OPEN PEER REVIEW

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IJ Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.5812/ijpbs-126430
Published in: IJ Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences: 16(3); e126430

Peer Review Report for "Self-perception from the Viewpoints of the Informal Caregivers of Individuals with Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury: A Qualitative Study"

Author(s): Roya Ghasemzadeh, Jalal Younesi, Bahman Bahmani, Farahnaz Mohammadi-shahboulaghi, Mahmood Dehghani, Mohammad Saeed Khanjani, Asghar Dadkhah

Review Timeline:

Submit Date:	4 Apr 2022
Revised Date:	20 Jul 2022
Accepted Date:	16 Aug 2022

Revision (0)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | Revision (0) 19 Apr 2022

Dear AE,
There are some comments which should be addressed by the author:

Thank you for inviting me to review the manuscript entitled" The Perception of the self from Viewpoints of the informal caregivers of Individuals with traumatic spinal cord injury: a qualitative study". That describes the main domain of self-perception in caregivers of individuals with TSCI. It was better to compare these results with self-perception in other people or maybe before their being caregivers.
Line 2: background: instead of the general definition of self-concept mention self-concept in caregivers of disabling diseases.
The introduction needs to be complete about former studies in these groups and features of self-concept in caregivers.
Lines 94, 95, and 96 are moved to the last paragraph before the objective.
Line 101: pls add the main question of semi-structured interviews

Line 114: sampling: give more information about “how were the participants selected?”, “where and at which center was the study done?”, “How was the sample size determined?”,
Line 122: Were there any inclusion or exclusion criteria for the participants?
In the end, the application of the study should be mentioned.

The manuscript needs proof-read.

Kind regards,

¬ **REFEREE**: Reviewer | **Revision (0)** 2 May 2022

Dear AE,
There are some comments which should be addressed by the author:

Herein, I want to express some notes and questions that will help you in the major revision of this paper.
1. In the introduction, it is better to focus on a theory from the perspective of psychology in which this research has been done. Expressing an in-depth explanation of the most relevant theories is usually better than a superficial expression of several theories. Given that it is a psychiatric journal, it is better to explain the definitions and principles from the perspective of psychiatry and psychology.
2. The ethics section should be completed.
3. Explain more about purposeful sampling. What were the purpose and cases of entering the research?
4. The relationship between interviews with "care" and "trauma" is not explained. In other words, if these interviews were conducted with other people, more or less the same codes and sub-categories would be obtained.
5. The findings of the article seem to be more closely related to philosophy than psychiatry. Which model in psychology can explain these findings and
6. what are the novel findings of this research?
7. The discussion of the article is not comprehensive and has not been properly compared with similar studies and the clinical application of the findings has not been determined.

Kind regards,

¬ **Seyyed Taha Yahyavi**: Associate Editor | **Revision (0)** 4 Jun 2022

Dear EIC,

According to the reviewers' comments, the paper needs a major revision. Especially discussion and introduction sections should be improved based on a psychology model or theories.

Kind regards,
AE

Mehran Zarghami: EIC | **Revision (0)** 18 Jun 2022

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript for consideration for publication in the Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. External peer reviewers have evaluated your paper. Please revise it according to their comments. I would appreciate it if you could do the revisions as soon as possible.

After revision, authors are obliged to upload reviewers' comments in a Word file in which they reply to each comment individually. Please note that the full manuscript file must be highlighted to indicate revised texts.

Besides, please pay attention to the word count limitation:
Word count limits are declared in this link: https://brieflands.com/journals/ij-psychiatry-and-behavioral-sciences/knowledgebase/category/tree#word_count_limits

We look forward to receiving your revised manuscript. Thank you for sending your work to the Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Kind Regards,
EIC

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Reply to Reviewers

Ideally, the reviewing process can significantly improve the submitted manuscripts by allowing the authors to take into account the advice of reviewers. Author(s) must reply to all reviewers' comments in a separate Word file, point by point. A "**Reply to Reviewers**" document is submitted along with revised manuscript during submission of revised files, summarizing the changes that the authors made in response to the reviewers' comments. The responses to reviewers' comments specifies how the authors addressed each comment the reviewers made.

You can read the authors' responses to the reviewers' comments in the next page.

Reviewer# 1

Dear Reviewer, 1, the members of the research team are grateful to you for reading the manuscript and providing us with your valuable comments. We have tried to revise the manuscript based on your comments as follows. We hope that the changes made, will satisfy you.

Yours sincerely,

The research team members

1. *In the introduction, it is better to focus on a theory from the perspective of psychology which this research has been done. Expressing an in-depth explanation of the most relevant theories is usually better than a superficial expression of several theories. Given that it is a psychiatric journal, it is better to explain the definitions and principles from the perspective of psychiatry and psychology.*

Response 1: We were not allowed to use any theoretical framework to guide this research due to the use of qualitative research method. According to your comment, the entire introduction was rewritten in a way that points to the psychological aspects. But it is undeniable that the border between philosophy and psychology is not truly clear regarding the self. Line 31 to line 101

2. *The ethics section should be completed.*

Response 2: Ethic section was completed as following: line 141 to line 166

3.5. Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to the institutional review board ethics committee of the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences for ethical approval as a Ph.D. dissertation in Rehabilitation Counseling. The project was approved by the ethics code of IR.USWR.REC.1396.209. We called the selected individuals before participating in the study to give them the initial information about it. They participated in the interviews voluntarily, and we ensured their confidentiality and anonymity. Verbal and written participants' informed consent were obtained, and they informed that they could refuse to continue the interview or study at any time they wanted. Contact details of the first author, the project implementing institute, and the relevant organizations offering counseling

services and support in case of psychological distress caused by the study are also provided on the participant information sheets.

3.6. Trustworthiness

In this study, credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability are four criteria that we have used to ensure data accuracy and trustworthiness. To ensure credibility, we had a long-term involvement with data, and used constant comparison methods till we reached data saturation. For confirmability, the research team members reviewed the data, codes, and categories to exchange views (peer check). The researchers summarized the results and gave them to the participants to receive their feedback on the results (member check). And, four experts, checked the data, analysis process and the results through an audit trail (expert check). Moreover, we tried to follow the principle of sampling with maximum variation and increase the number of conducted interviews, to ensure transferability. A complete description of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and formation of the codes, is documented step by step to provide the possibility of research follow-up by the audience and readers and ensure dependability (49, 50).

3. *Explain more about purposeful sampling. What was the purpose and cases of entering the research?*

Response 3: purposive sampling revised as follows: line 111 to line 122. The participants and research setting were discussed in separated sections.

3.2. Sampling

The target sample population was the informal caregivers of the individuals with TSCI. We have selected the participants through purposive sampling (non-probability sampling in which the investigator selects the participant based on the specific criteria) from those who volunteered to participate. Criteria for inclusion in this study were that the person considers himself / herself as the primary caregiver of the injured person and more than six months (48) have passed since the beginning of the caregiver role. Exclusion criterion was lack of enough cooperation in interviews. We performed purposive sampling in accordance with the principle of maximum variation till we reached data saturation. Therefore,

informal male and female caregivers participated in the study in the roles of father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.

4. *The relationship between interviews with "care" and "trauma" is not explained. In other words, if these interviews were conducted with other people, more or less the same codes and sub-categories would be obtained.*

Response 4: We tried to focus more on care and trauma in the introduction section. Line 31 to line 53. Like any other qualitative research, these data cannot be generalized. But since the participants were adults with internalized beliefs and values of Iranian society, it is likely that under the same conditions, the participants who are selected correctly will also refer to these sub-categories. To reduce the word count, we had removed the lower subcategories in the last manuscript, but according to your comment, we decided to add the details to the results section to make the results clearer. And summarized the subcategories in a figure. Line 192 to line 449.

5. *The findings of the article seem to be more closely related to philosophy than psychiatry. Which model in the psychology can explain these findings?*

Response 5: The findings of this research are findings derived from a qualitative research based on the quotes of the participants in this study. As mentioned in the revised introduction line 54 to line 83 and discussion line 456 to line 481. Philosophical discussions about the self go back to the time of Plato, and its trace can be seen in the divine religions. The participants in this study have grown up in the context of Iranian society, so their self-perception passes through a reference framework of their local values, which are remarkably close to religious and philosophical issues. It seems that in this case, quantitative researches with specific theoretical frameworks of psychology and by using research tools in accordance with psychological concepts can collect and present findings more related to psychology. But in our research, the findings related to the personal self-possessions can be explained with subjectivity in classical psychoanalysis line 64 to line 68, interpersonal self-possessions can be explained with intersubjective approaches and group dynamics line 64 to line 83, and transpersonal self-

possessions are relatively consistent with spiritual and existential approaches line 537 to 542.

6. *what are the novel findings of this research?*

Response 6: Studying the self is often not favored by most researchers due to its complexity. The novelty of these findings is that they are based on culture in Iranian social context. These findings provide a simple and multidisciplinary framework for studying self-perceptions of informal caregivers of individuals with TSCI. But it still leaves room for more research to investigate the effectiveness of such a structure in other target populations in Iranian society. These points are addressed in the discussion section Line 474 to line 481.

7. *The discussion of the article is not comprehensive and has not been properly compared with similar studies and the clinical application of the findings has not been determined.*

Response 7: Thanks for your comment, we have tried to completely rewrite the discussion as much as possible: line 450 to line 542. Unfortunately, we faced a lack of empirical studies related to self and self-perception in informal caregivers of chronic conditions. Therefore, the discussion is more about the comparison of existing theories.

Reviewer# 2

Dear Reviewer, 2, the members of the research team are grateful to you for reading the manuscript and providing us with your valuable comments. We have tried to revise the manuscript based on your comments as follows. We hope that the changes made, will satisfy you.

Yours sincerely,

The research team members

1. *Thank you for inviting me to review the manuscript entitled" The perception of the self from viewpoints of the informal caregivers of individuals with traumatic spinal cord injury: a qualitative study". That describes the main domain of self-*

perception in caregivers of individuals with TSCI. It was better to compare these results with self-perception in other people or maybe before their being caregivers.

Response 1: Unfortunately, studies that have investigated self-perception are rare. In the revised introduction section,(line 31 to line 53) we have tried to compare the conditions of informal caregivers with injured people or caregivers of other chronic diseases.

2. *Line 2: background: instead of the general definition of self-concept mention self-concept in caregivers of disabling diseases.*

Response 2: The background is modified as following:

Background: Difficult life experiences in adulthood such as caregiving of an individual with traumatic spinal cord injury (TSCI) constitute a challenge to the self and the identity. Line 4 to line 6

3. *The introduction needs to be complete about former studies in these groups and features of self-concept in caregivers.*

Response 3: Introduction is revised totally, according to your comment. Line 31 to line 101

4. *Line 94, 95, and 96 are moved to the last paragraph before the objective.*

Response 4: Moving line 94-96 were done indeed because this section was rewritten. The objective is modified as following:

2. Objective: This study aimed to explore self-perception from viewpoints of informal caregivers of individuals with TSCI. Line 102 to line 104

5. *Line 101: pls add the main question of semi-structured interviews.*

Response 5: We asked the participants " *who they were and what they thought about themselves?*" Also, we asked them whether *"caring for a person with TSCI affected their perception of themselves or not? And if so, what was the impact?"* As the research progressed, the questions changed gradually to suit the needs to complement the dimensions and properties of the categories and based on the participants' answers and feedbacks. Data collection and data analysis were performed simultaneously in this study. The data collection and analysis processes ended with reaching saturation. Data collection section: line 167 to line 183

6. *Line 114: sampling: give more information about "how were the participants selected?", "where and which center was the study done?", "How was the sample size determined?"*

Response 6: The sampling is modified as following:

3.2. Sampling: The target sample population was the informal caregivers of the individuals with TSCI. We have selected the participants through purposive sampling (non-probability sampling in which the investigator selects the participant based on the specific criteria) from those who volunteered to participate. Criteria for inclusion in this study were that the person considers himself / herself as the primary caregiver of the injured person and more than six months (48) have passed since the beginning of the caregiver role. Exclusion criterion was lack of enough cooperation in interviews. We performed purposive sampling in accordance with the principle of maximum variation till we reached data saturation. Therefore, informal male and female caregivers participated in the study in the roles of father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings. Line 111 to line 122

The research setting: We coordinated the place and time of the interviews with the participants, and the interviews were conducted in a situation where they felt more comfortable. We visited them at governmental and nongovernmental outpatient clinics for TSCI, or at the participants' homes. Line 131 to line 140

7. *Line 122: Were there any inclusion or exclusion criteria for the participants?*

Response 7: Inclusion or exclusion criteria added to the sampling section, as following: Criteria for inclusion in this study were that the person considers himself / herself as the primary caregiver of the injured person and more than six months (48) have passed since the beginning of the caregiver role. Exclusion criterion was lack of enough cooperation in interviews. Line 115 to line 122.

8. *In the end, the application of the study should be mentioned.*

Response 8: the application of the study mentioned at the end of introduction section as following: The results of this study may be effective in revision of health policies and designing appropriate and timely psychological interventions regarding the caregivers' need for self and identity reconstruction. Line 99 to line 101

9. *The manuscript needs proof-read.*

Response 9: It has been modified according to your comment. Thank you

Associate Editor 1

Dear *Associate Editor 1*, the members of the research team are grateful to you for reading the manuscript and providing us with your valuable comments. We have tried to revise the manuscript based on your comments as follows. We hope that the changes made, will satisfy you.

Yours sincerely,

The research team members

1. Dear authors

Thanks for submitting your paper in IJPBS. According to reviewers' comments the paper needs a major revision. Especially discussion and introduction sections should be improved based on a psychology model or theories. Please find reviewers' comments and let us have revised manuscript.

Best

Response: Thank you for your consideration. The discussion and the introduction were modified according to your opinion and the esteemed reviewers.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Revision (1)

Here, you can see the **Reviewers**, **Associate Editors** and **EICs'** comments from the beginning to the end of the revision process.

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision (1)** 1 Aug 2022

Dear AE,

The study is reviewed carefully. According to comments and revisions by the author, this manuscript is accepted.

Kind regards,

REFEREE: Reviewer | **Revision (1)** 5 Aug 2022

Dear AE,
The study is reviewed carefully. According to comments and revisions by the author, this manuscript is accepted.
Thanks

Seyyed Taha Yahyavi: Associate Editor | **Revision (1)** 8 Aug 2022

Dear EIC,

Based on the authors' answers to the reviewers' comments, the reviewer(s) have recommended publication.

Kind regards,
AE

Mehran Zarghami: EIC | **Revision (1)** 16 Aug 2022

Dear Authors,

We have completed our review of your manuscript and are pleased to inform you that it is being considered for publication in the IJPBS. Note that the publication of your article will only be finalized upon your cooperation with the editorial processing.
Thank you for your kind contribution, and we look forward to your continued contributions to the Journal.

Kind regards,

EIC