
SPIRITUALITY IN SCHIZOPHRENIA: DO PATIENTS AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS HAVE SIMILAR UNDERSTANDING?

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Background: The special mental states such as hallucination and confusion in schizophrenia have been creating obstacles in research in spirituality in this population. Although primary treatment should focus on symptom management, psychosocial and spiritual care should not be neglected. This study aimed to understand spirituality from the perspectives of both the patients and the healthcare professionals and its role in different stages of disease and rehabilitation.

Method: Schizophrenic patients (n=22) and healthcare professionals including psychiatric doctors, nurses, and social workers (n=19) were recruited from an out-patient clinic of a hospital and a mental health rehabilitation complex. Semi-structured interviews on the meaning and experiences of spirituality, and its role in rehabilitation were conducted, with follow-up interviews when further clarification was needed. Interviews were transcribed into verbatim and analyzed with the assistance of computer software based on Ground theory. Trustworthiness was assured through member checking and peer scrutiny.

Results: Both patients and professionals regarded spirituality as an inherent part of the patients' well-being. Spirituality could be a practice, a way of thinking, sense of peace and fulfillment, and connectedness towards oneself, others, and a higher power. Spiritual experiences were helpful in the rehabilitation phase. However, some patients considered spirituality as apparitional experiences, thus hindered their recovery.

Conclusion: This study demonstrated that the spirituality played a part in patients' lives and rehabilitation. Findings suggest the importance of spiritual care in this population and provide insights and roadmap for developing spiritual assessments and holistic care in psychiatric context.

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