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Mental Health of Caregiving Grandparents

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Mental Health of Caregiving Grandparents

Abstract

Purpose/Aims: The purpose of the study was to assess the mental health of custodial grandparents as compared with part-time caregiving grandparents. **Rationale/Conceptual Basis/Background:** Increasingly, grandparents are stepping up to help raise their grandchildren due to the high demand on parents to hold two or more jobs, single parents who work outside the home, increasing divorce rates, along with problems resulting from substance abuse and/or child neglect and abuse. Of the mental health stressors reported by caregiving grandparents, relationships with their adult children, issues of being totally responsible for raising another family at an increased age, and legal issues predominate. Previous research indicates that grandparents raising their grandchildren may have lower levels of mental health than non-caregiving grandparents. Little is known however how the mental health of custodial caregivers compares with that of part-time caregivers, especially among rural populations. Pender's Health Promotion Model served as the conceptual framework for the study. **Methods:** A comparative descriptive pilot study was conducted with a convenience sample of 11 caregiving grandparents residing in a frontier county in Idaho. The sample included five grandfathers and six grandmothers with a mean age of 60.5 years (range = 46-75). Six grandparents were full-time custodial caregivers and five were part-time caregivers for their grandchildren. The SF-36 Health Survey was administered and the norm-based mental component score used to assess mental health status. Non-parametric statistics were used to compare the groups due to the small sample size. **Results:** The norm-based mental health scores for the total sample ranged from 45.2 to 60.2 with a mean of 53.6. The mean score for custodial grandparents was 50.8 compared with 56.9 for part-time caregivers. This difference was not statistically significant. **Implications:** These findings suggest that full-time custodial and part-time caregiving grandparents have similar levels of mental health. The fact that mean mental health scores for both groups were slightly above the norm is important to note. This conflicts with previous research indicating lower mental health levels among caregiving grandparents and among rural adults in general. This finding may suggest that caregiving may actually support mental health among frontier grandparents. This study was limited by the small sample size, and further research with larger samples is indicated to more fully assess the mental health of grandparent caregivers to guide future nursing intervention. Funded by the Jody DeMeyer Endowment at Boise State University, Department of Nursing.



Purpose

To assess the mental health of full-time custodial grandparents as compared with part-time caregiving grandparents

Background

Grandparents are stepping up to help raise their grandchildren while:

- Both parents hold two or more jobs
- Divorce rates are increasing
- Single parents are working outside of the home
- Substance abuse &/or child neglect /abuse are present

Mental health stressors :

- Strained relationships with adult children
- Responsibility of raising another family at an increased age
- Legal issues with adult children

Previous research suggests that caregiving grandparents may have lower levels of mental health

Methods

Conceptual Framework:
Pender's Health Promotion Model
Comparative Descriptive Design

Sample:
•11 frontier grandparents (5 grandfathers & 6 grandmothers)
•6 full-time custodial
•5 part-time caregiving

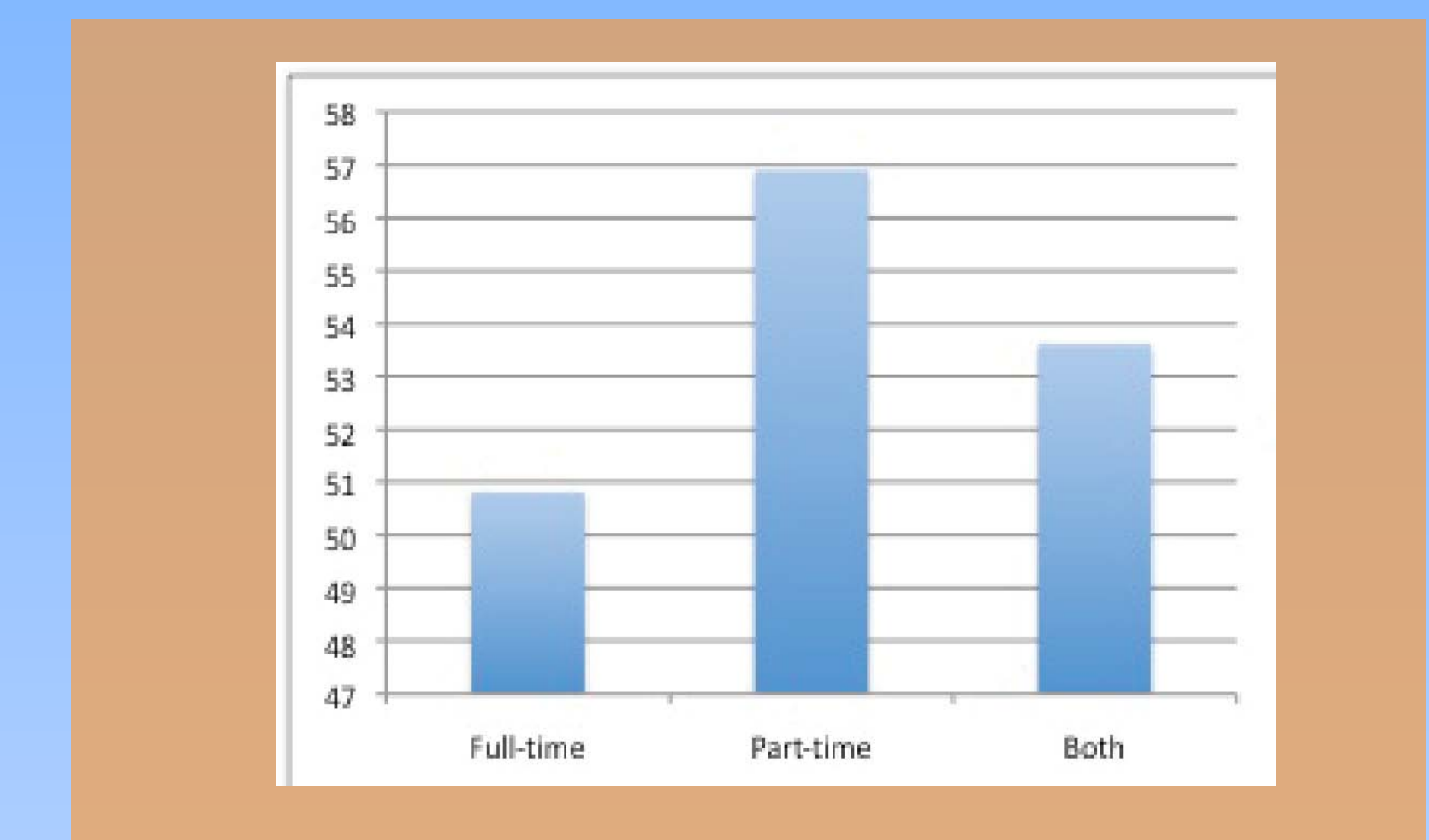
Instrument:
SF-36 Health Survey (composite mental health score)

Analysis:
Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U



Results

No statistically significant difference in mean mental health scores between caregiver groups



(range = 45 - 60, norm = 50)

Implications

Limitations

- Small sample size

Findings suggest

- Frontier grandparents' mental health is higher than the norm
- No difference between full-time & part-time caregiving grandparents' mental health

Differs with previous grandparent & rural/frontier research

Caregiving may promote mental health in frontier grandparents

