

# Health of Disabled Family with Mental Illness

Youn-Kyoung Kwag

<sup>1</sup> Department of Nursing, Silla University, Busan, Korea

**Abstract.** This study conducted a conceptual analysis to examine and clarify the concept of health among family members of patients with mental illness in South Korea. The study results showed that the main attributes of family health were found in four areas: family belief characteristics, organizational characteristics, relational characteristics, and responsive characteristics. As the main defining attributes, first, balanced perspectives on life for family belief characteristics, flexibility and connectivity for organizational characteristics, intimacy, mutually open communication, and relationship-directedness for relational characteristics, and mutually cooperative problem solving for response characteristics were identified.

**Keywords:** Patients with Mental Illness, Family Members, Health

## 1 Introduction

Although family members of patients have always been focused as an object of caring in nursing field, few studies have been conducted that focus on “caring for patients including family members”. Previous nursing studies regarding family members have focused on clinical fields where family members who took care of patients with health problems or entire family members or vulnerable health groups were the main subjects and they focused on diseases or health-related problems and how this affected relationships between the patients and family members. As a result, most of the previous studies were concerned primarily with topics such as family support, family functions, family burden, or resilience as they only discussed the concept of family intervention individually or measured physical and mental health states [1]. Thus, few studies have been conducted on the health of family members from an integrated or comprehensive point of view. Also previous studies cannot reflect the unique characteristics of family culture in Korea or assess them accurately [2].

Thus, this study aims to provide foundational data to develop a scale regarding the health of family members who have patients with mental illness in South Korea through a conceptual analysis of health of families of patients with mental illness in terms of positivity [3] via the conceptual analysis phases proposed by Walker and Avant [4].

## **2 Research Process**

### **1 Selection of concept**

Since mental illness will affect patients as well as their family members over a long period of time, if family members who play an important role in the treatment and rehabilitation of patients cannot overcome such difficulties, it can create other problems for patients and family members. Thus, nursing interest in the concept of family strength is much needed. However, only two nursing studies regarding the concept of the strength of the family have been identified with regard to this subject: one examined the concept of family strength [5] and the other investigated the strength of family members of patients with mental illness [1].

### **2 Setting up the objective of the analysis**

This study aims to clarify the meaning of family health of patients with mental illness in a comprehensive manner by analyzing health-related nursing concepts, which have been already developed, such as family functions, family hardiness, or family resilience, and develop a measuring tool to measure the health of families of patients with mental illness in South Korea and so achieve an operational definition on the basis of the conceptual analysis.

### **3 Verification of the concept usage**

During the first material collection activity, we managed to find a study by Park (2004) on the attributes related to concepts of family health in Korea [5]. However, this study just measured the notion of family health proposed by Lee et al. (2004) in terms of normativity, intimacy, and communication [6], which lacked an in-depth analysis on the attributes of the concept. Hence, we reviewed a study by Jang (1998) that dealt with family nursing in Korea and investigated family health related concepts [1].

### **4 Determining the defining attributes**

To determine the defining attributes, conceptual maps of characteristics and variables regarding the notion of a healthy family in studies in non-nursing fields and studies on nursing in Korea and overseas were schematized in order to verify the defining attributes about family health based on nursing concepts.

In reviewing the attributes of family health in non-nursing fields, studies were grouped according to similar attributes and final attributes in each of the literatures and were integrated and summarized. The results showed that the main attributes of family health were largely classified into four: family belief characteristics,

organizational characteristics, relational characteristics, and responsive characteristics.

## 5 Development of model cases

Cases that included seven major attributes regarding the concept of family health of patients with mental illness were developed as follows: A young woman visited her father who was hospitalized due to schizophrenia and shared some greetings briefly while eating some food. She listened to the plan for the next week outlined by the father's doctor about discharging him from hospital and returning home. Then, she explained this plan to the rest of the family members and discussed how they could help their father after he was discharged from hospital according to their ability and circumstances.

## 6 Making additional cases

**A borderline case** refers to a case that includes some important concepts to a certain extent but not all concepts. In the above model case, it could be a young woman who visited her father but did not show or display much intimacy and who listened to father's doctor about discharging her father from the hospital the following week followed by a discussion with other family members. **A related case** is an example that is related to the concept to be analyzed but does not include important attributes. In the above case, a young woman discussed with her family members the matter of her father being discharged from the hospital and she took care of her father alone without other family members as she thought it was an expression of her love for the family. **A contrary case** refers to a decisive example of "case that is contrary to the concept". In the above model case, the mother may call on the help of an exorcist by spending much money to cure the father's disease without telling other family members after hearing from her daughter the matter of the father's discharge from the hospital. **An invented case** refers to an example made by using ideas rather than our experiences. It reads like "science fiction" and is useful in analyzing ordinary concepts that are accepted as natural cases. **An illegitimate case** refers to an example of a concept that is used incorrectly although it is not always included in the concept analysis. It may contain one or two main attributes but it helps analyzers to find a meaning of completely different terms from others when most attributes are not applied.

## 7 Verification of antecedents and consequences

An antecedent in the case of family health is the onset of mental illness in a family member. Family members will face physical, psychological, social, and economic burdens and stress due to the onset of mental illness in one of their family members, which will affect family function and family adaptation. Family hardiness, problem

solving and coping ability, and social support are variables that affect family function and family adaptation positively whereas stress is a variable that affects family function and family adaptation negatively. Thus, this study puts forward the basic proposal, based on the concept analysis, that if we healthened family hardiness, problem solving and coping ability, and social support or if we reduce a stress among family members, this would increase the health of families of patients with mental illness.

## **8 Determination of empirical referents**

We searched for empirical objects of the main attributes regarding the health of families of patients with mental illness and the search results showed that the main attributes and empirical referents were the same.

## **3 Conclusion**

This study conducted a concept analysis on the health of families of patients with mental illness in order to develop a middle range nursing theory for maintaining and improving the health of family members of patients with mental illness. Through this study, various family health related concepts developed in the nursing field were reviewed in an integrative manner in order to thereby refine the terms used currently and provide a better understanding on the basic attributes of family health from a nursing viewpoint. This study employed a method to develop theories that can contribute to communication between and exchanges with other disciplines in relation to the family. It also provides an operational definition that has clear theoretical foundations and this will hopefully contribute to practical improvements with regard to family nursing.

## **References**

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