

Background

- Individuals diagnosed with depression tend to endorse negative attitudes about themselves due to their mental illness diagnosis (Boyd et al., 2014).
- Levels of empowerment, perceived lack of control, and illness severity have been associated with more depression stigmatization (Brohan et al., 2011)
- Few studies have looked at the effects related to psychotropic medication, which may play a role in mental illness stigma (Boyd et al., 2015).

Research questions

- How does depression diagnosis and being prescribed antidepressant medications impact:
 - Self attitudes
 - Levels of empowerment
 - Optimism/Control over the future
 - Self Esteem/Self-Efficacy

Method

- 425 undergraduate students, on average 19 years of age ($SD=2.91$), and 78% Caucasian, were recruited from undergraduate psychology classes at a Northeastern University
- Participants completed the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (McMullen, & Resnick, 2013) and then were exposed to one of three vignettes
 - Control – Participants were told everything was normal in their life
 - Diagnosed – Participants were told they had been diagnosed with depression
 - Diagnosed with medication – Participants were told they had been diagnosed with depression and prescribed antidepressants
- Participants then completed a modified version of the Attitudes Towards Mental Illness Questionnaire (Fekadu et al., 2006).
 - Lower scores indicating more negative attitudes towards themselves
 - Likert scale from -2 (strongly agree) to +2 (strongly disagree), with two reverse scored questions.
- Finally, an Empowerment Scale (Chamberlin et al., 1997) containing self-esteem/self-efficacy and optimism/control over the future subscales.
 - Higher scores indicating more of a particular trait.
 - Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

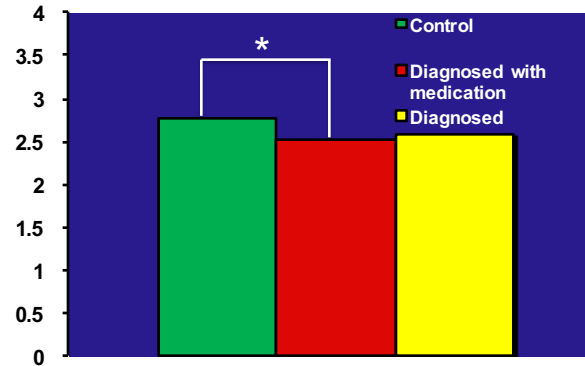


Figure 1. Self-esteem/self-efficacy post-vignette exposure by group
* $p < .05$.

Results

- Post-vignette exposure, the control group, $M=5.20$, $SD=3.44$, had significantly more positive attitudes about themselves compared to the experimental groups (Figure 2 & Table 1).
 - Diagnosed without medication, $M=.67$, $SD=3.21$, and diagnosed with medication groups, $M=1.52$, $SD=3.24$, did not significantly differ.
- In addition, the diagnosed with medication group reported significantly lower self-esteem/self-efficacy, $M=2.51$, $SD=.93$, compared to the control group, $M=2.77$, $SD=.77$ (Figure 1 & Table 1).
 - No significant differences in self-esteem were exhibited between groups before vignette exposure
- There were no significant differences between groups in overall empowerment or optimism/control over the future (Table 1).

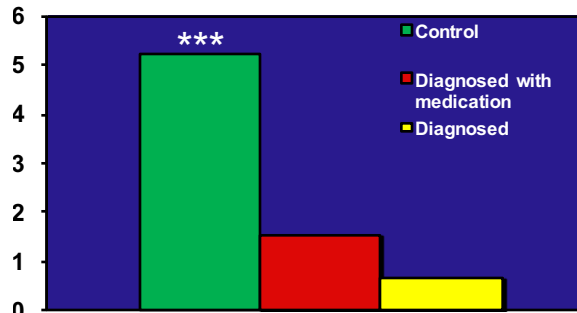


Figure 2. Attitudes towards mental illness post-vignette exposure by group
*** $p < .001$.

	Control N=133	Diagnosed N=147	Diagnosed with medication N=145	
Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>
Attitudes towards mental illness ^a	5.20 (3.44)	.67 (3.21)	1.52 (3.24)	73.26 ***
Empowerment total score ^b	2.41 (.59)	2.30 (.63)	2.77 (.65)	<i>n.s.</i>
Self-esteem/self-efficacy ^b	2.77 (.77)	2.57 (.97)	2.51 (.93)	3.18*
Optimism and control over the future ^b	2.55 (.72)	2.39 (.85)	2.45 (.84)	<i>n.s.</i>

Table 1. Differences between groups on their attitudes and beliefs after vignette exposure.

Note. ^aLower scores on the Attitudes Towards Mental Illness Scale indicate more negative self attitudes. ^b Higher scores on the empowerment scale and subscales indicate more of a particular trait.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

- According to these findings, a depression diagnosis is indicative of negative attitudes about oneself; antidepressants do not have an additive effect.
- A depression diagnosis, paired with an antidepressant prescription, has a negative effect on self-esteem/self-efficacy.
 - Lower self-esteem/self-efficacy levels may be explained by perceived lack of control or severity of illness (Juth et al., 2008).
- This knowledge may contribute to guiding future research on antidepressant medications role in mental illness stigma.

References

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