

Abstract

This study applied affordance management theory to explain the stigmatization of people with schizophrenia. Analyses compared attitudes in the General Social Survey about violence, social distance, and treatment for schizophrenia versus depression. The results support the theory's predictions about perceived violence and social distance.

Introduction

- Affordance management theory states that humans have goals, such as maintaining physical safety, that motivate behaviors, such as avoidance (Pirlott & Cook, 2018).
- Past research found that people stereotyped schizophrenia as a threat to physical safety goals, which led to fear and avoidance in social situations (Boysen et al., 2022, 2023).
- The goal of the current study is to replicate these findings by reanalyzing the large, representative sample offered by the General Social Survey (www.gss.norc.org).
- We compared perceptions of schizophrenia and depression to test theoretical predictions about stereotypical violence, desire for social distance, and recommended treatments.

Method

- The method consisted of a reanalysis of the mental health module from the 2006 ($N = 1,523$) and 2018 ($N = 1,173$) General Social Survey (www.gss.norc.org), and this poster presents results from 2018 data.
- Participants considered vignettes describing a person with schizophrenia or depression and rated perceived violence, desire for social distance, and treatment endorsement.

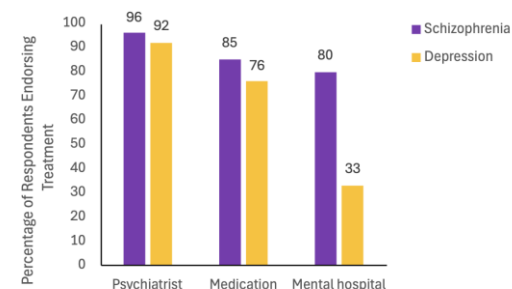
Results

Comparisons of Stereotypical Violence and Desire for Social Distance Across Disorders

Measure	Schizophrenia		Depression	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Stereotypical violence				
Violent toward other people*	2.85 ^a	0.74	2.12 ^a	0.72
Violent toward themself*	3.30 ^a	0.66	2.94 ^a	0.74
Desire for social distance				
Marry in family*	3.02 ^{abc}	0.92	2.32 ^{abc}	0.90
Have as neighbor*	2.62 ^a	0.94	1.95 ^a	0.72
Spend time socializing*	2.54 ^b	0.94	1.85 ^b	0.75
Group home in neighborhood	2.29 ^{abc}	1.00	2.05 ^c	0.88

- The analyses consisted of mixed ANOVAs comparing schizophrenia and depression between subjects and ratings of violence and social distance within subjects.
- A main effect for violence showed that ratings of schizophrenia were higher than depression (all $F_s > 23.38$, all $p_s < .001$, all $\eta^2 > .046$).
- Main effects and interactions occurred for ratings of social distance (all $F_s > 13.59$, all $p_s < .001$, all $\eta^2 > .029$).
- Post hoc tests showed significantly higher desire for social distance from schizophrenia than depression.
- Desire for social distance was significantly different between high- and low-contact situations (family vs. group home) for schizophrenia but not depression.

Comparisons of Recommended Treatment Across Disorders



- Chi square analysis showed that people endorsed hospital treatment more frequently for schizophrenia than depression, $\chi^2(1, N = 471) = 105.99$, $p < .001$, all $d = 1.08$.

Discussion

- Consistent with theory and past studies, a clear stereotype emerged associating schizophrenia with violence, as did a preference for social distance (Boysen et al., 2022, 2023).
- This is the first test of affordance management using a large, nationally representative sample.
- Affordance management theory can offer new insights into mental illness stigma research.

References

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- Pirlott, A. G., & Cook, C. L. (2018). Prejudices and discrimination as goal activated and threat driven: The affordance management approach applied to sexual prejudice. *Psychological Review*, 125(6), 1002–1027. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000125>