

Stigma of mental health problems and fear of disclosure among Asian international students: implications for help-seeking, guidance and support

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INTRO

The current study explored the understandings and experiences of Asian international students (AISs) in terms of mental health, disclosure and help-seeking within higher education (HE) in Scotland, UK.

METHODS

A qualitative study using individual semi-structured interviews with AISs (n=20) was used and an inductive thematic approach to analysis was conducted.

RESULTS

Three major themes were developed:

- (1) Negative beliefs, stigma and fear of judgment impacting on understandings and disclosure of mental health issues (mental health as taboo and collective pressures to succeed),
- (2) Adaptation and acculturation difficulties (lack of sense of belonging),
- (3) Barriers in communication, social disconnection and loneliness.

DISCUSSION

Supporting AISs involves challenging negative judgements surrounding mental health, increasing mental health literacy and addressing barriers in overcoming adaptation, acculturation and communication difficulties that may inhibit disclosure and help-seeking behaviour.

The need for culturally sensitive mental health practitioners and awareness of diverse understandings of mental health issues is essential.



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