



# Investigating Lived Experiences and Challenges on Performance of Specific ADLs by Individuals with Chronic Stroke: A Qualitative Study

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## Introduction

- Stroke often results in long-term disability and challenges in performing daily activities.<sup>1</sup>
- Even after physical recovery through rehabilitation, many survivors continue to struggle with self-care tasks.<sup>2</sup>
- Aim:** To explore the lived experiences of stroke survivors regarding barriers and facilitators to self-care, with the goal of informing rehabilitation strategies to address these challenges.

## Methods

- Population:** Individuals with chronic stroke at least 6 months after onset, 18 years old and older.
- Data Collection and analysis:**
  - Individual Interviews via in-person and phone were recorded and transcribed.
  - Thematic analysis was conducted with two independent coders conducted thematic analysis.<sup>3</sup>
  - The interview script included 10 questions and prompt question were asked as needed.
  - Questions explored how stroke survivors experience and manage changes in their self-care, examining daily challenges, emotional responses, support systems, environmental and therapeutic influences, ad strategies they use to regain independence.

## Results

- Seven adults were included in the study (Table 1).
- Average age was 58 years, with most experiencing left-side impairment, averaging 6.5 months post stroke.
- The sample included one female participant and two black participants.

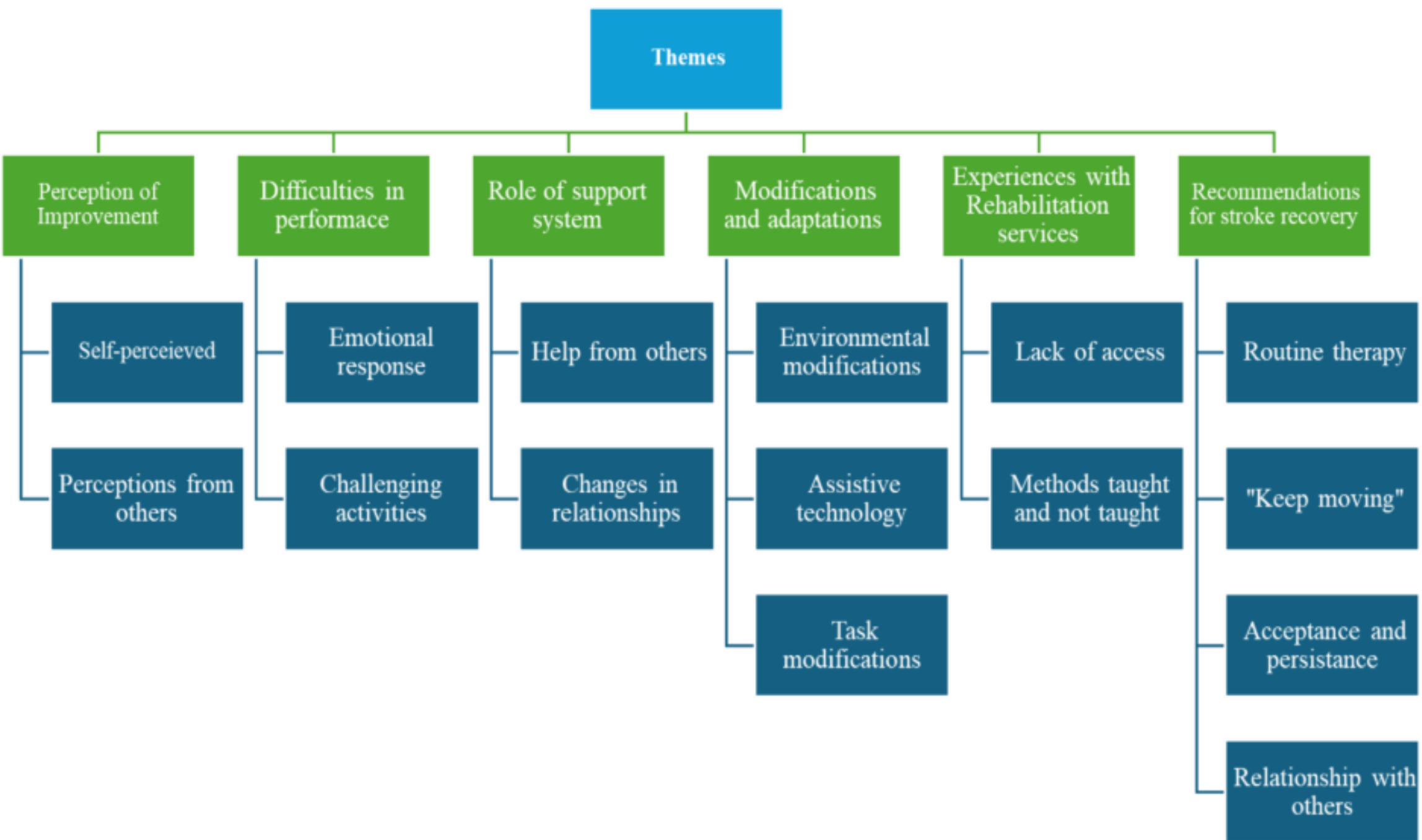
Table 1. Participants Characteristics

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Race	Time since stroke (m)	Affected side	Caregiver present?
PT- #1	59	Male	Non-Hispanic	White	75.5	L	YES
PT- #2	65	Male	Non-Hispanic	White	11.6	L	YES
PT- #3	46	Male	Non-Hispanic	Black	15.2	R	NO
PT- #4	74	Female	Non-Hispanic	White	20.3	L	NO
PT- #5	42	Male	Non-Hispanic	White	6.5	L	YES
PT- #6	54	Male	Non-Hispanic	Black	65.6	L	NO
PT- #7	68	Male	Non-Hispanic	White	143.5	L	NO

## Results (cont.)

- Six themes and fifteen sub-themes were identified (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes



- Theme 1: Perception of Improvement:** describes the participant's perspectives on their progress in self-care after stroke, leading to two sub-themes, **Self-perceived Changes and Perception from Others**, highlighting the discrepancies between personal and external views of progress.

*“I felt successful putting on my own shoes.” (PT 05)*

*“People say I’m getting better, but I don’t see it” (PT 01)*

- Theme 2: Difficulties in performance:** describes the difficulties participants faced in self-care performance, leading to **Emotional Response and Challenging Activities** highlighting how physical limitations and task demands shaped their frustration, effort, and adaptation during recovery.

*“A lot of things take two hands to do.” (PT 01)*

*“It’s more difficult for me to do things for myself than it was before, like going to the bathroom.” (PT 02)*

- Theme 3: Role of Support System:** describes how social and practical support shaped recovery, leading to two sub-themes **Help from Others and Changes in Relationships**, which explains how participants adapted to new forms of assistance and changes in relational dynamics.

*“My caregiver, Ms. Beverly showed me how to put my shirt on. She was the key.” (PT 06)*

*“Sometimes I assume I’m a burden to my wife.” (PT 07)*

## Results (cont.)

- Theme 4: Modifications and adaptations:** describes how participants modified their environments, devices, and techniques to maintain independence, leading to three sub-themes **Environmental Modifications, Assistive Technology, and Task Modifications** as key strategies for managing self-care challenges.

*“We put up a bar to help me hold on getting out.” (PT 04)*

*“I’ve learned to turn myself over in the bathtub and push myself up.” (PT 04)*

- Theme 5: Experiences with Rehabilitation Services:** describes how access to and quality of rehabilitation influenced recovery, leading to two sub-themes **Lack of Access and Methods Taught and Not Taught**, emphasizing the gaps and the impact of education on long term self-care.

*“Our insurance ran out. We have no more.” (PT 05)*

*“They taught me an easier way to put my shirt on.” (PT 03)*

- Theme 6: Recommendations for stroke recovery:** describes the guidance participants felt was most important for recovery, reflected in four sub-themes **Routine Therapy, “Keep Moving,” Acceptance and Persistence, and Relationship with Others**, which capture the behaviors and attitudes they believed supported their ongoing improvement.

*“When you go to therapy, take it seriously, it can help.” (PT 03)*

*“Try not to be aggressive with your helper.” (PT 02)*

## Discussion and Conclusion

- These findings can offer occupational therapy practitioners with valuable insight into the challenges individuals with chronic stroke face in performing self-care, from a lived experience perspective.
- This study can support the development of client-centered interventions that specify address psychosocial factors during stroke recovery.

## References

