

Understanding Psychosocial Influences on Stroke Rehabilitation: A Qualitative Study on Post-Stroke Survivors' Experiences

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BACKGROUND

THE UNMET PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS



Hidden Barriers to Recovery

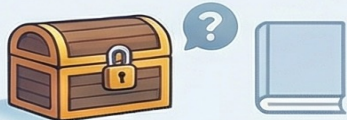
Survivors struggle with grieving lost roles, reduced independence, and disclosing mental health concerns.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION



Gaps in Community Participation

Limitations in social integration are closely tied to both physical and mental health outcomes.



Insufficient Resource Access

Survivors frequently report inadequate disease-related information and limited psycho-emotional support.

IMPACTS AND INTEGRATION

Factors Driving Rehabilitation Success

Psychosocial factors directly dictate engagement in rehab, adaptation, and long-term well-being.



Strengthening Care Coordination

Better links between specialist and primary care are essential for enhanced post-stroke outcomes.



Survivor-Centred OT Practice

Qualitative evidence from survivors is needed to inform more effective occupational therapy practices.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This qualitative study aims to explore **post-stroke survivors' lived experiences** to identify psychosocial factors influencing their recovery.

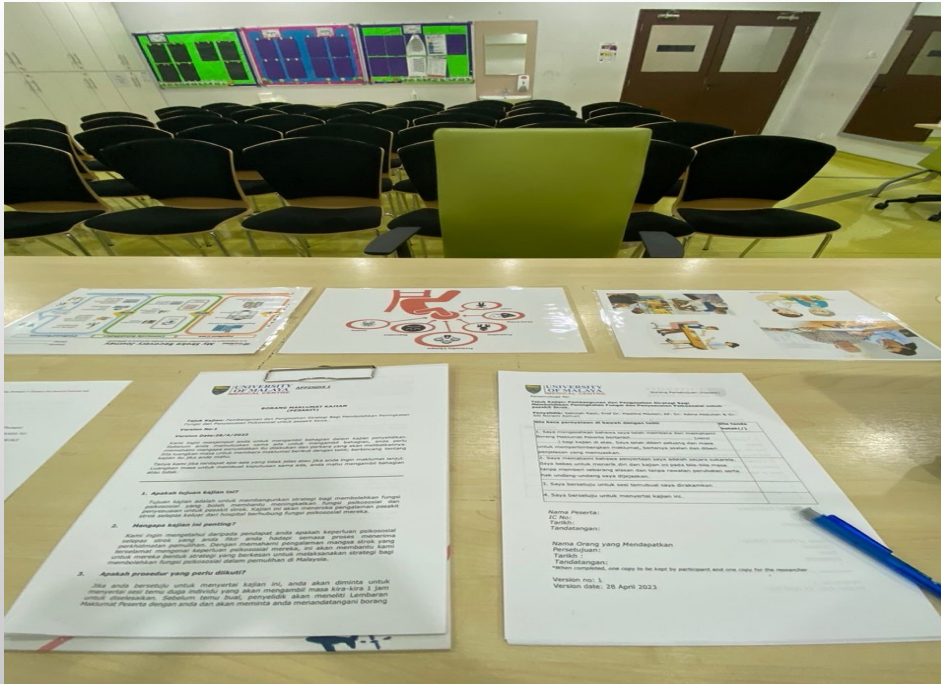


METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Qualitative Study

Phenomenologically-informed design to explore the lived psychosocial experiences of stroke survivors during rehabilitation



Participants Selection

Purposive sampling

Adults (≥ 18) with ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke

Medically stable; functional status ranging from none to mild–moderate impairment

Receiving outpatient or community-based rehabilitation (incl. OT)

Able to communicate in Bahasa Melayu or English and provide informed consent

Excluded: severe cognitive/psychiatric or communication impairment, other major neurological disorders, active substance abuse, <3 months post-stroke, institutionalised care, <18 years

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Interviews were recorded using an encrypted voice recorder, transcribed verbatim, and further supplemented by reflective process notes.

Interview length ranged from 30 to 45 min

Data Analysis

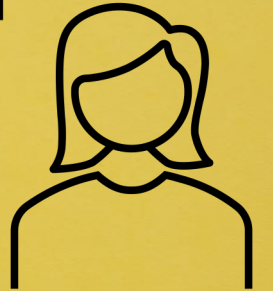
Inductive Thematic Analysis

Transcription for 8 transcripts.

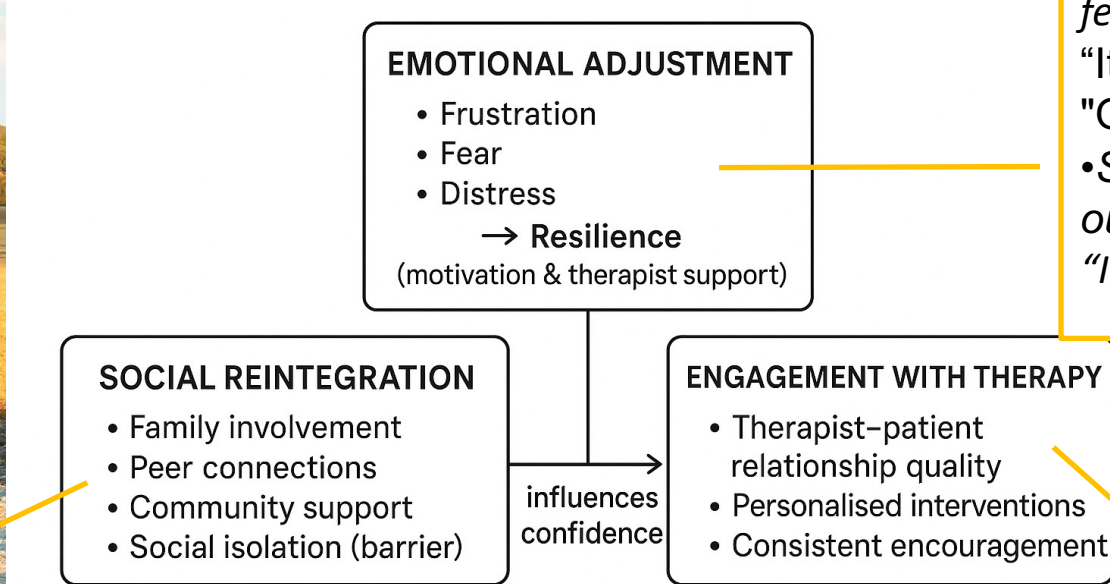
Familiarized with the data,
Do the preliminary codes,
Coding using Atlas ti
software Version 23,
Reviewing the themes,
Defining & naming themes.

RESULTS

- **Participant Profile Overview**
- **Gender:** 6 Male, 2 Female
- **Age Range:** 37–72 years
- **Ethnicity:** Malay (4), Chinese (2), Indian (2)
- **Time Since Stroke:** 9 months – 4 years
- **All participants experienced first-ever stroke**
- **Employment impact:**
 - » 2 became unemployed
 - » 1 shifted to part-time employment
- **Living arrangement changes:** Minimal change
(1 participant shifted from living alone to living with friends)



Themes



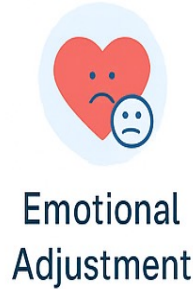
•Participants (5 out of 8) experienced shock upon realizing the sudden loss of function. "Because *I didn't feel anything, it just suddenly happened*;(S5)
"It was shocking, right."(S6), "I was shocked."(S10),
"One thing for sure, I was shocked."(S4)
•Several participants (S1,S4, S5) maintained a hopeful outlook and demonstrated emotional strength.
"*I tried. I was thinking of my child.*" (S1)

"*When I met with the OT and PT regularly, they told me I could do it.*" (S4)
These quotes show that affirmation from professionals contributed to psychological adjustment and goal-setting.

"Just do something." (S5); When I got home, I had to do something;(S5).
"*I was thinking of my child.*" (S1, S7)
This quote reflects not just motivation, but the emotional burden of not being able to fulfill parental responsibilities as before.
"*My husband too...*" (S5)
This shows how reliance on others, even spouses can be a source of discomfort or guilt.

DISCUSSION

Emotional adjustment, social re-integration, and engagement with therapy are central aspects of the post-stroke experience.



Role of Occupational Therapists in Holistic Care



Emotional Support



Foster Adaptation



Reduce Challenges

May enhance quality of life and functional outcomes for stroke survivors

Limitations

In-depth interviews (IDI) provide rich, detailed insights but have inherent limitations.

- Single-country context
- Small sample size
- Reliance on self-reported data



CONCLUSION

Important of integrating psychosocial considerations into OT rehabilitation.

By addressing emotional challenges, strengthening social networks, and optimizing therapeutic engagement, occupational therapists can enhance recovery outcomes.

A holistic, patient-centred approach that prioritizes these psychosocial dimensions is crucial for supporting well-being in post-stroke survivors.

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