



August 20, 2012

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the research project '*Psychological Growth in Carers of People with Mental Illness*'.

The research project aimed to identify whether positive psychological changes, referred to as psychological growth (for example gaining personal strength), occur for carers and family members of people with mental illness. Furthermore the project aimed to determine the relationship between psychological growth and meaning found in caregiving, coping, and social support. Meaning found in caregiving refers to the significance and positive value that carers/family members may link to certain caregiving experiences. Forty-five carers of people with mental illness responded to a questionnaire about their experiences (33 female, 12 male, average age = 41.51 years).

Findings from the quantitative study showed that participants reported moderately high levels of psychological growth, as measured by the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory. Results suggest that meaning found in caregiving may make a significant contribution towards the development of psychological growth. Furthermore, it was found that greater employment of active coping and access to informal social supports by carers led to greater meaning found in caregiving, which in turn led to higher psychological growth. It is important to note that, active coping strategies are responses that intend to change the nature of stressful caregiving events or how one thinks about them. An example of active coping is when a carer seeks resources to manage problems associated with the care recipient's mental illness.

The strong supporting evidence for the presence of psychological growth in carers serves as a signal for researchers, indicating a greatly under-investigated area of positive carer/family member outcome that deserves further exploration. However as this was an exploratory study with only a small sample population, these results need to be verified through further research.



Thank you again for your participation. Your contribution is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions or concerns about this research you are encouraged to contact either myself (email: zafiroulavlahodimitrakou@students.ballarat.edu.au), or the principal researcher, Dr. Elizabeth Temple on 5327 9744.

Yours sincerely,

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