Recovery in Serious Mental Illness: Perception of Health Care Trainees in Morocco

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Abstract : Background: Despite improvements in recent years, the Moroccan mental healthcare system still face disparity between available resources and the current population'sneeds. The societal stigma, and limited economic, political, and human resources are all factors in shaping the psychiatric system, exacerbating the discontinuity of services for users after discharged from the hospital. As a result, limited opportunities for social inclusion and meaningful community engagement undermines human rights and recovery potential for people with mental health problems, especially those with psychiatric disabilities from serious mental illness (SMI). Recovery-oriented practice, such as mental health rehabilitation, addresses the complex needs of patients with SMI and support their community inclusion. The cultural acceptability of recovery-oriented practice is an important notion to consider for a successful implementation. Exploring the extent to which recovery-oriented practices are used in Morocco is a necessary first step to assess the cultural relevance of such a practice model. Aims: This study aims to explore understanding and knowledge, perception, and perspective about core concepts in mental health rehabilitation, including psychiatric disability, recovery, and engagement in meaningful occupations for people with SMI in Morocco. Methods: A pilot qualitative study was undertaken. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and focusgroup discussions with healthcare professional students. Questions were organised around the following themes: 1) students' perceptions, understanding, and expectations around concepts such as SMI, mental health disability, and recovery, and 2) changes in their views and expectations after starting their professional training. Further analysis of students' perspectives on the concept of 'meaningful occupation' and how is this viewed within the context of the research questions was done. The data was extracted using an inductive thematic analysis approach. This is a pilot stage of a doctoral project, further data will be collected and analysed until saturation is reached. Results: A total of eight students were included in this study which included occupational therapy and mental health nursing students receiving training in Morocco. The following themes emerged as influencing students' perceptions and views around the main concepts: 1) Stigma and discrimination, 2) Fatalism and low expectations, 3) Gendered perceptions, 4) Religious causation, 5) Family involvement, 6) Professional background, 7) Inaccessibility of services and treatment. Discussion/Contribution: Preliminary analysis of the data suggests that students' perceptions changed after gaining more clinical experiences and being exposed to people with psychiatric disabilities. Prior to their training, stigma shaped greatly how they viewed people with SMI. The fear, misunderstanding, and shame around SMI and their functional capacities may contribute to people with SMI being stigmatizedand marginalised from their family and their community. Religious causations associated to SMIsare understood as further deepening the social stigma around psychiatric disability. Perceptions are influenced by gender, with women being doubly discriminated against in relation to recovery opportunities. Therapeutic pessimism seems to persist amongst students and within the mental healthcare system in general and regarding the recovery potential and opportunities for people with SMI. The limited resources, fatalism, and stigma all contribute to the low expectations for recovery and community inclusion. Implications and future directions will be discussed.

Keywords : disability, mental health rehabilitation, recovery, serious mental illness, transcultural psychiatry