Gender Differences in Positive Aspects of Caregiving

Abstract
The total sample (N = 639) for this study was 141 male and 488 female caregivers from the Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer’s Caregiver Health (REACH) sites in Birmingham, Memphis, and Philadelphia. Data for the study were collected through in-home interviews during the baseline phase. The overall REACH project, research sites (Birmingham, Memphis, Philadelphia; Miami; Palm, Alto, and Philadelphia), and a coordinating center (Pittsburgh) focused on characterizing and testing the most promising home and community interventions for improving the health and quality of life of Caucasian, African American, and Latino caregivers of dementia patients.

Table 1. Characteristics of Caregivers by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total Social Support</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>PAC Self-Affirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67.06</td>
<td>60.47</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60.06</td>
<td>59.94</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We examined differences in measures of positive aspects of caregiving (PAC) among 141 male and 488 female caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease from the REACH sites (Birmingham, Memphis, and Philadelphia). Differences were examined by gender with the gender by religious interaction having a statistically significant impact on the relationship between religion and self-affirmation. Our results suggest that religious intervections may have promise to improve the PAC self-affirmation scores of females with higher anxiety levels.

Results
- Men had higher PAC scores than did females. This is explained by males’ higher scores on the PAC self-affirmation sub-scale (M = 4.93, P = .05).
- Males and females did not differ on the PAC outlook on life sub-scale.
- Five variables were related to both gender and PAC self-affirmation. Females scored higher on anxiety, behavioral bother, depression, religiosity, and social support. Males had lower anxiety scores than females, and lower anxiety was associated with higher PAC scores.
- Because being less religious and having less social support than females, males reported higher PAC.
- Although males reported significantly lower behavioral bother and depression than did females, neither helped explain the relationship between gender and PAC.

Practice Implications
Intervention strategies to improve Alzheimer’s caregivers’ sense that the caregiving experience is intrinsically satisfying and enriching should be individualized and gender-sensitive.

For Males
Because male caregivers received less social support than females and lower social support was associated with lower self-affirmation, interventions with males to increase social support might have promise for increasing males’ PAC self-affirmation scores.

For Females
Because female caregivers had higher anxiety than males and high anxiety was associated with lower self-affirmation, interventions with females to decrease anxiety might have promise for improving female PAC self-affirmation scores. It might be possible to improve PAC self-affirmation scores of females with low social support through interventions to improve their social support. Similarly, referrals for appropriate religious interventions may also have promise.

Table 3. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Sobel Test Statistics for the Relationship between Gender and Positive Aspects of Caregiving - Self Affirmation Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>P.A.</th>
<th>owering p</th>
<th>Sobel Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- *Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed) and gender interaction significant

**Note:**
- Results were obtained with statistical significance at p < .05.