

Exploring the lived-experience of visually impaired individuals regarding their autonomy, using the example of the community pharmacy: A qualitative study

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Background

Visual impairment constitutes a significant public health concern, affecting many individuals on a global scale [1]. The impact of visual impairment on the daily lives of individuals is considerable, especially regarding the administration of medications and interactions with community pharmacists [2]. Community pharmacists occupy a pivotal role as a point of contact for visually impaired patients. The pharmacy is a place of reception and support and therefore must provide the best possible services to all its patients. Consequently, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the specific needs of visually impaired individuals, who are particularly vulnerable, to facilitate their inclusion in healthcare. The **objectives** of the study were therefore 1) to examine the perceptions, challenges, and needs of visually impaired individuals in managing their medications, and 2) to enhance pharmacist-patient communication and ensure more accessible and inclusive healthcare for these individuals.

Methodology

Semi-structured **interviews** were conducted until theoretical data saturation with **visually impaired participants** recruited on voluntary basis and using the snowball method (*Figure 1*).

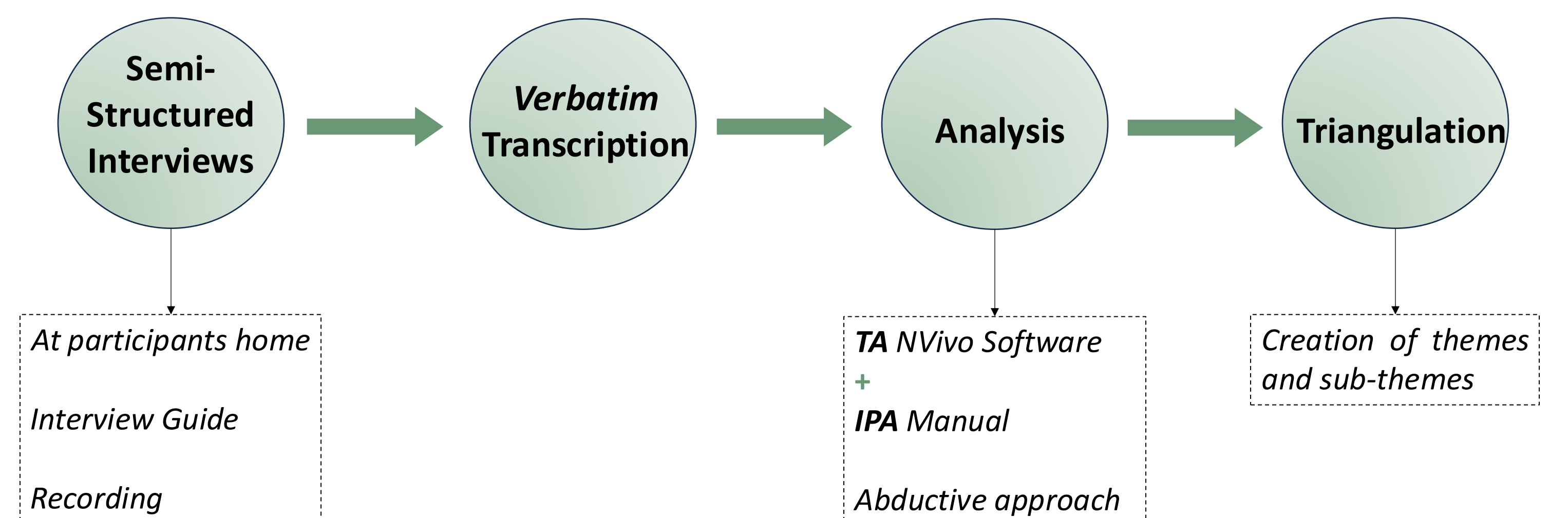


Figure 1. Description of the study methodology. **TA**: thematic analysis [3], **IPA**: interpretative phenomenological analysis [4].

Results

Two dimensions, psychological and pharmaceutical, were explored in the semi-structured interviews. In total, 19 interviews were conducted (*Figure 2*), and seven themes were identified. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.938, indicating that the analyses were highly reliable (*Figure 3*). From a psychological perspective (*Figure 4*), the experience of individuals with visual impairment appears to be linked to their family and social context. The emotional states of visually impaired individuals and the actions of their family members and friends, who occasionally assume the role of informal caregivers, can be either beneficial or detrimental. The relationship they have with their pharmacist is also important, especially regarding the relational aspect and the knowledge of visual impairment. During the interviews, visually impaired individuals indicated that pharmacists do not frequently offer additional guidance beyond dosage and storage instructions (*Figure 5*). They also reported that they devised themselves strategies to facilitate their medication administration (color-coding system, touch to identify medications, memory, or assistive products).

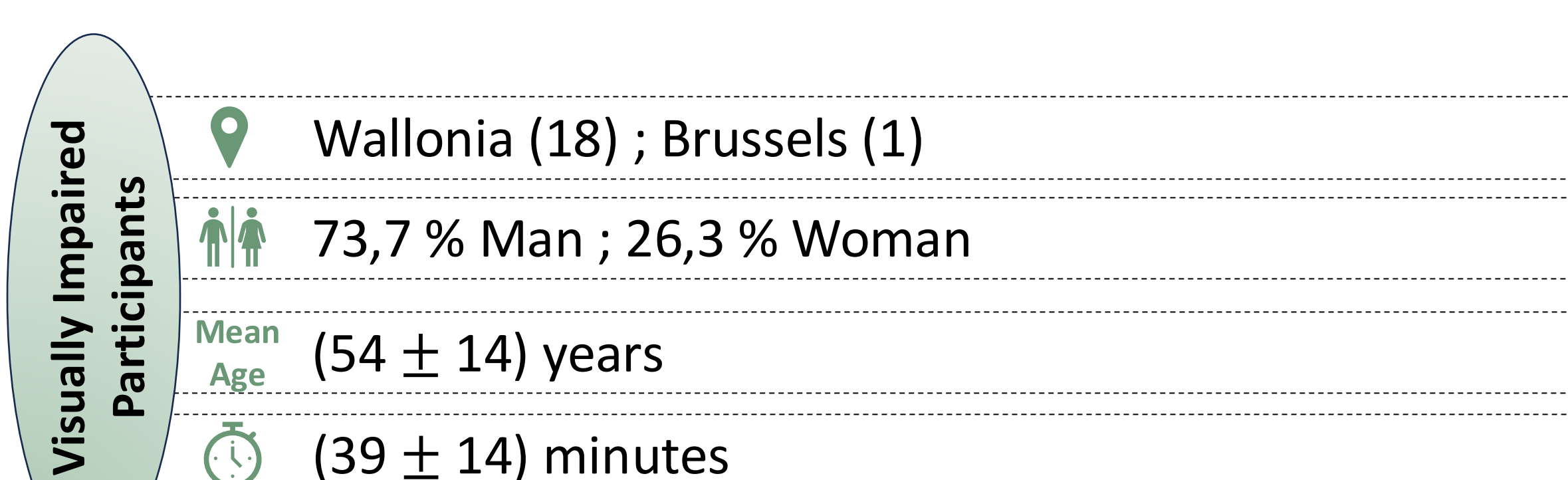


Figure 2. Description of the study sample.

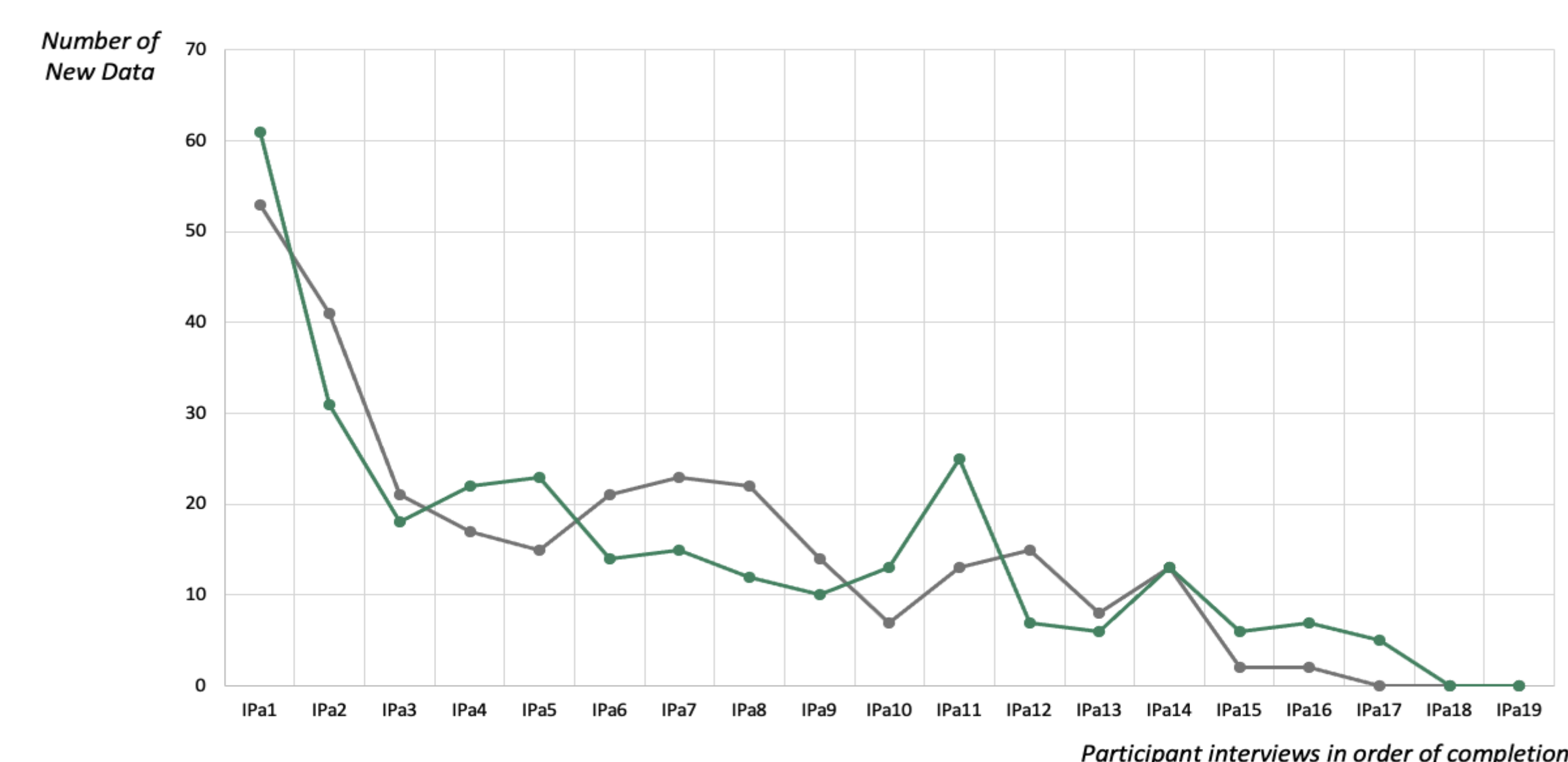


Figure 3. Theoretical data saturation. The green curve is for thematic analysis and the grey curve is for interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Conclusion

Visual impairment is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors. Consequently, adaptation systems are necessary at all levels of the society (micro, meso, and macro) to provide visually impaired individuals with the best living conditions and integrated care. The results of this qualitative study offer valuable insights that can inform the development of recommendations for community pharmacists.

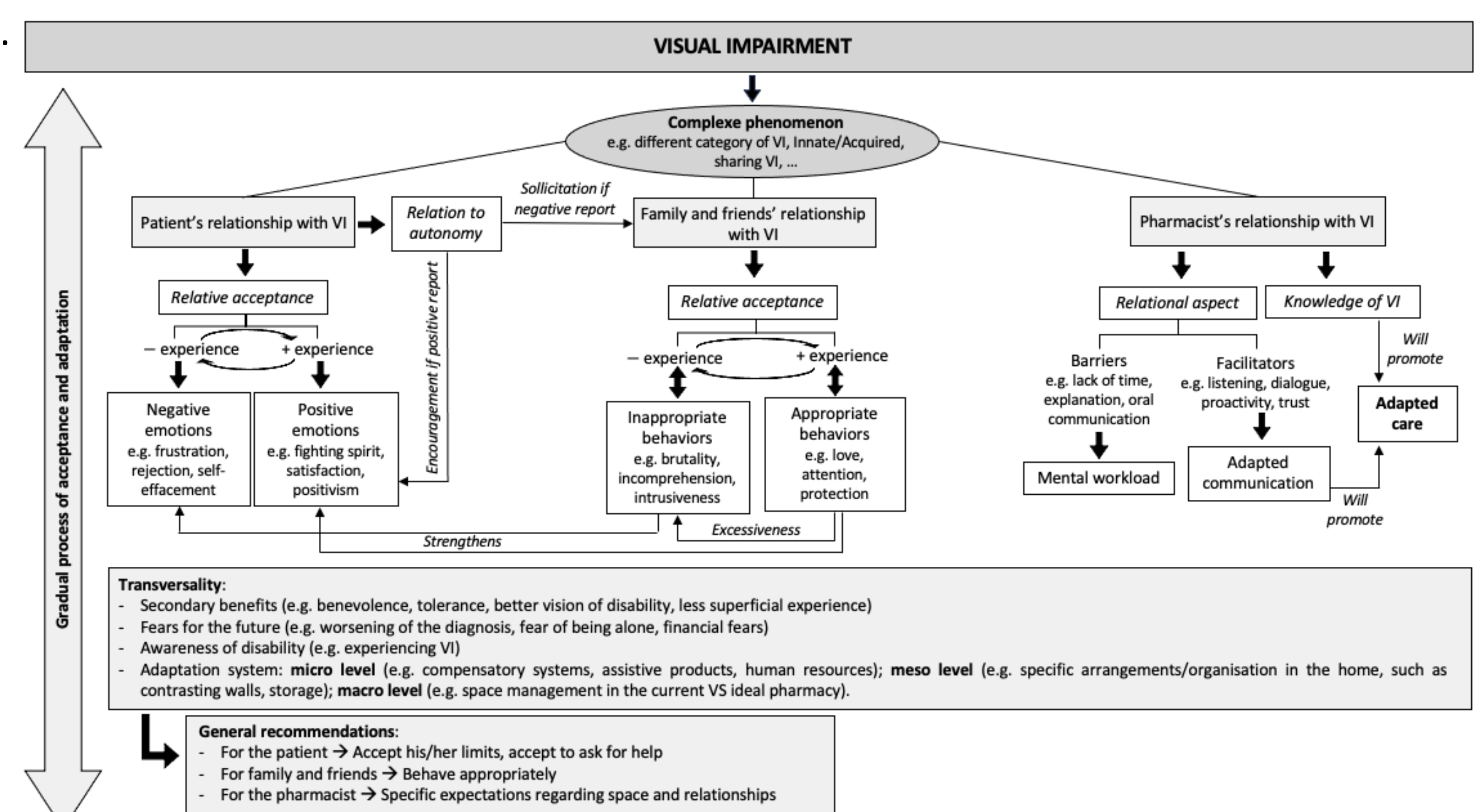


Figure 4. Schematisation of exploring the lived-experience of visual impairment. **VI**: visual impairment.

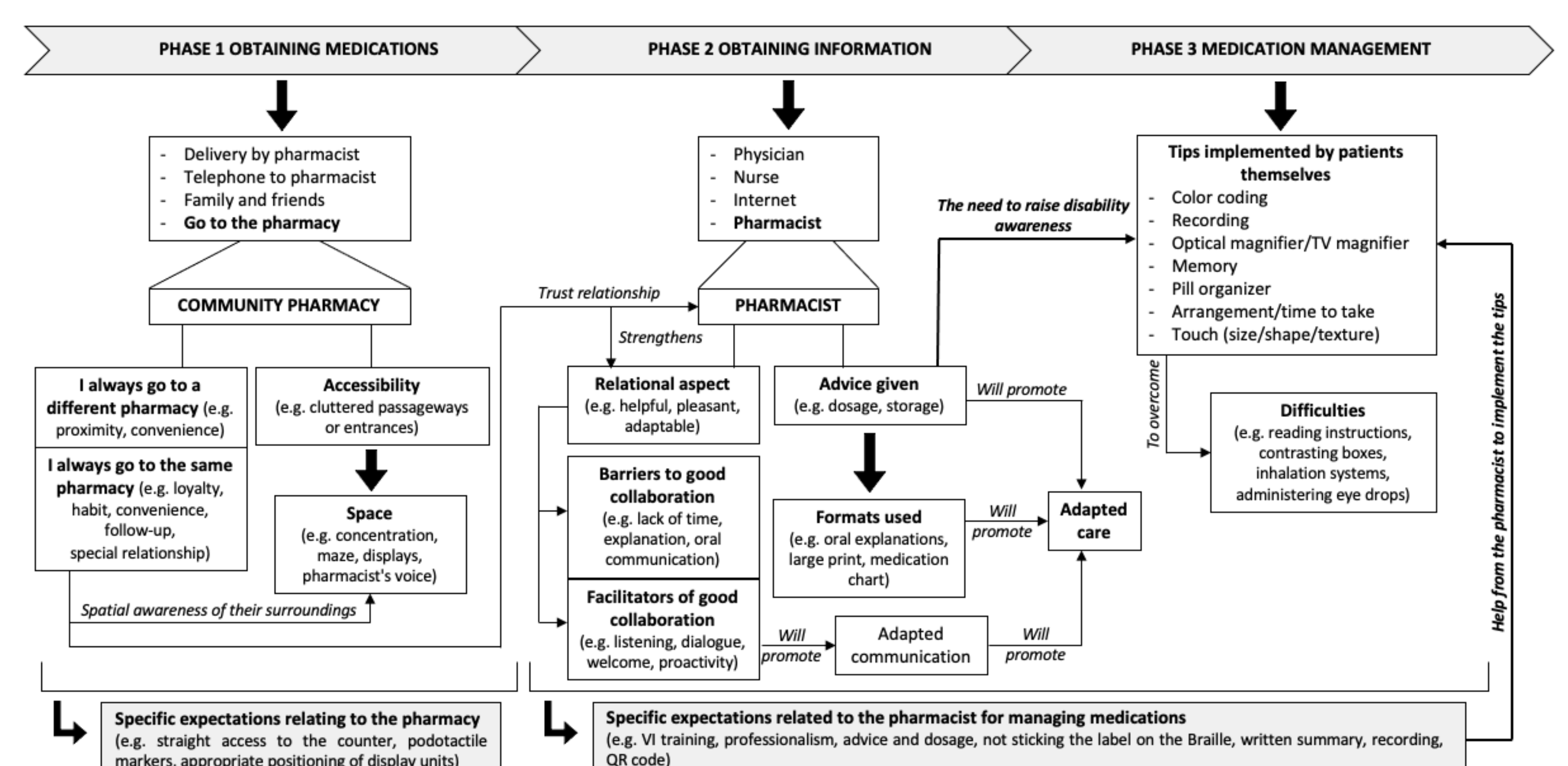


Figure 5. Schematisation of the process of obtaining and managing medications. **VI**: visual impairment.

[1] World Health Organisation, WHO. 2021. Blindness and Visual Impairment. Available from <https://www.who.int/fr/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>. Accessed 24.02.25.

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