

SCHIZOPHRENIA AND MISCONCEPTION ABOUT IT: A STUDY IN JOHOR BAHRU

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ABSTRACT

Schizophrenia is a chronic and serious mental health problem that involves the way a person thinks, behaves and feels that the sufferer has difficulty distinguishing between reality and imagination. The person with schizophrenia lives in a state full of imagination in his head. Excessive Dopamine and Glutamate content is the reason why people with Schizophrenia hallucinate. Dopamine and Glutamate are a type of chemical in the brain that creates memory and helps people to learn something new. Schizophrenia can be treated with medical and psycho-social methods. However, there is still no specific treatment for this mental problem. Schizophrenia has triggered many misconceptions among the family, society and even the sufferer himself. This study uses a qualitative method in which the researcher will conduct a semi-structured interview to understand the meaning given by the respondents to this issue.

Keywords: *Schizophrenia, mental illness, hallucinations, treatment*

INTRODUCTION

Schizophrenia is a relatively severe type of mental illness characterized by persistent impairment in a person's acceptance of real-world realities. People with schizophrenia who do not seek treatment are usually prone to thought disorders, delusions or auditory hallucinations (Wikipedia). They usually feel as if someone is saying something in their mind or seeing an object that does not actually exist in front of them. In addition, some hear strange voices and subtle whispers in their ears for them to do something.

The term schizophrenia is taken from the Greek word, schizo which means to break or divide which refers to the mind. Basically, schizophrenia is translated as 'shattered mind' (Wikipedia). This explains the condition of a person with schizophrenia as having unstable thinking, often disturbed and being in an abnormal condition. A 'shattered' state of mind leaves patients unaware of whatever is being done or things happening around them.

According to Umadevi (2012), the first mental illness is called Schizophrenia while the second mental illness is Bipolar Schizophrenia. Bambang Eko Suryananto, Head of Indonesian Hospital (2016) stated that schizophrenia is a serious disease in which patients are unable to manage themselves, including not being able to control their emotions and stress. This is closely related to the unstable state of mind experienced by the patient. They easily feel happy for no reason, they can also become angry as a result of something that is not clear.

An increase in the neurotransmitter dopamine in parts of the brain can also result in strange or out of control behaviors by schizophrenia patients. In addition, schizophrenia also disrupts the psychology of the sufferer. Whether the disease changes an individual's personality, way of thinking or their physical condition. A person with schizophrenia may change from a cheerful person to a grumpy person, a person who is fluent in speaking to a quiet

person and does not like to be disturbed and from a fit person may change to an unmanageable skinny person.

The World Health Organization (2010) reports that individuals as young as 16 years of age and older are accustomed to diagnosed with schizophrenia. There are also opinions stating that schizophrenia usually occurs when an individual is aged between 16 years to 45 years and above (Gunarsa & Singgih, 2004). However, it is not impossible for this disease to be identified in younger children if the awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health is not applied in life from now on.

Signs of Identifying Schizophrenia

Signs of schizophrenia usually first appear in early adulthood and must persist for at least six months for a diagnosis to be made. There are few signs of schizophrenia. These signs vary dramatically from each person suffering from schizophrenia. Not every person with schizophrenia will have all the signs and the signs of schizophrenia may change over time. The signs in question are as follows:

a) Hallucinations

Hallucinations are sounds or other sensations experienced as real to the person experiencing it and it may be very confusing for others when they exist only in the mind. These include a person hearing voices, seeing things or smelling things other can't perceive. There are few types of hallucinations:

- **Auditory**

Voices heard in their head and the voices are those of someone they known. Usually they are critical, vulgar or abusive.

- **Visual**

Visual hallucinations means seeing things that aren't there. For example, a person might see his loved one or friends who are no longer alive.

- **Gustatory and olfactory**

Involve the sense of smell and taste. For example, the smell of a flower.

- **Tactile**

Involve the feeling of touch and movement in the body such as feeling the internal organs are moving around.

b) Delusions

Delusions involve illogical or bizarre ideas or fantasies such as they think they are the famous actor or they have superpower.

c) Struggling with the basics of daily life

They may stop taking care of themselves such as brushing their teeth or bathing.

d) Cognitive issues and disorganized thinking

Sufferer have difficulties to remember things.

e) Trouble concentrating

Lost focus on what's going on.

f) Movement disorders

May repeat certain motions over and over again or sometimes does not move and does not respond to others.

g) Lack of pleasure

Sufferer have lost interest in activities they used to enjoy and have a decreased ability to feel pleasure.

h) Disorganized speech

When they talk, their words come out mixed up and doesn't make sense. They may also say illogical things.

i) Flattening

Lack of showing emotions. In other words, it is a condition that causes sufferer to not express emotions in the same way other people might be.

Factors Causing Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia can occur due to several factors (Hatta & Mohammed, 2002). Among the main factors that are said to be the cause of a person having schizophrenia are:

1. Genetics, where it is likely that an individual will inherit this mental illness from a previous family member. For example, individuals who have a parent with schizophrenia, have a high risk of getting schizophrenia for themselves (Arif, 2006). However, in a family with 5 children for example, it may be that only one child will get the disease from his parents.

2. Drug abuse can also be a factor in the occurrence of schizophrenia in a person. According to studies, drug abuse especially cannabis type gives a higher risk to an individual to get this schizophrenia disease (Nor-Zuraida & Jesjeet, 2012). Due to the harm caused by the misuse of drugs, the community is urged to stay away from the feces. Drugs not only affect physical health, they also injure mentally. If an individual who already has schizophrenia abuses a hallucinogenic pill type drug, their condition will worsen where the brain will be affected and unable to function properly (Hawari, 2011). They are at risk of losing their sanity completely, possibly irreversibly.

3. Viral infections during the period before the birth of a baby or after birth are also associated with the development of schizophrenia (Semiun, 2010). Therefore, maintaining cleanliness is a matter that is highly emphasized to pregnant mothers. They should always ensure that personal hygiene is at an optimal level so as not to leave a serious impact on the fetus and affect the process of brain formation (Semiun, 2010). In addition, mothers also need to practice a healthy and balanced diet to ensure that the unborn baby gets adequate nutrients. Adequate nutrients are needed by mothers and babies to increase the body's resistance to the attack of various viruses in the environment.

4. Bart and Smet (1994) proved that stress in life can have a negative impact on an individual. When the oncoming stresses cannot be managed well, this condition will lead to serious mental health problems (Amin, 2009). This is no longer denied. Naturally, when a person is under a lot of stress, his mind is easily confused. Eventually the mind will begin to be filled with unimportant things so as to give rise to prolonged delusions.

5. Kaplan et al (2010) stated that schizophrenia is related to the condition of the living environment that stems from poverty. A life full of competition, noise and anxiety often makes a person feel threatened. In addition, poor conditions force individuals to work harder as well as longer. This makes physical and mental health vulnerable. This poor living is also a cause of schizophrenia (Stuart, 2007). This is because in a situation where the value of money is

declining, the price of goods is increasing, life is starting to feel more crowded. This narrowness of life causes a lot of anxiety in the souls of those who go through such life. The restlessness that is increasing every day eventually leads to mental illness that can no longer be avoided.

Personality factors are also a contributor to schizophrenia. Some individuals exhibit abnormal and unhealthy behaviors (Nor-Zuraida & Jesjeet, 2012). People with schizophrenia have a personality known as 'schizotipal' which is a tendency to think and talk strangely, believe that others like to talk about him and have the illusion that he is isolated from the environment. Another personality that is commonly detected in people with schizophrenia is 'schizoid', an attitude that causes a person to be lonely, dislike to socialize and talk less with people around (Hawari, 2014). These attitudes of course cause discomfort to others, causes them to start moving away from the patient and not wanting to interact as usual. This neglect and isolation makes patients increasingly immersed in their own world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Person with schizophrenia often have problems doing well in society, at work, at school and in relationship. They might feel frightened and withdrawn, and could appear to have lost touch with reality. This lifelong disease can't be cured but can be controlled with proper treatment. Contrary to popular belief, schizophrenia is not a split or multiple personality disorder. Schizophrenia involves a psychosis, a type of mental illness in which a person can't tell what's real from what's imagined. At times, person with psychotic disorders lose touch with reality. The world may seem like a jumble of confusing thoughts, images and sounds. Their behavior may be very strange and even shocking (Smitha Bhandari, 2020).

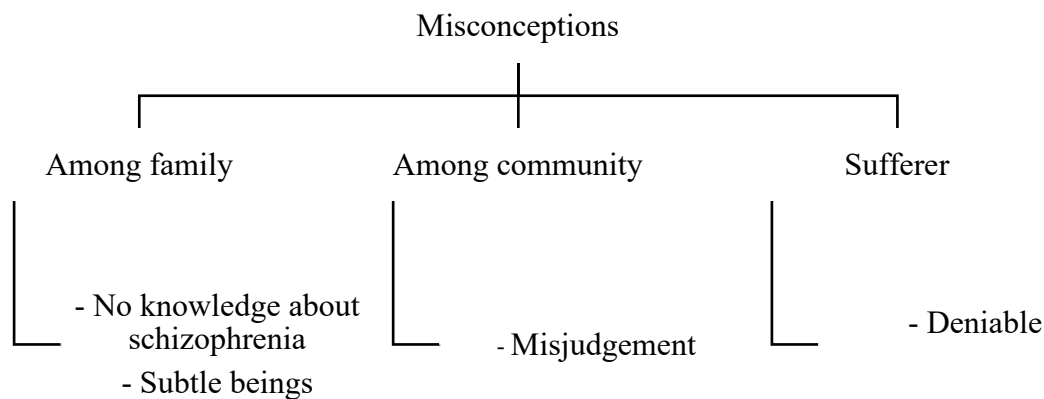
Educational programs for family members, significant others, and friends offer instruction about schizophrenia symptoms and treatments, and strategies for assisting the person with the illness. Increasing key supporters' understanding of psychotic symptoms, treatment options, and the course of recovery can lessen their distress, bolster coping and empowerment, and strengthen their capacity to offer effective assistance. Family-based services may be provided on an individual basis or through multi-family workshops and support groups (www.nimh.nih.gov).

Misconception about schizophrenia

There's a lot of incorrect information about schizophrenia. Some of it is spread by movies or TV shows. Sometimes, people use stereotypes when talking about this mental illness.

Based on observation and readings, the main misconceptions about schizophrenia are among the family, society and the sufferer himself. Each of these misconceptions can be classified as follows:

Figure 1: Misconceptions about Schizophrenia



1. Family misconception

According to the Psychiatric Consultant who is also the Head of the Psychiatry and Mental Health Department of Selayang Hospital, Dr. Toh Chin Lee, many people with schizophrenia in Malaysia are late to seek treatment because family members do not understand about the disease. In fact some often associate the symptoms of schizophrenia with subtle being disorders or black art attacks (Metro, 2016). Most family members especially those who are anti-modern medicine have always insisted that this mental disorder is simply due to the negligent attitude of the individual himself. They consider mental illness to occur because a person often forgets God and is too preoccupied with worldly affairs to be easily disturbed by subtle beings.

Doctor of Psychiatry, University Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Center (PPUKM), Dr. Hazli Zakaria, on the other hand, explained that 54% of the total number of mental patients were treated by traditional healers (shamans or shamans) first. When the patient's condition worsens, they are taken to see a psychiatrist. This complicates the treatment process as patients are already increasingly chronic (Metro, 2016). Some cases of schizophrenia patients are brought to undergo traditional treatment almost all over the country simply because family members believe their relatives are being abused by people who are jealous of their lives. Some take up to years for families to finally agree to take patients to the hospital for needed treatment. Sometimes it is too late and the patient can no longer be controlled.

Schizophrenia can be treated and its sufferers can be cured if they get the right specialist treatment. The disease also has a chance to be cured if treated early. Professor Dr Ahmad Hatim Sulaiman from the Division of Medical Psychology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya stated that counseling treatment and medication according to the schedule can help cure schizophrenia patients.

"Over 80% of schizophrenia patients are able to return to a normal and productive life after receiving treatment and taking medication according to a set schedule," the Professor told Harian Metro (2016).

2. Community misconception

The tragedy of bizarre murders among close family as well as children certainly leaves a deep impression on our hearts. It is human nature, when we are often presented with such scary news, we can easily become confused and confused. Along with anger and anxiety as well. We are afraid the same thing will happen to our families as well. This fear often drives us to point the finger at placing responsibility on a particular party. Often those with mental illness are targeted. This is because the media often features tragic stories involving the mentally ill. We, on the other hand, receive every news without understanding the real situation.

Dr. Zul Azlin in his article entitled 'Psychiatric Violence and Illness' published on The Malaysian Medical Gazette portal in 2014 stated that people are more likely to accept the fact that a person is stabbed to death in a robbery than to be stabbed by a psychiatric patient. Then society makes the impression that all psychiatric patients are violent and dangerous. This is further compounded by the frequent news of heartbreaking tragedies involving them featured in electronic and print media.

Because of this misconception, individuals with symptoms of schizophrenia often refuse to admit that they are ill. This denial also caused them to refuse to see a specialist for proper treatment. They are always overshadowed by accusations that describe how much people hate schizophrenics or are considered crazy.

Swanson (1998) explains that the main factor driving violent acts is not the schizophrenia experienced by a particular individual. On the other hand drug and alcohol abuse are the most common causal factors to such violence, whether the individual has a mental illness or not.

Factors of alcohol and drug abuse are often discussed in other studies on the risk of violence among the mentally ill (Swanson 2002, Fazel 2009, Elbogen 2009).

Mental illnesses such as schizophrenia can undeniably drive a person to become violent. However, this only happens if the patient does not receive proper treatment and does not continue the treatment advised by doctors and psychologists (Zul Azlin, 2014). That is why it is very important for the family and close people to give moral support to the patient to continue to seek treatment from specialists. They also need to be constantly encouraged to adhere to the medication schedule so that the condition of the disease does not become serious.

3. Own misconception

Schizophrenia can occur in both women and men. Generally, the symptoms of this disease are more easily detected in men than women (Mar'ain, 2019). However, in Malaysia the previous year, about 30% of the people suffered from mental illness with the majority of women having a higher risk of developing schizophrenia symptoms (Guan, 2018). This may be influenced by work stress, family conflicts and various other difficulties that cause their minds to become overwhelmed.

Most patients diagnosed with schizophrenia refuse to accept the fact that their mental state is less healthy than others. Some think they can recover on their own without the help of medications prescribed by a psychiatrist. There are also patients who feel themselves healthy enough without realizing that their mental health levels are declining day by day due to not being treated properly.

The commitment to take medication at the right time each day is a relatively daunting challenge for a person with schizophrenia. This condition may be due to forgetfulness, tiredness of having to take medication every day, fear of being known by friends or despair due to low self-esteem with the illness experienced (Mar'ain, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

According to Thinagaran Perumal (2014) research can be considered as a process to solve a problem through systematic planning, collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Data collection is very important in research because problem solving becomes incomplete without being supported from data.

The themes identified in this study involved input on Schizophrenia disease and misconceptions about it. In general, this study uses a qualitative research method to study the disease of Schizophrenia. According to Boeijs (2010), the purpose of qualitative research is to

describe and understand the meaning given by individuals to social phenomena. The questions are studied flexibly allowing each individual involved to be connected to understand the scope and field of study.

The structure of this study is a phenomenological type of research that uses semi-structured interviews conducted face to face to obtain feedback and information from respondents related to the subject matter studied. Qualitative phenomenological analysis explores concepts and provides additional insights into the main points of study that may not be available through quantitative studies. Meanwhile, the use of semi-structured interviews was intended to facilitate the development of researchers' learning and research on the group. As a result, during the interview, researcher was able to identify about schizophrenia disease and misconceptions about it during the interviews conducted. In this study, data are classified according to the theme based on the topics studied.

Research sampling

This study is qualitative in nature and statistical generalization is not the aim of this study. Therefore, probability sampling was not used in this study, instead, non-probability sampling was used for the purpose of selecting samples for this study. Non-probability sampling is relevant to this study since the study was conducted to make findings on what was happening in the life of the parents with autism children, what are their challenges, financial aspects that they faced, the implications of what happened to the children and the relationship that relates to what happened in the context of parental challenges faced in raising autism children, rather than to answer questions such as "how much" and "how often" as in quantitative studies (Honigmann, 1982).

Therefore, the most appropriate sampling strategy used in this study is objective sampling (Patton, 2002). Purposive / purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to find, understand, and get an idea of the subject of the study. Therefore, it is important for this study to select a sample that will help to understand the subject being studied (Merriam, 2009). According to Patton (2002), the logic and power of sampling is based on a case study that provides more information with in-depth information. Therefore, selection criteria are important in selecting respondents for studies that use this purpose (LeCompte & Presissle, 1993).

The sampling used in this study was conducted using snowball sampling technique to obtain sample of respondents. Snowball sampling (also known as chain or network sampling) is the most commonly used form of sampling (Merriam, 2009). This technique involved finding some of the key respondents who easily met the criteria set out to participate in the study and then asked the respondent to introduce the researcher with other individuals who were potential respondents in the study.

This snowball sampling technique is useful for populations that are difficult to reach or identify individuals who meet sampling requirements or conditions but these populations know each other and are interrelated (Bernard, 2006). This method generates a sample of studies through referrals by those who share or know others who have the characteristics required of a study (Handcock & Gile, 2011). Thus, the study sample will become larger when the information from the new sample can be identified to meet the specified sampling criteria (Patton, 2002).

In this study, the snowball sampling process was conducted by identifying several individuals who is suffering from schizophrenia that met the criteria set out in the study as a preliminary sample, or also known as 'seed starting' (Shafie, 2010). This identification process requires researchers to obtain information from sources such as the MIASA, Social Welfare Department, General Hospital as well as local information from the public. The next step is to

request a sample of the sample to identify other individuals who meet the criteria presented in this study and potentially respond.

In this study, the number of samples was final when no new individual was proposed that was not mentioned in the previous wave and fulfilled the respondents criteria set out in this study.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are divided into three sections namely the demographics of the respondents, the dissertation information and the responses provided by the respondents based on the semi-structured interviews conducted on the respondents.

Schizophrenia screening

There's no single test for schizophrenia but mental health specialist or doctors might use various diagnostic tests such as MRI or CT scans or blood tests. The condition is usually diagnosed after assessment by a specialist. If symptoms are present, specialist will perform a complete medical checkup and mental status by observing appearance and demeanor and asking about thoughts, moods, delusions, hallucinations, substance use and potential for violence or suicide.

Mental health specialist use specially designed interview and assessment tools to evaluate a person for schizophrenia. They will determines if the person's symptoms point to a specific disorder as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), published by American Psychiatric Association. According to the DSM-5, a diagnosis of schizophrenia is made if a person has two or more of the following are present for a significant period of time for one month. One of which must be delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior and negative symptoms. Other DSM-5 criteria for a diagnosis of schizophrenia include:

- Symptoms must have been present at least once per week for the past month.
- Symptoms must have begun or worsened in the past year.
- Symptoms are sufficiently distressing and disabling to the individual to warrant clinical attention.

CONCLUSION

For those with Schizophrenia, this is not the end of life. Early detection is very important to help them get the right treatment. The intended treatment is medication, psychological help and even counseling. Taking medication in a timely manner can help control the disease of Schizophrenia. Regular and continuous treatment should be done according to the advice of a physician for the sake of the mental health of the sufferer.

Schizophrenia requires lifelong treatment even when symptoms have subsided. Treatment with medications and psycho-social therapy can help manage the condition. Psycho-social therapy is a kind of talk therapy that will also be a big help for them to understand and manage their symptoms. In some cases, hospitalization may be needed to ensure safety, proper nutrition, adequate sleep and basic hygiene.

A psychiatrist experienced in treating schizophrenia usually guides treatment. The treatment team also may include a psychologist, social worker, psychiatric nurse and possibly a case manager to coordinate care. The full-team approach may be available in clinics with expertise in schizophrenia treatment.

Concerns from all sides can ease the burden and sadness that schizophrenia patient is suffering.

Treatment, Medical and Rehabilitation

The most effective treatment for schizophrenia involves the combination of medication, therapy and psychological treatment and social support. Schizophrenia patient requires long-term treatment. They need to continue treatment even though they are feeling better, in order to prevent new episodes and stay symptom-free. Treatment for schizophrenia can change over time period.

a) Medication

Most person with schizophrenia will need medication as part of the treatment. Finding the right drug and dosage is a trial and error process. These drugs are broken into typical or atypical antipsychotics.

Some common medications for schizophrenia are:

- Risperidone (Risperdal)
- Olanzapine (Zyprexa)
- Quetiapine (Seroquel)
- Ziprasidone (Geodon)
- Clozapine (Clozaril)
- Haloperidol (Haldol)

b) Therapy and psychological treatment

Therapy can help sufferer develop coping and life skills, manage stress, improve communication, address relationship issues and pursue their life goals. On the other hand, psychological treatment will help them to live with schizophrenia and have the best quality of life.

c) Social support

This integrates medication, family and friends involvement and education services in a holistic approach. As well as keeping schizophrenia patients socially connected, it can help them feel good about themselves.

The burden of schizophrenia can be really heavy. However, it can be manageable with the right treatment. Family support and a strong sense of optimism is important. There are resources to help from organization such as Mental Illness Awareness & Support Association (MIASA).

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