

Caregiver burden and the coping mechanisms among the primary caregivers of people diagnosed with dementia

Mahinthan K¹, Kamsika M¹, Thuvaraha M¹, Amarakoon A M M R¹, Piyarathna H D C A¹,

Coonghe P A D², Sivayogan S³

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³*Teaching Hospital, Jaffna*

Introduction and Objectives: Much of the increase in the prevalence of dementia is in low- and middle-income countries, where mostly the family members take on the role of primary caregivers. This caregiving role implies a great degree of burden on the caregivers. Despite the evidence for prevalence of dementia in Jaffna, the burden of caregivers has not yet been assessed. This study aimed to assess the influence of sociodemographic factors on the degree of burden and coping mechanisms among primary caregivers of people diagnosed with dementia at the Mental Health Unit, Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on 99 primary caregivers recruited using data available at the Mental Health Unit of Teaching Hospital Jaffna. Data was gathered over the phone using interviewer-administered Zarit Burden Inventory (ZBI), Ways of Coping – Revised Scale (WOCS-R) and sociodemographic questionnaires. Student's t test and One-way ANOVA were used in statistical analysis.

Results: The overall proportion of study participants with any degree of caregiver burden was 73.7% (95%CI: 65.0% - 82.4%). Females, caregivers with no formal education or only up to grade 05, those not in marital life, and those unemployed or in domestic work were found to have more burden, although p values were >0.05. Among coping mechanisms, hours of caregiving per day showed significant association with usage of domains positive reappraisal (p<0.001), self-controlling (p=0.03), accepting responsibilities (p<0.001), planful problem solving (p=0.003), confrontive coping (p<0.001) and seeking social support (p=0.018). Educational level showed significant association with domains positive reappraisal (p=0.016), self-controlling (p=0.03), accepting responsibilities (p<0.001), planful problem solving (p=0.041) and avoidance (p<0.001). Age had significant correlation with positive reappraisal (p=0.036), and gender with confrontive coping (p=0.028).

Conclusion: Among primary caregivers, females, caregivers with no formal education or only up to grade 05, those not in marital life, and those unemployed or in domestic work are more at risk of experiencing more burden. Educational level of caregivers and duration of caregiving have a huge impact on the choice of coping mechanism.

Keywords: Dementia, Caregiver burden, Coping mechanisms