

Stigma associated with schizophrenia: The importance of diagnostic label vs. negative symptom presentation

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Background

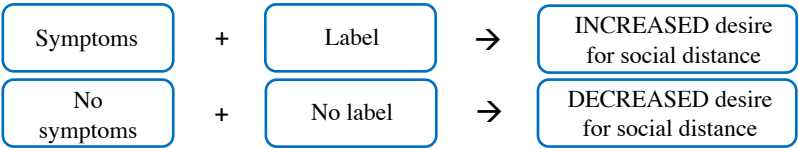
- Schizophrenia is one of the most highly stigmatized mental disorders¹. Stigma and social exclusion are significant barriers to functional recovery^{2,3}.
- Social exclusion results in individuals with schizophrenia having social networks nearly half the size of those found in healthy individuals⁴.
- Limited social networks⁵ and negative symptoms⁶ are both associated with poorer functional outcomes. Thus, negative symptoms may be important to understand why individuals with schizophrenia are excluded.



Objective

- Investigate how the presence of negative symptoms and/or a diagnosis label of schizophrenia affects social exclusion expressed by healthy individuals.

Hypotheses

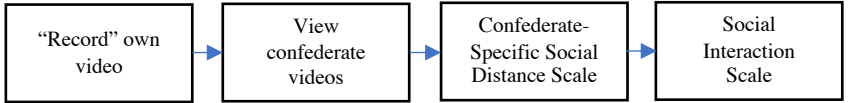


Methods

Research Design	SYMPTOMS	NO SYMPTOMS
2 (Symptoms: absent vs. present) x 2 (Label: absent vs. present)	Symptoms x Label	No symptoms x Label
Recorded confederate videos based on this design	Symptoms x No label	No symptoms x No label

Study Timeline

- Inclusion criteria: PSYA01/02 students, 18+ years of age, English proficiency
- Exclusion criteria: Less than 4/8 on effort-testing questions
- Independent variables: LABEL (absent, present) and SYMPTOMS (absent, present)
- Dependent variable: desire for social distance
- 64 participants participated in this study
- All participants viewed 4 confederate videos and completed various measures based on their impressions and desire for interactions with each student



Results

Fig. 2. Mean confederate-specific Social Distance scores based on repeated measures ANOVA data. Higher scores indicate greater desire for social distance.

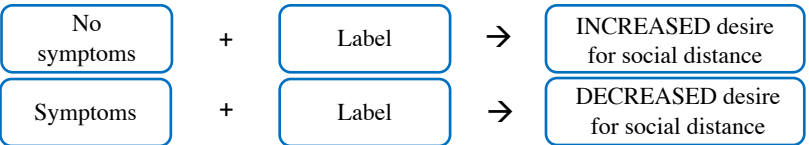
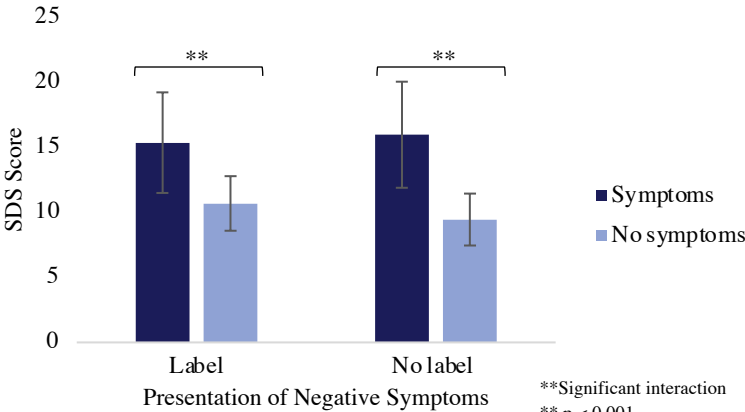
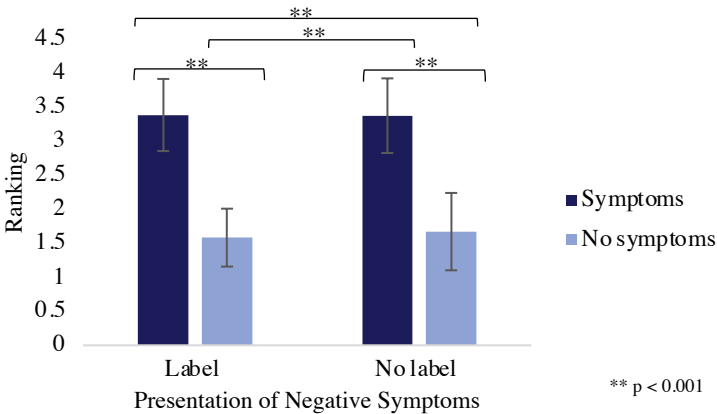


Fig. 1. Mean SIS scores by presence of label and symptoms based on Friedman test data. Higher rankings indicate more desire for social distance.



Conclusion and Future Directions

- Negative symptom presence was more closely related to stigmatizing attitudes expressed by healthy participants. These symptoms may represent a salient cluster of socially-relevant symptoms that affect an individual's decision to interact with someone with schizophrenia.
- We must increase general awareness and acceptance towards symptoms. These factors influence a diagnosed individuals daily functioning^{5,6}.
- We must increase public acceptance of specific symptom presentations through mental health campaigns. The Coming Out Proud⁷ program works to reduce self-stigma through public disclosure of mental illness.

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