

Abstract

Background: Insight into mental illness is associated with both positive outcomes, such as better treatment adherence and functioning, and negative outcomes such as depression and poorer quality of life (QoL). Over the past few decades, studies have examined the relationship between insight and QoL in patients with schizophrenia. However, these findings were inconsistent. It has been hypothesized that self-stigma may moderate the insight-QoL relationship, thus explaining the inconsistency. The present study aims to investigate the role of self-stigma in the insight-QoL relationship in Chinese patients with first episode schizophrenia.

Methods: A total of 115 outpatients with first episode schizophrenia was assessed for their socio-demographics, illness characteristics, insight, self-stigma, depressive symptoms, and subjective QoL cross-sectionally.

Results: Only a specific dimension of insight, namely the awareness of symptoms, was associated with poorer QoL. Self-stigma was associated with more depressive symptoms and poorer subjective QoL. Self-stigma interacted with insight to predict overall subjective QoL, though not the four specific QoL domains measured. The inverse relationship between insight and

subjective overall QoL was stronger among the participants with higher level of self stigma.

Conclusions: The present study provides some empirical evidence to support the moderating role of self-stigma in the insight-QoL relationship in patients with first episode schizophrenia. This may help explain the inconsistent findings on insight-QoL relationship in literature. In clinical practice, it may imply that self-stigma should be addressed in insight-oriented psycho-education to minimize detrimental effects like poorer subjective well being.