Family Interdependence of Psychological, Physical, Social and Spiritual Well-being within Korean Elder-Caregiver Dyads

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Abstract
Family members are by definition interdependent and affect one another in various ways, particularly in situations where a family member is providing essential caregiving for an elder family member. There is growing recognition of family interdependence within elder-caregiver dyads in terms of both practical and research implications; caregiver’s well-being influences elder’s well-being and vice versa. However, there is a dearth of published research regarding family interdependence.

This study aims to examine the degree of family interdependence within elder-caregiver dyads in terms of psychological, physical, social, and spiritual well-being in the context of Korean family caring.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) within dyads was used to test hypothesis 1. The ICC is a measure of how similar members of certain groups (in this case dyads) are to one another. Elders and their family caregivers were significantly related on psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of well-being, but not in terms of physical well-being.

Hypothesis 2: Multivariate linear regression modeling was used to examine Hypothesis 2. For each of the four well-being indexes described in the method, a regression model was run with elder well-being as the dependent variable. Independent variables in each model included the corresponding caregiver well-being score, along with the type of elder-caregiver relationship, the elder’s gender, age, marital status, education level, and monthly income as controls.

Caregiver’s well-being remained a significant predictor of elder’s well-being in domains of psychological, social, and spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

This study’s findings are important for furthering researchers’ understanding of family interdependence of well-being between elders and caregivers living at home. In emphasizing the dyad data from both elders and caregivers, we have shown the significant degree of family interdependence of well-being in terms of psychological, social and spiritual well-being within family caring relationships. More important, the interdependence of spiritual well-being was explored for the first time in the present study.

Hence, there is a need for a shift in the ideas and methods of understanding the well-being of elders living at home and their family caregivers. In the future, researchers should take elder-caregiver interdependence into consideration when designing and analyzing studies of well-being later in life. Understanding sources of shared variability will improve the usefulness of statistical analyses in this area.

Moreover, an understanding of interdependence within these dyads will help to improve clinical approaches to addressing the challenges to psychological, social, and spiritual well-being faced by both elders and their caregivers.