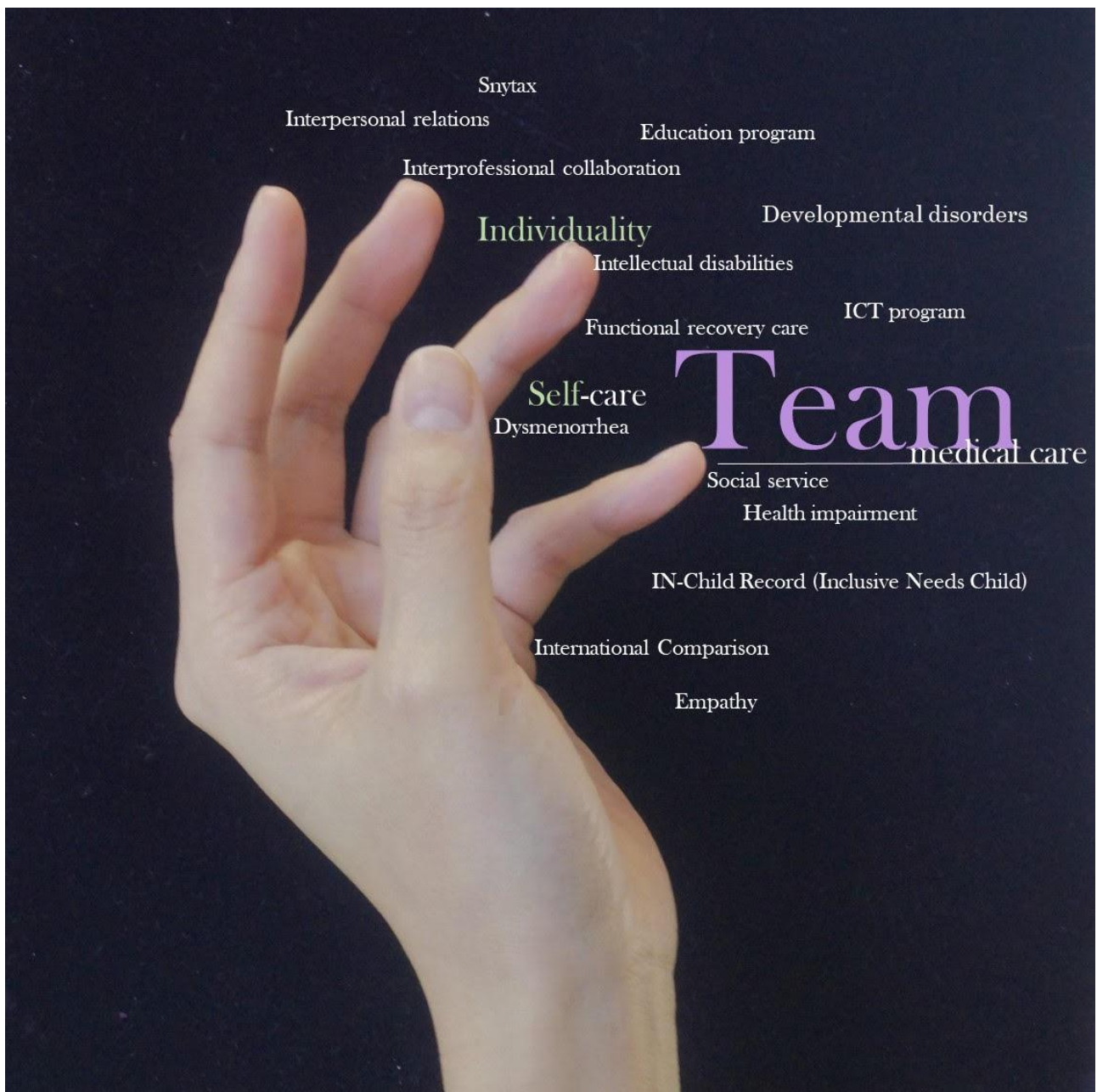


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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Construct of “Individuality” Perceived by Nursing Care Workers: A Qualitative Interview Study

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ABSTRACT

The research objective is to clarify the awareness of nursing care workers how they perceive “Individuality” of users and what they actually do to respect “individuality” when providing cares. We had semi-structured interview among 20 nursing care workers who worked at care welfare facilities over three years. We prepared verbatim and qualitatively analyzed data using inductive approach. As a result, we had 52 codes, 13 sub-categories and 6 categories, and found that nursing care workers provide essential care “now” and “here” for individual users. The word, “individuality” includes the consistency sought when providing cares and the uniqueness of individual nursing care workers with a certain balance, and this shows unique relationship of users and nursing care workers.

<Key-words>

individuality, nursing care job, elderly, users

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I. Introduction

Japanese elderly is rated at 27.7% in 2017 and the average life expectancy records the highest in history, 81.09 and 87.26 for male and female, respectively. Elderlies are increasing every year. Social security spending such as pension, medical, nursing care is increasing in direct proportion with an increase in elderlies. Furthermore, with the economical growth after World War II, the changes in lifestyle and value create various issue for the elderly society in Japan (General Incorporated Foundation, Edited by Health, Labor, and Welfare Statistics Association, 2018).

Becoming elderlies, it is a critical issue for our society how we spend the long elderly period. In general, elderlies suffer chronic disease disturbing their daily lives and wish to spend their rest of time at their long living home, therefore welfare for elderlies are now a significant issue. Welfare for elderlies are fundamentally consisted of welfare service at facility and nursing home, and they provide services based on nursing insurance program launched in 2000. Concrete nursing service is developed by nursing support specialists to provide cares by care workers and visiting helpers (Shigeyo OKUNO & Kazuko ONISHI, 2017).

Nursing care workers seem to provide cares using the word, “individuality” such as valuing “individuality” to respect individual users. Users have different needs at each time and occasion. Sometimes, they don’t even understand their own needs. We may seem to provide cares respecting “individuality” by assuming it’s a gender or historical life specific needs (e.g., “one is good at xxx due to one’s past job” or “one has interests in xx, so likes xx,”). But we may not have been provided what users really need. While “Individual care” is raised as one of essential capabilities of a nursing care worker, the individual care may not have provided in reality (Nursing Care Worker Basic Training Text Preparation Committee, 2018). Nursing care workers use the expression “value individuality” when respecting individual users. However, there is no clear terminology or process to capture “individuality” from the past research.

The research objective is to clarify the awareness of nursing care workers how they perceive “Individuality” of users and what they actually do to respect “individuality” when providing cares.

By clarifying the awareness of “individuality” captured vaguely, we can see what part of users the nursing care workers see and value in regard to nursing care. The research result will indicate the first step for nursing care workers to provide a concrete care that “respects individuality” without stereotyped view by created through using a specific word, “individuality.”

II. Study Method

1. Research Method

Semi-structured interview using one-on-one interview

2. Research Sample

20 nursing care workers fulfill the below criteria:

- 1) Obtains experience or currently working at a nursing care facility in Kanto area
- 2) Has nursing care certification and three years or more of experience of nursing care
- 3) No special training/education on “individuality,” which is the research subject

3. Research Period

April – June, 2014

4. Interview Method

Interviewed in an individual room for 60 – 80 minutes

5. Research Item for Interview

The research asks about the “individuality” itself, therefore did not intentionally explain its definition, but asked to openly comment respondents’ own view of “individuality”

Research Item:

- 1) Basic character (gender, age, occupation, years of experience)
- 2) Spontaneous image when hearing “Individuality”
- 3) Importance of “Individuality”
- 4) Why respondents feel/think it is important
- 5) Free talk what they feel/think of “Individuality”

The whole interview was recorded.

6. Analytic Method

We use the following process for the qualitative inductive analysis to understand “individuality”:

Developed verbatim from recording interviews, coded by grouping their wording by avoiding to include multiple elements and sub-categorized with relevant codes by looking overall. Furthermore, developed groups by sorting sub-category group from relevant content.

To enhance reliability and validity of analysis, we repeatedly discussed until we come to consensus under the supervision by the specialists of nursing care education and study.

7. Ethical Consideration

We conducted the research with the approval of the ethical committee at International University of Health and Welfare. We briefed respondents the objective and method in writing/verbal and got agreement. The explanation included that the participation to the research is on a voluntary basis, disagreeing will not be the detriment to respondents, respondents can quit participation during the research even after the agreement, interview data will be encoded to be anonymous and will be exclusively used for this research, data will be discarded upon completion, and the result will be published accordingly.

III Result

1. Respondent Outline

1) Respondent attribute (Table 1)

20 certified nursing care workers, 10 males (average age: 40.9, average experience: 11.9 years) and 10 females (average age: 44.9, average experience: 13.5 years).

Their occupations were at home nursing care, elderly nursing care facility, special elderly nursing home, regional comprehensive support center, intellectual disability center, day care, short stay care, group home facility, and paid elderly nursing home.

Table 1 Respondent's Basic Attributes

Respondents	Gender	Age	Experience (years)	Job Experience
A	Male	50	4	Visiting nursing
B	Male	39	17	Ellery nursing care facility
C	Female	30	5	Ellery nursing care facility
D	Female	48	10	Day care, Special elderly nursing home, Community support center
E	Female	57	12	Intellectual disability center, Elderly nursing care facility
F	Female	33	13	Day care
G	Female	46	12	Visiting matching, Special elderly nursing home, Day care
H	Male	36	16	Special elderly nursing home, Day care
I	Male	34	11	Visiting bathing, Special elderly nursing home, Nursing care home, Day care
J	Female	33	7	Special elderly nursing home, Nursing home with dementia care, Day care
K	Female	55	20	Special elderly nursing home Ellery nursing care facility
L	Male	34	12	Day care, Special elderly nursing home, Short stay care, Group home facility
M	Male	45	14	Special elderly nursing home, Paid elderly nursing home, Day care
N	Male	30	11	Home nursing care, Special elderly nursing home
O	Male	34	6	Group home facility, Home nursing care
P	Female	50	27	Special elderly nursing home, Elderly nursing care facility
Q	Female	53	15	Short stay care, Special elderly nursing home, Elderly nursing care facility
R	Male	57	14	Special elderly nursing home, Day care
S	Male	50	14	Special elderly nursing home, Elderly nursing care facility, Day care
T	Female	44	14	Special elderly nursing home, Elderly nursing care facility

2. Screened Category Result

1) Category Outline

After the data analysis, there were 52 codes, 13 sub-categories, and 6 categories. We indicated the category as [], the sub category as < >, and code as [].

6 categories were named [Accepting a user's own style], [Life with user being oneself][Desire the support to be independent][vague individuality][individuality to be noticed by family][Basic of nursing care] (Table 2).

Table 2 "Individuality" perceived by nursing care worker

	Category	Sub-category	Code
1	[Accepting a user's own style]	<Care accepting user's own style>	[Understanding a user leads to acceptance] [Accepting an individual just the way one is] [Looking at the reality of a user there] [Observing a daily behavior] [Need to learn from a user]
		<Care that a user can spend time by being oneself>	[What a user want, how a user want to be] [Living an ordinary life comfortably] [Even with dementia, a user can spend time the way one is] [Generating user's motivation]
2	[Life with user being oneself]	<Providing desired lifestyle>	[Relaxed place] [Lifestyle a user desires] [Respect an individual] [Supporting a user to be able to live at home] [Humane lifestyle till the end] [Living at home is true to oneself]
		<Being express one's value>	[Desire to live at home as much as possible] [User can express what one wants] [User can show one's real character] [To bring out a desire]
3	[Desire the support to be independent]	<Desire to respect>	[Things a user strongly wants and values] [Wanting to value what one still has]
		<Support to be independent>	[The environment a user can choose but provide support if necessary] [Us to find what's one is feasible and what's not] [Can bring out one's capability]
4	[Vague individuality]	<Vague individuality>	[Difficulty of individuality due to various views] [Vagueness toward the value (one's own character)] [Individuality sought to answer although there is no answer] [Welfare community using an individual and individuality differently]
		<Individuality learnt from user>	[Able to see from user personality or atmosphere that one belongs] [Dialogue with a user] [To listen a user with one's memory] [Effort to understand a user] [Learn from users] [To explore from the wording a user speaks]
		<Individuality found from user's life history>	[Individuality is significantly influenced by user's growing environment] [Every user has background] [To understand user's job, friends, and life before marriage] [To explore life story] [Origin of user]
		<Individuality assumed from user's life history >	[To hear past lifestyle] [Life environment, environment of times of life, family environment]
		<Individuality to be developed>	[Something to make together] [To portray the picture a user envisions]
		<Individuality not to be stereotyped>	[Not to be determined] [Not to conclude] [No stereotype of becoming elderly]
5	[Individuality to be noticed by family]	< Individuality to make family notice >	[Not to be captured by the past] [To make family notice]
6	[Basic of nursing care]	<Basic of nursing care>	[To understand a user oneself] [To make a user happy] [To spend time with care, the mean to get to know others] [To find the needs user seeks] [Fundamental of user care]

2) Relation of Categories

When we analyzed the correlation of sub-category and code that construct each category, the concept of “individuality” perceived by nursing care workers is as follows. In addition, Chart 1 addresses the correlation diagram of individuality concept and care perceived by nursing care workers.

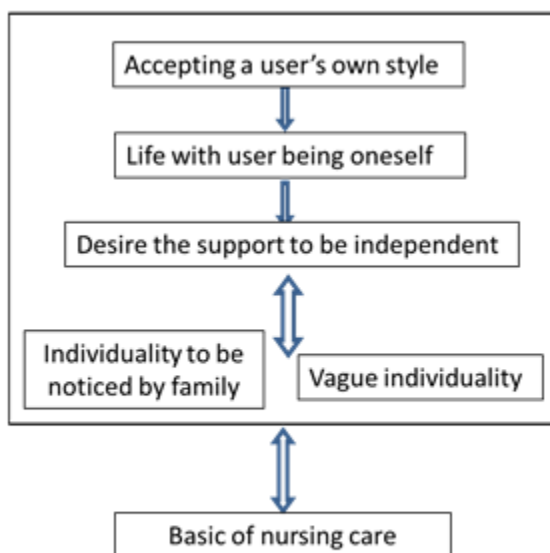


Diagram 2 Correlation diagram of individuality concept perceived by nursing care workers

Nursing care workers consider that respecting/valuing “individuality” is to understand **【Accepting a user’s own style】**, and that is to understand users, accept an individual just the way one is, and observe one’s daily behavior. Furthermore, it is needed to be able to live the way one is, and that is to provide cares bringing out what a user wants, making comfortable life, and spending time with one’s own style.

To live with one’s own style, we consider it is necessary to support a user to stay at comfortable space and provide humane lifestyle till the end for one’s desired life so that one can realize **【Life with user being oneself】**. In addition, we feel it is essential to provide the care that a user can say one’s desire to express one’s own style. For a user to spend one’s life at home and live humane lifestyle, we think we need to understand user’s **【Desire the support to be independent】**, and that is that a user can choose what one wants and explore what’s feasible and what’s not. As the individuality of users is diversified and difficult to understand its various aspects, it is understood as **【Vague individuality】**, therefore we should not to be stereotyped but understand it through each user, explore and imagine from one’s life history. We also felt we can create an individuality together with users as it was understood from the past life history, however, they are not living the past any more but living now changing every day, therefore one should be different from the past. On the other hand, many of their family have been stuck in the past, so that we felt **【individuality to be noticed by family】** is also important.

The word, “Individuality” is key to actually provide the individual care sought as [basic of nursing care]

IV. Findings

1. Concept of “individuality” from nursing care worker’s view

The word “Individuality” is a general term but no specific definition and understood differently by people. However, “Individuality” sounds good with warmth, therefore used a lot in nursing cares. Difficulty of the word, “Individuality” is similar to understanding ourselves. There is a proverb “Know thyself.” Is there anyone who can accurately explain about “being oneself”? Life is a journey to find what is “being oneself” till the end.

In regard to the difficulty to know oneself, Shinfuku (2001) states “Thyself (One) is not something tangible, therefore elusive. When you look at a mirror, your face appears, but face is outside, surface of yourself, not thyself.” “You are broad, complex and ever-changing. You can capture a part of it in a situation, but cannot capture everything. What can be captured is just a part of you, one side, and one area” “You start out something you don’t know (unknown), and you get to know, understand, and manage better as you grow, but there always remains something you don’t know forever (unknowable).”

In this way, while it is difficult to know yourself having unknowable yourself and being ever-changing, you always feel the consciousness of being yourself due to underlying coherence and continuity together.

The word, “individuality” is also broad, complex and ever-changing. You can capture a part of it in a situation, but cannot capture the whole thing. What can be captured is just a part of it, one side, and one area. In this way, it has similar sense.

One difference is that “Individuality” is used for others, not to yourself. “Individuality” of users in nursing care is utilized by nursing care works, on the other hand, “being oneself” is utilized by users. “Individuality” can be perceived as “user’s being oneself.”

In the interview, there was a respondent saying ‘individuality is portraying what we envision. When we work, we imprint the image through (the thinking process of) my mother used to be this way, but she is now that way, so she is probably this way. Therefore, when I am asked about “Individuality,” it is very difficult.’ Can family or a nursing care worker truly understand users’ “Individuality”? In other words, it gives a question if the “Individuality” nursing care worker sees matches with “being oneself” users perceives.

“Individuality” and “being oneself” cannot be determined by nursing care workers. “Individuality” is an image others see. Given that, nursing care workers use an abstract word, “Individuality” in their daily practice and it can lead to misunderstanding that it supports respectful, ideal cares to users. Using the word, “Individuality” does not

accurately express a user oneself. If we cannot provide cares that meet individual needs, it is just a self-satisfaction of nursing care workers by using the word “Individuality.”

From our interview, many nursing care workers commented that “Individuality” is vague and elusive, but it is a significant word. To value user’s individuality, nursing care workers provide daily cares by accepting user’s own style, understanding life history, and willing to support one’s desired life. Since their care is based on the vague, elusive “Individuality” word, cares among nursing care workers are not possibly consistent. If the care is effective to users, “Individuality” is considered to be effective, however, if the care is not effective, “Individuality” will be questioned. One respondent commented that “I don’t know the past (of a user), but we have now based on the past experience and we build together from here. Being together, something has changed, something unique to oneself can be developed is what I think the most. New individuality to be created.” We think that nursing care workers feel the cares looking now and future of users living now including their past without focusing on the word “Individuality” and value the attitude to discover a new part of users together with users.

In the conclusion, as mentioned earlier, nursing care workers using the word, “individuality” leads to understand uniqueness, personality, value, persistency, and psychological aspect such as pride that comes from emotions/feelings. This can be considered that nursing care workers have an attitude of respecting each user.

While we need to have consistent nursing care policy, individual users’ reactions and expressions are different to each nursing care worker. Therefore, it is critical for team care to provide effective cares appropriate for each situation based on an individual relationship of a user and a nursing care worker. However, a nursing care worker should not only focus on an individual user’s care, but good balance of consistent care policy and individual care.

2. Care toward “Individuality” perceived by nursing care worker

We found that nursing care workers provide essential care by judging what the user want “now” and “here.” It means nursing care workers commonly value a facing user.

From the interview result, nursing care workers said the word, “Individuality” was important and it was classified into six categories, the word was seen abstract, vague and elusive. In general, “Individuality” is to respect lifestyle and value developed from one’s long life experience, however, the value of users were diversified and uncertain in the interview.

In the interview, we found nursing care workers value is what Carl Ransom Roger states as a basic of personal support, “now” and “here” that were accumulated knowledge and technological experience in their care practice (Hiroshi ITOH, 1982). While nursing care workers unconsciously do this, many of them said they need to know the past to understand the current user.

In other words, nursing care worker do not only focus on the word, “Individuality,” but consider the attitude of discovering a new user together by providing a care looking into the user’s past, today, and future.

Carl Ransom Rogers states that personal support is the sensitivity of instant moment within here and now and immediate presence, and it is critical to be sensitive to the client’s being properly. ⁶⁾

As shown to the comment of nursing care workers, [Accepting a user’s own style], [Life with user being oneself], [Desire the support to be independent], [Vague individuality], [Individuality to be noticed by family] and [Basic of nursing care], they provide cares needed by users and family at instant moment of now and here.

V. Conclusion

While there are various research approach on “Individuality,” respondents commented that “Individuality” was vague in the interview of nursing care workers, and we found that they provided a different nursing care based on the perception accordingly. We have a risk of providing consistent team care when providing the care based on elusive “Individuality.”

Nursing care workers always provide cares by respecting user’s life history and value, always trying to understand a facing user, and looking at what’s happening “now” and “here” regardless if they are elderly suffering dementia.

The word “Individuality” include consistency sought for cares and uniqueness of individual nursing care workers, and this shows unique relationship of a user and a nursing care worker.

VI. Limitation and challenge of the research

This study was done among 20 nursing care workers, therefore it is difficult to generalize the understanding of “Individuality” among nursing care workers. We would like to continue and conduct research with bigger samples in the future.

VII. Acknowledgement

We deeply appreciate to all of nursing care workers providing invaluable data to us through response and cooperation during your busy practices. This paper is re-edited with data used for the paper of University of Health and Welfare Graduate School in 2014.

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