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**ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS: A SARAWAK
STUDY**

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Introduction

Medical science has made incredible progress over the last century in helping to understand, and treat mental illnesses however; stigma towards mental illness still exists throughout the world. Mental illness is not seen like other illnesses such as heart disease and cancer. Mental illness is seen as an incurable, dangerous, and something to be hidden away. This is because society feels uncomfortable about mental illness. Due to inaccuracies and misunderstandings, people have been led to believe that an individual with a mental illness has a weak character or is inevitably dangerous.

Media, especially television, has done much harm to create and sustain a distorted view of mental health issues. Characters are usually portrayed as aggressive, dangerous and unpredictable. Negative attitude towards people with mental illness can be attributed to stigma (Mas & Hatim, 2007).

Studies done by Tsang et al (2003), showed that there were rather severe stigmatizing attitudes in the community, such as beliefs about parents causing the illness, strong opposition to setting up psychiatric community facilities near their residence, and limited employment opportunities for people with mental illness, which also increased both the subjective and objective burdens on clients' relatives by denying them social and practical support.