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MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE – THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE IN TERMS OF RESEARCH PRIORITIES

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Objectives: The present study aims to establish mental illness stigma research priorities of relevance for implicated stakeholders within the targeted region: Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia.

Methods: We employed a systematic stepwise approach to generating and scoring of research questions, using predetermined criteria and a matrix based design. The matrix based approach entails: (1) establishing the research context, (2) creating a list of criteria, (3) generating research questions, (4) evaluating and scoring research questions on each previously formulated criterion, (4) weighting resulting scores, (5) ranking research questions based on their weighted scores.

Results: As expected, mental health related research capacity is low in South-Eastern Europe. There is great variability in research questions generated in between countries and great variability in scores allocated to criteria (i.e., answerability, feasibility, applicability, impact, equity, utility, acceptability, sustainability, and publication) but also in scores allocated to research questions in between stakeholder categories.

Conclusions: Given the transparency, simplicity of the algorithms, and inclusiveness of the exercise, the results should be widely accepted. Resulting priorities should structure future mental illness stigma endeavours in the region and inform the allocation of existing funds. In this way, the limited available resources could be oriented to research that addresses the most pressing aspects related to mental illness stigma, creating a match between needs and investments.



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