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The Elders' Experiences of Social Support in Nursing Home: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background & Aim: Dramatic increase in the overall number of older adults currently in the population, and further increases expected, heightens the awareness of the need for adequate support for older persons living in the community. The elderly are particularly vulnerable to stress. Transition to the care home and environment of a residential home has been identified in the literature as the most significant relocation affecting older people. Social support plays an important role in managing stress, but, there are a few researches that have investigated the quality and intensity of relationships as a part of social supports for elders, especially those living in nursing homes. Researchers have found that social supports protect elders against the harmful effects of stress and promote emotional and physical wellbeing. Older adults who are connected to active social networks and who receive informal social support have been shown to demonstrate better physical and mental health than those who are less connected and involved with others. For this reason, researchers intend to explore elders' attitude living in nursing home with regard to religious and cultural aspect in Iran. This study aimed understanding elders' perceptions of social support quality during their residency period in nursing home.

Material & Method: In this study, the qualitative phenomenological approach was used by several in-depth interviews with elders residents in private and governmental nursing homes were selected by purposive sampling over a 9 months period. Purposive sampling continued until data saturation was occurred where the sample size reached to 10. The data was collected by in-depth interviews. Researchers used field notes for completing data collection process. Colaizzi's method was applied for data analysis. The rigor of present study was based on transferability and credibility.

Results: The findings were including: 80 codes, 5 sub-themes and two themes extracted from the data (structural components of experience). The themes were informal social support in nursing home, and formal social support in this setting.

Conclusion: According to older people's attitudes there were three important elements, staff, family and other residents, which have very much important influence in their life providing social support network. In present study, nursing home residents stated various degrees of communication with and sense of support from family, friends and others. All of them stated other people's visits as encouraging and supporting.

Key Words: Social Support_ Elderly_ Nursing Home

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