

A Helix of Anxiety: a qualitative analysis of the personal experiences of individuals with health Anxiety

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Abstract

The mind-body problem dates to old times. Hypochondria is at the center of the discussions about the psyche-soma relationship since it appears that individuals have physical complaints in the absence of “real” illness. The current study aimed to explore how individuals having hypochondriac complaints interact with their bodies and their experiences regarding the believed illness or anxiety about the illness. Furthermore, the way they establish a relationship with others, especially with physicians, other healthcare professionals, and with whom they try to get assurance was tried to be understood. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used as a method since it offers a systematic approach to study the subjective experiences of individuals by making a very detailed examination of a case. The fourteen participants between 19-55 years old, who were living in Ankara, whose questionnaire scores indicated high health anxiety and who also stated that they have anxiety about their health were included in the study. The data of the study were collected via face to face semi-structured interviews. As a result of the analyses of these interviews, four superordinate themes emerged. ‘Causal attributions of health anxiety: loss at the core as an unsettled matter’, ‘Being drawn into the vortex of the symptom’, ‘An endless call to an expert for naming own experiences and eliminating uncertainty’, and ‘Every cloud has a silver lining: Benefits of being/feeling ill’ were the themes. These themes and the clinical implications of the findings were discussed in the light of the literature.

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Biography:

Burcu Pinar Bulut has completed her PhD at the age of 30 years from Middle East Technical University and worked at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Department of Psychology. In her thesis, she carried out a study of individuals having high health anxiety symptoms. She was a Lacanian oriented psychologist: She has been attending meetings about Lacan's theory for four years. She has published 4 papers in reputed journals, and made nine presentations at national and international conferences. She has also been serving as an editorial board member of Ayna Clinical Psychology Journal.