

Are patients with mental disorders aggressors, or victims?

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RESUMEN

El estigma es una condición que impone barreras en el cuidado e integración de las personas con trastorno mental en la sociedad. Desde tiempos históricos, las personas con trastorno mental han sufrido el rechazo más profundo por parte de la sociedad. De manera progresiva, sus derechos y condiciones han mejorado; sin embargo, el aspecto discriminatorio del estigma ha cesado insignificativamente debido a la percepción de peligrosidad que se tiene sobre los pacientes. Esta percepción social produce un peor pronóstico en el trastorno del paciente (mayor aislamiento, síntomas depresivos, menor oportunidad laboral...). Por tanto, el objetivo de la siguiente revisión es sintetizar la evidencia sobre el índice real de violencia ejercida por pacientes con trastorno mental; especialmente el espectro psicótico.

Se llevó a cabo una revisión bibliográfica mediante las bases de datos Scopus, PubPsych, PsycINFO, donde finalmente se recogieron 6 artículos tras los procesos de exclusión e inclusión. Tras revisar la literatura científica, se puede observar que las personas con trastorno mental no son peligrosas debido a su trastorno mental per se, sino debido a factores clínicos y sociodemográficos de riesgo: estado civil, edad, situación laboral, clima de apoyo, abuso de sustancias o falta de adherencia a tratamiento. Además, aparte de que los pacientes con trastorno mental son no violentos (2%), son un grupo vulnerable en relación a la victimización y posibles delitos sufridos. Estos hallazgos contrastan con el mito generalizado de que muchos pacientes psiquiátricos son violentos y peligrosos, y este conocimiento debe utilizarse en políticas y campañas para superar el estigma asociado con enfermedades mentales.

Palabras clave: violencia; peligrosidad; victimización; trastorno; pacientes; mental

SUMMARY

Stigma is a condition that imposes barriers in the care and integration of people with mental disorders in society. Since historical times, people with mental disorders have suffered the deepest rejection by society. Progressively, their rights and conditions have improved; however, the discriminatory aspect of stigma has ceased insignificantly due to the perception of danger that is had on patients. This social perception produces a worse prognosis in the patient's disorder (greater isolation, depressive symptoms, less job opportunity ...). Therefore, the objective of the following review is to synthesize the evidence on the real index of violence exerted by patients with mental disorders; especially the psychotic spectrum.

A bibliographic review was carried out using the Scopus, PubPsych, PsycINFO databases, where 6 articles were finally collected after the exclusion and inclusion processes. After reviewing the scientific literature, it can be observed that people with mental disorders are not dangerous due to their mental disorder by itself, but due to clinical and sociodemographic risk factors: marital status, age, work situation, supportive climate, abuse of substances or lack of adherence to treatment. Furthermore, apart from the fact that patients with mental disorders are non-violent (2%), they are a vulnerable group in the face of victimization and possible crimes suffered. These findings contrast with the widespread myth that many psychiatric patients are violent and dangerous, and this knowledge should be used in policies and campaigns to overcome the stigma associated with mental illness.

Keywords: violence; dangerousness; victimization; disorder; patients; mental

1. Introduction

Stigma is a relevant barrier to the care and social integration of people affected by mental illness (Arnaiz & Uriarte, 2006).

This phenomenon is not only related to people with mental disorders, but it has been characterizing in our society the relationships that most humans establish with certain groups of people.

This social concept is the set of three characteristics: **ignorance, prejudice and discrimination** (Fresan et al., 2010).

Looking back, people with mental disorders have suffered rejection from the rest of society since historical origins. Since then, the conditions in relation to people with mental disorders have improved remarkably; however, the discriminatory aspect of stigma has experienced a practically **insignificant cessation** within our social structure. Social discrimination towards people with mental disorders is associated with a central aspect of stigma: **perceived dangerousness**.

This social perception associated with dangerousness has been notably reinforced by the media, leading to a negative influence on the course of the patient's pathology: **depressive symptoms, anxiety, greater social isolation, lower self-esteem, less job opportunity, and greater collateral damage to the family**

Therefore, the purpose of this review is to synthesize the evidence on the real index of violence exerted by patients with mental disorders; especially the psychotic spectrum. For this, a bibliographic review of the scientific literature available in the last decade was established.

2. Method

✓ **Keywords:** Violence, mental, disorder

✓ **Inclusion criteria:**

- Keywords use: violence, mental, disorder
Boolean operator AND
Keywords in title or abstract
- Articles in Spanish or English language
- Fully study access
- Articles published in the last decade: 2011-2021
- Psychotic spectrum in the sample

✓ **Exclusion criteria:**

- No Spanish or English language
- Paid articles
- Articles with the words COVID, PREGNACY, PARENT, SEXUAL in their titles. Boolean operator AND NOT

To carry out the literature review in a correct and prescribed manner, the PRISMA Method has been followed as much as possible (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010)

1,327 studies located in the databases Scopus (372), PubPsych (458) and PsycINFO (497)

1282 excluded studies (duplicate or did not meet criteria)

45 studies included after reading the title and abstract

39 studies discarded after full reading

6 studies included in the systematic review

4. Conclusions and discussion

After reviewing the scientific literature, it can be observed that people with mental disorders are not dangerous because of their mental disorder by itself, but because of clinical and sociodemographic risk factors: marital status, gender, age, work situation, supportive climate, substance abuse, or lack of adherence to treatment. In addition, apart from the fact that patients with mental disorders are not violent (2%), they are a vulnerable group in the face of victimization and possible crimes against them. These findings contrast with the widespread myth that many psychiatric patients are violent and dangerous, and this knowledge can be used in policies and campaigns to overcome the public stigma associated with mental illness.

3. Results

AUTHOR	SAMPLE	MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
Martín & Carrasco, 2011	N= 30 patients with a history of violence □ +18 years	•Violent subjects = 70% men, 76.7% single and 76.7% without stable employment •80% used substances at some point in their life •Violence rate towards others: 13.3% •Half of the cases presented lack of adherence to treatment
Edlinger et al., 2014	N= 7222 inpatients	•2% of the patients were particularly difficult to manage in relation to violent behaviors •Higher prevalence in organic mental disorders, group B personality disorders and comorbidity with substances
de Muij et al., 2015	N= 323 patients with severe mental disorder and 10,865 controls as a comparison group □27-76 years	•People with severe mental disorders have a 22.7% chance of being victims of violent crimes compared to 8.5% in the general population •25% of the mental disorder group has ever been the victim of a violent crime, compared to 2.8% of the general population •5 times more likely to be victims of assaults •Higher prevalence in young and disorganized patients
Pinna et al., 2016	N=678 patients in charge of a university mental health center	•Violence is associated with gender (male), younger age, low education, unemployment, living with parents, personality disorders and substance abuse
Ose et al., 2017	N= 25,482 people (2,358 inpatients; 23,124 outpatients) □18-70(+) □65% of Norwegian hospitalized patients included in the sample □60% of Norwegian outpatients included in the sample	•Percentage of non-violent patients = 68% in hospitalized patients, 92% in outpatients •Higher risk of predominant violence in involuntarily hospitalized patients •After weighing, less than 2% of patients had a predisposition towards violent behavior •Sociodemographic characteristics associated with violent behavior: age, gender, educational level, supportive climate, work situation and refugees • There are no significant differences between diagnoses, except those that are comorbid with substance abuse
Dean et al., 2018	N= 2058063 people □48.7% men □51.3% women □18-45 years	•Higher IRR (Incidence rate) in addiction, personality disorder, and schizophrenia of being subjected to crime •IRR significantly higher in patients (21.5%) than in the general population (12.5%) •Higher prevalence of being the object of crime in women with severe mental disorder (7 times higher compared to control women)

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