample

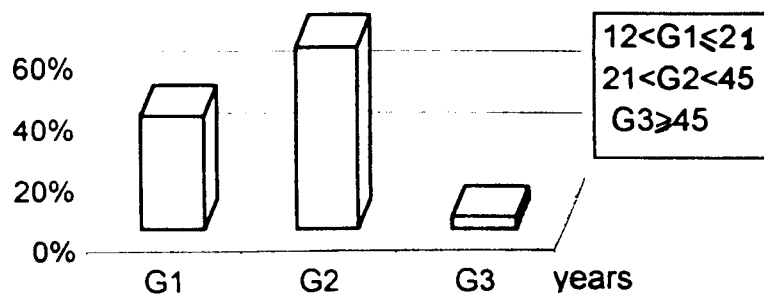
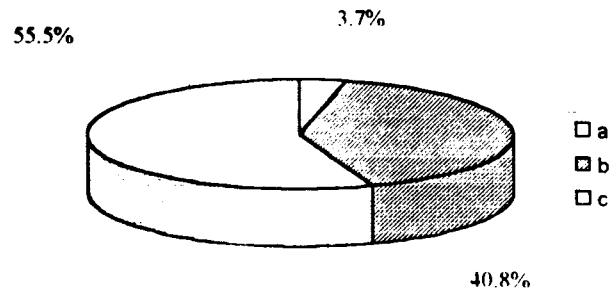


Fig (3). Degree of governmental education among sample



a: highly educated b : moderately educated c: illiterate

Fig (4) : Bedouins concepts about the way psychiatric patients are approached in psychiatric hospitals

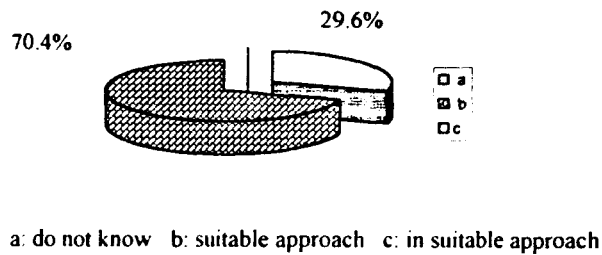
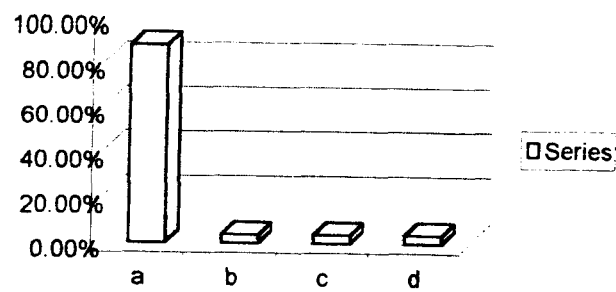


fig (5) .knowledge of Bedouins about Schizophrenia



a: unaware
b: organic brain disease
c: restlessness and rapidly changed mood
d: state of anxiety

DISCUSSION

It was surprisingly to find that when asked about their knowledge of mental illness (table 1) that answers were somehow equally distributed upon the given options with no noticeable domination of one over the other. Relatively, the majority of them claimed that it is represented as state of sadness and depression then comes the statement that it is a kind of madness affecting the diseased person. Unexpectedly, a very small number believed that psychological derangement is the work of devils and evil souls, this may be a direct reflection of tough and realistic environment where one must do its utmost to achieve things with no role for miracles and paranormal activities in their life. This it seems that most of people have a considerable understanding of the causes committed in the occurrence of psychological disorders (table 2) as about 67% stated that it results from various sorts of stresses in life. This notice may be explained on the basis that most of them were young adults who are somehow openminded.

Regarding their attitude towards the mentally - ill persons and the social stigma that is connected to the psychiatric patient (table 4) most of them showed a kind of rejection as they refused to let such patients accompany them at work. This is in accordance with the findings of El-Sherbini et al (1981) and Shama and Gad (1999) A small number of people stated that they can be work partners with mental patients provided that they will approach such patients in a special way. Also, a fact that represents the seriousness of the social stigma of the psychiatric ill persons (table 5) is that most people (70.4%) preferred that the patient should be hospitalized and isolated from the rest of the community.

Concerning ways of curing psychiatric illnesses, the majority of people stressed on the important role of hospitalization and the supervision of a specialist physician (table 3&6) in treating those patients in comparison to other modalities of treatment such as magic and traditional remedies which in their opinion has little to do in the treatment of psychiatric diseases and how much they trust the psychiatric physician and believe in his abilities.

Patients (figure 4) are well - treated and nicely approached in the special hospitals with 55% stated that psychiatric disorders are curable under the supervision of the specialist physician. This may be explained either as a well - understanding of the role of modern medicine in treating psychiatric illnesses or by the cautious nature generally found in bedouins when intervened for survey reasons.

A great number of people, 88.8% were completely unaware of a disorder called schizophrenia (in Arabic Fusam) (figure 5). The remaining schizophrenia being an organic brain disease, a state of anxiety and restlessness or a rapidly changing mood. Our results showed many misconceptions among which their attitude towards patients with mental disorders which is closely similar to those reported by Rashed et al (1987) about psychiatric patients beliefs about their drugs, the common factor is lack of education and awareness. Also, the negative attitude expressed towards patients with mental disorders is similar to that described by El-Gueneidy et al (1986) about stigma associated with epilepsy.

However it seems that governmental education succeeded in improving their concepts and beliefs towards mental disorders as most of the correct answers that reflect right concepts came from university educated persons.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge and attitudes towards mental illness are much better than expected, but still stigmatizing mental illness in some aspects. It seems that there is no place for magical powers and paranormal activities in their life. Bedouins trust psychiatrists and believe in and them as way of cure of psychological disturbances. As in many other parts in Egypt, there is a social stigma connected to the psychiatric patient.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further psychiatric research should be conducted on a larger scale among bedouins to investigate more about their knowledge and attitudes towards mental disorders, perhaps with larger samples and possibly older population. Health education program should be conducted aiming to improve bedouin's knowledge, attitude and practice towards psychiatric patients. Efficient psychiatric health care facilities should be administered to bedouins. A training course to the primary health care physicians with

referral system will be efficient.

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المعرفة والاتجاهات لدى بدو سانت كاترين (جنوب سيناء) تجاه الاضطراب النفسى والفصام

قام طلبة السنة الخامسة بكلية الطب - جامعة قناة السويس بعمل مسح صحى طبى نفسى لتقييم معرفه واتجاهات عينه عشوائية منظمة ٨١ من سكان سانت كاترين تجاه المرض النفسى والفصام بإستخدام أسئلة فى مقابله شبه مقننه وأظهرت نتائج المسح الاستطلاعى لعدد ٨١ فرداً من السكان أن معرفتهم بالاضطراب النفسى وأسبابه أفضل من المتوقع ولكن كان حوالى ٨٩٪ من العينة لا يطعنوا أى شىء عن لفظ الفصام بينما رفض حوالى ٦٦٪ منهم العمل مع مريض بإضطراب نفسى ويناقش البحث الدلالات والنتائج فى ضوء أهمية برامج التوعيه الصحية النفسية وتحسن نظره المجتمع تجاه المرض النفسى بصفه عامه والفصام بصفه خاصة.