



# What Factors Influence An Individual's Perception Of Mental Stigma?

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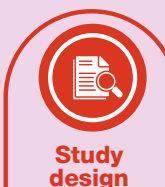


## INTRODUCTION

Mental health perspectives within a community significantly influence the well-being and attitudes of individuals regarding their help-seeking behaviors.<sup>1</sup> Despite the increasing awareness, persistent stigma surrounding mental health continues to erect formidable barriers to outreach within communities, ultimately fostering an environment where shame supplants support and fear eclipses recovery.<sup>2</sup> The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023 has unveiled a marked escalation in mental health issues,<sup>3</sup> prompting the Ministry of Health Malaysia to initiate the "War on Stigma" campaign. This initiative aims to combat the detrimental misconceptions that have long obstructed individuals from pursuing the assistance they require.<sup>4</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

This study aims to identify the significant differences among individuals with diverse backgrounds, varying degrees of awareness, and comprehension regarding mental health stigma in relation to the perceived mental health stigma prevalent within the community.



Cross-sectional survey involving Malaysians aged 18 years and above

**Study instrument**  
STIG-9<sup>5</sup>



**Sample size**  
n=2165

**Data analysis**  
Independent sample T-test was applied to achieve the stated objectives.



## RESULTS

The table below illustrates a notable disparity between genders ( $t=-2.235$ ;  $p=0.026$ ) and localities ( $t=-2.257$ ;  $p=0.024$ ) regarding the perceived stigma surrounding mental health within their communities. Specifically, females and individuals residing in rural areas exhibit a heightened perception of mental health stigma. Conversely, no significant difference is observed among those whose household income falls below RM4,850 ( $t=4.301$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). Similarly, both marital status ( $t=-1.962$ ;  $p=0.050$ ) and occupational status ( $t=-0.084$ ;  $p=0.933$ ) do not demonstrate significant differences.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	954	29.21	5.883	-2.235	0.026*
Female	1211	29.72	5.182		
<b>Locality</b>					
Urban	1558	29.34	5.317	-2.257	0.024*
Rural	607	29.91	5.383		
<b>Income<sup>a</sup></b>					
< RM4,850 (B40)	1496	29.36	5.351	-1.846	0.065
≥ RM4,850	669	29.81	5.310		
<b>Marital Status</b>					
Never Married	1213	29.30	5.449	-1.962	0.050
Have & Still Married	952	29.75	5.191		
<b>Occupational Status</b>					
Working	1467	29.49	5.328	-0.084	0.933
Not working	698	29.51	5.372		

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates a significant disparity in perceptions of mental health stigma based on gender, geographical locality, and the awareness of mental health stigma within the community.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The table below illustrates that there exists no significant disparity between individuals who have experienced mental health illnesses ( $t=0.192$ ;  $p=0.848$ ) regarding their perceptions of mental health stigma within their community. Similarly, there is no notable difference among those who comprehend mental health stigma ( $t=1.704$ ;  $p=0.089$ ). However, a significant distinction emerges among individuals who possess awareness of mental health stigma ( $t=4.301$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), as those who are cognizant exhibit stronger perceptions of stigma related to mental health.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
<b>Have experienced or have mental health illness</b>					
Yes	471	29.54	5.883	0.192	0.848
No	1694	28.49	5.182		
<b>Aware of mental health stigma</b>					
Yes	1605	29.79	5.330	4.301	<0.001*
No	560	28.67	5.291		
<b>Understand mental health stigma</b>					
Yes	404	29.91	5.471	1.704	0.089
No	1761	29.40	5.308		

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