

Creating Meaning - People Living with Mental Illness in Switzerland

Authors

Peter Wolfensberger*, Sabine Hahn**, Edwin van Teijlingen***, Sarah Thomas****

Presenters

Peter Wolfensberger*

Introduction: Mental illnesses have a large impact on individuals, their families and friends and communities. People living with mental illness often face discrimination and not the least within the health-care system. In this research project people living with mental illness in Switzerland share their stories. Out of these stories the Creating Meaning Theory was developed which sheds light on how the people concerned deal with their life situations.

Objectives: The aim of this research project was to explore and evaluate the personal experiences of people living with mental illness and to outline the process of adaptation within a new theory. This new understanding may help health-care providers and nurses to promote an improved quality of life and increased wellbeing.

Methodology: A constructivist and reflexive Grounded Theory approach was chosen for the study. Ten participants, people living with mental illness in Switzerland, were interviewed and additional data from various sources were included in the data analysis.

Results: Three categories form the theoretical framework of the Creating Meaning Theory, which summarises the experiences of the people interviewed for this study: Constructing explanations refers to the process of participants trying to understand what is going on in their lives. Defining self-identity points out that people living with mental illness provide themselves with an understanding of who they are. Making sense-of-life refers to the aspect, that the participants give situations meaning and take control over them. The findings support existing theories but add a new and unique understanding of people's experiences in living with mental illness.

Conclusions: The Creating Meaning Theory provides a new and unique understanding of the adaptation process to living with mental illness from a service user perspective. It is a non-linear, infinite and ongoing process. Their stories need to be heard, understood and transformed into action in real life, health-care and society.

Keyword 1: Creating Meaning

Keyword 2: Grounded Theory

Keyword 3: Mental Health and Illness

Keyword 4: Service User Perspective

Keyword 5: Adaptation to Illness

Keyword 6: Personal Recovery

References 1: Charmaz, K., 2014. Constructing Grounded Theory. 2nd edition. London, UK: Sage Publications.

References 2: Leamy, M., Bird, V., Le Boutillier, C., Williams, J. and Slade, M., 2011. Conceptual framework for personal recovery in mental health: systematic review and narrative synthesis. The British Journal Of Psychiatry, 199 (6), 445-452.

References 3: Mezzich, J. E., Botbol, M., Christodoulou, G. N., Cloninger, C. R. and Salloum, I. M., 2016b. Person Centered Psychiatry. Cham, Switzerland: Springer

References 4: Wolfensberger, P., Hahn, S., van Teijlingen, E. and Thomas, S., 2019. Uncertainty in illness among people living with mental ill health - a mental health nursing perspective. British Journal of Mental Health Nursing, 8 (4), 181-187

Financing entities: The research project was carried out as part of a PhD thesis and was self-financed.

* Integrierte Psychiatrie Winterthur - Zuercher Unterland, Nursing Development and Research , Nurse Leader, Nurse Researcher [pwolfensberger@bournemouth.ac.uk]

** Bern University of Applied Sciences, Department of Nursing , Professor in Nursing

*** Bournemouth University, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences , Professor of Reproductive Health

**** Bournemouth University, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences , Senior Research Fellow