Qualitative Research

Determining the ideas and suggestions of communication faculty students about stigmatization of individuals with mental illness

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Abstract

Objectives: This study is carried out with students who study at the communication faculty of a private university in Turkey. The study aims to determine the opinions of the students about stigmas towards individuals with mental illnesses and to learn the views and suggestions for preventing this stigmatization.

Methods: This research was a qualitative study conducted with 12 students in the communication faculty of a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey in the 2016–2017 academic year who agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected by the face-to-face interview method.

Results: In individual in-depth interviews, 83.3% of the students expressed that doctors should conduct health programs in order to prevent stigmatization of mental illnesses. In addition, 75% responded that society should be educated appropriately and 50% of the students stated that adding courses in the university curriculum would play a major role in preventing this stigmatism.

Conclusion: The study concluded that communication faculty students found stigmatizing behavior towards mental illness inappropriate. The participants further responded that as employees of the newly emerging media sector they will approach psychiatric patients with more devotion, empathy, tolerance and respect when reporting in the media. The participants in this research will play an important role in the future of media, therefore this research is significant.

Keywords: Communication students; mental illness; stigmatization.

What is known about the subject?
- It has been well established that the media has a great influence on the stigma surrounding mental illnesses.

What does this paper add to our knowledge?
- Students participating in this study found that the representation of mental illness in the media can lead to misunderstandings in society, and that attention should be paid to the manner in which subjects that can create false perceptions about mental illness, such as violence, are portrayed when creating media content.

How does the paper contribute to practice?
- Students of the communication faculty have provided points that should be considered when preparing media content related to mental illness and individuals with mental illness.

Stigma is an unwarranted demeanor towards an individual, based on certain perceptions and understanding of another person's environment or culture.[1] It is also defined as misperceptions of ethnic background, misuse of drugs, physical disability or mental illness of an individual or a group, and reflects this as negative and improper.[2] Although stigmatization is used for various phenomena, those who are more exposed to it are people with mental illness. People in society try to alienate individuals whom they perceive as dangerous. Stigmatization starts here and many factors affect it. The knowledge of a group is one of the most important factors resulting in stigmatization.[2,3]

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Society learns about mental illness primarily through the media as with many other subject areas. Thus, it is important that the content provided is accurate and clear as this is how society develops attitudes towards mental illness. Media is the most powerful tool that can prevent the increase of stigma in our society. An important step in preventing stigma is to educate and raise awareness in society. The uses of media facilitate the access to every segment of society.[4,5]

The majority of news in the media about people with mental illness is far from the objective of raising awareness in society. The media should be sensitive about misdirection, misinformation and developing misbeliefs. News primarily contains crimes associated with mental illness. This presents a disturbing effect on people who have never interacted with these individuals. Instead of focusing on the medical conditions, media focuses more on the behaviors of individuals with mental illnesses. This creates negative attention and increases the stigmatization towards mental illness.[5]

It is important to learn the thoughts of students on the stigmatization of mental illness who will work in the media sector after graduation, and to identify problems and bring solutions based on their ideas. Communication faculty students receive training in every realm of media. Therefore, they can intervene in the content of a broad area of news. Their attitudes and understanding towards mental illness and the issue of stigmatization can have an impact on society and give direction in activities of their professional life.

People exposed to stigma have difficulty finding accommodations and jobs, encounter decreased self-respect, barriers in receiving treatment, poor living conditions, isolation, estrangement, and loss of power.[3] There are methods to reduce stigma and the most important is performed by health care professionals. Nurses providing primary health care services constitute an important part of the studies conducted for reducing stigma. Nurses are in charge of various tasks such as identifying the causes of stigma, the effects of stigma on the victims, conducting studies to support the victims of stigma, and developing and applying programs to reduce stigmatization.[2] Nurses should defend patients and stand against stigmatization. Professionals should work in cooperation to develop mental health and reduce this issue. Nurses should find out the ideas of communication faculty students whose future is in media, which contributes to this stigma.

This study aims to determine the ideas of communication faculty students at a private university on stigmatization of individuals with mental illness, and to understand the students' ideas and suggestions about preventing this stigma. In line with this, the study aims to identify the attitudes of the individuals who will work in media industry, lead and support studies about stigma, and contribute to making sensitive news.

Materials and Method

This was a qualitative study aimed at identifying the ideas and suggestions of communication faculty students of a private university on stigma behavior. The population of the study consisted of 12 volunteer students studying in a communication faculty of a private university in Istanbul in the 2016-2017 academic year. The study was conducted using in-depth individual interviews. A goal-directed sample selection was used in the research. Five students in the Department of Radio, Television and Cinema (DRTC), and seven students in the Department of Journalism (DOJ) were included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected by the researchers in line with the related literature[2,3,6–8] using semi-structured interviews. Students were asked 15 questions aimed at finding out their ideas about the role of media on stigma behavior and preventing stigma. The participants were posed open-ended questions appropriate to the objective of the study. Those questions included the following; how would they approach individuals with mental illness, have they been in contact with individuals with mental illness, whether they thought the media had an impact on stigmatization of mental illnesses, whether they thought prejudices could be prevented through the media, and if this were possible, how could media accomplish this, what motives could be behind campaigns of the media for preventing stigma, what would be a common focus between the media and health care professionals, what path the media and health care professionals should follow to prevent stigmatizing behavior and whether it would contribute to public knowledge, if project studies should be carried out through the media to prevent stigma, and finally, if the media should edit the contents and release the news and videos to the public would it be a solution to prevent stigma?

Data Collection

Data were collected by three researchers conducting in-depth interviews with five students from the DRTC, and seven students from the DOJ. Five female and seven male participants between the ages of 20 and 25 participated in the interviews. The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. The necessary information was provided to the participants before the interview, including the objective and subject of the research. They were informed that the interview would be recorded (audio record), but the credentials would be used only for the research and kept confidential. They could stop the recording at any time. The participants signed a statement indicating that this was a scientific study and their credentials would be kept confidential. The interviews took place after obtaining informed consent.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using content analysis. Each interview was transcribed within 30 days following the interview and the audio recordings were personally analyzed. After the analyses, four independent researchers (one psychiatric nurse and three

fourth-year nursing students) interpreted the transcribed interviews. The themes and subthemes were identified from the statements of the participants. After the individual studies, the researchers gathered the identical views, and finalized the themes and subthemes.

Ethical Consideration

Yeditepe University Clinical Studies Ethical Committee [KAEK Decision No: 672] gave permission for the study as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Communication. The participants were given verbal and written information about the research and subsequently signed informed consent forms to take part in the study.

Results

Six main themes were identified based on the in-depth individual interviews with the students from the DRTC and the DOJ consisting of six female and six male participants with the age range of 20 to 26 years (Table 1). These included the effect of discussing the subject about the formation of stigma in the media, suggestions for television and journals, legal regulations, suggestions for universities, and suggestions for society. Of the students, 83.3% stated that health programs should be administered by doctors, while 75% stated that society should be better informed. Moreover, 50% of the students expressed that the addition of courses in the university curriculum would play a significant role in preventing stigma, aimed at preventing mental illness.

Effect of Discussing the Subject About the Formation of Stigma in the Media

This theme consists of six subthemes which include: the appeal of programs containing violence, misinformation and creating false consciousness, inability of programming due to cost, presenting an issue by a popular but uninformed individual, the media effect on the formation of stigma, and the power of the media.

The Appeal of Programs Containing Violence

Programs containing violence regarding stigmatization towards patients with mental illness became appealing when the issue was looked at from different perspectives in the subtheme according to the students. They stated that since preventing stigmatization against mental illnesses is not appealing, it is not addressed in the media from that perspective, however, news containing violence attracts the attention of people. Following are statements from students:

"That is what draws attention to the news through videos, visuals and pictures." (age 26, male, DRTC, 4th year student).

"Things that attract people's attention are reported in the media, producing news that attracts attention is only possible when a popular person becomes mentally ill or has to deal with a mental health issue." (age 22, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"Our society likes exaggeration, they are interested in news reporting with phrases like "killed…", "spread terror…". They are more interested in watching fights or sexually explicit pro-

Table 1. Students' socio-demographic characteristics and psychological disorder status							
Questionnaire	Gender	Age	Department	Grade	Has a psychological disorder	Has a relative with psychological disorder	Information about mental and neurological disorders
1	Male	22	Radio, television and cinema	3rd year	No	Yes	Very little
2	Male	22	Journalism	3rd year	Yes	Yes	Very little
3	Male	22	Journalism	4th year	No	No	Yes
4	Female	22	Journalism	3rd year	No	Yes	Yes
5	Female	24	Radio, television and cinema	3rd year	No	Yes	Very little
6	Female	25	Journalism	4th year	No	No	No
7	Male	24	Journalism	4th year	No	No	Very little
8	Male	26	Radio, television and cinema	4th year	No	No	Very little
9	Male	25	Journalism	3rd year	No	No	Yes
10	Female	21	Radio, television and cinema	2nd year	No	No	No
11	Female	22	Radio, television and cinema	3rd year	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	Female	24	Journalism	3rd year	No	No	Yes

grams. Consequently, media publishes this kind of breaking news. The media attracts people's attention by reporting "the man killed his wife…", "killed his son…". However, media producers believe that people will not care much if they provide the news in the form of subtitles." (age 24, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

Misinformation and Creating a False Consciousness

The students stated that misinformation in the media had an impact on their understanding and behaviors towards mental illnesses and stigma. 75% of the students believed that society should be informed appropriately. The statements of the students regarding these subthemes are given below:

"Our society learns about daily news from the media. They react based on this information and it can shape their life accordingly. They care about things they learn about. Also, I believe that these things may upset or please them and affect their psychology either positively or negatively." (age 24, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

"Not for serious or major diseases such as anxiety, schizophrenia but for lesser ones, some news states that "if you have at least five out of seven symptoms of… you are in depression or crisis…" and so lead people to believe that they are depressed. The media may have such impacts." (age 21, female, DRTC, 2nd year student).

Inability to Do Programming Related to Cost

The inability to do programming related to stigma based on cost was identified as an important subtheme by the students.

"I think the reason is cost. Because income cannot be brought in for even the most popular public service programs. (age 24, female, DRTC, 3rd year student).

"The reasons for the inability to do programs are simply three words; money, money, money. These are not watched, even when they are watched, these are limited to simple topics such as flu and cold. Because other programs are not watched. It cannot become a public service program, because it does not attract the attention; on the contrary, people dislike it." (age 22, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

Presenting an Issue By Popular But Uninformed Individuals

Most of the students stated that addressing this issue by a popular but uninformed individual makes important contributions to stigmas.

"People like watching popular shows. If this issue is addressed by a famous person, it possibly will have a greater impact on people." (age 24, female, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"For example, on TV8, they talked about this with Keremcan, so they made a serious issue more nonsense. The media should ask the proper people who are experts, not address this issue with the wrong people. Yet, some experts may make absurd expressions. I believe that if a serious and well-informed ex-

pert can address it in a proper manner everyone will listen. They ask the wrong people in the wrong places." (age 22, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

The Media Effect On the Formation of Stigma

The media's effect on the formation of stigma was an important subtheme. Following are statements by students on this subtheme:

"I think the news would have an effect if it is reported in a lighthearted manner. For example, it is very important not to constantly emphasis the name of the disease. Because hearing this repeatedly evokes a sense of marginalization in people." (age 22, female, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"Imposing something and polarization… these are the preoccupations of the media, but it is not associative. The easiest way to create polarization is to separate people into groups; for example, individuals with psychological disorders. The aim of the media is to create stigmatization; so why to specialize if it is in hand?" (age 21, female, DRTC, 2nd year student).

"Let's say a mentally ill person robbed a jewelry store. This would be reported in the media. The video would be broadcast. Then similar news would appear on television within a week. People may utilize and say "I am also mentally and neurologically ill." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Power of the Media

The students pointed out that the power of the media was an important subtheme. The ideas of the students are as follows:

"This kind of news of course can be effective but we much prefer to transmit when they spread terror. Instead of explaining the reason for the actions of those patients, we demonstrate it in a newsworthy manner." (age 24, female, DRTC, 3rd year student).

"The media is pointed like a bugbear everywhere you may imagine. For example, the media talks about people being deported, can assault and hurt other people. Nothing is shown positively. The news also does the same." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Suggestions for Television

The students emphasized the importance of television in preventing stigmatization of mental illness and they provided important suggestions using television as a media tool. There are three subthemes; making a film or TV series, presentation of TV shows by doctors, and preparing public service programs with appealing contents.

Making a Film or TV Series

The students replied that mentally ill individuals were not included in films or series or if they were included, they were

reflected as bad characters. They also noted that major steps could be taken to prevent stigmatization of mental illnesses through films and series reflected in a positive way. The students' statements are given below:

"A film in which only people with psychological disorders have roles may be important. It would make a tremendous impact. Because the media pays attention to these things. If Zeki Demirkubuz or Nuri Bilge Ceylan becomes the advisor for these movies, and people with mental illnesses direct the film, it would be effective. (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

"Commissioned films are continuously produced, so one could be produced for a specific subject. The Ministry of Health could produce it, or it could be included in the scenario of any film. For example, it can be produced with a scenario of people keeping themselves apart from schizophrenia, not feel empathy and thinking they are misbehaving." (age 22, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

"We need to take lessons from this issue and produce advertisements or series to prevent this. We should include such things in those programs. Namely, we should impose this on the public. So, we can come all together." (age 22, female, DRTC, 3rd year student).

"I mean such issues are not much reflected in the movies or series. Or when they are mentioned, people misrepresent them; unfortunately, they are not reflected as they are." (age 22, female, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Presentation of TV Shows By Doctors

The students emphasized that daytime programs should be addressed regarding stigma prevention. They emphasized that these programs would be beneficial when they present appropriate content and bring psychological disorders to the attention of the public. In support of this view, 83.3% of the students suggested daytime programs be prepared by doctors. The statements of the students are given below:

"Health care programs can be organized, in fact there are some, but not successful in terms of their content. Such programs can be improved and be presented by experts, in my opinion." (age 24, female, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"Women viewers particularly care about morning programs hosted by doctors. They try to listen to them and take their advice. The subjects are generally limited to the flu and colds. Instead, doctors should produce more programs, this could be effective. Morning programs are watched from 9 am to 3 pm usually. I think that if these programs are produced instead of the programs for women, it will be more effective." (age 22, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

"I think it will have a positive effect if the related experts take this subject in hand. We are living in such an age that people only believe in the media. They learn from it and behave accordingly. The ratings of morning programs are quite high." (age 24, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

Preparing Public Service Programs with Appealing Content

In the in-depth interviews the students emphasized the importance of preparing public service announcements with appealing contents and deliver to people by means of television. The following are statements from students:

"The ads can be informative through public service announcements. Public awareness can be raised, and the content can spread through social media. Photographs, videos, visuals can be provided. (age 26, male, DRTC, 4th year student).

"The media should create programs to address all individuals rather than focus on women. These programs can include information given by health care professionals." (age 25, female, DOJ, 4th year student).

Suggestions for Journals

The students emphasized the importance of journals in preventing stigmatization of mental illnesses. There are three sub-themes in this category; producing appealing news, journalists interviewing health care professionals, and preparing the news with empathy. The students verbalized the importance and effect to provide the content of news by establishing empathy. Additionally, informative texts should be included in journals about psychological disorders to prevent stigma.

Producing Appealing News

The students suggested that providing positive information about the lives of individuals with psychological disorders and producing appealing news would be beneficial. The statements of the students are given below:

"I don't know, if we give it a try, maybe a public service announcement can be produced just like the one for smoking. Produce short messages to facilitate their lives. (age 25, female, DOJ, 4th year student).

Journalists Interviewing Health Care Professionals

The students expressed belief that there is still a part of the society that reads newspapers. Thus, publishing series prepared in cooperation with health care professionals in the newspapers will create a positive impact.

"A separate section in newspapers or magazines could be allocated for these series. More parts can be added to the news. For example, a journalist can do an interview with a health care professional regarding mental illness." (age 22, female, DOJ, 3rd year student).

Preparing the News Empathetically

Most of the students stated the news was newsworthy. In parallel with this, the students stated that establishing empathy with individuals having psychological disorders and preparing the news accordingly will have positive outcomes. The statements are given below:

"We should look through the eyes of the people before preparing the news. Did they have or are they having treatment, how do they live, why did they become ill? All these concerns should be considered and used in the broadcast. I think the word schizophrenia should not be used, instead, they should be referred to as having psychological disorders. Thus, people will not think that patients with schizophrenia kill other people. Actually, not all schizophrenic patients kill." (age 25, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"The language used in the media should not marginalize or refer to the bad sides of illness. It should be made clear that patients experiences are due to their psychological disorders" (age 26, male, DRTC, 4th year student).

"Whatever the quality of the news, it should be pointed out in the news that people should not be afraid of these patients, also people should be provided with education on how to behave around those individuals." (age 22, female, DOJ, 3rd year student).

Legal Regulations

Another theme emerged in the study linked to legal regulations. The students provided suggestions for legislation regarding this issue. The students suggested creating a health care unit and designing projects for patients to increase positive feedback. The statements are given below:

"We can meet in places such as a seminar or symposium. We can develop a project with the participation of the Ministry of Health." (age 26, male, DRTC, 4th year student).

"A sub-unit of the Ministry of Health can be created to address this issue. Thus, in case of an incident like this, people from this department can go to the site together with the police. This indicates we support those patients and perhaps will make a positive impact on them. (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Students asserted that job opportunities should be provided to mentally ill patients in the media:

"Are they provided with job opportunities? I don't think so." (age 22, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

The students pointed out that very few legal regulations are considered for these patients. Additionally, they asserted that other people's approach to them will be easier in the presence of certain restrictions and rules. Below are statements from the students:

"There are certain stereotypes used in the news and people start to use them, this could be changed. Restrictions should be agreed on like the use of certain words being prohibited in publications. An organization, whichever one, the supreme board of radio and television (RTÜK), or something else I don't know, should prohibit and prevent stigmatization like calling patients schizophrenic." (age 21, female, DRTC, 2nd year student).

"At least, a law could be introduced for using the correct words to refer to these people. I think this will have a big effect on preventing stigmatization." (age 21, female, DRTC, 2nd year student).

Suggestions for Universities

Another main theme created suggestions for universities following the interviews. The students stated that they were open to learn about mental illness during their university classes. The theme for adding a course about stigma to the license education of the participants is given below.

Adding a Course About Stigma to the License Education

Half of the students defended adding a course about stigma to the license education, and believed understanding about this issue would be beneficial. The statements are given below:

"We don't have any courses on how to report health news but I would like to being informed because the health care industry is a sensitive sector, so it should be reflected to the public in this way." (age 25, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"We can participate in the courses and get information about this subject. We can become confident on how to behave around them. We can learn about them thanks to the training, and this will benefit us too. We can derive stories from their experiences." (age 22, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"We are not certain who we are going to interview. I think it will be a surprise for us since we don't have any idea about such diseases. Even if it is a brief course, it would be very nice to receive training about how to behave when we interact with mentally ill people." (age 22, male, DOJ, 3rd year student).

"These situations also have a relationship with the media. It would be helpful it there was courses connected to media. But the instructor who presents the course is also important." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Suggestions for Society

The theme of suggestions for society consists of three subthemes; family education, social responsibility projects conducted by the patients in the media, and association organizations. The students mentioned about the responsibilities of the society regarding these subthemes.

Family Education

The students set forth that stigmatization either on mental illnesses or other kinds of stigma result from upbringing. They emphasized the vital importance of family education. These statements are given below.

"It results from how you are brought up and this is related to other issues. When growing up, information should be shared with children." (age 22, male, DOJ, 4th year student).

"Conscious parents raise conscious children. I think this is very helpful in this sense." (age 25, female, DOJ, 4th year student).

"What's more, since the health programs' audience are mothers or nursemaids, how sensitive they raise their children make it more effective. (age 24, female, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Including Social Responsibility Projects Conducted By the Patients in the Media

This theme emerged from the students' ideas about stigmatization towards people with mental illnesses. To further prevent this occurrence in the media and create awareness on this subject the statements of the students follow:

If the doctor and the patient exchange positions and the media is called to that scene and nobody knows about the exchange, they may say "Look! These are doctors, but in fact patients. This seems very typical for you. There is nothing abnormal, they are the same in real life." this will be newsworthy. Such a cross would be possible." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Association Organizations

Some students included the patients in their association projects, and they proposed to advance with the patients. This could reintegrate the patients into society through large organizations and suggested to announce this fact via mediatic persons. Below are statements from the students:

"For example, the winter has come and bipolar schizophrenic patients can distribute soup to homeless people at nights." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

"Mental health and neurological disorders associations can arrange a seminar. And if they invite important media organizations or journalists to that function, this will be newsworthy." (age 22, male, DRTC, 3rd year student).

Discussion

Mental health is defined as being at peace with oneself, individuals and society. Additionally, mental health is forming an environment and sustaining the necessary endeavor to ensure a constant balance, order and harmony.[9] Individuals need to have a mutual and balanced relationships and interactions to maintain a bio-psycho-social wellbeing. Individuals who have mental illness are perceived as dangerous people in society. Their actions are perceived as unpredictable and harmful to people around them. People generally believe that mental illness is not curable, and that they cannot communicate with these people. This belief alienates individuals with mental illness, segregates people and encourages stigmatization. In the past, people with mental illnesses were exposed to torture. Similarly, today there is social pressure on these individuals causing them to get worse.[1]

This study aimed to determine the ideas of communication faculty students of a private university on stigmatization of the individuals with mental illness, and to evaluate their ideas and suggestions about preventing stigma. As a result of the individual in-depth interviews the following emerged as main themes: 1) The impact of addressing the subject in the media on the subject of stigmatization 2) Suggestions for television 3) Suggestions for journals 4) Suggestions for legislation 5) Suggestions for universities 6) Suggestions for society.

The first and the most important theme of the study was determined as "the effect of treating the subject of stigmatization in the media". The media may cause society to misunderstand mental illness. While illnesses are emphasized in news as the reason behind violence, individuals with mental illnesses are projected in TV programs as the cause of high-profile cases.[3] "The family's secret schizophrenia became their end", "schizophrenia insanity", "schizophrenic spreading terror on the bus" headlines indicate only negative sides of those patients escaping from the hospital and hurting others. The ideas about those patients turn into thoughts that people with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.

The "appeal of the programs containing violence" and "misinformation and creating false consciousness" subthemes emerged from "the impact of treating the subject in the media on the formation of stigma" main theme. The students expressed that plain texts are ineffective, but headlines are more newsworthy and draw more attention. The participants stated that mental illnesses have a negative news value. While misinformation in the media should be replaced with correct information, it becomes impossible because such news does not attract people's attention. Violence is emphasized more to attract attention. In this case, mental illness is associated with violence. Philo et al.[10] made a content analysis regarding how mass communication treat mental illness. It was reported that 66% of the content in the media about mental illness is associated with violence. Authors discussed the effect of this association on viewers' beliefs about mental illness, and emphasized that having an illness associated with violence negatively impacts the search for support and acceptance of the disease.

Inability to create programs due to cost and the impact of treating the subject in the media on the formation of stigma are other subthemes. The study came to the conclusion that programming about mental illnesses should be profitable so that profits can be used for such programs. The financial situation is very important in the media, and it becomes necessary to apply to the producers for financial support for those programs.

Presenting an issue by popular but uninformed individuals is another subtheme. The participants gave examples from popular individuals who are not health care professionals but offering advice to society on this subject.[3] In the study of "stigmatization on individuals with mental illnesses and application to reduce stigma", it was observed that the comedians included the behaviors and characteristics of mentally ill individuals in their stage performances.[3]

The impact of treating the subject in the media on the formation of stigma indicated that individuals with mental illnesses are alienated by the media effect. Bilge and Cam[3] stated that media's false and negative impressions about people with mental and neurological disorders leads people to have reactions that these patients are "assaulters" and "dangerous".

The last subtheme of the impact of treating the subject in the media on the formation of stigma was determined as the power

of media. Palabiyikoglu et al.[9] conducted a study on how suicide news was projected onto newspapers readers. That study indicated that in the contents of suicide news words like "pessimism" and "depression" were associated with mental illnesses. This leads people to think that mentally ill patients have the potential to commit suicide. According to the participants, the media has a major effect on society. Manago et al. analyzed intercultural impacts of the media on stigmatization of schizophrenic patients and patients diagnosed with depression from three different countries and of the patients with psychiatric diseases. The study indicated similarities as well as differences of stigmatization in these three countries. The authors emphasized that the media is not a reason for stigmatization, but it is more a continuation factor of stigmatization.[11]

The second main theme of the study, was suggestions for television. The participants selected the television as the media instrument which should be used to prevent stigma. The participants believe that the majority of society can be influenced using television as a media tool. Media has recently given wide coverage to health care issues. Additionally, health care issues are covered more in newspapers and magazines. There is an increase in the number of both programs and space allocation in the news about health on TV.[12] Media tools are capable of reaching large masses of people, being effective at changing individual's behaviors, increasing knowledge and creating a consciousness about health care and bringing it to public attention.[13]

Making a film or TV series was the subtheme of the main theme of suggestions for television. The participants think that showing positive sides of mentally ill patients in films or series will create a solution in the public eye. A study indicated the high impact of films as a mass communication tool on society.[13] Clement et al.[7] conducted a meta-analysis of the studies of the effect of intervention made by mass communication on stigmatization of mental health. The analysis reported that the prejudices made by mass communication could be reduced, however, this was not sufficient evidence to determine its effect on stigmatization. The authors of that study pointed out the necessity of carrying out more studies to determine the effects of mass communication on stigmatization.

Another subtheme of the suggestions for television is the presentation of TV shows by doctors. The participants indicated that women could be influenced by morning programs. TV programs presented by doctors could provide people with appropriate information. These programs presented by doctors could include mental illnesses and because the information is given by doctors it would be taken seriously. Also, introducing a psychiatric nurse to the program to share experiences about psychiatric diseases would be beneficial. When positive experiences of patients are shared by a holistic viewpoint of a nurse it will be easier to feel empathy.

The last subtheme of the suggestions for television was preparing public service announcements (PSA) with appealing content. The participants suggested adding subjects involving mental illnesses to public service announcements prepared by the Ministry of Health. Public service announcements on television are remembered longer, according to students. Public service announcements are among the tools needed to create public awareness on important social issues. Furthermore, these tools do not necessitate any cost. Strategies should be created accordingly since the objective of these announcements is to create behavioral changes in viewers. Public service announcements should be prepared by experts.[14] There is a study in the literature comparing two public PSA's. One of these announcements was "Smoking is a regret" which was prepared by the Ministry of Health, and the other was "You can quit smoking too" prepared by a private organization. The participants found the content and technical features of the PSA successful, but thought the intended meaning was insufficient and unsuccessful. The participants stated they enjoyed watching the advertisement by the private organization several times as they found the actor sympathetic and as it contained humor.[14] This study, however, concluded that preparing a PSA with appealing content would be more effective.

The participants provided some suggestions for journalists on how to prevent stigma. This is one of the most important themes. The participants emphasized that remarkable issues could be included in public service announcements before publishing any news from the contents of journals. According to the news published in 2013, a mother left her baby at home for a two-day holiday and went to her homeland, when she returned, she saw the baby would not eat and was still, so she took the baby to the hospital and learned that the baby was dead. The journals reported the news headline as "Beast Mother". Furthermore, they published her address, name and picture without any censor. Considering the life conditions of the mother, it would be found that she had mental illness. Reports from the media stated "The beast mother turned out to be schizophrenic patient." This is believed to have a significant effect in leading people to have ideas about this illness.[15]

The participants created the subtheme of suggestions for journals to recommending making interesting news. The participants emphasized that highlighting the positive sides and good behaviors of these individuals in the news would be an important step to prevent stigma. The research conducted in 2003 by Stuart[15] aimed to use media interventions to correct the expressions of the diseases like schizophrenia made in the newspapers. Media intervention included directly affects the contents of the news published. In this study, the journalists provided accurate information about the matter and produced more positive content. As a result of the evaluation, the number of positive news doubled the negative ones in light of correct information. An increase of 33% was observed in the positive news.[15] For the individuals participating in the current study, publishing positive news will increase the number of news to be produced on that issue.

Another subtheme of the suggestions for journals main theme was journalists interviewing health care professionals.

The participants asserted that correct information should be taken from health care professionals before news, health information or opinion columns about an issue is published. At the same time, interviews should be made with health care professionals on these issues. They stated that including these in newspapers as informative facts would be a step toward preventing stigma, and delivering the correct information to the public from the experts would be more accurate.

The last theme of the suggestions for the journals was to prepare the news with empathy. According to research, an empathetic person can understand others better than people who are not empathetic.[16] People who judge others without establishing empathy generally have conflict. People who feel empathy have less conflict. People who feel empathy can evaluate the situation of the other people holistically.[16] In the study conducted by McKeever[16] in 2014, the support given to people with depression and the attitudes towards them in the media was empirically tested. The individuals in the first group were given an article showing rigid people in extreme depression and the second group was given an article showing weak people with serious depression. The control group was not given an article. After reading the articles a website was shown to the participants with a fake counterpart support organization. The results indicated that the positive attitudes of the individuals responding with empathy increased their possibility of showing supportive behaviors to the organization. The results of study showed that obtaining news information from health care professionals and considering the content of the news without using language that would be detrimental to mentally ill people would be effective in preventing stigmatization in society.

Another theme of this study is legal regulations. The participants think that stigma can be prevented by laws. A study asserted that individuals with psychological disorders are generally exposed to beating, and suggested bringing legal regulations for this action.[17] As a result of the efforts of the mental health advocacy of 2008, a new law was enacted for patients observed to have the effects of the disease even when the symptoms were reduced with medication. Thus, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) met their needs. Before the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) was enacted, patients who responded to treatment and managed their symptoms lost their protection within the ADA. Furthermore, ADAAA identified that people may occasionally show symptoms of the disease and be exposed to unfair treatment. People will associate ideas that are not related to the mental illness because of misperceptions rather than the actual disease. Drawing attention to functional disorders is the approach of the ADAAA and includes segregation based on perception which is the opposite of legislation applying more arbitrary criteria for certain mental illnesses.[18] Researchers in the USA found out that patients with mental illnesses supported the struggle with organizational and structural discrimination.[19] The current study emphasizes that of the credentials of psychiatric patients should not be disclosed in the news. The study reported that views of society will be more tolerant when these factors are reduced.

Suggestions for universities were made in the study that universities include psychiatry courses in the curriculum. According to research conducted by Griffiths et al.,[19] educational anti-stigma interventions provide factual information about stigmatizing situations aimed to correct false information or conflict with negative attitudes and beliefs. An example of this can be educational campaigns. Educational campaigns can be designed at any level from local evaluations of educational interventions to national levels.[19] For example, the "Follow me" campaign of Scotland was created to put an end to stigmatization and segregation. This was a campaign encouraging patients to speak about their problems. However, a research conducted two years after the initiation of the campaign indicated there was a decrease of 11% in public belief that people with mental health problems should be protected, and a decrease of 17% in the belief that people with mental illnesses are dangerous.[8] As a result of the endeavors including educational programs, a decrease was observed in stigmatization of mental illness, psychosis and depression.[19]

Another theme of the study was suggestions for society. The responsibility of society towards stigma is immense. The participants agreed that society plays an important role in directing human behavior and taking part in social life. According to the study by Carr and Halpin,[20] 10.1% of patients become homeless, and 15.3% live in a hostel each year. Homeowners do not want to rent their apartments to people with mental illness. This is social stigmatization; there is a need for general rules to prevent this.

The subtheme of suggestions for society was family education. The participants stated that children should be taught from childhood not to practice segregation. Additionally, they responded that the value of family education is one of the most important factors shaping personality. Many primary and secondary schools of other countries determined that mental health courses developed knowledge, attitude and supportive behaviors. It was observed that developing mental health and basic health knowledge is effective in reducing stigmatization. Also, different age groups were provided with training to improve attitudes of society and help individuals develop cognitively. These programs included courses under the titles mental health, first aid, responding to mental health issues and crisis.[18]

Another subtheme creating the main theme for society was including projects prepared by patients in the media. These programs reflecting the identities of the patients would draw public attention. According to research conducted by Corrigan et al.,[21] it was shown that people with mental health disorders or substance use disorders to interact with the public and share their stories of success. This empowered the empathy emotion. There are projects where patients have a role aimed at decreasing social stigmatization. Moreover, this created a sense of empowerment in patients and increased their self-respect.

The last subtheme of the suggestion for society was the association organizations. The participants asserted that active roles of patients in association organizations would draw the public's attention. They supported these campaigns. A service known as peer providers in America was initiated according to the article by Armstrong et al.[22] This site is comprised of people having experiences with vital issues along with health care staff. Anyone can post their own experiences. The peer providers are a site offering to talk about problems with no discrimination, help others to identify their problems and follow the correct strategies to cope with these problems effectively. Furthermore, the support of peers deals with the discrimination, the refusal and isolation that patients may encounter while trying to receive treatment and services for mental issues or substance abuse. The supportive effects of peer interventions may be effective in sustaining the use of a longer and consistent treatment.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the ideas of students at a faculty of communication at a private university on stigmatization of individuals with mental illnesses and to create an awareness to prevent stigma by using media. In this sense, the study aimed to create awareness for the students of the faculty of communication. During face-to-face interviews, the students became acquainted with the issue thanks to mental and neurological disorders knowledge. Of the students, 83.3% stated that health programs should be developed by health care professionals, while 75% stated that society should be better informed. Moreover, 50% of the students expressed that an addition of courses at universities would play an important role in preventing stigma. This study is important as it consisted of students between the ages 21–26 years enrolled in communication studies who will have a future role in the media. Based on the qualitative study results, the communication faculty students found stigma behavior inappropriate. Accordingly, new candidates of the media industry are expected to more feel empathy, be devoted, tolerant and respectful while making news of or mentioning psychiatry patients. Nurses have an important role in this issue as they conduct research on university students from various departments, identify major problems in society, and inform individuals who, in the future, will provide services that may influence the views of people. It is recommended to add courses about mental illnesses to the curriculum of the faculty of communication. The social responsibility projects conducted by the students of the faculty of communication and nursing department jointly are expected to form a basis for future cooperation of the fields. A further suggestion is that studies identifying stigma and media be replicated.

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