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Decoding prejudice: Understanding patterns of Adolescent Mental Health Stigma. Validating a program centered on arts aimed at reducing stigma surrounding mental health among young people.

Exploring knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding mental health and stigma associated with mental health problems among children and adolescents in a sample population.

Sara Albuquerque¹, Isabel Santos¹, Leonor Pereira da Costa¹, Ana Beato¹, & Ana Carvalho²,

¹ Universidade Lusófona, HEI-Lab: Laboratórios Digitais de Ambientes e Interações Humanas, Portugal

² Universidade Lusófona

Statement of the Problem: Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability among young people, affecting approximately 20% of adolescents. However, adolescents are particularly reluctant to seek help due to stigma and the fear of being labeled. Also, they exhibit low mental health literacy and tend to view mental health issues as personal failures. To address these complexities, our study aimed to identify distinct subgroups within the adolescent population based on their levels of knowledge about mental health, attitudes towards social stigma, experiences of intergroup anxiety, and endorsement of stereotypes related to mental health. **Methodology:** Participated in this cross-sectional study 182 adolescents (48.9% male), aged from 11 to 17 (M = 13.8; SD = 1.56). An online survey was completed and included the Mental Health Knowledge Schedule, Attribution Questionnaire (AQ-8-C), Intergroup Anxiety Scale, and Stereotype Scale. Cluster analysis was performed to derive the main subgroups. **Findings:** We found three distinct profiles within our adolescent sample: (1) "Potential Advocates," characterized by high levels of mental health knowledge, low social stigma, low intergroup anxiety and moderate endorsement of stereotypes; (2) "Ambivalents," exhibiting high levels of mental health knowledge, moderate social stigma, heightened intergroup anxiety and low endorsement of stereotypes; and (3) "Stigmatizers," demonstrating low levels of mental health knowledge, pronounced social stigma, moderate intergroup anxiety, and a tendency to endorse of stereotypes. **Conclusion & Significance:** These findings underscore the heterogeneity of adolescent perceptions regarding mental health and highlight the critical role of knowledge, stigma, intergroup dynamics, and stereotypes in shaping attitudes towards mental health in this population. Implications for intervention and prevention efforts aimed at addressing mental health stigma and promoting positive attitudes towards mental health in adolescents are discussed, emphasizing the importance of tailored approaches that consider the diverse needs and experiences within this developmental stage

Biography

Sara Albuquerque (PhD) is an Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon, Portugal. She has published several articles in scientific journals and book chapters with focus on grief processes, individual and marital adjustment after the traumatic loss of a child, dyadic coping, post-traumatic growth. Recently, her research interests have also focused on the context of traumatic birth. She is currently the coordinator and a clinical psychologist of the Grief and Trauma Consultation at the PIN Clinical Center - at all stages of life (in Lisbon), whose action focuses mainly on the assessment and intervention with children, adolescents, and adults, in grief and traumatic events. She has psychotherapeutic training in grief and trauma. She also gives several workshops on grief and emotional regulation.

sara.albuquerque@ulusofona.pt

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