**Masennuksen arkea. Selityksiä surusta ilman syytä.** [Everyday of depression. Explanations of sorrow without a cause.]

**Oppiaine**
Social Psychology

**Työn nimi**
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**Tivistelmä**
The aim of this dissertation is to study the explanations of depression, particularly causal attributions, which depressed people give to their own symptoms. The other purpose of the study is to explore the social and cultural meanings of the phenomenon called "depression". The theoretical frame of reference of this study is attribution theory. From the point of view of attribution theories the main interest is in "why"-questions, and the answers given to them. The causal attributions are integrated theoretically with the frame of reference of social representations. Social representations are continuously changing, commonly shared and socially constructed meanings to the different kind of social phenomena.

The subjects of the study were people who were seeking psychotherapeutic help. Twenty videotaped research interviews of the Helsinki psychotherapy study were transcripted and analysed, first categorizing part of the data, and then by content analysis, evaluating the validity of the categories. The other material for the study consisted of the articles about depression, as a symptom or as a mental health problem, published in Helsingin Sanomat (1998 - 2000). Many novels and memoirs were also used to illustrate the lay explanations, or the social representations, of depression. The study proceeded circularly, as a dialogue between the different data classification and analysis as well as research literature.

The causal attributions of the 20 depressed people (altogether 1002 causal arguments) concentrate clearly on intimate relationships (21%), which are either too solid, or there are no good relationships at all. Thinking too much, or thinking not enough (14%), too harsh or too protective childhood experiences (13%), and emotional restlessness or numbness (11%), are the other important categories of explanation, as well as either stress at work or being without work (11%), and destructive or uncommunicative character (8%). Males prefer explanations in terms of character and females in terms of causes related to intimate relationships. Depression can also be seen as acceptable way of living, lifestyle, or deliberate way to be an outsider, observer of life (13%). The causal explanations referring to body or disease (3%), society (3%), family history (1%), nature (1%) or culture (1%) are not important ways to explain depression, at least not for people seeking psychotherapeutic help and living in the individualistic society. All above-mentioned categories of causal explanations can also be found in literature and newspaper articles.

Depression turns out to be a phenomenon which seeks and lives on explanations, rather than just a sorrow without reason, as often thought. The diversity of causal attributions reflects the shaping and reorganization of the whole life situation in particular cultural and social context. Each main category of explanation includes a clear duality of explanation. The end result of this study could be expressed using the pair of concepts, "pressure" and "lack"(e.g. pressure and/or lack of emotions). The dynamic of the depression becomes the circulation or dialectics of the pressure and lack, the individual relating to the social, from the inside to the outside, and vice versa. Intimate relationships, thinking, childhood experiences, the meaning of the life, emotions, work and character are repeatedly and continuously considered as problematic issues by depressed people.

**Avainsanat**

**Säilytyspaikka**

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