MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

KNOWLEDGE, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG A GROUP OF PORTUGUESE CLINICIANS

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BACKGROUND

Mental health literacy has been defined by Jorm, *et al* as the "knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention". [1]

Mental illness stigma represents an important barrier in providing high quality mental health care, negatively impacting patients' and their relatives' quality of life.[2] Little discussed is the fact that mental illness stigma **exists as well among healthcare professionals**, leading to the underdiagnosis and neglect of physical symptoms, which ultimately results in poor outcomes for these patients.[3]

AIM

The study aimed to **describe the mental health literacy among a group of non-psychiatrist clinicians** from a Portuguese hospital.
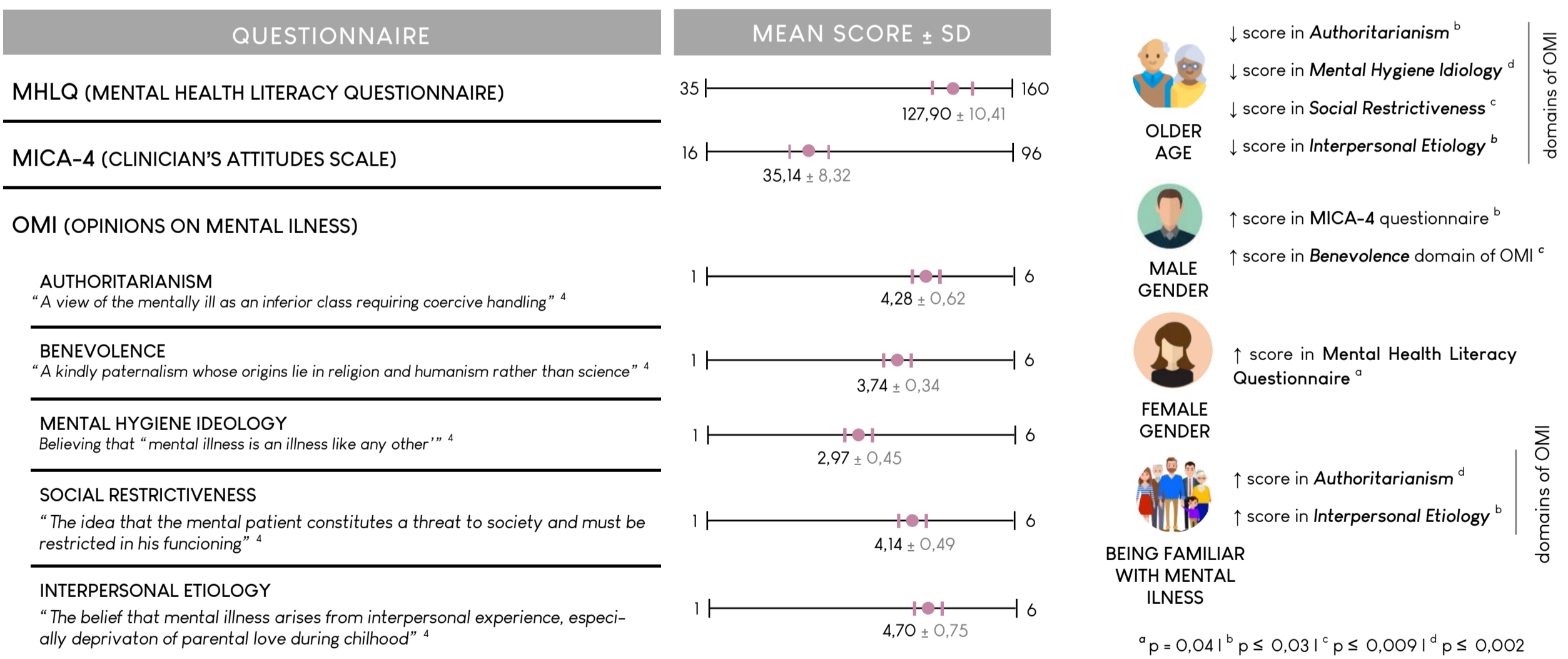
MATERIAL & METHODS

This was a cross-sectional descriptive survey conducted among a group of clinicians from a portuguese hospital, specialized in areas other than psychiatry.

The participants were presented with a *socio-demographic questionnaire, Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire* (higher values respresenting higher levels of literacy), *Opinions on Mental Illness Questionnaire* (higher scores reflecting stronger agreement with the respective opinion) and **Clinician's Attitudes MICA-4 Scale** (*higher scores reflecting* the stigma associated to mental illness)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

50 out of 100 clinicians accepted to participate in this survey. 46% were female gender, the mean age was 36 years old (minimun 25, and maximum 63 years old). 62% were single and 28% were married. 50% were specialists and 50% were residentes. 64% had a master degreee, and 2% had a PhD.

QUESTIONNAIRE	MEAN SCORE ± SD
MHLQ (MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY QUESTIONNAIRE)	35 ⊢———————⊣ 160 127,90 ± 10,41
MICA-4 (CLINICIAN'S ATTITUDES SCALE)	16 ⊢———————⊣ 96 35,14 ± 8,32
OMI (OPINIONS ON MENTAL ILNESS)	
AUTHORITARIANISM *"A view of the mentally ill as an inferior class requiring coercive handling"* [4]	1 ⊢———————⊣ 6 4,28 ± 0,62
BENEVOLENCE *"A kindly paternalism whose origins lie in religion and humanism rather than science"* [4]	1 ⊢———————⊣ 6 3,74 ± 0,34
MENTAL HYGIENE IDEOLOGY *Believing that "mental illness is an illness like any other'"* [4]	1 ⊢———————⊣ 6 2,97 ± 0,45
SOCIAL RESTRICTIVENESS *"The idea that the mental patient constitutes a threat to society and must be restricted in his funcioning"* [4]	1 ⊢———————⊣ 6 4,14 ± 0,49
INTERPERSONAL ETIOLOGY *"The belief that mental illness arises from interpersonal experience, especially deprivaton of parental love during chilhood"* [4]	1 ⊢———————⊣ 6 4,70 ± 0,75

OLDER AGE
↓ score in *Authoritarianism* [b]
↓ score in *Mental Hygiene Idiology* [d]
↓ score in *Social Restrictiveness* [c]
↓ score in *Interpersonal Etiology* [b]
(domains of OMI)

MALE GENDER
↑ score in MICA-4 questionnaire [b]
↑ score in *Benevolence* domain of OMI [c]

FEMALE GENDER
↑ score in Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire [a]

BEING FAMILIAR WITH MENTAL ILNESS
↑ score in *Authoritarianism* [d]
↑ score in *Interpersonal Etiology* [b]
(domains of OMI)

[a] p = 0,041 [b] p ≤ 0,031 [c] p ≤ 0,0091 [d] p ≤ 0,002

This is, for the authors' knowledge, the first study evaluating the literacy in mental health among Portuguese clinicians.

MHLQ mean score (127,90±10,41) is comparable to the portuguese general population,[5] and therefore, lower than expected. The scores obtained in the OMI scale, although not ideal, were similar to other studies developed among portuguese health professionals.[6]

Stigma against mental health consumers among health professionals remains an important problem. Consistent with the literature, knowledge about the disorder and contact with mental illness do *not* seem to be enough to dilute the problem of stigmatization. In the future, we aim not only to increase our sample, but also to include psychiatrists in it to compare the results. It is important to implement standard educational interventions to improve mental health literacy and to reduce stigma among clinicians.

1. Jorm, A. F., et al. Mental health literacy': a survey of the public's ability to recognise mental disorders and their beliefs about the effectiveness of treatment. Medical Journal of Australia 1997, 166, 182–186. • 2. Sartorius, N, Schulze, H. Reducing the stigma of mental illness: a report from a global association. Cambridge Universiy Press, 2005. • 3. Stubbs, A. Redcing mental illness stigma in health care students and professionals: a review of the literature. Australasian Psychiatry 2014, Vol 22(6) 579 –584. • 4. Cohen J, Struening E. Opinions about mental illness in the personnel of two large mental hospitals. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology. 1962. • 5. Campos P. Crenças, Opiniões e Atitudes dos Enfermeiros de Saúde Mental Face à Doença Psiquiátrica. 2017. • 6. Rocha I. Adaptação e Validação da Escala Mental Health Literacy para a População Portuguesa. 2016.