

Abstract

The present study tested a model studying how group perceptions were associated with self-stigma and empowerment which in turn might lead to better recovery in people with mental illness. Particularly, group perceptions were studied as a broad construct by incorporating an ingroup sense of community scale along with measures of group identification and group value. Moreover, the present study captured recovery using a multi-faceted approach. 133 service users from a large scale non-governmental organization providing mental health rehabilitation services in Hong Kong were interviewed. Results of structural equation modeling revealed that the proposed model fit the data ($\chi^2 = 92.95$ ($df = 50$, $p < .01$), CFI = .95, NNFI = .93, RMSEA = .08). Group perceptions were positively associated with empowerment, negatively associated with self-stigma and it had an indirect positive effect on recovery. Higher empowerment and lower self-stigma were related to better recovery. Empowerment and self-stigma were not highly correlated in the present study so we questioned the widely accepted notion that they lay on opposite ends on the same continuum. This study extended research on group perceptions of people with mental illness by studying its indirect effect to recovery. It also provided implications to mental health services by emphasizing the importance of enhancing group perceptions, empowerment and reducing self-stigma.

Keywords: group perception; stigma; empowerment; recovery; mental illness