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PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS IN ROMANIA

I. Todor

University of Alba Iulia, Alba Iulia, Romania

Negative stereotypes and stigmatizing attitudes against mentally ill persons have powerful historical roots in many cultures. The common perspective about these persons, who are unable to defend their rights, is that they are dangerous, violent and unpredictable (Arborea-Florez & Sartorius, 2008). This paper presents a preliminary investigation regarding the public perceptions and attitudes about schizophrenia using an adapted version of the Opinions about Mental Illness Scale (Cohen & Struening, 1962). The participants were 350 university students and the following five attitudinal dimensions were investigated: authoritarianism (the opinion that people with schizophrenia are not able to respond about their acts and they should be controlled by the society), benevolence (an attitude that could be placed between tolerance and mercy), mental hygiene ideology (the opinion that mental illness is similar with other illnesses and it should be treated adequately by specialists), social restrictiveness (the opinion that mentally ill persons should be restricted in some social domains), and interpersonal aetiology (the belief that the real cause of a mental illness are the problematic interpersonal relations). The implications for the implementation of anti-stigma programs are discussed.