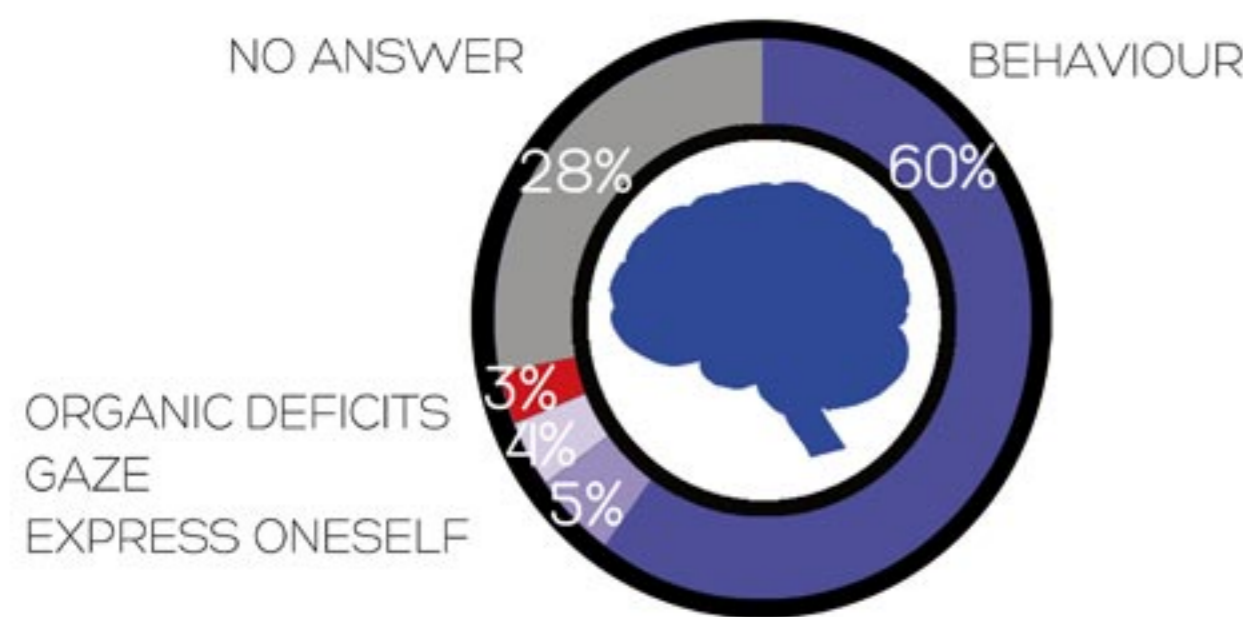


# PUBLIC STIGMA IN ITALIAN HEALTHCARE STUDENTS: A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL STUDY

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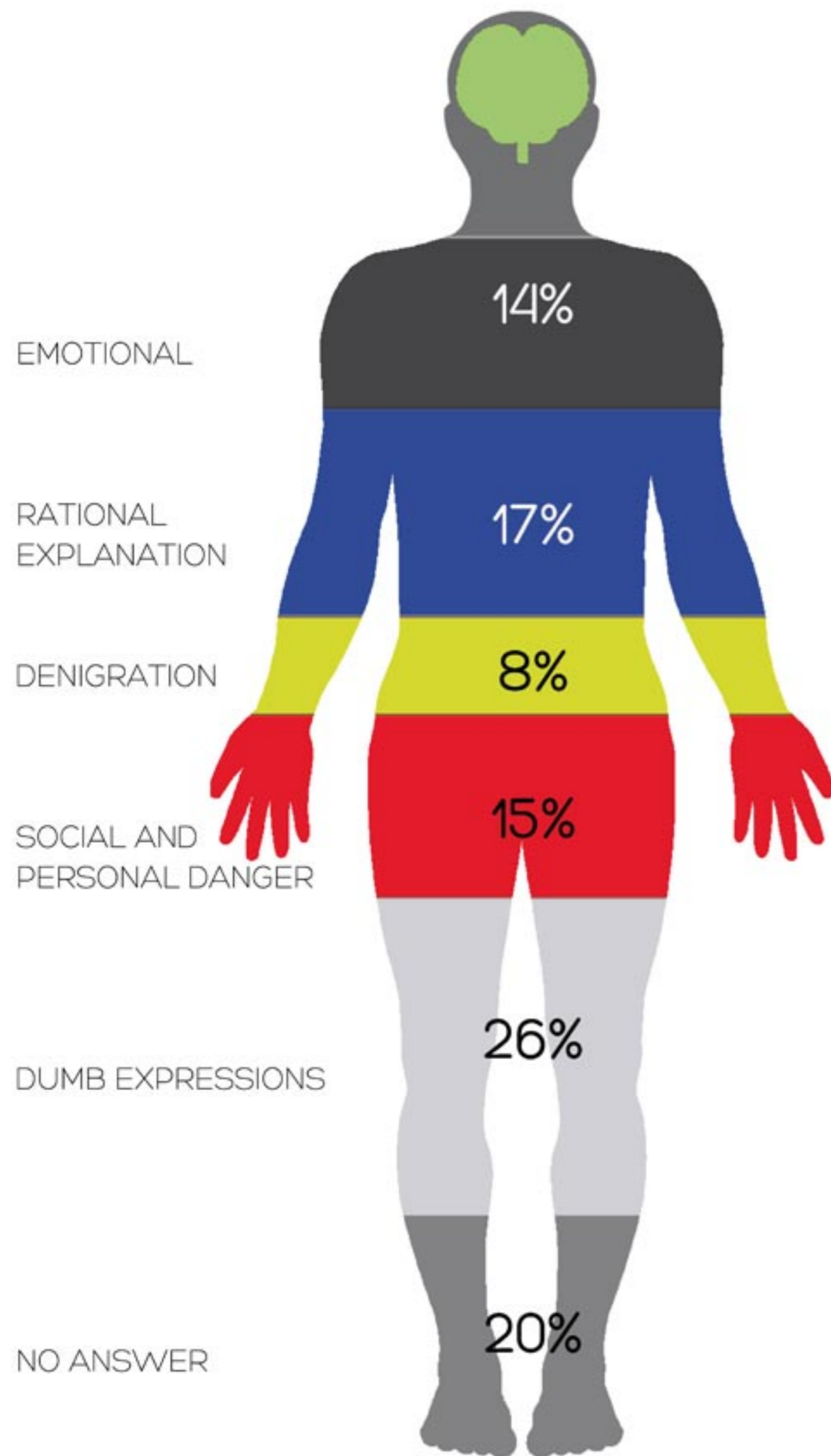
## HOW TO RECOGNIZE A MENTAL ILL



- NURSE
- OBSTETRICIAN
- MRI SCAN TECHNICIAN
- PHYSIOTHERAPIST
- LABORATORY TECHNICIAN
- SPEECH THERAPIST
- NUTRITIONIST
- HEALTH EDUCATOR



## DESCRIPTION OF A MENTAL ILL WITH OWN WORDS



Introduction: The aim of the present study was to explore the way healthcare students stigmatize mental patients using Stigmaquest test [Bellomo, Ferretti, Starace] for attribution model of public discrimination towards people with mental illness.

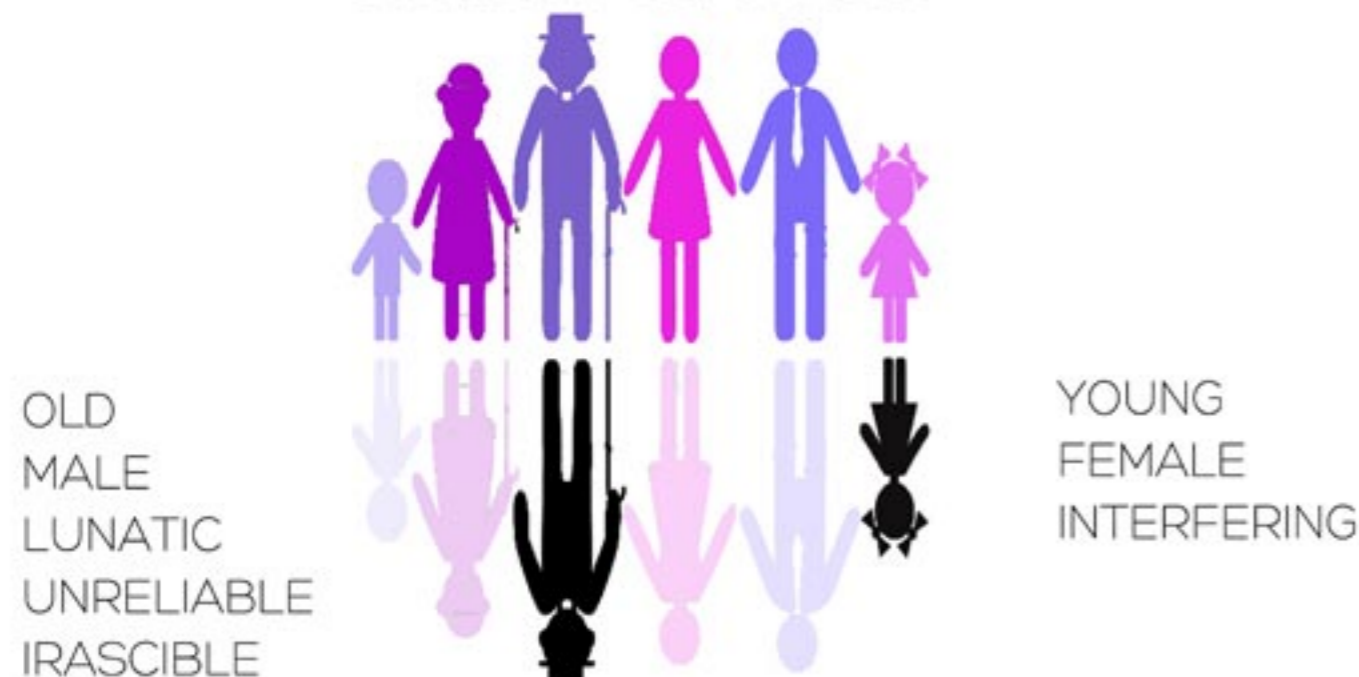
Methods: The questionnaire is a semi qualitative parametric questionnaire-based and cross-sectional that comprises scales about stigma in terms of the perception of societal stereotypes, public-stigma in terms of stereotype agreement and structural discrimination. Participants come from 8 health courses of the Medical University of Foggia, Italy: 236 final-year students covering health professions from nursing to social assistance. Students were presented with a person who got a not specified psychiatry treatment. They were asked to complete the self-report questionnaire measuring attitudes towards public stigma, stereotypes and social/media desirability.

Results: Differences between clinical and social oriented students were found in each Stigmaquest item: five sub scales dealing with stigma social cognition emerged by factor analysis. Five sets of stigma-linked beliefs were extracted accounting for an overall variance of 65%: 1) People with mental illness are dangerous; 2) They are to blame for their inability to work; 3) They are culturally incompetent; 4) They are disengaged from normative expectations (desocialization); 5) They are to blame for their character with a low morality. Gender and age adjective stereotypes were identified by cluster analysis. In the qualitative analysis all students showed discrimination towards mental professions and a high negative media desirability was constant as also anger and dangerousness beliefs. About mental professionals 33% of the respondents agreed to the stereotype that "mental health professionals have a high level of morality"; 16,5% agreed that "psychiatrists are engaged in a meaningful social work"; 7,2 % agreed that "psychiatrists are just about as mad as their patients"; 6,2% agreed that "psychiatrists are the patients' guardians".

Conclusions: This study provides evidence that an educational programme focused on stigma is needed in the study course of health professions. In order to improve the effectiveness of service provision and treatment outcomes for mental illness it is important that health care service providers and teaching institutions consider the implications of these factors when developing staff and services, and base interventions on theoretical models of stigma and discrimination.

- (1) WPA guidance on how to combat stigmatization of psychiatry and psychiatrists. Sartorius, Gaebel, Cleveland, Stuart et al, World Psychiatry 2010;9:131-144
- (2) Lotta allo stigma percorsi integrativi ed innovativi. Bellomo, Nardini, Petito, Starace, Ferretti, WPA Inter Sectional Congress, Riflessioni e idee per una nova psichiatria, Fiuggi 2008
- (3) A unitary theory of stigmatisation Pursuit of self-interest and routes to destigmatisation. Haghigat, The British Journal of Psychiatry 10.1192/bjp.178.3.207

## STEREOTYPES FOUNDED



## STIGMA BELIEFS SUBSCALES

NO CULTURAL BENEFIT FOR SOCIETY

NO ABLE TO WORK

MORAL WEAKNESS

UNSOCIABLE

PSY-PROFESSIONALS ARE...



NO ANSWER

CONTAMINATED

GUARDIANS

SOCIAL HELPFUL

HEROES

