

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	Attitudes and beliefs of Spanish families regarding their family members aged 75 years and over who live alone: a qualitative study
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Molina-Mula, Jesús; Gallo-Estrada, Julia; Miquel-Novajra, Alexandre

### VERSION 1 - REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Lyndsey Miller, PhD RN Post-Doctoral Fellow College of Nursing University of Utah United States of America
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	24-Aug-2018

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This manuscript details a qualitative study that aimed to describe the perceptions of family members about their older relatives (age 75 and older) who lived alone. There is a growing population of older adults who do live alone and family members provide a significant amount of the supportive care and services for this population. The topic area is of interest to social science, however in this manuscript the problem statement and significance of the relevant issues were not adequately addressed and the aim of the paper was too non-specific to make the potential impact of this study clear. I offer several suggestions to help the authors in future submissions of this manuscript:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The aim of the study, while descriptive, still needs to be more specific and address an identified gap in the scientific literature on the topic of older adults who live alone. Why are family members' perceptions important? What is to be gained by studying perceptions of older adults living alone?</li><li>2. The abstract should identify the sample and the methods used, and the language should be more precise (e.g. "fruit of analysis of discussion" is too poetic).</li><li>3. The literature review needs to be updated and tailored more to your study aims. Many of the references were published more than a decade ago and some of the statements about the aging population are also outdated (e.g. baby boomers have already reached retirement age). There is no background or literature review presented on what is known about family perceptions of older adults who live alone, which is a huge oversight.</li></ol>
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	<p>4. In the methods section, the authors specify the social critical paradigm for their study, but the sentences that follow do not make sense (page 7, lines 5-12) and there needs to be more detail included about which social group the authors view as oppressed. Is it the older adult living alone? The women who are often expected to provide care at a distance?</p> <p>5. The sample description (pages 7-8) should be organized more carefully. The authors spend several paragraphs discussing issues around the recruitment and choice of the family members before giving the basic details of how many participants were included, their gender and age, etc.</p> <p>6. The discourse analysis model (page 8, line 32) will not be familiar to many readers and should be described in more detail. Similarly, it is very important to the credibility of the results presented that the authors describe in more detail the methods used for triangulation and who was involved from the research team, how it was carried out, and so on.</p> <p>7. A major concern I have for this study is how the authors organized the family members into "traditional" or "modern" categories. On page 9, line 28, it sounds as if it were done a priori according to the researchers' judgment. Would this not seriously undermine the results? Please justify these labels and how you arrived at separating participants into one or the other group.</p> <p>8. Throughout the results section, when referring to a sub-group of participants (e.g. "women with basic and secondary education", page 11, line 31) please give the number of participants who fall under such a label. In many places this manuscript overstates findings by seemingly generalizing to all people in the general population who fit this description, when in reality there were only a small handful included in your study.</p> <p>9. The discussion, while interesting and often well-written, veers way off the course of discussing the results of this specific study and massively generalizes to societies and populations in general, which cannot be supported by the results of this small qualitative descriptive study. Perhaps think of publishing the discussion in a non-scientific forum instead.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Rune Svanström The School of Health and Education University of Skövde Sweden
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	05-Sep-2018

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>Thank you for letting me read this manuscript that covers an important topic, and as I understand is groundbreaking in for this research area in Spain. However I have some concerns about the manuscript. First, my opinion is that the whole manuscript need language revision. Secondly the references needs to be updated since many of those about care and perceptions on care were published 10 years ago or earlier. The references also need to be supplemented with international articles since the BMJ Open has readers worldwide.</p>
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	<p>I am also concerned of the aim of the study. Several aims are presented and I don't really understand what the aim is. This need to be specified.</p> <p>The section on Material and Methods need to be more specific and references on methodology is needed.</p> <p>The section of Results needs further processing. One of the problem in this section is when reading the text I sometimes get the impression that the elderly has participated in the study. This need to be clarified. Another problem for me as reader is that several of the quotations does not really match what's in the preamble. One example:          Relatives recognized the improvement of some socio-medical resources offered by the Spanish national system of services, but were critical of the bureaucracy involved to apply for this help, and considered them insufficient to cover their needs. Some confusion was seen among families when faced with the lack of coordination among the different professionals attending them:          "They even bring food to the house, it's very well organized and the truth is that with the neighbors and all this, the truth is you feel much better" (Man with basic and middle education)          "[The resources] are few and far between, and they make things very hard for you (...) I think the day will arrive when rather than setting up kindergartens, eh, they'll have to set up day care centers for the elderly" (Woman with higher education) (page 16-17, starts on line 35 on page 16)</p> <p>The section of Discussion and Conclusions needs further processing and more references. Some parts of the text is hard to understand for example:          In short, the permanency of an elderly person continuing to live in solitude revolves partly around their social network that they lean on in difficult situations. (page 17 line 18-20)</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Louisa-Jane Burton University of Leeds, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	05-Nov-2018

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>Thank you for inviting me to review this manuscript, which concerns the perceptions of the families of elderly people, who live alone.</p> <p>Initially I think the title needs revision. From the title, I had assumed the article concerned the perceptions of elderly people about their families, and not the other way around, as I see from the abstract. Overall, the paper would benefit from a thorough proof-reading from a native English speaker, as it is currently difficult to read and at times the use of language obscures the meaning. Further, there are some typographical errors throughout, including spelling and grammar.</p> <p>The aims could be clearer; there are numerous aims statements throughout the paper, and these need to be checked to ensure they are consistent.</p> <p>The methods section could be improved in terms of its structure, and more detail added, in order for the study to be replicated.</p> <p>There is a section on patient and public involvement, which seems to relate to the participants in this study, rather than any patient and public involvement work. More detail about the participants,</p>
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	<p>and how they were recruited, is required, including any inclusion and exclusion criteria. The section on participants also includes information about the procedure and analysis. It would be better to use more subheadings, or remove them altogether, as this is confusing to read. More detail about the analytical process is needed; a general approach is mentioned, but it is not clear if/ how the transcripts were coded and themes emerged. The first line of the results section makes it sound like the participants in the focus groups were members of the same family, but I'm not sure if this was the case? A table of demographic data would be helpful, for the reader to have more information about who the participants were, e.g. their ages (rather than just a range), and in particular, how they were related to the elderly person in question. These factors could impact the findings, e.g. a child of an elderly person may have very different views than a sibling. It would also be useful to know how many participants with each type of education were included. Finally, do the authors have any information about the elderly people themselves, e.g. are they healthy, or do they have long-term conditions? This may substantially impact their family members' views on their ability to live alone.</p> <p>In the results section, the authors should be careful of who they mean by 'they.' At times, it reads as though the elderly people themselves have participated in the study, when in facts, these are views attributed to the elderly people by their family members. In the discussion section, the authors make statements around how perceptions of family members with different levels of education differ. These differences were not clear from reading the results section and it is difficult to tell if they arose from the results of the study or not. Perhaps these are findings, rather than discussion points?</p> <p>There are some judgement statements in the paper, e.g. page 9, lines 42-43; page 19, lines 46-47, which should be avoided if possible. Finally, there are only a handful of references from the last ten years, and I wonder if the literature has been updated in this time.</p>
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### VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

1. The aim of the study, while descriptive, still needs to be more specific and address an identified gap in the scientific literature on the topic of older adults who live alone. Why are family members' perceptions important? What is to be gained by studying perceptions of older adults living alone?

We have included an explanation of the importance of analyzing perceptions of Spanish families about their elderly family members aged over 75 years who live alone in their own home.

2. The abstract should identify the sample and the methods used, and the language should be more precise (e.g. "fruit of analysis of discussion" is too poetic).

The abstract has been modified, including a better description of the methodology

3. The literature review needs to be updated and tailored more to your study aims. Many of the references were published more than a decade ago and some of the statements about the aging population are also outdated (e.g. baby boomers have already reached retirement age). There is no background or literature review presented on what is known about family perceptions of older adults who live alone, which is a huge oversight.

The review of the literature from 2010 to 2018 has been updated in PubMed through the descriptors "family" AND "Elderly living alone" obtaining 83 results, of which 7 were related to the objective of the study. The following table describes the articles selected by year. The results of the studies reviewed throughout the manuscript have been integrated into the different sections, especially in the introduction and discussion.

Year	Selected
2010	2
2011	1
2013	1
2015	1
2016	1
2017	1

4. In the methods section, the authors specify the social critical paradigm for their study, but the sentences that follow do not make sense (page 7, lines 5-12) and there needs to be more detail included about which social group the authors view as oppressed. Is it the older adult living alone? The women who are often expected to provide care at a distance?

The key concepts of Bourdieu's critical-social theory have been explained in the methodology. In addition, new references has been included in the bibliography.

4. The sample description (pages 7-8) should be organized more carefully. The authors spend several paragraphs discussing issues around the recruitment and choice of the family members before giving the basic details of how many participants were included, their gender and age, etc.

In the methodology section, the selection of participants has been ordered in a logical manner as suggested by the reviewer. The participants of the discussion groups and the segmentation variables have been described to later justify said classification.

5. The discourse analysis model (page 8, line 32) will not be familiar to many readers and should be described in more detail. Similarly, it is very important to the credibility of the results presented that the authors describe in more detail the methods used for triangulation and who was involved from the research team, how it was carried out, and so on.

A section on data analysis methodology has been created in which the discourse analysis procedure has been explained more concretely.

In addition, another section called Validity and Reliability / Rigour has been created to explain the processes of methodological rigor including triangulation

6. A major concern I have for this study is how the authors organized the family members into "traditional" or "modern" categories. On page 9, line 28, it sounds as if it were done a priori according to the researchers' judgment. Would this not seriously undermine the

results? Please justify these labels and how you arrived at separating participants into one or the other group.

It was not done a priori. They are considered traditional or modern according to their discourse (ejm hire care services, obligatory care, etc)

7. Throughout the results section, when referring to a sub-group of participants (e.g. "women with basic and secondary education", page 11, line 31) please give the number of participants who fall under such a label. In many places this manuscript overstates findings by seemingly generalizing to all people in the general population who fit this description, when in reality there were only a small handful included in your study.

The results section has been divided into two: On the one hand, a description of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, including a table. And on the other hand discourse analysis.

8. The discussion, while interesting and often well-written, veers way off the course of discussing the results of this specific study and massively generalizes to societies and populations in general, which cannot be supported by the results of this small qualitative descriptive study. Perhaps think of publishing the discussion in a non-scientific forum instead.

From a qualitative methodology point of view, it does not intend to establish results that are generalized to the population, but intends to comply with the transferability criterion. That is to say, the results obtained in a similar context can be transferred and that is stated in the studies carried out so far, in a similar social, historical and cultural context. This question is verified when comparing the results of the study with others in the discussion. It has been observed that relatives of elderly people living alone describe the same limiting factors explained in different ways.

A paragraph referring to this aspect is included in the conclusions.

Reviewer: 2

1. Thank you for letting me read this manuscript that covers an important topic, and as I understand is groundbreaking in for this research area in Spain. However I have some concerns about the manuscript. First, my opinion is that the whole manuscript need language revision. Secondly the references needs to be updated since many of those about care and perceptions on care were published 10 years ago or earlier. The references also need to be supplemented with international articles since the BMJ Open has readers worldwide.

The manuscript has been sent to the services of revision and English edition of BMJopen to improve this aspect.

The review of the literature from 2010 to 2018 has been updated in PubMed through the descriptors "family" AND "Elderly living alone" obtaining 83 results, of which 7 were related to the objective of the study. The following table describes the articles selected by year. The results of the studies reviewed throughout the manuscript have been integrated into the different sections, especially in the introduction and discussion.

Year	Selected
2010	2
2011	1
2013	1

2015	1
2016	1
2017	1

2. I am also concerned of the aim of the study. Several aims are presented and I don't really understand what the aim is. This need to be specified.

The objective of the study has been clarified by including it in the abstract and other sections of the manuscript being: The aim to analyse perceptions of families regarding their family members aged over 75 years who lived alone in their own home, considering gender differences and level of education.

3. The section on Material and Methods need to be more specific and references on methodology is needed.

In the methodology section, the selection of participants has been ordered in a logical manner as suggested by the reviewer. The participants of the discussion groups and the segmentation variables have been described to later justify said classification.

A section on data analysis methodology has been created in which the discourse analysis procedure has been explained more concretely.

In addition, another section called Validity and Reliability / Rigour has been created to explain the processes of methodological rigor including triangulation

3. The section of Results needs further processing. One of the problem in this section is when reading the text I sometimes get the impression that the elderly has participated in the study. This need to be clarified. Another problem for me as reader is that several of the quotations does not really match what's in the preamble. One example:
  - Relatives recognized the improvement of some socio-medical resources offered by the Spanish national system of services, but were critical of the bureaucracy involved to apply for this help, and considered them insufficient to cover their needs. Some confusion was seen among families when faced with the lack of coordination among the different professionals attending them:
  - "They even bring food to the house, it's very well organized and the truth is that with the neighbors and all this, the truth is you feel much better" (Man with basic and middle education)
  - "[The resources] are few and far between, and they make things very hard for you (...) I think the day will arrive when rather than setting up kindergartens, eh, they'll have to set up day care centers for the elderly" (Woman with higher education) (page 16-17, starts on line 35 on page 16)

The verbatins and the definition of the codes have been revised and have been adjusted and improved in the results.

Also, the results section has been divided into two: On the one hand, a description of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, including a table. And the other hand, with categories and codes analysis about discussion groups.

4. The section of Discussion and Conclusions needs further processing and more references. Some parts of the text is hard to understand for example:

- In short, the permanency of an elderly person continuing to live in solitude revolves partly around their social network that they lean on in difficult situations. (page 17 line 18-20)

The discussion and conclusions section has been revised, in addition to the inclusion of new references for the update of the literature review

Reviewer: 3

1. Initially I think the title needs revision. From the title, I had assumed the article concerned the perceptions of elderly people about their families, and not the other way around, as I see from the abstract.

The title has been readjusted and clarified to be more faithful to the objectives of the study

2. Overall, the paper would benefit from a thorough proof-reading from a native English speaker, as it is currently difficult to read and at times the use of language obscures the meaning. Further, there are some typographical errors throughout, including spelling and grammar.

The manuscript has been sent to the services of revision and English edition of BMJopen to improve this aspect.

3. The aims could be clearer; there are numerous aims statements throughout the paper, and these need to be checked to ensure they are consistent.

The aim to analyse perceptions of families regarding people 75 years old or more who live alone in their own home, considering gender differences and level of education.

4. The methods section could be improved in terms of its structure, and more detail added, in order for the study to be replicated. There is a section on patient and public involvement, which seems to relate to the participants in this study, rather than any patient and public involvement work.

In the methodology section, the selection of participants has been ordered in a logical manner as suggested by the reviewer. The participants of the discussion groups and the segmentation variables have been described to later justify this classification.

5. More detail about the participants, and how they were recruited, is required, including any inclusion and exclusion criteria.

In the methodology section, the selection of participants has been ordered in a logical manner as suggested by the reviewer. The participants of the discussion groups and the segmentation variables have been described to later justify this classification.

6. The section on participants also includes information about the procedure and analysis. It would be better to use more subheadings, or remove them altogether, as this is confusing to read.

A section on data analysis methodology has been created in which the discourse analysis procedure has been explained more concretely.

7. More detail about the analytical process is needed; a general approach is mentioned, but it is not clear if/ how the transcripts were coded and themes emerged.

In addition, another section called Validity and Reliability / Rigour has been created to explain the processes of methodological rigor including triangulation

8. The first line of the results section makes it sound like the participants in the focus groups were members of the same family, but I'm not sure if this was the case?

The participants in the DG were not familiar to each other or to the elderly interviewed. It has been clarified in the methodology in the inclusion criteria.

9. A table of demographic data would be helpful, for the reader to have more information about who the participants were, e.g. their ages (rather than just a range), and in particular, how they were related to the elderly person in question. These factors could impact the findings, e.g. a child of an elderly person may have very different views than a sibling. It would also be useful to know how many participants with each type of education were included.

A table has been included in the methodology section

10. Finally, do the authors have any information about the elderly people themselves, e.g. are they healthy, or do they have long-term conditions? This may substantially impact their family members' views on their ability to live alone.

We passed a Lawton and Brody scale but the sample of adults are not all autonomous but the family cares and attends even the self-employed. A clarification has been included as inclusion criteria.

11. In the results section, the authors should be careful of who they mean by 'they.' At times, it reads as though the elderly people themselves have participated in the study, when in fact, these are views attributed to the elderly people by their family members.

The manuscript has been sent to the services of revision and English edition of BMJopen to improve this aspect.

12. In the discussion section, the authors make statements around how perceptions of family members with different levels of education differ. These differences were not clear from reading the results section and it is difficult to tell if they arose from the results of the study or not. Perhaps these are findings, rather than discussion points?

A greater description of the segmentation variables has been included in the results, in which the division of the discussion groups by educational level is explained. A table describing the participants has even been added.

The results begin with a general explanation of the percipient of the next of kin, to identify these perceptions by educational level.

13. There are some judgement statements in the paper, e.g. page 9, lines 42-43; page 19, lines 46-47, which should be avoided if possible. Finally, there are only a handful of references from the last ten years, and I wonder if the literature has been updated in this time.

The review of the literature from 2010 to 2018 has been updated in PubMed through the descriptors "family" AND "Elderly living alone" obtaining 83 results, of which 7 were related to the objective of the study. The following table describes the articles selected by year. The results of the studies reviewed throughout the manuscript have been integrated into the different sections, especially in the introduction and discussion.

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2010	2
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2013	1
2015	1
2016	1
2017	1

## VERSION 2 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Louisa-Jane Burton University of Leeds, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	26-Dec-2018

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>Thank you for inviting me to re-review this manuscript, which examines the views of family members of elderly people living alone.</p> <p>The language is much improved and as a result, the manuscript is now much easier to read. However, there are still some typographical errors without the manuscript. E.g. pg 5, lines 50-55; pg 9, lines 20-25; page 10, lines 29-32; page 15, lines 24-25; page 16, lines 37-38, page 29, lines 15-16 and lines 26-27; page 32, lines 15-16.</p> <p>Additionally:</p> <p>Page 5, lines 50-60 – I’m afraid I can’t make sense of the meaning here.</p> <p>Page 6, lines 7-8 – I’m not sure ‘several’ is the right word here.</p> <p>Page 9, lines 45-51 – by ‘announcements’, are the authors referring to posters?</p> <p>Page 14, lines 37-38 – this reads as though the participant was the elderly person’s mother? I’m not sure if the authors mean child here?</p> <p>Page 23, lines 17-29 – I can’t make sense of this quote in context</p> <p>Page 26, lines 10-12 – I’m not sure about the use of the pronoun ‘you’ here.</p> <p>Page 27, lines 17-20 – I still struggle with the idea of ‘working’ being a ‘masculine property’ in the 21st century.</p> <p>Page 31, lines 42-45 – I’m not sure of the meaning here.</p> <p>I’m afraid the aims of this study are still not consistently reported throughout the manuscript, and this is confusing. For example, the abstract states that the objective is ‘to understand the perceptions of families regarding their elderly family members aged over 75 years old who live alone in their own home, considering gender differences and level of education.’ Whilst in the introduction, three slightly different aims statements appear:</p> <p>“The present study aimed to identify the social factors that influence elderly individuals to stay alone in their own homes and how their family members support them to live out this wish.”</p> <p>“In this article we present results related to the family, although the main aim of our study was to explore the adaptation strategies and factors that determine the reasons why individuals aged over 75 years continue to live alone in their own home.”</p> <p>“The aim was to analyse perceptions of families regarding their family members aged over 75 years who lived alone in their own</p>
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	<p>home, considering gender differences and level of education.” – this one matches the abstract.</p> <p>The introduction could be improved by presenting only one aims statement at the end of the section, and making sure this matches the aims statement in the abstract. I think it may be that these results come from a wider study with different aims and this is where the confusion is coming from? If this were the case, it would be useful to make this clear. In the final paragraph of the introduction, there is repetition of the statement about ‘distance intimacy’, which I assume is the same as ‘intimacy at a distance’ (page 6, lines 20-1).</p> <p>The methods section would benefit from restructuring. For example, I wouldn’t expect to find the lines about the researchers maintaining a field journal in the section about selection of participants. The sample appears to be a volunteer sample, but the authors also mention purposive sampling and it is not clear how this was done or what factors this was based on. Later on, there is mention of snowball sampling. All information about sampling should be kept together. Again, I would suggest either incorporating more subheadings to add structure, or removing them altogether, e.g. there are details on the procedure within the section on selection of participants, a statement about collection of sociodemographic details under the heading validity and reliability/ rigour and a line about ensuring anonymity in the section on Patient and Public Involvement.</p> <p>The information about the socio-demographic data relating to each group might be better tabulated. It is still not clear in the manuscript how the authors decided the type of family that the participants belonged to (was this self-reported, or allocated by the authors?). In the point made about ‘These family members perceived that the elderly individual preferred any sort of help that will enable them to continue living in their own home, as opposed to the options of living with the family or living in an elderly care facility,’ neither of the proceeding quotes seem to address this point. There is a similar issue with the quotes proceeding the point about a focus on the freedom of elderly individuals to decide and assess their abilities, and the one relating to ‘hire services and set limits.’</p> <p>The section on strengths and limitations also needs to be further developed. I'm not sure what is meant by participation being 'low'? I'm also unclear about what the authors mean when they state that transferability is limited since there are no similar studies in Spain - it is not necessary to have other studies for comparison to assess transferability. The authors might say that transferability is limited because the participants were all from the same cultural background, for example. Another example of a limitation might be that the participants were self-selecting because they responded to an advertisement, and so their views may not be representative of all family members of elderly people living alone. An advantage of a qualitative focus group methodology might be that the authors were able to obtain detailed information about the participants' views.</p> <p>Finally, I note the editor’s comment that the ‘article summary’ section should present the study’s strengths and limitations, rather than a summary of the findings.</p>
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## VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

1. However, there are still some typographical errors without the manuscript. E.g. pg 5, lines 50-55; pg 9, lines 20-25; page 10, lines 29-32; page 15, lines 24-25; page 16, lines 37-38, page 29, lines 15-16 and lines 26-27; page 32, lines 15-16.

The indicated errors are corrected and the manuscript is revised again to avoid others.

2. Page 5, lines 50-60 – I'm afraid I can't make sense of the meaning here.

The paragraph is written and clarified

3. Page 6, lines 7-8 – I'm not sure 'several' is the right word here.

"Several" is deleted of the sentence because it is unnecessary

4. Page 9, lines 45-51 – by 'announcements', are the authors referring to posters?

This section is clarified

5. Page 14, lines 37-38 – this reads as though the participant was the elderly person's mother? I'm not sure if the authors mean child here?

It is modified, refers to daughter

6. Page 23, lines 17-29 – I can't make sense of this quote in context

A new quota is added.

The first refers to the role that each member of the family acquires when the older person must be cared for. Differentiating between man and woman.

In the second, it refers to how responsibility usually falls on the daughters rather than the sons, especially if they have family.

7. Page 26, lines 10-12 – I'm not sure about the use of the pronoun 'you' here.

It changes to "they"

8. Page 27, lines 17-20 – I still struggle with the idea of 'working' being a 'masculine property' in the 21st century.

We agree with the statement that in our time, working is not a masculine characteristic, but it is observed that the concept of some elderly people, is to consider that it continues to be a more masculine role. This aspect is clarified.

9. Page 31, lines 42-45 – I'm not sure of the meaning here.

It refers to the anonymized transcripts are available and can be consulted at the indicated email address. It clarifies.

10. I'm afraid the aims of this study are still not consistently reported throughout the manuscript, and this is confusing. For example, the abstract states that the objective is 'to understand the perceptions of families regarding their elderly family members aged over 75 years old who live alone in their own home, considering gender differences and level of education.' Whilst in the introduction, three slightly different aims statements appear:

- a. "The present study aimed to identify the social factors that influence elderly individuals to stay alone in their own homes and how their family members support them to live out this wish."
- b. "In this article we present results related to the family, although the main aim of our study was to explore the adaptation strategies and factors that determine the reasons why individuals aged over 75 years continue to live alone in their own home."
- c. "The aim was to analyse perceptions of families regarding their family members aged over 75 years who lived alone in their own home, considering gender differences and level of education." – this one matches the abstract.

It is unified in all sections of the manuscript with the objective: The aim to assess the attitudes and beliefs of families regarding their family members aged 75 years and over who live alone, with consideration of gender and educational differences among the family members.

11. The introduction could be improved by presenting only one aims statement at the end of the section and making sure this matches the aims statement in the abstract. I think it may be that these results come from a wider study with different aims and this is where the confusion is coming from? If this were the case, it would be useful to make this clear.

It is clarified according to the indications when belonging to a larger study with several specific objectives

12. In the final paragraph of the introduction, there is repetition of the statement about 'distance intimacy', which I assume is the same as 'intimacy at a distance' (page 6, lines 20-1).

The last paragraph of the introduction is moved to when it makes reference to that concept for the first time.

13. The methods section would benefit from restructuring. For example, I wouldn't expect to find the lines about the researchers maintaining a field journal in the section about selection of participants.

Reorder some aspects of the methodology section

14. The sample appears to be a volunteer sample, but the authors also mention purposive sampling and it is not clear how this was done or what factors this was based on. Later on, there is mention of snowball sampling. All information about sampling should be kept together.

That information is unified

15. Again, I would suggest either incorporating more subheadings to add structure, or removing them altogether, e.g. there are details on the procedure within the section on selection of participants, a statement about collection of sociodemographic details under the heading validity and reliability/ rigour and a line about ensuring anonymity in the section on Patient and Public Involvement.

We follow the recommendations of the reviewer, delete the section and reorder others to make it clearer.

16. The information about the socio-demographic data relating to each group might be better tabulated. It is still not clear in the manuscript how the authors decided the type of family that the participants belonged to (was this self-reported, or allocated by the authors?).

It is clarified in the methodology section why the selection of participants, according to gender and level of education, by the theoretical perspective of the research.

17. In the point made about 'These family members perceived that the elderly individual preferred any sort of help that will enable them to continue living in their own home, as opposed to the options of living with the family or living in an elderly care facility,' neither of the proceeding quotes seem to address this point. There is a similar issue with the quotes proceeding the point about a focus on the freedom of elderly individuals to decide and assess their abilities, and the one relating to 'hire services and set limits.'

News quotas are added.

18. The section on strengths and limitations also needs to be further developed. I'm not sure what is meant by participation being 'low'? I'm also unclear about what the authors mean when they state that transferability is limited since there are no similar studies in Spain - it is not necessary to have other studies for comparison to assess transferability. The authors might say that transferability is limited because the participants were all from the same cultural background, for example. Another example of a limitation might be that the participants were self-selecting because they responded to an advertisement, and so their views may not be representative of all family members of elderly people living alone. An advantage of a qualitative focus group methodology might be that the authors were able to obtain detailed information about the participants' views.

The limitations of the study is extended and modified, according to the indications of the reviewer

#### VERSION 3 - REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Louisa Burton University of Leeds, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	06-Mar-2019

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	Thank you for inviting me to review this revision of a paper exploring family members' perceptions of elderly people living alone. The manuscript has improved in clarity and readability and the previous comments have been addressed.
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