

# Investigating the Relationship of Attitude Towards Mental Health Among Tribal and Non-Tribal University Students in Bangladesh

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Publication Date: 2025/08/08

**Abstract:** The present study attempted an empirical investigation to explore the attitude toward mental health among tribal and non-tribal university students. A total of 120 respondents made up the study's sample. Of these, 60 were tribal students and 60 were non-tribal students. Each group included 60 males (50%) and 60 females (50%). The samples were taken from Chittagong University. The measuring instruments were adapted from the Bangla version of the scale for attitude toward mental health. The findings showed that ethnic groups & places of residence had no significant effect on attitude. The results revealed ( $p < 0.05$ ) that education was positively correlated ( $r = 0.233$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with attitude toward mental health; that means the more we are educated, the more we have positive attitudes toward mental health. There was no significant difference between male and female attitude or tribal and non-tribal attitude. But there was found a significant difference between resident and non-resident students, and also their educational level with respect to their attitude toward mental health.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Mental Health, Tribal & Non-Tribal, Attitude Towards Mental Health.

**How to Cite:** Lailun Nahar; Anando Ghosh; Kamrujjahan Dhina; Md Al Insan; Rosha Akter (2025). Investigating the Relationship of Attitude Towards Mental Health Among Tribal and Non-Tribal University Students in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(7), 3295-3300. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jul1845>

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the field of psychology, an attitude refers to a disposition of favor or disfavor towards a person, place, thing, or event, which is known as the attitude object. Attitudes can be defined as evaluative statements concerning a person, object, or event, which may be perceived as either favorable or unfavorable (Yaldiz, 2015). They demonstrate our determined inclination to respond and conduct ourselves in specific manners towards individuals and circumstances. Our demeanor shapes how the world perceives us,

influencing its own opinions and attitudes. The branches that have emerged are a direct result of the seeds we have sown, informed by our experiences, whether they be positive or negative. According to Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology (2022), it is important to distinguish between attitudes and personality types, as the latter tend to be more fixed in nature and also attitudes are inherently flexible and can be shaped into various forms over time. The concept of attitude pertains to the consistent patterns in an individual's emotions, thoughts, and inclinations to respond to various elements of their surroundings (Secord and Beckman, 1964).

Individuals with a positive mental attitude often experience faster advancement and greater life satisfaction compared to those with a negative outlook. To cultivate a positive mental attitude, individuals should adopt a generally constructive approach towards their work, life, and relationships. Attitudes are shaped by anticipated results, while expectations arise from beliefs and values, which form the foundation of human personality (Lothion, 1990). Adults are not considered to be in a state of optimal mental health in about 17% of the United States (Forman-Hoffman et al., 2024). Previous research indicated that non-tribal university students showed that they have higher levels of psychological well-being than tribal students (Suvera, 2012) because non-tribal students get better educational and social support. Additionally, they tend to have higher levels of positive attitudes toward mental health and available resources (Hossain et al., 2017) and non-tribal individuals are perceived to have lower levels of psychological well-being than tribal students. However, both groups of people are influenced by their cultural beliefs, which may affect their attitude toward mental health, understanding of mental health illness, and treatment procedures (Roy & Roy, 2024). Many researchers suggested that invisible struggles of stress, depression and holistic support systems are caused by academic struggles, societal expectation and education diversity (Murali & Avudaiappan, 2024). Another study indicated higher levels of prevalence rates of mental health concerns such as suicidal ideation, anxiety, and loneliness, and this study also indicated that there were significant age and gender differences (Karuturi & Kandi, 2024) in tribal people's attitude towards mental health. A study on tribal students in Meghalaya, India, indicated that risk and protective factors for mental health were significantly associated with family conflicts and mental health problems (Suting & Ali, 2024). However, tribal individuals demonstrated significantly higher levels of supernatural attitude than non-tribal, in which their treatment and psychological well-being-seeking attitudes remain unaffected (Ali et al., 2023). However, a recent study examining the intricacies of psychological well-being and comprehending its symbols, obstacles, and resources across various ethnicities continues to significantly influence the university's educational atmosphere (Tikhomirova et al., 2022). But earlier research showed that different groups of people have different ideas about mental illness, especially young people and college students. Also, college is still the best place to create comprehensive and successful mental health programs because the attitudes and values of college students have a big impact on society as a whole. The correlation study showed that there is a positive correlation between how people feel about getting psychiatric help and how much education they have at the graduate level (Mahto, R. K., et al. 2009). Furthermore, research studies examining the attitudes of individuals participating in academic programs focused on psychological well-being have demonstrated more positive and understanding perspectives. For example, according to Eker (1989), a comparison was conducted among first-year psychology students, science students, and medical students to examine whether psychology students exhibited more positive attitudes towards individuals with mental health conditions. A study

conducted by Penny, Kasar, & Sinay (2000) examined the attitudes of occupational therapy students towards mental illness, highlighting a troubling decrease in the engagement of occupational therapy practitioners within mental health environments. The findings indicated that the participants' initial attitudes towards individuals with mental illness were less favorable than their attitudes towards those with physical disabilities. Furthermore, as noted by Keane (1991), there is a discussion in the nursing literature regarding the changes in student attitudes following coursework. Additionally, this aligns with the findings of Corrigan et al. (2002; 2004) and supports the biological explanation of mental illness. This supports the hypothesis that there is a less hostile and more favorable perspective on mental illness when it is regarded as a disorder that individuals do not choose or cause. After reviewing literature, most of the research doesn't explore how tribal university student's educational activities and settings, such as acquiring knowledge, diverse environments, and learning of psychological well-being, affected their attitude towards mental health outcomes. Still, there was a research gap to identify the relationship of attitude towards mental health with education and how it can vary within tribal groups and non-tribal groups.

#### ➤ *Research Question*

Based on the insights from the aforementioned literature review, this study raises the research question of whether there is a difference in attitudes towards mental health between tribal and non-tribal people, and how educational settings and knowledge can influence these attitudes?

#### ➤ *Rationale of the Study*

Mental health is a very important factor in which the individual realizes his or her abilities and can cope with the normal stress of life. We have to be conscious of both mental and physical health because they are related to each other. In over country suicide, drug addiction, and murder have increased in large numbers because of mental illness. In the case of a student, mental health is a very important factor because their skills and competencies are also dependent on their mental health. It is the ability of a student to understand his or her own feelings and other people's feelings and manage good emotions while interacting with others. Student aggressive and harsh behaviors may be reduced by the feelings of mental health. Knowledge of mental health will help to determine necessary steps for the overall success of university students. Most of the students are residential, and they are remote from their family members. In this situation, their peer group plays a vital role in the growth of their mental health. As a social worker or counsellor, the result of my study will help university students have a better healthy life and healthy functioning. Considering this fact, I have taken university students for my study.

#### ➤ *Objectives of the Study*

- ✓ To investigate whether attitudes of mental health vary according to ethnic groups and place of residence in

- ✓ university students.  
✓ To investigate the relationship of attitudes of mental health with education.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### ➤ Research Design & Sampling Technique

A cross-sectional study was used to conduct this study, and the target population of the present study was Chittagong University students. 120 respondents were

selected randomly as study participants, and their age ranged from 18 to 29 years (mean  $\pm$  SD = 22  $\pm$  2.03). Among them, 60 were male, and 60 were female. Each participant was either a tribal or non-tribal student, and their education level ranged from honour's to master's. All the population or area was selected by using purposive sampling [inclusion criteria—equal gender specification & half of tribal population], but participants were selected by using random sampling.

Table 1 Number of Study Sample According to Gender, Ethnicity & Place of Residents

Gender	Tribal: Resident	Non resident	Non-tribal: Resident	Non resident	Total
Male	15	15	15	15	60
Female	15	15	15	15	60
Total	30	30	30	30	120

### ➤ Measuring Tools

#### • Demographic and Personal Information Questionnaire

A demographic and personal information questionnaire was used to collect data about participant's age, gender, ethnicity, position, education, resident father and mother occupation etc.

#### • The Bangla Version of Attitude Toward Mental Health Scale

The original Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Health (ATSPPH) scale was developed by Fischer & Farina (1995). Elias adapted the Bangla version of the Attitude towards Mental Health Scale in 2002, but it remained unpublished due to his sudden death. The Bangla version scale contains 29 items. Participants rated items using a 5-point scale anchored at 5 (strongly agree) and 1 (strongly disagree). There are 5 alternatives for each question. The score of the scale ranges from 1 to 150. The alpha value (0.851) indicated internal consistency of the scale. Alpha was calculated on a sample of 90 students. The high score indicates a higher attitude toward mental health, and a lower score indicates a lower attitude toward mental health. The Bangla version of this scale demonstrated a higher level of consistency, as evidenced by its Cronbach's

alpha ( $\alpha$  = 0.851), which indicates strong internal consistency for the scale. In this present study, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.802.

#### • Procedure & statistical Analysis

For collecting data from the students under this study, the scale was administered to them individually. They were requested to fill out their demographic information and the questionnaire. After finishing their task, they were given thanks for their cooperation. In accordance with the objectives of the present study, the obtained data were analyzed using different statistical techniques. Two-way ANOVA and Pearson product moment correlation were used.

## III. RESULTS

The aim of the present study was to investigate attitudes towards mental health of tribal and non-tribal students of Chittagong University. For the purposes of this study, the obtained data were collected from different faculties and demographic characteristics.

Table 2 Mean & SD of Attitudes Towards Mental Health Scores According to Ethnic Groups and Residence of University Students

Ethnic groups Residence	Tribal M	SD	Non tribal M	SD	Total M	SD
Residential	117.33	6.09	118.67	9.07	118.00	7.69
Non residential	114.80	9.15	115.57	11.47	115.18	10.29
Total	116.06	7.81	117.11	10.37	116.59	9.15

Table 3 Summary of Analysis of Variance for the Effect of Ethnic Groups and Residence on Attitudes Towards Mental Health

Sources of Variance	SS	DF	MS	F value
Ethnic groups	33.075	1	33.075	0.395
Residence	238.008	1	238.008	2.844
Ethnic-groups* residence	2.408	1	2.408	0.029
Error	9707.500	116	83.687	

R Squared= .027(Adjusted R Squared =.002)

Results presented in the table indicated that the main effect of ethnic groups and place of residence was not statistically significant for attitudes towards mental health,

but the interaction between ethnic groups and place of residence had significant effects on attitudes towards mental health.

Table 4 The Correlation of Attitudes Towards Mental Health with Education

Mental health	R
Education	0.233*

\*Correlation coefficients are significant at 0 .05 level (2 tailed)

The present results indicated that attitudes towards mental health had a significant positive correlation with education. This evidence indicates that the higher the education a student had, the higher his or her attitudes towards mental Health.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of attitude toward mental health among the tribal and non-tribal students. The first objective was to investigate whether there is any effect of the ethnicity and place of residence on the attitude toward mental health. The result revealed that there was no significant mean difference between tribal and non-tribal students' attitudes toward mental health or their place of residence. This findings of the study consistent with previous researcher that no significant difference exists between tribal and non-tribal students' attitudes toward mental health (Suvera, 2012; Shelly, 2016).

The second objective was to investigate the effect of education or interaction on the attitude toward mental health. The result is consistent with the previous research findings and research consistently shows that mental health is one of the least preferred areas of nursing for a potential career among undergraduate nursing students (Happell et al., 2008). The result revealed that education has a positive effect on the attitude toward mental health and higher-level students have a higher attitude toward mental health (Pursehouse, 2022). The correlation analysis results indicated a positive relationship between attitudes towards seeking psychological help and the level of education attained at higher education in university (Alqassim et al., 2022). This outcome indicates that education level may influence one's attitude towards wanting assistance from mental health professionals, aligning with earlier studies conducted in this area. Their engagement with education consistently yields positive outcomes. Nonetheless, additional studies indicate that the level of education holds less importance in explaining the factors that affect an individual's attitude towards pursuing professional psychological assistance (Halpern-Manners et al., 2016). Finally, this study will help to make better policy, intervention and university settings to reduce stigma of less seeking of psychological well-being from tribal and non-tribal university students.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on how tribal and non-tribal students at Chittagong University, Bangladesh, feel about mental health. Findings reveal that mental health attitudes among students were comparable across ethnic groups, and neither ethnic identity nor gender had any measurable influence on attitudes. The residential status of students had

a notable impact on their attitudes towards mental health, highlighting distinctions between residential and non-residential students. Conversely, it is evident that educational attainment plays a significant role; individuals with higher degrees tend to exhibit a more beneficial perspective on mental health. The findings indicate the impact of educational and residential conditions on students' attitudes towards mental health. They emphasize that the reforms for encouraging healthy mental health attitudes must focus on education policy and targeted housing support instead of racial or gender structures.

#### LIMITATION & IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The sample size was too little to establish significant generalizations regarding how tribal and non-tribal students feel about mental health. The key thing this study does is help teachers, psychologists, and counsellors remember how important attitude is for mental health. Also, it can be helpful to know what challenges the students and community are having in relation to these ideas.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Specially, a lot of thanks to our Research Volunteers for their great initiatives as a data collector and also special acknowledgement for the member of psychological research & aid management Organization-PRAMO

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