Assessing beliefs on schizophrenia: a study in a sample of Tunisian students

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19TH WPA WORLD
CONGRESS OF
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LISBON, 21-24 AUGUST, 2019

INTRODUCTION

Popular beliefs about schizophrenia have been the subject of several studies, which have revealed that in Western countries psychosocial and biological explanations are the most widespread while supernatural explanations are most frequent in other cultures.

The purpose of this work is to study popular beliefs about the symptoms, causes, and therapeutic means of schizophrenia in a population of Tunisian students.

METHODE

It is a descriptive study conducted on 310 students, from six different faculties in the Sousse region; The data collection was done using a pre-established form.

RESULTATS

Our population is made of 310 students, the sex ratio was 1.38 with an average age of 22.6 years. The urban origin was predominant, 77.4%.

83.2% of the students investigated had knowledge of schizophrenia.

information source

symptoms

origine of schizophrenia

■ biological ■ socio-environmental ■ heredity ■ supernatural

The results of our study showed a great disparity as well as a diversity of the causes mentioned, which were the antipodes such as supernatural and biological causes. Such diversity has also been reported in different cultures [1-5]. We cite in particular a study carried out in Morocco which found that 46% of parents of patients with schizophrenia attributed the cause of schizophrenia to stressful life events such as conflict and break-up, 25% incriminated sorcery, 23% explained it by heredity, 30% involved biological disturbances and 25% evoked drug abuse [6,7].

Socio-environmental causes, were evoked by 78% of the subjects of our study. We think that this overrepresentation is due to the fact that people have trouble to distinguish between the real stressors trigger to the illness and the psychosocial dysfunctions that result from the illness itself, especially for the insidious forms. In fact Unemployment, emotional breakdown, job maladjustment and difficulties accomplishment of military service reported spontaneously by parents as a cause of schizophrenia are indeed frequent consequences of the disease.

Supernatural beliefs about the causes of schizophrenia also seem common in other countries of Africa [8,9,10]. such as Nigeria where the etiologies the more recognized by parents of patients with schizophrenia were the supernatural causes and then hereditary and lastly medical and psychosocial explanations.

CONCLUSION:

Popular beliefs about schizophrenia have evolved in recent years, however, destigmatization programs targeting the general population are needed.

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