

Understanding the Support Needs and Challenges Faced by Family Caregivers in the Care of Their Older Adults at Home [Response to Letter]

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Dear editor

We would like to express our gratitude to Xiao et al for sharing their insightful comments regarding our paper titled “Understanding the Support Needs and Challenges Faced by Family Caregivers in the Care of Their Older Adults at Home. A Qualitative Study”.^{1,2} We appreciate the opportunity to address the points raised in their letter.

Demographic Information and Participant Coding

While we agree that demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status can influence caregiving experiences, the primary goal of our study was to identify and explore the overarching challenges faced by family caregivers in the context of a low-resource and conflict-affected region. The phenomenological approach we used aims to capture the essence of lived experiences, focusing more on the shared challenges rather than on individual variations across demographic categories. We did not feel that associating specific narratives with individual participants was essential for understanding the primary themes of caregiving challenges. Instead, the focus remained on the collective experience of caregiving in this unique context.

That said, we acknowledge that integrating more demographic information with participant coding could have offered additional layers of insight. Future studies could explore this aspect more deeply to understand how these demographic characteristics intersect with caregiving experiences.

Use of Visual Aids

We understand the value of using visual aids such as charts and graphs to enhance data presentation, especially for thematic analysis. However, as this was a qualitative study, the emphasis was on the richness of participants’ narratives and lived experiences. In our view, visual aids like charts and graphs are more suited to quantitative studies or mixed-methods approaches, where numerical data and thematic frequencies are emphasized. In this context, we chose a narrative-driven presentation, as it allows readers to engage more directly with the depth of the caregivers’ experiences.

Nonetheless, we appreciate the suggestion and will consider including visual elements, such as thematic coding diagrams, in future qualitative studies to increase transparency and aid in the presentation of complex data.

Gender-Based Analysis

We recognize the importance of gender-based analysis in understanding caregiving dynamics, and your point about potential differences in experiences based on gender is well-taken. While this was not the central focus of our study, which aimed to broadly identify the key caregiving challenges, future research could indeed explore gender-specific caregiving roles. This would allow for the development of targeted interventions, especially in contexts where societal norms and expectations regarding caregiving roles differ for men and women.

Intersectional Approach and Future Research Directions

We agree that the intersection of factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and education level could shape caregiving experiences in varied ways. While these variables were considered in our demographic analysis, the study's primary aim was to identify the most pressing challenges faced by family caregivers, which limited our focus on intersectionality. However, this is an important area for further research, and future studies could adopt an intersectional approach to capture how multiple factors interact to influence caregiving in diverse contexts.

Exploring Digital Health Solutions

Your suggestion to explore digital health solutions like mobile health (mHealth) and telemedicine for caregivers is highly relevant. While the current study focused on identifying challenges, future work could indeed investigate how digital tools might address issues related to healthcare access and transportation in low-resource settings. This is an exciting area of research, and we will consider exploring the feasibility of digital solutions in the caregiving context in our future work.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

References

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