The mediating influence of anticipated self-stigmatization when help seeking on the relationship of depression and quality of life of untreated people

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Background
Presence of depressive symptoms is associated with decreased quality of life [1]. Seeking accurate treatment takes time; sometimes years before entering into therapies [2]. Stigma associated with seeking therapy can inhibit the use of psychological services and prolong suffering [3]. There is a lack of research on the anticipated self-stigmatization when seeking help and quality of life in people with untreated depressive syndrome.

Research aims
– Examine the associations between depression, quality of life and anticipated self-stigma when seeking help.
– Examine quality of life & anticipated self-stigma when seeking help in people with untreated depressive syndrome.
– Does anticipated self-stigmatization to seek help mediates the association of depressive symptoms on quality of life?

Method
• Cross-sectional, community based study in Northern Germany
• N=229 people were interviewed; age M(SD)= 49.6 (16.4) yrs (18-80 yrs)
  – N=199 people had a psychiatric-relevant diagnosis; N=178 with affective diagnosis (ICD-10)
• Measurements:
  – Subjective Quality of life (QoL; Eurohis-8; [4]) - M(SD) = 24.3 (5.0); α=.73
  – Depression (PHQ-9, [5]) - M(SD) = 12.8 (4.7); α=.78
  – Anticipated self-stigmatization (SSOSH, [6]) - M(SD) = 22.6 (7.2); α=.84
  – Psychiatric Interview (MINI)
• Statistical analyses: correlation, regression analysis (controlled for age/gender)

Associations
People with an affective diagnosis (ICD-10; N=178)
• Depressive symptoms & subjective QoL highly negatively associated (r=-.646, p < .001)
• QoL slightly negatively associated with anticipated self-stigmatization (r = -.012, p = .095, n.s.)
• Depression & anticipated self-stigmatization positively associated (r = -.109, p = .129, n.s.)
• Significant negative associations for age
  – & depressive symptoms (r = -.155, p < .05)
  – & anticipated self-stigma when seeking help (r = -.205, p < .01)
• Gender: no associations

Results
• Total sample:
  – Depression predicts QoL; SSOSH not associated with depression/QoL -> no mediation of SSOSH
• Gender effect:
  – Women: tendency of SSOSH to be significant predictor for QoL (p = .073)
  – Men: tendency for partial mediation of anticipated self-stigma (p = .064)
• Age:
  – Younger (<49 yrs); tendency for SSOSH to be significant predictor for QoL (p = .069)

Neither mediator nor moderator effect found for anticipated self-stigmatization when seeking help on QoL in people with untreated depressive syndrome

Discussion
People with untreated depressive symptoms experience low levels of QoL. No mediation effect of anticipated self-stigma when seeking help on quality of life was found. In tendency self-stigmatization when seeking help predicts QOL in younger individuals and females. Self-stigmatization when seeking help does not effect QoL directly.

Investigation of other variables (e.g. help seeking behavior) and interaction effects is needed.

References