

## **Abstract**

Few comprehensive and quantitative studies have appraised the caregiving experiences of relatives of Chinese patients who are suffering from severe psychiatric illnesses. This study aimed to translate and examine the psychometric properties of the Experience of Caregiving Inventory (ECI), a 66-item instrument that measures both positive and negative appraisals of the caregiving experience. Predictors of the appraisal of caregiving were then explored and the 'stress-coping' model re-examined. Relatives were assessed on the ECI, GHQ-12, mastery scale, ways of coping, and other sociodemographic data, and for the amount of contact time they had with the patients. Patients' sociodemographic and clinical variables, such as diagnosis, functioning level, and symptomatology, were also studied. 129 caregivers and 81 patients were recruited, 63% of whom suffered from schizophrenia, 17% suffered from affective disorder, and the remainder from other functional psychotic disorders. Test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and the item-scale correlation of the Chinese version of the ECI were satisfactory. Factor analysis found a 10-factor solution that was comparable with the original version. Regression analysis of sociodemographic and clinical predictors (such as symptomatology) of ECI scores (n=81) showed that the negative appraisal was mainly predicted by the GAF at one year before admission and the years of education of

caregivers, while the positive appraisal was predicted by the employment status of patients and the years of education of caregivers. The latter also showed a negative correlation with the 'avolition-apathy' score of patients. Diagnosis, positive, and depressive symptoms did not show any significant relationship with the ECI.

Re-examination of the stress-coping model showed that there was significant psychological distress among caregivers. Ways of coping (especially rational problem solving) accounted for 21.8% of the variance, while negative appraisal explained 22.8% of variance in GHQ scores. The positive correlation between negative and positive appraisals warrants further investigation of the stress-coping model, with the concept of 'commitment' of relatives in caregiving.