

# Tolerance among college students: Attitudes towards juveniles with mental illness

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## Introduction

In the United States alone, 1 in 5 adults experience a mental illness during any given year (NAMI, 2015). Despite this, research shows that mental health stigma continues to be widely endorsed (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Unfortunately, mental health stigma has the potential to negatively impact individual's experiencing it. For example, research indicates that stigma may result in low self-esteem (Link, Struening, Neese-Todd, Asmussen, & Phelan, 2001), reluctance to seek help (Corrigan, Druss, & Perlick, 2014), and failure to adhere to treatment and medications (Sirey et al., 2001). However, much of the previous literature examining stigma and its impact focuses on adults, leaving knowledge of stigma towards youth with mental illnesses under-conceptualized (Heflinger & Hinshaw, 2010; Heflinger, Wallston, Maukolo, & Brannan, 2015). Researchers of the current study hope to close this literature gap by assessing attitudes and stigmas about juvenile mental health among a sample of college students.

### Example question:

A youth with a mental illness will do something violent to others

- 1 – strongly Agree
- 2 – somewhat Agree
- 3 – neutral
- 4 – Somewhat disagree
- 5 – Strongly disagree

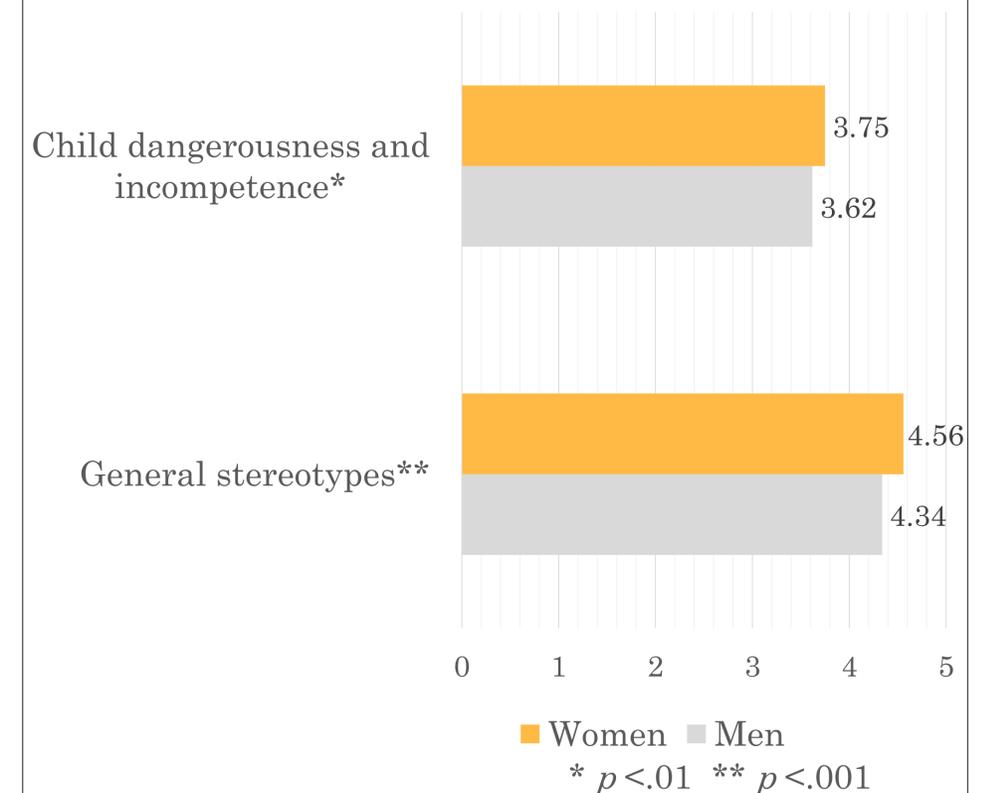
## Method

- Attitudes were assessed using a sample of 204 college-aged students ( $M=19.53$ ,  $SD=2.02$ ) enrolled in general education courses at Fort Hays State University (139 females, 64 males).
- Participation included taking a self-constructed survey consisting of demographics and questions from previously validated questionnaires (Heflinger et al., 2015; Penn, Esposito, Stein, Lacher-Katz, & Spirito, 2005).
- Survey questions assessed participant's personal attitudes, general stereotypes, child dangerousness/incompetence, community devaluation/discrimination, and suicidality.

## Results

- Results indicated that 18.7% of students have been diagnosed with a mental illness.
- 71.6% of students know someone personally who has been diagnosed with a mental illness.
- Most students (63.2%) felt somewhat or strongly knowledgeable about mental health issues among youth.
- Most students felt neutral or uninformed about youth in the juvenile justice system (73.5%).
- Majority of students agreed that mental illness has an influence on juvenile delinquency (80.4%) and agreed there is a need for increased mental health treatment in the juvenile justice system (72.9%).
- Men and women did not differ on community devaluation, personal attitudes, or stigma of suicidality.

## Comparison between men and women



## Discussion

### Limitations

Convenience sampling was used for this study. Additionally, an uneven number of male and female participants were surveyed.

### Implications

Results demonstrate college students' vast experience with mental illness and understanding of mental health.

### Future Directions

In the future, this data will be compared with a population that works with juveniles to examine the differences in possible stigmatic attitudes.