



A Narrative Case Study of How Individuals Construct Meaning Concerning Their Situation Through Their Meetings with Work Counsellors

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ABSTRACT

Unemployed individuals with health problems may need extensive work counselling to return to work. Narrative meaning-making processes provide possibilities for healing and change; however, we do not know enough about how such processes unfold throughout work counselling. The aim of this study is to explore how individuals construct meaning concerning their situation through their meetings with work counsellors. We sought to create in-depth knowledge according to this aim through a narrative qualitative case study design. We created data through a narrative interview with "Erin", who shared her story about being mentally ill, unemployed, and engaging in work counselling in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. Data were analysed through a narrative approach. Our main finding is that through seemingly small and mundane interactions, work counsellors may have an important impact on individuals' meaning-making processes. Our findings show how this impact might be quite hidden, both positive and negative. We discuss how our findings and interpretations may inform our understanding of what it may be like to be sick and unemployed. Further, we discuss how a narrative perspective can be useful in work counselling for people with sickness or disabilities and what implications our findings may have for practice.

ABSTRAKT

Arbeidsledige med helseproblemer kan ha behov for omfattende arbeidsveiledning for å komme tilbake i arbeid. Narrative meningssskapende prosesser gir muligheter for helbredelse og endring, men vi vet ikke nok om hvordan slike meningssskapende prosesser utspiller seg i arbeidsveiledning. Målet med denne studien har vært å utforske hvordan individer konstruerer mening om egen situasjon gjennom møter med arbeidsveiledere. Vi søkte å skape dybdekunnskap i henhold til dette målet gjennom et narrativt kvalitativt casestudiedesign. Data ble skapt gjennom et narrativt intervju med "Erin", som delte sin historie om å være psykisk syk, arbeidsledig og engasjere seg i arbeidsveiledning i NAV. Data ble analysert gjennom en narrativ tilnærming. Vårt hovedfunn er at gjennom tilsynelatende små og dagligdags interaksjoner kan arbeidsveiledere ha stor betydning for enkeltpersoners narrative meningssskapende prosesser. Våre funn viser hvordan denne påvirkningen kan være skjult, og både positiv og negativ. Vi diskuterer hvordan våre funn og tolkninger kan utdype vår forståelse av hvordan det kan være å være syk og arbeidsledig. Videre diskuterer vi hvordan et narrativt perspektiv kan være nyttig i arbeidsveiledning for personer med sykdom eller funksjonsnedsettelse, og hvilke implikasjoner våre funn kan ha for praksis.



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