
ABSTRACT

The process of becoming “young carers” and developing mental illness in children of a depressed parent

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of becoming “young carers” and developing mental illness in children who have a depressed parent. Using Trajectory Equifinality Model, I analyzed narratives of five adult mental health patients, who have provided care to their depressed parent since their childhood. The result is as follows: First, when children experience their parents’ change due to symptoms of a depressive disorder, they felt upset, and desired that their parents regain their health, therefore, they began to help them. Secondly, as they received praise from other people for providing such support, they enhanced their self-efficacy, thus, and helped their parents more than before. Thirdly, when their parent’s condition deteriorated or their family faced some crises, they increased providing care to cope with the problems. Consequently, the children became “young carers”. Although they sought external support, they often couldn’t access effective resources, and eventually developed mental illness in themselves. This finding suggests that it is important to establish multi-institutional support network not only for the depressed parents but also for the “young carers” and to intervene in the earliest stages.

Key Words: young carers, children of a depressed parent, qualitative study, Trajectory Equifinality Model
