

Research Paper

Identification of Facilitators and Deterrents of the Quality of Life in Elderly Women and Men: A Phenomenological Research



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ABSTRACT

Objectives Considering the rapid growth of elderly population in the world, especially in Iran, studying the quality of life in elderly people and the identification of factors affecting them is of particular importance. This research aimed to identify factors which could improve or deteriorate quality of life in elderly women and men.

Methods & Materials The present research is a qualitative and phenomenological study. The study participants were 23 elderly who were selected by the purposive sampling method, having ages between 61 and 101 years. The elderly subjects consisted of 60.9% of women and 39.1% of men. Data were collected by in-depth and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded and analyzed based on Streubert and Carpenter method.

Results Research findings include 6 main themes and 24 subthemes. The main themes are as follows: "internal facilitate contexts", "external driving factors", "interpersonal challenges and problems", "obstacles and deficiencies in the field of external", "declined desires and aspirations", and "necessities and suggestions for improvement".

Conclusion Our study indicates that to improve the life, the elderly should pay attention to factors such as the role of religious beliefs, proper nutrition, meeting relatives, reminiscence, and establishing proper social relationships. In addition, removing barriers such as breaking the taboo of elderly marriage, financial support, and providing counseling services could improve their quality of life.

Key words:

Facilitators, Deterrents, Quality of Life, Aging, Phenomenological Study

Extended Abstract

1. Objectives

The growth of elderly population is one of the most important economic, social, and health challenges of the 21st century [1, 2], and identifying the factors affecting aging-related issues is as

important as for other age groups [3]. The increasing population of older adults is so remarkable that it has been described as the quiet revolution [4]. Quality of life as a health concept has an inverse relationship with all causes of death [5]. Although the changes caused by aging are inevitable, we can prevent or postpone many of them to some extent [6]. Therefore, the necessity and importance of more exploration in this field are evident. In this regard, we attempted to identify the fa-

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cilitators and deterrents of the quality of life in elderly people in Pars-Abad and Moghan cities and propose appropriate solutions to address the weaknesses and problems at the old age.

2. Methods & Materials

The present research is a qualitative phenomenological study. The study population included all older adults in different regions of Pars-Abad City. Cluster random sampling method was used to recruit the samples. For this purpose, four districts (Fajr, Bakeri, Valiasr, and Shahid Motahhari) of the city were randomly selected. Then, the public places (mosques, parks, green spaces, sports venues, and shopping centers) were identified, and the researcher visited those places to select study subjects from each public place, provided that they have the inclusion criteria and willingness to participate in the research.

The data were collected through in-depth interviews. An interview guide was used in this study that prevents waste of time and energy. A total of 23 interviews were performed, each lasted from 15 to 40 minutes depending on the willingness of the interviewee to continue the conversation. The interview began with a general question about the daily life experiences of the elderly and how they see the old age and talking about it, and then more questions were asked. To interpret and analyze the data, the method of Streubert and Carpenter was used. An expert in qualitative research was consulted to analyze the data. The responses of the interviewees were compared with the findings of similar studies. Furthermore, this research is a part of the dissertation entitled "Quality of Life of the Elderly of Ardabil Province" being drafted by the researchers at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Tabriz University.

3. Results

In this study, 6 main themes and 24 subthemes (Table 1) were extracted as follows:

Internal facilitating platforms

The subthemes extracted from the main theme of internal facilitating platforms are as follows: religious beliefs, proper nutrition, re-marriage, leisure, and recalling experiences. No one overlooks the role of religion and religious beliefs and its positive impact. Nutrition plays an important role as a supportive factor for the body and soul. One of the problems of the elderly is the death of their wife and their loneliness afterwards. Planning for recreation and leisure activities is

a requirement of aging. Recalling old experiences also plays an important role in supporting mental health.

External facilitating platforms

The subthemes extracted from this theme include visiting relatives and affordability of caregivers. Personal contacts between family members and friends have a great impact on the mental health of the elderly. The role of caregivers is also important in the life of the older adults.

Interpersonal challenges and problems

The subthemes extracted from this theme are as follows: memory impairment and remembering problems, the anxiety of death, physical problems, and sleep disorders. In general, the likelihood of forgetfulness increases with the increase in age. Fear of death is a natural fear, and reduced physical abilities can affect people's health. Mental health depends on how people acquire their basic needs. Sleep is considered as one of the most vital physical, mental, and emotional needs of human.

Obstacles and shortcomings in the external arena

The subthemes extracted from this concept are as follows: old-age marriage taboo (forced loneliness), independence of children, lack of financial support and income deficits, living in an apartment, and the cyberspace. The death of a spouse greatly increases the loneliness of the elderly. One of the problems of the elderly is the marriage of children and separation from them. Financial and therapeutic support is an effective factor in healing the mental health of the elderly. The living environment is another factor influencing the spirit of the elderly as with the introduction of new technologies into the family, there are gaps between the family members.

Desires

The subthemes extracted from this theme are as follows: travel, sitting, spending more time with the family. Trips and healthy recreation leave humans out of their routine. Sitting jobs and lack of mobility are the most probable reasons for muscle weakness and physical burnout. Assigning more time by parents and, in particular, the father, to be with the family will help the elderly.

Necessities and suggestions for improvement

In the final section, some suggestions were extracted from the words of the elderly; Love and attachment:

Table 1. Themes extracted from interviews

Main Themes	Subthemes
Internal facilitating platforms	1. Religious beliefs 2. Proper nutrition 3. Re-marriage 4. Leisure time 5. Recalling experiences
External facilitating platforms	1. Visiting the relatives 2. Affordability of caregivers
Interpersonal challenges and problems	1. Memory impairment and remembering problems 2. Fear of death 3. Physical problems 4. Sleep disorder
Obstacles and shortcomings in the external arena	1. Old-age marriage taboo (forced loneliness) 2. The independence of children 3. Lack of financial support and lack of income 4. Living in apartment 5. Cyberspace: A barrier between the elderly and their relatives
Desires	1. Travel 2. Sitting 3. Spending more time with the family
Necessities and suggestions for improvement	1. Love and attachment: a solution to the generation gap 2. Relaxed environment and tension control 3. Happiness: the need for old age 4. Continuity of learning 5. Changing attitudes toward aging

a solution to the generation of the gap, relaxed environment and tension control, happiness: the need for old age, continuity of learning, and changing attitude towards old age.

4. Conclusion

The present study indicates that some factors contribute to improve the lives of the elderly. Internal factors such as religious beliefs, proper nutrition, re-marriage, recreation, and leisure time with exercise and music help in improvement in the quality of life of elderly. Obstacles and problems that play a deterring and negative role in the elderly are considered as internal factors which include memory impairment and remembering problems, anxiety of death, physical impairment and sleep disorders, whereas old age marriage taboo, children’s independence, lack of financial support and income deficit, living in apartment and cyberspace are considered as external factors that prevent improvement in old age. Most of the older adults have mentioned more surfing, more physical activity in their young age, and the possibility of spending more time

with their families. They were also offered suggestions for a relaxed environment, love and attachment, happy life, and continuity of learning.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.