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HOW MEDIA INFLUENCE STIGMA TOWARDS PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

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Media are considered to be the public´s primary source of information regarding mental illness. Evidence suggests that media representations of people with psychiatric disorders are frequently negative and contribute to their stigmatization. On the other hand, media can play an important role in reducing this stigmatisation by providing adequate information about this topic. An example of an use of a standardised and objective measurement of the stigma of mental illness in print media using clearly operationalized definitions will be shawn. The *Picture of Mental Illness in newspapers* (PICMIN) instrument is based on the principles of content analysis and used in an analysis of the coverage on mental health/illness issues in Czech, Croatian, and Slovak print media. Some of the most interesting findings based on the analysis include; a similarly high level of stigmatizing articles across countries, clearly exceeding the ones with destigmatizing statements; overrepresentation of schizophrenia and eating disorders and underrepresentation of anxiety disorders and dementia when comparing the correlation of their actual rate in the populations; the proportion of articles depicting mental disorders together with aggressive deeds being as high as one-third of all articles; homicide being most frequently mentioned in the context of psychotic disorders, while affective disorders being most frequently associated with completed suicides, etc. As the influences of the media and the stigma of psychiatric disorders are heterogeneous, activities that should tighten the mental health together with media professionals should be initiated in an ultimate effort to improve media coverage of mental illness issues.

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