INTERNALIZED STIGMA AMONG PEOPLE WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS: ASSOCIATIONS WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY

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Background and Aims

The internalization of stigma leads to an array of negative consequences among people with severe mental illness (SMI). For the purpose of improving the quality of life of people with severe mental illness, we need to increase awareness of the negative effects of internalized stigma. The study aims to examine internalized stigma and its associations with self-esteem and self-efficacy among people with SMI in mainland China.

Materials and methods

A cross-sectional study design was conducted in a sample of 156 adults diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or schizoaffective disorder in a tertiary psychiatric hospital in Beijing. The participants were evaluated by the Chinese versions of the Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness (ISMI) scale of Ritsher, Link's Perceived Devaluation and Discrimination scale (PDD), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) and the General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE). Correlation analysis analysis and mediation analysis were used to analyze the data.

Results

Overall, a substantial portion of the participants (**62.8%**) reported experiencing perceived public stigma and **23.7%** subjects had moderate-to-high ISMI scores using a cut-off criterion (2.5 on a 1-4 scale). Higher levels of internalized stigma and perceived public stigma were significantly related to lower self-esteem($r=-0.613$, $P<0.001$, $r=-0.296$, $P<0.001$) and lower self-efficacy($r=-0.418$, $P<0.001$, $r=-0.228$, $P=0.004$), and internalized stigma mediate the effect of perceived public stigma on self-esteem and self-efficacy. Furthermore, all of the subscales of ISMI, including value negation, social withdrawal, stereotype endorsement, perceived discrimination and life meaninglessness, were significantly, inversely correlated with self-esteem and self-efficacy($P<0.001$).

	SES total		GES total	
	r	P	r	P
PDD total	-0.296	< 0.001	-0.228	0.004
ISMI total	-0.613	< 0.001	-0.418	< 0.001
Value negation	-0.674	< 0.001	-0.461	< 0.001
Social withdrawal	-0.496	< 0.001	-0.302	< 0.001
Stereotype endorsement	-0.456	< 0.001	-0.297	< 0.001
Perceived discrimination	-0.477	< 0.001	-0.372	< 0.001
Life meaninglessness	-0.610	< 0.001	-0.417	< 0.001

Conclusions

The research results indicated that internalized stigma of this study sample has a significant and detrimental effect on an individual's self-esteem and self-efficacy. Further research is needed to develop interventions to diminish internalized stigma, in hopes of improving the quality of life of people living with severe mental illness.