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A Life Journey of a Patient with Limb Amputation: Exploring Lived Experiences and Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Limb amputation is a life-changing experience that can significantly affect an individual's physical functioning, emotional well-being, psychological adjustment, social relationships, independence, and overall quality of life. This study explored the life journey of a patient with limb amputation, focusing on the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, adaptations, and healthcare encounters associated with living after limb loss. Using a descriptive qualitative case study design, the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how amputation influences different aspects of an individual's life and how the person adjusts to the physical and psychosocial changes brought about by this experience. Data were collected through an in-depth, semi-structured interview using a researcher-developed and expert-validated interview guide. Participants were purposively selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria. The interview responses were transcribed, organized, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify significant experiences, recurring patterns, and emerging themes. The findings revealed that living with limb amputation involves a complex journey characterized by physical limitations, emotional and psychological challenges, changes in daily activities and independence, social adjustments, and experiences within the healthcare system. The participant's journey also highlighted the importance of acceptance, resilience, family and social support, personal determination, rehabilitation, and compassionate healthcare in adapting to life after amputation. The study emphasizes the need for holistic, individualized, and patient-centered care that addresses the physical, emotional, psychological, social, and rehabilitative needs of individuals with limb amputation. The findings may provide valuable insights for nurses and other healthcare professionals in developing appropriate interventions, strengthening patient education, improving rehabilitation support, and promoting independence and quality of life among individuals living with limb loss.

Keywords: *Limb amputation, life journey, descriptive, qualitative research, patient outcomes, physical changes, psychosocial changes*

INTRODUCTION

Limb amputation is a significant life event that results in permanent physical loss and profound psychosocial changes. Individuals who undergo amputation often experience challenges that extend beyond physical disability, including altered body image, emotional distress, reduced independence, financial burden, and changes in social role. Advances in surgical techniques and rehabilitation have improved survival and mobility; however, many patients continue to face difficulties in adapting to life after amputation. Understanding the

lived experiences of individuals with limb amputation is essential for healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, to provide holistic and compassionate care. Despite the growing number of amputees worldwide, qualitative studies exploring their personal journeys remain limited in the Philippine context. This study seeks to explore these lived experiences and identify outcomes that may guide improvements in healthcare delivery.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences and outcomes of patients with limb amputation. Specifically, it sought to understand how individuals described their journey before, during, and after the amputation, including the emotional, physical, psychological, and social challenges they encountered throughout the process. The study also examined the coping strategies participants used to adapt to life after amputation, their experiences with healthcare services and rehabilitation, and the ways these experiences influenced their recovery and quality of life.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on adult patients who had undergone upper or lower limb amputation due to medical or traumatic causes. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and interviewed about their lived experiences. The study emphasized participants' personal narratives and did not aim to measure clinical outcomes, treatment effectiveness, or compare causes of amputation. Findings are limited to the experiences of the selected participants and may not be generalized to all individuals with limb amputation.

Review of Related Literature

Studies have shown that individuals who undergo amputation commonly experience grief, anxiety, altered body image, decreased independence, and challenges in returning to their daily roles and activities (Shober & Abrahamsen, 2022). Successful adaptation depends on several factors, including access to rehabilitation services, family support, effective coping strategies, and compassionate healthcare. Holistic nursing care and multidisciplinary rehabilitation have been recognized as essential in helping patients regain functional independence and improve their quality of life (Ferwins et al., 2026). Despite the growing body of international research on limb amputation, there remains limited qualitative evidence exploring the lived experiences of Filipino amputees. This gap underscores the need for phenomenological studies that provide a deeper understanding of patients' experiences and generate evidence to improve patient-centered care and rehabilitation services (Schober & Abrahamsen, 2022; Ferwins et al., 2026)

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Roy's Adaptation Model, Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing theory, and Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Theory, which collectively explain how patients with limb amputation adapt to physical, emotional, and social changes. These theories emphasize the importance of self-care, nursing support, rehabilitation, resilience, and finding meaning through the recovery process, providing a comprehensive

framework for understanding the lived experiences and outcomes of individuals with limb amputation.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological research study was designed to explore the lived experiences and outcomes of patients with limb amputation. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and meaning from their experiences.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of patients with limb amputation. A phenomenological approach was chosen because it focuses on exploring participants' personal perceptions, emotions, and meanings of their experiences. This design enabled the researcher to capture rich, detailed narratives that provided insight into the participants' adaptation, coping mechanisms, and life outcomes following amputation.

Research Steps

The study began with securing ethical approval and validating the interview guide before recruiting eligible participants through purposive sampling. After obtaining informed consent, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews, transcribed and analyzed the data using thematic analysis, and interpreted the findings to identify the common lived experiences and outcomes of patients with limb amputation.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the study's inclusion criteria, ensuring they had firsthand experience of living with limb amputation. Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews after obtaining informed consent, allowing participants to openly share their lived experiences until data saturation was achieved.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The researcher systematically coded the transcripts, identified recurring patterns, and organized them into meaningful themes that represented the lived experiences and outcomes of patients with limb amputation.

Research Assumptions and Validation

This study assumed that the participants would honestly and openly share their lived experiences and perceptions regarding limb amputation. The interview guide was validated by research experts, and the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were ensured through established qualitative research criteria, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study was limited to a small number of purposively selected participants with limb amputation; therefore, the findings reflect their lived experiences and are not intended to be generalized to all individuals with limb loss. Ethical principles were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis identified five overarching themes that describe the lived experiences and outcomes of patients with limb amputation. Participants experienced significant physical limitations, emotional distress, financial challenges, and disruption in their daily lives following amputation. However, family support, faith, personal resilience, and compassionate healthcare played a vital role in helping them adapt and recover. Despite appreciating rehabilitation services and healthcare providers, participants also highlighted the need for improved access to prosthetic devices, psychological counseling, rehabilitation programs, and livelihood support to enhance their quality of life and promote holistic recovery.

SUMMARY

The findings suggest that limb amputation extends beyond physical disability and encompasses emotional, social, economic, and healthcare challenges. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated remarkable resilience, with recovery being strongly influenced by family support, spirituality, rehabilitation, and positive healthcare experiences. These themes provide a holistic understanding of the life journey of patients with limb amputation and directly address the objectives of the present qualitative study.

CONCLUSION

Limb amputation is a life-changing experience that affects an individual's physical, emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Although patients encounter challenges such as reduced mobility, phantom limb pain, financial difficulties, and dependence on assistive devices, they may gradually adapt through family support, compassionate healthcare, effective rehabilitation, and personal resilience. The findings emphasize the importance of holistic, patient-centered nursing care and support the relevance of Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit theory, Sister Callista Roy's Adaptation Model, and Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Theory in explaining how individuals recover, regain independence, and achieve a better quality of life following limb amputation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, patients are encouraged to actively participate in rehabilitation programs, while families continue to provide emotional, practical, and social support throughout recovery. Healthcare professionals and institutions should strengthen holistic, patient-centered care by improving access to rehabilitation, prosthetic services, psychological counseling, and livelihood support. Furthermore, nursing schools should enhance education on rehabilitation nursing and disability care, and future researchers are

encouraged to conduct similar studies with larger and more diverse populations to further expand the understanding of the lived experiences of patients with limb amputation.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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