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**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
COPING STRATEGIES AND MOOD STATES
IN CAREGIVERS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA
IN NEW ZEALAND**

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Abstract

Alzheimer's dementia is a worldwide concern, as is the growing aging population and demands on services by many elderly people. Caregiving for people with dementia is recognised as one of the most distressing events in any family's life cycle. Many adverse effects among caregivers have been identified, such as increased depression and anxiety, however many questions remain unanswered. New Zealand, in particular, lacks accurate information on caregivers of people with dementia, obviously affecting the programmatic and clinical decisions made about this group.

This study investigates the role of helping attitudes and coping strategies on the mood states (positive and negative affect) of caregivers of people with dementia. A regional sample, recruited through the membership lists of Age Concern and the Alzheimer's Society, consisted of 158 caregivers. A self-report questionnaire was developed for the study using three instruments: Helping Attitude Scale (HAS), Revised Ways of Coping Checklist (RWCCCL), Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS). A range of demographic information was also included in the questionnaire.

The results provide a description of the characteristics of New Zealand caregivers and found that helping attitudes and coping strategies each contribute in different ways to positive and negative mood states, and differentially predict affective outcomes in caregivers of people with dementia. The results may assist practitioners to identify caregivers who may be at risk for developing mood difficulties and allow for the implementation of appropriate psychological intervention and prevention strategies.

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CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Appendices.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
Caregiving	7
Psychological Impact of Dementia Caregiving.....	9
The Role of Coping Strategies	12
Helping Behaviours and Psychological Functioning	17
Mood States and Well-being	25
Summary	29
The Current Study	31
METHODOLOGY	33
Research Design	33
Sample Information.....	33
Measures.....	35
Data Analysis	38
RESULTS.....	39
Data Management.....	39
Profiles of Caregivers and People with Dementia.....	40
Measures in Caregiver Sample.....	45
Relationships between Demographic Factors, Helping, Coping and Mood States....	48
Intergroup Differences.....	56
Role of Helping Attitudes and Coping Strategies in Mood States	58

Prediction of Positive Affect	59
Prediction of Negative Affect.....	61
DISCUSSION.....	64
General Characteristics of Caregivers and People with Dementia.....	64
Role of Demographic and Lifestyle Variables to Positive and Negative Affect.....	64
Role of Helping Attitudes Regarding Positive and Negative Affect.....	68
Role of Coping Strategies Regarding Positive and Negative Affect.....	69
Intergroup Differences	70
Applications of Findings	73
Limitations of the Study	74
Future Research Implications.....	76
REFERENCES	79
APPENDICES	91

List of Tables

Table 1. Frequencies of demographic and lifestyle variables relating to caregivers.....	40
Table 2. Means and standard deviations of demographic and lifestyle variables...	43
Table 3. Frequencies of demographic information relating to person with dementia (those cared for)	44
Table 4. Descriptive statistics of helping, coping strategies and mood states.....	45
Table 5. Comparison of coping between norm group and caregiver sample.....	46
Table 6. Comparison of positive and negative affect scores between norm group and caregiver sample.....	47
Table 7. Correlations between demographic and lifestyle variables.....	49
Table 8. Correlations between demographic and lifestyle variables, HAS, RWCCCL, and PANAS scores.....	52
Table 9. Correlations between HAS, RWCCCL, and PANAS scores.....	54
Table 10. Descriptive statistics of study variables according to gender.....	57
Table 11. Stepwise regression analysis for predicting positive affect	61
Table 12. Stepwise regression analysis for predicting negative affect.....	63

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias	92
Appendix B. Request for participants	95
Appendix C. Information sheet	98
Appendix D. Consent form	100
Appendix E. Confidentiality agreement.....	102
Appendix F. Caregiver questionnaire	104