African American Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren: Results of an Intervention to Reduce Caregiver Psychological Distress

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Faculty Disclosure

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  - Conflict of interest: None
  - Employer: Georgia State University School of Nursing
  - Sponsorship/Commercial support: None

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  - Sponsorship/Commercial support: None

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  - Conflict of interest: None
  - Employer: Georgia State University, Consultant
  - Sponsorship/Commercial support: None
Goal and Objectives

- **Goal**
  - Describe effective approaches to improving well-being of grandmothers raising children

- **Objectives**
  - Discuss international phenomenon
  - Describe intervention to decrease distress
  - Discuss results of interdisciplinary intervention to decrease distress
  - Describe which demographic groups benefit most from the intervention
Global Phenomenon

- **Africa**
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Orphans Vulnerable Children (OVCs)

- **Eastern Europe**
  - Labor migration, alcohol abuse

- **China**
  - “Left behind children”

- **United States**
  - Substance abuse, neglect
Literature

- Increased depression/stress
- Chronic health problems
- Social isolation
- Inadequate resources
- Dealing with traumatized children/behavior problems
Method

- **Design**
  - Longitudinal, one year
  - Pre and post-test
  - Convenience sampling
Procedure

- On-going research study
- Participants recruited from community
- IRB approval and informed consent
- Data collected in home prior to intervention
Sample

- 549 caregiving grandmothers
- Parent-absent households: 100%
- African American: 100%
- Predominantly low income
- Participant mean age: 56.27 years
- One-third > 60 years
Sample (cont’d)

- Mean number children raised:
  - 2.47 (range 1-8)

- Mean length time children in care:
  - 5.2 years (range < 1 to 16 years)

- Mean age grandchild:
  - 8.26 years (range four months to 18 years)
  - One-third (31.1%) ≤ 5 years old
Intervention

- Interdisciplinary home/community-based
- Home visitation by RNs
- Social worker case management
- Support groups/parenting classes
- Early intervention
- Legal service referrals
- One year in duration
Outcome Measure

- Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)*
  - 53 item, self-report measure of distress
  - 9 primary symptom dimensions
  - Global Severity Index (GSI) summary measure of distress

*Derogatis, 1983
Analyses

- Descriptive statistics
- Paired t-tests
- Repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA)
- Scheffé post hoc tests
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest Mean Score</th>
<th>Post-test Mean Score</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Severity Index (GSI)</td>
<td>53.73 (10.93)</td>
<td>51.06 (10.59)</td>
<td>34.56</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall GSI Change Over Time*

* $p < .001$
## Subscale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Pretest Mean Score</th>
<th>Post-test Mean Score</th>
<th>t score</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somatization</td>
<td>55.67</td>
<td>54.36</td>
<td>-2.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Sensitivity</td>
<td>50.43</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>-6.25</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>52.12</td>
<td>49.38</td>
<td>-6.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>49.40</td>
<td>46.96</td>
<td>-5.25</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>50.53</td>
<td>48.82</td>
<td>-3.65</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Subscale Scores (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Pretest Mean Score</th>
<th>Post-test Mean Score</th>
<th>t score</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obsessive-compulsive</td>
<td>53.37</td>
<td>51.46</td>
<td>-4.15</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobic anxiety</td>
<td>52.09</td>
<td>50.46</td>
<td>-3.34</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoid ideation</td>
<td>56.46</td>
<td>54.29</td>
<td>-4.91</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoticism</td>
<td>54.36</td>
<td>52.73</td>
<td>-3.65</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both groups decreased, $p < .001$
Younger age group greatest decrease, $p < .001$
GSI Changes Over Time By Employment Group

- All groups decreased over time, $p < .001$
- Employed group greatest decrease, $p < .01$
GSI Changes Over Time By Marital Status

- Single, Sep./Div., Widowed groups decreased, $p < .001$
- Married group, NS
- Single group greatest decrease, $p < .01$
GSI Changes Over Time By Education Group

- All groups decreased over time, $p < .001$
- Greatest impact on HS graduate, $p < .001$
GSI Changes Over Time By Number of Grandchildren

- All groups decreased over time, $p < .001$
- No significant differences in change among groups
Conclusions

- Overall psychological distress levels decreased after the intervention
- All subscale scores improved
- Psychological distress post intervention most likely to improve if:
  - Younger (≤ 56 years old)
  - Employed
  - Single, separated/divorced, widowed
Discussion

- Improved distress could be result of intervention, time, or other factors

- If intervention, could be attributed to:
  - Improved social support
  - Improved access to resources
  - Improved physical health indicators
  - Referrals for behavioral health issues
Limitations

- Non-experimental design, lack of randomized control group
- Sample homogeneity: race, SES, location
- Reliance on self-report
Practice and Policy Implications

- Interdisciplinary interventions needed:
  - Improve psychological well-being
  - Increase access to resources and support

- Public policy needed to improve benefits to custodial grandparents
Project Healthy Grandparents

www.gsu.edu/phg