Public Beliefs About Mental Disorder and Attitudes Towards the Mentally Ill – An International Comparison

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Determinants of Public Beliefs about Mental Illness and Attitudes towards the Mentally Ill

Society

- Political context
- Cultural values
- Actual social problems
- Mental health care
- Science

Beliefs about mental illness and attitudes towards the mentally ill

Individual

- Sociodemographic characteristics
- Familiarity with mental illness
Labelling of Symptoms of Mental Disorders

- Labelling of depressive symptoms as "depression"
- Labelling of schizophrenic symptoms as "schizophrenia/psychosis"
Endorsement of Hereditary Factors as Cause of Mental Disorders
Results from Population Surveys in Germany (2001),

[Bar chart showing endorsement of hereditary factors in different cities and populations, with German cities (≥500,000 inhabitants), Bratislava, and Novosibirsk.]
Endorsement of Brain Disease as Cause of Mental Disorders
Endorsement of Stress at Work as Cause of Mental Disorders
Endorsement of Lack of Social Support as Cause of Mental Disorders

Endorsement of Broken Home as Cause of Mental Disorders
Results from Population Surveys in Germany (2001), Bratislava (2003), and Novosibirsk (2002)

![Bar chart showing endorsement of broken home as cause of mental disorders in different cities.]

- **German cities (>500,000 inhabitants)**
  - Major depression: 40%
  - Schizophrenia: 30%

- **Bratislava**
  - Major depression: 50%
  - Schizophrenia: 40%

- **Novosibirsk**
  - Major depression: 60%
  - Schizophrenia: 50%
Endorsement of Lack of Parental Affection as Cause of Mental Disorders

Results from Population Surveys in Germany (2001), Bratislava (2003), and Novosibirsk (2002)
Endorsement of Alcohol Abuse as Cause of Mental Disorders
Endorsement of Drug Abuse as Cause of Mental Disorders
Results from Population Surveys in Germany (2001), Bratislava (2003), and Novosibirsk (2002)
Stereotypes of Mental Illness: Lack of Will Power
Endorsement of Immoral Life Style as Cause of Mental Disorders
Endorsement of God’s Will as Cause of Mental Disorders
Endorsement of Unconscious Conflict as Cause of Mental Disorders
Association of Schizophrenia With Split Personality
Responses to Open-Ended Question
Results from Population Surveys in Germany (2001) and Novosibirsk (2002)

German cities
(>500000 inhabitants)
(n=298)

Novosibirsk
(n=745)
Help-Seeking Recommendations in Case of Mental Disorders: Psychiatrist
Help-Seeking Recommendations in Case of Mental Disorders: General Practitioner

Help-Seeking Recommendations in Case of Mental Disorders: Priest

Help-Seeking Recommendations in Case of Mental Disorders: Confidant

Help-Seeking Recommendations in Case of Mental Disorders: Self-Help Group
Recommendations for the Treatment of Mental Disorders: Psychotropic Drugs
Recommendations for the Treatment of Mental Disorders: Psychotherapy


![Bar chart showing prevalence of major depression and schizophrenia in German cities, Bratislava, and Novosibirsk.](chart.png)
Recommendations for the Treatment of Mental Disorders: Meditation/Yoga

Recommendations for the Treatment of Mental Disorders: Relaxation Techniques
Desire for Social Distance Towards People with Mental Disorders: Rejection as Co-Worker
Desire for Social Distance Towards People with Mental Disorders: Rejection as Neighbour
Desire for Social Distance Towards People with Mental Disorders: Rejection as Tenant
• A comparison between results from Germany, Slovakia and Russia reveals similarities and differences with regard to public beliefs about major depression and schizophrenia as well as public attitudes towards people suffering from these disorders.
• Similarities mainly refer to the endorsement of established concepts of the aetiology of the two mental disorders, the acceptance of psychiatrists as helping source and the recommendation of established treatment modalities.
• Differences between the three countries - usually as a gradient from Germany over Slovakia to Russia, or vice versa – were found as concerns
Summary (2)

- The labelling of symptoms of the two disorders as expression of either depression or psychosis/schizophrenia (most frequently in Germany)
- The endorsement of more traditional etiological concepts (lack of will power, immoral life style, God’s will) as well as the attribution to problematic social relationships and to substance abuse (most frequently in Russia)
- The endorsement of an unconscious conflict as cause (most frequently in Germany)
- The recommendations to seek help from a GP, a priest or a confidant (least frequently in Germany), and the recommendation to join a self-help group (most frequently in Germany)
- The recommendation of meditation/yoga and relaxation techniques (most frequently in Germany)
- The desire for social distance (highest in Russia)
Conclusion

• There are clear indications of social-cultural influences on beliefs about mental disorders and attitudes towards people with mental illness.

• Based on experiences made in Germany our prognosis is that the differences between the three countries will diminish over the coming years.