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THE EFFECTS OF A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON REDUCING STIGMATISATION ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA IN A SAMPLE OF UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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Negative public reactions concerning mental illness, and in particular schizophrenia, may result in a number of negative consequences, including aggravating their clinical condition and making it even more difficult for patients to assimilate into society. The present study examined young people's attitudes about schizophrenia and furthermore evaluated the effect of a documentary film (that depicts the lives of schizophrenia patients) on reducing stigmatization about schizophrenia. One hundred and fifteen undergraduate psychology students first provided information concerning their attitudes and knowledge about schizophrenia, in addition to filling out a questionnaire assessing their degree of acceptance of stereotypes and degree of social distance towards schizophrenia patients. One week later, participants viewed the documentary film and completed the same questionnaire. The film significantly and positively influenced participants' attitudes concerning schizophrenia. In particular, after having watched the film, participants revealed less stereotypical attitudes about schizophrenia and desired less social distance with schizophrenia patients. This change was not related to social desirability or to age, sex or years of education.