Knowledge and Attitude towards Dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students

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KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEMENTIA AMONG UNIMAS UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

This graduation exercise is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Nursing (with Honours)

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ABSTRACT

Background: The increase in the number of demented people in Malaysia indicates the need for increased quantity and quality of geriatric care services. As future primary healthcare providers, nursing students are expected to have good knowledge and a good attitude toward dementia. **Objectives:** To assess the level of knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students as well as to examine the relationship between the level of knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted through a simple random sampling. The data was collected from UNIMAS nursing students (n=162). The 16-item Dementia Knowledge and Dementia Attitude scale (DAS) of questionnaires were used to assess students' knowledge and attitudes toward dementia. **Results:** Findings showed that most respondents possessed poor knowledge 79 (48.8%) and poor attitudes 89 (54.94%) toward dementia. The overall mean knowledge score was 9.42 (SD= 1.76) meanwhile, the overall mean attitude score was 68.20 (SD= 7.54). A weak positive relationship was found between the level of knowledge and attitude towards dementia, [r= .22, n= 162, p= .005] respectively. **Conclusion:** This study concluded that UNIMAS nursing students have poor knowledge and attitudes toward dementia. The study's findings demand more dementia educational materials, dementia workshops, and training to improve knowledge and attitude among nursing students.

Keywords: Dementia, knowledge, attitude, nursing students, UNIMAS

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: *Kenaikan jumlah orang yang mengalami demensia di Malaysia menunjukkan perlunya peningkatan kuantiti dan kualiti perkhidmatan penjagaan geriatrik. Sebagai penyedia penjagaan kesihatan primer masa depan, pelajar kejururawatan dijangka memiliki pengetahuan yang baik dan sikap yang baik terhadap demensia.* ***Objektif:*** *Menilai tahap pengetahuan dan sikap terhadap demensia di kalangan pelajar kejururawatan prasiswazah UNIMAS serta mengkaji hubungan antara tahap pengetahuan dan sikap terhadap demensia di kalangan pelajar kejururawatan prasiswazah UNIMAS.* ***Metodologi****: Satu kajian kerjasama dilakukan melalui persampelan rawak mudah. Data dikumpulkan dari pelajar kejururawatan UNIMAS (n=162). Soal selidik 16 item Skala Pengetahuan Demensia dan Sikap Demensia (DAS) digunakan untuk menilai pengetahuan dan sikap pelajar terhadap demensia.* ***Hasil kajian:*** *Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan responden memiliki pengetahuan yang kurang baik 79 (48.8%) dan sikap yang kurang baik 89 (54.94%) terhadap demensia. Purata keseluruhan markah pengetahuan adalah 9.42 (SD= 1.76) manakala purata keseluruhan markah sikap adalah 68.20 (SD= 7.54). Hubungan positif lemah ditemui antara tahap pengetahuan dan sikap terhadap demensia, [r= .22, n= 162, p= .005] masing-masing.* ***Kesimpulan:*** *Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa pelajar kejururawatan UNIMAS memiliki pengetahuan dan sikap yang kurang baik terhadap demensia. Hasil kajian ini menuntut lebih banyak bahan pendidikan demensia, bengkel demensia, dan latihan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan sikap di kalangan pelajar kejururawatan.*

Kata kunci: Demensia, pengetahuan, sikap, pelajar kejururawatan, UNIMAS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
PWD	People with Dementia
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study's background, problem statement, research questions, aims, the significance of the study, and definitions of key terms.

1.1 Background of study

Negative views towards people with dementia is a major global issue, and it is one of the most significant barriers for people with dementia to live with full dignity and respect (Lacko et al., 2019). According to the recent World Alzheimer Report (2019), the estimated number of People with Dementia (PWD) in Malaysia will be 261,000 in 2030 and is expected to triple in 2050. This indicates that Malaysia is currently in a situation where immediate action is needed to prepare for the expected increase in the number of older individuals. However, Malaysia may not be sufficiently equipped to provide high-quality healthcare services for persons with dementia and their carers, according to a report by Access Economics Pty Limited for the Asia Pacific members of Alzheimer's Disease International (Lai et al., 2022). Thus, this showed that dementia still has a lower level of public awareness than other chronic illnesses that affect older individuals.

According to Brielle (2020), dementia is not a normal component of the aging process. It is a degenerative disease that involves abnormal cognitive function, resulting in cognitive and physical symptoms that deteriorate with time. The brain and body begin to slow with normal ageing, although a person's intellectual level remains constant (NIH, 2020). However, the

issue with healthcare professionals' misconceptions about the distinctions between normal aging and dementia is still a major problem nowadays, which reflects that they were lack awareness about dementia. As evidence, approximately 40% of the general public mentioned that medical professionals turn a blind eye to dementia patients (Alzheimer's Disease International, 2019). As a result, the diagnosis and treatment can be delayed by a lack of knowledge and understanding about dementia (WHO,2022) and prevent people from seeking medical care when their symptoms are apparent (Alzheimer's Association, 2019a). This is supported by Griffiths et al. (2020), which is among 347 older people who were admitted to a hospital in urbanized Malaysia for physical health issues, the majority had mild (64.7%) or moderate to severe (3.1%) cognitive impairment (Griffiths et al., 2020).

Nurses, nursing students, or caretakers often experience negative physical, emotional, social, and economic consequences from the growing population of PWD. A research study by Strøm et al. (2021) reported that most nursing home staff viewed demented patients as people who could not control their emotions and had unpredictable behavior. One of the factors contributing to the negative perception of people with dementia by nursing home staff generally could be the complexity of caring for those with dementia. The negative effects are also made worse by the perception that dementia's early signs and symptoms are frequently considered common among the elderly (Alzheimer Association, 2019b). Other than that, the nursing students reported that they faced difficulties and had bad experiences during their clinical practice when managing demented patients (Saini et al., 2012). The reason contributing to this problem could be due to their lack of basic knowledge of dementia prior to clinical practice. Good knowledge would give nurses and nursing students a clear understanding when giving treatment and managing care. Knowing more about dementia is

vital in the healthcare industry as this will increase their competence and improve dementia care as well the quality among healthcare professionals (Rahmi et al., 2021).

Thus, as nurses and nursing students have a strong foundation of knowledge on dementia, their poor attitude may change. As a result, their perceptions of people with dementia may change positively.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Nursing students are the future caregivers, advocators, and healthcare workers in their future workplaces. Increasingly, more nursing students will have direct contact with people who have dementia as a result of the rise in the number of people with dementia (PWD). Emotional changes are a common symptom of dementia (Alzheimer's Society, 2022). Nursing students' clinical encounters with PWD are very challenging, especially in managing their unpredictable behaviour, such as anxiousness, agitation, violence, and aggressiveness (Scerri & Scerri, 2013). Demented patients may have less control over how they communicate their feelings. For example, PWD may overreact to situations, experience quick mood swings, or become impatient. They may also seem disengaged or uninterested in what is happening around them (Alzheimer's Society, 2022). The nursing students' feelings of difficulty approaching PWD might be due to their inadequate knowledge regarding the characteristics of dementia, which will likely experience more difficulties in their future careers (Aljezawi, 2022). Moreover, nurses with insufficient knowledge and poor attitude frequently use physical strains to manage this unpredictable behaviour (Keuning-Plantinga et al., 2020). This could be due to their insufficient knowledge of alternatives to restraint which may affect the patient's functionality and reduce peripheral circulation (Said & Kautz, 2013).

Demented people might feel afraid and insecure due to their mistreated behavior towards them. Nurses' and nursing students' negative attitudes and actions toward patients with dementia can profoundly harm those directly or indirectly affected by the condition. It can exacerbate their emotions of hopelessness and sense of isolation while affecting their ability to cope (Beeston, 2022). As a result, the lack of knowledge and poor attitude towards people with dementia may lead them to put off getting help or seeking medical attention (Griffiths et al., 2020).

Thus, nurses must be knowledgeable and skilled to fulfil the specific needs of dementia patients (Rahmi et al., 2021). Many research has been done on the understanding and perspectives of nursing students toward dementia in various parts of the world. Based on the study by Scerri and Scerri (2013) and Strom et., al (2021), they have found that nurses and nursing students are inadequately trained and lack knowledge but have a good attitude toward dementia in developing countries. There is a lack of published articles on this study, and few researchers have conducted the study among nursing students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions for this study are:

a) What is the level of knowledge on dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?
b) What is the attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

c) Is there any relationship between the level of knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

Research aim: To investigate the relationship between knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

Objectives:

a) To assess the level of knowledge on dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.
b) To identify the level of attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.
c) To examine the relationship between the level of knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students.

1.5 Significance of the study

Nursing students are the future healthcare workers who will serve their community service in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. In order to improve PWDs' quality of life and health outcomes, nurses and nursing students must have the knowledge and develop a good attitude toward dementia. Understanding dementia will develop a moral value of mutual respect, being patience, and tolerance which is one of the significant parts of providing person-centered care (Strøm et al., 2021). As a result, people with dementia may feel recognized and be treated as a person with respect, able to find positive parts of life. With the aid of this study, UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students' current knowledge and attitude toward dementia can be assessed. In addition, it will provide baseline data regarding factors that might affect the measured variables between knowledge and attitude towards dementia. By doing this, the

university may take the initiative to improve the knowledge and attitude among nursing students at UNIMAS. Therefore, these will promote awareness and eliminate dementia stigma among nursing students in the long run. Lastly, as there have not been many recent studies on the knowledge and attitudes of nursing students in Malaysia concerning dementia care, the results of this study can act as a foundation for future research, particularly in Malaysia (Zuhaida et al., 2022).

1.6 Definition of terms

Dementia: Is defined as the loss of cognitive ability that interferes with a person's everyday life and activities by impairing their thinking, remembering, and reasoning (National Institute on Aging, 2021).

Knowledge: A skill in understanding information about something a person gets through experience or study (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). In this study, the researcher will use the Sixteen (16) items of Dementia Knowledge adopted from Khonje et al. (2015) with permission to determine the understanding of dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students. First, the correct answers were summed up to get the overall knowledge score, which ranges from 0 to 16. One mark was given for each correct answer and zeroed for each wrong answer. Then the total score would be categorized into good, moderate and poor knowledge by using visual binning of SPSS (IBM, 2021). The level of knowledge was classified as poor knowledge with a score of 9 and below, moderate knowledge with a score of between 10 to 11 and good knowledge with a score of 12 and above.

Attitude: Defined as a thought, judgement, or way of behaviour (Cambridge, 2019). The attitude of UNIMAS nursing students towards Dementia will be measured by using 20-item questions on Dementia Attitude Scale which are gained from open access and adapted from O'Connor & McFadden (2010), with permission. Using a 5-Likert scale which will be ranged from 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. The total score will range from a minimum of 20 to a maximum score of 100. After that, the visual binning was used to determine the cutoff points of the total score. Based on the visual binning results, the attitude was classified as poor if the score was 68 and below, and a good attitude with a score of 69 and above.

UNIMAS Undergraduate Nursing Students: A nursing student is identified as a person who is enrolled in a nursing programme (Law Insider, n.d). For this study, nursing students refer undergraduate nursing students in the academic year 2022/2023 who have experience in the clinical setting.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed the study's background, the problem statement, and the significance of the study to understand the purpose and importance of conducting this research among undergraduate nursing students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the knowledge and attitude towards dementia among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the literature review regarding the lack of previous studies on the knowledge of dementia, the attitudes towards dementia and its relationships.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section presents relevant literature available in online databases, including Google Scholar, Elsevier, ResearchGate, PubMed, and ScienceDirect, to gain a deeper understanding and provide ideas about the association of knowledge and attitude towards dementia among undergraduate university students in countries outside of and in Malaysia. The keyword used in the online databases is “level of knowledge on dementia”, “attitude towards dementia”, and “nursing students. The filter used for the search is sorted by date and year from 2012 to 2023 to see the latest papers as the top results by using the PRISMA checklist. Utilising the PRISMA statement and its extensions when writing protocols or the final review report and following the PRISMA checklists will probably inform readers and reviewers of what authors have done and discovered while enhancing the quality of reporting and optimising the peer review process (McKenzie et al., 2020). The review of the literature will be presented in the following subsections.

2.1 Knowledge of the nursing students on Dementia

Many studies have been conducted to study the baseline knowledge of various populations about dementia. A descriptive correlational study by Khatiwada et al. (2022) shows that dementia knowledge among 177 nursing students was poor. This may be due to their lack of work experience with dementia patients and training in dementia care. Dementia is a complex condition that necessitates a thorough understanding of its causes, progression, symptoms, and management. Lack of clinical experience causes nursing students have a limited understanding of the various types of dementia, their specific characteristics, and the

underlying pathophysiology (Fisher et al., 2016). This lack of understanding causes difficulties in providing an effective care towards people with dementia. Moreover, nursing students may be unable to keep up with the latest dementia care practises and interventions due to a lack of training. As a result, they may rely on outdated or ineffective approaches, resulting in poor outcomes for people with dementia. Besides, a study by Aljezawi (2022), showed that Jordanian undergraduate students scored lower than the average mean scores regarding dementia. This finding implies that nursing students have a knowledge gap that needs to be filled. The poor knowledge could be attributed to the insufficiency of educational resources provided to students in the university. Lack of educational resources may leads to insufficient knowledge among nursing students especially related to the causes, symptoms and progression of dementia. This may affect their ability to recognise and respond to the specific needs of people suffering from dementia.

Furthermore, a study by Wang et al. (2018) shows that community health practitioners in China have a poor understanding of dementia, with mean knowledge scores of 19.7 out of 30. The results of this study show a relationship between dementia symptoms and knowledge scores. Many people believe that dementia symptoms are a normal part of ageing and cannot be treated, especially in China's communal settings. The majority of participants (62.8%) believed in the misconception that tremors or shaking of the hands or arms was a common indication of Alzheimer's disease. The lack of expertise among community nurses in this study may result from their limited professional scope and insufficient dementia education and training. Lack of dementia training leads to their unable to recognise and assess dementia symptoms as well as their needs. Thus, nurses may struggle to distinguish dementia from other conditions or normal ageing processes, resulting in misdiagnosis or delayed intervention (WHO, 2022).

Similarly, a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted by Rahmi et al. (2021) among 34 nurses from Public Health Centre in Bandung, Indonesia, showed the nurses have limited knowledge regarding dementia. Work experience and the availability of information about dementia health education and dementia care are two factors that could influence the findings. Nurses with direct experience working with dementia patients are more likely to understand the dementia condition. They learn about the unique challenges and needs of people with dementia, as well as strategies for providing effective care, through hands-on experience (Yous et al., 2019). Nurses also may acquire a better understanding of the condition as they have access to comprehensive educational resources focused specifically on dementia health education and care. These resources may include research articles guidelines, online courses, and workshops which cover various aspects of dementia care, including assessment, communication, behavioral management, and person-centered care (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2022).

In contrast, research by Zuhaida et al. (2022) revealed that 78.6% of nursing students at the undergraduate level had a good knowledge of dementia. More years of study increases the likelihood of achieving a high level of knowledge. Most students had experience caring for dementia patients since their first year of clinical placement could be one of the reason of their good knowledge. As a result, students with prior experience providing care for dementia patients may better understand dementia in older individuals. Clinical experience is crucial for nursing students to learn more about dementia. Therefore, it is advised that nursing curriculum planners give more attention to relevant clinical placements so that students have experience caring for people with dementia. Better awareness of dementia among nursing

students may enable them to perform better in various responsibilities, such as informing patients about the illness process and formulating management strategies to preserve the highest level of communication (Zuhaida et al., 2022).

A descriptive cross-sectional study by Shin et al. (2015) found that South Korean nursing students had a good knowledge of dementia. As for the correct answer scores by the dementia knowledge domain, the average correct answer scores were 94.6% in the caregiving domain, 89.0% in the symptoms and diagnosis domain, 85.4% in the causes of dementia domain, and 78.6% in the prevention and treatment domain. Students' years of study and clinical care experience with dementia patients were among the variables that could affect their dementia knowledge. Thus, the researcher suggested providing dementia training and proper education regarding dementia care.

The overall research findings indicated that most respondents from all over the world had limited awareness of dementia. The research also discovered that earlier clinical exposure and exposure to dementia education are frequently linked to greater dementia understanding. This proves that more attention must be placed on institutional and community dementia education in order to provide the general public, healthcare professionals, and undergraduate students with the information they need for a better future. Healthcare organisations and educational institutions should work together to implement dementia awareness campaigns, and training approaches in order to increase awareness of the disease and reduce stigma among students and healthcare professionals. This is aligned with WHO policies that emphasise prevention, early detection, and therapies for dementia worldwide (WHO, 2022)