

Experience in Coping with Tinnitus on Subjective Idiopathic Tinnitus : A Phenomenological Study

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Background and Objective: Tinnitus is reported subjectively by over 90% of patients. Especially in cases of subjective idiopathic tinnitus where the cause remains unclear, there is currently no distinct treatment available. As a result, most patients experience a chronic course of the condition. The insights gathered from in-depth interviews with subjective idiopathic tinnitus patients can serve as foundational data to aid those who are suffering from the condition. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the experience of coping with tinnitus among subjective idiopathic tinnitus patients and uncover its essence and meaning.

Methods: This study employed a phenomenological study design using individual in-depth interviews and applied the analysis method proposed by Colaizzi. The main question for this study was, “what experience did you have when tinnitus occurred?” Data were collected from 11 subjective idiopathic tinnitus patients between December 2021 and February 2022.

Results: The study participants had an average age of 46 years. A total of 63 meaningful statements were derived regarding the experience of coping with subjective idiopathic tinnitus, resulting in the emergence of four themes and twelve sub-themes (Table 1). The first theme revealed the distress arising from the inability to understand tinnitus accurately. The second theme depicted the disruption of everyday life. The third theme highlighted the challenges in adapting to tinnitus. The fourth theme emphasized acceptance of tinnitus and living with it, including experiencing empathy and solidarity among tinnitus patients, making personal efforts to manage tinnitus, and accepting tinnitus by letting go of the pursuit of complete recovery (Table 1).

Conclusion: The study findings provide valuable insights into the coping experience of individuals dealing with subjective idiopathic tinnitus. These results can be used as a foundational basis for the development and implementation of tinnitus nursing interventions in the future.

Table 1. Coping Experiences of Subjective Idiopathic Tinnitus Patients

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|--|
| The distress due to the inability to understand tinnitus accurately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling helpless due to not knowing the cause of tinnitus. ▪ Resentment towards the persistent tinnitus ▪ Loneliness caused by a lack of empathy from those around |
| The disruption of everyday life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication difficulties arising from tinnitus ▪ Discomfort due to an inability to focus on daily life ▪ Psychological distress leading to a sense of helplessness |
| The challenges in adapting to tinnitus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional instability exacerbated by tinnitus-related stress ▪ Ignoring and avoiding tinnitus ▪ Giving up on coping and experiencing a decrease in the zest for life |
| Embracing tinnitus and living with it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling empathy and solidarity with fellow tinnitus patients ▪ Making personal efforts to manage tinnitus in one's own way ▪ Letting go of the pursuit of a complete recovery and accepting tinnitus |

Keywords: coping, experience, phenomenology, tinnitus