

Affiliate stigma and its association with quality of life among caregivers of individuals with mental illness

The programme of Mental Health Policy from the Research Division conducted a study exploring affiliate stigma among caregivers of individuals who were diagnosed with mental illness and its association with their quality of life.

The study recruited its participants from outpatient clinics at IMH as well as the Satellite clinics. After obtaining informed consent, data was collected using relevant questionnaires.

Over 90% of the caregivers experienced affiliate stigma possibly due to societal discrimination towards their care recipients. Among all the caregivers recruited in the study, younger caregivers (under 35 years) reported experiencing more affiliate stigma compared to older caregivers.

This could be because of younger caregivers lack of readiness for the role or because they are more outspoken and willing to share their feelings with others, whereas older caregivers are more likely to keep their feelings to themselves.

In addition, the study also found that parents as caregivers experienced more affiliate stigma than others (spouse, sibling, etc) probably because they felt that they are responsible for the psychological development of their children. As expected, the more affiliate stigma caregivers experienced, the poorer the quality of life reported in the domains of Psychological, Environmental and Social relationship.

These key findings highlight the need for support for caregivers in the course of caring for patients with mental illness.



“Over 90% of the caregivers experienced affiliate stigma possibly due to societal discrimination towards their care recipients...”

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More information about the study can be found at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29684770>

Deliberate self-harm among IMH out-patients (aged 14-35 years)

Recent local media have headlined rising trends in deliberate self-harm (DSH) in Singaporean youth. However, these reports were based on anecdotal evidence and inspired the conception of this study, led by Principal Investigator, Shazana Shahwan. DSH refers to an intentional act of causing physical injury to oneself without wanting to die. The aim of this study was to examine the prevalence of DSH among IMH outpatients, identify its risk factors as well as explore the reasons for DSH.

20 participants who had reported DSH in the survey were purposively sampled to explore the motivations underlying their DSH. Factors such as frequency and type of DSH, age, gender, ethnicity, diagnosis, and sexual orientation that may account for a variety of DSH motivations were represented in the sample.

Using thematic analysis, the motivations for DSH that emerged through the interviews were grouped into 5 broad themes shown in Figure 2.

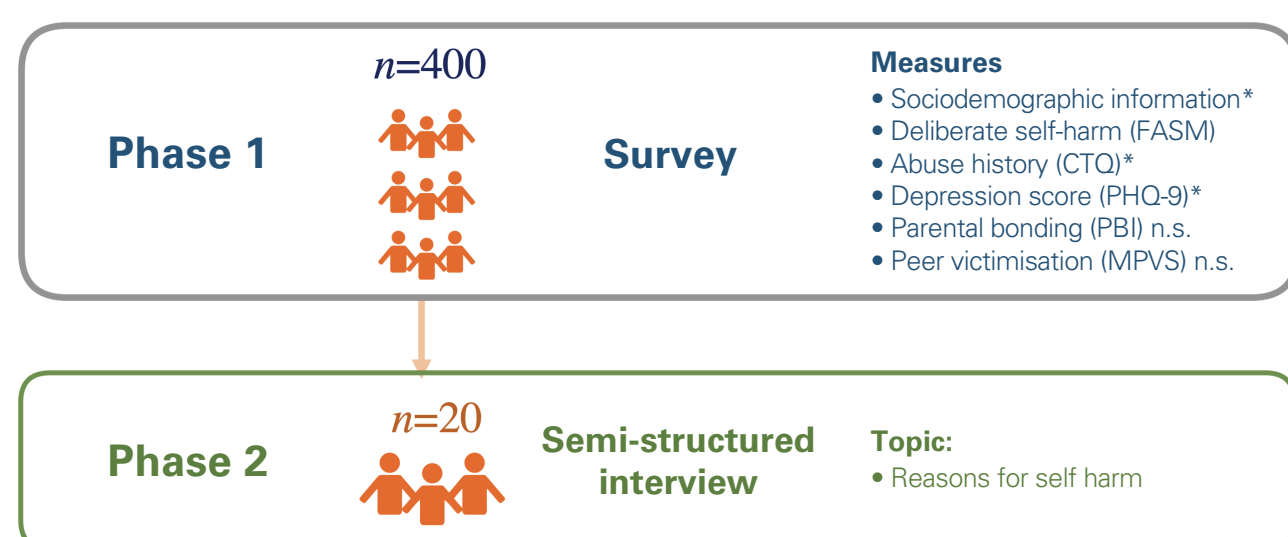


Figure 1. Mixed method design of this DSH study
*Statistically significant n.s. not significant

A 2-phase mixed-methods study comprising a survey and a follow up in-depth interview for a subset of survey participants was designed to achieve these aims. The study was supported by the NMRC Centre Grant.

Out of the 400 outpatients from the adult and child clinics who participated, almost 60% (n=235) reported committing some form of DSH in the past year, with the most common forms being cutting and hitting. Abuse history and depression scores were the two clinical factors that were directly associated with DSH regardless of form. Sociodemographic risk factors however, differed according to type of DSH with younger age and female gender predicting cutting but not hitting behaviour.

A preponderance of motivations served intrapersonal emotion-regulating functions. By contrast, a small subset of motivations served the inter-personal function of signalling distress when usual forms of communication such as verbalising and crying were futile.

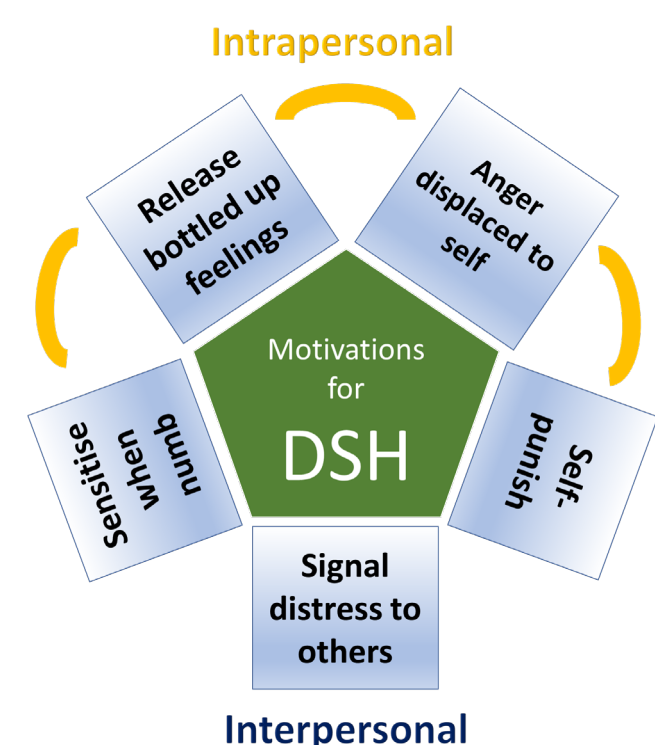


Figure 2. Motivations for DSH

The results suggest that DSH is common among outpatients at IMH and that the behaviour is a manifestation of difficulties in emotion-regulation and/or communication, as well as exposure to environments that are likely to precipitate and perpetuate these difficulties. The study provides an understanding of DSH that is locally relevant which may guide individual and systemic interventions.

More information about the study can be found at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30324964>

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