

Dementia Knowledge Among Female College Students from A Collectivistic Society Transitioning to A Neoliberal Model

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Abstract

Dementia is a progressive neurocognitive disorder that mostly affects individuals in old age. Knowledge of dementia among young people is critical for early detection and adequate home care of those who are suffering from this devastating disorder. In a society with strong collectivistic roots, such as Saudi Arabia, taking care of the elderly members of one's collective, including those who may be suffering from dementia, is a key responsibility of its youth. The present study was guided by the assumption that a precondition for fulfilling this responsibility is knowledge among younger members of the symptoms of dementia and its treatment. Under this assumption, the study surveyed female undergraduate students' awareness of dementia, as the patriarchal roots of the Saudi Arabian society place women in the role of primary care providers. Through the Dementia Knowledge Assessment Scale (DKAS-A), the study identified two distinct knowledge-level groups among young Saudi Arabian female students (age range: 18-28): either low or moderate. Contact with an older adult with dementia was not accompanied by greater knowledge, except for information about causes and characteristics. These findings suggest that extracurricular activities, such as workshops and talks, are needed to ensure early detection of dementia in the communities where older and younger individuals live.

Keywords: Dementia Awareness; Saudi Arabia; Social Change; Undergraduate Students; Young Women