

Investigating Mental Health Stigma in a General Hospital – a qualitative study

Roos, T^{1.}, Yonel, H.^{2.}, Fialho, R.^{2.}

¹University College London

²Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust, Liaison Psychiatry Service

Aims & hypothesis

This study aims to explore attitudes of healthcare professionals towards patients with mental illness in general hospital.

Background

Mentally ill patients articulate feeling labelled and staff describe a sense of hopelessness about psychiatric conditions (Liggins et al., 2005).

General emotional distress, sense of poor knowledge and fear have been expressed by staff and patients regarding mental ill health (Liggins et al., 2005).

Methods

This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews with 9 healthcare professionals working within an acute NHS hospital trust.

Participants encompassed a variety of professional backgrounds and seniority levels. Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was used to identify key themes.

Results

Pilot data analysis has identified the following emergent themes:

- 1) The disconnect between mental and physical health
- 2) Lack of support
- 3) Fear/lack of understanding of mental health
- 4) Stigma is cyclical
- 5) The pandemic has increased mental health awareness

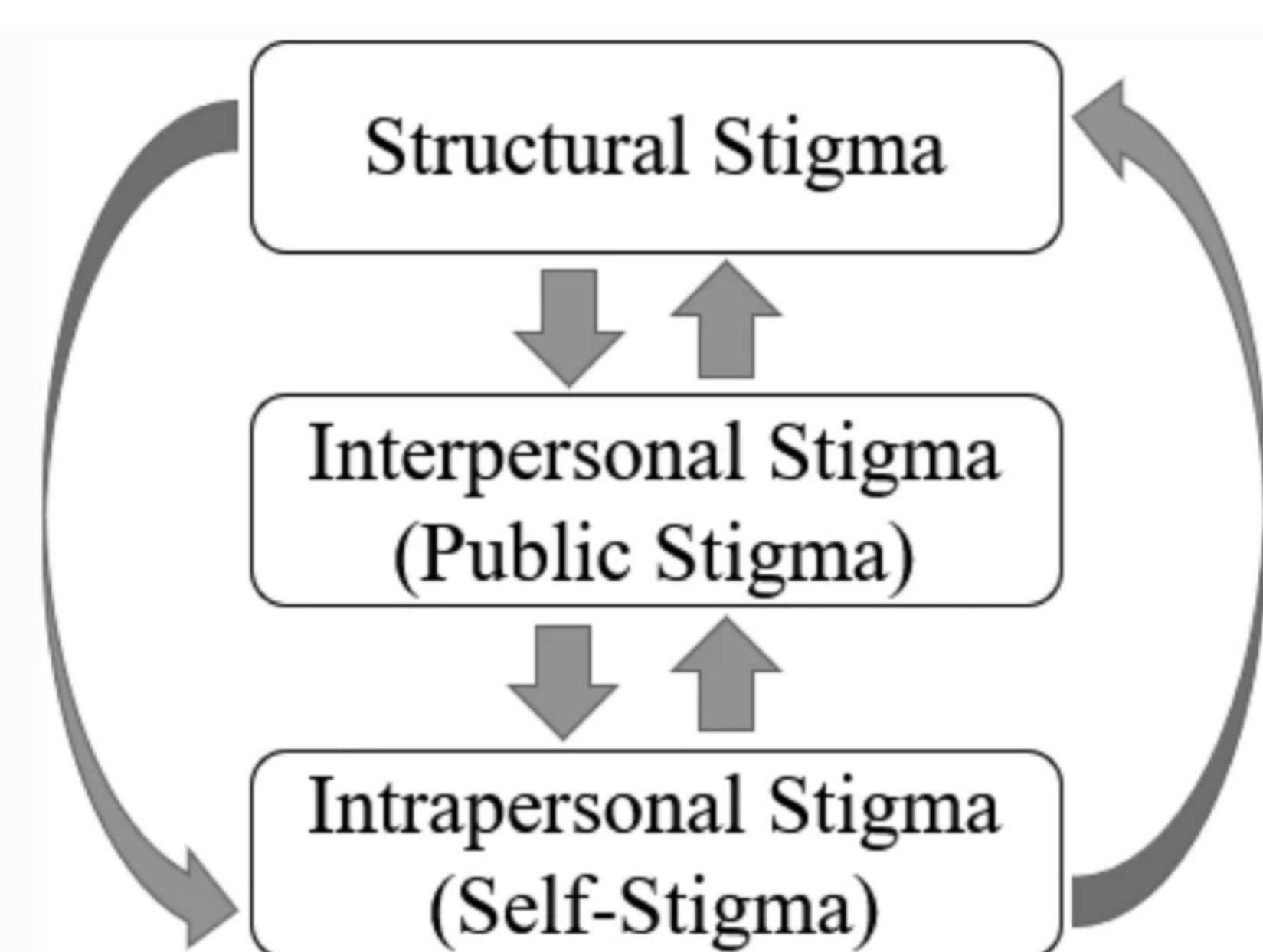
Conclusions and future directions

Participants noted the mind body divide with mental health often neglected.

Self-stigma and public stigma appear to be linked, consistent with existing research (Smith et al., 2022).

The post pandemic period could be a focus for future research with emerging evidence that COVID has increased mental health awareness.

Studies could explore general healthcare professionals' personal experience of mental health and how it relates to patients.



Smith et al., (2022)

References:

Liggins, J., & Hatcher, S. (2005). Stigma toward the mentally ill in the general hospital: A qualitative study. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 27(5), 359–364 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsy.2005.05.006>

Smith, J. M., Knaak, S., Szeto, A. C. H., Chan, E. C., & Smith, J. (2022). Individuals to Systems: Methodological and Conceptual Considerations for Addressing Mental Illness Stigma Holistically. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-022-00801-5>