

Expressed Emotions among Caregivers of Patients with Mental Illness

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Abstract

Introduction: The intention of the study was to identify the feelings conveyed by caregivers of people with mental health conditions.

The purpose of this study was to identify feelings experienced by caregivers of people with mental health conditions.

Methods: The present study used an non experimental research design. 230 caregivers of patients with mental illness were chosen using a convenience sampling approach. The data was obtained through interview techniques on demographic and medication adherence scales from samples who met the inclusion criteria.

Results: The study results shown that 8.69% patients had low expressed emotion, 60% had moderately expressed emotion, and 31.30 % had high expressed emotion. The association found between the level of expressed emotion and the religion of patients was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The association found between the level of expressed emotion the number of hospital admission, types of illness, education, family monthly income, marital status, and duration of caretaking among caregivers at $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion: The study found that the emotions expressed by caregivers were a predictor of the re-hospitalization rate among mentally ill patients. The presence of a significant amount of expressed emotion points out the need for psychosocial support from the family members. This will reduce the emotion expressed, which could reduce relapse rates and help caregivers adapt and manage the ill family member effectively.

Keywords: Caregivers, patients, mental illness.

1. Introduction

Expressed emotion (EE) is a family member's critical, unfriendly, or overly emotional reaction to a friend or family member with a mental illness. The quality of interactions and the nature of familial relations between caregivers and patients suffering from psychiatric disorders are considered to be an adverse family environment. With the beginning of deinstitutionalization, caregivers have gradually anticipated more accountability for the care of their mentally ill patients. The negative caregiver experience is one of the most common causes of stress that results in increased expression of emotions.

In India, over 90% of those who are psychologically ill live with their relatives, are dependent on them. Family members of patients suffering from psychiatric disorders, experience a range of emotions from loss, and grief to

guilt and anger. They also suffer from feelings of isolation and shame. Family member's lives are troubled when they are given more care than is typically appropriate for someone of their age (Rakesh. K, 2014).

Family members who show strong emotional expression are hostile, very critical, and cannot tolerate their patients. They feel that this attitude helps them. They criticize not only the behavior associated with the disorder but also other behaviors specific to the character of the mentally ill. Strongly conveyed emotions are a possible to lead to relapse of symptoms.

Family members are more reserved with their criticism; low-expressed emotion occurs. They feel that the patient is not in control of the illness. The greater chance of the family having low expressiveness raises if they are more educated and not have to accept the patient and his disorder. This causes altered stress and is less directed towards the patient (Wendel, Miklowitz, Richards, & George, 2000).

Leff. J et al. (2010) conducted a one-year follow-up study where the relationship between relatives' EE and the outcome of the patients was assessed in Chandigarh. The sample was collected from both urban and rural setups. A significant relationship between high EE and relapse was found. Individual components of expressed emotion were also assessed and a strong association between

EE is a common psychological stressor and has a direct link to disease recurrence. It's a challenging task to care for someone who is suffering from mental health issues. It can create a negative emotional environment in the patient's family. Moreover, the negative family environment not only leads to relapse of symptoms but also to rehospitalization. The progression of the disease is also greatly impacted by it. The caregiver's feelings affect the patient's symptoms, which in turn affects their recurrence of symptoms.

The main intention of this study was to identify the expressed emotions among caregivers of patients with mental illness attending the psychiatric outpatient department at Sri Ramachandra Hospital.

2. Materials & Methods

A descriptive research design was used. The study was conducted at the outpatient department of SRMC. Permission was obtained from the Director, Nurse, Head of Psychiatry, and Medical Superintendent of Sri Ramachandra Hospital before data collection.

The study included 230 caregivers of mentally ill patients who spoke Tamil or English and spent maximum hours with them as parent, spouse, sibling, child, or other relative. Caregivers with chronic physical or mental illness or sensory impairments were excluded.

The instrument used for the study was divided into two sections such as selected demographic variables of patients and caregivers and the Family member attitude scale (Kavanagh DJ, 1997). It is a structured form that measures expressed emotion and has 43 items. The minimum score is 43 and maximum score is 215. A higher score reveals a greater level of expressed emotion.

Written informed consent was obtained from each patient Informed that their answers would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Then the questionnaire was distributed to study participants. Comfort and privacy have been considered. Data were analyzed.

3. Results & Discussion

Descriptive analysis of the patients' demographic variables represented that 68 (29.56%) were between 41-50 years of age. Considering the gender 122 (53.04 %) were males and 108 (46.96 %) were females. In view of the residents, the majority of them 145 (63.05%) were residing in an urban area. Considering their education, many of them 81(35.22%) had primary education. In view of occupation, 73(31.74%) were retired.

Descriptive analysis of the caregiver's background variables represented that 81 (35.22%) were 31- 40 years of age. considering the gender of the patients, 128 (55.65 %) were males and 102 (44.35%) were females. In view of relationships with patients, 86 (37.83%) were mothers. In view of the duration of care, the patient 73(31.74%) were 2-3years. Considering the duration of mental illness 80 (34.78%) of them were suffering from mental illness from 6 months - 1years. In view of the type of mental illness, 23(1.30%) had schizophrenia, 43(14.34%) had

depression, 90(35.21%) had bipolar disorder, 49(10.86%) had substance abuse disorder, 10(1.73%) had other neurotic disorder, 15(1.34%) and had other disorders such as personality, sexual and behavioral disorders. Considering the number of hospital admissions 4 (34.78%) got admitted more than 4 times.

The study results revealed that 8.69% (20) patients had low expressed emotion, 60% (138) patients had moderately expressed emotion, and 31.30 % (72) patients had high expressed emotion (Table 2a). Mean score was 144.65 , SD was 22.55 for expressed emotions among caregivers of patients with mental illness (Table 2b). The association found between the level of expressed emotion and the religion of patients was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The association found between the level of expressed emotion the number of hospital admission, types of illness, education, family monthly income, marital status, and duration of caretaking among caregivers at $p < 0.05$.

The study findings are supported by a descriptive study conducted by Bharati, S. B, et al. (2016) on expressed emotions prevailing among the caregivers of inpatients with mental illness in a general hospital psychiatric set up at a government medical college and hospital in Nagpur with the 100 samples. They were assessed by family emotional involvement with the help of a perceived criticism scale. The study highlighted the Perceived criticism scale shows 98 caregivers had severe perceived criticism (PC) score whereas 97 caregivers had severe Emotional Involvement (EI) score which shows the majority of the caregivers had high Expressed Emotions.

The study's limitations were that expressed emotions were measured subjectively as oral responses only elicited from the study participants using standardized scales. The study was conducted only in one setting. It was time-consuming to administer the tool.

Table 1. Distribution of the level of expressed emotions among care givers of mentally ill patients

(N=230)

Expressed Emotion	n	%
Low (5-108)	20	8.69
Moderate (109-160)	138	60
High (161-215)	72	31.30

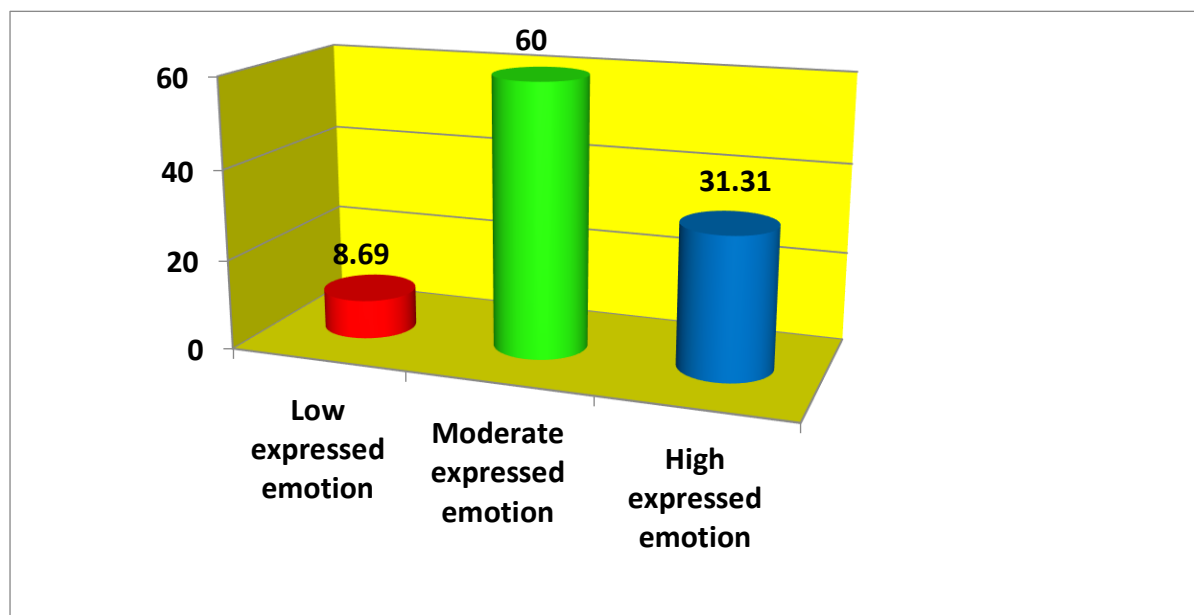


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of level of expressed emotions among care givers of mentally ill patients

(N=230)

Table 2. Mean score of expressed emotion among care givers of mentally ill patients

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Expressed Emotion	144.65	22.55

4. Conclusions

The study revealed that emotions expressed by caregivers predict re-hospitalization of patients with mental disorders. A significant amount of expressed emotions indicates a need for psychosocial support from family members. This reduces expressed emotions, which can reduce relapse and help caregivers adjust and effectively care for an ill family member.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Consent

Written consent was obtained from all the participants.

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