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Reconsidering the Caregiving Stress Appraisal scale: Validation and examination of its association with items used for assessing long-term care insurance in Japan

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Abstract

The Caregiving Stress Appraisal (CSA) scale is a simple scale for measuring family caregiver stress. However, information on its validity and association with new social welfare systems in Japan is inadequate. The purpose of the present study is to examine the criterion validity of the CSA and to explore its association with the variables used for assessing long-term care insurance in Japan. In the present study, 219 family caregivers completed a self-administered questionnaire. Of these, 50 and 202 caregivers were used for the analysis of the criterion validity and construct validity, respectively. The CSA, the Japanese version of the Zarit Burden Interview (J-ZBI), the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D), and the items used for assessing long-term care insurance in Japan were used for the analyses. The results revealed that the CSA had significant correlations with the J-ZBI and the CES-D. Despite the small sample size, the CSA had significant correlations with the items used for assessing long-term care insurance in Japan. These results suggest sufficient criterion and construct validity of the CSA for the future study.

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Keywords: Family caregivers; Caregiving burden; Stress-coping theory; Validation study

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1. Introduction

Recently, several countries have witnessed the growth of the problem concerning the stress experienced by the family members who care for older people (Torti et al., 2004). Therefore, several studies have been conducted in this area to enhance social services both for older people and family caregivers (Lieberman and Fisher, 1995; Newcomer et al., 1999). In the nascent stage of the studies, Zarit et al. (1980) formulated the concept of “burden” among family caregivers and developed the “Zarit Burden Interview” (ZBI) for psychological assessment. The ZBI is currently being widely used in many studies and has been translated into several languages (The 10/66 Dementia Research Group, 2004; Torti et al., 2004).

However, there remain several unsolved problems in measuring the burden of family caregivers. First, Lawton et al. (1989) indicated an assortment of the ZBI items that described the symptoms of older people and the subjective feelings of family caregivers. The difficulty in distinguishing between the concepts of “objective” burden and “subjective” burden has also been discussed (Thommessen et al., 2002). Second, Vitaliano et al. (1991) presented the difficulties in capturing the complex feeling of burden in a single dimension. Therefore, some multidimensional caregiver burden or stress scales have been developed for this assessment (Green et al., 1982; Stull, 1996). Although these multidimensional scales have certain psychometric advantages, not many reports have used these scales (e.g., Thommessen et al., 2002). Third, it is necessary to reexamine the construct that accompanies the recent developments in social services provided to older people and their families. Few studies have examined the association among the variables based on social services, caregiving burden, and disabilities of older people (Zarit et al., 1998; Arai et al., 2003).

In order to reexamine the concept of burden from a psychological perspective, attempts have been made to analyze the problems faced by family caregivers by using the stress-coping theory. Lawton et al. (1989) developed the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Caregiving Appraisal Scales (PGCCAS) based on the stress-coping theory put forth by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The PGCCAS considers burden as a cognitive appraisal and has negative and positive subscales. Although the positive aspect of the PGCCAS was omitted due to its low Cronbach’s alpha (Lawton et al., 1989), several researches have emphasized the benefits of its theoretical background (Sevick et al., 1997; Struchen et al., 2002). However, the model of Lawton et al. (1991) failed to support the theoretical model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), and several studies that followed Lawton et al. (1991) also failed to provide sufficient evidence for the model based on the psychological stress theory (Lawton et al., 1991; Smith, 1996; Sevick et al., 1997; Struchen et al., 2002).

1.1. CSA scale

Abe (2001) developed the CSA scale based on the findings of the abovementioned researches on caregiving burden and stress. In the previous study, analyses of structural equation modeling revealed that the stress appraisal of family caregivers functioned as a mediated variable between the stressor and depression.

Based on the results of factor analysis, the CSA is suggested to comprise two factors—“social constraints” and “physical exhaustion.” Each factor has six items; therefore, the

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