

Relationship Building Between Peer Support Worker and Person in Recovery in the Community-based One-to-One Peer Support Service of Mental Health Setting

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Abstract : Peer support has been a rising prevalent mental health service in the globe. The community-based mental health services employ persons with lived experience of mental illness to be peer support workers (PSWs) to provide peer support service to those who are in the progress of recovery (PIRs). It represents the transformation of mental health service system to a recovery-oriented and person-centered care. Literatures proved the feasibility and effectiveness of the peer support service. Researchers have attempted to explore the unique good qualities of peer support service that benefit the PIRs. Empirical researches found that the strength of the relationship between those who sought for change and the change agents positively related to the outcomes in one-to-one therapies across theoretical orientations. However, there is lack of literature on investigating the relationship building between the PSWs and PIRs in the one-to-one community-based peer support service. This study aims to identify and characterise the relationship in the community-based one-to-one peer support service from the perspectives of PSWs and PIRs; and to conceptualize the components of relationship building between PSWs and PIRs in the community-based one-to-one peer support service. The study adopted the constructivist grounded theory approach. 10 pairs of the PSWs and PIRs participated in the study. Data were collected through multiple qualitative methods, including observation of the interaction and exchange of the PSWs and PIRs in the 1st, 3rd and 9th sessions of the community-based one-to-one peer support service; and semi-structural interview with the PSWs and PIRs separately after the 3rd and 9th session of the peer support service. This presentation is going to report the preliminary findings of the study. PSWs and PIRs identified their relationship as "life alliance". Empathy was found to be one of key components of the relationship between the PSWs and the PIRs. Unlike the empathy, as explained by Carl Roger, in which the service provider was able to put themselves into the shoes of the service recipients as if he was the service recipients, the intensity of the empathy was much greater in the relationship between PSWs and PIRs because PSWs had the lived experience of mental illness and recovery. The dimensions of the empathy in the relationship between PSWs and PIRs was found to be multiple, not only related to the mental illness but also related to various aspects in life, like family relationship, employment, interest of life, self-esteem and etc.

Keywords : person with lived experience, peer support worker, peer support service, relationship building, therapeutic alliance, community-based mental health setting

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