



MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH: ENGAGING COMMUNITY FOR RESEARCH IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

This panel discussion was one of the sessions in International Multidisciplinary Prospective Research in Education and Social Sciences (IMPRESS21) conference that took place on 7-9 September 2021. This discussion was about community involvement in mental health research and the panel members were Professor Mohamed Hatta Shaharom, a senior medical practitioner and Professor of Psychiatry. Next panellist, Dr. Kahar Abdulla is an International Coordinator at European Alliance against Depression who is passionate in increasing mental health awareness in the community. Final panellist, Mr. Gan Chun Hong is a lecturer and clinical psychologist whose work focuses on the area of rehabilitation clinical psychology. The aim of this discussion is to illustrate the role of community in mental health management, research and in post-graduate training. This discussion hopes to highlights the needs of community engagement in mental health research for an impactful outcome.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Research Impact, Engaging Community*

BACKGROUND

There is a growing interest in the role of community in research mental health care, even before the emergence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Before moving further into how to engage the community in mental health research or any other form of research, first, we need to understand the concept of community. The concept of community can be understood from various perspectives (Rahman et al, 2020). But for this paper basically community can be understood from system perspectives (community is like a living creature, comprising different parts that served specialized functions, activities, or interests, and which operate within specific boundaries to meet specific needs); secondly, social perspective, there is the social and political networks that link individuals, community organizations, and leaders together; thirdly, virtual perspective, to dates community are linked and relied more on computer-mediated communications to access information, meet people, and make decisions that affect their lives; and lastly individual perspective, the community may have a sense of belonging to more than one community where their sense of membership can change over time and may affect their participation in community activities. All the four perspectives of community need to be learned to understand how individuals understand their identity and connections, enter into relationships, and form communities before engaging them in research.