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Psychometrics of the Positive Thinking Skills Scale among Dementia Caregivers

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PROJECT TITLE: Psychometrics of the Positive Thinking Skills Scale among Dementia Caregivers.

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INTRODUCTION

One out of 9 adults aged 65 and older in the US are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease; the most common form of dementia.¹ Eighty percent of the care provided for persons with dementia is provided by unpaid caregivers.¹ Dementia caregivers are at high risk for developing physical and psychological health problems and they experience a high rate of clinical depression as a result of the burden of caregiving.² A recent descriptive research has shown that positive thinking attenuated the effects of caregivers' burden and enhanced their levels of resourcefulness and psychological well-being in a sample of 80 caregivers of persons with dementia.³ Therefore, Dementia caregivers would benefit from a positive thinking intervention that helps them to rise above their challenges and to be resilient.

SIGNIFICANCE

Previous research have shown that positive thinking is associated with better quality of life, less depression, greater life satisfaction, enhanced psychological and physical well-being, and a sense of meaning in life.⁴ Therefore, dementia caregivers would benefit from a positive thinking training intervention. However, before delivering the intervention, a measure of intervention fidelity, that is, whether the intervention was implemented according to a planned protocol, is needed. The Positive Thinking Skills Scale (PTSS)⁵ has been developed and published by the Principal Investigator but has not been tested in dementia caregivers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to test the psychometric properties of the PTSS as a direct measure of intervention fidelity that is designed to capture the frequency of use of eight skills for thinking positively. The information gained from this study will be used to develop a full protocol for a cognitive intervention that has the potential to enhance caregivers' resilience. The fidelity of the intervention will be measured using the PTSS that will be tested in this study.

FORWARD THINKING/INNOVATION

This study is innovative because it recognizes the importance of testing the psychometric properties of the PTSS among dementia caregivers as a direct measure of intervention fidelity. This is an initial step toward implementing a cognitive intervention using the PTSS to measure the frequency of using the eight skills constituting the PTSS and to identify which of the positive thinking skills are used by caregivers, so these skills can be reinforced and the ones that are not used can be taught for better outcomes to dementia caregivers. Dr. Bekhet plans to extend this study to test the cognitive intervention using the Positive Thinking Skills Scale that will be psychometrically tested in this study as a direct measure of intervention fidelity. IRB approval will be obtained once the proposal gets funded. Matthew will use the information gained from this study to build on his master and PhD study as he is interested in positive thinking and mental health. Matthew is currently a teaching assistant for the mental health theory class that Dr. Bekhet is teaching. Also, he is working with her on a manuscript related to the concept of resilience. This study will facilitate further research of the student and faculty.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Karie and Matthew will take the lead on this project with the support of and collaboration with Dr. Bekhet. Both will recruit the study participants (n=80), collect the data, and entering the data into SPSS. Dr. Bekhet, Mr. Greenwood, and Ms. Kobiske will clean the data and analyze the results. Karie R. Kobiske plans to study dementia caregivers and resilience for her dissertation. This study will open avenues and thoughts for her dissertation in terms of understanding the positive thinking as a protective factor for the resilience concept. The information gained from this study will help her to develop a proposal that integrates some of the resilience enhancing factors and use them as intervening variables to help caregivers rise above their challenges and become resilient. Matthew Greenwood is a direct entry student and a teacher assistant for my mental health class who has the passion for mental health and plan to use this information for his clinical practice and his master program to become a mental health practitioner.

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