NEEDS OF GRIEVING ADVENTITIOUSLY VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADULTS: FROM INSIGHT TO ABILITY

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis illuminates the phenomenon of the emergent needs post-grief experienced by Adventitiously Visually Impaired (AVI) adults following loss of sight. The research focuses on specific experiential areas related to the phenomenon; the perspectives the AVI adults have of their loss of sight; their experience of grief as a resolvable or chronic process; the emergent psychological, emotional and practical needs they experience; and the support from society, families and rehabilitation in meeting their needs. The influence of the length of time of the impairment on these experiences is also considered.

The literature survey indicates that most research on Adventitious Visual Impairment (VI) concentrates on the period before and immediately after rehabilitation, and emphasises practical, technological and technical needs and issues. This focus is limited in acquiring insight and understanding about the psychological and emotional reactions and needs of AVI adults throughout the time course of their impairments.

This study applies an adapted phenomenological research strategy using 10 case studies of adults, AVI within and beyond 6 years, to understand the researched phenomenon. Essential insight gained from the study is that loss of sight is an unique experience which is inextricably linked to the degree of vision loss, that many unique but also common psychological, emotional and practical needs are experienced, and that length of time of the VI has a profound impact on these needs and the experience of the grief process.

This research challenges the traditional resolvable grief theory and emphasises a chronic, recurrent and episodic grief process. These contrasting processes impact on experienced needs. The research challenges the linear and invariant notion of Maslow's (1987) Need Hierarchy, and emphasises both ascent and descent and simultaneous experiences of unsatisfied needs on different levels of the hierarchy. The research highlights the need for society to know and understand the complex real world of Adventitious VI with all its diverse implications, limitations and needs. As always, there are more questions than answers, but this research provides further insight into the complex real world of Adventitious VI.
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