**“I have no other choice”: Coping resources among FSU immigrants caring for family members with severe mental illness**

**Abstract**

**Background:** Families who care for a relative with severe mental illness (SMI) while they are also in the acculturation process of immigration face multiple stressors and a lack of available resources. Although Israel is a country with a relatively high percentage of immigrants no study to date has been conducted on immigrant caregivers of people with SMI.

**Study Aim:** This qualitative study examined how immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) cope with a family member’s SMI within the context of immigrating to Israel.

**Method:** Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 32 FSU immigrant caregivers.. The interviews were analyzed using categorical content analysis.

**Results:** An analysis of the interviews revealed the resources that helped immigrants in their coping processes:

 (1) personal resources – optimism and religious beliefs; (2) familial resources – a sense of commitment and familial support; (3) socio-cultural resources – workplace and engagement in leisure activities; (4) institutional resources – participation in culturally-adapted interventions in family counseling centers. The findings highlight that these resources alleviated the sense of burden felt by the immigrant caregivers, improved their coping abilities on an emotional, cognitive, and socio-cultural level, and helped them to develop a sense of resilience.

**Conclusions and implications:** Immigrant caregivers with lack of familial and social network/support and experience ongoing adjustment difficulties in Israel, are most in need of institutional support.

The professionals have to recognize the cultural and contextual characteristics of immigrant caregivers’ and help them with locating and accessing/utilizing their valuable resources.

**“I should have supervised more ”: The burden experience among immigrants from the former Soviet Union caring for a family member with severe mental illness**

Family members who care for relatives with severe mental illnesses experience a great deal of stress and a high sense of burden in their daily lives. Immigrant caregivers who care for a family member with severe mental illness, and who are in the process of immigration themselves, are exposed to a multitude of stressful and burdensome situations. However, little is known about how immigrant caregivers experience this burden and what the implications of this sense of burden are for their personal and family lives.

The current article proposes a new term – “the double adaptation burden.” This term helps to deepen an understanding of the experience of immigrant caregivers in their unique context, identify high risk groups among them, and promote interventions and social policies that better suit their needs.