

## THE 20<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM IN PSYCHOLOGY AT UNK & VDU, DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>, 2017. ABSTRACTS

### STIGMA, CULTURE AND EDUCATION: COMPARISON OF STIGMATIZING BELIEFS TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN USA AND LITHUANIAN STUDENTS' SAMPLES

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**Introduction:** Stigma of mental illness is a significant barrier for quality of life and adequate treatment of people with mental illness. Students of mental health care related professions are not free from stigmatizing beliefs. More comprehensive understanding of stigma and choice of intervention targets is needed to promote changes in students' attitudes during university years. This study aimed evaluating and comparing the effect of cumulative university education on counseling, social work and psychology students stigmatizing beliefs in two countries: Lithuania and the US.

**Methodology:** 1014 social work, counseling and psychology students (712 in Lithuania and 302 in the USA) participated in the study. A set of scales and questions was used to evaluate different stigma elements: social distance, stigmatizing emotions, causal attributions of mental illness, community attitudes towards mentally ill and self-stigma of seeking help. Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1991) was used to control the response bias of the participants.

**Results:** Lithuanian students when compared to the USA students expressed stronger desire for social distance from people with mental illness, reported stronger feelings of fear, anger and pity, were more likely to attribute causes of illness to person him/herself, were more pessimistic about possibilities of recovery, and expressed more support to social restrictions to people with mental disorders. No differences between countries were observed in attitudes towards community mental health care. USA bachelor students expressed stronger self-stigma of seeking help. In both countries, some dynamics in stigmatizing beliefs was observed. With professional education decreased: desire for social

distance, fear of people with mental disorders, tendency to attribute causes of mental illness to a person him/herself, social restrictiveness and self-stigma of seeking help, and increased support to community mental health care. However, no changes were observed in the feelings of anger, pity, and recovery beliefs.

**Conclusions and implications:** University education makes positive impact on students' attitudes and helps to decrease stigma of mental illness. However, not all stigma components are equally susceptible to change. Educational interventions should give stronger focus on stigmatizing emotions and students' recovery beliefs. Cultural differences should be also taken in to account.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EFFICACY TO QUALITY OF LIFE DOMAINS AMONG MOBILITY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS: PRIMARY RESULTS

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**Introduction:** Self-efficacy is the belief in one's competence to attempt difficult or novel tasks, and to cope with adversity arising from specific demanding situations (Cross et al., 2006; Bandura, 1994). It is one of key resources in coping with the challenges and demands presented by a chronic condition. The quality of life of the disabled individuals might be influenced by the degree of control they feel able to exert over stressful situations arising from having a disability. Highly self-efficacious individuals with mobility impairment may be better able to cope with stressful situations arising from their conditions (Luszczynska et al., 2010; Cramm et al., 2013). Considering the importance of self-efficacy on the quality of life outcomes of the individuals with mobility impairment, and the lack of such research, this study aimed at investigating the influence of general self-efficacy on various quality of life outcomes, such as physical health, social relationships and environment, as perceived by mobility impaired individuals.

**Methods:** The study sample consisted of 154 mobility impaired individuals (49 men and 105 women), aged between 18 and 66 years old. According to the mean of age ( $34,65 \pm 11,20$ ), the study participants were divided into two groups of younger and older individuals. Self-efficacy was assessed using General Self-Efficacy scale (Schwarzer, Jerusalem, 1995). Three domains of quality of life, including physical health, social relationships, and environment, were measured using WHO-QOL-BREF.

**Results:** Firstly, the results revealed that younger individuals perceived having a higher self-efficacy compared to older individuals. Regardless of age, the participants with higher self-efficacy reported having more energy for everyday life, being more satisfied with their sleep, ability to perform daily living activities, capacity for work, and as needing less medical treatment to function in daily life compared to that of the participants with lower self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacious individuals also were more satisfied with their personal relationships and sex life, more content with conditions of their living place, leisure time,

feeling more safe reported as having enough money to meet their needs, their physical environment being healthier, and the information being more available when needed in day-to-day life than lower self-efficacious individuals. In addition, younger individuals with higher self-efficacy were more satisfied with the support they get from friends than younger individuals whose self-efficacy was lower. Older individuals with higher self-efficacy reported that physical pain prevents them less from doing what they need to do compared to older individuals with lower self-efficacy.

**Conclusions and implications:** These results confirm general self-efficacy being very important to individual's quality in life – it is significantly related to perceived physical health, social relationships, and environment measures. Highly self-efficacious individuals reported more positive physical health outcomes, were more satisfied with their relationships with other people, and more content with their living environment. The interventions to improve general self-efficacy should benefit the quality of life among the mobility impaired individuals.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO CURRICULA ON EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

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The purpose of the study was to determine which reading curriculum (Reading Mastery vs. Treasures) yielded a higher average rate of gain when assessed using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) across kindergarten and first grade students. Archival data from a Midwestern elementary school was analyzed and it was concluded both curricula generated similar results. The participants will leave the session with information to assist school districts in choosing an effective reading curriculum.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES AND COGNITIVE INTERESTS OF 16–17 YEAR OLD STUDENTS IN LITHUANIA

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**Introduction:** There are many studies about the relationship between intelligence and academic performance (Chen, 2016; Šimelionienė, 2012), intelligence and vocational interests (Passler, Beinicke, Hell, 2015), but only few studies take interest in the relationship between

intelligence and cognitive interests. It is still unknown what the relationship between intellectual abilities (like „g“ factor, fluid (Gf), and crystalized (Gc) intelligence), and cognitive interests of academic subjects is. It is possible that this information about the relationship between intellectual abilities and cognitive interests can help to identify students studying potential for particular subjects or can be used to achieve greater quality for studying.

**Methods:** 317 students participated in the study where the aim was to investigate the correlation between intellectual abilities and cognitive interests. For a variety of reasons, the data from 281 participants (16–17 years old) was used: 167 girls and 114 boys. The study itself consisted of two parts: in the 1st part the participants were given intelligence (IST-2000R) tests to get general, fluid, and crystalized intelligence scores. In the 2nd part the participants were given a cognitive interests scale, which was created specifically for this study, to measure the interests in 14 academic subjects.

**Results:** The results of this study showed that intellectual abilities and cognitive interests differ by gender: the boys have higher intellectual abilities than the girls ( $t(g) = -3,202$ ;  $t(Gf) = -2,944$ ;  $t(Gc) = -2,635$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). Cognitive interests differ by gender only in specific academic subjects: the girls have higher interests in biology, chemistry, music, arts, Lithuanian and Russian languages (resp.,  $t = 4,894$ ;  $t = 4,636$ ;  $t = 3,436$ ;  $t = 3,936$ ;  $t = 6,833$ ;  $t = 3,253$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) while the boys have higher interests in math, computer science, physics, and the English language ( $t = -2,240$ ;  $t = -7,378$ ;  $t = -6,136$ ;  $t = -2,273$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). The girls' higher intellectual abilities have low positive correlation with higher cognitive interests in physics ( $r(g) = 0,236$ ;  $r(Gf) = 0,229$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), history ( $r(Gc) = 0,263$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), and English ( $r(Gc) = 0,220$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), and low negative correlation with cognitive interests in biology ( $r(g) = -0,184$ ;  $r(Gf) = -0,188$ ;  $r(Gc) = -0,193$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), arts ( $r(g) = -0,055$ ;  $r(Gf) = -0,087$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), and Russian ( $r(g) = -0,166$ ;  $r(Gf) = -0,187$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), and Lithuanian ( $r(Gf) = -0,158$ ;  $r(Gc) = -0,037$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) languages. The boys' higher intellectual abilities have low positive correlation with cognitive interests in math ( $r(g) = 0,283$ ;  $r(Gf) = 0,269$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), history ( $r(Gc) = 0,250$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), and low negative correlation with cognitive interests in computer science ( $r(Gc) = -0,264$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), geography ( $r(Gf) = -0,218$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), the Lithuanian ( $r(Gf) = -0,038$ ;  $r(Gc) = -0,042$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), and the English language ( $r(g) = 0,075$ ;  $r(Gc) = -0,177$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), music ( $r(g) = -0,209$ ;  $r(Gf) = -0,274$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), and sports ( $r(Gc) = -0,246$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ).

**Conclusions:** The results show that the boys have higher intellectual abilities compared to those of the girls. Furthermore, it was shown that cognitive interests and their relationship with intellectual abilities differ by gender. Knowing that cognitive interests take an important part in the academic world (Cedere, Jurgena, Gedrovics, 2015), these results can be used for the development of the programs, and in the academic process itself. In other words, this would be useful for teachers and students themselves, so that they could make the best use of their intellectual abilities and study potential.

## **EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIES USED FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION IN NEBRASKA SCHOOLS**

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Gatekeeper suicide prevention training models are being offered to school personnel in Nebraska's public school systems. This research project looked at evaluating the effectiveness between three different training models (Kognito, Making Educators Partners, and QPR) being offered through a five-year plan by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). School personnel (N = 75) participated in an on-line survey after taking part in the different training models. The results showed that there is not a significance in the knowledge gained through the different training models. Although it appears that all three models provide school personnel with the necessary information to identify and intervene with students at risk for suicide, additional research should focus on the implementation of the knowledge learned to determine if differences exist in the three training models related to skill development.

## **USING CURRICULA, LANGUAGE, AND POVERTY TO PREDICT CBM SCORES**

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The academic demands in legislation continue to increase and schools are beginning to examine different variables that may be influencing student academic performance. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and curriculum on student achievement in reading. Archival data were obtained from the kindergarten and first grade students from a Midwestern public school. The results indicated that all three variables predict DIBELS composite scores in kindergarten but none of them predict DIBELS composite scores in first grade. In addition, the three variables did not predict DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency scores across kindergarten and first grade. The results of this study may help schools make decisions in supporting potentially at-risk students in the early years of their education.