Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of relationships on personhood in dementia care: A qualitative, hermeneutic study

Version: 1 Date: 16 October 2013

Reviewer: Dorothy Forbes

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This paper makes an important contribution to the literature by enhancing our understanding of the meaning of personhood for persons with dementia and how relationships can contribute to the sense of personhood. The clarification of the terms individualized care and person-centred care was also helpful. The vignettes clearly illustrated the lived experiences of the participants.

Please number your comments and divide them into

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  1) Discuss the reason(s) for not interviewing the persons with dementia for their perspectives on their relationships with the family carers and professional caregivers. Their voices could have made a significant contribution to the study and paper. Without their voice, there is a void in the findings.
  2) Discuss the reason(s) for not observing the interactions between the persons with dementia and their family carers.
  3) In the section “Relationships that sustained personhood” and subtitle “Professional relationships”, third line, strengths-based approach is mentioned. Further description and the advantages of this approach are needed as this is the only time this term is used.
  4) In the section “Relationships that diminished personhood” and subtitle “Reluctant helping relationships”, the sentence “Mrs J had earlier been a representative wife and hostess” needs clarification as I am not sure what is meant by “representative”.

- Minor Essential Revisions

There are several grammatical errors throughout the paper:

1) “Participation observation may have influenced behaviour but concealed observation was ethically no option.” This sentence should read “Participation observation may have influenced behaviour but concealed observation was ethically not an option.”

2) “Showing respect and preserving dignity was a major concern...”. This sentence should read “Showing respect and preserving dignity were a major concern...”
3) “Reciprocity and the sharing of information was important” should read “Reciprocity and the sharing of information were important”

4) “As in other studies, alternative explanations could be that they considered this an indication of distrust in professional carers’ abilities as or that they threatened the expertise of professional carers [62, 63].” Remove the “as”.

5) “…their connectedness to the person with dementia enabled them to know how the persons needs and emotions”, sentence needs to be revised.

- Discretionary Revisions

None

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.