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A Study of Media Portrayal of Schizophrenics to Understand How Stigma Associated with Schizophrenia may be Reversed

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A Study of Media Portrayal of Schizophrenics to Understand How Stigma Associated with Schizophrenia may be Reversed

Rainielle Cua

Introduction

The news media are one of the most influential sources of information regarding mental illness for the general public. Schizophrenia is one of the most stigmatized mental illnesses and media coverage tends to be negative, focusing on schizophrenics' high risks of violence, failure, and unpredictable behavior. Such perceptions may cause a detrimental impact on the mentally ill and cause them to internalize a stigmatizing stereotype and may hinder the public's understanding of mental illness. I studied how media portrayal in newspaper coverage of those who suffer from schizophrenia has evolved since the 1990s, because I wanted to find out how nonfiction media representation has affected people's perceptions of and attitude towards schizophrenics over time in order to help my readers understand the importance of tone, language, and fact checking in newspaper coverage of schizophrenia to propose an implementable solution to reduce stigma by utilizing the media.

Methods

I explored scholarly sources that analyzed the changes in reporting of schizophrenia in high-circulation newspapers in different countries and how renaming schizophrenia in Japan and China reduced the associated stigma and changed newspaper coverage. I examined sources that performed content analyses on major newspapers and categorized articles to determine how reporting had changed over time. I also investigated successful solutions that have been implemented in other countries that have helped decrease the stigma associated with schizophrenia and how self-stigma reduction programs may aid schizophrenics with managing their disease.

References

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MYTH

VERSUS
FACT

SCHIZOPHRENIA



Violent behavior

Cannot lead productive lives



Most crimes are committed by people with mental illness

Split/Multiple Personality



No more dangerous than the rest of the population when undergoing treatment

Can lead productive, successful, and independent lives



More likely to be victims than perpetrators of crime

False ideas and lost touch with reality

Sources:
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-truisms-wellness/201511/4-myths-about-schizophrenia-and-the-facts-you-need-know>
<http://www.webmd.com/schizophrenia/guide/schizophrenia-myths-and-facts#1>

Infographic 1: Misconceptions and Realities



STOP THE STIGMA OF SCHIZOPHRENIA



BARRIERS TO RECOVERY

STIGMA

DISCRIMINATION



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Ensure that media portrayal is accurate and does not focus on negative aspects of schizophrenia

Understand the importance of language, tone, and fact-checking, especially in the media

Understand schizophrenia, raise mental health awareness, and end the stigma

Sources:
<https://psychcentral.com/lib/illuminating-13-myths-of-schizophrenia/>
<https://www.slideshare.net/SARDAA/schizophrenia-the-truth-presentation>
<http://schizophrenia.com/?p=140>

Infographic 2: How can we stop the stigma associated with schizophrenia?

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Results

My research has shown that the media does play a role in the stigmatization of schizophrenia in multiple countries, such as Spain, Japan, Italy, Brazil, China, and the United States. I found that the press associated mental disorders with negative attributes such as unpredictability, danger, criminality, and isolation. In Japan and China, the name change of schizophrenia was associated with an increase in quality of newspaper reporting regarding schizophrenia within a ten-year period. I discovered that self-stigma is also a large part of the barriers to recovery that coincide with feeling of hopelessness and shame. Self-stigma reduction programs have the potential to reduce self-esteem reduction and enhance psychosocial treatment adherence among the self-stigmatized individuals with schizophrenia during the active interventional stage.

Conclusion

Currently in other countries, destigmatization efforts are mostly directed at providing more accurate information that truly represent the mental illness. The tone and language of articles may impact how people perceive and understand the news. It is important to inform people that stereotypes and discrimination can negatively affect the livelihoods of the mentally ill. There is a need for the implementation of effective measures to bring newspaper reporting in line with current guidelines. Newspaper reporting should not only include the negative attributes of schizophrenia, but also note outside context, such as the high chances of treatment. An appeal for the government to provide opportunities to discuss and reflect on media contents may also be successful in decreasing the association between mental illness and violent crime. Infographics may be an important tool to spread the word on the realities of schizophrenia, while also educating the public and busting common myths. It is imperative that the U.S. creates and implements solutions that may decrease mental health stigma and also discover other possible solutions. This will not only help the predicaments of those suffering from mental illness, but may also educate the public on such mental health problems as to prevent further misinformation.

Further Information

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