

Caregivers Relational World with or without significant others

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ABSTRACT

‘Caregiver’ is defined as an individual responsible for caring for a sick or dependent individual, who helps this individual to perform daily tasks such as eating and personal hygiene, in addition to administering routine medication and accompanying the individual to health care services or other services, necessary in their daily routine, excluding techniques or procedures identified as being exclusive to other legally established professions. Several researches have focused on Objective burden, coping strategies, stigmatization of families with mentally ill patients and other specific issues about caregivers of mental patients in the last few years. Burden of Chronic illnesses not only affect the patient and caregiver, but also have a significant impact on the family and may affect their overall QOL. Quality of life (QoL) can be closely related to caregiver burden, which may be a potential mediating effect on the relationships among caregivers of person with Chronic mental illnesses. Caregivers experienced burden in areas such as expectation, privacy, management, embarrassment, anger, personal and social relationships, fear, dependence, finance, incompetence, uncertainty, and avoidance.

Keywords: Chronic Mental illnesses, Caregiver, Relational world.

INTRODUCTION:

“The sense of identity requires the existence of another by whom one is known; and a conjunction of this other person’s recognition of one’s self with self recognition”

-Laing (1990)

Deinstitutionalization has highlighted the role of family members as the primary source of care giving to persons with chronic mental disorder. It creates a significant burden on the caregiver in the families, and on society at large in terms of significant direct and indirect costs that include frequent hospitalizations and the need for long-term psychosocial and economic support, as well as life-time lost productivity. **Rochefort (1984)**

The first and foremost relationship of a person is with his or her own self. The way a person relates with him or herself, determine how he would relate with others. Therefore, literature review considers the researches done in the area of relationships. Holding on the cliché of John Donne that **“No man is an island”**, all over the continent the relationships serve as a base of one’s existence. Nothing affects the human personality so much as the relationships. It is only in the context of others that our needs can be met. Whether we like it or not, each of us has an unshakeable dependence on others (**Parrott,1998**). Everyone need trust, support, affection, love and most importantly belongingness to a group.

The term relationship is used conventionally to refer to people who influence each other’s behaviour. According to **Hinde (1997)** **“Relationships as often described are more or less close, and a participants perceptions of the closeness of a relationship may affects its detailed course. Closeness implies interdependence between the participants.”**

At a preliminary stage of development, the child is unable to distinguish himself from others, he considers himself as a part of mother. In gradual process of growth he begins to segregate himself from others and think about himself and others. This direct experience with others is mediated. As a result relatedness becomes more rich, brood, complex and more differentiated with development.

In the words of **Josselson (1996)**, **“Relatedness not only involves other people as an object of desire (as when we need someone to satisfy a particular need) but relatedness**

also serves as a context for the experience of the self". Thus, self other relatedness is developed as a process of interaction and experience with others. Each one of us has two worlds within us- internal and external. How one relates with the external world will decide how one construes and relate with himself/herself. Hence, relationships becomes a parameter for not only one's survival but also one's well being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

OBJECTIVES:

To assess the self other relatedness among caregivers of persons with Chronic Mental Illness across gender.

DESIGN:

Ex- post facto research with exploratory orientation was used.

VARIABLES:

MAJOR VARIABLES

Major variables of the research is self other relatedness. This was major variable have been measured across gender of caregivers.

SAMPLE

The sample comprises of 100 primary caregivers of person with diagnosed chronic mental illness from Private Psychiatric hospitals and clinics at Lucknow. These groups were divided based on gender of the caregivers. The sampling technique has been used for Non-probability purposive technique.

SAMPLING CRITERIA:

Inclusion criteria:

1. Caregivers (Parents/Spouse/Sibling/Children)
2. Age group of caregivers above 21 yrs
3. Living with the Chronically mentally ill patient for at least last 1 year.
4. Primary care givers of person with chronic mental illness above 1 year.
5. Primary care givers who are able to understand and speak Hindi or English.
6. Primary care givers of mentally ill persons who will be available at the time of data collection.
7. Caregivers (male and female) who were willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Primary Caregivers of person with mental illness other than these five.
2. Primary Caregiver of person with chronic mental illness with Life time history of head injury, movement disorders, cerebral palsy and surgical intervention.
3. Primary Caregivers with psychiatric condition, organic syndromes, mental disability, substance dependence (any type) or chronic physical illness.
4. Those who are professional health caregivers.

TOOLS AND THEIR ADMINISTRATION

I. Socio Demographic Profile Sheet: this questionnaire was developed by researcher included items related to personnel characteristic of caregivers such as age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, duration of illness and relationship with patient.

II. Circle Technique (Thrower, Bruce and Walton in 1982) was used to explore self other relatedness and relationship dynamics of Caregivers.

(a) About the Technique

With the help of circle drawings illustrated in graphic, form the patterns of closeness distance, power in a family and alliance and boundaries. The circle source a rich source of information concerning family dynamics and interpersonal relations.

(b) Administration of the Tool

The subject was asked to devote his own 'self' and 'significant person' in his life space. After establishing the rapport with the subject some instructions were given regarding circle technique

(c) Scoring & Analysis

Data obtained on circle technique has been analyzed on five dimensions: Presence of self, Centrality of self, Size of self related to others, Autonomy of self, significant others emerged in life space. Thereafter tabulation of the obtained raw data with the help of content analysis and percentage analysis were used.

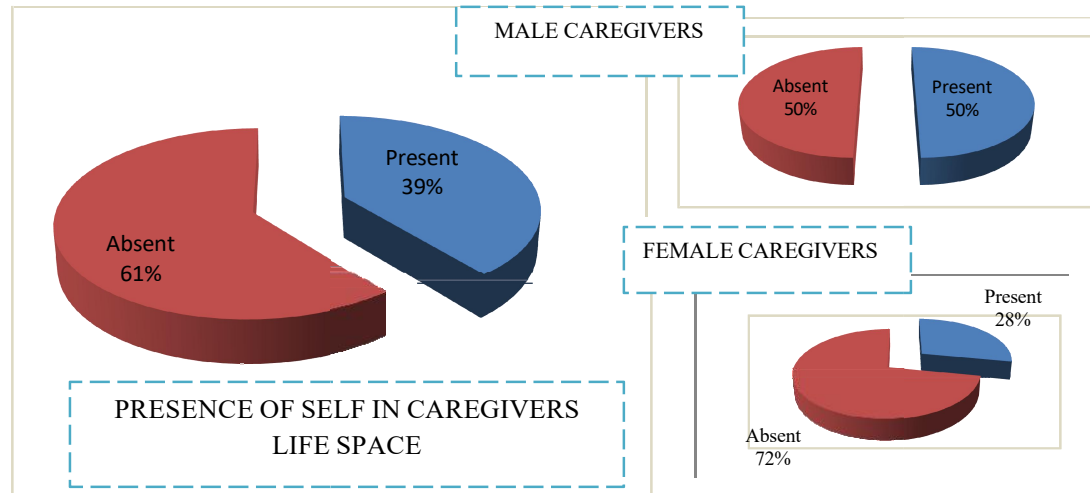
RESULT:

Relationships are an essential part of health and wellbeing. Relationships supply strength to a long, healthy, and happy life. The key component for any successful relationships are when we make mistakes and take responsibility for own behaviour. The base of any successful relationship is observe and connect with ourselves decides how we would perceive others and relate with them. Caregivers who are involved in Caregiving along with their other works and responsibilities as of household, social, professional etc. do not have this safe and sound base of relationships. They have a background of conked out relationships. Lots of responsibilities, over-burdened schedule, social withdrawal & isolation, professional excuses are hurdle to create a harmful scrappy echo image and subsequent negative self concept. This unenthusiastic self image will in turn affect their perception of others and their relationship with others. Different theorists have emphasized on various aspects of self-object relations. For self-object is representation of parents in the child's mind. **Laing (1990)** proposes that many instances of mental illness are primarily a result of a lack in basic security of the self. We all have two worlds of relationship: **the internal world and the external world**. How we relate to the external world depends upon the internally construed world of relations. This self-other construing can be understood in a nonthreatening way by projective technique or tests where there is little play of social desirability. Therefore in the present research an attempt has been made to explore the self other relatedness of the Caregivers through Circle Technique. Close relationships are like oxygen, we breathe. One fined his / her sense of being only in relation to his significant others. Relationship with significant others is important not only for positive mental health of a person but also for his/ her construing of self. The concept of relational self also denotes that self is fundamentally interpersonal . There is no existence of self in the absence of others because in relational self knowledge about the self is linked with the knowledge about significant others.

The Circle Technique reflects the construing of the relational world within. The data obtained from Circle Technique has been analyzed on five dimensions, namely – **Presence of self, Centrality of self, Size of self , Relation of self to others, and Significant others emerged in life space**. These dimensions pertaining to self- other relatedness are being discussed here –

1. **Presence of Self**-Whether the self is present or not in the life space of a person is of considerable importance.

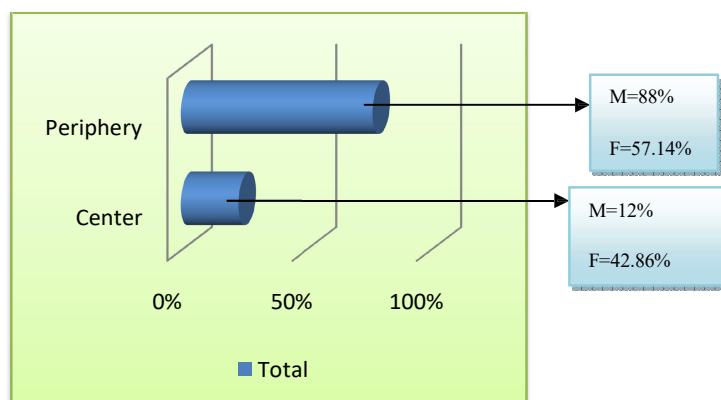
PRESENCE OF SELF



The content analysis of the obtained responses brought forth two response categories. It is clearly apparent that taken as a whole, 61% Caregivers do not have their self in their life space. This reflects that their life space is dominated by others. Self with a programming of rejection by significant others often leads to self rejection. However when the results revisited for gender more Male (50%) in comparison to their Counterparts differences (28%) have their self in their life space. This also has a bearing of the discriminative rearing where the male child right from beginning prized and given importance conceives self as important. Female caregivers give preference to others e.g. *“Issh gola mai hum apni maa, pitta, bhai, bahinn, bacchan orh patti koh banahe, kayese yeh saban jaroori hai humre liye, sabki chinta rahat hai hume, humra ka hai kal mare to hajj marr jaye”*

2. **Placement of Self**- Placement of self shows the importance of self in one's life space. Either the self can be in the centre or in the periphery.

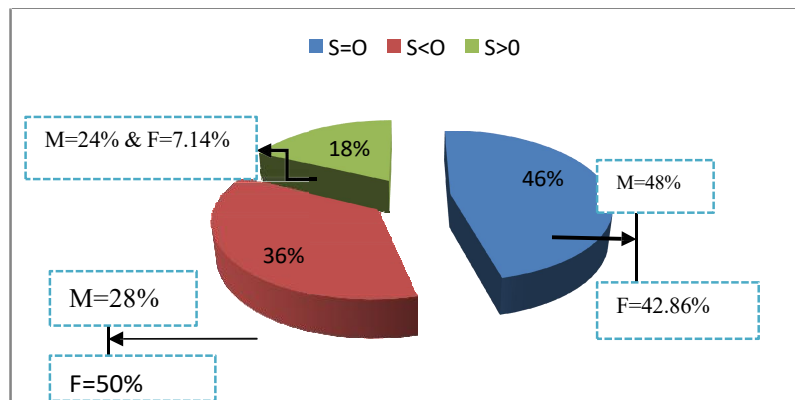
PLACEMENT OF SELF



The obtained data on circle technique reflects that for the majority of subjects self is placed at periphery. The content analysis of the obtained responses brought forth two response categories. As is apparent from Graph, 76.9% of the caregivers made their self at periphery in their life space. This again shows the **inadequacy and inferiority of self**. Others are more important in their lives than their own self. However, more Male Caregivers (88%) than their counterparts (57.14%) made their self at the periphery.

3. **Size of Self-** This dimension shows the development of self in one's life space i.e., whether the self is depicted as equal to others or bigger than others or smaller than others.

SIZE OF SELF

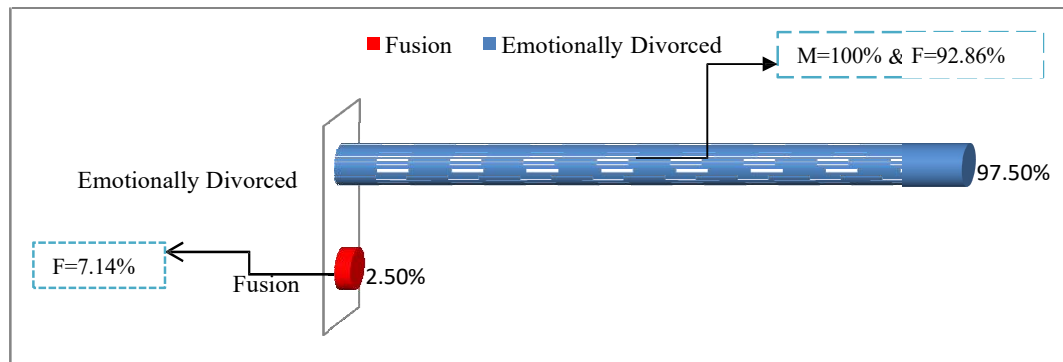


Size of self, denotes the dominance of self in relation to others. This dimension indicates whether the self of the person in relation to others is more important, less important or equally important. When the data was content analyzed it brought forth three response categories, It is clearly apparent from Figure, that 46.15% of the sample made their self equal to others in their life space. This was followed by 35.89% of the sample who made their self smaller than others. In terms of gender Female Caregivers (50%) predominantly made their self smaller than others whereas Male Caregivers (42.86%) predominantly made their self equal to others. In other words more Female Caregivers perceive their self as weak, inadequate, worthless, insignificant and smaller to others than their counterparts.

4. Relation of Self to others-

Two major trends have emerged in the data. One which shows a **fused self other relation** where boundaries between persons are very unclear, in this members do not clearly separate there, own feelings, anxieties, concerns and identities. (and) the other where the self is **emotionally divorced from significant others** where members are emotionally separated or divorced, they are distant and share very few of their emotions.

RELATION OF SELF TO OTHERS



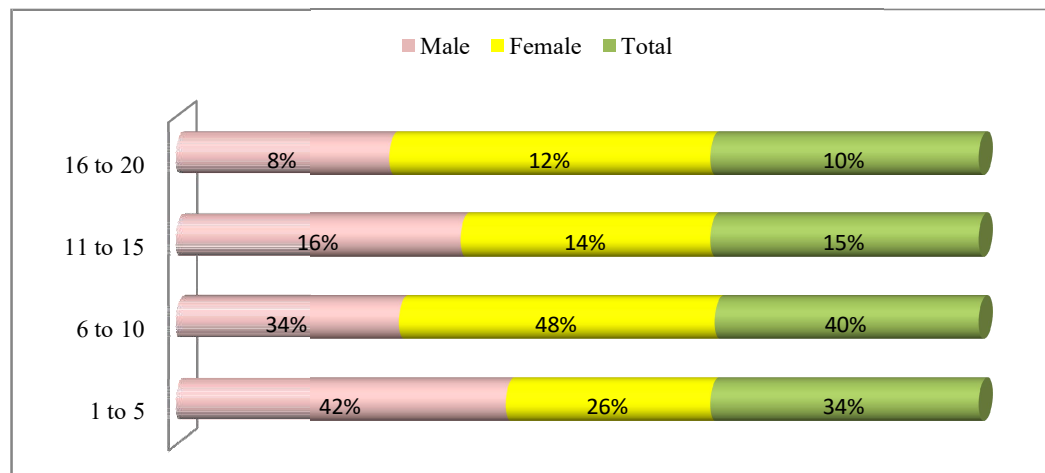
The content analysis of the obtained responses (for only 39 caregivers of various ailments who had their self present in their life space) brought forth two response categories, From the graph it is evident that sample predominantly depicted their self as independent of others in their life space or in other words as emotionally divorced. On analyzing the data according to gender similar trend emerged. However Male Caregivers (100%) were slightly ahead of Female Caregivers (92.86%) in depicting their self as emotionally divorced.

5. Significant others emerged in life space

This dimension brings to fore relational network in terms of social support by significant others. It has been analyzed in terms of number of significant others that have emerged in life space and significant relationships that have emerged in the life space. These are as follows-

- i. **Number of Significant Others Emerged in Life Space** – This dimension gives an idea about how many Family members or relatives consider significant in their lives.

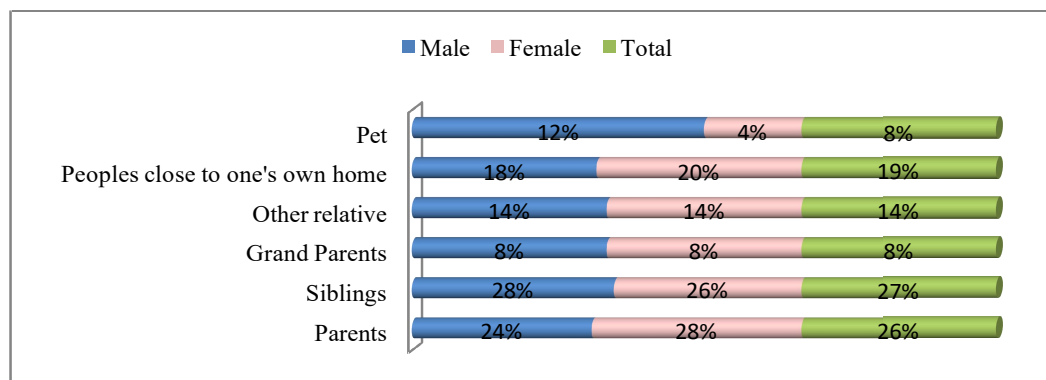
NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS' EMERGED IN LIFE SPACE OF CAREGIVERS



On content analyzing the data it brought forth four response categories. From the table which highlights the most dominant response category, it is apparent that 41% of the Caregivers showed 6 to 10 people as their significant others in their life space. With reference to gender majority of the Female caregivers (48%) showed 6 to 10 people as their significant others where as majority of male caregivers (42%) showed 1 to 5 people as their significant others in their life space. This could be due to the fact that Female are more relationship seeking than male caregivers. Therefore they are slightly ahead of male caregivers in relationship network. Further in comparison to Female caregivers (26%) more Male caregivers (42%) had 1 to 5 people as significant others in their life space.

- ii. **Significant Others Emerged in Life Space** – It is not only important to get information about the number of people in the life space but casting a glance at the details of these significant others is imperative. Therefore, this dimension gives information about persons with whom Caregivers have proximity and consider them as important.

DETAILS OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS EMERGED IN LIFE SPACE OF CAREGIVERS



The content analysis of the obtained responses brought forth six response categories, clearly shows that predominantly two target persons have emerged in the life space – siblings and parents. Surprisingly siblings (27%) are a little bit ahead of parents (26%) in emotional proximity and relationship bonding. In other words Caregivers are receiving more emotional warmth from siblings than parents. In terms of gender Male caregivers (28%) predominantly consider siblings closest to them whereas for Female caregivers (28%) it is predominantly parents.

CONCLUSION:

- Majority Caregivers do not have their self in their life space.
- Another interesting trend In terms of presence of self in life space according to mental disorder which emerges is that 100% female caregivers of Depression patient do not have their self in their life space.

- However, those who have shown their self in their life space, the placement of the self is at periphery, which further indicate inadequate self image.
- In terms of gender more Female caregivers perceived their self as weak, inferior, inadequate others than their counterparts.
- Thus absence of self in the life space and self being depicted emotionally divorced indicate conflictual self – other relations. This supports the assumption that “Self – other relatedness of Caregivers caring for person with chronic mental illness would be conflictual”.
- Further in terms of gender as greater number of Female caregivers did not have their self in their internally construed relational world. Besides there appeared greater fusion of self -other relations among those in whom self has emerged.
- In terms of gender difference it is found that females reported greater number of significant others in comparison to their counterpart.

IMPLICATIONS

Major implications arising out of the main findings are as follows-

- The findings strongly suggest the **need to provide intervention in the form of psychosocial support on the relationship level to these Caregivers.**
- **Counselling services by trained mental health professionals should be a part of the treatment.**
- Radical acceptance of **DBT & acceptance and commitment therapy** can be given to the patient and their caregiver.

SUGGESTIONS

- More Interventional studies may be done to target caregiver burden and its effect can be assessed on self-other relatedness.
- A comparative study could also be taken up between Caregivers of Person with chronic mental illness and Caregivers of Person with chronic physical illness.
- The present study can save as a base line for the development of psychosocial intervention of such people package.

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