FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED BURDEN AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN AND CAUCASIAN CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA

Background and significance: Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias affect approximately 5.4 million persons in the U.S., a number that is expected to triple to 11 -16 million by 2050. Dementia is characterized by declines in memory and cognitive abilities that affect the person’s ability to carry out daily activities. Providing care to persons with dementia can have negative effects on caregivers’ physical and psychological well-being. Studies have shown that African-American caregivers are susceptible to more health problems and report poorer health than Caucasians, possibly because of the multiple stressors they encounter, such as poverty, unemployment, and racism. Yet, research has also found that African-American caregivers showed more resilience, less burden, less psychological stress, and lower levels of depression in the face of the challenging situations associated with caregiving than Caucasians. Previous research demonstrates that greater resourcefulness is associated with more adaptive functioning and greater life satisfaction. However, research on resourcefulness is lacking among caregivers of persons with dementia.

Purpose: This secondary analysis explored relationships among resourcefulness, perceived burden, depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being in dementia caregivers. Conceptual Framework: Zauszniewski’s theory of resourcefulness and quality of life provided the theoretical framework for this study. Sample Description: the sample included 28 African American and 45 Caucasian caregivers of persons with dementia. Setting: In the parent study, subjects were recruited through the Alzheimer’s Association early stage programs in Southeastern Wisconsin. Method/Design & Procedure: Descriptive, comparative, and cross-sectional design was used to examine the hypothesized relationships in a sample of 73 caregivers. In the parent study, the researcher contacted the administrators at the Alzheimer’s Association early stage programs in Southeastern Wisconsin to explain the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures. IRB approval was obtained and the administrators at the Alzheimer’s Association early stage programs in Southeastern Wisconsin helped to distribute recruitment flyers. Caregivers who were interested contacted the research assistant and caregivers completed the consent form and the questionnaires at an agreed upon date and time.

Results/Outcomes: Caucasian reported greater burden (t = -3.68, p <.001), more anxiety (t = -2.66, p <.01), depression (t = -2.21, p <.05), and hostility (t = -2.30, p <.05) than African American. On the other hand, African American caregivers reported higher scores than Caucasian on resourcefulness and slightly higher scores on psychological well-being. In Caucasian and African American, burden correlated significantly with measures of anxiety, depression, hostility, and resourcefulness in the expected direction.

Conclusions/Implications: The results of this study have clinical relevance and implications for practice. The study findings provided directions for the development of resourcefulness interventions to enhance the psychological well-being among caregivers of persons with dementia.