

Title of paper:

Bipolar disorder and recovery on Reddit: a corpus linguistic analysis

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Abstract:

Bipolar disorder (BD) is a severe mental health problem characterised by recurring episodes of depressed and elevated mood (Jones et al., 2010). About 1.5-2% of European populations (Pini et al., 2005) meet criteria for BD, which is associated with lower quality of life (Michalak et al., 2005) and a high suicide risk (Novick et al., 2010). Therefore, its treatment is an important societal task.

Mental health care agendas increasingly demand treatment to focus on personal recovery, ‘a way of living a satisfying, hopeful life even with the limitations caused by the illness’ (Anthony, 1993). This contrasts with a narrow focus on symptoms and functioning in the still dominant clinical recovery paradigm. Personal recovery might be of particular value in BD (Murray et al., 2017) where symptoms often persist despite adequate treatment but has been under-researched so far (van Weeghel et al., 2019).

As part of a PhD project (Jagfeld, 2019) that combines evidence from structured and unstructured research settings on personal recovery in BD, this study applied natural language processing methods to identify 20K users with a self-reported BD diagnosis on the online discussion platform reddit.com and collected all of their 21M posts from 2006-2019 (Jagfeld et al., 2021). The users are slightly more feminine- than masculine-gendered mainly young or middle-aged US-based adults (Jagfeld et al., 2021). Key semantic domains analysis (Rayson, 2008; Rayson et al., 2004) of a words-per-user balanced corpus of English-language posts in BD-specific subforums (8.7K users, 20M words) revealed mental health symptoms, professional treatment, and recovery and self-management as most salient topics. Posts containing *recover(y)* are further analysed with corpus linguistic methods to explore how Reddit users with a self-reported BD diagnosis use and understand these clinically important terms. The findings are discussed with a personal recovery framework (Jagfeld et al., submitted; Leamy et al., 2011).

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