

Abstract

Background: Nonattachment, the letting go of mental fixation, has been suggested to promote mental well-being through enhancing openness and flexibility to experiences.

Objective: This study examined the role of nonattachment in the mental well-being of informal caregivers. How nonattachment might be related to mental well-being through sequentially promoting caregivers' acceptance of illness unpredictability and their relationship quality with care-recipients were also examined.

Methods: A total of 162 informal caregivers of family members diagnosed with dementia (n=88) or mental illness (n=74) in Hong Kong were recruited through non-governmental organizations and online platforms. Participants' demographic information, level of nonattachment, acceptance of illness unpredictability, relationship quality variables including warmth and conflict in relationship and emotional over-involvement, as well as outcome variables including caregiving burden and perceived meaning in caregiving, were measured through self-administered questionnaires online. Simple linear regression and sequential mediation analyses were conducted.

Results: Nonattachment was negatively associated with caregiving burden ($F_{1, 160}=39.70$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.20$), and it was fully mediated by warmth and conflict in relationship ($\beta=-.18$, 95% CI -0.26 to -0.10), and partially and sequentially mediated by acceptance of illness unpredictability and emotional over-involvement ($\beta=-.05$, 95% CI -0.09 to -0.01).

Nonattachment was also positively associated with perceived meaning in caregiving ($F_{1, 160}=38.05$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.19$), and it was partially mediated by warmth and conflict in relationships ($\beta=.14$, 95% CI 0.08 to 0.22).

Conclusions: This study revealed nonattachment's positive association with the mental well-being of caregivers. Day-to-day interaction with care-recipients which was measured by warmth and conflict in relationship significantly mediated nonattachment's association with