

HEALING BEYOND WORDS: A METAPHOR-BASED PSYCHOEDUCATION IN PSYCHOSIS

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the case study on the effectiveness of metaphor-based psychoeducation with a 47-year male with chronic psychosis. He was MBBS graduate and had an outstanding academic record, but developed the belief of people against him that started at internship which further became persecutory delusion followed by social withdrawal that accompanied by medication treatment for the time being, but symptoms persisted and intensified by the interplay of social stressors and genetic vulnerability. For his chronic symptomology, conventional method of psychoeducation was found less effective due to rigidity in beliefs revealed by assessment. A metaphor-based psychoeducation was implemented, which helped with better comprehension of psychological process like cognitive flexibility and enhances therapeutic alliance too. Moreover, clinically significant improvement was noted in shape of reduction in severity of delusions, reflected in lower scores on clinician rated dimension of psychosis severity. Furthermore, the intervention also improved recall of psychoeducational content, that can help with longer term results. Findings points out the potential of metaphor as a culturally adaptive and recovery-oriented replacement for conventional interventions in psychosis, further research would add on to the broader clinical utility of it.

Keywords: Psychosis, Delusions, Cognitive Flexibility, Metaphors, Psychoeducation

INTRODUCTION

Everything that we do in our daily life has a thought process behind it, leading to behavior, perception, judgment and emotional processes. If these thought process get distorted or dis-organized, give rise to psychosis, marked with hallucination, delusion, impaired cognitive processes and negative symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Such disorders have a Worldiwd prevalence of 7.5 per 1000 people (Moreno-Küstner et al., 2018), therefore it's important to understand its etiology for better treatment. As psychosis has both positive and negative symptoms, so it requires a multidimensional perspective. One of that is the neural diathesis-stress model, stating that the genetic predisposition and neurobiological changes engage

with psychosocial stressors, emphasizing the role of neurodevelopmental vulnerabilities, epigenetic processes and stress reactivity leading toward psychosis (Stilo & Murray, 2019; Pruessner et al., 2017). This highlights the need for psychosocial intervention interconnected with biological one in its treatment.

Among the treatment procedures of psychosis, psychoeducation is one of the structured interventions, works by improving the insight of the individual regarding the illness and its treatment helping with the medication adherence, relapse prevention and enhancing coping strategies (Lincoln et al., 2007; Xia et al., 2011; Lobban et al., 2013). However, conventional psychoeducation

mostly has clinical explanations, making it harder for an individual with disorganized thought processes to grasp the concept (Bucci et al., 2023). Therefore, a simpler and efficient way of psychoeducation is needed to enhance the treatment.

Metaphor based psychoeducation approach is an emerging tool that frame complex psychotic experiences in easier terms for understanding the processes, enhancing the comprehension, emotional connection and retention of the knowledge, making it more effective (Stilo & Murray, 2019). This way the limitations in the psychoeducation approaches can be overcome with more efficient approach helping with increase in quality of life of people with psychosis that get effected with disruptions in thought processes (Llorca et al., 2015).

Rationale

Given the limitations of traditional psychoeducation, metaphor-based approaches are emerging as innovative tools. By framing complex psychotic experiences in relatable terms, metaphors can enhance comprehension, emotional engagement, and retention, making psychoeducation more accessible and effective (Stilo & Murray, 2019).

Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore the therapeutic value of integrating the metaphor-based psychoeducation in treatment for psychosis.

Research Question

How the metaphor-based psychoeducation helps with understanding the complex psychological process in clients with psychosis?

Method

Research Design

The study is based on a case study design, using a qualitative approach that helps with in-depth insight of a person experiences, behaviors and treatment in a real setting of life. This sort of design is especially helpful in clinical psychology, as it enables the comprehensive evaluation of complicated psychological processes and interventions that likely not be easily observed through quantitative methods (Yin, 2018).

Sample

The study has, 47-year-old male, participant, presented with the complain of delusional beliefs lack of interest in social interaction.

Illness Recount and Family History

The client, a 47-year-old MBBS graduate, presented with a chronic history of psychosis started having persecutory delusion at 25 at psychiatric internship, leads toward antipsychotic treatment that developed type 1 diabetes, positive symptoms were managed by medicines completely but negative persisted. Therefore, when he moved back to his hometown and started private practice but failed due to those persistent negative symptoms of psychosis, and when he couldn't continue his clinic and started living at home, his positive symptoms of delusion reappeared leading to multiple hospitalization by the family, followed by temporary improvement in symptoms not fully due to lack in medication adherence. The situation worsens after the father death, as the family relocated to another city, resulted in prolonged in-ward admission at rehabilitation setting.

Background Information

Raised in a financially strained nuclear family of nine, where the father was the sole bread earner, he supported his studies with scholarship as he was academically outstanding and dedicated to his studies but remained socially withdrawal, with no friendships reported and haven't been married yet neither showed interest in marriage. It's worth mentioning that he has a family history of schizophrenia, that interacted with psychosocial stressors making him susceptible to his illness.

Assessment

A comprehensive assessment approach has been used to evaluate the client issue, by the help of standardizes tools and methods, including clinical interviews, behavioral observation, behavior checklist, subjective rating, dysfunctional thought record, degree of conviction for delusions, vertical descent, Mental State Exam, Clinical rated dimensions of psychosis severity scale and DSM 5 TR checklist for schizophrenia. The outcome revealed presence of persecutory delusion having high conviction, along with negative symptoms of social withdrawal, flat affect and minor concentration problem while orientation and memory were preserved. Overall, the assessment supported the diagnosis mentioned in the below section.

Diagnosis

According to the DSM-5-TR, the criteria of schizophrenia (F20.9) has been met by the client, as he has been reported to exhibit persecutory delusions, cognitive distortion with family and negative symptoms such as avolition, social withdrawal and flattened affect, fulfilling the criteria of symptoms. Moreover, his symptoms have been persisted beyond six months duration, thereby making the schizophrenia as the best fit diagnosis for the problem.

Interventions

The vertical descent revealed the client's rigid belief of being a "failure", so for doing cognitive restructuring, firstly the psychoeducation was used as first step to create cognitive flexibility by making the belief perceived as thought. For that, metaphor-based psychoeducation was applied. In that framed the thoughts as the clouds sometimes dark, rainy or foggy, that goes through the mind. Moreover, client's belief was presented as dark cloud and sun as positivity relating with the achievements and happy moments of his life, where his brothers stood by

him. This helps him to understand that thoughts have the transient nature and are not the permanent truths (Stott et al., 2010).

The psychoeducation also extended to relating umbrellas and shelters as coping tool like social support and adaptive routines, that helps to pass through hard times until clarity returns. This helped him to reframe his belief of worthlessness and mistrust as a passing states or thoughts instead of rigid truths, this leads toward development of cognitive flexibility. This reflects that the metaphorical psychoeducation can be used to improve engagement and insight development in psychosis, where traditional methods of therapy may seem too abstract for clients (Hayes et al., 2012; Bucci et al., 2023).

Post Assessment

The efficacy of the Metaphor Based Psychoeducation has been shown in the clinically significant improvement in the symptom's intensity of the client, as mentioned in the Figure 1 and 2.

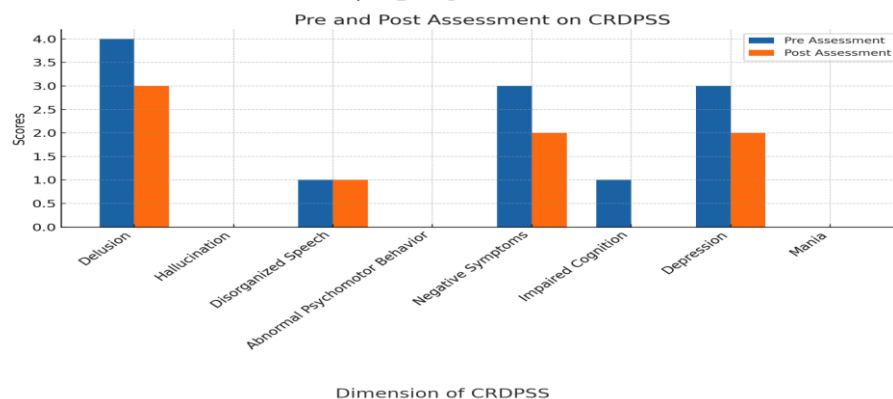


Figure 1

Pre and Post Ratings on Clinician Rated Dimensions of Psychosis Symptoms Severity.

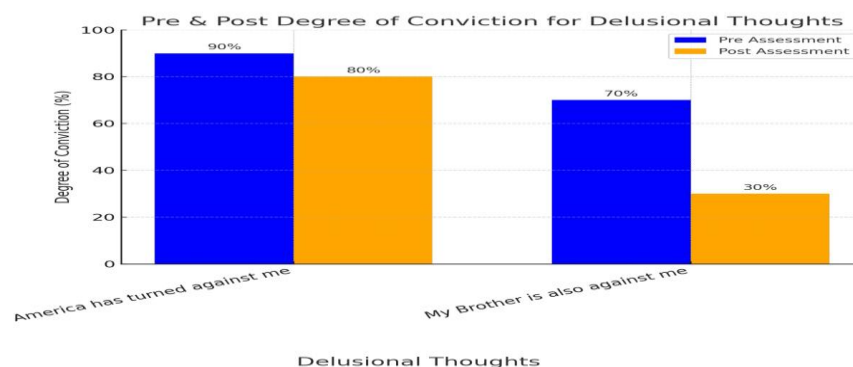


Figure 2

Pre and Post Degree of Conviction Ratings for Delusional Thoughts.

Discussion

This case study reflects on the use of metaphor-based psychoeducation, to make complex psychological processes easier to grasp for people with psychosis. This is backed with the research that mentions the efficacy of metaphors by connecting clinical terms to everyday experiences and this way make learning less overwhelming during distress (Oades et al., 2010; Stott et al., 2010).

In this case, the progress was seen not just be clinical observation but also observed on the Clinician-Rated Dimensions of Psychosis Symptom Severity (CRDPSS). As the clients delusional thought become moderate and he exhibited flexibility in his thoughts, reflecting a meaningful increase in insight. The use of a standard DSM 5 tool to measure such change make the improvement a reliable one (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This outcome would help not with just the improvement in delusion but would leads to longer term benefit in the quality of life, as the thought process are related with it (Llorca et al., 2015). Moreover, the earlier findings suggests that psychoeducation approach that is easier to understand and engaging lowers the relapse rate, enhances treatment adherence and supports better functioning in psychosis (Lincoln et al., 2007; Xia et al., 2011).

The efficacy also been reflected in the better recall and comprehension of content by the client, by using metaphorical terms. This finding suggest that metaphors seem to help with the cognitive demand in psychosis while also helping with strengthening of therapeutic alliance, especially when culturally relatable terms used. Earlier literature points out the similar finding that the metaphor use helps in connecting clinical concepts with relatable experiences, hence deriving the better session outcome (McMullen & Tay, 2023; Shattock et al., 2018).

For this approach to work efficiently requires client tailored metaphor, what work for one client may not work for another one and pose a limitation in its generalizability. Moreover, this is a single case, so future research needs controlled trails in metaphor-based psychoeducation to test its longer-term efficacy across different cultural setting (Herrera et al., 2023).

Overall, this case provides a cornerstone that metaphor-based psychoeducation's helpful with psychosis treatment in making psychological processes easier to grasp, relatable thereby enhancing strong recall and strengthen collaboration between client and therapist.

Conclusion

This case study shows the efficacy of metaphor-based psychoeducation, by enhancing the insight, reducing the cognitive rigidity and helps with therapeutic alliance in psychosis. However, the approach has demonstrated the clinically significant outcomes, but its effectiveness may vary with clients therefore further research would help to establish its broader clinical utility.

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