

# The effect of social discrimination against people having mental illness

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



Can you imagine people that are diagnosed with cancer and they are being blamed for it? Being accused that it was their own fault and they totally deserve it? This is what happens to the people suffering from mental illness but slightly different. Mental illness is defined as any disability of the mind (MOH, 2018). People suffering from mental illness are being labelled as lunatics, abnormal or even cursed and people have negative opinions against them. According to the Mental Health Foundation (2018), 450 million people worldwide has a mental health problem. However, although there are so many people experiencing it, there is still a string of judgemental comments and misunderstandings against them and people do not talk openly about it. It is proven that there is a strong stigma against people that has a mental illness, and they experience it in all areas of their life (MHF, 2018). The effect of social stigma and discrimination present against people having mental illness can lead to many serious consequences. Other than facing problems coping with their mental health condition, they also have to deal with people's comments and prejudice against them. The prejudice against them will also robbed them off their opportunities of a normal life which is having a housing, holding a good job and they are being cast outside of a mainstream society (MHF, 2018).

Based on the research study by the federation of trade union, three-quarter of people with mental illness are not employed and even if they are, less than half of them can last 12 months in their jobs. Other than that, stigma and discrimination act as a huge barrier for them to seek for treatment. It is found that two-thirds people with a known mental disorder do not seek treatment from a health professional (WHO, 2018). With discrimination

existing, nine out of ten people with mental health problems say that stigma and discrimination have negative effects on their lives and make it harder for them to recover (MHF, 2018). Therefore, there should be more to be done in order to lift social stigma off the society. The best ways to reduce social stigma will be by providing more public education initiative about mental illness and to provide a platform through business solution.

Firstly, to lift social stigma of the society will be by having more public education initiatives to educate people about the factual information about mental illness as there are public misconceptions about it (NCSS, 2018). Sometimes, people will have comments like “ there are so many things to be thankful for, how can you still be depressed?”, “ snap out of it” and “ there are a lot of people worse than you” (Tracy, 2010). These are no sense and hurtful things to say to people with mental illness as it is like saying they have no reason to be sick, they could choose to not have this mental illness if they really wanted to and that it is not a fatal and it is a serious problem at all (Tracy, 2010). People also have these misconception like if they wants to be happy, they can just be happy and it is just an excuse and a safety blanket for them (White, 2016). All of the examples shows that people actually do not know any fundamental concepts about mental illness as they does not know that having mental illness is not by choice, neither did they deliberately choose to be unhappy.

Instead, they should be aware that the chemical imbalance in our brain is actually the cause of mental illness like depression and it is not something that we can control just like however we want it to be. Also, based on The

Mind Matters study on mental health literacy conducted by IMH in 2016, nine in ten respondents feels that mental illness is something that would get better if they really wanted to and 50% of them perceived it as a personal weakness. The research also showed that less than half of the respondents could not name the correct disorder when given symptoms of the mental illness. This definitely shows the inadequate knowledge and misconception people perceived towards mental illness that results in negative emotions and prejudices against them. By educating them on the concepts and fundamentals of mental illness, people will get to know that mental illness is not by choice and will not discriminate against them but instead, understand them more and even encourage them, thus, reducing social stigma and at the same time promoting inclusivity.