

DOCTORAL THESIS

A qualitative study on recovery experience of people with schizophrenia in Hong Kong

Law, King Keung

Date of Award:
2017

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

ABSTRACT

This study is to examine the meaning of recovery and its making process among people with mental health problems from a person-centered perspective in Hong Kong. By employing a qualitative research approach, this study attempts to explore the strategies and practices deployed by people with schizophrenia for overcoming the daily difficulties and challenges caused by their illness. A total of 14 persons with schizophrenia living in the community were invited to participate in the in-depth interview.

Three major types of strategies and practices employed by people with mental health problems are revealed in the study. They can be categorised into medical, personal and social practices. In the recovery process, it is suggested that people with mental health problems are active agents. Based on their social situations and resources, they creatively invent and deploy tailor-made coping strategies and practices for overcoming their daily struggles and challenges.

With the use of the person-centered perspective, it is evident that the meaning of recovery of persons with schizophrenia is highly subjective. Five emerging themes have been identified throughout the recovery process, including developing a social role, achieving acceptance of one's own mental health problems, developing a positive sense of self, developing a new meaning and purpose in one's life and finally, taking responsibility of one's wellbeing. These themes highlight the complexity and uniqueness of people with mental problems in Hong Kong.

In sum, the study bridges the research gaps in understanding the conceptualisation of recovery in the local context. It helps to extend the discussion and analysis of recovery beyond the western medical paradigms. Moreover, this study clarifies three major types of coping strategies and practices deployed by people with mental health problems, particularly those with schizophrenia, and attempts to establish an analytical framework in understanding these strategies and practices. Finally, the delineation of the decision making process, including the social context and the rationales of the use of various coping strategies and practices opens up new possibilities in understanding the mechanism of recovery.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| DECLARATION | i |
| ABSTRACT..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | iv |
| LISTS OF TABLES..... | x |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| The Objectives of the study..... | 4 |
| The Organization of the Thesis | 5 |
| Chapter 1 What is Schizophrenia..... | 8 |
| Legacies from the Past: John Hughlings Jackson, Emil Kraepelin and Eugen Bleuler | 10 |
| John Hughlings Jackson (1835-1911) | 11 |
| Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926)..... | 12 |
| Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939) | 15 |
| The Epidemiology of Schizophrenia..... | 20 |
| Incidence..... | 21 |
| Prevalence..... | 25 |
| Mortality | 26 |
| Risk Factors..... | 28 |
| Biological risk factors..... | 28 |
| <i>Paternal Age</i> | 28 |
| <i>Season of birth</i> | 29 |
| Socio-environmental risk factors..... | 30 |
| <i>Urbanicity</i> | 30 |
| <i>Ethnicity and migration</i> | 32 |
| <i>Socioeconomic status</i> | 35 |
| <i>Psychosocial stress</i> | 37 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 38 |
| Chapter 2 Understanding “Recovery” in Schizophrenia | 41 |
| Recovery in Schizophrenia | 44 |
| New discoveries from longitudinal studies on schizophrenia | 46 |
| <i>The recovery rate</i> | 47 |
| <i>The resumption of social functioning</i> | 48 |
| <i>The resumption of multi-level functioning</i> | 49 |
| <i>Recovery of schizophrenia around the globe</i> | 51 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Scientific Perspective of Recovery | 54 |
| Short-term outcome: remission rate | 55 |
| Long-term outcome: daily functioning..... | 57 |
| Humanistic Perspective of Recovery | 58 |
| The personal accounts in recovery | 60 |
| <i>Recovery is personal</i> | 62 |
| <i>Recovery as personal growth</i> | 63 |
| <i>Recovery as developing meaning and purpose of one's life</i> | 65 |
| <i>Recovery as self-awareness and empowerment</i> | 66 |
| <i>Recovery as a reconnection of social relationship</i> | 66 |
| <i>Social and environmental factors in recovery</i> | 68 |
| Elements of recovery | 69 |
| Stages of recovery | 74 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 78 |
| Chapter 3 Historical development of mental health services in Hong Kong: A critical review | 81 |
| The Pre-initial Period | 82 |
| The setup of lunatic asylum..... | 82 |
| The enactment of asylums ordinance | 84 |
| The Initial stage..... | 85 |
| The setup of mental hospital..... | 85 |
| The transfer of mental patients to China | 86 |
| The Formation Stage | 87 |
| The birth of mental health professions in Hong Kong | 87 |
| The birth of mental health non-governmental organizations | 88 |
| The enactment of mental health ordinance and the setup of centralised mental health institutions..... | 88 |
| The establishment of community-based mental health facilities | 89 |
| The regionalization of mental health care facilities and services | 90 |
| The active role of the government..... | 91 |
| The Expansion Stage..... | 95 |
| The specialisation of community mental health care services | 96 |
| The birth of aftercare service..... | 97 |
| The setup of Kwai Chung Hospital and the response to the Un Chau Estate tragedy | 98 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| The setup of community psychiatric nursing service | 99 |
| The setup of central registry of the disabled and 24-hour hotline service..... | 99 |
| The standardisation of halfway houses..... | 100 |
| The implementation of Public Mental Health Education | 100 |
| Innovations in the provision of community mental health care services | 101 |
| The amendment of mental health ordinance and the setup of family resource centre | 102 |
| The setup of long care stay home and the specialisation of halfway houses for psychiatric patients | 103 |
| The standardisation of aftercare service | 104 |
| Public panic towards mental patients and the launch of mental health month | 105 |
| The setup of self-help groups and community psychogeriatric teams | 107 |
| The Transformation Stage..... | 114 |
| The setup of community mental health link | 114 |
| The setup of early detection of psychosis service and the support of self-help organizations..... | 115 |
| The setup of community mental health care services and job-training program | 116 |
| The setup of community mental health intervention programme | 117 |
| The setup of integrated community centre for mental wellness (ICCMW) and case management programme | 118 |
| The implementation of personalized care programme | 119 |
| Chapter Summary | 123 |
| Chapter 4 Research Methodology..... | 131 |
| Sampling and Subjects | 133 |
| Purposive sampling | 133 |
| <i>Recruitment of participants</i> | 140 |
| <i>Subject of Study</i> | 143 |
| Method of data collection | 146 |
| <i>In-depth-Interview</i> | 146 |
| <i>The interview guide</i> | 150 |
| <i>Setting of the interviews</i> | 154 |
| Person-centred perspective | 155 |
| <i>Procedure</i> | 156 |
| Ethical Considerations..... | 159 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Data analysis..... | 163 |
| <i>The Sample Characteristics</i> | 163 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 165 |
| Chapter 5: Recovery: Strategies and Practices | 168 |
| Medical Practice..... | 169 |
| Attending regular medical consultation..... | 169 |
| <i>Negotiating for the dosage of medication</i> | 170 |
| <i>Participants' initiation</i> | 171 |
| <i>Negotiating for rearrangement of treatment</i> | 174 |
| Requesting for hospitalisation | 177 |
| <i>Requesting for hospitalisation during a follow-up consultation</i> . | 178 |
| <i>Requesting for hospitalisation in crisis</i> | 179 |
| Adhering to antipsychotic medications | 180 |
| <i>Reducing bizarre thoughts</i> | 181 |
| <i>Improving the quality of sleep</i> | 182 |
| <i>Stabilising Emotions</i> | 183 |
| Personal Practices..... | 186 |
| Taking rest..... | 186 |
| Asking for help | 188 |
| Taking control over the symptoms | 190 |
| Making a Mental Reminder | 190 |
| <i>Memorising others' behaviours</i> | 191 |
| <i>Using self-instruction techniques</i> | 191 |
| <i>Using an personal object</i> | 192 |
| Avoiding triggers..... | 193 |
| <i>Avoiding crowds</i> | 194 |
| <i>Avoiding stresses and conflicts</i> | 194 |
| <i>Getting a Psychological Shelter</i> | 195 |
| <i>Defocusing hallucinations</i> | 197 |
| Learning about mental health problems | 199 |
| Social Practice | 200 |
| Work..... | 200 |
| Participating in leisure activities | 202 |
| <i>Participating in sports</i> | 204 |
| Participating in social activities and events..... | 205 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 208 |
| Chapter 6 Emerging Themes in Recovery | 210 |
| Emerging Themes in the Recovery Process | 213 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Developing a Social Role | 213 |
| <i>Being a responsible son or daughter</i> | 215 |
| <i>Being a good Christian</i> | 216 |
| <i>Being an productive worker</i> | 218 |
| Achieving an acceptance of mental health problems | 219 |
| <i>Normalising the meaning of mental health problems</i> | 220 |
| <i>Reframing the meaning of mental health problems</i> | 221 |
| Developing Positive Sense of Self | 222 |
| <i>Achieving accomplishments from work</i> | 223 |
| <i>Enhancing the ability to tackle daily problems</i> | 224 |
| <i>Developing an active attitude</i> | 226 |
| <i>Interacting with supportive people</i> | 227 |
| <i>Finding the faith in religion</i> | 227 |
| Developing New Meaning and Purpose of One’s Life | 228 |
| <i>Meaning of the life derived from religion and spirituality</i> | 229 |
| <i>The will to live an ordinary life</i> | 230 |
| <i>Determination to change</i> | 232 |
| Taking responsibility of one’s wellness | 235 |
| <i>Maintaining physical wellness</i> | 236 |
| <i>Maintaining psychological wellness</i> | 239 |
| Chapter Summary..... | 241 |
| Chapter 7 Conclusion..... | 243 |
| A Quest for In-depth Understanding of Coping Strategies and Recovery of Person with Mental Health Problems..... | 244 |
| Personal and social elements are significant for recovery..... | 244 |
| Autonomy and choice are important components in recovery | 245 |
| Personal strengths and talents help open up new possibilities | 245 |
| Supportive environment and relationship take an indispensable role in recovery | 246 |
| Collaborative relationship between psychiatrists and participants is essential | 247 |
| Coping strategies and practices for recovery are individualised | 247 |
| Empowerment as the foundation of recovery..... | 248 |
| Recommendations for further of Development Community Mental Health Care Services | 248 |
| Promoting personalised mental health care services and programs | 249 |
| Encouraging the participations of service users in service planning..... | 250 |
| Promoting the value of autonomy in service interventions and practices | 250 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Establishing social support groups and networks..... | 251 |
| Promoting mental health education | 251 |
| The Significant of the Study | 252 |
| Limitations of the study | 253 |
| Directions for future research..... | 255 |
| Investigation of the subjective experience among people receiving private mental health care services | 255 |
| Investigation of the recovery experience of those without receiving medical practices and interventions | 256 |
| Investigation of the role of community in the recovery process | 257 |
| Investigation of caregivers and other supportive people’s perception on recovery..... | 258 |
| Appendix I | 259 |
| Appendix II..... | 261 |
| References..... | 262 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE..... | 295 |