

## Knowledge and Misconceptions about Schizophrenia among Health Care Students and Hospital Staff

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Schizophrenia is a chronic psychiatric disorder often surrounded by stigma and misconceptions, even among healthcare professionals. Limited knowledge and negative attitudes among healthcare trainees and staff may influence patient care and delay treatment.

#### Objectives:

1. To assess knowledge regarding schizophrenia among healthcare students and hospital staff.
2. To identify common misconceptions related to schizophrenia.
3. To compare knowledge levels among medical, dental, nursing students and paramedical staff.

#### Methods:

A cross-sectional questionnaire-based study was conducted in **two medical colleges with associated hospitals, two nursing colleges, one dental college, and one private hospital**. Participants included **300 respondents**: 100 MBBS students/interns, 50 BDS students, 50 nursing students, and 100 paramedical staff (nurses and technicians). A structured questionnaire assessed knowledge and misconceptions regarding schizophrenia. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests.

#### Results:

Overall, **52.3% participants had moderate knowledge, 27.0% good knowledge, and 20.7% poor knowledge**. Misconceptions such as schizophrenia being “split personality” or “caused by supernatural forces” were present in a significant proportion of participants. Medical students demonstrated the highest knowledge scores compared with paramedical staff.

#### Conclusion:

Although healthcare trainees showed moderate awareness of schizophrenia, misconceptions and stigmatizing beliefs persist. Targeted mental health education and anti-stigma training programs are needed for healthcare professionals.

**Keywords:** Schizophrenia, mental health literacy, healthcare students, misconceptions, stigma.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Schizophrenia is a severe psychiatric disorder characterized by disturbances in thought, perception, emotion, and behavior. It affects approximately **1% of the global population** and represents a significant public health challenge.

Despite advances in psychiatric research and treatment, schizophrenia remains highly stigmatized. Misconceptions such as believing it represents “multiple personalities,” or that individuals with schizophrenia are inherently dangerous, remain common.

Healthcare professionals play a critical role in identifying and managing mental illness. However, studies have demonstrated that even medical and nursing students may have **insufficient knowledge and stigmatizing attitudes toward psychiatric disorders**, particularly during early training.

Similarly, research among healthcare students indicates that misconceptions and negative attitudes toward mental illness can persist despite educational exposure.

Understanding the level of knowledge and misconceptions among healthcare trainees and staff is essential because their perceptions can directly influence patient care, help-seeking behavior, and quality of mental health services.

Therefore, the present study aimed to evaluate knowledge and misconceptions regarding schizophrenia among healthcare students and hospital staff in selected institutions.

## 2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

### Primary Objective

1. To assess knowledge about schizophrenia among healthcare students and hospital staff.

### Secondary Objectives

2. To identify common misconceptions regarding schizophrenia.
3. To compare knowledge levels between different healthcare groups.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

Cross-sectional questionnaire-based study.

### Study Setting

The study was conducted in India in :

- 2 Medical colleges with teaching hospitals
- 2 Nursing colleges
- 1 Dental college
- 1 Private hospital

**Study Participants**Total participants: **300**

<b>Participant Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
MBBS students & interns	100
BDS students	50
Nursing students	50
Paramedical staff (nurses & technicians)	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>

**Inclusion Criteria**

- Healthcare students currently enrolled in respective programs
- Hospital staff including nurses and technicians
- Individuals willing to provide informed consent

**Exclusion Criteria**

- Participants unwilling to participate
- Incomplete questionnaires

**Data Collection Tool**

A **structured questionnaire** consisting of three sections:

**Section A – Demographic details**

- Age
- Gender
- Educational background
- Years of training/work experience

**Section B – Knowledge about Schizophrenia**

Questions regarding:

- Causes
- Symptoms
- Treatment options
- Prognosis

**Section C – Misconceptions**

Statements assessing common myths such as:

- Schizophrenia means “split personality”
- Patients with schizophrenia are always violent
- Mental illness is caused by supernatural forces
- Schizophrenia cannot be treated

Responses were recorded using **Likert scale (Agree–Neutral–Disagree)**.

**15-Item Likert Scale Questionnaire**

**Title:** Knowledge (and Misconceptions) about Schizophrenia

**Instructions:**

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding schizophrenia.

**Response Scale**

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

**Section A: Knowledge about Schizophrenia (Items 1–6)**

1. Schizophrenia is a chronic mental disorder affecting thinking, emotions, and behavior.
2. Genetic factors may contribute to the development of schizophrenia.
3. Hallucinations and delusions are common symptoms of schizophrenia.
4. Early diagnosis and treatment improve the prognosis of schizophrenia.
5. Antipsychotic medications are important in the treatment of schizophrenia.
6. Psychological therapies and social support are helpful in managing schizophrenia.

**Section B: Attitudes toward People with Schizophrenia (Items 7–10)**

7. Individuals with schizophrenia can live productive lives with proper treatment.
8. People with schizophrenia should be treated with the same respect as those with physical illnesses.
9. Healthcare professionals should actively support the rehabilitation of patients with schizophrenia.
10. Community awareness programs can reduce stigma related to schizophrenia.

**Section C: Misconceptions about Schizophrenia (Items 11–15)**

11. Schizophrenia means a person has multiple or split personalities.
12. People with schizophrenia are usually violent and dangerous.
13. Schizophrenia is caused by supernatural forces or evil spirits.
14. People with schizophrenia cannot recover or lead normal lives.
15. Families should hide schizophrenia because it brings social stigma.

**Scoring Method (for Research Analysis)****Positive knowledge/attitude items:**

Items 1–10

**Misconception items (reverse scoring):**

Items 11–15

Reverse scoring example:

Strongly Agree = 1

Agree = 2

Neutral = 3

Disagree = 4

Strongly Disagree = 5

**Total Score Range: 15 – 75**

Score Range	Interpretation
60 – 75	Good knowledge
40 – 59	Moderate knowledge
< 40	Poor knowledge

**Scoring approach (optional for methods section)**

- Positive knowledge items: higher score = better knowledge
- Misconception items: reverse scoring
- Total score range: **5–25**
  - 20–25 = Good knowledge
  - 13–19 = Moderate knowledge
  - 5–12 = Poor knowledge

**Statistical Analysis**

Data were analyzed using **SPSS software**.

Statistical methods used:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage)
- Chi-square test for comparison between groups
- Significance level: **p < 0.05**

**4. RESULTS**

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	150	50%
Female	150	50%
Age 18–22	160	53%
Age 23–30	140	47%

**Table 2: Knowledge Level among Participants**

Knowledge Level	Number	Percentage
Good knowledge	81	27%

Knowledge Level	Number	Percentage
Moderate knowledge	157	52.3%
Poor knowledge	62	20.7%

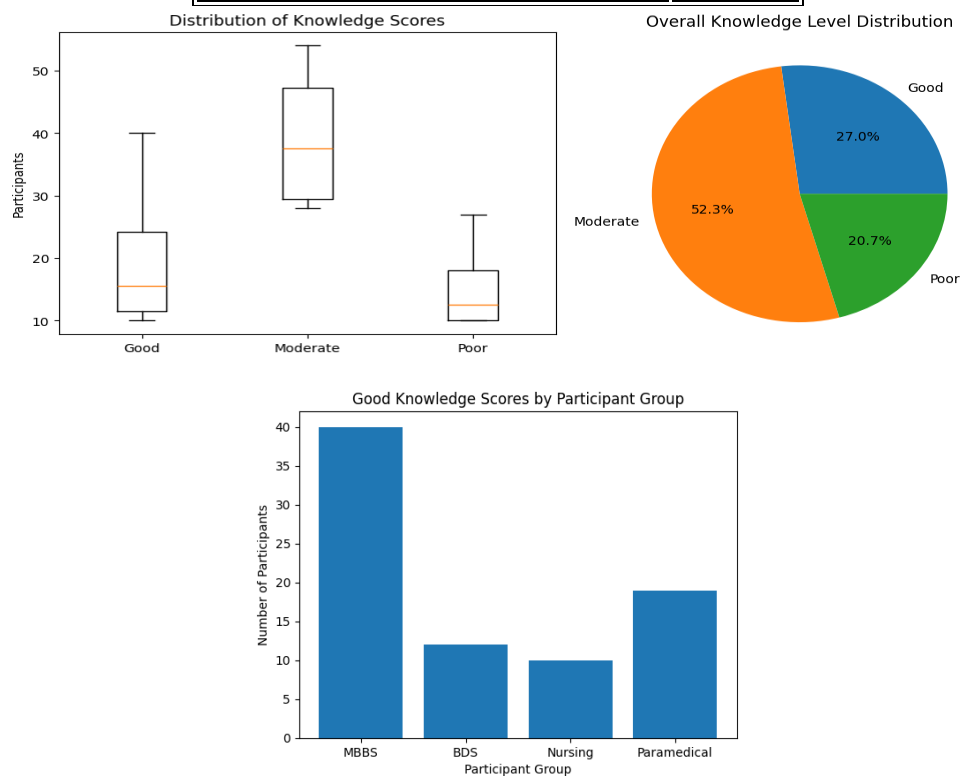
**Table 3: Knowledge Comparison by Participant Group**

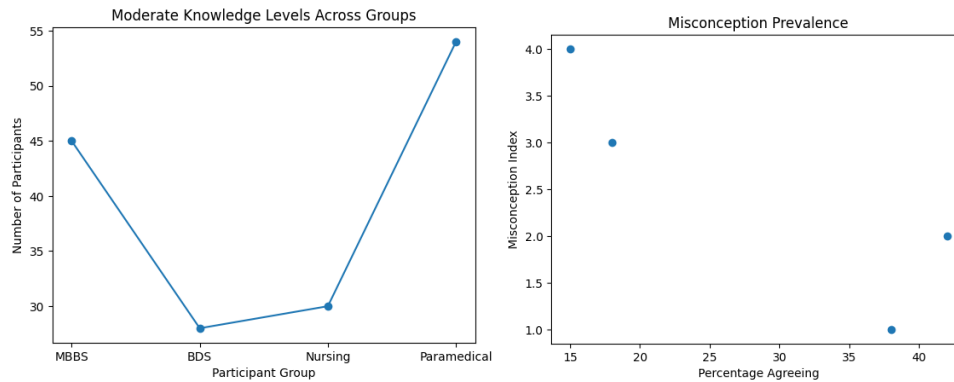
Group	Good Knowledge	Moderate	Poor
MBBS students	40	45	15
BDS students	12	28	10
Nursing students	10	30	10
Paramedical staff	19	54	27

Medical students demonstrated significantly higher knowledge scores ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4: Common Misconceptions Identified**

Misconception	Agree (%)
Schizophrenia means multiple personalities	38%
Patients with schizophrenia are violent	42%
Caused by supernatural forces	18%
Cannot be treated	15%





## 5. DISCUSSION

The present study assessed knowledge and misconceptions regarding schizophrenia among healthcare students and hospital staff.

The findings indicate that moderate knowledge levels were most common, while a significant proportion of participants held misconceptions about schizophrenia.

Medical students showed higher knowledge compared with other groups. This may be due to exposure to psychiatry during clinical training. Previous studies also show that knowledge improves with increasing year of medical education.

Despite moderate knowledge, misconceptions persisted. One common myth observed in this study was the belief that schizophrenia refers to “split personality,” which has also been reported in earlier studies.

Negative perceptions and stigma toward individuals with mental illness remain a major concern even among healthcare trainees. Such attitudes can affect patient care and treatment outcomes.

The study emphasizes the importance of strengthening psychiatric education and awareness programs among healthcare students and hospital staff.

## 6. STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

- Inclusion of multiple healthcare disciplines (medical, dental, nursing, paramedical).
- Multi-institutional setting, increasing generalizability.
- Assessment of both knowledge and misconceptions.

## 7. LIMITATIONS

- Cross-sectional design cannot establish causality.
- Self-reported questionnaire may introduce response bias.
- Study limited to selected institutions.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Incorporate mental health literacy programs in healthcare curricula.
2. Conduct anti-stigma workshops and training sessions for hospital staff.
3. Include psychiatric awareness campaigns in healthcare institutions.

4. Future research with larger multicentric samples is recommended.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that although healthcare students and hospital staff possessed moderate knowledge regarding schizophrenia, misconceptions and stigmatizing beliefs still exist. Improving mental health education among healthcare professionals is essential to enhance early

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