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Family Experiences in Caring for Patients with Hallucinations: A Phenomenological Study at Naimata Regional Mental Health Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Background & Objective: Hallucinations are a form of perceptual disturbance commonly experienced by patients with mental disorders, which impact the quality of life for both the patients and the families who care for them. The objective of this study is to deeply explore the experiences of families caring for patients with hallucinations at Naimata Regional Mental Health Hospital. **Method:** This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The population consists of families who have a family member suffering from a mental disorder involving hallucinations. The sample includes twelve participants, selected using purposive sampling. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. The data were presented in the form of thematic narratives and analyzed using thematic analysis, which included the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research instruments used were the interview guidelines and a voice recording device. **Results:** The findings of the study indicate that families experience psychological burdens such as stress, fear, and helplessness, as well as social pressure due to societal stigma. Despite these challenges, families continue to play a crucial role in providing emotional, physical, and social support to the patients. Additionally, support from healthcare providers and the surrounding community significantly aids the caregiving process. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that the experience of families caring for patients with hallucinations is highly complex and requires mental, emotional, and social readiness. Active interventions involving families are necessary to improve the quality of patient care and the well-being of families in facing these challenges.

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Introduction

Serious mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, are major challenges for individuals who experience them as well as for the families who care for them (Leng et al., 2019). One of the main symptoms of schizophrenia is hallucination, which may involve false sensory perceptions that do not align with reality. These hallucinations can affect the behavior, emotions, and social interactions of patients, thereby requiring special attention from the family during the care process (Abdelraof et al., 2023). Families play an important role in supporting the recovery process of patients with mental disorders. Good family support can improve the quality of life of patients and accelerate the healing process (Kusumawaty et al., 2021). However, not all families possess adequate knowledge and skills in caring for a family member who experiences hallucinations (Dina Yusdiana et al, 2023; Fatmawati & Syahrir, 2023). The burden experienced by families in caring for patients with hallucinations is often psychological and emotional (Novian et al., 2020). Social stigma towards mental disorders may worsen this condition, causing families to feel isolated and anxious (Prima Dewi Kusumawati et al., 2025). Therefore, it is important to understand the family’s experience in caring for patients with hallucinations in order to provide appropriate support.

Family knowledge about how to care for patients with hallucinations greatly influences their ability to provide effective care. Without sufficient knowledge, families may be unable to manage the patient’s symptoms properly, which can worsen the patient’s condition and increase the caregiver’s burden (Fatmawati & Syahrir, 2023; Lukitasari & Hidayati, 2013). In addition to knowledge, social support also plays an important role in the caregiving process. Families with strong social support networks tend to be more capable of overcoming the challenges in caring for patients with hallucinations. This support can take the form of emotional assistance, information, and other resources (Ibda, 2023; Santi et al., 2021). Therapeutic communication between the family and the patient is also a crucial aspect of care. An empathetic and supportive communication approach can help patients feel more accepted and understand their condition, which can reduce hallucination symptoms and improve their quality of life (Busainah et al., 2021; Suwardiman, 2023). However, not all families have adequate therapeutic communication skills. Therefore, training and education for families on how to communicate with patients experiencing hallucinations are highly necessary to improve the effectiveness of care. In addition, the family's role in preventing relapse is also very important. With a good understanding of the patient’s condition and appropriate care strategies, families can help prevent the recurrence of hallucination symptoms and ensure that patients receive continuous care (Nancye, 2021; Sulistyaningrum & Pratiwi, 2022)

Family involvement in the care process can also improve patients' adherence to treatment. Patients who feel supported by their families are more likely to follow treatment schedules and medical check-ups, which contributes to their recovery (Aulya et al., 2025) However, the challenges of caring for patients with hallucinations do not only come from within the family but also from the existing healthcare system. Limited resources, lack of professional staff, and restricted access to mental health services can worsen the patient's condition and increase the family's burden (Aulya et al., 2025; Santi et al., 2021) Therefore, it is important to conduct in-depth research on the family's experience in caring for patients with hallucinations. This research can provide valuable insights for the formulation of policies and intervention programs that support families in the care of patients with mental disorders. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of families in caring for patients with hallucinations at the Naimata Regional Mental Hospital. By understanding these experiences, it is expected that effective strategies and interventions can be identified to support families and improve the quality of care for patients with hallucinations.

Objective

This study aims to explore the experiences of families in caring for patients with hallucinations at Naimata Regional Mental Hospital, in order to identify the challenges they face and the support they need during the caregiving process.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of families caring for patients with hallucinations. The phenomenological approach was chosen as it aims to understand the meaning that families attribute to their experiences in caring for patients with mental disorders who experience hallucinations. The population in this study consists of families with members who have a mental disorder accompanied by hallucinations. A total of twelve individuals were selected as the sample, chosen using purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have relevant experiences related to the topic of this research, ensuring that the data obtained would provide in-depth insights into the families' experiences.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. This interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature, with open-ended questions aimed at exploring the families' experiences and feelings while caring for the patients. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded using a voice recorder to ensure accurate data collection.

The data obtained were presented in thematic narrative form, which describes the families' experiences in detail. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which included three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher identified and categorized the main themes that emerged from the interviews. The next stage, data presentation, involved elaborating on the identified themes in narrative form. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved linking these themes to generate a deeper understanding of the families' experiences. The research instruments used in this study were the semi-structured interview guide and a voice recorder to document the interviews. The study was conducted at Naimata Regional Mental Hospital during the period from July to September 2024.

Results

The results of this study revealed three main themes that describe the experiences of families caring for patients with hallucinations at Naimata Regional Mental Hospital. The analysis showed that families face significant psychological, emotional, and social burdens, but they continue to play an essential role in providing support to the patients.

TABLE 1. Themes, Participants, and Supporting Narratives

Theme	Participants	Supporting Narratives
Theme 1: Psychological and Emotional Burden	Participant 1 (Mrs. T, R)	I feel helpless watching my family member struggle with hallucinations; it's emotionally draining.
	Participant 4 (Mrs. O, G)	It's very stressful, especially when they react aggressively due to their hallucinations.
	Participant 6 (Mrs. I, M)	very emotionally exhausting. Sometimes, I feel like I'm the one carrying the entire burden of their illness alone.
Theme 2: Social Pressure and Stigma	Participant 2 (Mrs. M, H)	People around us don't understand the situation, and they often avoid us, which makes everything harder.
	Participant 5 (Mrs. N, P)	I'm afraid to talk about my family member's condition due to the negative stigma from others.
	Participant 7 (Mrs. S, A)	It feels very isolating; no one wants to associate with a family dealing with mental health issues.
Theme 3: Support from Healthcare Providers and the Community	Participant 3 (Mrs. A, B)	The support from doctors and nurses is very helpful. Their advice helps me stay strong.
	Participant 8 (Mrs. T, L)	Healthcare providers have been very supportive, offering resources and guidance on how to manage hallucinations.
	Participant 12 (Mrs. W, K)	Routine check-ups and counseling sessions have been helpful in understanding how to manage hallucinations.

Summary of Findings:

This study found that caring for patients with hallucinations imposes significant psychological, emotional, and social burdens on families. Despite facing these challenges, families continue to provide essential emotional, physical, and social support to the patients. Support from healthcare providers and the surrounding community is crucial in alleviating the family's burden and improving the quality of care for the patients. The identified themes psychological and emotional burden, social pressure and stigma, and support from healthcare providers and the community align with the study's objective to explore the experiences of families caring for patients with hallucinations. These findings highlight the importance of interventions aimed at addressing the psychological needs of families and the stigma associated with mental illness, as well as the critical role of professional support in the care process.

Discussion

The findings revealed three main themes: psychological and emotional burden, social pressure and stigma, and support from healthcare professionals and the community. Each theme provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by families in caring for patients with hallucinations.

1. Psychological and Emotional Burden : The first theme identified was the psychological and emotional burden experienced by families. The study found that families experienced stress, fear, and feelings of helplessness. This aligns with previous research indicating that caring for patients with severe mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, often impacts the psychological well-being of families (Suwardiman, 2023). Families feel isolated and concerned about the patient's condition, especially when the patient experiences hallucinations that disrupt daily life. Hallucinations can cause patients to become irrational or even aggressive, increasing family anxiety. In this study, several participants expressed deep feelings of despair and frustration in facing the patient's condition, which showed no improvement. Participant 1 (Mrs. T, R) stated that they felt powerless because they did not know what to do to help the patient. This reflects a lack of adequate knowledge about the mental disorder experienced by the patient, which often leads to emotional stress for the family. Research by (Mansyur, 2018; Prayogo & Noviana, 2021) also emphasizes the importance of family knowledge in caring for patients with mental disorders to reduce stress and anxiety levels.
2. Social Pressure and Stigma : The second theme found was the social pressure and stigma felt by families. Many families reported feeling judged by society for caring for a family member with a mental disorder. Previous research also indicates that social stigma towards mental disorders can worsen the condition of patients and their families (Firmawati et al., 2023; Prima Dewi Kusumawati et al, 2025) This stigma often leads to social isolation, making families feel alienated and struggling to seek support from their surroundings. For example, Participant 2 (Mrs. M, H) revealed that they felt ashamed to talk about their family member's condition due to fear of negative judgment from society. This stigma not only worsens the family's emotional well-being but also hinders their access to the social support they need. This reinforces findings in studies by (Aditia et al., 2024; Astuti, 2024; Aulya et al., 2025), which highlight the

importance of public education to reduce stigma related to mental disorders. A more informed society can provide better support to families caring for patients with mental disorders.

3. Support from Healthcare Professionals and the Community : The third theme identified was support from healthcare professionals and the community. Families with access to competent healthcare professionals reported a better experience in caring for patients. Some participants expressed that support from healthcare professionals, such as doctors and nurses, was very helpful in understanding how to care for patients with hallucinations. This support provides a sense of security and reduces the anxiety they feel. This study underscores the importance of support from medical professionals in the care process of patients with mental disorders. Participant 3 (Mrs. A, B) mentioned that assistance from doctors and nurses was very helpful in managing the hallucinations experienced by the patient. This support, according to research by (Fitri et al., 2024; Nadlifuddin et al., 2024), can reduce family anxiety and improve the quality of patient care. Additionally, support from the community, whether from friends, neighbors, or family support groups, can provide the emotional assistance that is greatly needed.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The strength of this study lies in its qualitative approach using a phenomenological design. This approach allows the researcher to deeply explore the subjective experiences of families caring for patients with hallucinations. Data collection through in-depth interviews provides participants with the opportunity to express their feelings and experiences more openly and honestly. Thus, this study can offer richer and more profound insights into the challenges faced by families in caring for patients with mental disorders. Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling ensures that the selected sample is highly relevant to the research objectives, namely families caring for patients with mental disorders experiencing hallucinations. Therefore, the findings of this study can accurately represent the experiences of families within the intended context.

Limitations

However, a limitation of this study is the small sample size, consisting of only 12 participants. Although this sample size is adequate to provide an overview of family experiences, the small number may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample may be necessary to confirm these findings. Additionally, this study was conducted at a single hospital, so the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of families at other hospitals or in the general community. Another limitation is that this study did not explore other aspects, such as economic factors or the long-term impact of caregiving on the family's quality of life. More comprehensive research involving these various factors could provide a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced by families in caring for patients with hallucinations.

Implications of the Study

This study has several important implications for both mental health care practice and health policy. First, the findings indicate that families caring for patients with mental disorders require greater support, both from healthcare professionals and from society. Therefore, it is crucial for healthcare professionals to provide better information and training on how to care for patients with mental disorders to families. Second, reducing stigma towards mental disorders through public education can enhance social support for families. Lastly, this study highlights the need for policies that support family-based interventions in the care of patients with mental disorders to improve the well

Conclusion

This study concludes that families caring for patients with hallucinations face significant emotional, psychological, and social burdens. Despite these challenges, they remain central in providing comprehensive support to patients. Effective collaboration with healthcare professionals and strong community involvement are essential to ease the caregiving burden. Healthcare providers should offer continuous support, involve families in treatment plans, and develop support networks. Public education should be enhanced to reduce stigma. Future research should include more diverse and larger samples, use longitudinal designs, and compare different care models to identify the most effective support systems.

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