

Abstract

Published researches show that loneliness negatively affects mental and physical health and occurs across all age groups. However, the area of loneliness has not been sufficiently explored in the Czech context, and there are still not enough studies on a global scale focusing on loneliness in people with mental illness. This work therefore contributes to the opening of this issue from the perspective of social work, which can respond well to the challenges that loneliness brings to the lives of people with mental illness.

In the theoretical part I deal with the definition of a group of diagnoses called “serious mental illnesses”. A common feature of diagnoses from this group is a serious disruption of normal and social functioning of the individual. Subsequently, I define loneliness, its types and theoretical framework, which provides an insight into the issue. Furthermore, I present the basic researched areas, which are followed by abstracts of studies with focus on loneliness in people with mental illness.

The aim of the thesis was to answer the main research question: “How do people with serious mental illness experience loneliness?” It was answered using interpretive phenomenological analysis, which offers a flexible approach to research and gives space for respondent's interpretation. The research was carried out with clients of a social service that works directly with people with serious mental illness and based on the statements, their view on the experience of loneliness was introduced.

From the interpreted statements, it can be said that the respondents perceive loneliness as an unwanted state, when they have no one to support them and whom they could share their experiences more deeply with. Disappointment from previous relationships and the characteristics of their illness, which is so serious that it disrupts their social functioning, play an important role. Furthermore, it is work with self-acceptance, level of self-confidence and participation in the therapeutic process. All these findings approach the issue of loneliness in people with mental illness and open up opportunities for further research on this topic in the Czech context.