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Photo Voice: An Innovative Research and Intervention Tool to Promote Personal Agency and Personal Development

Presentation Abstract

Using the photovoice method, this study explores the experience of user participation in mental health services (MHS) in Hong Kong and examines the effects of involvement in community-based participatory research (CBPR).

CBPR is seldom practiced in mental health research within Chinese communities. Photovoice is therefore applied to elicit the voices and personal agency among individuals with lived experience of mental illness.

In this exploratory inquiry, academic and peer researchers, together with research participants collaborated in various stages of design, data collection and data analysis.

Grounded in their first-person perspectives, participants pictured their perception of involvement in MHS systems though photos. Verbal and written narrations about these images were elicited. Participants also evaluated their novel experience of engaging in the photovoice study.

User participation was experienced as a gradual course of undertaking control through personal responsibility, peer connection, collaboration with staff and social inclusion. Sense of contribution, interpersonal connection, self-worth, and transformation of identity were indicated upon meaningful participation. Participants identified authentic participation, autonomy, individualized expression and personal growth through the involvement in photovoice while challenges were also reported.

Photovoice opens up new possibility for growth among research participants and gives access to unfold knowledge-by-experience. Further application of this CBPR is recommended the construction of experience-based knowledge with the mental health community.