

The impact of stigma on female voice hearers: A case study

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Background

Stigma: Discrimination against an individual or group based on 'undesirable' social characteristics (Goffman, 1963).

Voice hearers are faced with added degrees of stigma that impacts hearers' well-being and social functioning (Phalen et al., 2019).

Life opportunities have barriers put up to voice hearers, impacting income and quality of life (Hampson, Watt, & Hick, 2020).

Female voice hearers, have increased self-stigmatisation, increasing their likelihood of social withdrawal (Maharjan & Panthee, 2019).

Design

To explore the effects of stigma, the transcript of an individual was analysed. The case study offering in-depth, multi-faceted understanding (Crowe, 2011).

Participant

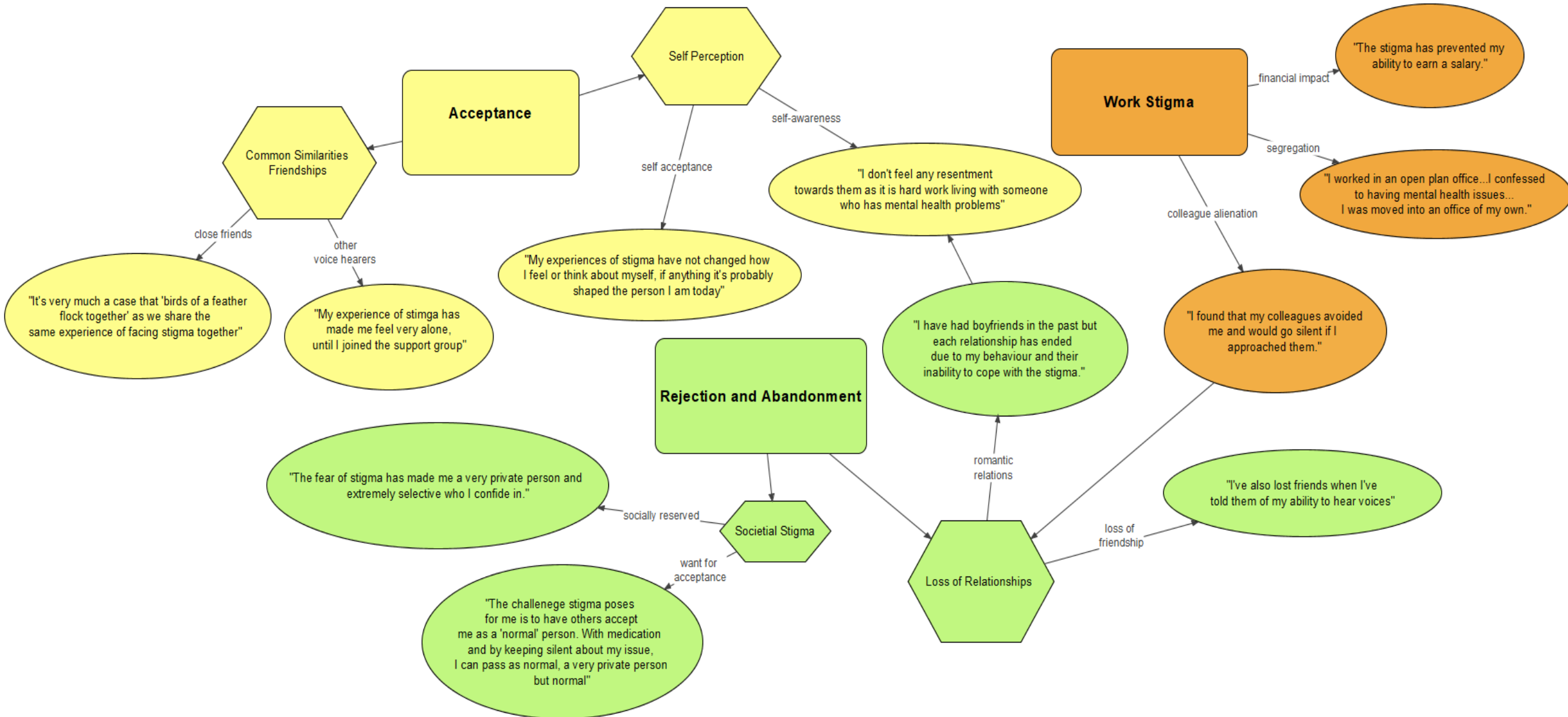
Angie was a 55-year old woman, and had experienced voice hearing since she was a child. She volunteered to participate through her hearing voices support group.

Methods

Data Collection: A 30-minute interview was video-recorded.

Data Analysis: Data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

Thematic map of the three themes (rectangular) and four subthemes (hexagon) with supporting quotations (oval) in the influence of stigma on a female voice hearer



Conclusion

Acceptance

- Relationships are more easily made with people who have similar experiences to Angie, feeling more comfortable around other voice hearers and others who face societal stigma.
- Research has shown that individuals feel a great sense of belonging when with peers who share the same experience (Salmon, 2013).
- Angie embraces her stigma experiences, they contribute to who she is –individuality (Jager, Han & Dingemanse, 2019).

Rejection and Abandonment

- Her desire to be accepted by society is overshadowed by her fear of rejection and that of those around her which may cause them to leave.
- Selective with who she confides, appearing socially reserved, as expected given the seen effects of previous stigma research (Link & Phelan, 2001).
- Rejection had precedence when she was working, with colleagues altering their behaviour, creating awkwardness and isolating Angie.

Work Stigma

- The workplace showed little support, segregating and alienating her, to the point where she did not feel she could work again.
- Krupa (2009) – workplace stigma assumptions: 1. lack competence, 2. are dangerous or unpredictable, 3. working is unhealthy for them, and 4. employment is charity.
- Low-income individuals are more likely to experience increased psychosis symptoms (Topor, et al., 2013).

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