

## **Combat stigma in psychological health: an SL experience in higher education**

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Caring about everyone's psychological health is essential since well-being at this level may contribute decisively to a healthier, more productive and more inclusive society. In this context, it is particularly important to combat prejudice and discrimination, as they constitute barriers to the inclusion of those who develop psychological health problems. Thus, this project, developed within the Community Psychology Service, anchored in the Service-learning methodology, aims to contribute to the fight against stigma and prejudice through, on the one hand, detecting stigma in the community and raising awareness of inequalities as a source of discrimination and, on the other hand, detecting and reducing self-stigma, minimising the respective damage.

With regard to stigma in the community, and since the school is in a privileged position to intervene in the educational process and consequent construction of "being a citizen", the target population is secondary school students. The intervention in this area is structured around four meetings (Challenges) of 90 minutes each, three of which take place during the second term of the school year and the last one at the end of the third term. In each session/challenge, the facilitators (eleven volunteer students from the Psychology and Communication Sciences degrees and two teachers) implement a set of dynamics that constitute a starting point for exploring the concepts and respective reflection. In the third session a short film will be used which has been fully realised (story and film production) by the students involved, with the group from the Communication Sciences degree leading this process and even holding a workshop for psychology students on how to build a script for a short film. This short film aims to promote empathy, raising awareness about non-discrimination. To assess the presence (or not) of stigma, we will use the AQ-9 Oliveira and Azevedo, 2014 (in the first session and the followup session). This is the Portuguese version, revised and abbreviated, of the AQ-27 Attribution Questionnaire Corrigan et al, 2003, which has been shown to be a useful and easy-to-apply tool to assess stigma towards the disease. application to assess the stigma towards mental illness in the Portuguese population (university Portuguese population (university students, young adults and adults). Given its presentation/construction and in the absence of another instrument validated for the adolescent population, we chose to use this instrument, contributing to its possible adaptation to this population; As for self-stigma, the target population will be individuals

with experience of mental illness. The interventions to be developed in the two strands of the project (community stigma and self stigma) include a set of activities and strategies, anchored in group intervention and art therapy.

In terms of results It is expected that the implementation of the project will lead to an improvement in the assessment of stigma (community and self-stigma).

The practical implications will be deepened, being expected, however, the decrease of negative attitudes towards people with mental illness as well as the damage that occurs when these people internalize these attitudes, promoting their recovery and quality of life.

#### Bibliography

Oliveira, A. R. F., & Azevedo, S. M. (2014). Estigma na doença mental: estudo observacional. *Revista Portuguesa De Medicina Geral E Familiar*, 30(4), 227-34. <https://doi.org/10.32385/rpmgf.v30i4.11347>