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Entitled

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY, MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA, AND THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF CONTACT EXPERIENCES IN THE UAE

by

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Abstract

Mental health illness is one of the most stigmatized diseases globally. Mental illness stigma continues to play an important role that shapes societal responses to individuals with mental illness. Owing to the negative consequences of stigma endorsed by the public and thereby internalized by the individual, better understanding is required to identify how these public negative attitudes develop towards people with mental illness. The study explored the effects of personality and contact experiences on mental illness stigma measured by social distance and aimed to determine whether contact experiences have a moderating effect on personality differences and stigma towards mental illness. Participants (N = 203) completed the Social Distance Scale, 20-item short form of the International Personality Item Pool (Mini IPIP), and degree of contact experiences. Results suggested that Openness to Experience and Agreeableness personality traits reported the least amount of stigma and Neuroticism was observed to have the highest amount of stigma towards individuals with mental illness. Having close-contact experience was linked to a lower expression of mental illness stigma whereas, individuals having no previous contact were more likely to engage in greater stigma. No moderating effects of contact experiences on personality and social distance were observed. These findings suggest that certain personality traits may predict greater endorsement of stigma while personal contact experiences may reverse the amount of stigma expressed towards people with mental illness. Moreover, by increasing contact experiences, greater public awareness and acceptance may be achieved allowing for stigmatization towards people with mental illness to decline.

Keywords: Mental Illness, Stigma, Social distance, Personality, Contact experiences, Moderation.