Support and Expertise-by-Experience:

On the Necessity of an Ethical Support Framework for Experts-by-Experience in the Mental Healthcare Sector

Abstract (199 Words)

The growing institutionalisation of experts-by-experience in mental healthcare marks an epistemic shift: lived experience is increasingly recognised as a form of knowledge. Yet this transition raises a practical ethical question central to contemporary philosophy of psychiatry: what does it mean to professionalise vulnerability?

This paper argues that the integration of experts-by-experience requires a concrete ethical support framework to prevent the instrumentalisation of lived experience. Drawing on conceptual work on experiential knowledge (Borkman 1976; Halloy et al. 2022) and recent Dutch policy developments (BCP-E), I analyse two key tensions shaping this role. The first being the dual demand to remain vulnerable and professionally composed. Second is the risk of commodifying lived experience within institutional settings. I aim to highlight how these tensions blur boundaries between patient and professional, potentially undermining both care and well-being.

In response, I evaluate a co-produced framework of support standards (Horgan et al. 2020), focussing on collaborative practice. I argue that such structures redistribute ethical responsibility from individuals to institutions, thereby strengthening care practices. However, I caution that overly rigid implementation risks flattening the subjectivity that makes experiential knowledge valuable. By foregrounding institutional design, I demonstrate that philosophical analysis can help inform ethical mental healthcare practice.

Keywords

experts-by-experience, experiential knowledge, commodification, vulnerability, philosophy of psychiatry, institutional design