



Understanding Mental Health Stigma in Youth

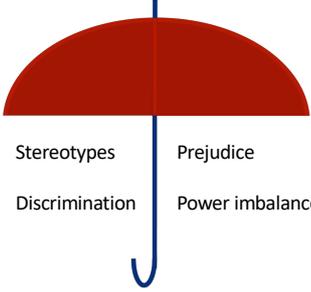
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Stigma widely recognized as a problem in adult mental health

- World Health Organization Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2020) – acknowledging the need to *'reduce stigmatization and discrimination and promote human rights across the lifespan'* (p. 15)
- "Stigma is a major cause of discrimination and exclusion: it affects people's self-esteem, helps disrupt their family relationships and limits their ability to **socialize and obtain housing and jobs**. It hampers the prevention of mental health disorders, the promotion of mental well-being and the provision of effective treatment and care. It also contributes to the abuse of human rights."




Stigma



Stereotypes      Prejudice  
Discrimination      Power imbalance




Stigma

			
<b>Stereotypes: Negative beliefs about a group:</b> <i>"Young people with mental health problems lack personal strength"</i>	<b>Prejudice: Negative emotional response</b> <i>"I feel angry at young people with mental health problems because they could try harder"</i>	<b>Discrimination: Negative action:</b> <i>"I won't give support to this young person because he has a mental health problem"</i>	<b>Power imbalance:</b> Always directed at a less powerful group in society




## Types of stigma

- Perceived/public stigma
  - Perceptions of what 'most people' believe or do in response to a social group: 'Most people believe that young people with mental health difficulties are unreliable'
- Personal stigma
  - My personal beliefs and actions towards a social group: 'I believe that young people with mental health difficulties are unreliable'
- Self stigma
  - My beliefs about myself as a member of that social group: 'I have a mental health difficulty, I must be unreliable'.



## Mental health stigma experienced by adults



## Evidence of stereotypes:

- Young people (10 to 16 years) regarded a peer with ADHD or depression as more dangerous than other peers (O'Driscoll et al., 2013).
- Another study supported this for young male participants (14-16 years) (Dolphin & Hennessy, 2016).



## Evidence of prejudice

- Young people (10 to 16 years) reported feeling fear and anger in response to a description of a peer with ADHD or depression (in comparison to a peer without these conditions) (O'Driscoll et al., 2013).
- Young male participants (14-16 years) felt 'uncomfortable' in the presence of a peer with depression (Dolphin & Hennessy, 2016).



## Evidence of discrimination

- Personal experiences**
  - Gavin (14): "There was one person that found out [about his ADHD] and they kept mocking me because of it." (McKeague, 2013)
- Young people's responses to questionnaires**
  - O'Driscoll et al. (2013): 10 to 16 year olds showed fewer positive intentions and desired greater social distance from peers with symptoms of ADHD or depression
- National studies**
  - Growing Up in Ireland study - 9 year old children who had emotional or behavioural difficulties were significantly more likely to report that they were bullied (Reulbach, 2013).




## Stigma in adolescence



STEREOTYPES: DANGEROUS



PREJUDICE: FEAR, DISCOMFORT



DISCRIMINATION: EXCLUSION, NAME CALLING, BULLYING




## Stigma in adolescence and early adulthood

- Identity formation.
- Peer group of growing importance
- Adolescents and young adults have less power than other adults.




## Consequences of stigma in adolescence

- Secrecy and fear**
  - "...[if I told them] they'd probably think I'm weird or something, [...] or that I'm insane or something, because they're really ignorant." Fiona (14)
- Not seeking help**
  - Several studies with adolescents have linked higher levels of stigma (or perceptions of stigma) with lower levels of help seeking.
  - There is also evidence that parents with higher levels of stigma are less likely to identify their son/daughter's need for help.
- Self-stigma**
  - Adolescent self-stigma related to social skills deficits and parents' tendency to conceal their child's mental health problems.




### Way forward

-  Education
-  Contact
-  More robust experimental studies



Thank you  
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