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Sensemaking in mental health non-profit organisations: a case study focused on the idea of quality

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ABSTRACT

Sensemaking is the process through which people construct meaning around issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some regard run contrary to expectations. Drawing on key insights from the work of Karl Weick on sensemaking, the aim of this study was to explore how staff members and volunteers at a non-profit human service organisation make sense of and enact the idea of quality in their environments. The study employed an interpretive approach and took the form of a single-case holistic case study. Using thematic analysis, several themes emerged from the data, which suggest that in order to deconstruct the idea of quality, as it exists in the minds and behaviours of organisational members, it is critical to obtain insight into the social and context driven processes that influence sensemaking. The findings also suggest that existing models and approaches to quality in the literature are incomplete in terms of their lack of a sensemaking focus. Practical recommendations are made for human services organisation administrators and managers to improve and monitor quality in their respective environments. The study concludes with a discussion of limitations as well as possible avenues for future research in light of the findings.

KEY WORDS:

Sensemaking, Quality, Social Constructivism, Human Services Organisations.