# 'I Would Like My Daughter to Live in a World Where Talking About Bipolar is Like Talking About a Broken Leg': Changing the Perception of Mental Health Diagnosis: The Video-Blogs of Happileeerin as a Case Study

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## Abstract:

For several decades, mental-health diagnosis or the so-called "mental illness" has been a cause of stigma, negative attitudes and discrimination (cf. Goffman, 1990; Harper, 2005). Recently, research (cf. Balfour, 2019; Price, 2022) has turned attention to the role of mass media, including TV and the press, in creating recurrent negative stereotypes and views on mental health diagnosis (cf. O Hern, 2017 on bipolar disorder and Balfour, 2019, on the representation of schizophrenia). Despite the long-held negative views on mental health diagnosis, there is some evidence that the representation of mental health diagnosis in the public domain is undergoing change (cf. White 2020 on the representation of bipolar in graphic novels). The aim of this paper is to turn further attention to this recent change, exploring the videos of the video-blogger HappileeErin as a case study.

While exploring two video-blogs of HappileeErin from a critical perspective (see below), the paper will argue that HappileeErin subverts the representation of bipolar and mental health diagnosis in mass media (cf. O Hern 2017) in several respects, for example, representing mental health diagnosis as an illness that can be well-manged; presenting individuals with mental health diagnosis as 'normal' individuals with multi-faceted identities; and calling on individuals with mental health diagnosis to seek help, highlighting their agency, among other aspects. In addition, the analysis of a set of data of 100 comments will explore the commenters' response to her videos. It will show that v-blogging about mental health on YouTube has given a scope for users' expression of stance on mental health diagnosis, expression of solidarity, and an affiliation to a needed change of attitude towards mental health diagnosis. As such, the paper will throw light on a domain that is rarely examined, i.e., the agency of individuals in talking about their mental health diagnosis (cf. Jamet, and Coupé, 2023).

Methodologically speaking, the paper will draw on insights from a variety of approaches of Critical Discourse Studies, namely the Discourse Historical Approach (cf. Wodak, 2001), new literacy studies (Barton and Lee, 2013), and the Theory of Visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), capturing the ways video-blogging about mental health diagnosis on YouTube has allowed for a change of attitude towards mental health diagnosis. Parameters that the paper will explore include HappileeErin's self-presentation, the use of multi-modality, nominalisation and argumentation strategies, among other categories.

Given the little attention to the representation of mental health diagnosis on social media, one contribution of the present paper is that it will strengthen a vein of research that seeks to explore communication about mental health online. Furthermore, it will present a framework for exploring the representation of mental health diagnosis on social media that can be extended to other case studies. The paper will be of interest to anyone interested in discourse analysis, health communication online as well as health practitioners and sociolinguists.