

**The Relationship Between Internalized Stigma,  
Negative Symptoms and Social Functioning in Schizophrenia Spectrum  
Disorders: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy**

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**Declaration**

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University of Institution.

Signed.....

Date.....

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## Tables of Contents

Declaration:	Page ii
Acknowledgements:	Page iii
Tables of Contents:	Page iv
List of Figures:	Page v
List of Tables:	Page vi
List of Appendices:	Page vii
Extended Abstract:	Page viii
Critical Literature Review:	Page 1
Hypotheses:	Page 36
Journal Article:	Page 38
Abstract:	Page 38
Introduction:	Page 39
Methods:	Page 46
Results:	Page 51
Discussion:	Page 53
References:	Page 61
Extended Discussion:	Page 72
Extended References:	Page 95
Appendices:	Page 110

## List of Figures

Figure 1:	Mediational model	Page 33
Figure 2:	Mediational role of self-efficacy in relation to internalized stigma and negative symptoms	Page 35
Figure 3:	Mediational role of self-efficacy in relation to internalized stigma and social functioning	Page 36

**List of Tables**

Table 1:	Characteristics of the sample	Page 68
Table 2:	Means and S.D.s for measures	Page 70
Table 3:	Correlations between measures of internalized stigma, negative symptoms, social functioning and self-efficacy	Page 71

## List of Appendices

Appendix A:	Information Statement	Page 110
Appendix B:	Consent Form	Page 116
Appendix C:	Demographic Questionnaire	Page 119
Appendix D:	National Adult Reading Test (NART)	Page 121
Appendix E:	Calgary Depression Scale (CDS)	Page 122
Appendix F:	Internalized Stigma of Mental Illness Scale (ISMIS)	Page 126
Appendix G:	Quality of Life Scale, Abbreviated	Page 131
Appendix H:	Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms (SANS)	Page 140
Appendix I:	Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ)	Page 157
Appendix J:	Faux Pas Recognition Test	Page 159
Appendix K:	Aims and Scope of Journal - Psychiatry Research	Page 185
Appendix L:	Guide for Authors – Psychiatry Research	Page 186

## Abstract

### Scope:

Negative symptoms represent a fundamental component of schizophrenia. Furthermore, as noted in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), poor social functioning has been classified as a diagnostic criterion for the disorder. The relationship between both factors has been highlighted in the literature, with negative symptoms being identified as predictors of social functioning. Consequently, considerable research has been devoted to identifying the factors that contribute to negative symptoms. While impairments in neuropsychological functioning have been shown to be contributory factors, research has also demonstrated that a range of psychological variables has provided further clarity regarding negative symptomatology.

### Purpose:

The broad aim of the current research was to gain a greater understanding of the processes that contribute to negative symptoms and social functioning in schizophrenia and schizophrenia spectrum disorders. More specifically, a theoretical model was proposed which predicted that self-efficacy would mediate the relationship between internalized stigma and both negative symptoms and social functioning.

### Methodology:

Sixty participants, who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia or a schizophrenia spectrum disorder and admitted to acute mental health facilities in the Hunter Region of New South Wales, Australia, were recruited for the current research. A broad range of assessment tasks were utilized, with all tasks being



completed in approximately 60 – 90 minutes. In relation to self-efficacy, the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ) was designed to evaluate the participants' expectancies about their performance on the Faux Pas Test.

#### Results:

Initial results indicated that internalized stigma was strongly correlated with negative symptoms, social functioning and self-efficacy. Furthermore, self-efficacy was also found to be strongly associated with negative symptoms and moderately related to social functioning. Additional analyses that utilized a bootstrapping procedure and accompanying SPSS macro for small sample sizes did not support the mediational model. In other words, support was not obtained for the mediating role of self-efficacy in relation to the association between internalized stigma and both negative symptoms and social functioning.

#### Conclusions and Clinical Implications:

While support was not found for the proposed theoretical model outlined in the current research, a greater understanding was gained concerning the relationship between internalized stigma, self-efficacy and both negative symptoms and social functioning in schizophrenia and schizophrenia spectrum disorders. In brief, the findings of the study highlighted the clinical relevance of research into internalized stigma and the psychological construct of self-efficacy.

Furthermore, the research findings have important implications for intervention development and implementation during times of acute admission. Specific theoretical and clinical implications of the findings, together with recommendations for future research, are outlined.