

# Exploring the experiences of pet ownership for people with aphasia:

A thematic analysis mapped to the ICF

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# Background

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## Aphasia



Results from Acquired Brain Injury



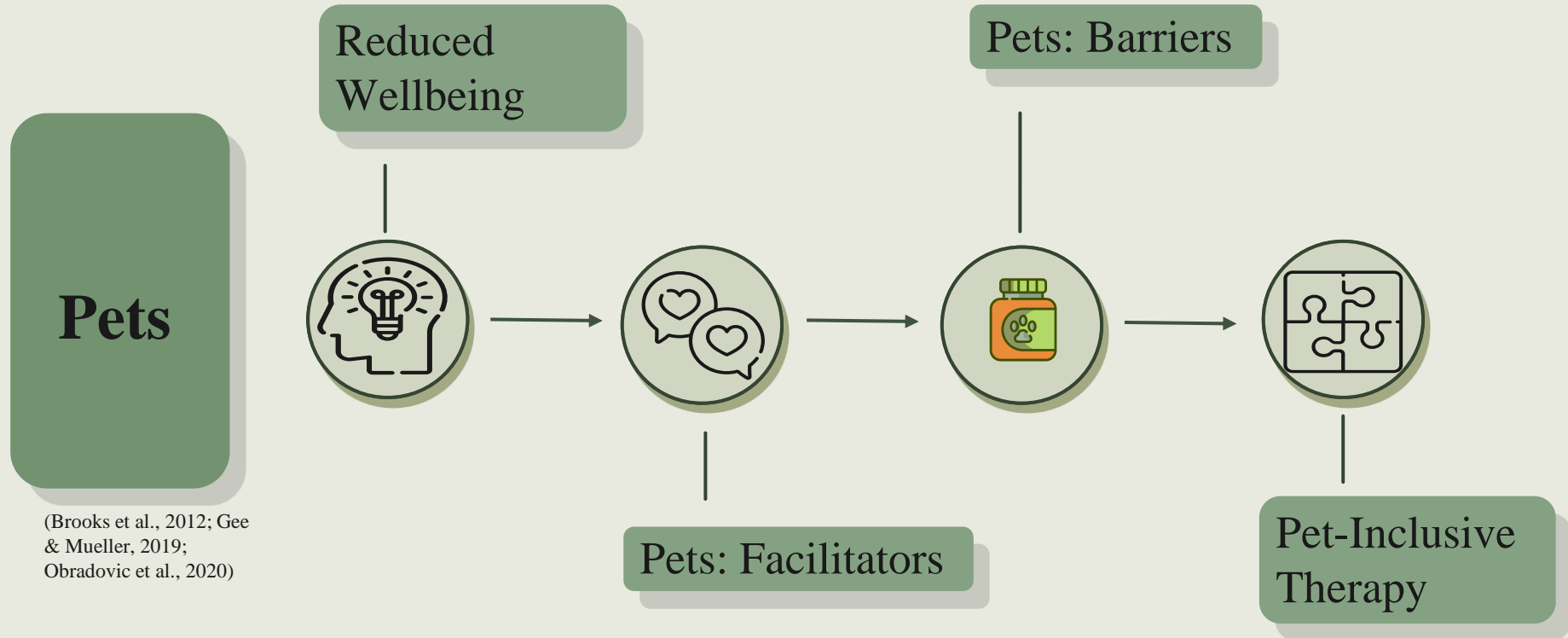
Difficulties with understanding and producing spoken language, reading and writing



Impacts functional communication, independence and wellbeing

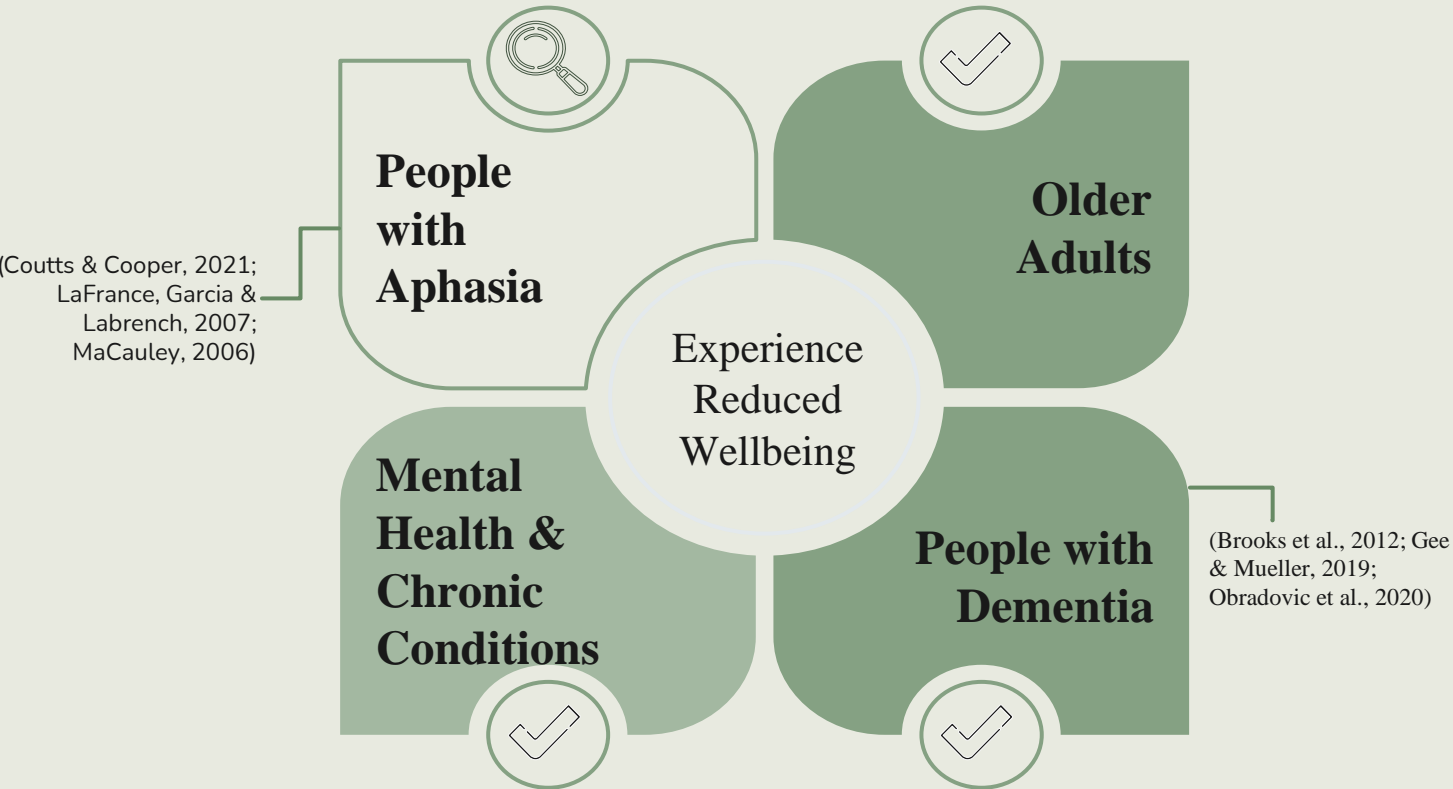
# Background

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# Background

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# Research Aims

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**What are the experiences of pet ownership for people living with aphasia?**



Emotional and Social  
Wellbeing



Communication

# Research Design

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## Qualitative Descriptive

(Sandelowski, 2000; Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007).



- Inductive, flexible approach
- COREQ Checklist

## Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)

(National Institute of Health Research, 2014;  
Staniszewska et al. 2011; Charalambous et al. 2023).



- PPI Partners:
- Aphasia SA board members
  - One pet owner with aphasia
  - Two speech pathologists
- GRIPP-2 Checklist  
PAOLI Framework

The study was approved by the University of South Australia Human Research Ethics Committee (ID Ethics Protocol 204249)

# Sampling and Recruitment

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## Inclusion Criteria

- Chronic aphasia
- Owned and/or lived with pets post-aphasia onset
- English speaking
- Aged over 18-years
- Willing and able to provide informed consent



## Exclusion Criteria

- Primary progressive aphasia
- Severe cognitive, visual or hearing impairments



Convenience and snowball sampling



Aphasia SA  
Talkback Groups

# Data Collection

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## Semi- Structured Interview



Interview Guide  
Pilot Tested



n=6  
Mean duration: 1hr



Video/Audio recorded with consent



Communication Support Strategies

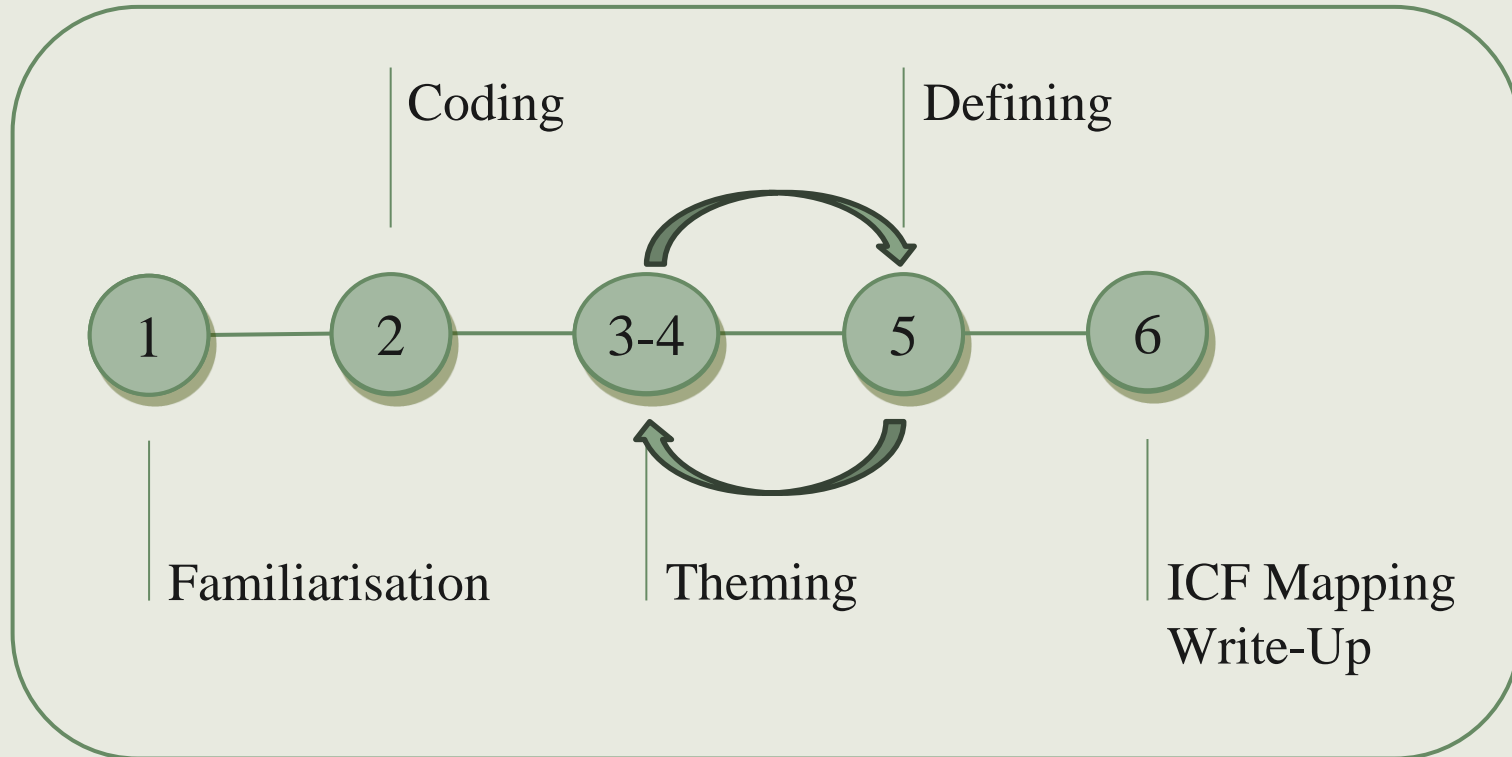


Transcription



# Data Analysis

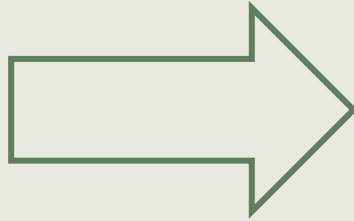
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# Rigour

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**Credibility**  
**Transferability**  
**Dependability**  
**Confirmability**



- Pilot interview
- Communication support strategies
- Respondent validation
- Researcher debriefing
- PPI Partner collaboration
- Audit trail

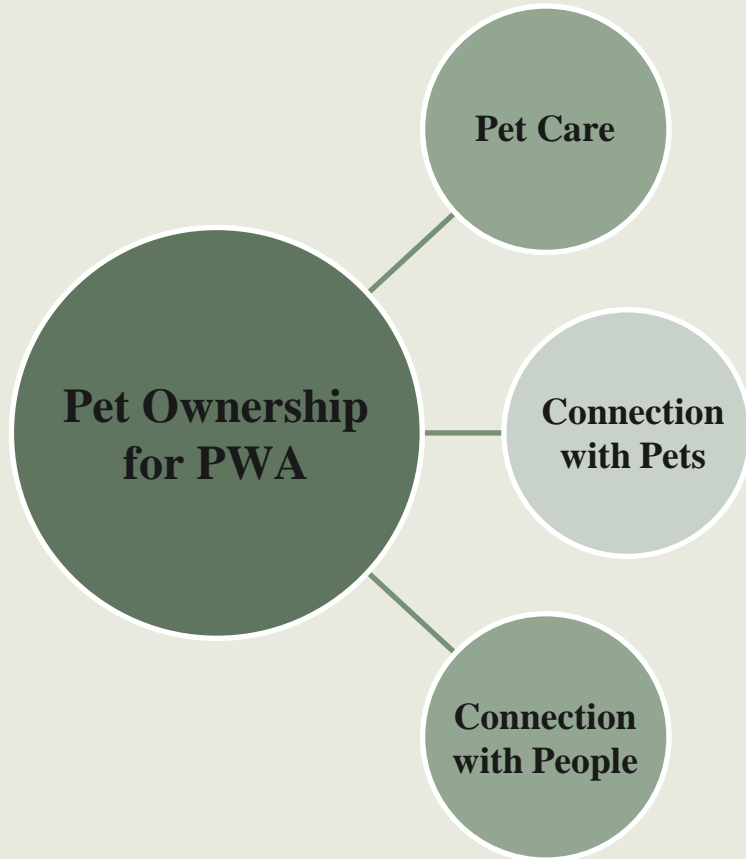
(Charalambous et al. 2023; Hersh, Israel & Shiggins, 2021).

# Participant Demographics

<b>Age</b>	50-75yrs
<b>Sex</b>	(2) Male (4) Female
<b>Aphasia Presentation</b>	(1) Mild Expressive (3) Mild Expressive/Receptive (1) Mod-Sev Expressive/Receptive (1) Mild Anomic
<b>Aphasia Aetiology</b>	(4) Stroke (1) Brain Tumour (1) Traumatic Brain Injury
<b>Other</b>	(3) Reduced mobility and strength
<b>Pet Breed</b>	(2) Cats (2) Dogs (2) Mixed (incl. 1 fish)

# Results

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## **Independence Facilitates Wellbeing**

Routine, Responsibility, Purpose, Motivation

## **Demands Outweigh Capacity**

Aphasia-related difficulties, Pet behaviour, Carer burden

## **Managing Difficulties**

Communication strategies, External support, Resilience

## **Pets Provide Emotional Support**

Companionship, Acceptance, Comfort, Protection

## **Human-Pet Relationship**

Pets are family, Quality time, Pets are calming, Grief

## **Communication**

Opportunity, Ease

## **Pets Facilitate Social Participation**

Family, Friends, Community

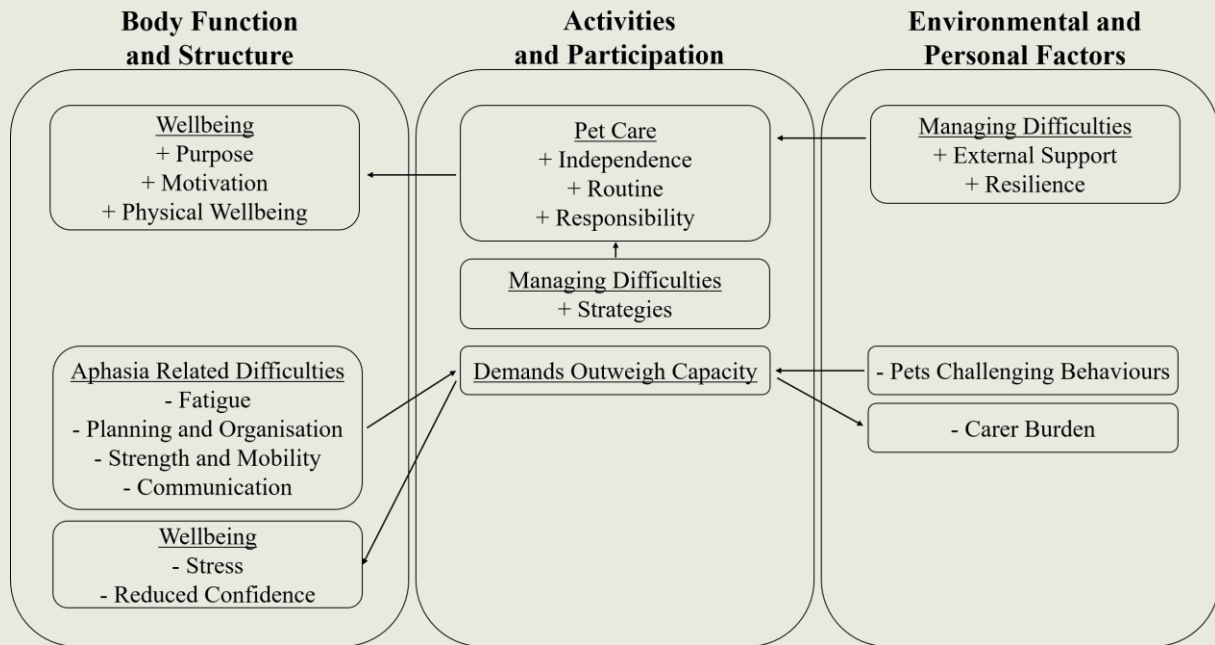
## **Pets Restrict Social Participation**

Pet behaviour, PWA guilt

## **Managing Difficulties**

External support, Resilience, Pets wellbeing

# Results – Pet Care



*“She’s a priority, almost above everything else in our life.”*

*“It’s so much better now, something else [pet] to think about.”*

*“Sometimes that relationship [vet] can be a little stressful, but it shouldn’t be.”*

*“Yea (support worker) is marvellous, he changes the kitty litter but no other ones do. It leaves the load off me.”*

# Results – Connection with Pets

*“Calming and relaxing,  
with all the turmoil going  
on.”*

*“I've got somebody to love  
me.”*

*“It was terrible, it is  
terrible. I wish she [dog]  
was still with me, that's the  
main thing.”*

*“Yes definitely, I can  
notice the difference. Just  
that instead of staring at  
nothing, I'm talking to  
someone.”*

## Body Function and Structure

## Activities and Participation

## Environmental and Personal Factors

### Wellbeing

+ Calm  
+ Happiness and Joy  
+ Confidence

### Human-Pet Relationship

+ Pets are Family  
+ Quality Time

### Pets Provide Emotional Support

+ Companionship  
+ Comfort  
+ Acceptance  
+ Protection

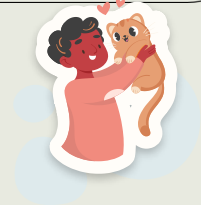
### Wellbeing

- Grief

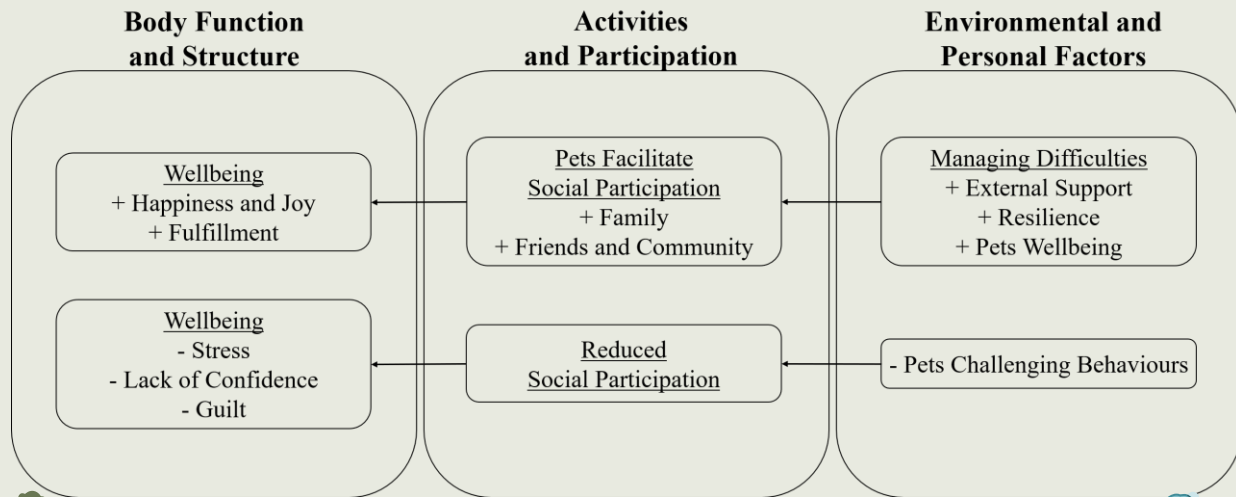
### Communication

+ Opportunity  
+ Ease

- Pet Loss



# Results – Connection with People



*“We talk a lot about her, so we have something to talk about. When you're married for 50 years you run out of things to talk about.”*

*“I’m still not too confident with, because she’s got her dog, whereas this dog would be [excitable]”.*

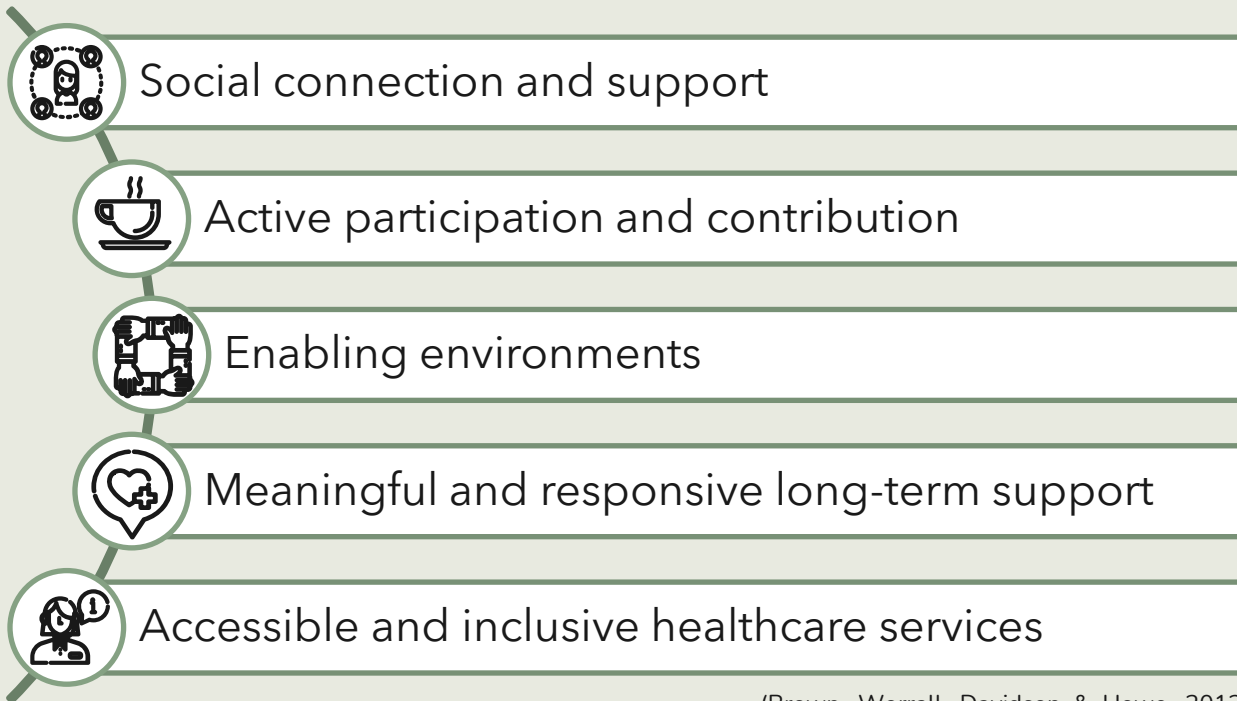
*“Now (partner) works from home, it gave us the golden opportunity to get a dog.”*



# Discussion

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## **Pets and Living Successfully with Aphasia**



(Brown, Worrall, Davidson & Howe, 2012;  
Manning et al. 2019).



# Limitations

## Accurate Data Collection



- Small sample size
- Member checking
- Unequal representation



### Miscommunication risk:

- Aphasia-related difficulties
- PWA vs. Partner perspectives
- Researcher's inexperience

## PPI Partner Accessibility



- Inaccessibility of written reports
- Fatigue



**Future  
Research**

*Thank you  
for listening*

**Any Questions?**



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