

9<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress on **MENTAL HEALTH**

September 05, 2022 | Webinar

**Mentally ill patients: investigating attitudes and perceptions about mental illness and their desire for social distance**

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**Introduction:** Familiarity with social distance from people with mental illness and specific socio - demographic characteristics have been linked to conditions that lead to less nd prejudiced beliefs and a more positive opinion about mental illness overall.

**Aim:** The main purpose of this study was to explore the relation of the attitudes and perceptions of the citizens of Larissa city towards mental illness and their desire for social distance from the mentally ill people, in relation to their familiarity with mental illness.

**Method:** This study was conducted as part of the Postgraduate Program "Mental Health" General Department, of University of Thessaly. Thus, a survey was conducted in Greece, Larissa City with a convenience sampling of 220 citizens. The research tools used were: a) Familiarity was assessed using the Level of Contact Report, b) The Social Distance Scale, to measure the desire for social distance from people with mental illness c) Attitudes about mental illness were assessed using The Opinions About Mental Illness (OMI) Questionnaire and finally d) a questionnaire for the socio - demographic information.

**Results:** Univariate and multivariate analysis was applied for the statistical analysis of the data, which showed that: Desire for social distance from people with mental illness is positively related with the familiarity (with mental illness) but on the other hand is negatively related to the opinions / attitudes about mental illness.

**Conclusions:** The results from this study highlight and emphasize the important role of familiarity (with mental illness) and the desire for social distance (from people with mental illness) in the formation of positive/negative attitudes and perceptions about mental illness.

**Biography**

Dr. Stiliani Kotrotsiou was a Assistant Professor University of Thessaly- in Greece. He completed his Post graduation Studies in Mental Health in Greece.