

Acceptance of mental illness: Core components of a multifaceted construct

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Abstract

The recovery movement has identified acceptance of mental illness as critical to quality of life and illness management. However, there is a general lack of research on the acceptance of mental illness. The present qualitative study was conducted with 30 participants with mental illness to clarify the construct of acceptance. Grounded theory methodology is utilized to analyze the 30 semistructured interviews. Results in the present study reveal acceptance to be a multifaceted construct composed of several core characteristics, including the: (1) identity component, (2) cognitive component, (3) emotional component, (4) behavioral component, and (5) relational component. In addition, when asked to define acceptance of mental illness, some participants noted negative connotations to acceptance. Implications for psychological services and future research will be discussed to guide additional study and practice in this area.