Attitudes of University Students towardsStigmatization of the Mentally ill Patients

Chandrasekara, W. S.[1], Zhixia, Chen[2]

[1]Institute of Human Resource Advancement (IHRA), University of Colombo

[2]School of Public Administration, Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), China

sagara.user@gmail.com

Mental illness stigma is generally recognized as one of the main hindrances to the provision of care to the people with mental illness in the world.Mental illnesses are common in people, but many do not seek treatments despite the availability of evidence-based treatments because of stigma related to mental illness.

The main objective of this study was to discover the levels of stigmatization and discrimination attitudes among university students in Sri Lanka towards people with mental illness. A total sample of 300 university students were interviewed adopting Discrimination- Devaluation (D-D) scale developed by Link and colleagues. The interviews were caarried based on a vignette of a young person with a mental depression. They were asked 12 statements, as to how much they agree or not for the statements.Additionally, qualitative data also were collected through case studies to support to the quantitative findings.

Findingsshow that fairly high level of stigmatization attitudes are prevalent among university students against mental ill health people. Most of respondents stated that (85%) they would not consider such person for an employment. 90% respondents said that if they were in charge of treatments of such person they would force him/her to live in a psychiatric hospital. Majority (82.%) stated that the particular person is responsible for his/her illness. In general, the findings confirmed that stigmatization attitudes among university students are a significant issue for providing care to the people with mental illness in Sri Lanka. So far in the literature, it has not been discovered how and in watch level University students stigmatize people with mental illness in Sri Lanka. Implications of the findings for stigmatization reduction policy planning will be discussed in the paper.

Key words: Discrimination, Mental Illness, Stigma.