

Poster

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Poster 23

[P-23-06] Negotiating Normalcy and Patienthood: A Dialectical View of Mental Illness Narratives among Indian Women with Psychiatric Diagnoses

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This paper explores how discourses of normalcy and patienthood shape illness narratives of Indian women psychiatric patients. Drawing on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with ten women receiving inpatient psychiatric care in New Delhi, a discursive thematic analysis was conducted to understand how meanings of illness are constructed and embodied. A key finding is the dialectical movement in their narratives between the role of a "patient" and that of a "normal," relationally functional woman, illuminating the tensions between biomedical framings of illness and lived cultural realities.. Rather than treating constructs like self-sacrifice, domesticity, caregiving or emotionality as predisposing factors to illness, the paper examines how these notions are integral to participant's sense of their distress, maintain relational identities, and reassert a sense of moral worth. The analysis highlights the dialectical tension between illness and normalcy, where the desire to return to socially valued roles coexists with an embodied experience of incapacity. This study contributes to the growing literature on cultural idioms of distress and offers critical implications for feminist, community-based, and culturally competent mental health care.