

## Abstract

The study aims to examine the effect of labeling on different components of stigma towards individuals with different psychotic features through an attributional-emotive model. As a stigma reduction scheme, the HK Hospital Authority has introduced the label of “Early Psychosis” for early onset schizophrenia since 2001. The present study aimed to investigate its effectiveness empirically by a 3 (label) x 2 (gender of the young adult) x 2 (psychiatric symptoms) factorial design, using 12 vignettes to tap the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of 800 participants towards a young adult with psychotic features. Five components of stigma was resolved, namely pity, distress, rejection, intentionality, and controllability. Using a MANCOVA analysis, each components of stigma were found to have specific pattern of interaction towards the factors of label, gender and psychiatric symptoms, contributing to an attributional-emotive model of stigmatization. In sum, two different mechanisms for illness label were found. Echoed with the labeling theory, the illness label was found to magnify the existing stereotype of mental illness among the population. The eye-catching bizarre behaviors interacted with the label, further led to deep-rooted discrimination against the mentally-ill. Residual phase of negative symptoms received different treatment. The label played its sociological role by giving the submissive attitude a socially acceptable reason. People view the avolition in a more sympathetic orientation. The positive effect of socially acceptable role outweighs the negative effect from labeling theory, resulting in less discrimination in negative symptom situation. Thus, the strategy of altering labels, without depicting the special needs of different phases of diseases, is not sufficient to combat stigmatization. The Government should use the differentiated information from the present study to tailor-made programs for the needy.

