



# TOWARDS A STIGMA-FREE SOCIETY: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH PERCEPTION IN MALAYSIA (NMRR ID-24-01317-QDP)



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## INTRODUCTION

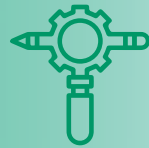
Notable surge in depression among Malaysians has been revealed through the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2023<sup>1</sup> as many Malaysians were reported to avoid seeking mental health treatment due to the stigma and fear of being labelled as “crazy”<sup>2</sup>. Mental health stigma is a widely recognized issue to mental health well-being in a society as it perpetuates fear and discrimination and creates barriers to care that leave many to suffer in silence<sup>3</sup>. Understanding mental health stigma requires the community to reduce fear and discrimination that could ensure individuals feel safe and supported in discussing their mental health concerns<sup>4</sup>. Unity with efforts to break this barrier down could potentially build a community where mental health is prioritized and ensure equal access to care where everyone could feel supported and valued. This study aims to explore the association between diverse demographic backgrounds, varying levels of awareness, and understanding of mental health stigma with the perceived mental health stigma in the community.

## METHODS



### Study design

Cross-sectional survey that involved Malaysians aged 18 years and above



### Study instrument

STIG-9<sup>5</sup>



### Sample size

n=2165



### Data analysis

Point-biserial correlation analysis was applied to achieve stated objectives.



## RESULTS

Table below shows that several demographic factors are significantly associated with the perceived mental health stigma in the community. These demographic factors are gender and locality with significance values of  $p=0.026$  and  $p=0.023$  respectively. However, household income, marital status, and occupational status of the respondents shows no association with  $p=0.066$ ,  $p=0.051$ , and  $p=0.933$  obtained respectively.

|  | Variables                  | N    | Sig.   |
|--|----------------------------|------|--------|
|  | <b>Gender</b>              |      |        |
|  | Male                       | 954  | 0.026* |
|  | Female                     | 1211 |        |
|  | <b>Locality</b>            |      |        |
|  | Urban                      | 1558 | 0.023* |
|  | Rural                      | 607  |        |
|  | <b>Income<sup>a</sup></b>  |      |        |
|  | < RM4,850 (B40)            | 1496 | 0.066  |
|  | ≥ RM4,850                  | 669  |        |
|  | <b>Marital Status</b>      |      |        |
|  | Never Married              | 1213 | 0.051  |
|  | Have & Still Married       | 952  |        |
|  | <b>Occupational Status</b> |      |        |
|  | Working                    | 1467 | 0.933  |
|  | Not working                | 698  |        |

Table below shows that there is no association between perceived mental health stigma in the community with those who have experienced/ have mental health illness and those who understand mental health stigma with significance value obtained are  $p=0.848$  and  $p=0.083$  respectively. However, those who have awareness on mental health stigma shows a significant association with significance value of less than 0.001

| Variables   | N    | Sig.    |
|---|------|---------|
| <b>Have experienced/ have mental health illness</b> |      |         |
| Yes   | 471  | 0.848   |
| No  | 1694 |         |
| <b>Aware of mental health stigma</b>                |      |         |
| Yes   | 1605 | <0.001* |
| No  | 560  |         |
| <b>Understand mental health stigma</b>              |      |         |
| Yes   | 404  | 0.083   |
| No  | 1761 |         |

## CONCLUSION

Transforming the perceived mental health stigma in a community could pave the way for a future where a community thrives and uplift one another as mental well-being is prioritized without fear or prejudice.

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