

Primary Caregivers of Patients with Psychoactive Substance Use Often Suffer from Depression & Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine the frequency of depression and anxiety in carers of psychoactive substance use patients.

Study Design: Cross sectional study

Place and Duration of Study: Department of Psychiatry, Baluchistan Institute of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences, Quetta from June 2020 to December 2020.

Methodology: One hundred and twenty caregivers of psychoactive substance use patients were enrolled. Detailed demographics of patients and caregivers were recorded after taking informed written consent. Patients were aged between 18-70 years. Depression and anxiety were calculated in primary caregivers of patients of psychoactive substance use. A DASS-21 criterion was used to examine the depression. Data was analysed by SPSS 22.0.

Results: Mean age of patients was 35.27±15.43 years. 90 (75%) patients were males while 25% were females. Among caregivers 78 (65%) were females while 42 (35%) were males with mean age 36.86±16.48 years. Among caregivers, 12.5% of the patients had mild, 37.5% showed moderate and 18.33% caregivers showed severe depression while 38 (31.67%) had no depression. Anxiety among caregivers was mild in 12 (10%), 26 (21.7%) had moderate and 15 (12.5%) caregivers had severe anxiety while 67 (55.83%) caregivers had no anxiety.

Conclusion: The frequency of anxiety and depression was high in primary caregivers of patients with psychoactive substance abuse.

Keywords: Anxiety, Depression, Substance use, Caregivers

INTRODUCTION

Providing direct care, managing illness symptoms, engaging and remaining in treatment, providing financial assistance, and providing emotional support to family members with co-occurring substance use and mental health issues is an important role that families play in the well-being of those they love.¹⁻³

Several studies have proved the relation of depression and anxieties by relatives of drug dependent patients when confronted with conditions resulting from the use of drugs that cause dispute and frailty in interpersonal relationships.⁴⁻⁶ Many of these situations are manifested by sensations that are more closely tied to emotional behaviours including guilt, fear, impotence, dishonesty, anxiety, ambiguity, sadness and other related issues. Rejection by society and friends further worsen the quality of life of both sufferers and their family members.^{4,5}

When there is dependency, the entire family structure can be thrown off balance; yet, the members of the family experience varied degrees of closeness and separation as a result of the negative consequences of this conduct. Typically, a family member takes on the role of caregiver⁶, as they are the ones most directly involved in the care and/or emotional support of the person who is dependent on the drug⁷, a situation that not only negatively impacts their quality of life but also make them vulnerable to negative thoughts and depression.⁵

According to a study conducted on drug dependent family members, 58% of the wives were at increased risk of developing mental problems, and the police engagement, family member's death was also higher among those families.⁶ Co-occurrence of mental health problems among family members of drug addict is also reported in higher number within the last decade.⁸ According to international survey conducted on drug addicts, individuals who are actively using psychoactive drug substances are more prone to mood swings and anxiety disorders.⁹

Quality of life and depressive symptoms relation was mostly reported by North American literature with main focus on IV drug users and its role on their family members.^{10,11}

According to a study that included families of chemically dependent individuals, there was an elevated chance of mental problems, which was observed in 58% of drug addict wives. In addition, such homes have a high incidence of physical

aggression, death, and problems with the police.¹² Another study on wives who care for alcoholics found that these women were more likely to become ill as a result of the constant pressures, anxiety, and shame, anger, fears, and frustrations associated with relapses, and other factors.¹¹

The present study was conducted aimed to determine the depression and anxiety among caregivers of substance abuse patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted on 120 caregivers for a total of 120 psychoactive substance abuse patients. Patients were taken from Psychiatry department of Baluchistan Institute of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences, Quetta from the duration of 1st June 2020 to 31st December 2020. Detailed demographic information was collected after taking informed consent from the patient. The patients ranged in age from 18 to 70 years. Patients with chronic disease, organic brain disorders, and mental retardation were barred from participating.

A professional psychiatrists conducted one-on-one interviews with participants to acquire the information for this study. Prior to the interview, the purpose of the study was explained to each participant. This was agreed upon by all of the participants. Depression level in primary carers of patients who were abusing psychoactive substances were measured. For the purpose of assessing depression, the DASS-21 criterion was used. SPSS 22.0 was used to examine the entire set of data.

RESULTS

Mean age of patients was 35.27±15.43 years. 90 (75%) patients were males while 25% were females. Mean BMI of patients was 25.05±4.58 kg/m². 58 (48.33%) were married while 62 (51.67%) were unmarried. 41 (34.17%) patients had family history of any substance abuse (Table 1)

Among caregivers 78 (65%) were females while 42 (35%) were males with mean age 36.86±16.48 years. Twenty-five percent of caregivers were illiterate and seventy-five percent were literate. 35 (29.16%) caregivers were unmarried and 85 (70.83%) caregivers were married. 40 (33.3%) caregivers were employed and 80 (66.7%) were unemployed. 44 (36.67%) caregivers were

mothers, 26 (21.67%) were wives, 20 (16.67%) were brothers, 15 (12.5%) were spouse and 15 (12.5%) were others (Table 2).

Table 1: Baseline details of substance abuse patients

Variables	No.	%
Mean age (years)	35.27±15.43	-
Mean BMI (kg/m)	25.05±4.58	-
Gender		
Male	90	75
Female	30	25
Marital Status		
Married	58	48.33
Unmarried	62	51.67
Family History of Substance Abuse		
Yes	41	34.17
No	79	65.83

Table 2: Baseline characteristics of caregivers

Variables	No.	%
Mean age (years)	36.86±16.48	-
Gender		
Male	42	35
Female	78	65
Education		
Literate	90	75
Illiterate	30	25
Marital Status		
Married	85	70.83
Unmarried	35	29.16
Employment		
Yes	40	33.3
No	80	66.7
Relation		
Mother	44	36.67
Wife	26	21.67
Brother	20	16.67
Spouse	15	12.5
Other	15	12.5

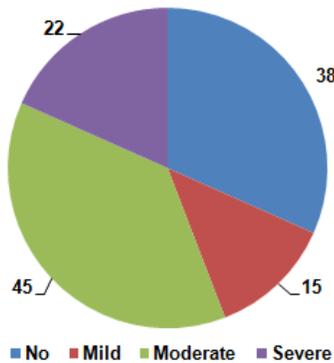


Fig. 1: Frequency of depression among caregivers

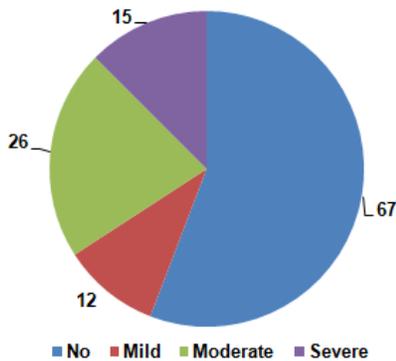


Fig. 2: Frequency of anxiety among caregivers

Among caregivers 15 (12.5%) had mild, 45 (37.5%) showed moderate and 22 (18.33%) caregivers showed severe depression while 38 (31.67%) had no depression (Fig. 1). Anxiety among caregivers was mild in 12 (10%), 26 (21.7%) had moderate and 15 (12.5%) caregivers had severe anxiety while 67 (55.83%) caregivers had no anxiety (Fig. 2).

DISCUSSION

In terms of sociodemographic data, the group of carers had a bigger prevalence of females than the group of users, as compared to the group of users with the same sociodemographic variables. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that women, specifically wives and/or family members, are frequently assigned the duty of primary caretaker. A study of caregivers for psychiatric patients discovered that 80.0 percent of the sample consisted of female caregivers.¹³ Another study conducted on alcohol misusers and their family revealed that most of the caregivers were women which are also common in other chronic conditions as well.^{14,15} These showed strong relation of male gender dependency on others.

Men use illicit substances at a higher rate than women according to studies conducted with this group.¹⁶ Male is also a risk factor for drug dependence, according to studies conducted with this population.

The mean age of the participants in the current study was 35.27±15.43 years. Ninety-five % of the patients were males, whereas just twenty-five percent were girls. The mean body mass index (BMI) of % patients was 25.05±4.58 kg/m². 58 (48.33 %) of the participants were married, while 62 (51.67 %) were single. There were 41 (34.17%) patients who had a family history of substance misuse in any kind. According to certain prior studies^{17,18}, these findings were equivalent to one another.

In this study we found among caregivers 78 (65%) were females while 42 (35%) were males with mean age 36.86±16.48 years. Twenty-five percent of caregivers were illiterate and seventy-five percent were literate. 35 (29.16%) caregivers were unmarried and 85 (70.83%) caregivers were married. 40 (33.3%) caregivers were employed and 80 (66.7%) were unemployed. 44 (36.67%) caregivers were mothers, 26 (21.67%) were wives, 20 (16.67%) were brothers, 15 (12.5%) were spouse and 15 (12.5%) were others. Many of studies demonstrated that females were high in numbers as caregivers to any substance abuse patient.^{14,20}

Among caregivers 12.5% had mild, 37.5% showed moderate and 18.33% caregivers showed severe depression while 38 (31.67%) had no depression. Anxiety among caregivers was mild in 12 (10%), 26 (21.7%) had moderate and 15 (12.5%) caregivers had severe anxiety while 67 (55.83%) caregivers had no anxiety. A study conducted by Kasi et al²¹ reported that 47.8% caregivers had no depression, 30.6% showed mild depression, 16.4% showed moderate and 5.2% showed severe depression.

Another cross-sectional study by Marcon et al²² demonstrated that caregivers of substance abuse patients had higher stress level and majority of caregivers were mothers to substance abuser. These results were similar to our study findings.

Using the WHOQOL-Bref, a study on quality of life evaluation among caretakers of chemical dependents found that physical domain (14.4) had higher scores than social (13.2), psychological (12.5), and environmental (10.6) domains.²³ According to the results of another study involving caregivers of hemiplegic patients, they had lower SF-36 scores in the areas of vitality (51.7), functional competence (53.8), mental health (60.8), and emotional elements (55.6). Despite these disparities, studies that analysed caregivers' quality of life (QL) all agreed that people who are responsible for dependents have a significantly reduced quality of life, particularly in terms of emotional components and mental health.^{24,25} Caregiver emotional well-being was shown to be less impacted in this study compared to those of caregivers of chronic patients.^{26,27}

CONCLUSION

The frequency of anxiety and depression was high in primary caregivers of patients with psychoactive substance abuse.

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