
The Relationship Between Nurses' Attitudes Toward Stigma of Mental Health Care and Help Seeking Behavior for Psychiatric Conditions

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Abstract:

Background: Nurses experience high levels of psychological distress, yet evidence suggests that negative attitudes and mental health-related stigma may deter them from seeking professional psychiatric help.

Aim: This review aimed to examine the relationship between nurses' attitudes toward mental health stigma and their help-seeking behaviors for psychiatric conditions.

Methods: A systematic literature review was conducted following established review guidelines. Electronic databases including PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses were searched for English-language studies published between 2020 and March 2025. Eligible studies focused on nurses' attitudes, stigma, and help-seeking behaviors related to mental health. Data were synthesized narratively due to methodological heterogeneity.

Results: Ten studies met the inclusion criteria. Two major themes were identified: (1) nurses' attitudes toward mental health and their influence on help-seeking behavior, and (2) the impact of public and self-stigma on help-seeking. Despite adequate mental health knowledge, many nurses reported reluctance to seek psychological support, commonly driven by fear of judgment, perceived professional weakness, and concerns about career repercussions. Stigma consistently emerged as a significant barrier, while mental health literacy, supportive workplace environments, and targeted educational interventions facilitated positive help-seeking behaviors.

Conclusion: Mental health-related stigma and unfavorable attitudes significantly hinder nurses' willingness to seek psychiatric help. Organizational policies, stigma-reduction initiatives, and mental health education programs are crucial to improving help-seeking behaviors and promoting nurses' psychological well-being.

Keywords:

Nurses' Attitudes, Stigma, Help Seeking Behavior, Psychiatric Conditions.