



PERCEPTIONS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF CAREGIVERS REGARDING MENTAL ILLNESS IN JAIPUR, INDIA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mental illness poses a significant global health challenge, particularly in countries like India, where stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health persist. There is a lack of understanding regarding caregivers' perceptions and coping strategies, highlighting the need for targeted research in this area. **Method:** This descriptive study was conducted at the Psychiatric Center in Jaipur, India, utilizing a non-probability convenient sampling method. Seventy caregivers aged 21-51 years were selected, and standardized tools, including a Likert scale and modified coping strategies scale, were used to assess perceptions and coping strategies. **Results:** The study revealed that a majority of caregivers demonstrated moderate levels of perception regarding mental illness, with 71.4% reporting moderate perception scores. Similarly, most caregivers exhibited moderate coping strategies when dealing with the challenges associated with mental illness, with 80% demonstrating moderate coping levels. Educational qualification emerged as a significant factor positively correlating with perception scores, with postgraduate caregivers showing higher perception levels. However, other sociodemographic variables, such as age, gender, marital status, monthly household income, religion, type of family, relation with the client, and occupation, did not show significant associations with coping strategies or perception levels. **Conclusion:** The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve caregivers' perception of mental illness and enhance coping strategies. Educational programs and counseling sessions tailored to caregivers' specific needs could prove beneficial.

KEYWORDS: *Mental Illness, Caregivers, Perceptions, Coping Strategies, India.*

INTRODUCTION

Mental illness is a pervasive global health challenge, affecting millions of individuals worldwide, with significant social, economic, and personal ramifications. Despite its prevalence, mental health remains stigmatized and often misunderstood, particularly in certain cultural contexts such as India. Caregivers, including family members, friends, and healthcare professionals, play a critical role in supporting individuals with mental illness.^[1]

While there is growing recognition of the importance of mental health and the role of caregivers, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the perceptions and coping strategies of caregivers, particularly in the Indian context. Mental illness is a global health challenge that affects individuals across all age groups and has significant social and economic implications. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately

450 million people worldwide suffer from mental health disorders.^[2]

In India, the National Mental Health Survey conducted in 2016 revealed that approximately 14% of the population suffers from mental illness. Caregivers can include family members, friends, spouses, and healthcare professionals who are directly involved in the care and management of individuals with mental illness. They often bear the responsibility of ensuring the well-being and treatment adherence of the person they care for.^[3] Recent studies revealed that 6% of people with social anxiety disorder.^[4] Among those who received treatment, 1 out of 27 people with depressive disorder and 1 out of 10 people with anxiety disorder received minimally adequate treatment without mental health there can be no true physical health.^[5]

Mental, neurological and substance abuse (MNS) disorders are one of the leading causes of disability, contributing 7.4% of the global burden of disease in terms of disability adjusted life years (DALYs). A significant gap has also been reported between the number of people who need mental health care and those actually receiving services.^[6]

According to the National Mental Health Survey of India (NMHSI), 15% of the Indian population has a mental disorder. The most common mental disorders in India are depression, anxiety disorders, and schizophrenia. There is a shortage of mental health professionals in India, and many people with mental disorders do not receive the help they need. India is a vast country with a 1.3 billion population.^[7]

According to a report by the world health organization in India 56 million people are suffering from depression, 38 million people are suffering from anxiety disorders. Mental distress is a key cause of student suicide in the country. In India, the prevalence rate of mental and behavioral disorders are ranging from 9.54 to 370 per 1000 population. However Indian people's attitude towards mental illness and the mentally ill is not helping.^[8]

Poor knowledge of caregivers on mental illness affects early detection and early treatment of mental disorders while the negative perception of caregivers on mental illness prevents or delays professional help-seeking behavior and encourages social stigma and discrimination on mental illness. Untreated mental disorders worsen the condition with time and deepen the emotional, social, and economic burden of the community and caregivers.^[9]

Existing studies have highlighted the prevalence of mental illness in India and the challenges faced in accessing treatment. However, there is a need for more targeted research focusing on the experiences and needs of caregivers, particularly in terms of their perceptions of mental illness and their coping mechanisms. The aim of this study is to assess the perception and coping strategies regarding mental illness among caregivers at selected hospitals in Jaipur, India.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design is employed to comprehensively describe caregivers' perceptions and coping strategies regarding mental illness, allowing for systematic data collection and analysis. The study was conducted at the Psychiatric Center, Jaipur, with 70 caregivers aged 21-51 years or above selected via non-probability convenient sampling. The study utilizes standardized tools to measure caregivers' perceptions and coping strategies regarding mental illness. These tools include a Likert scale for assessing perception and a modified coping strategies scale. The Likert scale consists of 20 items to assess perception, while the modified coping strategies scale also comprises 20 items. The collected data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, median, and standard deviation, are employed to summarize the data and describe the characteristics of the sample. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and correlation coefficients (e.g., Karl Pearson), are utilized to explore associations between variables and identify patterns or relationships within the data. The significance level for inferential statistics is set at 0.05.

RESULT

Table 1: Sociodemographic variables of caregiver. (N = 70)

Demographical Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age of Caregivers (years)		
- 21-30	26	37.1
- 31-40	35	50
- 41-50	9	12.9
- 51 or above	0	0
Gender		
- Male	43	61.4
- Female	27	38.6
Marital status		
- Married	42	60
- Unmarried	26	37.1
- Divorced/Separated	2	2.9
Monthly household income (in rupees)		
- Less than 20,000	2	2.9
- 20,001 - 35,000	22	31.4
- 35,001 - 50,000	32	45.7
- 50,001 or above	14	20
Religion		
- Hindu	68	97.1

- Muslim	2	2.9
- Others	0	0
Educational qualification		
- Less than Secondary	2	2.9
- Senior Secondary	17	24.3
- Undergraduate	47	67.1
- Postgraduate	4	5.7
Type of family		
- Nuclear	41	58.6
- Joint	29	41.4
Relation with client		
- Family member	53	75.7
- Friend	13	18.6
- Neighbor	4	5.7
Occupation		
- Employed	12	17.1
- Self-employed	36	51.4
- Others	22	31.4

Table 2: Finding related to assess the coping strategies regarding mental illness among caregiver. (N = 70)

S.N.	Level of coping	Frequency (%)
1.	Low Coping	7(10%)
2.	Moderate Coping	56(80%)
3.	High Coping	7(10%)
S.N.	Level of perception	Frequency (%)
1.	Low perception	10 (14.3%)
2.	Moderate perception	50(71.4%)
3.	High perception	10(14.3%)

Table 3: Association between level of Perception and Coping strategies among caregivers with their selected Socio-demographic variables.

Demographical Variable	Df	Coping strategies	Level of Perception
		Chi Square Value	Chi Square Value
Age of samples (In years)	4	3.88 ^{NS}	2.89 ^{NS}
Gender	2	1.34 ^{NS}	0.02 ^{NS}
Marital status	4	0.87 ^{NS}	1.60 ^{NS}
Monthly household income (In rupees)	6	3.25 ^{NS}	6.04 ^{NS}
Religion	2	3.73 ^{NS}	2.26 ^{NS}
Educational qualification	6	12.41 ^{NS}	20.83 [*]
Type of family	2	3.17 ^{NS}	0.68 ^{NS}
Relation with client	4	3.38 ^{NS}	5.12 ^{NS}
Occupation	4	2.05 ^{NS}	5.60 ^{NS}

NS= Non-Significant *= Significant

Table No. 4: Mean, S.D and Correlation between level of Perception and Coping strategies. (N = 70)

S. No	Variables	Mean	S.D.	“r”	Df	Tabulated value	Result
1	Perception scores	65.58	11.85	0.53	68	0.23	Moderately positive correlation (Significant)
2	Coping strategies	39.54	6.59				

DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, this is the first study to Perceptions and Coping Strategies of Caregivers Regarding Mental Illness in India. Findings of this study shed light on the perceptions and coping strategies regarding mental illness among caregivers in selected hospitals in Jaipur, India. The study revealed that a majority of caregivers

demonstrated moderate levels of perception regarding mental illness. This finding aligns with previous studies by [Tenzing et al., and Bipeta et al., 2020], highlighting a common trend among caregivers.^[10,11] However, the moderate perception levels observed in this study raise questions about the depth of understanding and

awareness among caregivers, suggesting a need for targeted education and awareness campaigns.

Regarding Coping Strategies results indicated that most caregivers exhibited moderate coping strategies when dealing with the challenges associated with mental illness. This finding mirrors the findings of [Ramesh Subba et al., 2022], who also reported similar coping patterns among caregivers.^[12] While moderate coping strategies may indicate resilience and adaptability, it's essential to explore the specific strategies employed and their effectiveness in mitigating caregiver burden and stress.

The association between sociodemographic variables and coping strategies/perception levels revealed interesting insights. Educational qualification emerged as a significant factor, with higher educational levels correlating positively with perception scores. However, other variables such as age, gender, marital status, monthly household income, religion, type of family, relation with the client, and occupation did not show significant associations with coping strategies or perception levels. To contrast the present study with a study conducted by Mishra SS et al (2023), which showed that factors such as age, gender, marital status of caregivers, and occupation of caregivers were associated with the perception score of caregiver stress.^[13] For instance, [Asima Jaffar et al., 2020] identified educational qualification as a significant predictor of coping strategies.^[14]

In our study, the analysis revealed a moderately positive correlation between perception scores of caregivers and their coping strategies toward mental illness. This finding underscores the interconnectedness between how caregivers perceive their role and the strategies they employ to manage stress. Further supporting this relationship, a study conducted by Buanasari et al. echoes our findings by demonstrating a positive correlation between caregivers' attitudes towards mental illness and their coping mechanisms.¹⁵ This alignment suggests that caregivers who maintain positive attitudes towards mental health challenges may be more inclined to adopt effective coping strategies in managing the associated stressors.

Overall, these results highlight the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to improve caregivers' perception of mental illness and enhance their coping strategies. Educational programs and counselling sessions tailored to the specific needs of caregivers could prove beneficial in this regard. Additionally, policies aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness and increasing access to mental health services are crucial to supporting both caregivers and individuals with mental illness in India.

The study's findings have significant implications for the development of support programs and policies aimed at

improving caregiver well-being and enhancing the quality of care for individuals with mental illness. By understanding caregivers' perceptions and coping strategies, healthcare providers can offer targeted interventions, such as psychoeducation, counseling, and respite care, to better support caregivers in their role. Limitations of the study, such as the use of convenience sampling and the potential for response bias. Future research could employ more rigorous sampling techniques and longitudinal designs to explore the long-term impact of caregiving on mental health outcomes.

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