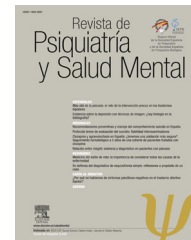Revista de Psiquiatría
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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Spanish validation of the social stigma scale: Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness[☆]

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**Abstract**

*Introduction:* The stigma against people with mental illness is very high. In Spain there are currently no tools to assess this construct. The aim of this study was to validate the Spanish version of the Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness questionnaire in an adolescent population, and determining its internal consistency and temporal stability. Another analysis by gender will be also performed.

*Material and methods:* A translation and back-translation of the Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness was performed. A total of 150 students of between 14 and 18 years old were evaluated with this tool in two stages. Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach $\alpha$; and intraclass correlation coefficient was used for test–retest reliability. Gender-stratified analyses were also performed.

*Results:* The Cronbach $\alpha$ was 0.861 for the first evaluation and 0.909 for the second evaluation. The values of the intraclass correlation coefficient ranged from 0.775 to 0.339 in the item by item analysis, and between 0.88 and 0.81 in the subscales. In the segmentation by gender, it was found that girls scored between 0.797 and 0.863 in the intraclass correlation coefficient, and boys scored between 0.889 and 0.774.

*Conclusions:* In conclusion, the Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness is a reliable tool for the assessment of social stigma. Although reliable results have been found for boys and girls, our results found some gender differences in the analysis.

## Validación al castellano de la escala de estigma social: Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness en población adolescente

**Resumen**

*Introducción:* El estigma hacia las personas con una enfermedad mental es muy elevado. En España no existen instrumentos actuales para evaluar este constructo. El objetivo del presente estudio es validar la versión española del cuestionario Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness en una población de adolescentes, estudiando la consistencia interna del instrumento, así como la estabilidad temporal. Este último análisis se realizará también por género.

*Material y métodos:* Se llevó a cabo una traducción y retrotraducción del Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness. Se evaluaron con este instrumento un total de 150 alumnos de Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria, de entre 14 y 18 años, en 2 momentos. Se analizó la consistencia interna del instrumento mediante el α de Cronbach, y la fiabilidad test-retest con el coeficiente de correlación intraclase. Se realizaron análisis estratificados por género.

*Resultados:* El α de Cronbach fue de 0,861 para la primera evaluación y de 0,909 para la segunda evaluación. Los valores del coeficiente de correlación intraclase oscilan entre 0,775-0,339 en el análisis de ítem por ítem, y entre 0,88-0,81 en las subescalas. En la segmentación por género encontramos que las puntuaciones en el coeficiente de correlación intraclase en el grupo de chicas está entre 0,797-0,863 y en los chicos entre 0,889-0,774.

*Conclusiones:* En conclusión podemos afirmar que el Community Attitudes towards Mental Illness es un instrumento fiable para la evaluación del estigma social. A pesar de resultar fiable de la misma manera para chicos y para chicas, se han encontrado algunas diferencias en el análisis por género.

## Introduction

Social stigma is a construct that includes negative attitudes, feelings, beliefs and behaviour towards a collective of individuals.[1] Social stigma against people with mental illness has been reported widely, and is they are one of the collectives that experience the most stigma and social rejection.[2] One of the aspects that favours negative attitudes against the mentally ill stems from the belief that they are aggressive and uncontrollable individuals.[3]

With the commencement of community-based psychiatry and with the need to integrate people with severe mental disorders into the community, it becomes even more important to assess the social stigma against mental illnesses in it. This attitude makes a specific characteristic of a person generalised to his or her entire identity; this in turn establishes a stereotypical classification that leads to discriminatory responses and becomes an obstacle for satisfactory evolution of the individual that suffers from the disease.[4] Social stigma has been observed to be an element that lowers the quality of life and self-esteem and increases the possibility of depression in the mentally ill; and this affects their individual identity and interpersonal relationships.[5,6] In addition, it can have social and legal repercussions such as the loss of liberty and of the rights to opportunity.[7]

In this context, intervention programmes to reduce social stigma take on special interest and can improve the integration of individuals with a mental illness in the community. Various interventions have been carried out in the general population to reduce social stigma, with satisfactory results. Some of these studies have focused on adolescents, given that they are one of the collectives most interested in and vulnerable to change; the results have been encouraging.[8–12]

Another point is that social stigma against mental illness is different according to sex. In previous studies on adolescents, we have found that boys have more stigmatising behaviours than girls, especially in the items that are most related to authoritarianism.[12,13] In agreement with these studies, Ewalds-Kvist et al. (2013)[14] suggest that women are more positive and open to the integration of the mentally ill, but that they also show more behaviours of fear and avoidance.

In this context, one of the biggest problems we have in the Spanish community lies in assessing social stigma. At present, there is only 1 scale validated in Spanish that makes it possible to evaluate social stigma in the general population: the Opinions about Mental Illness scale.[15]