Does the media create stigma?
A study of mental illness in the written, televised, and radio media of El Salvador.

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Analyze the use of a human rights approach in El Salvador’s media regarding people with mental illnesses or psychosocial disability.
INTRODUCTION

179 radio stations
28 TV channels
9 written media—4 major daily newspapers (2 are tabloids) and 5 internet dailies

FOCUS: This study focuses on how these media present people who live with a mental illness or disability.
METHODOLOGY

DESIGN: — Quantitative: articles in MI CHERO. Qualitative: focus group interview with journalists.

PARTICIPANTES: Media professionals identified through AMSS

SAMPLE: 12 journalists: 5 from television, 4 radio, 3 written news outlets (print and internet)

DATA COLLECTION: (3)

- CONTEXT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER: Reviewed one year of daily publications of the newspaper MI CHERO (October 2014 to October 2015)

- FOCUS GROUP: Three focus groups of 2 hours each to answer structured and open questions.

- INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRE: Participants individually responded to questions in three areas: knowledge (multiple choice), attitudes (Likert scale), and practice (open ended questions).
INCLUSION CRITERIA: SMI: schizophrenia, bipolar, major depression, OCD, suicide, anxiety, panic, PTSD, and epilepsy.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA: Other mental illnesses, non-illnesses, and conditions related to violence or physical or sexual aggression.
Of 34 articles, most (59%) were high on the stigma scale: 8 used terms for mental illness such as “ailment,” 6 used “problem,” and 6 used terms like “disturbed personality,” “mental incapacity,” “altered mental faculties,” or an exaggerated “eccentricity” or “craziness.”

Six articles (18%) used a human rights focus: 3 were short informative pieces, and 3 (8.8%) were full articles using respectful terms.

Thus, over the course of one full year, only 3 of 389 news articles, or less than 1% (0.77%), were full articles that addressed mental illness in a respectful way.
FOCUSING WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS LENS

HUMAN RIGHTS

STIGMATICIZING
Of 34 articles, 28 (82%) used pejorative stigmatizing adjectives
1. “The principal hypothesis points to his son, a youth of 20 years who suffers schizophrenia.”

2. “You don’t have to be a psychiatrist to see that you are Münchhausen to get power.” (a disorder now known as somatoform, feigning illness to get control over others)

3. “When they went a long way to visit others, the family would hang a sign on her in case she wandered off.”

4. “She was declared responsible for the sad crime... having stabbed to death her imaginary friend Mr. Happy.”

- Full context of #1: “The principal hypothesis points to his son, a youth of 20 years who suffers schizophrenia” the journalist explains the crime scene, indications were found that the victim could have been killed by the local gang, which is very common, but the journalist instead makes the judgment that “the main hypothesis” points to the child, for the simple reason that he has schizophrenia, which results from the generalized and ambiguous belief that mental illness is uncontrollable violence and aggression.

- # 6: “She was declared responsible for the sad crime... having stabbed to death her imaginary friend Mr. Happy.” The article reports this “news” with minimal respect for the dignity of the person, and is written to ridicule and make a complete mockery of the state of the person, including in the photograph and subtitle, trying to convert symptoms and behaviors into pity and derision.
Negative

- They can attack people.
- You don’t know how they’re going to react.
- They are not able to carry out work responsibilities.
- They are possessed.
- They are crazy and going to be that way all their lives.

Tags: peeled, missing a screw, stupid, disanimated, sick, retarded, lost, schizophrenic, psychiatric sick person, mentally sick person, twisted, somebody you have to hide, whacky, te patina el coco, no está cuerdo.

Positive

- Everyone is responsible together, we laugh at people to avoid confronting the true problem, and many times the media is responsible because everyone consumes some media.
- People with disabilities.
- To say “sick person” is to discriminate against the person. It’s better to refer to them using their illness name, for example, “people with Downs Syndrome.”
Negative

It's impossible to recover, it's a mutilation, a disorder, a physical reality, for example children born with cerebral palsy. Generally we use 'disabled' because it is the rule, but we don't really know. Unless the issue is covered in depth by the media, we aren't really able to go deeply into the theme to give the public the necessary information.

It's not something that comes from our own initiative or from our bosses. When we write about human rights is when we treat people as subjects with rights.

One could write from the perspective of human rights, but I lament to say that what the people like is the morbid. The morbid gets people's attention.

Writing from a human rights perspective means putting the human being first, everything else is a party and playing with the pain of the other person (re-victimization).

Positive

The dis-information that we have as journalists is enormous. One can try to present a balanced view, be empathetic, but we need an expert to show us how to address the issue.
KAP Survey (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices)

How much do journalists know about mental illnesses and mental disability?

Knowledge -- 103/144 responses correct, or about 70%

* Indicates basic knowledge about mental illness and disability rights.

Attitudes – many responses, similar to comments already covered.

Practices – How do journalists address these themes in practice? What would they do to carry out an interview with a person with a mental illness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform oneself ahead of time about the mental illness that the person to be interviewed suffers from.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have confidence or trust in the people to be interviewed.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave with respect, friendliness, tact, and seriousness toward the person with mental illness and/or mental disability.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find help from a professional who knows the issue.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not make the interviewed persons feel inferior.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSIONS

- First of its kind study in El Salvador.
- Researchers concluded that media buys into, perpetuates, and even creates high levels of stigma against persons with mental illness and their families.

  - “Mi Chero” uses sensational and morbid stories, along with language that makes fun of people with mental illness, possibly as a sales strategy.
  - Journalists recognized that a high level of ignorance about mental illness exists within the media, as well as use of stigmatizing language.
  - The Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES) has a strong code of ethics that demands journalists act with special responsibility and rigor to avoid information or opinions that reinforce stereotypes and give rise to discrimination and prejudice. Media personnel from all types of media have an important role to play in helping people with psychosocial disabilities to recover and to enjoy a better quality of life through a society that respects their dignity.

- This study was presented in El Salvador October 2015 to a panel of media representatives, with valuable responses, and a commitment to train journalists was made.
Recommendations

- That the penal code be updated to use appropriate language reflecting a human rights approach for people with mental conditions and psychosocial disabilities.

- That trainings be held on a regular basis for all media journalists in best practices based on a human rights approach. First step was taken through First Regional Mental Health Congress in October 2015 where journalists suggested they be trained.

- That journalists focus on the positive image of people with mental conditions in recovery, enjoying work and contributing to their family, which focuses on hope and potential, rather than illness and dis-ability.

JOSE CAMPOS, then Q & A
Q&A

• What do you think about this study?
• What are the implications related to media in the U.S.?
• What are the cultural connections for Latinos across borders related to mental health?
• What are YOUR stories about media and stigma, especially from a minority/Latino perspective?
• ???
¡GRACIAS!
## INTERROGANTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrogante</th>
<th>FALSO</th>
<th>NO SÉ</th>
<th>CIERTO</th>
<th>NO CONTESTA</th>
<th>RESPUESTA CORRECTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Es posible que las personas con EM aun teniendo la medicación psiquiátrica correcta puedan recaer en situaciones de crisis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cierto (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Las enfermedades mentales son poco frecuentes a nivel mundial</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Falso (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Las personas con EM son más violentas y agresivas, por tanto son personas peligrosas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Falso (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Las personas con enfermedades mentales no se pueden recuperar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Falso (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. La esquizofrenia es contagiosa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Falso (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. La mejor forma de proteger a una persona con EM es aislándola de los demás</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Falso (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A nivel mundial la enfermedad mental más común es la depresión</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cierto (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Es posible que las personas con EM se puedan relacionar bien con los demás, por ejemplo puedan trabajar, casarse y desarrollar amistades.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cierto (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. La prevención no sirve. Es imposible prevenir una enfermedad mental</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Falso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERROGANTES</td>
<td>VALOR/FRECUENCIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Las personas con enfermedades mentales hacen importantes contribuciones a la sociedad.</td>
<td>0 0 8 3 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Las personas con discapacidad mental no se relacionan mucho con otras personas por miedo a comportarse de forma extraña.</td>
<td>0 5 1 5 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Tener una enfermedad mental arruina la vida de la personas.</td>
<td>2 6 3 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Las personas con enfermedades mentales se mantienen al margen de situaciones sociales para evitarle vergüenzas a familiares y amigos.</td>
<td>0 6 2 4 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Es necesario tener una enfermedad mental para entender a las personas que las tienen.</td>
<td>8 3 0 1 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Las personas con enfermedades mentales son ignoradas, rechazadas o no son tomadas en serio.</td>
<td>1 1 2 6 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. La enfermedad mental limita a una persona para alcanzar sus objetivos o proyectos de vida.</td>
<td>1 6 3 2 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A menudo las personas con enfermedades mentales son tratadas con condescendencia, como si fuesen niños.</td>
<td>2 2 7 1 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Las enfermedades mentales pueden ser causadas por los demonios o el castigo de Dios.</td>
<td>10 2 0 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Valores: 1=Totalmente en desacuerdo, 2=En desacuerdo, 3=Ni en desacuerdo ni de acuerdo, 4=De acuerdo, 5=Totalmente de acuerdo
Consiste en una pregunta abierta: ¿CUÁL ES LA FORMA EN QUE ABORDARÍA UNA ENTREVISTA CON UNA PERSONA CON ENFERMEDAD MENTAL Y/O DISCAPACIDAD MENTAL?

De ella se mencionan las respuestas que más coincidencia tuvieron entre las personas participantes de medios escritos, televisivos y radiofónicos:

- Informarse previamente sobre la enfermedad mental que padece la persona a entrevistar.
- Hacer sentir confianza a las personas en la entrevista.
- Comportarse con respeto, cordialidad, tacto y seriedad hacia la persona con enfermedad mental y/o discapacidad mental.
- Apoyarse de un profesional que conozca el tema.
- No inferiorizar a las personas con enfermedad mental y/o discapacidad mental.
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Pérez y Carballo (2013)

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Prevención del suicidio: Un recurso para los profesionales de los medios (2000)

Directrices generales para la prevención del suicidio (2015)