



# Caregiving Perceptions of Adult-Child and Spousal Caregivers Following Long-Term Care Placement of a Family Member with Dementia



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## Key Take Away

After dementia placement in long-term care, spouses experience greater feelings of relationship loss, whereas adult children experience greater worry and isolation, suggesting that caregiver support should be tailored to the caregiver's relationship with the patient.

## Introduction

Family members of persons with dementia continue to perceive themselves as primary caregivers even after placing their family members with dementia in long-term care (LTC) facilities. This ongoing role perception contributes to increased negative emotions and chronic grief. Adult-child and spousal caregivers may experience caregiving differently after LTC placement, yet little research has compared these groups.

## Methods

We analyzed baseline data from two intervention trials focused on grief management among family caregivers of persons with dementia in LTC (N = 159). Outcomes included: (1) caregiving perceptions: conflict with facility staff, role captivity, guilt, and relationship loss, measured using subscales of the Family Perception of Caregiving Role; (2) grief: personal sacrifice burden, heartfelt sadness and longing, and worry and felt isolation, measured using the Marwit–Meuser Caregiver Grief Inventory; and (3) depressive symptoms, measured using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare spousal and adult-child caregivers.

## Results

Spousal caregivers (mean ± standard deviation [M±SD]=73.75±6.59) were significantly older than adult-child caregivers (M±SD=57.13±8.46; *p* < .01). While time since LTC placement of their family members did not differ between spousal and adult-child groups (*p* ≥ .05), their emotional responses varied (Table 1).

## Purpose

This secondary analysis explored caregiving perceptions, grief, and depressive symptoms among adult-child and spousal caregivers after placement of their family member with dementia in LTC facilities (Table 1)

Table 1. Caregiving Perceptions between Adult-child and Spousal Caregivers (N = 159)

| Variable                                | Adult Child<br>(n = 127)      | Spouse<br>(n = 32) | Test<br>Statistic        | <i>p</i>                |      |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| Conflict with Staff, M±SD               | 37.15±12.18                   | 36.91±10.26        | <i>t</i> (157) = - 0.104 | .917                    |      |
| Role Captivity, M±SD                    | 30.74±14.02                   | 26.0±9.06          | <i>t</i> (157) = -1.817  | .071                    |      |
| Guilt, M±SD                             | 16.94±6.04                    | 16.44±4.47         | <i>t</i> (157) = -0.438  | .662                    |      |
| Relationship Loss, M±SD                 | 30.32±7.92                    | 34.38±7.07         | <i>t</i> (157) = 2.642   | .009                    |      |
| Grief, M±SD                             | Personal Sacrifice Burden     | 57.09±14.75        | 55.75±12.38              | <i>t</i> (157) = -0.472 | .638 |
|                                         | Heartfelt Sadness and Longing | 51.50±13.05        | 53.47±10.75              | <i>t</i> (157) = 0.790  | .431 |
|                                         | Worry and Felt Isolation      | 45.31±13.19        | 39.56±10.11              | <i>t</i> (157) = -2.298 | .023 |
| Grief Total Score, M±SD                 | 68.13±76.09                   | 61.09±68.51        | <i>t</i> (157) = -0.477  | .634                    |      |
| Depressive Symptoms, M±SD               | 16.00±11.11                   | 15.16±10.30        | <i>t</i> (157) = -0.389  | .697                    |      |
| Note. M±SD: Mean and standard deviation |                               |                    |                          |                         |      |

## Conclusions

Findings indicate that adult-child and spousal caregivers experience different emotional challenges after placing a family member with dementia in LTC facilities. Further research is needed to better understand the factors underlying these differences.

## References

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