

Mental Health Care Users' Perceptions and Experiences of the Use of Social Networking Sites

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With the introduction of the Internet people have found new ways of communicating through the use of social networking sites (SNS). This change has seen people spending more time interacting through digital means and retreating from the real world with South Africa being found to be amongst the highest rates of SNS usages globally. Recent research into the use of SNS has raised questions surrounding its influence on mental health.

The aim of this study is to explore and describe mental health care users' perceptions and experiences of the use of SNS. A qualitative research approach will be used with a descriptive, exploratory design. Purposive sampling has been selected for this study with inpatients of a private psychiatric clinic. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are being conducted with the participants and interviews with key informants will forming the data for the study.

This is a master thesis study and is currently being conducted with the estimation that the study will be completed by the end of 2017.

It is envisaged that this study will give mental health stakeholders a better understanding of mental health care users' perceptions and experiences with regards to the use of social media, as well as insight into their ability to manage their diagnosis through the use of SNS. It is hope that the study will give occupational therapist a better understanding of how use of social networking sites and the influence it has on our clients' mental health.