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Pluralistic Counsellor's and Psychotherapist's Experiences of Working with Actively Suicidal Clients:

A Qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

by

Leo Muckley

What is Pluralistic Counselling and Psychotherapy?

- PCP is a framework and philosophy for undertaking therapy.
- It recognises that one size does not fit all.
- The PCP practitioner works in collaboration with each individual client to decide which approach is best suited.
- Evidence informed.
- A both/and perspective not either/or.
- Empirically based using outcome, feedback and process measures to guide and support the work.

Rationale

Personal

Professional

Academic

Previous Research

- Suicide risk is common and could be called an occupational hazard in clinical settings in Ireland (Foley and Kelly, 2007).
- No qualitative accounts of *how* to practice. (Bergin, Carey, Collins, Coyle, Gaffney, Halligan & Russell, 2009, p. 641; Fogarty, Galavan, Houghton & O’Súilleabháin, 2021, p. 18).
- Systematic Literature Review.

Research Aims & Objectives

1. Explore the use of client preferences and cultural resources, and their effect on the therapeutic experience with this client cohort.
2. To gain a deeper understanding of the use of outcome and process measures with this specific presenting issue.
3. Explore the experience of the Pluralistic Counselling and Psychotherapy (PCP) practitioner when working with actively suicidal clients.
4. Add to the existing body of knowledge.

Methodology

Four participants via purposive sampling.

Semi structured recorded interviews.

Qualitative IPA (Husserl, 1927).

Six-step research framework (Flowers, Larkin & Smith, 2009).

Reflexivity (Engward & Goldspink, 2020).

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (European Commission, 2022).

Ethical guidelines identified by IICP College Ethics Committee (IICP, 2021).

West Cork island names given to each participant.

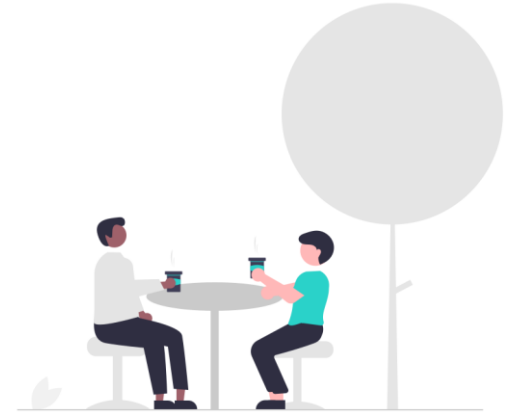
Results

Participant	Theme 1 Human, Meet Human	Sub-Theme 1.1 The Importance of Connection	Sub-Theme 1.2 A question of forms?	Theme 2 The House That Pluralism Built	Theme 3 Whose Therapy is it Anyway?	Theme 4 The Gift of Pluralism
Durseley	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bere	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whiddy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Garinish	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Theme 1:

Human, Meet Human

- Equality is paramount.
- Two humans meeting before theory or methods.



Sub-Theme 1.1:

The Importance of Connection

“I’m not an expert on him, he is the expert on him...not that it’s being done to him, it’s being done [emphasises the next two words] with him.” (Durse)

Sub-Theme 1.2:

A Question of Forms?

“...bringing out these forms, kind of, it's like a third party coming into the room. So sometimes it doesn't really work.” (Bere)

Theme 2:

The House That Pluralism Built

- Unique tools.
- PCP as a scaffolding to build the client's custom made house of mental health.

“I think with pluralism it gives you that coping mechanism of that way of being able to roll up your sleeves with the person do you know?” (Durseley)

“...respectfully honouring their autonomy and not being afraid, or fearful, of their bearing...” (Whiddy)

“They start becoming their own therapist...” (Bere)



Theme 3:

Whose Therapy is it Anyway?

- The client can be facilitated to *both* want to die *and* explore living in their therapy concurrently.
- Respecting *both* client autonomy *and* practicing ethically.
- Responsible *to* the client, not *for* the client.



“For those that completed, maybe they lived a little bit longer having worked with you. But that's all I can really bring to it. But, you know, I have respect for what the person wishes to do. That's a choice of theirs really.”
(Bere)

Theme 4:

The Gift of Pluralism

- PCP speaks to practitioners sense of self, morals and values.
- PCP has changed and enhanced practitioner’s lived experiences.

“The resilience of every client...it was as if every one of them had manifested right behind me and was like, what are you doing? Where is your knowledge? Where is your, your, your resilience? You know? Like, take the moment but get in off the fucking rocks.” (Garinish)



Discussion

**Adds to the
Body of
Knowledge**



Safety for all.
Risk inclusive.
Deep connections.

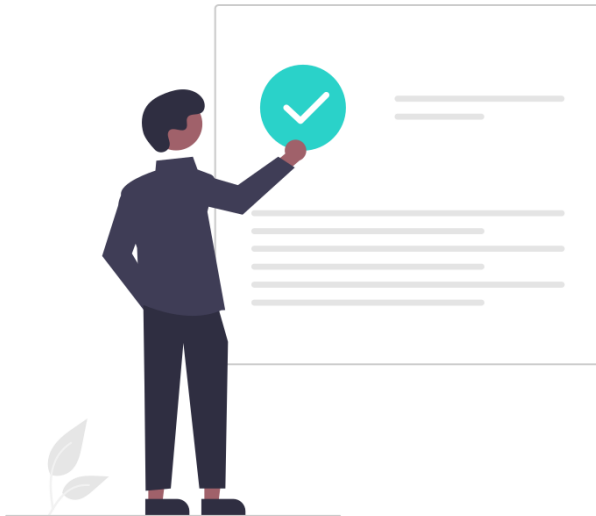
**Implications
for Practice**



Ethics and Values.
Relationship a step further.
Collaboration = Client autonomy.



Conclusion



- Creativity and flexibility are essential.
- PCP can provide an effective, robust, fulfilling, safe, boundaried and empirically based way of working with actively suicidal clients.

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Thank you.



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