

Expressed Emotion and Coping Strategies in the Caregivers of Schizophrenia Patients

Anwasha Mondal* and Deapti Mishra**

Abstract

Background: Expressed emotion is a qualitative measure of the ‘amount’ of emotion displayed, typically in the family setting, usually by a family or caretakers. The term coping refers to the process by which a person attempts to manage stressful demands. Relatively little research has examined the interaction between emotional responses and the coping skills of family members or caregivers in schizophrenic patients. **Objective:** The present study is an attempt to explore the expressed emotion, coping styles and the relation between them in the caregivers of patients with schizophrenia. **Method:** Sixty patients with schizophrenia along with their main caregivers were selected for the study. Scale for Assessing Positive Symptoms (SAPS) and Scale for Assessing Negative Symptoms (SANS) were used to measure the symptom severity of the patient group. Caregivers were screened by using GHQ-5 questionnaire. Attitude Questionnaire and Coping Scale was used to measure expressed emotion and coping strategies of the caregivers. **Results:** The highest and lowest expressed emotion shown by the caregivers was warmth and dissatisfaction. The most used coping strategy by the caregivers was found to be acceptance. Hostility was found to be negatively correlated with coping strategies. **Conclusion:** The study highlights the use of expressed emotion towards patients with schizophrenia and specific coping strategies by the caregivers and a relationship was also found between expressed emotion and coping strategies.

Key Words: Schizophrenia, caregivers, expressed emotion, coping

Expressed emotion refers to the interpersonal emotional environment of the family. Expressed emotion has been described as “a measure of the extent to which relatives express critical, hostile or over-involved attitudes about a patient when discussing the patient’s illness and family life with an interviewer” (Keonigsberg & Handley, 1986). The concept of expressed emotion was given by Brown et al in 1958. The main components of expressed emotion are emotional over-involvement, criticism, hostility, dissatisfaction and warmth, all of which effects the patient. The minimum time period to check expressed emotion is minimum 35 hours face-to-face contact per week. This is found to be the critical period, beyond which the chances of relapse increase significantly (Brown et al, 1972). According to Mos-Morris and Patrie (1997), coping refers to the cognitive, behavioural and emotional ways through which people manage stressful situations. A vast amount of research conducted on expressed emotion have shown that relapse rates were greater in families where relatives showed ‘high expressed emotion’ by making critical comments, expressing hostility and showing signs of emotional over involvement. The risk of relapse was greater if relatives were in contact with their close relatives for more than 35 hrs a week. (Brown et al, 1958). Research have also shown that caregivers of schizophrenic patients use both problem focused and emotion focused coping strategies. Acceptance was the most frequent coping response used by the caregivers of schizophrenic patients (Dutta et al, 1996). Relatively little research has examined the interaction between emotional responses and the coping skills of family members among the caregivers of schizophrenic patients. It has been found that avoidance

*Anwasha Mondal, Ph.D. Scholar (Clinical Psychology) RIPASS, Kanke, Ranchi(Jharkhand)

**Deapti Mishra, Associate Prof., Dept of Clinical Psychology, PGIBAMS, Raipur, Chhattisgarh