Reviewer’s report

Title: Balancing the struggle to live with dementia: A systematic meta-synthesis of coping

Version: 1 Date: 01 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Anja Bieber

Reviewer's report:

Comments on manuscript_BTGC-D-19-00070R1

Thank you for the invitation to peer review the manuscript, which deals with knowledge regarding the coping experiences of people with dementia. The authors aim to interpret and synthesize the knowledge regarding coping strategies of people with dementia. Therefore, a meta-synthesis has been conducted.

I have some minor and some major comments, which might improve the manuscript.

1. Abstract

P.2 line 29 and line 34: The authors assessed 83 articles, but included 74 in the meta-synthesis. The difference in numbers needs an explanation.

P. 2 line 30: The authors are requested to describe how they synthesized their findings.

P.2 line 50: The authors concluded that people with dementia cope in different ways and use several strategies. Implications for healthcare professionals and decision makers must be added.

2. Background

P. 3 line 11-13: Please correct the writing of "…, The World Health… and The Norwegian…"

P.3 line 16: The term "right treatment" is difficult to understand. Person-centered care aims to provide "individual treatment", which should be highlighted here.

P.3 line 54: A short description should be added about what "a global coping response" means.

P.4 line 1: Target groups of this meta-synthesis are healthcare professionals and decision makers. However, the subject will be important for informal carers of people with dementia, too. Therefore, I suggest adding informal carers as a further target group.

3. Methods

P. 4 line 10: The design must be described with only a few sentences.
P.4 line 29: The correct term of the database PsycINFO must be used (https://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycinfo). A correction is also needed in the abstract section.

P.4 line 53: Correction is needed for "...and (3) The paper...".

P.5 line 2: The CASP checklist includes 10 questions (https://casp-uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CASP-Qualitative-Checklist-2018_fillable_form.pdf). The authors excluded question 10: "How valuable is the research?" Reasons should be given because this question is important with regard to issues of external validity of the included studies.

P.5 line 19: The number of studies needs checking. The authors reported 83 reviewed studies, and that they excluded seven studies for low quality issues. The meta-synthesis included 74 studies. Table 1 includes 75 studies.

P.6 line 9: The authors described as the first analytic step the reading and analyzing of one-third of the papers. Please explain whether the categories were derived from this one-third of the papers. I wonder how the authors handled aspects of coping in the remaining two-thirds of the papers, which did not fit in the four categories?

4. Results

P.6 line 31-60: References must be added.

P.7 line 28: The identified latent theme "Balancing the struggle of living with dementia" should be added here.

P.9 line 1-12: This category accepting the situation has only one subcategory, i.e. position in life. Social and emotional support was described as one of the two main coping resources (P.7 line 7). What was reported within the studies about the use of social and emotional support by people with dementia to accept the situation? Who helps the people with dementia to accept their situation? Which strategies are useful? Answers to these questions are important results, because healthcare professionals and decision makers must improve their understanding of successful strategies to support people with dementia.

P.9 line 20: A reference must be added to the quotation "the end of the world".

P.9 line 30-46: The category Avoiding the situation has two subcategories, i.e. Direct avoiding strategies and Indirect avoiding strategies. It is difficult to see a clear distinction of these two subcategories. Maybe it is important to differentiate the avoiding strategies; however, there is a need for explanation.

P.9 line 52- P.10 line 7: The latent theme Balancing the struggle of living with dementia can be enhanced by including aspects of the identified main resources Humour and Social and emotional support.
5. Discussion

The section needs a discussion about the influence of the main coping resources Humour and Social and emotional support on the coping strategies and capabilities of people with dementia.

P.10 line 27-42: These are results, which should be part of the Results section.

P.10 line 50-52: The authors stated that their findings describe problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies. It should be discussed whether the categories Keep going and holding on to life as usual and Adapting and adjusting to demands from the situation are coping strategies that are more problem-focused, and whether the other two categories are more emotion-focused strategies. It should be discussed why it is important for professionals and decision makers (and informal carers) to consider the different needs regarding problem-focused aspects and emotion-focused aspects of coping in living with dementia.

6. Limitation

P.12 line 8: The limitation section should include the modified application changed use of the original CASP checklist.

7. Conclusion

This section needs major revision, because this is a short summary of the findings, but not a conclusion with a clear take-home message for readers.

References

4. Livingstone et al.: There is an error in the title of this paper.

Table 1: Authors should check the headings.

Table 2: This table includes 74 studies, but table 3 includes 75 studies.

Table 3: This table includes sociodemographic information for some studies. The information can be removed with the exception of the information regarding the cognitive status because the authors mentioned these aspects in the result section, and it seems to be an important influencing factor regarding the abilities of people with dementia to communicate their coping strategies.

Table 4: The category Social and emotional support includes reference 93, but this was not part of the Condensed meaning units. Reference 98 is included in the Condensed meaning units, but this is not part of the first category mentioned above.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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