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"INAPPROPRIATE USE OF LABELS OF MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG EMERGING ADULTS- A QUALITATIVE STUDY"

ANSITA SWAIN

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INSPIRED BY LIFE

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MANIPAL COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS
MAHE, MANIPAL
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation on "Inappropriate Use of Labels of Mental Illness among Emerging Adults – A Qualitative Study" has been completed by **ANSITA SWAIN** (201199014) under my supervision. I am satisfied with the work presented by the candidate towards the partial fulfillment of Master of Science in Clinical Psychology.

Guide

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Abstract

With the increasing prevalence of mental illness and the surge of social media platforms, there has been an increase in the use of diagnostic labels of mental illness in social media and real-life interactions. Memes and posts that misuse mental illness labels are shared widely on various social media platforms. Yet there is little understanding regarding the motivation and reasons behind the inappropriate use of mental illness labels. The current study aimed at understanding the motivation behind the inappropriate use of labels of mental illness among emerging adults. This study used a qualitative research design where participants between the ages of 18 and 25 who scored highest on tendency to share memes and posts with inappropriate use of mental illness labels were recruited for the in-depth interview. 8 participants were recruited with the focus of the interview on the motivations behind inappropriate use of labels of mental illness. From the data 38 themes emerged which then evolved into 12 superordinate themes. Perceived righteousness, need for inclusivity, inaccessibility to quality care, social media attributes were the reasons and motivation identified. Stigmatization, trivialization, romanticization & distorted perception of mental illness were the consequences of the inappropriate use of mental illness labels.

Keywords: Inappropriate use of mental illness labels, perceived righteousness, stigmatization, trivialization, romanticization, distorted perception of mental illness

Introduction

Our society has undoubtedly engaged in the stigmatization of mental illness. People with mental illness are tagged and labeled, excluded, attributed negative characteristics, and discriminated against. (Link et al. 1989; Corrigan and Penn 1999; Link and Phelan 1999). Mental illness has been perceived often inaccurately by the general public, as well as it has often been poorly or negatively portrayed in the media. The negative attitude of people towards someone with mental illness can stem from labeling the people with the mental disorder, behavior attribution, and misinformation regarding mental disorders and mentally ill individuals. Labeling can be defined as assigning a person to a particular diagnostic category. (Carson & Butcher, 2017). When mental illness labels are placed upon people, it has advantages and disadvantages. Correctly labeling someone with a mental illness would enhance help-seeking behavior among individuals.

Language is a method of communication. It is used to transmit intended and unintended meanings. (Shattell, 2009). How we perceive the world depends upon the way, we use language. The way we use our words also leads us to associate our feelings, attitudes, and values. The way we use language thus can influence how we stigmatize and marginalize people with mental illness. "*Stigmatization can be described as a process that involves labeling, segregation, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and is socially discrediting.*" (Link & Phelan, 2001). Label avoidance is a stigma that undermines the health-seeking services of the individual who requires psychiatric care. Label avoidance leads the individual to either not take up professional help or discontinue health-seeking services. (Corrigan, 2016). Usage of such terminology contributes to the stigmatization of individuals with mental illness because of the implicit assumptions associated with these terms. Many instances of what terms to use and terms to avoid can be found in the cases of addiction and mental health. (Botticelli & Koh, 2016; Harris & Felman. 2012; Rose, Thornicroft, Pinfold & Kassam, 2007). Derogatory as well as stigmatizing terms like "psycho," "nuts', 'or "crazy" are