INTRODUCTION

Many psychiatric medicine consumers are only able to obtain unskilled jobs, despite their potential. Nearly 2/3 of them actually want more education. A substantial number of them are academically capable, but they experience coping difficulties or barriers in school. At least 2/3 of students with psychiatric disabilities fail to sustain in at least 3 attempts at post-secondary education, without trained support. The Supporting Education intervention, which is designated a promising practice and where there has been a lot of interest in the U.S.A to make it an evidence-based practice, has been effective in helping students with psychiatric disabilities succeed in post-secondary education.

AIM

This study examined the need for Supported Education to be provided for post-secondary education students with psychiatric disabilities. It did so by:

i) Identifying the relationships between the students' coping difficulties and their current performances (academic achievement, self-esteem, school self-efficacy & illness symptoms),

ii) Determining their level of support for a Supported Education program.

METHODOLOGY

• Design: Survey
• Sites: Sultanah Aminah Hospital and Permai Hospital; both in Johore
• Accessible population: Johore, a state in Malaysia
• Target population: Malaysia
• Sample: 30 students diagnosed with psychiatric disability and studying in post-secondary education.
• Sampling Method: Purposive sampling
• Sample Criteria:
  • Inclusion criteria:
    - Outpatient
    - Currently studying and not taking an illness break
    - Diagnosis: mood, anxiety or psychotic disorder
  • Exclusion criteria:
    - Illness not transient
  • Instrument: Structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising the following sub-scales:
    - Coping Difficulties Inventory (researcher-designed)
    - Academic Achievement (using 4-point GPA) (researcher-designed)
    - Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg. 1965 in Burns. 1979)
    - School Self-Efficacy (modified) Scale (researcher modified from Moebry et al., 1999)
    - Modified Colorado Symptom Index (Conrad et al., 2001)
    - Support for Supported Education (researcher-designed)

RESULTS

Respondents' Age: 18 – 58 Mean = 25.03

Most experienced coping difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Likert Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concentration problem</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Test/Exam test anxiety</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Illness symptoms</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Memory problem</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationship between coping difficulties & current performances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping difficulties</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>Moderate association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>Moderate association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School self-efficacy</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Very strong association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Symptoms</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>Very strong association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support for a supported education program

• On a 5-point Likert scale, the students showed a high level of support for the supported education program (M = 3.79, SD = 0.72).

CONCLUSION

• Post-secondary students with psychiatric disabilities in Johore performed well academically, in subjective well-being and in symptomatology.

• Moderate to very strong associations between their current performances and the coping difficulties experienced imply that they would perform even better with a lower degree of coping difficulties experienced, if there is Supported Education. It would also increase their school retention rate.

• The students strongly supported the idea of having a Supported Education program.

• This is empirical evidence the Supported Education practice is needed to assist post-secondary students with psychiatric disabilities in Johore.

• The results and conclusion are generalizable to Malaysia, and potentially generalizable to other similar settings.

INTERESTING SNIPETS!

90% did not face financial difficulty, as Malaysian local education is greatly aided by the government.

93% were never involved in substance abuse, disruptive behaviours or legal issues while in school.

REFERENCES