

DOCTORAL THESIS

Guilt feelings in family and professional caregivers. Modulating variables and intervention proposal

*Sentimientos de culpa en cuidadores familiares y profesionales.
Variables moduladoras y propuesta de intervención*

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Madrid, September 2019

Tesis Doctoral presentada para obtener el título de Doctor con Mención Internacional en el Programa de Doctorado de Psicología Clínica y de la Salud

Agradecimientos:

A lo largo de este trabajo, no han sido pocas las ocasiones en las que he pedido a los cuidadores que me cuenten el estado su “jardín personal” y sus “plantas”, o lo que es lo mismo, que revisen su vida y las personas importantes que les rodean. Creo que ha llegado mi turno, para reflexionar y agradecer a todas aquellos que de un modo u otro forman o han formado parte de mi “jardín”.

Sólo puedo dedicar palabras de agradecimiento a mis directores, Andrés y María, que son los culpables de que haya llegado hasta aquí. Gracias, por confiar en mí y darme la oportunidad de entrar a este mundo, que tanto nos hace disfrutar y, a veces, sufrir. Por tener siempre unas palabras de ánimo y consejo y, apretarme las tuercas cuando es necesario. Por trabajar sin descanso para que este trabajo salga adelante (esas horas de madrugada trabajando...qué más que decir gracias). Por demostrar valores como la honestidad, objetividad, el saber hacer, y muchos más. En definitiva, gracias por ayudarme a crecer, no sólo como profesional también como persona.

Si algo he aprendido en este proceso es la importancia del trabajo en equipo y por eso no puedo olvidar al resto de Cuidemos. Rosa, gracias por haberme enseñado tantas habilidades clínicas, pero sobretodo, gracias por estar ahí siempre que lo he necesitado, por haberme consolado cuando era un mar de lágrimas y por tus consejos. Isa, gracias por estar siempre dispuesta a ayudar, por preguntarme y ofrecer tu ayuda cada vez que te contaba mis agobios. A mis compañeros cuasi-doctores, Carlos, Ana, Samara y María, gracias por compartir la tan estresante vida del doctorado conmigo, llena de evaluaciones, sesiones, citas, etc., en la que hemos compartido miles de anécdotas. Gracias a todo vuestro esfuerzo este trabajo ha sido posible.

Gracias al Dr. Rob DeRubeis, de la University of Pennsylvania, por haberme brindado la ocasión de conocer su trabajo. Gracias por tu atención y darme la oportunidad de conocer al Dr. Beck, un momento que siempre recordaré.

Quiero agradecer a la Dra. Karlijn Joling, de la Vrije Universiteit, su disposición a mostrarme cómo trabaja su equipo y sus proyectos. Gracias por toda la ayuda y por el interés mostrado hacia mis ideas.

A Jesús y M^a Carmen, mis padres, gracias por todo. Gracias por inculcarme el valor del esfuerzo y de la constancia, sin ellos esto no habría sido posible. Por animarme a cumplir mis metas y aspiraciones, acompañándome durante el camino, celebrando mis triunfos y ayudándome a levantar tras los tropiezos. Gracias por dejaros la piel para que a esta cabezota no le falte de nada en ningún momento de su vida. Me habéis dado alas y enseñado a volar. Gracias, porque gran parte de mí misma y mi jardín, os lo debo a vosotros.

A mi hermana Esther, gracias por ser un ejemplo de superación desde el día que naciste. Por estar siempre en los buenos y malos momentos. Por hacer más bonito el mundo a partir de tu bondad y también a través de tus dotes artísticas, nunca dejes de hacerlo. Te quiero millones.

Al resto de mi familia. A mi abuela Paqui, otro ejemplo de superación presente en mi vida. Por ser una segunda madre y enseñarme que a pesar de todos los golpes que puede dar la vida, con ganas de vivir, optimismo y sentido del humor se puede salir adelante. Gracias por brillar y compartir tu luz con los que te rodean, es un orgullo poder llamarte abuela. Y a mi abuelo Pedro, por enseñarme la importancia de trabajar duro y, sin quererlo, recordarme la necesidad y razón de este trabajo. A mis tíos, gracias por tener la confianza en que podré salir adelante siempre. A mis primos, Dani, Alejandro e Yrai, por hacer la vida más divertida con vuestras ocurrencias. Por último, no podrían faltar agradecimientos a mi tía María y mi tío Dámaso. ¡Tía, ya me podrás llamar doctora con razón! Gracias por toda vuestra ayuda y cariño. Tío, sé que desde dónde estés, te llegará mi más profundo agradecimiento.

Gracias a mis compañeros del aula PDIF, que hacen que este proceso se afronte con mejor cara. Miri gracias por tu alegría y tu cariño, por cada consejo que das. Mari Luz, gracias por tu cercanía y tus ánimos. Alba, por escucharme en los momentos más difíciles y comprenderme. Carlos, por enseñarme tantas cosas, como persona y terapeuta, y tus abrazos reparadores. Edu por las charlas-café y dejarte abordar por cualquier duda. María Quirós gracias por tu compañía y los momentos juntas en Filadelfia. José Ángel por siempre dispuesto a ayudarme, ¡qué paciencia has tenido conmigo y mis análisis con Mplus! Jenni gracias por la confianza en mí y ¡aguantar mis soliloquios en momentos críticos de estrés docente! Lidia por tu manera de defender tus ideas, aunque impliquen oponerte a los tecnicismos de los de clínica. Alfredo por tu visión práctica de la vida. A todos los demás, Tamara, David, Esther, María Melcón, Lorelei, Trunkel, Lucía, Marta, Víctor, gracias por todos los momentos compartidos y vuestra amabilidad. Y a todos aquellos que ya se fueron y que tan bien me acogieron: Dani, Itchi, Johana, Helena, Mirtha, David Santos. Y a María Cantero, una clara evidencia de que la vida te hace regalos, y a mí me ha hecho uno muy grande: tu amistad. Gracias por estar ahí siempre, por las risas, y lo más importante, la confianza.

Gracias también a mis profesores/excompañeros Miri, José, Almu, Paloma, Borja... que me vieron dar mis primeros pasos en la psicología y me ayudaron a elegir el camino investigador.

A mis amistades sin las que mi vida no sería igual. Clara, mi acompañante de locuras, gracias por mantenerte a mi lado durante toda la vida. Por tantos momentos a tu lado, ya sea recordando nuestra infancia, o compartiendo tanto penas como alegrías... Gracias, porque no imagino una mejor amiga que no seas tú. Jorge, gracias por no separarte de mí desde ese primer día de universidad y mantenerte siempre al pie del cañón, contagiándome las ganas de seguir adelante y no dejar que tire la toalla. Gracias, de verdad. A Melanie, por aguantar con paciencia

mi “desaparición” y aun así apoyarme en la distancia, gracias por estar siempre que te necesito y demostrarme el valor de la amistad. Vero y Pilar gracias por todos los momentos de risas y el apoyo que me habéis dado. A Ester, gracias por dar vida a mi estancia en Filadelfia, comprender mis agobios y ser un ejemplo de resiliencia, ¡por muchos momentos más! Y a Virginia, te prometí que acabaría esta tesis también por ti, gracias por todo tu apoyo.

Agradecer también el apoyo de mi familia política, Inés, Pepe y Alejandra. Gracias por recibirme con los brazos abiertos y hacerme un hueco en vuestra bonita familia.

Javi, las palabras de agradecimiento se quedan cortas contigo. Gracias por aparecer en mi vida y ponerla patas arriba. Por demostrarme día a día lo que es el amor, ya sea con actos simples (como recordarme que deje de escribir porque hay que cenar) hasta cruzarte el charco para verme. Por esperar pacientemente a que vuelva de estancia. Gracias por tu infinita paciencia ante mis múltiples peticiones, por aportarme la calma y estabilidad necesaria en estos últimos meses y dedicarme siempre alguna palabra bonita en mis horas más bajas y si eso no funciona, abrazarme con tanta fuerza que ya puede caerse el mundo que tú me sostienes. Pensar en todo lo que hemos vivido y compartido, sólo me hace querer más, más vivencias, más abrazos, más bromas, más de los dos. Prepárate compañero de viajes, porque ahora dispongo un poco más de tiempo y estoy dispuesta a invertirlo en más momentos a tu lado.

Quiero dar las gracias a la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, la Facultad de Psicología y al departamento de Psicología Biológica y de la Salud por concederme la oportunidad de realizar este trabajo bajo la concesión de una FPI-UAM.

Quiero también agradecer al Dr. Javier Olazarán, del Hospital Gregorio Marañón, y a Primitivo Ramos, del Servicio Regional de Bienestar Social de la Consejería de Asuntos Sociales de la Comunidad de Madrid, por su colaboración en la recogida de muestra. Gracias también a la implicación de los profesionales y miembros de la Asociación de Familiares de Enfermos de Alzheimer y otras Demencias de Madrid Suroeste (AFAMSO). Y a los demás centros que nos han abierto sus puertas: Centro de Especialidades Hermanos Sangro, Servicios Sociales de Fuencarral-El Pardo, Pozuelo de Alarcón, Getafe y Arganda del Rey; el centro Reina Sofía de Cruz Roja; la Fundación María Wolff; los centros de salud Hermanos García Noblejas, General Ricardos, Benita de Ávila y Vicente Muzas, y; los centros de día de San Sebastián de los Reyes, San Fermín, Gran Residencia, Fuenlabrada y Getafe. Y a las residencias de AMMA Pozuelo, Coslada, Valdebernardo, Tías y Las Anjanas.

Y, por último, pero no por ello menos importante, a todos los cuidadores que de manera desinteresada han dedicado un preciado tiempo de sus vidas a compartir sus vivencias y sentimientos. Sois un ejemplo de fortaleza y dais sentido a todo nuestro trabajo. ¡¡MILLONES DE GRACIAS!!

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Abstract

Although guilt is an emotion frequently experienced by dementia caregivers, both formal and, specially, informal, studies analyzing this experience and its potential precipitating factors are scarce. Drawing on the sociocultural stress and coping model adapted to caregiving (Knight & Sayegh, 2010), the present doctoral thesis was aimed at analyzing the feelings of guilt experienced by informal and formal caregivers, and its modulating variables. With this objective, five studies have been carried out. Although each study is presented independently, in the final discussion all the results and implications are considered jointly.

The first chapter provides the theoretical framework for the conducted studies. The second describes the general purpose of this thesis, and clarifies the specific objectives and hypotheses for each study. The third chapter consists of an overview of the principal methodological aspects of the studies. Then, each study is presented, with its own sections: Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion and References. Finally, the general discussion addressing the findings of the studies that conform the doctoral thesis, its limitations, and their practical implications, are presented. In order to conclude, few bullet points summarize the most important results derived from the doctoral thesis.

The main objective of the first study was to explore the relationship between the commitment with personal values and the levels of guilt experienced by dementia family caregivers. Specifically, the capacity of caregivers' commitment to specific values to predict their guilt levels was analyzed. The sample was composed by 179 Spanish dementia family caregivers. The results showed that commitment to the caregiving role

and with leisure contributed negatively and significantly to the explanation of guilt feelings, while commitment to work was associated with higher levels of guilt.

The second study presents an in-depth analysis of guilt feelings and its underlying factors in dementia family caregiving. A qualitative analysis of the narratives of thirteen family caregivers of people with dementia was carried out. The analyses revealed seven categories for understanding this emotion in dementia caregivers: guilt derived from their actions; guilt derived from one's limitations; guilt for feeling negative emotions; guilt associated with the change in the relationship with the cared person; guilt for neglecting other areas; guilt induced by the person cared for, and guilt induced by others. In addition to these factors, the study yielded the existence of guilt-avoiding patterns in caregivers 'daily routine.

Furthermore, previous literature has highlighted the interpersonal nature of guilt (e.g. Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherthon, 1994) and its potential in influencing other's behavior through the called induction processes (e.g. Barber, 1996). Moreover, considering also the findings of the second study supporting the guilt feelings induced by others in caregivers, the purpose of the third study was to develop the Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ), in order to assess the frequency and guilt derived from guilt induction behaviors performed by the cared recipient and by other relatives. A total of 201 dementia family caregivers participated in the study. The Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ) was composed by two scales: one assessing induction behaviors performed by the cared person (CGIQ-CR), and other for assessing the performed by other relatives (CGIQ-OR). The exploratory factor analysis of the CGIQ-CR showed a two-factor solution: *Care recipient's criticism of the caregiver's role* and *Global disqualifications*, explaining 56.24% of the variance. The CGIQ-OR subscale showed a two-factor solution *Other relatives' criticism of the caregiver's role* and

Excessive attribution of responsibility, explaining 63.24% of the variance. All the factors had acceptable to good reliability indexes. Higher frequency of exposure to both guilt induction scales was associated with higher psychological distress in caregivers (depression, anxiety, and guilt feelings). Further, the guilt induced by the care recipient was negatively correlated with caregivers' frequency of leisure. In addition to guilt, other generated emotions were identified, such as anger or sadness.

The fourth study was a pilot study of a psychological intervention specifically developed for decreasing caregivers' guilt feelings. That guilt-focused intervention consisted of eight group sessions, and was based on cognitive-behavioral, acceptance and self-compassion techniques therapeutic approaches. Four dementia family caregivers composed the final sample. The caregivers were evaluated in depression, anxiety and guilt levels by individual interviews before and after the intervention. At post-treatment, three participants obtained clinically significant changes (calculated through reliable change index; RCI) in guilt feelings. Reliable changes were also obtained in depressive and anxious symptoms. Only one caregiver did not report any change after the intervention.

Finally, the fifth study was aimed at analyzing the impact of different variables, such as guilt feelings, on anxious symptomatology in formal caregivers. Participants were 101 nursing home professionals. Feeling guilty about the care offered, and poor quality of the relationship with the family of the residents were associated with increased levels anxiety in the professionals. In addition, burnout levels (depersonalization) and burden were also associated with anxiety.

In closing, considering the findings of all studies together, we highlight the need of considering guilt as a multidimensionality construct. It seems that guilt feelings arise as a consequence of negative self-judgements, but the interpersonal context (relationships

Guilt feelings in caregivers

with the relative with dementia and others) and the socio-cultural environment (e.g. values) have an important role in the explanation of guilt, and ultimately distress experienced by caregivers. Furthermore, specific psychotherapeutic interventions that combine acceptance and compassion techniques for guilt feelings seems to have potential to reduce caregivers' distress. Finally, the presence of guilt feelings is an important factor to explain the stress process not only in family caregivers, but also in nursing home professionals.

Resumen

A pesar de que la emoción de culpa es frecuentemente experimentada por cuidadores de personas con demencia, tanto familiares como profesionales. El número de estudios que analizan este tipo de sentimientos y los posibles factores precipitantes es escaso. Tomando como referencia el modelo de estrés sociocultural y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado (Knight & Sayegh, 2010), la presente Tesis Doctoral tuvo como objetivo analizar los sentimientos de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores informales y formales, y sus variables moduladoras. Con este objetivo, se han realizado cinco estudios. Aunque cada estudio se presenta de forma independiente, en la discusión final se consideran de manera conjunta todos los resultados e implicaciones.

En el primer capítulo se desarrolla el marco teórico común a los cinco estudios realizados. El segundo describe el objetivo general de esta tesis y clarifica los objetivos específicos y las hipótesis de cada estudio. El tercer capítulo aporta una visión general de los principales aspectos metodológicos de los estudios. A continuación, se presenta cada estudio, con sus propias secciones: Introducción, Método, Resultados, Discusión y Referencias. Finalmente, se presenta la discusión general sobre los hallazgos de los estudios que conforman la tesis doctoral, además de sus limitaciones e implicaciones prácticas. Para concluir, se resumen las conclusiones y aportaciones más importantes de la Tesis Doctoral.

El objetivo principal del primer estudio fue explorar la relación entre el compromiso con los valores personales y los niveles de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores familiares de demencia. Específicamente, se analizó la capacidad predicativa del compromiso de los cuidadores con sobre los niveles de culpa. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 179 cuidadores familiares de demencia. Los resultados mostraron que el

compromiso con el rol de cuidador y el ocio contribuyeron de manera negativa y estadísticamente significativa en la explicación de los sentimientos de culpa, mientras que el compromiso con el trabajo se asoció con mayores niveles de culpa.

El segundo estudio supone un análisis en profundidad de los sentimientos de culpa y los factores subyacentes a éstos en la tarea de cuidar a familiar con demencia. En concreto, se realizó un análisis cualitativo de las narraciones de trece cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia. A partir de los análisis se obtuvieron siete categorías relevantes para la comprensión de esta emoción en los cuidadores: culpa derivada de las propias acciones; culpa derivada de las propias limitaciones; culpa por sentir emociones negativas; culpa asociada al cambio en la relación con la persona cuidada; culpa por el descuido de otras áreas; culpa inducida por la persona que cuida, y culpa inducida por otros. Además de estos factores, se reveló la existencia de patrones de evitación de la culpa en los cuidadores.

Por otro lado, diferentes autores han señalado la naturaleza interpersonal de la culpa (por ejemplo, Baumeister, Stillwell y Heatherthon, 1994) y su potencial para influir en el comportamiento de otros a través de los llamados procesos de inducción de culpa (por ejemplo, Barber, 1996). Además, considerando los hallazgos del segundo estudio que respalda la existencia de sentimientos de culpa inducidos por otros, el objetivo del tercer estudio fue desarrollar el Cuestionario de Inducción de Culpa en el Cuidado (CGIQ), para evaluar la frecuencia y la culpa derivadas de los procesos de inducción de culpa a los que se expone el cuidador, ya sean realizados por la persona cuidada como por otros familiares. En este estudio participaron 201 cuidadores familiares. El Cuestionario de Inducción de Culpa en el Cuidado (CGIQ) estuvo compuesto por dos escalas: una dirigida a evaluar los comportamientos de inducción realizados por la persona cuidada (CGIQ-CR) y otra los realizados por otros familiares (CGIQ-OR). El

análisis factorial exploratorio del CGIQ-CR mostró una solución de dos factores denominados: *Críticas del familiar cuidado sobre el rol de cuidador* y *descalificaciones globales*, respectivamente. Éstos explicaron el 56.24% de la varianza. También, la subescala CGIQ-OR mostró una estructura bifactorial. Los factores *Críticas de otros familiares sobre el rol del cuidador* y *Atribuciones excesivas de responsabilidad* explicaron el 63.24% de la varianza. Todos los factores tuvieron índices de fiabilidad entre aceptables y buenos. Los resultados mostraron que una mayor frecuencia de exposición a ambos procesos inducción de culpa (es decir, tanto por parte de la persona cuidada como de otros familiares) se asoció con mayores niveles de malestar psicológico en los cuidadores (medido a través de depresión, ansiedad y sentimientos de culpa). A su vez, la culpa inducida por la persona cuidada correlacionó negativamente con la frecuencia de ocio de los cuidadores. Así mismo, se identificaron otras emociones distintas a la culpa derivadas de este tipo de procesos, por ejemplo, la ira o la tristeza.

El cuarto estudio consiste en el estudio piloto de una intervención psicológica específicamente dirigida a los sentimientos de culpa de los cuidadores. Esta intervención enfocada en la culpa estuvo compuesta por ocho sesiones grupales, y estuvo basada en diferentes enfoques terapéuticos, utilizando técnicas cognitivo-conductuales, de aceptación y de autocompasión. La muestra final estuvo compuesta por cuatro cuidadores familiares. Los cuidadores fueron evaluados en depresión, ansiedad y culpa a través de entrevistas individuales en los momentos previos y posteriores a la intervención. En el momento post intervención, tres participantes obtuvieron cambios clínicamente significativos (calculados a través del índice de cambio confiable; RCI) en los sentimientos de culpa. También se obtuvieron cambios confiables en los síntomas depresivos y ansiosos. Sólo un cuidador no mostró ningún cambio después de la intervención.

Por último, el quinto estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de diferentes variables psicológicas y sociales, entre ellas los sentimientos de culpa, en la sintomatología ansiosa de cuidadores formales. Los participantes fueron 101 trabajadores de residencias de personas mayores. Los resultados mostraron que los sentimientos de culpa por la atención ofrecida a los residentes y una mala calidad de la relación con los familiares de los residentes se asociaron con mayores niveles de ansiedad en los profesionales. Por otro lado, los niveles de burnout (en concreto despersonalización) y los de carga también se asociaron con la sintomatología ansiosa.

Finalmente, considerando en conjunto todos los hallazgos obtenidos, podemos resaltar la necesidad de considerar la culpa como un constructo multidimensional. Parece que los sentimientos de culpa no sólo surgen como consecuencia de los propios juicios negativos, sino que el contexto interpersonal (relaciones con el familiar con demencia y otros) y el entorno sociocultural (por ejemplo, los valores) también juegan un importante papel en la explicación de la culpa, y en última instancia en el malestar experimentado por los cuidadores. Igualmente, las intervenciones psicoterapéuticas específicas que combinan técnicas de aceptación y de autocompasión parecen ser potencialmente eficaces para la reducción de los sentimientos de culpa y otro tipo de malestar emocional en cuidadores (p. ej., depresión y ansiedad). Para concluir, la presencia de sentimientos de culpa es un factor relevante para explicar el proceso de estrés y malestar no solo en los cuidadores familiares, sino también en los cuidadores formales como los trabajadores de residencias de personas mayores.

Capítulo 1:

Introducción general

1.1 Envejecimiento poblacional como fenómeno de relevancia mundial.

La población mundial envejece a un ritmo rápido. En la actualidad se estima que existen 962 millones de personas mayores de 60 años, lo que representa el 13% de la población mundial (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, ONU, 2017). Los informes realizados a escala mundial sobre estadísticas y previsiones de población coinciden en la relevancia e inevitabilidad del fenómeno del envejecimiento poblacional, con estimaciones de un aumento a 1.4 billones de personas mayores para 2030 y 2.1 billones en 2050.

Las causas principales del fenómeno de envejecimiento poblacional son el continuo descenso en las tasas de fecundidad de los países, unido al aumento de la esperanza de vida a lo largo de los siglos XX y XXI (ONU, 2017). En este sentido, el informe de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables* (2017) expone que la población mayor de 60 años crece a un ritmo mayor que los otros grupos de edad, aumentando un 3% de manera anual (ONU, 2017). A su vez, Europa es el continente más envejecido, siendo actualmente la proporción de personas mayores el 25% de la población total (ONU, 2017).

Dentro de las estadísticas europeas, España se sitúa entre los cinco países con mayor número de personas mayores. En la actualidad, en España viven más de ocho millones de personas mayores de 65 años, lo que representa un 18.8% sobre la población total (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2017). No sólo nos encontramos ante un aumento de la población mayor en general, sino que las estadísticas revelan una situación que no se había dado hasta la fecha en nuestro país, el aumento de personas mayores de 80 años. En la actualidad, el 6.1% de la población total española pertenece a este grupo poblacional y se espera que siga aumentando en el proceso de envejecimiento de una

población ya envejecida (Abellán-García, Ayala-García, Pérez-Díaz & Pujol-Rodríguez, 2018).

Estos datos de prevalencia, unidos a las bajas tasas de natalidad y a una de las esperanzas de vida más altas mundialmente (85.8 años para las mujeres y 80.3 en el caso de varones) contribuyen al rápido sobre-envejecimiento de la población en España. Además, de manera reciente Salomon et al. (2012) revelaron que a la alta esperanza de vida se le añadiría una alta esperanza de vida saludable en España, concretamente 68.8 años para los hombres y 73.0 para las mujeres. Estos datos son indicadores del acusado envejecimiento que se prevé para las próximas décadas en el país. En este sentido, se espera que para 2066 el número de personas mayores de 65 años haya aumentado a 14 millones, correspondiente a un 34.6% de la población española total (INE, 2017).

1.2. Enfermedad de Alzheimer y otras demencias

Aunque la mayoría de las personas mayores envejecen sin limitaciones físicas o cognitivas que les generen problemas de dependencia, el aumento del número de personas mayores, sobre todo en el estrato de las personas octogenarias, unido al incremento de la esperanza de vida, se asocian a un aumento en prevalencia de enfermedades crónicas que limitan la movilidad, aumentan la fragilidad y disminuyen la capacidad de vida independiente. Las demencias, entre las que se encuentra la enfermedad de Alzheimer (EA), son una de las enfermedades que generan elevados niveles de dependencia en esta población. Dado que el riesgo de padecer demencia aumenta con la edad y, de hecho, se calcula que entre un 25% y un 30% de las personas de 85 años o más padecen cierto grado de deterioro cognitivo (Organización Mundial de la Salud [OMS], 2015), es lógico que los informes sobre envejecimiento poblacional alerten de la necesidad de políticas y recursos destinados a este tipo de enfermedades (p. ej. OMS, 2013).

Las demencias han sido definidas como un síndrome neurodegenerativo que engloba un amplio listado de síntomas, entre los que se encuentra la afectación de la memoria de manera principal, así como otras habilidades cognitivas, lo que reduce la capacidad de la persona afectada para desenvolverse en la vida cotidiana. El DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) clasifica a las demencias como desórdenes neurocognitivos mayores. Se establece como criterio diagnóstico principal la evidencia de deterioro cognitivo significativo en relación al nivel previo de funcionamiento de la persona en uno o más dominios cognitivos (atención compleja, funciones ejecutivas, aprendizaje y memoria, lenguaje, perceptivo-motor o cognición social). Esta evidencia está basada en: 1) la preocupación del individuo, un informante que le conozca o el clínico, que alertan de un declive significativo en la capacidad cognitiva; y 2) un deterioro sustancial en el funcionamiento cognitivo, documentado por tests neuropsicológicos, o en su defecto, por otro tipo de evaluación clínica. A este criterio se le añade que el déficit cognitivo interfiere en los niveles de autonomía del individuo para llevar a cabo las actividades diarias (es decir, requiere algún tipo de asistencia en la realización de actividades instrumentales complejas de la vida diaria, p. ej., seguir las pautas de su medicación o manejar sus cuentas bancarias), no ocurre exclusivamente en el contexto de un síndrome confusional y no puede explicarse por otro desorden mental (p. ej., esquizofrenia o trastorno depresivo mayor). Así mismo, los planteamientos diagnósticos más recientes han añadido la presencia de marcadores biológicos a la hora de realizar el diagnóstico de este tipo de afecciones (p. ej., la proteína beta-amiloide en la enfermedad de Alzheimer o niveles de glucosa en el cerebro; Alzheimer's Association, 2018). La OMS (2013) estima que, a fecha de 2010, unos 35.6 millones de personas padecían algún tipo de demencia en el mundo y prevé que para el año 2030 serán 65.7 millones de personas afectadas, llegando a 115.4 millones en 2050.

Dentro del amplio término de demencia se incluyen diferentes tipos de afecciones, que incluyen la enfermedad de Parkinson, la demencia de cuerpos de Lewy, la demencia vascular, la demencia frontotemporal y la enfermedad de Alzheimer (EA), que es la más frecuente (Alzheimer's Association, 2018). De hecho, se calcula que representa entre el 60% y 80% de los casos con diagnóstico de demencia (OECD, 2018). En la actualidad se estima que sólo en Estados Unidos de América 5.7 millones de personas tienen Alzheimer y se espera un rápido incremento a 13.8 millones para el año 2050 (Alzheimer's Association, 2018). Mientras, en Europa, se estima que 9.1 millones de personas mayores de 60 años están afectadas por algún tipo de demencia y se prevé un crecimiento de un 60% en las próximas décadas, alcanzando 14.3 millones de personas afectadas en 2040 (OECD, 2018). Un meta-análisis reciente llevado a cabo por Niu, Álvarez-Alvárez, Guillén-Grima y Aguinaga-Ontoso (2017) estableció que la prevalencia europea de la enfermedad de Alzheimer en personas mayores es de 5.05%, con una incidencia de 11.08 casos cada 1.000 personas. Atendiendo al género, las mujeres presentaban una mayor prevalencia de Alzheimer en comparación con los hombres. Estos datos de prevalencia e incidencia son mayores en países del sur de Europa, entre los que se encuentra España. De manera específica, se estima que en España un 8% de la población mayor está afectada por algún tipo de demencia (OECD, 2018). En este sentido, Vega-Alonso et al. (2016) estimaron que al menos un 18.5% de la población española mayor de 65 años presenta algún grado de deterioro cognitivo, y dentro de esta población las mujeres y el grupo de edad mayor de 85 años presentaban mayores niveles de prevalencia de este tipo de afección. De hecho, se estima que sólo en Madrid un 5.91% de las personas 65 años y más (aproximadamente 52.287 personas) presentan algún tipo de demencia (Hoyos-Alonso, Bonis, Tapias-Merino, Castell, y Otero, 2016).

A pesar de las ya elevadas estimaciones de prevalencia de las demencias y la EA recogidas en los párrafos anteriores, los informes alertan sobre la posibilidad de que estos datos sean mayores en la realidad, dado que en muchas ocasiones las demencias no se comunican y podrían estar sub-diagnosticadas (Alzheimer's Association, 2018).

La EA implica importantes pérdidas en el funcionamiento físico, psicológico y social de la persona que la padece, y se estima que la persona convive con la enfermedad una media de entre cuatro y ocho años tras el diagnóstico, llegando en algunos casos hasta los 20 años (Alzheimer's Association, 2018). Dada la elevada duración de la enfermedad, el declive de la funcionalidad de la persona y los niveles de dependencia generados, la EA ha sido clasificada como una de las enfermedades que más niveles de carga originan tanto para la persona afectada como para sus familiares y cuidadores (Alzheimer's Association, 2018).

1.3 El cuidado familiar de personas con demencia

Como ya se ha comentado anteriormente, el envejecimiento poblacional se asocia con el aumento de personas mayores dependientes, siendo las demencias una de las causas más comunes de dependencia en esta población. Según el Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales (IMSERSO, 2016), actualmente el 20.7% de la población mayor de 65 años presenta alguna limitación para las actividades básicas de la vida diaria. Además, estas dificultades se ven incrementadas conforme aumenta la edad. Concretamente, en la población octogenaria el 53.7% tiene limitaciones para llevar a cabo alguna actividad básica de la vida diaria.

A pesar de que en años recientes han tenido lugar iniciativas importantes para la atención a la población con dependencia (p. ej., la Ley 39/2006 de Promoción de la

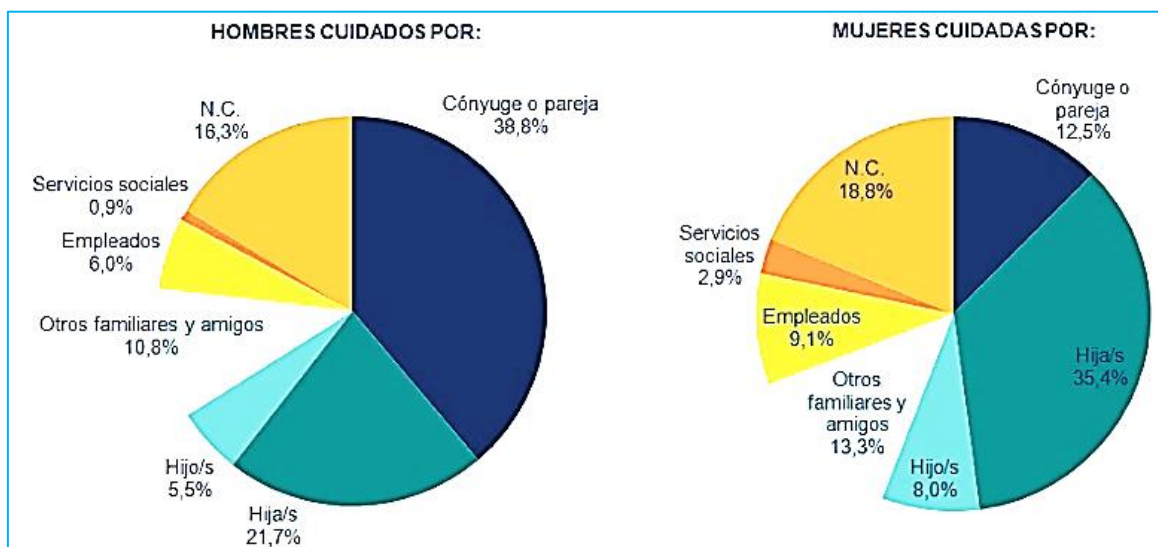
Autonomía Personal), la realidad es que el número de recursos formales disponibles para prestar atención a esta población es aún escaso e insuficiente.

Los déficits mencionados en la atención social y sanitaria hacen que la responsabilidad de la atención a la persona mayor dependiente recaiga en la mayoría de las ocasiones en las familias y entorno más cercano. En este sentido, la *Encuesta de Discapacidad, Autonomía personal y situaciones de Dependencia* (INE, 2008) estima que más de un 85% de los mayores con discapacidad en España únicamente contaba con apoyo informal, esto es, provisto por sus familiares. De hecho, se calcula que el 83% de la atención recibida por las personas mayores dependientes es proporcionada en el contexto familiar o informal (IMSERSO, 2005). Estas cifras son similares a las aportadas por los informes realizados en otros países. Por ejemplo, en Estados Unidos se estima que el 83% de la ayuda recibida por las personas mayores proviene de sus familiares, amigos y otros cuidadores informales (Spillman, Wolff, Freedman, y Kasper, 2014). Así mismo, los informes europeos establecen el porcentaje de atención proporcionada por familiares a personas mayores entre el 55 y 80%, encontrando un mayor porcentaje en países como Italia, Bélgica y España y las cifras menores en países como Dinamarca (Mestheneos y Triantafillou, 2005). Además, dada la elevada incidencia de las demencias a nivel mundial y los niveles de dependencia que generan en personas mayores, se calcula que el 48% de esos cuidadores informales lo son de una persona afectada por Alzheimer y otras demencias relacionadas (Friedman, Shih, Langa, y Hurd, 2015).

Los informes muestran que, en la mayoría de los casos, son las mujeres las que se encargan del cuidado de los familiares mayores dependientes (IMSERSO, 2014). La pareja (esposa o compañera) e hijas son las personas que suelen realizar las tareas de cuidado (ver Figura 1.1). Según el informe realizado en el año 2005 por el IMSERSO, el

perfil más común de cuidador familiar en España es una mujer (en el 84% de los casos), de mediana edad, con bajo nivel educativo y renta baja, que no tiene un trabajo remunerado y que dedica una gran cantidad de tiempo a las tareas del hogar y del cuidado. Además, en el 48% de los casos, conviven con la persona con demencia (IMSERSO, 2005). De manera similar, esta figura general de cuidador se repite en otros países de Europa y EE.UU. El último informe de la *Alzheimer's Association* (2018) indica que la tarea del cuidado la asumen en gran mayoría mujeres (esposas e hijas especialmente), de mediana edad, con bajo nivel de estudios y con inferiores niveles económicos. En el caso de los hijos e hijas que cuidan de un familiar con demencia, más del 25% eran “cuidadores sándwich”, es decir, cuidaban de su familiar con demencia y también de algún hijo menor de 18 años (Alzheimer's Association, 2018).

Figura 1.1 Persona que cuida, según el sexo de la persona mayor (INE, 2008).



El cuidado familiar de personas afectadas por algún tipo de demencia se asocia a unos elevados niveles de carga en el cuidador. En primer lugar, los cuidadores informales dedican una elevada media de horas diarias a su familiar. Concretamente, se calcula que las personas afectadas por demencia reciben una media mensual de 171 horas de cuidado informal, mientras que los cuidadores informales de una persona mayor dependiente no

afectada por demencia dedican una media de 89.3 horas (Friedman et al.,2015). A esta elevada dedicación hay que sumarle los costes económicos que la tarea de cuidar supone. Se estima que en España los cuidadores familiares invierten una media de 3301.52 y 4660.97 euros anuales durante el cuidado de su familiar con demencia (Escribano-Sotos y Pardo-García, 2015). Estas cifras se ven aumentadas conforme aumenta el declive y la gravedad de la demencia, llegando incluso a un gasto de 7926.20 euros anuales en los casos en los que la persona cuidada se encuentra en las fases más graves de la enfermedad (Escribano-Sotos y Pardo-García, 2015). Por ello, dado el importante papel de los cuidadores informales en la atención recibida por las personas afectadas por demencia, no es de extrañar que las políticas sociales alerten de la necesidad de atender y promover el bienestar no solo de la creciente población afectada por las demencias, sino o también el de sus cuidadores (Confederación Española de Alzheimer, 2017).

1.4. El modelo de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado

Como ya se ha señalado, el cuidado a las personas mayores dependientes se proporciona mayoritariamente por las familias. Estos cuidadores se enfrentan de manera diaria durante un largo período de tiempo a la tarea del cuidado de su familiar. Así mismo, su tarea no solo atañe a la supervisión y apoyo en la realización de actividades de la vida diaria, sino que en muchas ocasiones se enfrentan a cambios en la memoria, capacidad de comunicación, estado de ánimo y personalidad de la persona afectada por la demencia. Además, el progresivo deterioro y pérdida de las habilidades en el familiar hace que las horas dedicadas a ayuda y supervisión vayan incrementando a lo largo del transcurso de la demencia.

Por ello, debido a la naturaleza tan demandante que supone la tarea de cuidar de una persona con demencia (elevado número de horas diarias y prolongado en el tiempo), así

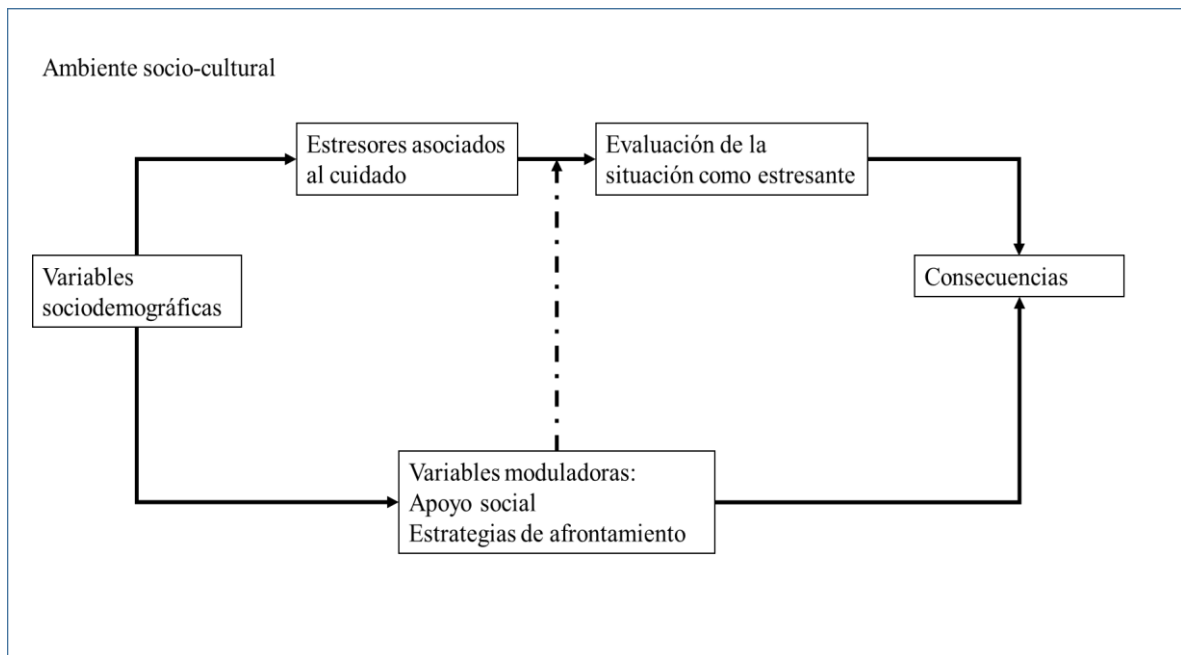
como la presencia de otros estresores en la situación (p. ej., preocupaciones económicas, cuidado de hijos, aspectos laborales...), la investigación es contundente a la hora de considerar el cuidado como una situación de estrés crónico (Knight y Sayegh, 2010). De hecho, ha sido también denominada como un experimento natural de estrés extremo (Robinson-Whelen et al., 2001). Dada su naturaleza altamente estresante, diferentes estudios han utilizado a esta población a la hora de plantear estudios dirigidos a avanzar en el conocimiento sobre el estrés y afrontamiento (ver, por ejemplo, Kiecolt-Glaser, Marucha, Mercado, Malarkey, y Glaser, 1995). Los modelos de estrés y afrontamiento adaptados al cuidado más utilizados y que mayor apoyo empírico han obtenido son los propuestos por Haley, Levine, Brown, y Bartolucci (1987), Knight y Sayegh (2010) y Pearlin et al. (1990).

Estos modelos comparten el concepto de estrés como un proceso en el que interactúan diferentes factores, como aspectos socio-demográficos, estresores y otros recursos personales, cuya interacción se ve reflejada en el estado del cuidador. Comparten el objetivo de la identificación de los estresores del cuidado, como podrían ser la presencia de comportamientos problemáticos en la persona cuidada, y las posibles variables o recursos (externos o internos) que modulan su efecto (p. ej., estrategia de afrontamiento utilizada) sobre las consecuencias en el cuidador principal.

El modelo teórico más frecuentemente utilizado y con mayor evidencia empírica en el contexto del cuidado es el modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado (Knight y Sayegh, 2010). La presente Tesis Doctoral se enmarca precisamente en este modelo teórico (ver Figura 1.2.). De acuerdo con el modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento, los estresores a los que están expuestos los cuidadores no conducen de manera directa al malestar experimentado por éstos, sino que esta relación está influida

en gran medida por distintas variables moduladoras (mediadoras o moderadoras) que amortiguan o, por el contrario, acentúan el impacto de los estresores en el malestar del cuidador, siendo las más frecuentemente analizadas el apoyo social y las estrategias de afrontamiento. Recientemente, Knight y Sayegh (2010) han señalado la importancia de ampliar el modelo, resaltando la importancia de considerar factores culturales en el estudio del proceso del cuidado como variables moduladoras entre estresores y malestar, entre los que se incluyen el familismo y los valores o los motivos del cuidado

Figura 1.2. Modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado utilizado en la presente Tesis Doctoral.



1.4.1 Dimensiones del modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado

a) Variables socio-demográficas

Esta dimensión hace referencia a todas aquellas características socio-demográficas de la díada de cuidador y persona cuidada, tales como la edad, el género, la

relación de parentesco, el nivel educativo y socio-económico, etc. En la mayoría de los estudios sobre el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia este tipo de variables han sido utilizadas como variables control, ya que se asume que pueden condicionar la experiencia del cuidado.

En la historia de la investigación sobre cuidadores se ha puesto de manifiesto que las mujeres cuidadoras experimentan mayores niveles de malestar psicológico que los hombres (Bédard et al.,2005; Butterworth, Pymont, Rodgers, Windsor, y Anstey, 2010; Eppers, Goodall, y Harrison, 2008; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006a; Zarit, Todd, y Zarit, 1986). Un meta-análisis sobre la influencia de la variable género en la tarea de cuidar ha mostrado que las mujeres presentan mayores niveles de depresión y carga, peor estado de salud física, así como mayor número de horas dedicadas al cuidado y una mayor frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos del familiar (Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006a).

En cuanto a la edad, los resultados se dirigen a señalar a los cuidadores más jóvenes como vulnerables. Diferentes estudios abogan por que los cuidadores más jóvenes realizan una evaluación más negativa de su rol y, por ende, podrían estar más sobrecargados (p. ej., Brodaty y Hadzi-Pavlovi, 1990; Convinsky et al.,2003; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2007). En esta línea, los cuidadores más jóvenes cuentan con mayor prevalencia de problemas de ansiedad y depresión (Kim, Spillers, y Hall, 2010; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2007; Schulz et al.,2008). Sin embargo, los datos concernientes a la edad aún son ambiguos, ya que diferentes investigaciones no confirman la relación entre edad y malestar psicológico (p. ej., Smith, Williamson, Miller, y Schulz, 2011).

Otra variable ampliamente estudiada en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia ha sido la relación de parentesco entre el cuidador y la persona cuidada, variable que se asocia con la edad del cuidador, ya que los cuidadores mayores son, con mayor

frecuencia, esposos o pareja de la persona cuidada, mientras que los más jóvenes suelen ser hijos o nietos. Diferentes estudios han demostrado el efecto modulador del parentesco sobre las consecuencias de diferentes estresores. De hecho, parece que en la literatura del cuidado familiar esta variable cuenta con mayor importancia que la edad, siendo igual o más importante que el género (Andrén y Elmstahl, 2007; Marks, Lambert, y Choi, 2002). En este sentido los diferentes estudios realizados en esta área alertan de la necesidad de tener en cuenta la relación de parentesco con la persona cuidada a la hora de analizar las diferentes consecuencias del cuidado (Mark et al., 2002; Sugihara, Sugiwasa, Nakatani, y Hougham, 2004). Un ejemplo de este tipo de estudios es el llevado a cabo por Depp et al. (2005), cuyos resultados mostraron que las esposas tenían mayor riesgo de mostrar menores niveles de autoeficacia en comparación con hijas. El estudio realizado por Kim, Zarit, Femia y Savla (2012) mostró respuestas diferenciadas al inicio del uso de centro de día en función del parentesco. A pesar de que tanto hijas y esposas disminuyeron sus niveles de depresión, carga y afecto positivo tras el comienzo del servicio de centro de día para su familiar, las esposas disminuyeron en mayor medida sus niveles de afecto positivo en comparación con las hijas, mientras que las hijas disminuyeron más los niveles de sintomatología depresiva. Estos resultados han sido encontrados también en estudios longitudinales. Por ejemplo, Sugihara et al. (2004) mostraron el papel moderador del parentesco a la hora de entender la sintomatología depresiva y los niveles de agotamiento emocional de las cuidadoras a lo largo de un seguimiento longitudinal de 30 meses. Concretamente, encontraron que las cuidadoras esposas eran aquellas que peor trayectoria mostraban en los niveles de agotamiento emocional, así como las nueras. Por otro lado, autores como Romero-Moreno et al. (2014) encontraron sólo en hijas cuidadoras que los sentimientos de culpa cumplían un papel moderador en la relación

entre la frecuencia de actividades de ocio y los sentimientos depresivos experimentados por los cuidadores.

Otras variables que han sido tratadas como variables sociodemográficas a controlar en la literatura sobre cuidadores han sido el nivel educativo y socio-económico. Las investigaciones disponibles sugieren que un bajo nivel educativo predice mayores niveles de malestar en cuidadores, reflejados en síntomas ansiosos y depresivos (Butterworth et al., 2010). Anteriormente, se han comentado los elevados costes económicos que las familias asumen durante el cuidado de un familiar con demencia. Por ello, no es de extrañar que las investigaciones apunten como predictores de peor salud mental en cuidadores el que cuenten con bajos niveles de ingresos económicos (Andrén y Elmstahl, 2007; Butterworth et al.,2010; Covinsky et al.,2003). Además, no solo la cantidad objetiva de ingresos influye sobre el estado del cuidador, sino que la evaluación de los propios ingresos como inadecuados para el cuidado del familiar predice mayores niveles de sintomatología ansiosa y depresiva (Sun, Higelman, Durkin, Allen, y Burgio, 2009).

b) Situaciones/estímulos estresantes asociadas al cuidado

En esta dimensión se incluyen todas aquellas variables asociadas a la situación del cuidado de una persona con demencia que pueden ser consideradas como estímulos potencialmente activadores de estrés, tales como la frecuencia de síntomas conductuales y psicológicos de las demencias (p. ej., agitación, agresividad, repetición de preguntas, tristeza, soledad...), el tipo de demencia o el deterioro funcional o nivel de dependencia de la persona enferma.

En primer lugar, el número de estudios dedicados a estudiar los efectos diferenciales en función del tipo de demencia que afecta al familiar es limitado. La

literatura indica que cuidar de un familiar afectado por el tipo de demencia frontotemporal se asocia con mayores niveles de sobrecarga y malestar (Brodaty y Donkin, 2009; Eneida et al., 2013; Riedjik et al., 2006; Rosness, Haugen y Endegal, 2008; Vugt et al., 2006). Por ejemplo, Vetter et al. (1999) encontraron que, en las etapas iniciales del cuidado, aquellos cuidadores que cuidaban de un familiar afectado por demencia vascular presentaban mayores niveles de sobrecarga. Sin embargo, con el paso del tiempo y el avance de la enfermedad, aquellos que cuidaban de un familiar con demencia tipo Alzheimer informaban de mayores niveles de sobrecarga en comparación con los cuidadores de personas con demencia vascular. Los autores hipotetizaron que en las primeras fases de la enfermedad los pacientes de EA, en comparación con los de demencia vascular, respondían mejor al tratamiento farmacológico, favoreciendo que el declive cognitivo sea menos acusado. Sin embargo, en las fases tardías, el agravamiento de los síntomas de la EA y la aparición de nuevos retos (p. ej., incontinencia, problemas de deglución, etc.) incrementarían la sensación de pérdida de control y sobrecarga en sus cuidadores. Por su parte, Rosness et al. (2008) encontraron que los cuidadores de familiares afectados por demencia frontotemporal tienden a mostrar menores niveles de satisfacción con la información y apoyo recibidos por el equipo médico y los programas destinados a la promoción de su bienestar en comparación con cuidadores de familiares con Alzheimer. Recientemente Lara-Ruiz et al. (2019) mostraron la importancia de tener en cuenta no sólo el tipo de diagnóstico, sino también el estadio y/o etapa de deterioro global del proceso degenerativo de la demencia.

Por otro lado, el deterioro funcional de la persona afectada por la demencia se refiere básicamente al grado de dependencia que presenta a la hora de realizar actividades básicas de la vida diaria (p. ej., vestirse, comer, asearse, etc.) y otras actividades instrumentales básicas (p. ej., pagar facturas, hacer la compra, seguir pautas de

medicación, etc.). Estudios como los realizados por Molyneux, McCarthy, McEniff, Cryan, y Conroy (2008) muestran que una menor capacidad cognitiva y funcional de la persona cuidada predice mayores niveles de carga y depresión del cuidador. Recientemente, Lara-Ruiz et al. (2019) encontraron que la capacidad funcional del familiar cuidado para realizar actividades básicas de la vida diaria es un mejor predictor del malestar psicológico y los niveles de carga que el nivel de funcionamiento neurocognitivo. Además, se ha evidenciado que las intervenciones dirigidas a preservar la capacidad funcional de los pacientes con demencia tienen efectos positivos sobre los niveles de carga y malestar psicológico de los cuidadores familiares (Bahar-Fuchs, Clare, y Woods, 2013; Gitlin et al., 2017; McDermott et al., 2019).

Una de las variables que mayor atención ha suscitado en la literatura sobre cuidadores han sido los problemas de conducta asociados a las demencias a los que los cuidadores se ven expuestos en su rutina diaria. Son numerosas las investigaciones que han demostrado la robusta relación entre la presencia de este tipo de comportamientos (p. ej., irritabilidad, deambulación, conductas agresivas, aislamiento, etc.) y mayores niveles de malestar psicológico (p. ej., sintomatología depresiva y ansiosa) y carga en cuidadores (Fauth y Gibbons, 2014; Feast, Moniz-Cook, Stoner, Charlesworth y Orrell, 2016; Liu et al., 2017; Logsdon, McCurry, y Teri, 2007; Nogales-González, Losada, y Romero-Moreno, 2015; Rosdinom, Zarina, Zanariah, Marhani, y Suzaily, 2013). De hecho, investigaciones como la de Rabinowitz, Mausbach, y Gallagher-Thompson (2009) sugieren que los comportamientos problemáticos tienen un mayor papel estresor que la falta de autonomía en la persona cuidada, siendo incluso predictores del ingreso en contextos formales como residencias.

c) Variables moduladoras

Tal y como se mencionó anteriormente, el modelo socio-cultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado propuesto por Knight y Sayegh (2010) propone la existencia de variables que modulan, ya sea atenuando o incrementando, la relación de la exposición a los distintos estresores y el estado físico y psicológico del cuidador. De hecho, parece que este tipo de variables son claves a la hora de explicar la gran variabilidad interindividual en las respuestas a estresores y en las consecuencias experimentadas a la hora de cuidar un familiar con demencia. En la literatura científica acerca del cuidado de familiares con demencia, las variables moduladoras que mayor atención han recibido por parte de la investigación son el apoyo social, los niveles de autoeficacia percibida y las estrategias de afrontamiento utilizadas por el cuidador, entre otras.

Un largo número de artículos ha evidenciado el papel mediador o moderador de las evaluaciones de autoeficacia en la relación entre la exposición a estresores (por ej. comportamientos problemáticos del familiar) y las consecuencias psicológicas que éstos producen, especialmente sobre los niveles de depresión y carga percibidas (Gallagher et al., 2011; Gilliam y Steffen, 2006; Nogales-González, Romero-Moreno, Losada, Márquez-González, y Zarit, 2015; Romero-Moreno et al., 2011; Romero-Moreno, Márquez-González, Mausbach y Losada, 2011). Por ejemplo, Nogales-González et al. (2015) encontraron que la autoeficacia ejercía un papel de moderador en la relación entre la frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos y la reacción de estrés asociada a éstos en una muestra de 231 cuidadores familiares. Específicamente, cuando los cuidadores que informaban de una alta frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos de su familiar presentaban a su vez altos niveles de autoeficacia percibida mostraban menores niveles

de estrés y malestar asociado a estos comportamientos en comparación con aquellos cuidadores con menores niveles de autoeficacia. Este tipo de resultados también han sido mostrados en investigaciones como la de Romero-Moreno et al. (2011), quienes encontraron que el nivel de autoeficacia percibida para controlar los pensamientos disfuncionales moderaba la relación entre carga y malestar psicológico, medido a través de síntomas de ansiedad y depresión.

En relación con la variable de apoyo social, diferentes estudios han mostrado su papel modulador en la relación entre los estresores (p. ej., elevada frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos) y la sintomatología clínica experimentada por el cuidador (por ej. depresión, niveles de carga subjetiva, etc.) (Clay, Roth, Wadley, y Haley, 2008; Haley, Levine, Brown, y Bartolucci, 1987; Robinson-Shurgot y Knight, 2005; Schulz y Martire, 2004). Otra variable ampliamente estudiada han sido las estrategias de afrontamiento adoptadas por el cuidador. Los diferentes estudios realizados en este ámbito abogan por el impacto positivo de las estrategias de afrontamiento activas, tales como, por ejemplo, aquellas centradas en la reevaluación cognitiva, afrontamiento centrado en el problema o búsqueda de ayuda, que se han encontrado asociadas con menor sintomatología depresiva, ansiosa y una mayor satisfacción con la vida. Por el contrario, el uso de estrategias de afrontamiento como la pasividad, negación y evitación se asocian con mayor estrés, ansiedad, depresión, problemas de salud física y mayor aislamiento y soledad (Cooper, Katona, Orrell, y Livingston, 2008; García-Alberca et al., 2012; Li, Cooper, Bradley, Shulman y Livingston, 2012; McConaghy y Caltabiano, 2005; Papastavrou et al., 2011; Romero-Moreno et al., 2011; Sun, Kosberg, Kaufman y Leeper, 2010; Tschanz et al., 2013).

Knigh y Sayegh (2010), en su revisión del modelo de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado, indicaron la necesidad de tener en cuenta las diferentes variables del ámbito social y cultural. La inclusión de este tipo de variables en el modelo permitiría mejorar la capacidad explicativa de éste sobre las diferencias individuales y transculturales en las consecuencias que tiene el cuidado de un familiar con demencia. En la investigación con cuidadores se ha puesto de manifiesto cómo estas variables influyen de manera significativa en las relaciones entre las dimensiones comentadas anteriormente (Etters et al.,2008; Knigh y Losada, 2011; McCleary y Blain, 2013). Dentro de este tipo de variables podemos resaltar el familismo y los motivos para cuidar. El familismo es entendido como la presencia de sentimientos de lealtad, reciprocidad y solidaridad entre los miembros de una misma familia (Losada et al.,2006). Tradicionalmente, la mayoría de las investigaciones sobre esta variable se han realizado en EEUU y han puesto de manifiesto que los cuidadores hispanos puntúan más alto en comparación con cuidadores “caucásicos” (p. ej., Robinson y Knigh, 2002). En los últimos años se han realizado diferentes investigaciones sobre familismo en muestras de cuidadores españoles. Por ejemplo, Losada et al. (2006) compararon los niveles de familismo y su influencia sobre el proceso de estrés en dos muestras de cuidadores, una conformada por cuidadores españoles y otra por latinos residentes en EEUU. Sus resultados mostraron que, mientras que ambas poblaciones no diferían de manera significativa en la variable familismo, en la muestra de cuidadores españoles el familismo se asoció de forma directa con la sintomatología depresiva, asociación que no ocurría en la muestra de latinos. Este tipo de resultados evidencian la importancia del contexto cultural a la hora de explicar el malestar de los cuidadores.

En relación a los motivos para cuidar, la literatura sugiere que los cuidadores que perciben su labor como una obligación o deber presentan mayores niveles de carga

subjetiva, rumiación y sentimientos de ira, depresión y ansiedad. Por otro lado, la experiencia de sentido intrínseco en el cuidado, relacionada con la reciprocidad y el compromiso con los valores personales, parece actuar como factor amortiguador del malestar psicológico (Camden, Livingston, y Cooper, 2011; del-Pino-Casado, Frías-Osuna, y Palomino-Moral, 2011; Romero-Moreno, Márquez-González, Losada y López, 2011; Quinn, Clare, McGuinness y Woods, 2012).

1.5. Consecuencias del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia

Cuidar de un familiar mayor dependiente, especialmente si padece demencia, se ha encontrado asociado con elevados niveles de malestar físico y psicológico (Etters et al., 2008; Mausbach et al., 2010; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2003; Schulz y Martire, 2004; Vitaliano, Zhang y Scanlan, 2003) e incluso con mayor riesgo de muerte, siendo la probabilidad de morir de un cuidador que manifiesta estrés un 63% superior a la de un no cuidador (Schulz y Beach, 1999). Curiosamente, las evidencias sobre este último dato son mixtas, existiendo estudios que señalan aspectos positivos derivados de la tarea del cuidado de un familiar con demencia, ésta la que se considera como un factor de potencial crecimiento personal y protector contra el riesgo de muerte (p. ej., Roth et al., 2013).

En cuanto a consecuencias físicas, se ha evidenciado la afectación negativa del sistema inmune (p. ej., Cacioppo et al., 1998; Glaser, Sheridan, Malarkey, MacCallum, y Kiecolt-Glaser, 2000; Kiecolt-Glaser, Dura, Speicher, Trask y Glaser, 1991; Roth et al., 2019), cardiovascular (p. ej., Mausbach et al., 2012; Mausbach, Patterson, Rabinowitz, Grant, y Schulz, 2007; Roepke et al., 2011; Von-Känel et al., 2012) metabólico (p. ej., Fredman, Doros, Cauley, Hillier, y Hochberg, 2010) y endocrino (p. ej., Hirano, Umegaki, Suzuki, Hayashi y Kuzuya, 2016) de aquellos cuidadores con mayores niveles de estrés (p. ej., con un menor recuento de anticuerpos o mayores niveles de hormonas

implicadas en procesos de estrés como el cortisol), en comparación con población no cuidadora (Vitaliano et al.,2003).

En el plano psicológico, el riesgo de padecer niveles significativos de sintomatología depresiva y/o ansiosa es superior en comparación con no cuidadores (Knight y Losada, 2011; Ma, Dorstyn, Ward, y Prentice, 2018; Pinguart y Sörensen, 2003, 2007; Sallim, Sayampanathan, Cuttilan, y Ho, 2015). Las variables dependientes más estudiadas en el contexto del estudio del cuidado han sido la depresión, la carga, y en menor medida los niveles de ansiedad (Cooper, Balamurali, y Livingston, 2007; Losada et al., 2015).

A fecha de hoy, la consecuencia más estudiada en cuidadores ha sido la sintomatología depresiva (p. ej., Alspaugh, Stephens, Townsend, Zarit, y Greene, 1999; Cuijpers, 2005; De Fazio et al., 2015; Gaugler, Roth, Haley, y Mittelman, 2008; Joling et al.,2015; Pillemer, Davis, y Tremont, 2018). Los resultados muestran que los cuidadores de personas con demencia tienen mayor probabilidad de desarrollar depresión que cualquier otro tipo de cuidadores (p. ej., cuidadores de personas mayores con diagnóstico de diabetes u otra discapacidad) (Kim y Schulz, 2008). Los estudios sobre prevalencia de depresión han calculado unas tasas de prevalencia entre el 30% y 80%, dependiendo del tipo de muestra y reclutamiento utilizado (Schoenmakers, Buntinx, y Delepeleire, 2010). Recientemente, se ha puesto de manifiesto que la presencia de este tipo de problemas se asocia con mayor riesgo de aparición de ideación suicida en esta población (Joling, O'Dwyer, Hertogh, y van Hout, 2018). Por su parte, Sallim et al. (2015) estimaron la prevalencia de problemas depresivos en cuidadores de personas con demencia en torno al 34%, siendo mayor el riesgo para las mujeres, las esposas y los casos en los que la persona

cuidada es un hombre. También el mismo trabajo reveló que la prevalencia de síntomas de ansiedad era incluso mayor que la de los problemas depresivos, siendo de un 43.6%.

A pesar de que un menor número de estudios han analizado la ansiedad en cuidadores, las evidencias sugieren que aproximadamente un 25% de los cuidadores presentan síntomas clínicos de ansiedad (Cooper et al., 2007). Joling y sus colaboradores (2015) llevaron a cabo un seguimiento longitudinal de dos años de duración con el fin de analizar la incidencia de depresión y ansiedad, diagnosticados a través del Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI), así como posibles variables predictoras. Los resultados mostraron que el 66% de los cuidadores desarrollaron algún tipo de problema psicológico durante el seguimiento, de los cuales el 37% fueron casos de depresión, 55% problemas relacionados con ansiedad y 32% problemas de comórbidos de ansiedad y depresión. Así mismo, identificaron que las esposas cuidadoras tenían mayor riesgo de experimentar malestar psicológico. Otros predictores de ansiedad y depresión fueron el cese o abandono de actividades de tiempo libre y variables relacionadas con la persona cuidada.

Como ya se ha señalado, todavía es menor el número de estudios dirigidos a evaluar y analizar otras variables de resultado en la literatura sobre el cuidado. En este sentido, diferentes investigaciones ponen de manifiesto que se dan reacciones emocionales diferentes a la depresión y ansiedad durante el proceso de cuidar de un familiar con demencia, tales como la ira (MacNeil et al., 2009), ambivalencia (Losada et al., 2018), e incluso emociones y experiencias positivas, como el crecimiento personal (Leipold, Schacke, y Zank, 2008; Shim, Barroso, Gilliss, y Davis, 2013). Una emoción frecuente e incapacitadora que, sin embargo, ha sido escasamente analizada en cuidadores es la culpa (Gonyea, Paris, y Saxe Zerden, 2008; Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba,

y Romero-Moreno, 2010). Teniendo en cuenta lo comentado anteriormente, y dada la especial relevancia de la culpa en el presente trabajo, en los siguientes párrafos se incidirá especialmente en esta variable, clave en la presente Tesis Doctoral.

1.6. Los sentimientos de culpa en el contexto del cuidado familiar

1.6.1. La emoción de culpa

Las primeras formulaciones teóricas en psicología sobre la culpa fueron realizadas desde el enfoque psicodinámico. Freud concebía la culpa como los procesos autopunitivos resultantes de deseos e impulsos inaceptables del *ello*, que confluían en la manifestación de síntomas psicopatológicos (Freud, 1905/1935; citado en Tangney, Wagner, y Gramzow, 1992). Además, también propuso mecanismos de culpabilidad *inconsciente*, definida como fruto de la introyección o represión de experiencias tempranas de culpa ante experiencias, impulsos y emociones difíciles de integrar en la infancia y que estaría relacionada con un patrón de comportamiento masoquista en el que la persona buscaría de forma estable el castigo o penitencia de modo inconsciente (Freud, 1930; citado en Carveth, 2006). Sin embargo, los posteriores desarrollos teóricos asumen una perspectiva evolutiva y social de la emoción de culpa, e incorporan también una consideración de esta emoción como el resultado de procesos que tienen lugar en el plano cognitivo de la persona. En este sentido, la culpa ha sido descrita como el sentimiento disfórico asociado con el reconocimiento de la propia violación de un valor relevante para la persona o un estándar social (Kugler y Jones, 1992, pp. 318). Este tipo de acercamientos coinciden en la función adaptativa de la culpa como un factor relevante para el mantenimiento de las relaciones sociales, con una función preventiva y promotora de realización de conductas reparadoras de las posibles transgresiones en los vínculos humanos (Baumeister et al., 1994; Breggin, pp. 20-21, 2014; Mikulincer y Shaver, 2005; Nelissen, Leliveld, Van Dijk, y Zeelenberg, 2011; Tangney y Dearing, 2002). Sin

embargo, a pesar de la función adaptativa de la emoción de culpa, en ocasiones esta emoción puede estar disregulada, y su aparición ser más intensa o recurrente de lo habitual. De hecho, los sentimientos de culpa son uno de los criterios diagnósticos del trastorno de depresión mayor en el DMS-5 (American Psychological Association, 2013). Diferentes investigaciones han propuesto a la culpa como un factor predisponente para el desarrollo de problemas depresivos (Ghatavi, Nicolson, MacDonald, Osher y Levitt, 2002; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss y Gilbert, 2002; Quiles y Bybee, 1997; Zahn-Waxler, Cole y Barrett, 1991; Zhan et al., 2015). Concretamente, Ghatavi et al. (2002) encontraron que la culpa no sólo ejercía un rol predictivo sobre la depresión, sino que era un factor de importancia en su mantenimiento. Por otro lado, se ha evidenciado que aquellas personas que experimentan culpa tras la realización de un comportamiento transgresor, incluso solo ante el recuerdo de éste, son más propensas a autocastigarse, privándose a uno mismo de aspectos positivos o incluso auto-infligiéndose castigos físicos (Inbar, Pizarro, Gilovich, y Ariely, 2013; Nellisen, 2012; Nelissen y Zeelenberg, 2009). En este sentido, se ha identificado cómo la experiencia de dolor reduce los niveles de culpa (Bastian, Jetten, y Fasoli, 2011).

Es importante señalar que no resulta infrecuente observar que el constructo de culpa ha estado solapado en muchos trabajos con el de vergüenza (*shame*). En esta línea, diferentes autores proponen que no actuar conforme a los estándares tendría dos resultados diferentes: *guilt* (traducido al castellano como culpa) que serviría como antecedente de conductas reparadoras (p. ej., perdón), y/o vergüenza, que sería promotora de mayor malestar en el individuo (Tangney y Dearing, 2002). Sin embargo, en la cultura hispano-hablante la definición de la emoción de culpa integra ambas facetas, dando otro sentido a la propia emoción catalogada como vergüenza. Estudios internacionales recientes tampoco realizan esta distinción (ver p. ej., Ghatavi et al., 2002; Gonyea et al.,

2008). La presente Tesis Doctoral se centrará en la definición de culpa que integra el concepto anglosajón de vergüenza, considerándola antecedente tanto de conductas reparadoras y adaptativas como de rumiaciones autocríticas y reproche.

Han sido varios los intentos desarrollados por parte de los investigadores en este ámbito para crear medidas válidas y fiables de los sentimientos de culpa en la población general. En la Tabla 1.1. se muestra un resumen de las escalas más utilizadas en la literatura general para la medición de la culpa.

Tabla 1.1. Escalas desarrolladas para la medición de culpa en población general

| Nombre del instrumento | Subescalas | Número de ítems |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Hostility-Guilt Inventory (Buss y Durkee, 1957) | Culpa rasgo | 9 |
| Forced-Choice Guilt Inventory (FCGI; Mosher, 1966) | Culpa-Hostilidad Culpa sexual Moralidad | 79 |
| Measure of Susceptibility to Guilt and Shame (Check y Hogan, 1983) | Culpa rasgo | 10 (5 para culpa) |
| Guilt Inventory (Kugler y Jones, 1992) | Culpa rasgo y estado | 30 |
| Interpersonal Guilt Questionnaire-45 (IGQ-45; O'Connor et al., 1997). | Culpa del superviviente Culpa por separación/deslealtad Responsabilidad omnipotente Odio hacia el sí mismo | 45 |
| Trauma-Related Guilt Inventory (TRGI, Kubany et al., 1996) | Culpa general Malestar Cogniciones de culpa: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sesgo sobre responsabilidad▪ Errores en el propio comportamiento▪ Falta de justificación | 32 |
| Personal Feelings Questionnaire-2 (PFQ-2; Harder et al., 1992) | | 16 adjetivos para culpa |
| Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3 (TOSCA-3; Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, y Gramzow, 2000) | Medida basada en escenarios para la obtención de medidas de rasgo de culpa y vergüenza. | 16 escenarios |

En poblaciones clínicas con un diagnóstico diferente al de depresión se han encontrado asociaciones positivas entre los niveles de culpa y mayor malestar emocional. Por ejemplo, Gangemi, Mancini, y van den Hout (2007) defienden la necesidad de tener en cuenta la culpa como parte del trastorno obsesivo compulsivo, dada su alta frecuencia de experimentación y su importante papel en el mantenimiento de las conductas compulsivas derivadas de las obsesiones (p. ej., rituales de comprobación) (Gangemi et al., 2007; Mancini, Gangemi, Perdighe, y Marini, 2008). Otro tipo de trastornos en los que la culpa se asocia con mayor sintomatología clínica son los trastornos de la conducta alimentaria, habiéndose desarrollado incluso escalas para la medición de los sentimientos de culpa asociados al peso e imagen corporal (Burney e Irwin, 2000; Conrardt et al., 2008).

1.6.2. La culpa en los cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia

1.6.2.1. Culpa como variable de malestar en cuidadores

Como se ha señalado, el número de estudios sobre culpa en cuidadores es muy escaso. En el área de investigación centrada en cuidadores familiares, la culpa ha sido descrita como la percepción de haber violado (o ser capaz de violar) una norma moral o social relacionada con el cuidado del familiar, tanto en términos de pensamiento como de acción (Duggleby, Doell, Cooper, Thomas, y Ghosh, 2014; Spillers, Wellisch, Kim, Matthews, y Baker, 2008). En su investigación, Spillers y su equipo (2008) encontraron que la culpa era un factor de importante contribución al desarrollo y mantenimiento del malestar psicológico en cuidadores de personas enfermas de cáncer. Además, aquellos cuidadores que informaban de mayores niveles de culpa obtenían menores puntuaciones en sus niveles de funcionamiento social y físico (Spillers et al., 2008; ver también Duggleby et al., 2014). Otra población cuidadora en la que la culpa ha sido propuesta como un factor de importante contribución al malestar es la de los cuidadores familiares

de personas con esquizofrenia (Boye, Bentsen y Malt, 2002; Cherry, Taylor, Brown, Rigby, y Sellwood, 2017).

Los primeros acercamientos al estudio de esta variable en cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia se han llevado a cabo por Ankri, Andrieu, Beaufils, Grand y Henrard (2005). Ankri et al. (2005) identificaron la culpa como un factor perteneciente a la escala clásica sobre la carga subjetiva del cuidador, el Inventario de Carga de Zarit (Zarit, Reever y Bach-Peterson, 1980). De acuerdo con estos autores, este factor de culpa está compuesto por cuatro ítems que evalúan los sentimientos de insuficiencia en el rol de cuidador (*¿Cree que no dispone de dinero suficiente para cuidar a su familiar además de sus otros gastos?*, *¿Siente que será incapaz de cuidar a su familiar por mucho más tiempo?*, *¿Siente que debería hacer más de lo que hace por su familiar?*, y, por último, *¿Cree que podría cuidar de su familiar mejor de lo que lo hace?*). Los resultados mostraron que los cuidadores hijos o hijas experimentaban más culpa en comparación con cuidadores esposos, estando la culpa asociada significativamente con el nivel de depresión. Por último, los niveles de culpa se asociaban a diferentes características de la persona cuidada, concretamente, a un mayor nivel de agresividad, mayor nivel de dependencia funcional y peor funcionamiento cognitivo (Ankri et al., 2005). Este tipo de resultados fueron replicados por Springate y Tremont (2014). Martin, Gilbert, McEwan y Irons (2006) desarrollaron la *Caring Shame and Guilt Scale*, en la que formulan la culpa como una dimensión única conformada por 6 ítems enfocados en el miedo a dañar al otro y el remordimiento y sentido de responsabilidad en el cuidado (Martin et al., 2006). Sin embargo, los resultados de este estudio no mostraron una asociación directa entre los niveles de depresión y los sentimientos de culpa. Sólo obtuvieron resultados significativos en la relación entre la depresión y la emoción de vergüenza.

La literatura posterior sobre la culpa en cuidadores es consistente a la vulnerabilidad de las cuidadoras hijas a los sentimientos de culpa encontrada por Ankri et al., (2005). Así pues, Gonyea et al. (2008) desarrollaron un estudio cualitativo sobre la culpa en una muestra representativa de 142 cuidadoras que cuidaban de algún progenitor afectado por demencia. Los análisis de las narrativas demostraron que la culpa era una emoción comúnmente experimentada por las hijas cuidadoras, puesto que el 65% de la muestra comentó sentirse culpable. A lo largo del trabajo, los autores evidenciaron la existencia de diferentes factores explicativos de la culpa en cuidadores. Uno de ellos estaba compuesto por las percepciones por no hacer lo suficiente por su familiar, siendo congruente con el factor propuesto por Ankri et al. (2005). Otro aspecto relevante a la hora de explicar el malestar y culpa fueron las asunciones del rol de cuidadora como una “obligación”. Además, los resultados cuantitativos de su estudio mostraron la capacidad explicativa de los sentimientos de culpa, que se mostraron capaces de explicar un porcentaje significativo de varianza de la carga de las cuidadoras.

A pesar del buen funcionamiento de las escalas anteriormente mencionadas, la investigación sugiere que la culpa es un constructo más complejo. Losada et al. (2010) crearon el Cuestionario de Culpa del Cuidador (en inglés *Caregiving Guilt Questionnaire*; CGQ) y demostraron que la culpa experimentada en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia es un constructo multidimensional. En su estudio, los autores obtuvieron resultados que indicaban la existencia de cinco factores componentes del constructo de culpa en el cuidado. El primer factor fue denominado “culpa por comportarse de forma inadecuada con el familiar”, y se refiere a la experiencia de culpa por diferentes acciones y/o emociones hacia su familiar autoevaluadas como negativas (p. ej., regañarle, enfadarse con él). El segundo factor fue nombrado “culpa por no superar los desafíos del cuidado”, y recoge los sentimientos de culpa derivados de las percepciones de no estar

haciendo lo suficiente por el familiar y no hacerlo lo suficientemente bien. Estos dos primeros factores son congruentes con las fuentes de culpa que habían sido previamente exploradas en la literatura sobre cuidadores y explicadas anteriormente (Ankri et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2006). El tercer factor, denominado “culpa por el auto-cuidado”, recogía aquella culpabilidad derivada de la realización de actividades distintas al cuidado y relacionadas con el tiempo libre y dedicado a uno/a mismo/a. El cuarto factor de culpa, fue nombrado “culpa por abandonar a otros familiares” y se refiere a los sentimientos de culpa originados en las percepciones de no dedicar el tiempo que les gustaría a atender a otros miembros de su familia (p. ej., hijos, nietos, esposos...). Finalmente, el quinto factor, “culpa por experimentar emociones negativas hacia otros” hacía referencia a la culpa por experimentar emociones negativas (p. ej., envidia, odio, rencor) hacia otras personas que no dedican tiempo o esfuerzo al cuidado como deberían, o bien son ajenas al cuidado de un familiar con demencia. Además de evidenciar la estructura multidimensional de la experiencia de culpa, los autores encontraron asociaciones significativas entre los sentimientos de culpa y una mayor frecuencia de problemas conductuales en la persona con demencia, mayor sintomatología depresiva, ansiedad, carga y una menor frecuencia de actividades de ocio y tiempo libre. Además, encontraron una diferencia significativa en los niveles de culpa en función de las variables de género del cuidador y la relación de parentesco con la persona cuidada. Concretamente, las mujeres informaron mayores niveles de culpa en general y dentro de éstas, las hijas obtenían mayores niveles de culpa en comparación con las esposas. Por su parte, Roach, Laidlaw, Gillanders y Quinn (2013) realizaron la validación al inglés del Cuestionario de Culpa en el Cuidado y confirmaron la estructura factorial propuesta por el trabajo original de Losada et al. (2010). A su vez, también evidenciaron que las cuidadoras hijas experimentaban más sentimientos de culpa en comparación con las esposas, así como la

asociación positiva entre los niveles de culpa y la sintomatología depresiva de los cuidadores.

Recientemente, Prunty y Foli (2019) han propuesto tres factores clave en la aparición de los sentimientos de culpa: 1) las creencias de responsabilidad u obligación de la tarea de cuidar del familiar con demencia; 2) la percepción negativa sobre las propias actuaciones desde el rol de cuidador y; 3) las percepciones de abandono de uno/a mismo/a y de otras áreas debido al esfuerzo otorgado a la tarea de cuidar (Prunty y Foli, 2019). En los diferentes estudios cualitativos que exploran el malestar en cuidadores de personas mayores con demencia se ha identificado la presencia de las diferentes dimensiones propuestas por Prunty y Foli (2019). La gran mayoría de ellos han identificado la aparición de sentimientos de culpa tras las percepciones de no estar haciendo lo suficiente por el cuidado del familiar enfermo con demencia, o no estar haciéndolo lo suficientemente bien (p. ej., Brea, Albar y Casado-Mejía, 2016; Samuelsson, Annerstedt, Elmståhl, Samuelsson, y Grafström, 2001; Sheik y Janoff-Bulman, 2010). De hecho, estos sentimientos de culpa se mantienen tras la institucionalización del familiar con demencia, e incluso tras su fallecimiento (Harrop et al., 2016; Harståde, Andershed, Roxberg, y Brunt, 2013; Høgsnes, Melin-Johansson, Norbergh, y Danielson, 2014, Ryan y Scullion, 2000; Sury, Burns, y Brodaty, 2013). En relación con la asunción de responsabilidad, los estudios ponen de manifiesto que la percepción del cuidado como una obligación propia se asocia con mayor malestar psicológico y culpa en cuidadores (Liu, y Bern-Klug, 2016; Lim et al., 2014; Losada et al., 2008; Romero-Moreno et al., 2011). Por ejemplo, el estudio llevado a cabo por Lim et al. (2014) encontró que aquellos cuidadores con mayor percepción de obligación en relación con su rol de cuidador experimentan mayor preocupación por la propia actuación y mayores niveles de culpa. El estudio realizado por Pope, Giger, Lee, y Ely (2017) mostró que las percepciones de

obligación en el cuidado familiar eran predictoras del cese del auto-cuidado. De hecho, un importante número de cuidadores abandonan y/o dedican menos tiempo y esfuerzo para sí mismos y otras áreas de relevantes de su vida, viéndose su malestar incrementado como consecuencia (Crocker, Canevello, y Brown, 2016; Pope et al., 2017; Romero-Moreno et al., 2010). La literatura científica propone que las evaluaciones del cuidador que juzgan su rendimiento como negativo o insuficiente son una de las principales causas del cese en la satisfacción de sus propias necesidades y otras áreas de valor (Hellström, Håkanson., Eriksson, y Sandberg, 2017; Samuelsson et al., 2001). En este sentido, el trabajo de Høgsnes et al. (2014) señala que los sentimientos de culpa por separarse o dejar solo al familiar con demencia suponían uno de los motivos para el cese del autocuidado u otro tipo de actividades en los cuidadores.

Por otro lado, Rosa et al. (2010) identificaron que la incompatibilidad de roles (p. ej., cuidar de su familiar y dedicar tiempo al trabajo, otros familiares, etc.) se asociaba con mayores niveles de culpa en cuidadores. Lo anterior se relaciona con lo encontrado por Stephens, Townsend, Martire, y Druley, (2001), quienes identificaron que las cuidadoras hijas informaban con mayor frecuencia de la presencia de conflicto de roles y éstos han sido propuestos como un factor explicativo de la vulnerabilidad de los cuidadores hijos a la culpa (Ankri et al, 2005; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2018; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). De acuerdo con esta explicación, los cuidadores hijos, especialmente las hijas, se enfrentan de manera simultánea a más responsabilidades en comparación con otros cuidadores, como las esposas (normalmente amas de casa y/o jubiladas). Las cuidadoras hijas harían frente a tareas que ya de por sí su conciliación representa un importante reto, como es el cuidado de hijos pequeños y trabajar de forma remunerada fuera de casa, etc. A estas tareas se le sumaría la difícil y estresante tarea de cuidar de un progenitor afectado por demencia. Esta exposición a demandas

incompatibles originadas en las diferentes áreas de su vida y el contexto familiar, en este caso aumentadas por las necesidades del familiar con demencia, ocasionan una situación en la que las cuidadoras pueden sentirse sobrepasadas y/o con sensación de falta de competencia, por lo que aparecerían sentimientos de culpa al no cumplir de la manera deseada, incluso socialmente “esperada”, con sus roles o dominios vitales de elevada importancia. En esta línea, Gonyea et al. (2008) señalan que esta culpa derivada de no poder asumir el cuidado de manera esperada, ya sea el cuidado de hijos o el del progenitor, se vería incrementada en las cuidadoras hijas, debido a los roles sociales de género que sitúan el cuidado como aspecto central de la identidad femenina.

Además de estos factores de culpa, también se ha evidenciado el referente a la culpa por la experimentación de emociones negativas (p. ej., vergüenza, enfado, etc.) hacia la persona cuidada, en otras palabras, los cuidadores se sienten culpables por sentirse mal o experimentar reacciones emocionales negativas hacia su familiar. Diferentes estudios han identificado esta dimensión de culpa en cuidadores de familiares con demencia (p. ej., Diehl, Mayer, Förstl, y Kurz, 2003; Høgsnes et al., 2014; Razani et al., 2007).

1.6.2.2 Culpa como variable moduladora

A pesar de que los trabajos hasta ahora comentados señalan a la culpa como una consecuencia negativa de la tarea de cuidar de un familiar con demencia, otros estudios han demostrado que la emoción de culpa juega, a su vez, un papel modulador en el proceso de estrés y afrontamiento.

Autores como Romero-Moreno et al. (2014) analizaron el papel moderador de la culpa en la relación entre la frecuencia de actividades de ocio y los sentimientos depresivos de los cuidadores, atendiendo a la relación de parentesco, y los resultados

mostraron que sí existía un papel moderador de la culpa en la relación entre actividades de ocio y la depresión, en concreto, en las hijas cuidadoras. En concreto, la asociación entre la escasa realización de actividades de ocio y la sintomatología depresiva era mayor en las cuidadoras que informaban de mayores niveles de culpa. Por su parte, Feast et al. (2017) pusieron de manifiesto que la culpa se asociaba de manera directa con mayores niveles de carga percibida por el cuidador y al mismo tiempo mediaba la relación entre la frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos y los niveles de estrés derivado de éstos del cuidador. De manera reciente, Losada et al. (2018) mostraron que la culpa era una variable mediadora entre los niveles de ambivalencia y depresión. Así mismo, obtuvieron resultados coherentes con la literatura en relación con el parentesco: ser cuidador de un progenitor se asociaba con mayores niveles de culpa. Este tipo de resultados permite diferenciar diferentes perfiles de vulnerabilidad dentro de los cuidadores y, con ello, aportar información que permita en un futuro ajustar los tratamientos con el fin de maximizar su eficacia. En este caso, podemos señalar que las hijas con altos niveles de culpa constituyen un perfil de riesgo de presentar mayores niveles de sintomatología depresiva y podría ser un grupo diana de intervenciones psicológicas.

1.6.2.3 La culpa inducida por terceras personas

La culpa parece que también se encuentra claramente moldeada por el contexto cultural y las relaciones interpersonales del individuo (Bhugra y Mastrogianni, 2004). En esta línea, varios autores argumentan la necesidad de definir la culpa como un proceso interpersonal, en el que la interacción con otro individuo es esencial (Baumeister, Stillwell, y Heatherton, 1994; 1995). Según Baumeister et al. (1994), en el contexto de las relaciones interpersonales la culpa cumpliría tres funciones: la primera consistiría en motivar a la persona a realizar conductas que mantengan la relación con una persona significativa; a segunda función es redistribuir el malestar en la relación diádica tras una

transgresión y reparar el daño, o lo que es lo mismo, que el transgresor muestre señales de culpabilidad y malestar ante la otra persona ayudaría al proceso de perdón y restauración de la relación previa; la tercera y última función se corresponde con la culpa como mecanismo de control e influencia sobre las acciones del otro (Baumeister et al., 1994, 1995; Vangelisti, Daly, y Rudnick, 1991).

De hecho, esta concepción interpersonal de la culpa permite explicar los procesos de inducción de culpa. Esos procesos son aquellos intentos en los que un individuo lleva a cabo acciones, de forma deliberada o no, que provocan que otra persona experimente culpa. El estudio realizado por Baumeister et al. (1995) no sólo puso de manifiesto la existencia de procesos de inducción de culpa en el día a día de la población general, sino también que estos aparecen de manera más frecuente y con mayor intensidad en relaciones estrechas y cercanas, poniendo como ejemplo situaciones de cuidado familiar.

Diferentes autores han calificado este tipo de comportamientos como un mecanismo de manipulación emocional (Austin, Farrelly, Black, y Moore, 2007; Barber, 1996; Hyde y Grieve, 2014). Los mecanismos de manipulación emocional pueden definirse como aquellos intentos realizados por una persona con el fin de influenciar el estado emocional o el comportamiento de otro individuo para fines e intereses propios (Austin et al., 2007). La mayoría de los estudios enmarcados en esta línea se han focalizado en el uso de estas estrategias por parte de los padres y las consecuencias de la exposición a éstas en sus hijos (Barber, 1996; Donatelli, Bybee y Buka, 2007; Rakow et al., 2009; Rakow et al., 2011). En su trabajo, Barber (1996) desarrolló una medida observacional para la medición de los procesos de manipulación emocional en relaciones paterno-filiales, entre los que incluyó la inducción de culpa. El autor propuso tres tipos de estrategias a través de las cuales una persona puede ejercer este tipo de mecanismo de control psicológico: 1) señalando que el comportamiento del otro familiar tiene un

impacto emocional negativo sobre ella, como, por ejemplo, generarle preocupación, decepción, tristeza, etc.; 2) recordando y enumerando las acciones, esfuerzos o sacrificios que ella ha hecho por la otra persona en el pasado; y, 3) realizando comentarios acerca de que la otra persona no cumple sus expectativas, normas o deseos. Los resultados de este estudio mostraron que el uso de este tipo de estrategias de inducción de culpa por parte de los padres se asociaba con mayores problemas de depresión y delincuencia en los hijos adolescentes (Barber, 1996). Posteriormente, Donatelli et al. (2007) desarrollaron el instrumento *Maladaptive Guilt Induction measure* con el fin de medir la frecuencia en la que los adolescentes se veían expuestos a este tipo de prácticas por parte de sus padres. Los autores encontraron que los adolescentes que con mayor frecuencia eran objeto de este tipo de comportamientos experimentaban emociones crónicas de vergüenza y culpa, así como mayores niveles de sintomatología depresiva. Otros estudios posteriores han confirmado esta relación entre el uso de técnicas de inducción de culpa por parte de los padres y la presencia de sintomatología clínica en los hijos (p. ej., depresión y ansiedad), evidenciando a su vez una mayor presencia de este tipo de procesos en madres con diagnóstico de depresión (Rakow et al., 2009; Rakow et al., 2011). Recientemente, Baldassar (2015), en su estudio sobre dinámicas relacionales entre padres e hijos que han migrado a otro país, mostró cómo la inducción de culpa era un fenómeno de aparición frecuente, sobre todo de padres a hijas. De hecho, no eran infrecuentes las conversaciones en la que los padres indicaban el posible abandono y la falta de la persona que debe llevar su cuidado durante el proceso de envejecimiento.

Por otro lado, Forrest, Eatough y Shevlin (2005) incluyeron los procesos de inducción de culpa como un mecanismo de agresión indirecta. En su trabajo, los autores diseñaron el *Indirect Aggression Scales*, un instrumento que evalúa la frecuencia de uso y exposición a las diferentes estrategias de agresión indirecta durante la edad adulta. Uno

de los factores que componían la escala fue denominado técnicas de inducción de culpa, e incluye conductas como aprovechar los sentimientos de la otra persona para conseguir un objetivo, y pretender o emular ser ofendido o dañado por la otra persona para que ésta sienta malestar, entre otras. Por su parte, Walker, Richardson y Green (2000) encontraron que los estilos de agresión indirecta eran realizados en mayor medida por mujeres y por personas mayores. No obstante, los resultados de la validación española del instrumento no apoyaron la misma estructura factorial que los estudios realizados con muestras anglosajonas, si bien la mayoría de los ítems de inducción de culpa se mantuvieron en la versión española (Anguniano-Carrasco y Vigil-Colet, 2011). Una de las explicaciones para estas diferencias fue que la muestra española estuvo compuesta por estudiantes universitarios, dejando sin representación a la población que más utiliza este tipo de comportamientos, las personas mayores.

Sin embargo, a pesar de las referencias en la literatura sobre la presencia de este tipo de fenómeno en relaciones cercanas y familiares, son muy escasos los estudios que contemplan la culpa inducida por una tercera persona en la población cuidadora. Por ejemplo, en cuidadores de familiares con diagnóstico de cáncer, Spillers et al. (2008) señaló que puede distinguirse entre culpa auto-inducida y culpa hetero-inducida. Según estos autores la culpa auto-inducida correspondería a la culpa propuesta por las definiciones clásicas, es decir aquella que tendría origen en las propias evaluaciones y esquemas cognitivos (Kugler y Jones, 1992). Por su parte, la culpa hetero-inducida, sería la proveniente del no cumplimiento de normas, estándar, expectativas de otras personas, no solo de la persona cuidada. Hasta la fecha, solo un estudio ha analizado este tipo de procesos en cuidadores de familiares con demencia. El citado trabajo es el llevado a cabo por Fisher y Lieberman (1996), un estudio sobre el malestar físico y psicológico de cuidadores de algún progenitor afectado por demencia y sus posibles variables

predictoras. Los resultados demostraron que la exposición a este tipo de comportamientos realizados por la persona cuidada predecía un mayor malestar psicológico (medido a través de niveles de depresión) y físico en los cuidadores en un seguimiento longitudinal de un año. De manera similar, el trabajo posterior realizado por Samuelsson et al. (2001) identificó en las narrativas de los cuidadores la presencia de sentimientos de culpa y malestar derivados de críticas o comportamientos realizados por su familiar con demencia.

A pesar del creciente interés por la culpa en el área de investigación de cuidadores y las evidencias de su impacto negativo en cuidadores, el número de trabajos dirigidos a analizar el efecto de las intervenciones psicológicas sobre esta variable es aún reducido. A lo largo de la literatura en otras poblaciones se han implementado programas terapéuticos que han resultado eficaces para la disminución de los niveles de culpa. Un ejemplo son las intervenciones psicológicas dirigidas a pacientes con diagnóstico de estrés post-traumático (ver p. ej., Gorey, Richter y Snider, 2001; Karlin y Agarwal, 2013), o adaptaciones de la terapia cognitivo-conductual para padres con niveles elevados de culpa (Nixon y Singer, 1993). Weisman de Mamami y Suro (2016) analizaron la eficacia de la Terapia Cultural Informada para cuidadores de familiares con esquizofrenia. Esta intervención incluye módulos psicoeducativos, entrenamiento en habilidades de comunicación, estrategias relacionadas con mejorar la empatía y relación entre familiares, así como otras estrategias enfocadas en la espiritualidad. Sus resultados mostraron una reducción significativa de los niveles de carga, vergüenza y culpa de los cuidadores. De hecho, los autores encontraron que la culpa ejercía de moderadora entre el tratamiento y la reducción de los niveles de carga del cuidador.

A pesar de la disponibilidad y variedad de estudios sobre intervenciones eficaces para cuidadores con demencia (Gilhooly et al., 2016; Losada et al., 2015; Pinquart y

Sörensen, 2006b), son escasos los estudios que analizan el efecto de éstas sobre los niveles de culpa en cuidadores. Hasta la fecha, sólo una investigación ha analizado la eficacia de una intervención en la reducción de la sintomatología de culpa en cuidadores de familiares con demencia. En ese estudio, Mahmoudi, Mohammadkhani, Bonan y Bagheri (2017) analizaron en una muestra de 32 cuidadoras la efectividad de una intervención grupal diseñada bajo un enfoque cognitivo-conductual, comparándola con un grupo control. La intervención estuvo compuesta por 14 sesiones en las que se trabajan las técnicas clásicas incluidas en los programas cognitivo-conductuales para cuidadores (p. ej., reestructuración de pensamientos disfuncionales, activación conductual y entrenamiento en estrategias de resolución de problemas). Los participantes del grupo experimental redujeron sus niveles de culpa en comparación con el grupo control.

A pesar de la eficacia de las intervenciones cognitivo-conductuales para cuidadores, los tamaños del efecto encontrados han sido moderados, en el mejor de los casos (Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006b). Recientemente, se han propuesto diferentes alternativas para solventar la limitada eficacia de las intervenciones disponibles. Por un lado, se han realizado los primeros acercamientos al desarrollo de intervenciones eficaces desde otros enfoques terapéuticos, como la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (ACT, Hayes, Strosahl, y Wilson, 1999) para cuidadores de personas con demencia (Losada et al., 2015). De manera paralela, se ha señalado la importancia del diseño de programas de intervención dirigidos a perfiles de vulnerabilidad concretos y/o que trabajen con técnicas específicas con el fin de promover la individualización y eficacia de los tratamientos (Cheng et al., 2019). De hecho, es sorprendente el escaso número de investigaciones sobre intervenciones para problemáticas específicas en el cuidado. En este sentido, en relación con la culpa, autores como Springate y Tremont (2014) abogan por la necesidad de intervenciones específicas para los sentimientos de culpa dada su importante contribución

en la explicación de la carga y malestar de los cuidadores. Sin embargo, en la actualidad aún no se ha desarrollado ninguna técnica ni intervención específica para tratar los sentimientos de culpa en cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia.

1.7. Cuidadores profesionales: características y malestar presente en esta población

Los cambios sociales acontecidos durante las últimas décadas, tales como la incorporación de la mujer al mundo laboral o la reducción de la natalidad, limitan la disponibilidad de recursos familiares de apoyo a las personas dependientes que, como se ha mencionado, son la fuente principal de atención a este grupo poblacional (Knight y Losada, 2011). Tanto el Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) como otros autores los Abellán-García y Pujol-Rodríguez (2015) prevén que el crecimiento poblacional del número de personas de 80 y más años será muy superior al correspondiente al grupo de edad de entre 45 y 64 años de edad, lo que contribuirá a que cada vez sea menor el número de familiares disponibles para prestar ayuda a una cifra tan alta de mayores en situación de dependencia. Así, teniendo en cuenta lo señalado anteriormente, los recursos informales para hacer frente al cuidado decaerán drásticamente en los próximos años (Abellán-García et al., 2018; Abellán-García y Pujol-Rodríguez, 2015; IMSERSO, 2005). Dada esta situación, la propuesta, optimización y desarrollo de recursos formales se convierte en otro de los aspectos de esencial relevancia en las políticas referentes a la atención dirigida a la población mayor dependiente. En este sentido, las estadísticas revelan el auge en las solicitudes y el uso de servicios residenciales durante las dos últimas décadas (IMSERSO, 2014).

Actualmente, el número de servicios de residencia para personas mayores en España se sitúa en 5.482 (1.342 de titularidad pública) (IMSERSO, 2014) que ofrecen unas 371.064 plazas en total (un 47% corresponderían a plazas con financiación pública), de las que sólo 236.105 (el 64%) estarían ocupadas. El perfil de la persona usuaria de un

servicio residencial es una mujer (69% de los casos) octogenaria (67% de los usuarios supera los 80 años). De hecho, la media de edad de las personas ingresadas es 83 años (IMSERSO, 2014).

El crecimiento de los recursos formales de cuidado y su prevista expansión en las próximas décadas se traduce en un creciente interés de la investigación por conocer las variables que influyen en el bienestar de los usuarios de residencias (ver p. ej., Cummings, 2002; Harmer y Orrell, 2008; Kane et al., 2013; Samus et al., 2005). Un amplio número de estudios han puesto de manifiesto que los profesionales encargados del cuidado tienen un papel relevante en los niveles de bienestar del residente (Bishop et al., 2008; Edvarsson, Sandman, Nay, y Karlson, 2008; Wallace, Lemaire, y Ghali, 2009; Xu, Kane, y Shamliyan, 2013).

Dada la influencia que ejercen los profesionales sobre el bienestar de la persona mayor, un elevado número de estudios se han dirigido a analizar las características, niveles de estrés y malestar en los cuidadores formales (perfil profesional principalmente compuesto por auxiliares de enfermería y personal de enfermería) (p. ej., Cooper et al., 2016; Péliissier et al., 2015; Pillemer y Lachs, 2002; Pitfield, Shahriyarmolki, y Livingston, 2011) En esta línea, Ejaz et al. (2008) encontraron que en torno al 26% de la plantilla de profesionales de residencias mostraban niveles clínicos de depresión. En los últimos años, la mayoría de las investigaciones han estado enfocadas en el análisis de la relación entre los elevados niveles de estrés y burnout en esta población (Brodaty, Draper, y Low, 2003; Cocco, Gatti, de Mendonça Lima, y Camus, 2003; Duffy, Oyebode, y Allen, 2009; Kandelman, Mazars, y Levy, 2018; Kennedy, 2005; Pillemer y Lachs, 2002; Woodhead, Northrop, y Edelstein, 2016). El síndrome de burnout (en castellano, Síndrome de Quemarse en el Trabajo; SQT; Gil-Monte, 2003) se define como una

respuesta a la exposición crónica a altos niveles estrés laborales (Maslach, Schaufeli y Leiter, 2001). Se compone de tres factores: 1) cansancio emocional, caracterizado por la pérdida progresiva de energía, en otras palabras, el profesional experimenta sensaciones de desgaste, agotamiento, fatiga, y de estar al límite de recursos personales y emocionales; 2) despersonalización, a través de la cual el profesional muestra mayor irritabilidad, actitudes negativas y respuestas frías e impersonales hacia los residentes, pacientes, etc. y; 3) una baja realización personal en el trabajo, en otras palabras, evaluaciones negativas y menor eficacia del trabajo (Maslach et al., 2001). La OMS categoriza el burnout como una enfermedad ocupacional, y se estima que, en el sector de enfermería, entre un 26% (Adriaenssen, De Gucht, y Maes, 2015) y un 40% (Cocco et al., 2013) de profesionales lo sufren, siendo mayor la incidencia en el área de asistencia a personas mayores.

En la investigación sobre el estrés laboral en profesionales de residencias se ha señalado la importancia de diferentes factores a la hora de explicar su aparición, mantenimiento y consecuencias.

En primer lugar, los aspectos organizacionales han mostrado una clara asociación con el malestar y estrés experimentado por los profesionales (Bishop et al., 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2005). Se ha puesto de manifiesto que el trabajo en una residencia se caracteriza por largas jornadas de trabajo, altas presiones en tiempo para realizar el trabajo y sueldos bajos (Zimmerman et al., 2005). A esas condiciones laborales habría que añadirle elevados niveles de carga de trabajo, que ejercen un papel predictor sobre los niveles de estrés y malestar psicológico (p. ej., ansiedad) (Chappel y Novak, 1992; Gray-Stanley y Muramatsu, 2011; Zawadzki et al., 2011). A su vez, Edvarsson et al. (2009) encontraron que el clima organizacional percibido es otro factor clave a la hora de explicar el estrés experimentado por los cuidadores formales. Por otro lado, las relaciones establecidas con

los superiores y/o iguales han mostrado su asociación con el estado psicológico y niveles de estrés (Gray-Stanley et al., 2010; Woodhead et al., 2016). Por ejemplo, Woodhead et al. (2016) evidenciaron que la obtención de apoyo por parte de los supervisores se relacionaba con menores niveles de estrés en los cuidadores. También, la investigación de Chou y Robert (2008) encontró que una percepción de apoyo por parte de la institución se asociaba con mayor satisfacción con el trabajo.

En segundo lugar, las características y recursos personales han sido evidenciados como otra dimensión relevante a la hora de entender el estrés y malestar de los cuidadores profesionales. Respecto a características demográficas, una menor edad ha sido identificada como un factor de riesgo para desarrollar burnout y malestar en trabajadores de residencias (Gómez-Urquiza, Vargas, de la Fuente, Fernández-Castillo, Cañadas-de la Fuente, 2017; Molero-Jurado, Pérez-Fuentes, Gázquez-Linares, Simón-Márquez y Martos-Martínez, 2018). En este sentido, Molero-Jurado et al. (2018) calcularon que los auxiliares de enfermería que trabajan en el ámbito residencial con menos de 34 años tenían un 31.6% más de riesgo de desarrollar problemas de estrés y burnout. Así mismo, variables relacionadas con los rasgos de personalidad, como el neuroticismo, han sido asociadas con los niveles de burnout (Gustafsson, Persson, Eriksson, Norberg y Strandberg, 2009; Narumoto et al., 2008). De manera similar, los niveles de Inteligencia Emocional (IE), entendida como la habilidad para percibir, entender y manejar de manera adaptativa la propia experiencia emocional y las pertenecientes a otros, han mostrado asociaciones con menores niveles de estrés en cuidadores de residencias (Molero-Jurado et al., 2018; Nightingale, Spiby, Sheen y Slade, 2018). Por otro lado, otra variable que ha suscitado elevado interés en la literatura de cuidado formal ha sido la autoeficacia percibida. Esta variable ha mostrado su asociación con los niveles de burnout y malestar, especialmente en los casos en los que el residente padece demencia (Duffy et al., 2009;

Evers, Tomic y Brouwers, 2001; Mackenzie y Peragine, 2003; Nielsen, Yarker, Randall y Munir, 2009; Rivett, Hammond y West, 2019; Ventura, Salanova y Llorens, 2015). En este sentido, Duffy et al., (2009) encontraron que en profesionales de unidades de pacientes con demencia los niveles de autoeficacia eran el mejor predictor de los niveles de burnout, en comparación con otras variables sociodemográficas o el compromiso con el trabajo. También el locus de control ha sido identificado como una variable moderadora en la relación entre los niveles de sobrecarga y depresión de los profesionales (Gray-Stanley et al., 2010). Concretamente, aquellos cuidadores que poseían un mayor locus de control interno mostraban menos síntomas depresivos a pesar de presentar niveles similares de sobrecarga.

En tercer lugar, los aspectos relacionados con características de los residentes también han sido señalados como posibles estresores. La mayoría de los estudios han evidenciado que la presencia de problemas de conducta en los residentes se asocia con mayores niveles de carga, burnout y malestar en los profesionales (por ej. Miyamoto et al., 2010; Mooniz-Cook et al., 2000; Sourial, McCusker, Cole y Abrahamowicz, 2001; van Duinen-van den Ijssel et al., 2018, Zwijsen et al., 2014). De hecho, Kandelman, et al. (2018) mostraron que la exposición a alguna agresión por parte de un residente conformaba un importante predictor de burnout en el personal de residencias. Así mismo, la experiencia de agresión por parte de un residente se asocia con sentimientos de miedo, resignación y falta de control sobre la situación (Holst y Skär, 2017; Isaksson et al., 2009, Scott, Ryan, James, y Mitchell, 2011). De hecho, estos profesionales recurren en mayor frecuencia al manejo farmacológico de este tipo de conductas, e incluso, al aislamiento e ignorancia de las peticiones de ayuda realizadas por esos usuarios (Buchanan, Christenson, Ostrom, y Hofman, 2007). Además, la presencia de diferentes actitudes negativas hacia la demencia

en los profesionales se asocia con mayores niveles de estrés y ansiedad (Zawadki et al., 2011).

No sólo las relaciones con otros profesionales y los residentes pueden ser una fuente de estrés para los profesionales, sino que también los familiares de los usuarios de la residencia son un factor fundamental a tener en cuenta. En la investigación acerca de las relaciones entre los familiares y los profesionales de residencias se ha evidenciado la frecuente aparición de dificultades y conflictos entre ambas partes (Abrahamson, Pillemer, Sechrist y Suito, 2011; Abrahamson, Suito y Pillemer, 2009; Bramble, Moyle y Shum, 2011; Chen, Sabir, Zimmerman, Suito y Pillemer, 2007; Haesler, Bauer, y Nay, 2007; Law, Patterson, y Muers, 2016; Utley-Smith et al., 2009; Train et al., 2005). Una de las causas de esos conflictos son los problemas de comunicación con los profesionales, debido a la falta de tiempo, elevada carga de trabajo y escasa formación en el trato a familiares, así como los temores de los familiares de posibles represalias en el cuidado de su familiar (Haesler et al., 2007; Hertzberg y Ekman, 1996; Train et al., 2005). Pillemer et al. (2003), a través de la implementación de un programa de entrenamiento en habilidades de comunicación para ambas partes, mostraron el efecto positivo de este tipo de programas sobre los niveles de estrés e intención de abandonar el puesto de trabajo de los trabajadores. Por otro lado, la presencia de actitudes negativas hacia los familiares también es señalado como origen de conflictos y malestar en los profesionales (Park, 2010).

Tal y como se ha comentado, la investigación ha evidenciado la presencia de diferentes dimensiones en la aparición y mantenimiento de los niveles de estrés y burnout experimentados por los trabajadores de residencias. En relación a los estudios sobre las consecuencias de su experiencia, se ha puesto de manifiesto que mayores niveles de estrés

laboral y burnout se asocian con mayor insatisfacción con el trabajo, absentismo laboral e incluso el abandono del puesto de trabajo (ver por ej. Cohen-Mansfield, 1997; Salvagioni et al., 2017). No obstante, los estudios analizando la conexión entre el estrés y la salud física y psicológica de esta población no son tan abundantes, en comparación con otras poblaciones (por ej. Cuidadores familiares) (Koutsimani, Montgomery, y Georganta, 2019; Ejaz, Noelker, Menne y Bagaka's, 2008; Takahashi, Tanaka y Miyaoka, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 2005). Sin embargo, en otras muestras de profesionales (p. ej., enfermeras), se ha puesto de manifiesto la asociación entre los niveles de estrés laboral y relevantes consecuencias negativas en la salud física y psicológica de los trabajadores. En el plano físico, Salvagioni et al. (2017) encontraron que los niveles de burnout eran predictores de diversas enfermedades, entre las que se encontraban la diabetes tipo II, enfermedades coronarias, dolores musculoesqueléticos, dolores de cabeza, problemas gastrointestinales, e incluso mayor mortalidad en jóvenes menores de 45 años con depresión. Atendiendo al plano psicológico, se ha puesto de manifiesto la asociación positiva entre los niveles de burnout y los de sintomatología depresiva, ansiedad, insomnio y somatización (Bianchi, Schonfeld, y Laurent, 2015; Khamisa, Peltzer, y Oldenburg, 2013; Salvagioni et al., 2017; Vasilopoulos, 2012).

Al igual que en cuidadores familiares, la mayoría de los estudios en cuidadores profesionales se han centrado en las variables de estrés laboral, carga y sintomatología depresiva (Ejaz et al., 2008; Molero-Jurado et al., 2018). Hasta la fecha, otras variables de resultado u otras emociones como la culpa han sido prácticamente olvidadas en el análisis de esta población. Solo algunas investigaciones cualitativas han revelado diferentes reacciones emocionales en esta población (p. ej., Bourbonnais y Ducharme, 2010; Skovdahl, Kihlgreen y Kihlgreen, 2003). Podemos señalar el trabajo de Bourbonnais y Ducharme (2010) como pionero a la hora de analizar los sentimientos de

culpa experimentados por los cuidadores formales. Concretamente, estos autores encontraron que estos profesionales en ocasiones se sienten culpables por no poder proporcionar todo el tiempo deseado de atención a los residentes. Teniendo en cuenta las características del trabajo en residencias anteriormente comentadas, como la presión por realizar en menor tiempo las tareas, baja disposición de recursos o número de empleados, cabría esperar que este tipo de emociones apareciera de manera frecuente en los cuidadores profesionales. Por otro lado, Gil-Monte (2012) mostró que en trabajadores que proporcionan asistencia a personas discapacitadas, la culpa mediaba la relación entre los niveles de burnout y depresión de los profesionales. Por todo ello, dada la asociación entre los niveles de culpa y el malestar psicológico en cuidadores informales (Feast et al., 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010) y formales (Gil-Monte, 2019), se puede hipotetizar que este tipo de emoción podría afectar a los niveles de estrés y/o malestar experimentados por los profesionales de residencias.

A modo resumen de todo lo comentado en esta Introducción, cuidar de una persona con demencia, ya sea en el ámbito familiar o profesional, se asocia con elevados niveles de estrés y malestar (p. ej., Sallim et al., 2015; Vitaliano et al., 2003; Zimmerman et al., 2005). La gran mayoría de los estudios dirigidos a analizar el malestar psicológico de los cuidadores y las intervenciones desarrolladas para paliarlo han estado centradas en la variable de depresión, y en menor medida en la ansiedad (p. ej., Cooper et al., 2012; Losada et al., 2015; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006b), dejando a un lado otras emociones como la culpa. Los escasos estudios realizados en el campo de cuidadores y culpa han mostrado su relación con el malestar, especialmente en las hijas (Ankri et al., 2005; Gonyea et al., 2018; Losada et al., 2010; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). En el ámbito de estudio del estrés en cuidadores profesionales, ningún estudio hasta la fecha ha analizado el efecto

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de la experiencia de culpa en su salud mental, a pesar de haberse identificado evidencien la existencia de este tipo de procesos (Burbonnais y Ducharme, 2010).

A través de la presente Tesis Doctoral se pretende ampliar el conocimiento acerca del fenómeno de la culpa en el cuidado familiar y profesional, tanto en relación con el análisis de los factores implicados en su aparición y sus efectos sobre la salud mental de los cuidadores, como en lo relativo al desarrollo de aproximaciones terapéuticas específicas para este tipo de sintomatología.

Capítulo 2:

Objetivos e hipótesis

2.1 Objetivo general de la Tesis Doctoral

El objetivo general de la presente Tesis Doctoral es analizar en profundidad, tomando como referencia el modelo teórico sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado (Knight y Sayegh, 2010), los sentimientos de culpa en cuidadores de personas con demencia, así como los factores explicativos de esta emoción. Considerando su posible efecto moderador en el proceso de estrés del cuidado, tanto en cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia como profesionales. A su vez, se describirá el desarrollo de una intervención dirigida específicamente al abordaje de la culpa en cuidadores familiares con altos niveles de malestar psicológico, presentando un análisis preliminar de sus efectos.

Para la consecución de este objetivo general, se han desarrollado cinco estudios independientes entre sí, cuyos objetivos e hipótesis específicas se exponen a continuación.

2.2 Estudio 1: Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers

2.2.1 Objetivo general

Analizar el efecto del compromiso con diferentes valores personas sobre los niveles de culpa experimentados por cuidadores de familiares afectados por algún tipo de demencia.

2.2.2 Objetivos específicos

1. Analizar la influencia del compromiso con valores relacionados con la familia (p. ej., cuidado de hijos, cuidado del familiar con demencia, etc.) sobre los niveles de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores familiares.

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2. Analizar la influencia del compromiso con valores relacionados intereses propios no relacionados con la familia (p. ej., ocio, desarrollo personal, etc.) en los niveles de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores familiares.

3. Analizar la influencia del compromiso con cada valor personal por separado sobre los niveles de culpa.

2.2.3 Hipótesis

1. El compromiso con los valores personales se asociará de manera significativa y negativa con los niveles de culpa de los cuidadores familiares.

2. Un mayor compromiso con el valor del cuidado del familiar con demencia se asociará de manera significativa y negativa con los niveles de culpa experimentada por los cuidadores.

2.3 Estudio 2: "I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia

2.3.1 Objetivo general

Explorar el concepto de culpa en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia, así como de los aspectos relacionados con su aparición y mantenimiento, a través del análisis de las narrativas de diferentes cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia.

2.3.2 Objetivos específicos

1. Realizar un análisis de las narrativas sobre la culpa y malestar experimentado de cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia.

2. Identificar diferentes factores implicados en la etiología de la emoción de culpa en el contexto del cuidado familiar.

3. Identificar diferentes factores implicados en el mantenimiento de la emoción de culpa en el contexto del cuidado familiar.

2.3.3 Hipótesis

1. Como han señalado diferentes investigaciones (Losada et al., 2010; Prunty y Foli, 2019), la culpa es un fenómeno multidimensional, por lo que existirán diferentes factores implicados en su aparición y mantenimiento.

2. De manera coherente a la literatura sobre culpa en cuidado (Losada et al., 2010; Samuelsson et al., 2001;), uno de los factores implicados en el origen y mantenimiento de la emoción de culpa serán los juicios o evaluaciones de no estar haciendo lo suficiente o no actuar conforme a los estándares personales relativos al cuidado del familiar.

3. Dadas las evidencias de culpa como proceso interpersonal (Baumeister, 1995; Spillers et al., 2008), se identificarán sentimientos de culpa asociados a las acciones y comentarios realizados por una tercera persona (p. ej., la persona cuidada, esposo, hijos, etc.).

2.4 Estudio 3: Family guilt induction processes in dementia caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaires (CGIQs).

2.4.1 Objetivo general

Desarrollar un instrumento específico para la medición de la frecuencia y culpa asociada a los procesos de inducción de culpa a los que los cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia se ven expuestos en su rutina diaria de cuidado.

2.4.2 Objetivos específicos

1. Desarrollar una escala específica para la medición de la frecuencia de exposición y culpa derivada de comportamientos inductores de culpa realizados por parte del familiar con demencia cuidado.

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2. Desarrollar una escala específica para la medición de la frecuencia de exposición y culpa derivada de comportamientos inductores de culpa realizados por parte de otros familiares (distintos a la persona cuidada).
3. Aportar evidencias sobre la presencia de este tipo de procesos en el contexto de cuidar de un familiar con demencia y sobre la naturaleza multidimensional e interpersonal de la emoción de culpa.
4. Analizar la asociación entre la exposición a los procesos de inducción de culpa, ya sea por parte del familiar cuidado o por parte de otros familiares, y los niveles de malestar experimentados por los cuidadores.

2.4.3 Hipótesis

1. Existirán comportamientos inductores de culpa en el proceso del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia.
2. El instrumento presentará aceptables propiedades psicométricas tanto en la versión de familiar cuidado y la de otros familiares.
3. La frecuencia de exposición a este tipo de procesos se asociará de manera significativa y positiva con los niveles de malestar psicológico de los cuidadores (p. ej., depresión y ansiedad).
4. La culpa inducida por los comportamientos evaluados por el instrumento desarrollado se asociará de manera significativa y positiva con los niveles de culpa y malestar generales.

2.5 Estudio 4: Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic intervention for reducing guilt feelings in highly distressed dementia family caregivers

2.5.1 Objetivo general

Diseñar e implementar una terapia específica para la reducción de los sentimientos de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores.

2.5.2 Objetivos específicos

1. Diseñar un programa de intervención grupal dirigido a la reducción de los niveles de culpa. proveniente de la combinación de enfoques cognitivo-conductuales (Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2003), de la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (Hayes et al., 1999) y, de técnicas provenientes de la Terapia Centrada en la Compasión (Gilbert, 2009).
2. Realizar un estudio piloto de la implementación de la intervención psicológica diseñada en un grupo de cuidadores familiares con elevados niveles de culpa y malestar psicológico (depresión y ansiedad).
3. Analizar la eficacia de la intervención específica para la reducción de los sentimientos de culpa y malestar psicológico.

2.5.3 Hipótesis

1. Los niveles de culpa experimentados se verán reducidos de manera clínicamente significativa tras la aplicación del programa de intervención diseñado.
2. Los niveles de malestar (depresión y ansiedad) de los cuidadores también disminuirán de manera clínicamente significativa tras la aplicación del programa de intervención específico para los sentimientos de culpa.

2.6 Estudio 5: Psychosocial predictors of anxiety feelings in nursing homes staff

2.6.2 Objetivos específicos

1. Analizar la capacidad predictiva de las variables socio-demográficas sobre la sintomatología de ansiedad experimentada por los profesionales.
2. Analizar la influencia de las variables relacionadas con los niveles de carga y dimensiones del síndrome de burnout sobre los niveles de ansiedad de los profesionales.
3. Analizar la influencia de la emoción de culpa en los niveles de sintomatología ansiosa experimentados por los profesionales.
4. Analizar la influencia de variables relativas a las relaciones con los familiares de los residentes sobre la ansiedad experimentada por los profesionales.

2.6.1 Objetivo general

Analizar la influencia de diferentes variables relativas a características socio-demográficas, psicológicas e interpersonales, incluidos los sentimientos de culpa, sobre la sintomatología ansiosa de profesionales de residencias de personas mayores.

2.6.3 Hipótesis

1. Los años de experiencia en el trabajo con personas mayores se asociarán de manera significativa y negativa con los niveles de ansiedad.
2. Los niveles de carga de trabajo, así como los de burnout, se asociarán de manera significativa y positiva con los síntomas de ansiedad.
3. Los niveles de culpa experimentados por los profesionales se asociarán de manera significativa y positiva con los niveles de ansiedad.

4. La presencia de dificultades y una menor calidad de las interacciones con los familiares de los residentes se asociarán de manera significativa y positiva con los niveles de ansiedad.

Capítulo 3:

Metodología general

La presente tesis doctoral está conformada por cinco estudios independientes, aunque con temáticas relacionadas entre sí. Como se ha comentado en el capítulo 2, el objetivo común a todos ellos es el estudio del fenómeno de la culpa en cuidadores, tanto informales como formales, de personas afectadas por algún tipo de demencia. El estudio uno y cinco han sido aceptados para su publicación en las revistas *International Psychogeriatrics* y *Clinical Gerontologist*, respectivamente. Ambas revistas se encuentran indexadas en la base de datos *Web of Knowledge* y el *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)*. La primera corresponde a un cuartil dos en el área de Psicología y la segunda a un cuartil cuatro del área de Gerontología. Así mismo, la publicación correspondiente al quinto artículo recibió el premio *Best paper published by a New and Emerging Scholar in Clinical Gerontologist for the Volume Year 2018*. En cuanto a los estudios dos, tres y cuatro, se encuentran en proceso de revisión para su publicación en las revistas *Qualitative Health Research*, *Aging and Mental Health*, y *Dementia*. En relación al tercer estudio, los trabajos realizados a partir de datos preliminares obtuvieron el *2º Premio de Isidoro Delclaux* y el premio a la *Mejor comunicación oral del IV Seminario Anual de Doctorado*, ambos otorgados por la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

A pesar de que cada estudio cuenta con los apartados de Introducción, Método, Resultados, Discusión y Referencias, en este capítulo se describen las características relativas a la metodología compartida por todos los estudios, indicando cuando sea pertinente las particularidades de cada estudio que lo diferencian de los demás. En primer lugar, se expondrán datos relativos a los participantes y los procedimientos realizados para la recogida muestral. A continuación, se hará referencia a las variables objeto de estudio y los instrumentos de medida utilizados. Finalmente, el capítulo concluirá con la

descripción de los análisis de datos utilizados. En la Tabla 3.1. se presenta un cuadro resumen de las características y estado de los trabajos que componen la Tesis Doctoral.

3.1 Participantes y procedimiento

Como ya se ha comentado previamente, los cuatro primeros estudios se han realizado con cuidadores de familiares afectados por algún tipo de demencia. Los criterios de inclusión para participar en los estudios fueron:

1. Ser mayor de edad.
2. Identificarse como el cuidador principal del familiar diagnosticado con Alzheimer u otra demencia relacionada.
3. Ser cuidador informal (familiar o amigo y sin remuneración económica directa por ello).
4. Dedicar al menos, una hora diaria al cuidado o en su defecto un mínimo de 7 horas semanales.
5. Llevar al menos 3 meses a cargo de la situación de cuidado.

Además, dadas las características del segundo y cuarto trabajo, en los que los cuidadores participan en una intervención psicoterapéutica, se añadieron los siguientes criterios de inclusión para la participación en el estudio de intervención:

- a. No estar recibiendo en la actualidad, o en su defecto haber recibido seis meses antes del momento de la investigación, ayuda psicológica para el manejo del cuidado.
- b. Obtener niveles significativos de culpa (puntuaciones iguales o superiores a 16 en el instrumento Cuestionario de Culpa del Cuidador; Losada et al., 2010)
- c. Obtener niveles clínicamente significativos en sintomatología depresiva (puntuaciones iguales o superiores a 16 en la Escala del Centro de Estudios

Epidemiológicos de la Depresión; Radloff, 1977), y/o sintomatología ansiosa (puntuaciones iguales o superiores a 13 en la subescala de Tensión-Ansiedad del cuestionario Perfil de los Estados de Ánimo; McNair, Lorr, y Droppleman, 1971).

Como se señala en la Tabla 3.1, el número final de participantes varía entre los 13 del segundo estudio y los 201 del tercer estudio.

Por último, el quinto estudio contó con la participación de cuidadores formales de personas mayores. El único criterio de inclusión fue pertenecer a la plantilla de trabajadores de las residencias participantes en el estudio. El total de participantes para este estudio fue de 101.

3.1.1 Procedimiento seguido en los estudios uno, dos, tres y cuatro

Para reclutamiento de participantes del primer estudio se contactó con diversos centros colaboradores de la Comunidad de Madrid. Concretamente los centros fueron los Servicios Sociales de Fuencarral-El Pardo, Pozuelo de Alarcón, Getafe y Arganda del Rey; el centro Reina Sofía de Cruz Roja; la Fundación María Wolff y, los centros de salud Hermanos García Noblejas, General Ricardos, Benita de Ávila y Vicente Muzas.

De manera similar, para el segundo, tercer y cuarto estudio se contactó con diferentes centros colaboradores situados en la Comunidad de Madrid. Los centros colaboradores fueron centros sanitarios (Hospital Gregorio Marañón y el Centro de Especialidades Hermanos Sangro), centros de día pertenecientes a la Comunidad de Madrid (San Sebastián de los Reyes, San Fermín, Gran Residencia, Fuenlabrada y Getafe), los centros de día pertenecientes a la Fundación María Wolff y la Asociación de Familiares de Enfermos de Alzheimer y otras Demencias de Madrid Suroeste (AFAMSO).

Los centros colaboradores proporcionaron los datos de contacto de personas interesadas en participar en el estudio. A través del contacto telefónico se detallaban las características del estudio y se realizaba una entrevista de cribado para asegurar el cumplimiento de los criterios de inclusión. Los individuos que cumplían los criterios eran invitados a realizar una entrevista individual “cara a cara” de unas dos horas de duración en el centro colaborador para medir las diferentes variables incluidas en el estudio. De manera previa al inicio de las entrevistas presenciales se procedía a la lectura y firma del consentimiento informado.

En el caso del cuarto estudio, los individuos que cumplían los criterios de elevados niveles de culpa y malestar psicológico clínicamente significativo eran invitados a participar a una intervención psicoterapéutica de formato grupal de ocho sesiones semanales. Aquellos participantes que finalizaron el programa volvieron a realizar una evaluación post-intervención para la medición de los posibles cambios en las variables medidas en la evaluación inicial. A los cuidadores que no cumplían los criterios de inclusión se les ofrecía participar en un taller de una duración variable entre las dos y las cuatro horas sobre aspectos de interés relativos al cuidado familiar de personas con demencia.

La variación en los centros colaboradores y el número de participantes entre estudios es debida a que esta Tesis Doctoral se ha realizado bajo el marco de diferentes proyectos de investigación. El primero estaba dirigido a analizar las consecuencias psicosociales del cuidado familiar y el segundo estaba dirigido al análisis de los efectos de una intervención específica para los sentimientos de culpa. Ambos proyectos de investigación de los que derivan los estudios han sido aprobados por el Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad y los Comités Éticos de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid y la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid.

3.1.2 Procedimiento seguido en el estudio cinco

Para el quinto estudio se contó con trabajadores de residencias de personas mayores de la Comunidad de Madrid (Residencias del grupo AMMA). Los datos presentados en el estudio pertenecen a la evaluación inicial de los participantes de un programa de intervención dirigido a mejorar las relaciones entre los profesionales y los familiares de los residentes llevado a cabo en los centros participantes. En la reunión previa al inicio del programa, los trabajadores interesados en participar rellenaron los protocolos de evaluación de manera confidencial y anónima. Una vez recogidos los datos, los centros colaboradores hicieron llegar a los investigadores los protocolos por correo certificado en sobres cerrados ausentes de cualquier dato de carácter personal. La muestra final para el quinto estudio fue de 101 participantes. El estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética de la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos.

3.2 Variables e instrumentos de evaluación

En este apartado se ofrece una breve descripción de las variables objeto de estudio y los instrumentos de medida utilizados en los estudios que componen la presente Tesis Doctoral (en los Anexos II y III se incluye una copia de los instrumentos utilizados y en cada estudio se ofrece una descripción más detallada de cada una de las variables evaluadas).

3.2.1 Variables sociodemográficas

Se recogieron datos sobre características sociodemográficas de los cuidadores y las personas cuidadas señaladas como relevantes por el modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado (Knight y Sayegh, 2010).

En relación al cuidador, se preguntó por la edad, el género, la relación de parentesco con la persona cuidada, y los niveles educativo y económico, tiempo que lleva

cuidando y horas diarias dedicadas al cuidado. Así mismo, en el quinto estudio realizado con cuidadores formales se añadió a las anteriormente señaladas (género, edad, etc.) la categoría profesional, años de experiencia y número de horas en contacto con los familiares de residentes.

Atendiendo a las variables relativas a la persona afectada por demencia se recogió su edad, género, y el tipo de diagnóstico del familiar cuidado.

3.2.2 Estresores objetivos

En los primeros cuatro estudios se evaluó la **frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos** realizados por el familiar con demencia mediante el *Listado de Problemas de Memoria y Conducta Revisado* (RMBPC, Teri et al., 1992). Este instrumento aporta datos sobre la frecuencia de aparición de distintas conductas problema en pacientes con demencia (p. ej., irritabilidad, repetición de preguntas, etc.) y sobre la reacción de estrés del cuidador ocasionada por la aparición de estos comportamientos. Por otro lado, se midió la **capacidad funcional** de la persona con demencia a través del *Índice de Barthel* (Mahoney y Barthel, 1965). Esta escala evalúa el grado de independencia de la persona cuidada en diversas actividades básicas de la vida diaria (p. ej., comer, aseo, vestirse, etc.). También, se evaluó la **capacidad cognitiva** del familiar afectado por la demencia mediante la *Escala de Deterioro Global* (GDS, Reisberg, 1982).

Por otro lado, en el estudio cinco, se evaluaron la **calidad de la relación establecida entre los profesionales y los familiares** de los residentes y las dificultades en estas interacciones. Estas dos variables fueron medidas a través de los ítems *¿Cómo valora la calidad de su relación con los familiares de los residentes?* y *¿Hasta qué punto resulta difícil para usted el trato con familiares de los residentes?*, respectivamente.

3.2.3 Variables moduladoras

La variable de **compromiso con los valores personales** se midió con el instrumento *Valued Living Questionnaire Adapted to Caregiving* (VLQAC; Romero-Moreno et al., 2016). Este cuestionario ofrece el grado de compromiso, que puede entenderse como el grado en el que la persona trabaja de manera activa y realiza acciones dirigidas a áreas de su vida que considera relevantes, con doce valores o áreas de vida (p. ej., pareja, hijos, cuidado del familiar, salud, etc.). No obstante, además de proporcionar datos sobre el compromiso con los doce valores de manera individual, permite calcular el grado de compromiso con valores familiares (aquellos relacionados con la vida familiar, p. ej., vida marital, el cuidado del familiar con demencia), y con el factor de valores personales propios (tales como ocio, vida laboral, autocuidado, etc.). Por su parte, la **frecuencia de actividades de ocio** realizadas por el cuidador se evaluó mediante la adaptación de la *Escala de Frecuencia y Satisfacción con el Ocio y Tiempo Libre* (LTS; Stevens et al., 2004) utilizada en estudios previos realizados en cuidadores de personas con demencia (p. ej., Romero-Moreno et al., 2012).

3.2.4 Variables de resultado: consecuencias del cuidado

Los **sentimientos de culpa** experimentados por el cuidador fueron medidos a través del instrumento *Cuestionario de Culpa del Cuidador* (CGQ; Losada et al., 2010), explicado anteriormente en el capítulo de introducción general. Sin embargo, en el estudio cinco los sentimientos de culpa relacionados con el cuidado proporcionado a los residentes fueron evaluados a partir del ítem: *¿Se siente usted culpable por no poder atender a los residentes como a usted le gustaría?*

La **sintomatología depresiva** fue evaluada con la *Escala del Centro de Estudios Epidemiológicos de la Depresión* (CESD; Radloff, 1977).

Para la medición de los niveles de **ansiedad** se utilizó la subescala de Tensión-Ansiedad del cuestionario *Perfil de los Estados de Ánimo* (POMS; McNair, et al., 1971).

Además, en el estudio cinco se evaluó el nivel de **carga subjetiva** derivada del cuidado de los residentes a través del ítem: *¿Cuán cargado se siente por el cuidado de los residentes?* y la dimensión de **despersonalización** del síndrome de burnout mediante la subescala de despersonalización del *Inventario de Burnout de Maslach* (MBI; Maslach y Jackson, 1986).

3.3 Análisis de datos

A pesar de que en cada estudio se incluye un apartado específico en el que se describen con profundidad los análisis de datos utilizados para la consecución de los objetivos propuestos, en este apartado se presenta un breve resumen los principales análisis de datos realizados en la presente tesis doctoral.

De manera transversal, en los cinco estudios se han realizado análisis de datos **descriptivos**, calculando las frecuencias, medias, desviaciones típicas y rangos de las variables objeto de cada estudio.

En los estudios uno y cinco (*Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers* y *Psychosocial predictors of anxiety feelings in nursing homes staff*) se han llevado a cabo **análisis de regresión jerárquica**, con el fin de analizar la influencia de distintas variables incluidas en el modelo de estrés y afrontamiento en cuidadores (Knigh y Sayegh, 2010) sobre las diferentes variables relacionadas con el estado psicológico del cuidador y los niveles de culpa experimentada.

En el estudio dos (*"I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia*) se realizó el **análisis fenomenológico** (Giorgi, Giorgi y Morley, 2017) de las narrativas realizadas por cuidadores familiares de personas con

demencia en el contexto de una intervención psicoterapéutica. Este tipo de análisis cualitativo se caracteriza por no dotar de una estructura previa a los datos, sino clasificarlos posteriormente, elaborándose las categorías y la estructura de los temas a partir de las propias descripciones y verbalizaciones de los participantes (Glasier y Arbeuau, 2017). Concretamente, a partir de los comentarios y reflexiones acerca de la culpa reportadas por los cuidadores, los investigadores agruparon las diferentes narraciones con contenido común para la creación de las diferentes categorías que abarcaban las diferentes fuentes o aspectos relacionados con los sentimientos de culpa.

Para el estudio tres (*Family guilt induction processes in dementia caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ)*) se utilizó el **Análisis Factorial Exploratorio (AFE)** utilizando como método de estimación Máxima Verosimilitud Robusta (MLR) y aplicando la rotación oblicua Geomin. Así mismo, se realizaron *parallel analysis* para la elección del número de factores a retener en la estructura factorial. Por su parte, para analizar las relaciones entre las variables del estudio se realizaron análisis de **correlaciones de Pearson**.

Para la evaluación de los efectos clínicos de la intervención diseñada en el estudio cuatro (*Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic intervention for reducing guilt feelings in highly distressed dementia family caregivers*) se utilizó el criterio para cambio fiable propuesto (RCI) por los autores Jacobson y Truax (Jacobson y Truax, 1991) Según este criterio, existe un **cambio clínicamente significativo** si la puntuación de cambio de la variable (resultado de la diferencia entre las puntuaciones previas y posteriores a la intervención) es mayor que el valor denominado RCI, calculado a través de datos de la población de referencia.

Tabla 3.1. Resumen general de las características de los estudios que conforman la Tesis Doctoral

| Título | Autores | Estado de publicación | Muestra | Diseño | Variables | Análisis de datos |
|---|---|---|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers | Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Márquez-González, M., Romero-Moreno, R., y Vara, C | Publicado en: <i>International Psychogeriatrics</i> | Cuidadores familiares N = 179 | Estudio cuantitativo transversal-correlacional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Frecuencia y reacción ante comportamientos problemáticos (BPSD) · Compromiso con valores personales · Culpa | Univariados y Multivariados. Análisis de regresión jerárquica. |
| "I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia | Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Cabrera, I., Romero-Moreno, R., Pérez-Miguel, A., Pedroso-Chaparro, M.S., y Márquez-González, M. | En revisión. Revista Objetivo: <i>Qualitative Health Research</i> | Cuidadores familiares N = 13 | Estudio cualitativo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Variables sociodemográficas · Narrativas | Análisis fenomenológico. |
| Family guilt induction processes in dementia caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaires (CGIQs). | Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Márquez-González, M., Romero-Moreno, R., y Cabrera, I. | En revisión. Revista objetivo: <i>Aging and Mental Health</i> | Cuidadores familiares N = 201 | Estudio cuantitativo transversal-correlacional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Frecuencia y reacción BPSD · Culpa · Depresión · Ansiedad · Frecuencia de ocio · Procesos de inducción de culpa | Análisis Factorial Exploratorio (EFA). Parallel Analysis Correlación de Pearson. |

Tabla 3.1. Resumen general de las características de los estudios que conforman la Tesis Doctoral (cont.)

| Título | Autores | Estado de publicación | Muestra | Diseño | VARIABLES | Análisis de datos |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic intervention for reducing guilt feelings in highly distressed dementia family caregivers | Gallego-Alberto, L., Márquez-González, M., Romero-Moreno, R., Cabrera, I., y Losada, A. | En revisión. Revista objetivo: <i>Dementia</i> | Cuidadores familiares N = 20 | Estudio de intervención | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Culpa · Depresión · Ansiedad | <p>Análisis de cambio clínico significativo.</p> <p>Índice de cambio fiable (RCI).</p> |
| Psychosocial predictors of anxiety feelings in nursing homes staff | Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Vara, C., Olazarán, J., Muñiz, R., y Pillemer, K. | Publicado en: <i>Clinical Gerontologist</i> | Cuidadores profesionales de residencias de mayores N = 101 | Estudio cuantitativo transversal-correlacional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Burnout (despersonalización) · Carga · Relación con los familiares · Culpa · Ansiedad | <p>Univariados y Multivariados.</p> <p>Análisis de regresión jerárquica.</p> |

Capítulo 4:

*Study one: Commitment to personal values
and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers*

Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers

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International Psychogeriatrics

Cite: Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Márquez-González, M., Romero-Moreno, R., &
Vara, C. (2017). Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia
caregivers. *International psychogeriatrics*, 29(1), 57-65. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610216001393>

Abstract

Background: Caregivers' commitment to personal values is linked to caregivers' well-being, although the effects of personal values on caregivers' guilt has not been explored to date. The goal of this study is to analyze the relationship between caregivers' commitment to personal values and guilt feelings.

Method: Participants were 179 dementia family caregivers. Face-to-face interviews were carried out to describe sociodemographic variables and assess stressors, caregivers' commitment to personal values and guilt feelings. Commitment to values was conceptualized as two factors (Commitment to Own Values and Commitment to Family Values) and 12 specific individual values (e.g., education, family or caregiving role) were considered separately. Hierarchical regressions were performed controlling for sociodemographic variables and stressors, and introducing the two commitment factors (in a first regression) or the commitment to individual/specific values (in a second regression) as predictors of guilt.

Results: In terms of the commitment to values factors, the analyzed regression model explained 21% of the variance of guilt feelings. Only the factor commitment to family values contributed significantly to the model, explaining 7% of variance. With regard to the regression analyzing the contribution of specific values to caregivers' guilt, commitment to the caregiving role and with leisure contributed negatively and significantly to the explanation of caregivers' guilt. Commitment to work contributed positively to guilt feelings. The full model explained 30% of guilt feelings variance. The specific values explained 16% of the variance.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that commitment to personal values is a relevant variable to understand guilt feelings in caregivers.

Keywords: Caregivers, dementia, guilt, values.

4.1 Introduction

Caring for a relative with dementia is considered a chronically stressful situation (Vitaliano et al., 2003) that has negative consequences for the caregiver's psychological and physical health (Mausbach et al., 2010; Pinquart and Sörensen, 2003), including guilt feelings, a common and disabling emotion frequently suffered by this population (Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010).

Kugler and Jones (1992) described guilt as the dysphoric feeling associated with the recognition that one has violated a personally relevant moral or social standard. In studies focused on caregivers it has been described as the perception of having violated (or being able to violate) a moral or social standard related to the care of the relative, both in terms of thought and action (Gonyea et al., 2008). Even though guilt seems to be a relevant theme for dementia caregivers from different cultural backgrounds (Roach et al., 2013), the number of studies aimed at analyzing the effects of guilt in caregiving is limited (Martin et al., 2006; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014), and it has been said that “research into clinical assessment of and intervention for maladaptive guilt is in its infancy” (Roach et al., 2013; p. 2009). The available studies suggest that guilt in dementia caregivers is significantly associated with higher levels of distress, depressive symptoms, anxiety, and burden in dementia caregivers providing care in the community (Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2006; Roach et al., 2013) and in nursing homes (You and Tak, 2014). More specifically, Gonyea et al. (2008) found in a sample of 142 dementia caregivers that around 65% of adult daughters experienced feelings of guilt related to their caregiver role. In another study, Romero-Moreno et al. (2014) analyzed the role of guilt as a moderator in the relationship between the frequency of leisure and depressive symptomatology in a sample of dementia caregivers. The results demonstrated a moderator effect of guilt feelings in this relationship, but only in daughters. Daughter

caregivers with high levels of guilt may thus be especially vulnerable to suffering emotional distress (Romero-Moreno et al., 2014).

Drawing upon the Sociocultural Stress and Coping Model (Knight and Sayegh, 2010), the relationship between caregiving stressors and distress-related variables such as feelings of guilt is influenced by many different variables, which may increase or minimize the negative impact of the caregiving situation on caregivers' psychological and physical health. Among these modulating variables, caregivers' specific psychological resources may reduce caregivers' vulnerability to feelings of guilt. These resources include coping strategies and cultural values (e.g. motives for care), that have been found to have a significant impact on caregiver distress (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2002; Romero-Moreno et al., 2011; Sayegh and Knight, 2013). Research focused on analyzing the effects of psychological resources on caregivers' feelings of guilt is scarce, and studies are needed which allow the identification of potential resources preventing the emergence of these uncomfortable feelings.

One of the many variables involved in the caregiver stress process are personal values (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). These have been considered as global directions for life, chosen, desired and verbally constructed (Hayes et al., 1999, p. 206) that give meaning, direction and purpose to the individual's behavior (Paez-Blarrina et al., 2006). The commitment to personal values can be described as the degree to which a person is living in accordance with the most important values in their lives (Wilson et al., 2010). In non-clinical populations, being engaged with personal values is negatively associated with experiential avoidance or the tendency to control or avoid the occurrence of negative and uncomfortable internal events (Hayes et al., 1999). Also, commitment to personal values has been negatively linked with cognitive fusion - or the tendency to believe in the literal content of thoughts and feelings (Romero-Moreno et al., 2014) - anxiety, stress,

depression and somatization (Smout *et al.*, 2014; Trindade *et al.*, 2015). In clinical populations commitment to values is a relevant variable for explaining individual's health. In populations with chronic pain, MacCracken and Yang (2006) demonstrated the association between commitment to personal values and lower levels of physical distress, depression and pain anxiety. Wetterneck *et al.*, (2013) found that commitment was a significant predictor of OCD severity. However, the effects of commitment to values on caregiver distress have hardly been studied in the caregiving field (Márquez-González *et al.*, 2010).

Recently, Romero-Moreno *et al.* (2016) created an adaptation of the Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ; Wilson *et al.*, 2010) to the caregiver population that, in addition to the assessment of 10 relevant areas for people (e.g., family, parenting or personal growth), added the roles of caregiving and self-care. The results showed that commitment to personal values significantly predicted levels of depression, anxiety and life satisfaction, after controlling for the effects of sociodemographic and other resources variables, which provides support for the importance of personal values in the explanation of caregivers psychological wellbeing (Márquez-González *et al.*, 2010). Even though guilt and commitment to personal values have been shown to be related to caregiver distress, to our knowledge the effect of personal values on caregivers' guilt feelings has not yet been studied. The analysis of variables such as personal values on guilt can provide relevant information about predictive factors of guilt feelings and also suggestions regarding protective or vulnerability factors that may impact caregivers' health. The aim of this paper is to analyze the effect of commitment to personal values on caregivers' guilt feelings. We hypothesize that caregivers' commitment to personal values will significantly and negatively contribute to caregivers' guilt feelings.

4.2 Method

Participants

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 179 dementia family caregivers from Madrid. The inclusion criteria for the study were: self-identification as the main source of help for their relatives with dementia, being 18 years or older, and caring for at least one hour per day during at least three consecutive months. As shown in Table 4.1, most of the sample was composed of women with a mean age of 60. The majority of caregivers were children (49.5%) or spouses (40.5%) of the person being cared for.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through different procedures. First, agreements for participation in the study were reached with social and health centres in the Community of Madrid (a) which were contacted by the researchers of the study or (b) which showed interest in collaborating with the researchers. In both cases, the centres identified potential participants for the study among their users and provided their contact data to the researchers. A second recruitment procedure took place through advertisements appearing in different media, including radio and Internet. In these cases, caregivers contacted the researchers directly. Initial contact was established by telephone to check whether participants met the inclusion criteria of the study. This was followed by face-to-face interviews in the participating centres. Before enrolling in the study, participants were invited to sign the informed consent form. The study was approved by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Ethics Committee at the Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid.

Table 4. 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

| N = 179 | |
|--|--------|
| Gender % | |
| Women | 77.2 % |
| Men | 22.8% |
| Relationship to the care-recipient % | |
| Spouse | 40.5% |
| Son/daughter | 49.5% |
| Other (e.g., mother-in-law) | 10% |
| Work / employment while providing care | |
| Yes | 37% |
| No | 63% |
| Caregiver age | |
| Mean | 61.62 |
| SD | 14.60 |
| Range | 21-88 |
| Care-recipient age | |
| Mean | 79.56 |
| SD | 8.78 |
| Range | 55-101 |
| Time since caregiving began (years) | |
| Mean | 3.66 |
| SD | 2.79 |
| Range | 0.5-18 |
| Hours dedicated daily to caregiving | |
| Mean | 13.69 |
| SD | 8.27 |
| Range | 7-24 |
| Care-recipient illness of (%) | |
| Alzheimer | 76.5% |
| Other dementia (e.g. vascular dementia or dementia with Lewy Bodies) | 23.5% |

Materials

Following the stress and coping model adapted to caregiving (Knight and Sayegh, 2010), the following variables were assessed:

Socio-demographic variables. Gender and age of the participants, their relationship with the care recipient as well as the number of hours per day dedicated to caregiving and time since care began were assessed.

Care recipient functional status. The Barthel Index (Mahoney, 1965) was used to assess the ability of the person with dementia in ten basic activities of daily living. In this study the internal consistency (Cronbach's) alpha for the scale was 0.91.

Care recipient cognitive status. In order to assess the cognitive status of the care recipient, the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS; Reisberg et al., 1982) was administered.

Frequency of behavioural problems. This variable was assessed through the Spanish version (Nogales-González et al., 2015) of the Revised Memory and Behaviours Problems Checklist (RMBPC; Teri et al., 1992). This scale is composed of 24 items which evaluate the frequency of observable disruptive behaviour during the previous week with a response format ranging from 0 = "not at all" to 4 = "extremely". The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) obtained in this study was 0.73.

Personal Values. Commitment to personal values was measured using the Valued Living Questionnaire Adapted to Caregiving (VLQAC) (Romero-Moreno et al., 2016). The questionnaire consists of two factors. The first factor is labelled *Family values* and is composed of different aspects or family life domains (family relations; marriage/couples/intimate relationship; parenting; the role of the relative's caregiving), with an internal consistency of 0.60. The second factor is *Own values*, consisting of other different domains (friendships and social relations; education, training, personal

development/growth; employment/professional life; recreation, leisure and free time/hobbies; religion, spirituality; citizenship/community life; health/physical well-being, and caring for oneself). The internal consistency for this factor was 0.75 (Cronbach's alpha).

Guilt. Guilt feelings were measured through the Caregiver Guilt Questionnaire (CGQ; Losada et al., 2010). This instrument measures the frequency of guilt feelings in the caregivers during the previous week. It consists of 22 items (e.g. "I have felt guilty about the way I've sometimes behaved with my relative") with Likert-type responses from 0 = "never" to 4 = "almost always". The internal consistency found in this study (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.88.

Data analysis

First, assumptions for normality and outliers were analyzed. Descriptive analyses of the assessed variables were run (means, standard deviations and range). To analyse the effects of commitment to personal values on caregiver guilt, two hierarchical regression analyses were carried out, the first one analysing the effect on caregiver guilt of the two factors that compose the commitment to values questionnaire, and the second one analysing the effect of the 12 specific values that compose the scale. In order to ascertain whether commitment to values adds significant explained variance to guilt, this variable was included in a second step after controlling in a first step for variables usually considered in the stress and coping model (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). Specifically, in the first step of the regression, the socio-demographic variables (gender and caregiver age) and the stressors (daily hours devoted to caregiving, time since caregiving begun, type of dementia, cognitive and functional status, and frequency of behavioural problems) were included. Commitment to values was included in the second step. Considering that the required sample size for obtaining a medium effect size (f^2) with a statistical power higher

than 0.80 and a probability level of 0.05, using 21 predictors is 160, the sample size of the present study is sufficiently large for the analyses that are included.

4.3 Results

Normality and outliers

The results suggest that the assessed variables follow a normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis were within expected values). No univariate (z scores greater than 3.29, $p < 0.001$) nor multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distance = $p < 0.001$) were found.

Contribution of commitment to personal values to the explanation of guilt feelings

First, the effect of the factors *commitment to own values* and *commitment to family values* on caregiver guilt was assessed. As shown in Table 4.2, in the first step 14% of the variance in guilt was explained through the frequency of behavioral problems. In the second step, commitment to the two factors (*own values* and *family values*) were included. The results showed that the second step contributes significantly to the explanation of the variance in guilt feelings (7%), and the variables that contributed significantly to the explanation of guilt feelings were the commitment to family values and the frequency of behavioral problems. A higher commitment to the family values factor predicts lower guilt levels. In addition, a higher frequency of behavioral problems predicts more feelings of guilt. The full model explains 21% of the guilt feelings variance ($F = 3.773$; $p < 0.0001$).

Table 4.2. Hierarchical Regression with VLQAC factors

| D.V. Guilt | Step 1 | | Step 2 | |
|---|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| | β | T | B | T |
| Gender | -0.030 | -0.073 | 0.019 | 0.047 |
| Caregiver age | -0.133 | -1.537 | -0.061 | -0.699 |
| Hours dedicated daily to care | -0.095 | -1.119 | -0.035 | -0.411 |
| Frequency of behavioural problems | 0.260* | 3.328** | 0.172* | 2.153* |
| Time since caregiving began | -0.024 | -0.299 | -0.026 | -0.326 |
| Kinship (daughters = 0; other = 1) | -0.137 | -0.332 | -0.061 | -0.154 |
| Relative's functional status | 0.063 | 0.732 | 0.091 | 1.089 |
| Relative's mental status | -0.082 | -0.939 | -0.066 | -0.786 |
| Type of dementia (Alzheimer = 0; other = 1) | 0.153 | 1.922 | 0.138 | 1.785 |
| Family Values Factor | | | -0.324** | -3.793** |
| Own Values Factor | | | 0.061 | 0.771 |
| ΔR^2 | 0.137* | | 0.074** | |
| R^2 | 0.137 | | 0.211 | |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

Table 4.3. Hierarchical Regression with individual values assessed in the VLQAC

| DV. Guilt | Step 1 | | Step 2 | |
|---|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| | β | T | β | T |
| Gender | -0.030 | -0.073 | 0.057 | 0.142 |
| Caregiver age | -0.133 | -1.537 | -0.123 | -1.304 |
| Hours dedicated daily to care | -0.095 | -1.119 | 0.004 | 0.042 |
| Frequency of behavioural problems | 0.260** | 3.328** | 0.144 | 1.789 |
| Time since caregiving begun | -0.024 | -0.299 | 0.016 | 0.192 |
| Kinship (daughters = 0; other = 1) | -0.137 | -0.332 | 0.016 | 0.192 |
| Relative's functional status | 0.063 | 0.732 | 0.067 | 0.793 |
| Relative's mental status | -0.082 | -0.939 | -0.067 | -0.801 |
| Type of dementia (Alzheimer = 0; other = 1) | 0.153 | 1.922 | 0.147 | 1.828 |
| Commitment to caregiving role | | | -0.309** | -3.618** |
| Commitment to self-care | | | 0.116 | 1.204 |
| Commitment to family | | | -0.031 | -0.349 |
| Commitment to couple | | | -0.097 | -1.125 |
| Commitment to parenting | | | -0.037 | -0.418 |
| Commitment to friendship | | | 0.001 | 0.006 |
| Commitment to leisure | | | -0.187* | -2.168* |

Table 4.3. Hierarchical Regression with individual values assessed in the VLQAC (cont.)

| DV. Guilt | Step 1 | | Step 2 | |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | β | T | β | T |
| Commitment to religion | | | 0.005 | 0.056 |
| Commitment to work | | | 0.161* | 1.944* |
| Commitment to citizenship | | | 0.052 | 0.616 |
| Commitment to health | | | -0.030 | -0.318 |
| Commitment to personal growth | | | 0.008 | 0.084 |
| ΔR^2 | | 0.137* | | 0.161* |
| R2 | | 0.137 | | 0.299 |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

In a second regression analysis, the 12 specific values assessed by the VLQAC were included. The results (see Table 4.3) show that the variables that contribute significantly to the explanation of guilt were commitment to the caregiving role, leisure and work. A higher commitment to the caregiving role and to leisure are associated with less guilt, whereas a major commitment to work predicts higher levels of guilt. Through this second step, an increase of 16% of variance was obtained. The full model explains 30% of the variance in guilt feelings ($F = 2.939; p < 0.0001$).

4.4 Discussion

The present study aimed to analyze the influence of the commitment to personal values in the guilt feelings experienced by dementia caregivers. The results confirm our hypothesis that commitment to personal values is an important variable for the explanation of the caregivers' guilt feelings. Even though to our knowledge the effects of commitment to personal values on caregivers' well-being have not been previously studied, except for the VLQAC development study (Romero-Moreno et al., 2016), the findings of this study are consistent with previous literature in non-caregiving samples (McCracken and Yang, 2006; Smout et al., 2014; Trindade et al., 2015; Wetterneck et al., 2013). Our results confirm the association between commitment to personal values and psychological wellbeing, in this case guilt feelings. However, our results suggest that, when commitment to values is assessed through the VLQAC factors, only commitment to *family values* was negatively associated with guilt. No significant association was found for commitment to *own values*. These results are consistent with interpersonal theories of guilt, such as that developed by Baumeister et al., (1994), who argued that guilt occurs more frequently in close relationships, whose function is to reduce violations of social and other norms. The factor of commitment to *family values* is composed of vital

areas related to relations with other relevant people for caregivers, and it is expected that commitment to this factor is associated with less distress.

When commitment to values is assessed through specific values, again not all the values contributed significantly to the explanation of caregiver's guilt feelings. The results obtained suggest that the commitment to the caregiving role, leisure and work contributed significantly to the explanation of guilt feelings. Higher scores in commitment to the caregiving role value are associated with lower levels of guilt. This result is consistent with previous research in the area of care. Spillers et al. (2008) analyzed the feelings of guilt on a sample of 635 cancer caregivers and found that caregivers experience guilt and sense of incompetence when their care does not contribute to the improvement of the relative. These results can be transferred to the area of dementia caregiving because this population is also exposed to uncontrollable situations such as the cognitive decline of the family, and other highly stressful situations, for example the presence of a relative's disruptive behavior, which can lead to feelings of incompetence in their role as a caregiver.

A higher commitment to the value of care may indicate that the caregiver grants high importance to, and is consistent with his/her actions as a caregiver. With regard to the definition of commitment to values, it can be expected that for caregivers with high commitment to caregiving, the performance of many actions committed to the care of the person with dementia provides an area of particular relevance in their lives. These data can be related to other studies showing that greater satisfaction with care is linked to positive outcomes on caregivers (Lai, 2010). That is, those caregivers who live with greater commitment to their role as caregivers are likely to be more satisfied with their actions and therefore experience less distress and, as a result, less guilt.

On the other hand, our findings also suggest that commitment to leisure protects caregivers from suffering guilt. This result is consistent with the findings of Romero-Moreno et al. (2014), which showed that guilt plays a moderator role in the relation between leisure activities and depressive symptomatology, particularly in daughters. Those daughters with more guilt and with lower leisure activity frequency were more vulnerable to suffering depression. In this sense, it is possible that caregivers with greater commitment to leisure carry out more and more coherent actions in this area, which may protect them from guilt feelings and ultimately from depressive symptoms. The findings obtained are also consistent with research showing the positive effects of engaging in leisure activities (Losada et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2002), suggesting the importance of measuring, in addition to important values (e.g. leisure), the degree to which they act consistently with their values. Helping caregivers to engage in actions coherent with their values may contribute to increase the effects of valuable interventions such as respite services on caregivers' distress. As suggested by Lund et al. (2014), interventions may be helpful for helping caregivers to make more beneficial use of respite time, targeting the intervention to their specific needs and desires (values). However, not all the values seem to be associated with lower levels of guilt. Commitment to work appears to show a profile of vulnerability to guilt. Our results show that a higher commitment to the value of work increases caregivers' feelings of guilt. In line with the work of Spillers et al. (2008) and Bernard et al. (2003), those caregivers who work while caring for their families have higher levels of guilt. Similarly, Rosa et al., (2010) found that those dementia caregivers who experience a greater role conflict between work and family life have major difficulties in developing adaptive emotional reactions and new roles, which in turn can lead to guilt feelings. In other words, being exposed to incompatible demands in the context of work and family, in this case exacerbated by the needs of the relative with

dementia, creates a situation in which caregivers may feel overloaded and experience guilt feelings.

Our findings also show that the frequency of behavioral problems predicts caregiver guilt. This result is coherent with the findings of Ankri et al., (2005), who also found that a higher score in guilt was associated with more behavioral problems in the care recipient. However, when commitment to specific values is included in the second step of the regression, this effect disappears. This finding may be suggesting a mediator effect of engagement with personal values in the relationship between behavioral problems in the care recipient and caregiver's distress, specifically guilt feelings.

These data have important clinical implications. Our results suggest that commitment to personal values may contribute to putting caregivers in a position of vulnerability to develop guilt feelings. Specifically, low levels of commitment to the caregiving role and to leisure and high commitment to work are associated with guilt feelings. Detecting these profiles may be relevant for the development, implementation and optimization of psychological interventions aimed at preventing or reducing levels of guilt in caregivers. The perspective of contextual therapies and, specifically, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, Hayes et al., 1999), offers an interesting frame for these interventions, as it states that the realization of committed actions increases psychological well-being. Along these lines, Losada et al., (2015) demonstrated the effectiveness of ACT in decreasing caregivers' levels of depression and anxiety. Future studies could analyze the effects of this type of intervention for decreasing levels of caregiver guilt.

The present study has various limitations. First, the sample is composed of caregivers who volunteered to participate in the study, and the study has a cross-sectional design. These issues limit the generalizability of the results to the rest of the caregiver

population. Another source of limitations that may impact the generalizability of the obtained results has to do with the cultural background of the participants in this study. The influence of cultural variables on the caregiving stress process has received strong empirical support (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). For example, differences have been found between cultures associated with variables such as familism (Losada et al., 2006), and cultural issues may have a significant impact on commitment to personal values. Future studies should confirm if the findings obtained here are generalizable to samples with different cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, the correlational nature of the study does not permit us to make any causal inferences. The present results should be interpreted with caution, given the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations for relationships between variables found in this work. For example, an alternative explanation of the obtained results can be formulated if we consider guilt feelings as an independent variable, rather than a dependent one as is the case in the present study. Hence, it is possible that the relationship between guilt and commitment to values takes an alternative direction, with guilt functioning as a predictor of commitment to values. That is, those caregivers who experience higher levels of guilt might find more difficulties in being consistent and engaged with their values so that levels of guilt influence the degree to which the caregivers are engaged with their values. Longitudinal and experimental research is needed to confirm the interpretation of these results.

The assessment measures that have been used capture caregivers' subjective feelings associated with their role. For example, some caregivers reported to be caring for 24 hours per day, and the maximum number of years caring was 18. Even though it is frequent to find caregivers who believe that they take care for their relative for 24 hours per day (up to 59% of the caregivers consider this in the last year of care and some

Alzheimer's patients live 20 years after diagnosis (Alzheimer's Association, 2013), most of the caregiving literature is based on subjective reports made by the caregivers (even cognitive and functional status; Pearlin et al., 1990). Although these reports have been considered as indicators of the demands and hardships that caregivers encounter in their daily lives, the use of objective indicators of the assessed variables may show a different pattern of results to the one reported in this study.

Finally, considering that feelings of guilt may have different consequences on caregivers' distress depending on their kinship (Gonyea et al., 2008; Roach et al., 2013; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014), future studies should analyze the effects of personal values on caregivers' guilt considering kinship differences.

In spite of the limitations mentioned, our results show an association between psychological health and commitment to values. These findings suggest that commitment to values seems to be clinically relevant in explaining the dementia caregivers' levels of guilt.

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Capítulo 5:

Study two: "I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia

"I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia

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Submitted: *Qualitative Health Research*

Abstract

Family caregivers of people with dementia often report feelings of guilt, and these are associated with higher levels of psychological distress. However, the number of studies analyzing guilt and the factors associated with its appearance are scarce. The aim of this study is to explore the phenomenon of guilt and those aspects which underlie its origin in the family care of people with dementia. A qualitative analysis of the narratives of family caregivers of people with dementia about their feelings of guilt yielded seven relevant categories for understanding this emotion in the caregiver population: guilt derived from actions themselves; guilt derived from one's limitations; guilt for feeling negative emotions; guilt associated with the change in the relationship with the person cared for; guilt for neglecting other areas; guilt induced by the person cared for, and guilt induced by others. The results also show the existence of cases in which guilt is absent or masked by distress-avoiding processes. We conclude that guilt is a relevant variable in understanding caregiver distress, and that its analysis is necessary for therapeutic work in the field of care.

Keywords: guilt feelings, dementia caregiving, qualitative study

5.1 Introduction

Over recent decades, research has shown the negative effects which the task of caring for an elderly dependent can have on the physical and psychological health of the caregiver. Caring for a dependent elderly relative, especially if suffering from dementia, is associated with high levels of physical and psychological distress (Mausbach et al., 2010; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). Regarding potential physical consequences, the negative impact on the immune, cardiovascular, metabolic and endocrine systems of those carers with higher levels of stress compared to the non-caregiver population has been substantiated (for example, lower antibody count or higher levels of hormones involved in stress processes, such as cortisol) (Vitaliano, Zhang & Scanlan, 2003). On a psychological level, the risk of suffering significant levels of depressive and/or anxiety symptoms is higher in carers than non-carers (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). The most frequently studied outcome variables in the context of research on care have been depression, burden and, to a lesser extent, anxiety levels. (Losada et al., 2015). Studies aimed at assessing and analyzing other variables such as guilt are few and far between, even though it is a frequent and incapacitating emotion in caregivers (Gonyea, Paris & Saxe Zerden, 2008; Li, Stroebe, Chan, & Chow, 2017; Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba & Romero-Moreno, 2010; Losada et al., 2018; Samuelsson Annerstedt, Elmståhl, Samuelsson, & Grafström, 2001).

Feelings of guilt in family care of people with dementia

In the field of research focusing on caregivers of people with dementia, guilt has been described as the emotion resulting from the perception of having violated (or being able to violate) a moral or social norm related to family care, both in terms of thought and action (Gonyea et al., 2008). Recently, Prunty and Foli (2019) have proposed a more exhaustive definition of guilt in family care of people with dementia. The authors propose

three key factors in the appearance of feelings of guilt: a) beliefs of responsibility or obligation regarding the task of caring for the family member with dementia; b) negative perception towards one's actions as carer, believing one is acting against the person being cared for; c) perceptions of neglect towards oneself and other areas in the effort given over to the task of caring (Prunty & Foli, 2019). Guilt has been proposed as a major factor in the development and maintenance of depression and distress in caregivers of people with cancer (Duggleby et al., 2014; Spillers, Wellisch, Kim, Matthews & Baker, 2008) and in a population diagnosed with depression (Ghatavi, Nicolson, MacDonald, Osher & Levitt, 2002). The few existing studies which have analyzed the effects of guilt on family caregivers of elderly people with dementia have found significant associations between feelings of guilt and higher levels of distress, specifically depressive symptomatology, anxiety, burden and a lower frequency of leisure and free time activities (Feast, Orrell, Charlesworth & Moniz-Cook, 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010). The profile of women caring for a parent seems to be particularly vulnerable to feelings of guilt, and these feelings are especially associated with depressive symptomatology in caregivers who do few leisure activities (Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). Commitment (coherent behavior) to values associated with care and leisure seems to be linked to fewer guilt symptoms, while a greater commitment to values associated with work seems to have the opposite effect (Gallego-Alberto et al., 2017).

Recent studies appear to suggest that levels of guilt in caregivers can be reduced through psychological interventions (Mahmoudi, Mohammadkhani, Ghobari Bonab, & Bagheri, 2017). The results of one pilot study of an intervention specifically designed to reduce guilt symptoms in caregivers are optimistic as to the possibility of significantly reducing the distress associated with guilt in caregivers (Gallego-Alberto et al., submitted).

Despite the above, which shows the growing interest in guilt in the area of caregiver research, the number of studies aimed at analyzing this variable is very small (Gallego-Alberto et al., 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2018; Romero-Moreno et al., 2013; Samuelsson et al., 2001). Given the marked distress associated with the presence of guilt in the caregiver population, greater knowledge regarding the experience of guilt and the different aspects related to its appearance and maintenance would increase the possibilities of developing effective interventions to reduce the levels of suffering related to this emotion. This study therefore aims to review the concept of guilt in family care of people with dementia, as well as aspects related to its appearance and maintenance in the context of a group intervention study aimed at reducing emotional distress in caregivers.

5.2 Method

Participants

The sample consisted of thirteen family caregivers of people with dementia, recruited through day centers collaborating with the study. Ten women and three men took part, ranging from 34 to 77 years of age. Five of the ten women were caring for their mothers and the other five were looking after their husbands. Two of the three male caregivers were caring for their wives and the other was taking care of his sister. The length of time spent providing care to their relatives ranged from four months to seven years.

Procedure

The participants were referred to the study by day centers for relatives of people with Alzheimer's disease in Madrid and the surrounding towns of Móstoles and Fuenlabrada (Madrid, Spain). After a detailed individual assessment regarding various variables relevant to the care process and the distress they experienced, the participants

finally included were those who showed significant clinical levels of anxiety and/or depression as measured on the stress subscale of the Profile of Mood States (POMS; McNair, Lorr & Droppleman, 1971) and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). Caregivers were invited to participate in a psychotherapeutic group intervention of eight weekly sessions, carried out in the context of a research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (SI2015-65152-C2-1-R). All participants signed informed consent forms in which they were given information about the individual assessment of psychological variables and their possible participation in a group workshop of eight sessions and subsequent assessment, with confidentiality and voluntary participation guaranteed throughout the process. The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid.

For the present study, we analyzed the transcripts of the different excerpts of the exercises carried out during the intervention sessions, which included discussion and reflection on the feelings of guilt experienced by the participants in their day-to-day caring. More specifically, procedures derived from phenomenological analysis were used (Giorgi, Giorgi & Morley, 2017), as recently applied with caregivers by Glasier and Arbeau (2017). This type of qualitative analysis is characterized by not providing a structure prior to the data but to classify them later, categorizing and structuring the topics based on the participants' own descriptions and verbalizations. (Glasier & Arbeau, 2017). After analyzing the verbalizations regarding guilt which emerged during the intervention sessions, the researchers grouped the different narratives into categories with similar content, covering the various sources or aspects related to feelings of guilt in the context of care.

5.3 Results

The analysis of the participants' narratives resulted in a proposal of seven categories reflecting the origin or sources associated with the appearance and maintenance of guilt: guilt derived from the actions themselves; guilt derived from one's limitations; guilt for experiencing negative emotions; guilt associated with the change in the relationship to the person cared for; blame for the neglect of other areas; guilt induced by the person cared for, and guilt induced by others. Each of these categories is described with examples below.

Guilt derived from one's actions

Committing errors or the perception of one's actions as erroneous was one of the causes of guilt most frequently mentioned by caregivers. The actions in caring perceived as errors or wrong which produced the greatest interference were losing control with the person being cared for, for example shouting at and answering back to their relative.

For example, A. M., 75, who has been taking care of her husband affected by dementia for seven years, commented: *"When he doesn't want to take the pills I don't know what to do, how to behave ... In the end I just yell at him and he at me, I feel very guilty, it really gets to me ... "* Another caregiver, M. E., aged 71, caring for her husband affected by Alzheimer's over the last two years, reported the following situation: *"A few days ago my husband wanted to go out to the street in his pajamas and I lost my temper ... I don't know why I got like that ... it wasn't that bad. Knowing how he is ... I argue with him ... I felt guilty. "*

This type of situation frequently appears as the source of guilt feelings; even situations prior to the family member's diagnosis are seen to be originators of this type of

emotion. One example of this is A. B., a 41-year-old woman who has been taking care of her mother for two years:

"I remember it every day ... A couple of years ago when we still did not know the diagnosis, we were in the car together, and I asked her where we were going, but my mother did not know what to tell me, just kept repeating there we go ... Then I thought I'd force her to tell me, I shouted and slammed on the brakes ... I thought she would react and remember, but no. Then I stopped the car and sobbed with my mother next to me saying nothing ... "

One of the causes of these losses of control and also feelings of guilt is the lack of strategies or knowledge how to address different situations that arise in the day-to-day care of the person with dementia, such as behavioral problems (aggressiveness, wandering, repeating questions, etc.). Reflecting on her feelings of guilt and distress, A. P, aged 57, who has been taking care of her mother for two years, mentioned the following:

"When my mother goes crazy you don't know what to do, it's incredibly stressful, you just don't know what to do".

The experience of guilt for one's own actions ("errors", loss of control, self-care, etc.) seems to be linked to the maintenance of beliefs related to how to care, with the models of "good care" and "bad care" that all caregivers have and apply automatically to evaluate their own behavior. The more rigid and demanding these beliefs are, the greater the intensity of guilt generated in relation to them. As an example we can point to F. A., a 77-year-old caregiver, who talked about his possible failures in the care of his wife over the past six years, *"I shouldn't act that way, I must be patient."*

Throughout the sessions, it became evident that actions which resulted in a negative response (e.g., agitation, nervousness, aggression, etc.) in the person being cared for were another relevant source of guilt. For example, J. B. (aged 64), caring for his sister for the last three years, mentioned the following: *"One night I went to adjust my sister's sleep apnea machine while she was sleeping, it was badly placed, but she woke up and complained, I felt stupid, I should not have gone, because of me she got agitated."*

Other types of actions carried out by the caregivers which could trigger guilt were all those directed towards self-care and/or leisure and free time activities. In most cases, caregivers admitted that annoying thoughts and feelings of guilt frequently appeared while they took part in this type of activity. For example, L.C, 35, a carer for her parents, both affected by dementia, said that during her vacations, on seeing a couple of elderly people, she was tormented by numerous annoying thoughts:

"Here I am on the beach ... I ought to be home with them ..." "I'm an idiot ... I feel bad about leaving for three days, but my brother doesn't care if he's off for three weeks ..."

Another example of guilt about self-care may be that of M. P., 75 years old, who has been taking care of her husband for four years:

"I feel guilty for going to the therapy group, I have to wake my husband from his nap to come along, the poor guy comes home very tired from the center ..."

Meanwhile, M. M., 34, who has been caring for her mother for two years, told herself repeatedly before a leisure outing with her husband and son *"You shouldn't be doing this, you shouldn't go out without mom."* These difficulties in self-care associated with feelings of guilt sometimes extended to questioning one's acceptance of the help provided by social programs aimed at relieving the burden of care. In the case of M. E., while

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explaining that she had been granted a 30-hour-a-week home help to help with the care of her husband, she expressed her doubts about this, concerned about the following: *"How am I going to allow someone else to bathe my husband if I'm here, what kind of carer am I if I let others do it? "*

Guilt for experiencing negative emotions

Feeling negative sensations and emotions such as getting annoyed or angry was noted as a source of guilt throughout the intervention. Here, we can highlight the case of M. P. when she expressed feeling guilty for experiencing negative emotions derived from the care of her husband:

"I guess I don't love him enough ... If it's difficult for me, if I get angry ... If I loved my husband very much, it wouldn't be difficult ...".

Guilt associated with changes in the relationship with the person cared for

One of the reflections shared by the participants is the distress associated with changes in the relationship with their family member after dementia is diagnosed. In fact, confessions about feelings of distress and guilt about the change in relationships were frequent. P. D., aged 70, four-year carer for his wife affected by a frontotemporal dementia, mentioned the following:

"I married one person and now I live with another ..." "We no longer have a relationship."

A. B. reported that during telephone calls to her parents before the diagnosis, her relationship was closer with her mother and they talked for hours. However, after the decline of her mother, she was forced to talk more with her father and have fewer conversations with her mother. *"I don't pay so much attention to her, I find myself asking her right away to pass me to my father ... I don't feel good about this ...".*

In addition to the change in interactions with their relative, caregivers pointed to the change of roles as one of the most difficult aspects to accept and one which favors the appearance of guilt. For example, M. P. commented: *"I've taken the attitude of a sergeant, now I am in charge ..."*. On another occasion A. B. pointed *"I have four children ... my two children and my two parents."*

Guilt for neglecting other areas

It is not uncommon for family caregivers to abandon or dedicate less effort and/or time to vital areas other than caring, thereby creating feelings of frustration, disappointment, sadness and/or guilt over their neglect.

M. I., a 59-year-old carer of her mother with Alzheimer's for the last three years said *"I don't have a life of my own anymore, I've stopped going out with my friends ... I don't have any friends anymore, I had to quit my job to take care of my mother ..."*

M. M., who became a mother recently, sometimes mentioned feelings of guilt for not being able to attend to her baby one hundred percent when she was with her mother at home since she had to be aware of both at the same time. In this same case, guilt and distress were also frequently felt because she had stopped spending time with her husband on weekends in order to visit her mother: *"Before, we used to go to the country on Saturdays or Sundays, but now or I go to see my mother or we take her with us, we no longer do so many things alone together as before ..."*

A. I., a 41-year-old mother in charge of caring for her mother over the last four months expressed her guilt for not paying the same attention to other members of her family since her mother's diagnosis. *"I no longer speak with my father as before, my mother is now the centre of all attention ... The same thing happens with my brother, we don't talk about anything else, only about the situation, I wish I could dedicate more time, do more things"*

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with them ... ". Another similar example of this was A.B. She pointed out: "Because of this situation, on the weekends my husband and my children can't go out to do something fun or go out for a while, we have to go see the grandparents ..." "When I have time to play with my children ... I'm exhausted ... I can't enjoy it like this ... "

Guilt induced by the person cared for

Although all the aspects mentioned above are related to the non-fulfillment of the caregivers' own expectations, wishes or beliefs, complaints about distress and guilt caused by the behavior of the family member being cared for were not uncommon. During family care, there are different situations in which the person with dementia makes comments or behaviors which can give rise to various negative emotions in the caregiver, among them guilt.

Situations which involve a separation between the person being cared for and their family carer, such as going to the day care center or having the caregiver go to some activity without the family member, can trigger behaviors in the person being cared for which generate feelings of guilt in the caregiver. L. G. (36 years of age) who has been taking care of her mother during the last two years, told us the following situation which happened that same afternoon when leaving home to come to the intervention program:

"It's always the same, every time I go out of the house, she tries to blackmail me emotionally, she tells me that I'm abandoning her, that I am a bad daughter, even grabs me so I don't leave. She even tells me sometimes: "if you don't look after me, I'll kill myself".

Similarly, every weekend that M. M. did not visit her Alzheimer's-suffering mother and took part in some leisure activity, she said she felt guilty, not only for doing the activity without her family member, but for different comments made by her mother

and related to her feelings of loneliness. *"My mother is sad and she tells me that she's lonely, that she only has me and my brothers and sisters, and that we don't love her, she blames us for her sadness".*

Other occasions were noted in which guilt appeared as a consequence of problematic situations caused by the appearance of the relative's symptoms. A. M. described several situations in which the behavior of her husband generated distress and guilt:

"When my husband refuses to take medication, he tells me: you just want me to die, why don't you leave me alone? Just leave me in peace, can't you?"

Guilt induced by other people

Just as throughout the sessions caregivers pointed out the guilt feelings caused by the behavior of the cared-for relatives, they also on several occasions mentioned the appearance of these feelings after interacting with other relatives. Among the different behaviors of other family members which could create guilt in the caregiver, complaints and comments about the way in which the carer tackled the cared-for family member's problematic behaviors were common sources of this type of distress.

"When my brothers and sisters come and I tell them how aggressive my mother is, they ask me what I did to make that happen ... I even have to justify myself".

The comments of other relatives indicating that the situation is the result of the carer's own choice and the carer's sole responsibility was highlighted as another source of guilt and distress. For example, M. P. said she felt guilty after a conversation with her son, in which she explained her distress and difficulties in caring for her husband. *"My son said to me: "It's what you chose, mom "... and it hurt a lot".*

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To understand the guilt induced by the cared-for family member as well as by other people, it would clearly be helpful to consider the vulnerability-stress model (Zubin & Spring, 1977), assuming that the experience of guilt is always an interaction between the individual and their context: there are caregivers who, because of their personal characteristics (beliefs, self-concept, etc.) are more vulnerable to experiencing guilt in the face of comments or behaviors of people from within their immediate environment.

Masked guilt and anticipated guilt

A very interesting finding of this study was the observation during the sessions that caregivers often denied feeling guilty in their daily tasks. As an example, J. B. commented during one exercise: *"Me, guilt? No way, I don't feel guilty, what with everything else that's all I need, I'm going through enough as it is ... "*. There were many other cases like this example where subjects were seen to have great difficulty in identifying the emotion of guilt and labeling it as such. On different occasions when the caregivers talked about the explanation of their situation as caregivers and the feelings and thoughts associated with it, it became clear to the therapists that there was an emotional experience very close to guilt, even though the caregivers explicitly denied this emotion and labeled their experience as another emotion, such as anger or grief. After telling the story of a difficult situation with her husband, M. P. mentioned *"After scolding him, he told me: " please don't scold me anymore". And I felt devastated ... I tell myself that I shouldn't scream at him if I already know how bad he is, the poor thing ... it's not guilt, I feel sorry for him"*. Another example is J. B. who commented on one occasion: *"After repeating the same question several times I shouted, it really gets on my nerves ... I feel irresponsible, but not guilty"*.

At this point, it should be noted that what is observed in many cases is that guilt is indeed not experienced by caregivers because they organize their behavior in order to

prevent its occurrence or prevent it getting worse. Thus, the anticipation of guilt itself seems to activate patterns of behavior, mainly of evasion or control, aimed at avoiding experiences (avoidance of leisure activities, asking for help, etc.). This was the case of A. M.: *"When I try to leave him on his own to go for a walk, I feel terrible, he weighs on my conscience ... I can't do it, so I simply don't do it"*.

A conclusion emerges from this reflection: sometimes, the non-experience of guilt in caregivers can really be a marker of dysfunctionality, linked to avoidance and passivity; along similar lines, the presence of guilt could be an indicator of functionality when this is a result of adaptive behaviors by caregivers, as in the case of those related to their behavioral activation (self-care and leisure activities) or assertive communication (request for help).

5.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze the subjective experience of guilt feelings in the process of caring for a family member with dementia. The exercises in which participants reflect on feelings of guilt in their daily care routines have allowed us to identify different causes or factors in the origins of this emotion. Both the traditional definitions of guilt (Kugler & Jones, 1992) and those adapted to the context of caring for relatives with dementia (Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010; Prunty & Foli, 2019) propose that this type of emotion is the result of negative self-evaluation of the inadequacy of one's own behavior when compared to one's beliefs and ideals of meaningful action. The meetings with caregivers produced numerous occasions in which the experience of guilt was found to originate in the caregivers' evaluation of their own actions as inadequate or insufficient. The times when caregivers considered that their behavior with the relative did not come close to matching their beliefs or ideals about how a good caregiver should be or how they should behave and/or handle the situation

were a key factor in the appearance of guilt feelings. At other times, doing activities that involved a break from care duties and leaving the person (for example, leisure activities, self-care, etc.) were important sources of guilt and distress, as already pointed out in other qualitative studies, such as Hellström, Håkanson., Eriksson, and Sandberg (2017). Indeed, these results agree with cognitive-behavioral approaches that see guilt as a consequence of dysfunctional beliefs mainly of the "should" type, whose non-compliance would lead the person to experience various negative emotions, guilt among them (Nixon & Singer, 1993). Similarly, beliefs related to low tolerance of frustration are associated with greater guilt (Visla, Flückiger, Grosse Holtforth, & David., 2015). It could therefore be hypothesized that caregivers with rigid dysfunctional beliefs about the "good" caregiver and a low tolerance of frustration could be exposed on many occasions in which their rigid standards are not met and thus experience feelings of guilt. At the same time, these results are consistent with the key factors proposed by Prunty and Foli (2019). This type of "should" belief could be the result of assuming an obligation towards or moral responsibility for the sick relative. The second factor proposed by the authors would also correspond with this category, as it seems that perceptions of not acting in accordance with the moral norms one has set for oneself, or not doing enough for the relative, play a very important role in the origin of guilt feelings. If guilt is understood as a self-conscious emotion, it is logical to assume that experiencing it originates in cognitive evaluations regarding the implications of one's own behavior, and the evaluations of it by other people, for one's own identity or self-concept (Tracy & Robbins, 2004). This same type of negative evaluation related to the possibility of one's care not being as good as it should be has been identified in samples of professional caregivers of elderly people in institutional settings, which have shown a significant and direct association with psychological distress (Gallego-Alberto et al., 2018).

The results also show that guilt and distress may come from the change in the relationship with the relative with dementia once the role of caregiver is taken on, since this implies a change in role relations with the person cared for. The change from the previous relationship (Braun et al., 2010), combined with witnessing the anticipated loss of a loved one, generates greater psychological distress, and the guilt manifested by the caregivers is part of this distress, as well as the product of frustration for not managing to make the family member better no matter how hard they try in their caring (Spillers et al., 2008).

Assuming the role of caregiver implies often devoting most of one's efforts to the demanding task of caring, and this negatively influences the number of actions or time caregivers can devote to other areas of life (for example, to their partner or children, self-care, etc.) (Pearlin et al., 1990), which in turn favors feelings of guilt for not being able to attend to other family members, friendships and/or aspects relevant to themselves. Rosa et al., (2010) identified the association between higher levels of guilt and perceptions of role incompatibility in a sample of family caregivers of people with dementia. Similarly, the third factor underlying the appearance of guilt proposed in Prunty and Foli (2019) is consistent with this category: neglecting or paying insufficient attention to oneself and other responsibilities. It is important to note that in the present study, most of the caregivers experiencing this type of guilt were daughters. Kinship could be a variable of particular importance in this respect; indeed, the literature of guilt in caring highlights that daughter-carers have a particularly vulnerable profile (Romero-Moreno et al., 2013). It may be that daughters, young women who are currently in paid work outside the home, with other family members in their care such as their children and other relevant relationships such as their partners, may have a highly vulnerable profile because they

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cannot attend to all these relevant areas of their lives and thus experience frustration because of this role incompatibility (Rosa et al., 2010).

However, guilt appears not only to originate at the cognitive level of the person who suffers it, but is clearly shaped by the caregiver's social context and interpersonal relationships. Several authors argue that guilt needs to be defined as an interpersonal process, in which interaction with another individual is essential (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). In fact, this interpersonal conception of guilt allows us to explain the processes of how guilt is triggered. These processes are situations in which an individual carries out actions, deliberately or otherwise, which cause another person to experience guilt. In this study we have been able to identify examples of guilt feelings in caregivers which have their origin in another person. An important source of guilt can be found in the comments and behaviors of the family member with dementia in which they show their dissatisfaction or anger about the situation, thereby leading the caregivers to infer that they did not behave in the way desired or congruent with the role of a good caregiver. This type of comment generated great distress in the caregiver and in most cases caused the caregiver not to do what the relative indicated as incorrect or causing them distress, an aspect that further increased the caregiver's own distress and feelings of frustration. This type of process was studied by Fisher and Lieberman (1996) in caregivers of parents affected by dementia, and showed that this kind of emotional manipulation predicted greater psychological and physical distress in a longitudinal follow-up of one year.

Similarly, the guilt experienced by the caregivers was not only influenced by the person cared for, but also by other close relatives who play an important role in this process. Although they were less frequently involved than the cared-for family member, different actions carried out by other relatives were also mentioned as sources of distress

and guilt. Verbalizations which qualified the actions of the caregiver as inadequate or even claimed that he or she was the cause of the problematic situation or distress of the relative with dementia were relevant factors when explaining feelings of caregiver guilt. Thus, feelings of guilt and psychological distress in general were exacerbated by behaviors perceived by the caregiver as of low involvement or "wriggling out of their responsibility" on the part of their relatives. This seems logical if we take into account that the variable of social support, widely studied in the context of care, has been shown to have a cushioning effect on stress and distress in caregivers (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). This type of phenomena could occur in those cases in which there is less family cohesion and worse family functioning, which would generate, as we have seen in this study, a greater feeling of guilt by leading the caregiver to self-assessments of not being good enough or not performing the task of care as well as expected or as it should be done.

Throughout the sessions with the participants the high level of distress associated with experiencing guilt was evident, regardless of the factor triggering it. All caregivers agreed on the high degree of turmoil, both mental and physical, which this type of emotion produced and the processes of rumination about the behavior subject to self-criticism which generated it. Given that the experience of guilt can be highly debilitating, we can consider the inclusion of specific exercises and techniques for working on this emotion in psychological interventions aimed at family caregivers of people with dementia to be extremely relevant. However, a further conclusion of this study confirms the complexity of the analysis of this emotional experience in caregivers, as they are often not aware of this emotion, identify it with difficulty and give it another name or label, or simply do not get to experience it because they organize their lives in such a way as to prevent its appearance. Thus, as pointed out in the study, it has been shown that there are substantial difficulties when working with guilt for psychotherapeutic purposes. The greatest of these

problems encountered by the authors throughout the study is the denial of guilt in the initial stages of exploration. It was not uncommon for caregivers to deny or be reluctant to acknowledge experiencing guilt feelings. However, upon discussing the situation and the lived experience in greater depth, the emotion of guilt could often be identified as "camouflaged" in the caregiver's speech, with the caregiver giving it a different label, as in the case previously outlined ("*irresponsibility*" or "*feeling sorry for someone*" instead of guilt). On the one hand, labeling it with another name may result from a scarce emotional vocabulary, and as a result, the caregiver has difficulties in distinguishing and correctly labeling his emotional experience. On the other hand, this type of narrative may reflect the use of negation as a coping mechanism for stress in the caring process, a strategy that has been associated with greater anxiety symptoms (Cooper, Katona, Orrell, & Livingston 2008).

These reflections are suffused with the idea that guilt in the context of family care is an emotional experience of great complexity, and understanding it is undoubtedly an ambitious goal. In this sense, it may be worth considering the possibility that the cognitive-behavioral theoretical model has limitations in terms of attaining an adequate understanding of the different manifestations and explanatory mechanisms of guilt in this population. It is possible that other therapeutic approaches offer interesting conceptual tools to achieve this objective. For example, studies framed in theoretical positions derived from the attachment model (Bowlby, 1982) suggest that adult attachment patterns, originating in those built during childhood, shape people's emotional experience (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005); in this sense, an association has been found between the tendency towards patterns of anxious or insecure attachment and the tendency to experience guilt in relationships (Gross & Hansen, 2000; López et al., 1997). In a caregiver population, some authors have discussed the importance of the influence of

caregiver attachment patterns on the care experience, finding a relationship between insecure and avoidant attachment patterns and distress in care (Cooper, Owens, Katona, & Livingston, 2008; Magai & Cohen; 1998). A further example of other therapeutic approaches which could contribute to our understanding of guilt is the psychodynamic formulation of unconscious guilt (Freud, 1930, cited in Carveth, 2006), which would be the result of introjection or repression of early experiences of guilt in the face of experiences, impulses and emotions which were difficult to integrate during childhood and which would be related to a pattern of masochistic behavior in which the subject subconsciously seeks steady punishment or penance. It is possible that this formulation could provide clues to understanding some cases of caregivers who reduce their lives to the task of caring and shut the door to any rewarding or pleasurable experience, or even those in which a conscious guilt narrative could be masking more intense guilt feelings the carer may be avoiding. However, it should be noted that theoretical developments concerning the emotion of guilt point to the positive function of guilt as a relevant factor in the maintenance of social relations, with a preventive and reparative function with regard to possible transgressions in the bonds between people (Baumeister et al., 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005), which should warn us not to adopt a negative and pathologizing reductionist perspective on this emotion. In other cases, guilt is simply absent. Guilt frequently did not appear in this type of situation because caregivers organized their behavior around its avoidance. Both in the reflection exercises analyzed in this study and in the clinical experience of the authors, it is not uncommon for caregivers to regulate their behavior with the aim of evading distressing experiences. Thus, caregivers frequently avoid carrying out activities which would be important for them in relation to their own well-being or other areas away from care so as not to face the guilt for not dedicating themselves to the family member at that moment. This type

of result is consistent with those obtained by Gallego-Alberto et al. (2017), who showed that greater commitment to the role of carer was associated with lower levels of guilt experienced. In addition, such guilt avoidance behavior may be the reason why many caregivers fail to ask for help from other relatives or to take advantage of professional help resources, while others seem to inhibit their expression of negative emotions (e.g., exhaustion, anger) about caring and the person cared for. As suggested by Lee, Martin and Poon (2017), caregivers can invest a great deal of effort in order to succeed in their aim to avoid feeling negative emotions about the people they are caring for, such as increasing the time and dedication in their caring for fear of not doing enough for their family member. These efforts prevent guilt from arising, but increase their burden and distress (anxiety, depression, etc.). In addition to the above-mentioned dysfunctional mechanism of negation, this type of process can be analyzed as a manifestation of experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance can be understood as the attempt to avoid or modify negative or unwanted situations, emotions and thoughts (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999). Various studies have highlighted the association of experiential avoidance with greater psychological distress in caregivers, specifically with greater anxious psychopathology and a greater number of dysfunctional thoughts (Romero-Moreno, Losada, Márquez-González & Mausbach, 2016), as well as with higher blood pressure (Márquez-González, Cabrera, Losada, & Knight, 2018). In such cases, therapeutic efforts would be better aimed at helping the caregiver to adopt more adaptive behavior patterns, consistent with their values, even when they imply the experience of guilt, among other negative emotions.

This study has tried to establish a greater degree of understanding regarding the feelings of guilt experienced by caregivers throughout the process of caring for a family member affected by dementia. Nevertheless, some limitations must be taken into account

when analyzing the results of this study. In the first place, the fact that the sessions were not recorded limits qualitative analysis to the transcripts of the participants' verbalizations, which may have missed or overlooked some relevant aspects. It would be interesting if future research could confirm the conclusions of this study and assess the extent to which the contents described here are generalizable to broader samples of caregivers, evaluating the possible existence of differences depending on variables such as the caregiver's gender, relation to the person cared for, the quality of their relationship, the stage of the care process in which the caregivers find themselves, or others that could be influencing the subject of study.

In conclusion, and despite its limitations, this study has reflected on factors that can contribute to a greater understanding of guilt feelings in caregivers, especially factors that may be key to understanding their appearance and maintenance. Given the important association between the experience of guilt and psychological distress in caregivers, it could be relevant for caregiver interventions to include the use of specific techniques aimed explicitly at working with guilt feelings and the processes that generate them (Gallego-Alberto et al., submitted). Similarly, the results of this study suggest that therapy focusing on this emotion may be important in both an explicit and implicit way. It seems important not to overlook work on guilt in such cases where experiencing it is denied, since dysfunctional coping mechanisms such as denial and avoidance could be at work. Given the difficulties involved in labeling and accepting this type of experience, intervention using the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy approach is likely to be particularly useful (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999), promoting as it does the identification of emotions of guilt, and acceptance and openness to experiencing them, while simultaneously working on the behavioral activation of the caregiver within their own values (Losada et al., 2015).

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Capítulo 6:

*Study three: Family guilt induction processes
in dementia caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt
Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ).*

**Family guilt induction processes in dementia
caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt Induction
Questionnaire (CGIQ).**

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Submitted: Aging and Mental Health

Abstract

Dementia caregiving has been linked to negative consequences on caregivers' health. An emotion frequently experienced by caregivers is guilt. However, the studies analyzing the etiologic factors of guilt are scarce. One way through which guilt feelings can be generated is through induction processes. The objective of the present study was to explore these processes in the dementia caregiving context through the development of the Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ). Individual interviews were carried out with 201 dementia family caregivers assessing sociodemographic variables, frequency of leisure, guilt, and anxious and depressive symptoms. In addition, a pool of items was included which measured the frequency and guilt derived from different induction attempts performed by the care-recipient (CGIQ-CR) and other relatives (CGIQ-OR). The exploratory factor analysis of the items composing the CGIQ-CR showed a two-factor solution ("Care recipient's criticism of the caregiver's role" and "Global disqualifications"), explaining 56.24% of the variance. The CGIQ-OR subscale also showed a two-factor solution ("Other relatives' criticism of the caregiver's role" and "Excessive attribution of responsibility"), explaining 63.24% of the variance. All the factors had acceptable to good reliability indexes. Positive and significant associations were found between the both frequency subscales and depression, anxiety, and general guilt feelings. CGIQ-CR induced guilt was negatively correlated with frequency of leisure. In addition to guilt, the induction processes generated other emotions such as anger or sadness in the caregivers. The results of this study provide preliminary support for the use of the CGIQ as a valid and reliable measure of care-recipients' or other relatives' factors that may induce guilt in the caregivers. The association between these factors and caregiver distress suggest potential clinical implications of the findings.

Keywords: dementia, caregivers, induced guilt, family issues

6.1 Introduction

Caring for a relative affected by dementia has been linked to negative outcomes in caregivers' psychological health (Sallim, Sayampanathan, Cuttilan, & Ho, 2015). One of these negative outcomes is the experience of guilt feelings (Gonyea, Paris, & Saxe Zerden, 2008; Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba, & Romero-Moreno, 2010),

Traditionally, guilt has been described as the negative emotion associated with the self-judgment that one has not behaved according to a personally relevant moral or social standard (Kugler & Jones, 1992; Tilghman-Osborne et al., 2010). In the caregiving research literature, guilt feelings are considered a multidimensional construct, related to perceptions of failing in the caregiving role, not caring as well as one desires, or not doing enough for the cared-for relative. This emotion may arise throughout the caregiving process, from the early stages of the caregiving task to the placement in a nursing home or even after the death of the care recipient (Feast et al., 2017; Harrop et al., 2016; Losada et al., 2010; Prunty & Foli, 2019; Samuelsson et al., 2001; Sury et al., 2013). Different studies have shown the association between guilt and higher levels of caregiver distress, such as depression and anxiety (Feast, Orrel, Charlesworht, & Moniz-Cook; 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010, 2018; Romero-Moreno et al., 2013; Springate & Tremont, 2014). Furthermore, in non caregiving samples, such as depressive patients, guilt has been proposed as an important factor in the prediction and maintenance of depressive problems (Boye et al., 2002; Ghatavi et al., 2002; Losada, Márquez-González, Vara-García, Gallego-Alberto, Romero-Moreno, & Pillemer, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2002; Spillers et al., 2008).

Despite the evidence that guilt feelings represent a relevant cause of suffering in dementia caregivers (Losada et al., 2018), the number of empirical studies analyzing the sources and factors involved in its appearance and maintenance is scarce (Losada et al.,

2010). Several authors consider that guilt is not just the result of an individual process of cognitive appraisal (self-judgement), and highlight the importance of considering this emotion in an interpersonal context (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; 1995; Tagney & Dearing, 2002). According to Baumeister et al. (1994), “the prototypical cause of guilt would be the infliction of harm, loss, or distress on a relationship partner” (p. 245). In this interpersonal context, three functions of guilt have been mentioned: 1) to motivate the person to perform behaviors which permit the maintenance of relationships; 2) to redistribute distress and repair the dyad after a transgression; and 3) to influence the actions of others, as a mechanism of control (Baumeister et al., 1994, 1995; Duggleby et al., 2014; Hanson, 2008). The induction of guilt, as a strategy for influencing the behavior of others, may be more likely to appear and generate stronger effects in the context of close relationships (e.g., caring for a loved relative) (Baumeister et al., 1995). In this sense, studies have demonstrated that people deliberately attempt to make others feel guilty in their daily life to influence their behaviors (Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991), especially in relationships with a strong affective bond, such as the family caregiving context (Baumeister et al., 1995). Accordingly, it is not uncommon for caregivers to report feelings of guilt triggered by different behaviors or verbalizations made by their relative. An example of this process is the caregiving situation in which the care-recipient has to leave home and attend an adult day care center. On many occasions, caregivers report facial and verbal expressions made by their relatives, such as verbalizations like “you are a bad caregiver, you leave me here alone!” which lead them to feel guilty (Gallego-Alberto et al., submitted). Similarly, a qualitative study on the burden experienced by dementia caregivers has reported the presence of guilt derived from critics or beliefs about not meeting expectations and disappointing the relative with dementia (Samuelsson, Annerstedt, Elmstahl, Samuelsson, & Grafström, 2001).

In addition, the induction of guilt has been proposed as a mechanism of emotional manipulation (Austin, Farrelly, Black, & Moore, 2007; Hyde & Grieve, 2014). Emotional manipulation can be understood as the set of attempts to influence another individual's feelings and behavior for one's own self-interest (Austin et al., 2007). Several studies have shown the use of this type of control technique by parents in order to manipulate their children, and the associated consequences in offspring exposed to such guilt induction processes (Baldassar, 2015; Baumeister, 1998; Donatelli, Bybee y Buka, 2007; Rakow et al., 2009; 2011). For example, Barber (1996) used an observational measure of different psychological control techniques performed in parent-adolescent dyads and defined different types of behaviors through which individuals induced guilt in other family members. One way of inducing guilt is to point out that the other person's behavior had a negative emotional impact on a family member, such as making them worry, feel sad or depressed, or lose self-esteem. In the second place, attempting to evoke remorse or self-blame by enumerating all the things they have done for the other is another guilt induction strategy. Finally, verbalizations about the failure of the other's behavior in meeting the desired or expected standard represent another way of eliciting guilt feelings. The results of the study carried out by Barber (1996) showed a significant association between the use of emotional manipulation techniques by parents and depression and delinquency in adolescents (Barber, 1996). Along similar lines, Donatelli et al. (2007), using the Maladaptive Guilt Induction measure, showed that children and adolescents exposed to a higher frequency of this phenomenon reported more chronic guilt and shame feelings as well as higher levels of depressive symptomology. Additional studies have found a relationship between the use of guilt induction techniques by parents and children internalizing problems (Rakow et al., 2009).

Guilt feelings in caregivers

To our knowledge, only one study has analyzed this type of emotional manipulation in the context of family caregiving. Fisher and Lieberman (1996) argued that family dynamics and interactions are relevant factors for understanding offspring caregivers' well-being. Through a semi-structured telephone interview, these authors measured variables accounting for emotional management, defined as the way that emotions are expressed, acknowledged, and managed in the family, considering the factors of hostility, conflict avoidance, and guilt induction. Specifically, guilt induction was measured through a 3-point item rating the degree to which guilt is used by the care recipient to coerce the caregiver, including a self-victimizing style developed by Fisher, Nakell, Terry & Ransom (1992). Higher exposure to guilt induction behaviors performed by the care recipients were associated with higher caregiver anxiety and levels of depression, and predicted lower general well-being in a one-year follow-up (Fisher & Lieberman, 1996).

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned negative effects of exposure to guilt induction processes on psychological health, the objectives of the present study are: 1) to develop a specific assessment scale for measuring the occurrence and frequency of guilt induction processes performed by the care-recipient and other relatives; and, 2) to provide descriptive data on the presence of this type of phenomenon and its associations with relevant variables for understanding caregiver distress.

6.2 Method

Participants

Participants were 201 dementia family caregivers from Madrid (Spain). Inclusion criteria for the study were: a) being at least 18 years old, b) self-identifying as the primary caregiver of the relative with dementia, and c) caring for at least an average of one hour per day during at least three consecutive months.

Procedure

The sample was recruited through different health and adult day care centers in Madrid, Spain. Before enrolling in the study, an initial telephone interview was conducted in order to check whether participants met the inclusion criteria of the study. After the telephone contact, an individual interview was arranged at the collaborating centers. All participants signed the informed consent form. The study was approved by the Ethics Committees of the Autonomous University of Madrid and the King Juan Carlos University.

Materials

In addition to socio-demographic variables (caregivers' age, gender, daily hours caring and time since being a caregiver), the following variables were measured:

Frequency and reaction to behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia.

The frequency and stress associated with care the recipient's behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia were assessed through the Spanish version of the Revised Memory and Behavior Problems Checklist (RMBPC; Nogales-González, Losada, & Romero-Moreno, 2015). The internal consistency indexes (Cronbach's alpha) in this study were 0.78 for the frequency and 0.87 for the reaction subscale.

Frequency of leisure activities. An adaptation of the leisure time satisfaction (LTS) scale (Stevens et al., 2004) used in previous studies carried out with dementia caregivers (e.g. Romero-Moreno et al., 2012) was used. This instrument assesses the caregiver's perceived frequency of engagement in six leisure activities over the past month (e.g., quiet time, pursuing hobbies and personal interests, spending time with friends, etc.). Internal consistency index (Cronbach's alpha) in this study was 0.74.

Guilt. General guilt feelings were assessed through the Caregiver Guilt Questionnaire (CGQ; Losada et al., 2010). This instrument measures the frequency of the caregiver's guilt feelings during the previous week. It consists of 22 items (e.g., "I have felt guilty about the way I've sometimes behaved with my relative") with Likert-type responses from 0 (never) to 4 (almost always). The internal consistency found in this study (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.89.

Depression. Depressive symptomatology was measured through the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). The scale has 20 items for evaluating the experiencing of different depressive symptoms during the previous week (e.g., "I felt sad"). Answers vary from 0 (rarely or never) to 3 (most or all of the time). Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 in the present study.

Anxiety. The Tension-Anxiety subscale from the Profile of Mood States (POMS; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971) was used. This scale measures the frequency of anxious symptoms in caregivers during the previous week. This scale consists of 9 items (e.g., "nervous") with Likert-type response options ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The internal consistency for this scale was 0.86 (Cronbach's alpha).

Guilt induction processes. Following a review of the literature and based on the authors' clinical experience, we developed the Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire. The instrument is composed of two subscales. The first subscale assesses the frequency of guilt induction behaviors employed by the care recipient and the guilt derived from them (CGIQ-CR), and is composed of an initial pool of 13 items. The second subscale assesses the frequency of guilt induction behaviors employed by other relatives (e.g., siblings, husband) and the guilt derived from them (CGIQ-OR). This second subscale comprised an initial pool of 12 items. The instrument has Likert type-responses ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always) for frequency responses; and from 0 (not at all) to 4

(extremely) for the magnitude of resultant guilt. In addition to guilt derived from these behaviors, we asked the caregivers through an open-ended question if there were other emotions resulting from the exposure to these behaviors.

Data Analyses

To analyze the characteristics of the sample and the assessed variables, descriptive analyses were carried out (means, standard deviations, and range).

Prior to the analysis of the factorial structure of the questionnaire, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test were calculated. In order to analyze the factorial structure of the developed instrument, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator and Geomin as a method of rotation. In order to determine the number of factors to retain, parallel analyses were carried out with the criteria proposed by Longman, Cota, Holden, and Fekken (1989), using the mean eigenvalues and the 95th percentiles eigenvalues. For the assessment of the fit of the factor structure, four fit indexes were tested: RMSEA, TLI, CFI, and SRMR. Finally, correlation analyses were carried out between the study variables. The Mplus version 7 software (Muthén & Muthen, 1998-2012) was used for the exploratory factor analyses. The SPSS version 23 (IBM, 2015) was used for the descriptive and correlation analysis.

6.3 Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

The sample was composed mostly of women (66.2%), with a mean age of 62.71 (S.D. = 12.88). Mean daily hours devoted to the caregiving task was 14.51 (S.D. = 8.90) and they reported having been caring for an average of 49.70 months (S.D. = 45.22). Spouse caregivers made up 46.5% of the sample, and 51 % were offspring caregivers.

Guilt feelings in caregivers

The remaining caregivers were caring for other relatives, such as a sibling, etc. Most of the caregivers were caring for a relative with Alzheimer's type dementia (61.4%), and the mean age of the care-recipients was 79.19 (S.D. = 10.60).

Exploratory factor analysis of the Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire

Care Recipient scale

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Care recipient's (CGIQ-CR): Frequency subscale

The preliminary pool of 13 items showed a good Cronbach's alpha (0.83) and all items showed good item-scale correlations (all higher than 0.20). All of the initial items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The KMO measure was 0.827 and the Bartlett test was significant ($\chi^2(75) = 751.427, p < 0.001$). The first solution of the EFA showed three items with non-significant factor loadings ("*Calls my problems less important than his/hers*", "*Tells me that I enjoy or have more fun with other people without him/her*", and "*Blames me for not having enough patience*"). These items were removed.

Parallel analysis was carried out with the remaining 10 items. The results showed a two-factor solution (the eigenvalues were higher than the simulated, 3.79 and 1.27, respectively). The fit indexes showed a good fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2(45) = 287.440, p < 0.001$; RMSEA = 0.039 90% CI [0.000 – 0.072]; CFI = 0.967; TLI = 0.942, and SRMR = 0.040). The final factors structure is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Factor loadings and descriptive data of the CGIQ-Care recipient subscale.

| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| 3. Makes me responsible for problematic situations (disruptive behaviors, resistance to caring, etc.) | 0.842 | 0.052 |
| 11. Accuses me of being a bad caregiver | 0.643 | 0.044 |
| 4. Criticizes me for not letting him/her live quietly and for disturbing him/her | 0.597 | -0.001 |
| 1. Criticizes my actions and choices about her/his care. | 0.580 | 0.052 |
| 2. Makes me responsible for his/her problems and distress | 0.526 | 0.083 |
| 8. Tells me that I abandon him/her and I am a bad caregiver when I try to go out to do some leisure activity | 0.367 | 0.156 |
| 12. Accuses me of being a bad wife/husband/son/daughter/etc. | -0.004 | 0.871 |
| 10. Tells me that if I really cared or love him/her, I wouldn't do things that cause him/her distress | 0.063 | 0.651 |
| 6. Reminds me of the sacrifices, efforts and favors that he/she has made for me | 0.119 | 0.506 |
| 5. Says that I am a disappointment for him/her | 0.279 | 0.474 |
| Mean | 3.01 | 1.09 |
| S.D. | 4.10 | 2.53 |
| Range | 0-21 | 0-15 |

The first factor, labeled “Care recipient’s criticism of the caregiver's role”, is composed of items referring to behaviors and comments performed by the care recipient with the aim of criticizing and showing the caregiver's actions to be inadequate and/or distressing for the care-recipient. This factor explained 42.11% of the variance and its Cronbach’s alpha was 0.73.

Guilt feelings in caregivers

The second factor was named “Global disqualifications”, and it comprises items related to the care recipient’s different behaviors aimed at criticizing the caregiver’s general actions and choices. This second factor explained 14.13% of the variance and obtained a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.80. The alpha for the total (10 items) scale is 0.81.

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Care recipient’s (CGIQ-CR): Induced Guilt subscale

The subscale of guilt feelings associated with the items assessed in the frequency subscale described in the previous section presents a reliability index of 0.74 (Cronbach’s alpha). The descriptive data are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Descriptive data of Induced Guilt Subscale of the CGIQ-Care recipient

| | Mean | S.D. | Range |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Induced Guilt CR total subscale | 1.40 | 3.06 | 0-16 |
| Induced Guilt Care recipient’s criticism of the caregiver's role factor | 1.04 | 2.33 | 0-14 |
| Induced Guilt Global disqualifications factor | 0.36 | 1.27 | 0-10 |

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Care recipient’s (CGIQ-CR): qualitative analysis of emotions

Participants were asked to answer the question “*Do you experience any other resultant emotion?*” for each of the items of the CGIQ-CR. A total of 106 reports of other emotions were provided by 25% of the assessed caregivers. Of these, 81 corresponded to other reactions to the behaviors assessed by the first factor. For a descriptive analysis of the data, the reported emotions were organized in the following categories: 1) Emotions

related to anxiety and stress; 2) Emotions related to anger and frustration feelings; 3) Emotions related to sadness, depression, or similar emotions; 4) Feelings of being misunderstood; 5) Feelings of being threatened by the relative; and, 6) Other emotions, such as shame.

Related to the “Care recipient’s criticism of the caregiver’s role”, the majority of responses (32%) corresponded to the first item (*Criticizes my actions and choices about her/his care*). Regarding this factor, 49% of the answers were related to anger and frustration feelings; 31% to emotions of sadness and depression, while 10% of the sample reported anxiety derived from the relative’s behaviors; 8% felt fear and felt threatened by the care-recipient; 1% had feelings of being misunderstood; and finally 1% experienced other emotions such as shame.

In relation to the “Global disqualifications” factor, the predominant emotions experienced were feelings of anger and frustration, found in 44% of the answers, followed by feelings of sadness with 36%. Twelve per cent reported anxious feelings, while 4% reported feeling threatened by the relative and, finally, 4% of the caregivers reported feelings of being misunderstood.

Other relatives scale

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Other relatives (CGIQ-OR): Frequency subscale

Even though the reliability analysis of the 12 initial items reported an adequate reliability index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76), one item (“*Blame me for the symptoms of my cared-for relative*”) showed an item-scale correlation below 0.20, so it was removed. A KMO value of 0.771 was obtained and the Bartlett test was statistically significant ($\chi^2(91) = 943.920, p < 0.001$). Three items with non-significant factor loadings were removed

Guilt feelings in caregivers

(“Tell me that I complain excessively and I exaggerate”; “Accuse me of having abandoned them (or not paying attention to them) and of being focused only on the care of my relative”; and, “Tell me that I do not let them help in caregiving tasks”). The parallel analysis with the remaining eight items suggested a two- factor solution (with both eigenvalues, 3.55 and 1.51 being higher than the simulated values). The obtained fit indexes suggested a good fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2(28) = 212.235, p < 0.001$; RMSEA = 0.011 90% CI [0.000 – 0.071]; CFI = 0.998; TLI = 0.996, and SRMR = 0.025). The final factor solution for the CGIQ-OR is shown in Table 6.3.

The first factor accounted for 44.34% of the explained variance, and was labeled “Other relatives’ criticism of the caregiver's role”. This factor is composed of items assessing other relatives’ behaviors and comments questioning the caregiver’s actions regarding care. The reliability index for this factor was 0.81 (Cronbach’s Alpha).

The second factor explained 18.90% of the variance and was named “Excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility”. This factor can be defined as the relatives’ attempts to avoid their share of responsibility in the caregiving situation and increase this responsibility for the primary caregiver, alongside other attempts to avoid problems related to dementia caregiving. The factor obtained a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.80. The alpha for the global scale (8 items) was 0.78.

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Other relatives (CGIQ-OR): Induced Guilt subscale

The subscale of guilt feelings associated with the items assessed in the frequency subscale described in the previous section presents a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.60. The descriptive data for this scale are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.3. Factor loadings and descriptive data of the CGIQ-Other relatives subscale.

| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| 2. Make me responsible for my cared-for relative's distress | 0.841 | 0.228 |
| 7. Accuse me of being a bad caregiver. | 0.840 | -0.081 |
| 4. Make me responsible for problematic situations (disruptive behaviors, resistance to caring, etc.) | 0.704 | 0.032 |
| 3. Blame me for the decline of my relative | 0.664 | 0.133 |
| 1. Criticize my actions and my choices related to the care of my relative | 0.551 | 0.228 |
| 9. Blame me for choosing my caregiving role | -0.009 | 0.867 |
| 10. Reproach me, saying that they have other responsibilities and that my personal situation is better for performing the caregiving task | 0.022 | 0.631 |
| 12. Tell me that I do not organize well the tasks I have to do | 0.112 | 0.415 |
| Mean | 1.50 | 1.01 |
| S.D. | 2.49 | 2.08 |
| Range | 0-20 | 0-12 |

Table 6.4. Descriptive data of Guilt Induced Subscale of the CGIQ-Other relatives

| | Mean | S.D. | Range |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Induced Guilt total OR subscale | 0.53 | 1.60 | 0-14 |
| Induced Guilt Other relatives' criticism of the caregiver's role factor | 0.36 | 1.35 | 0-14 |
| Induced Guilt Excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility factor | 0.17 | 0.62 | 0-4 |

Caregiver guilt induction questionnaire: Other relatives (CGIQ-OR): qualitative analysis of emotions

Caregivers were requested to answer the open-ended question “Do you experience any other resultant emotion?” for each item of the other relatives guilt induction scale. The answers were organized in the following categories: 1) Emotions related to anxiety, stress and worry; 2) Emotions related to anger and frustration feelings; 3) Emotions related to sadness, depression, or similar emotions; 4) Emotions related to being misunderstood; and, 5) Emotions related to acceptance and being aware of the current situation.

A total of 77 reports of other emotions were obtained, provided by 21% of the sample. Thirty-nine reports were obtained regarding the “Other relatives’ criticism of the caregiver's role” factor. Of these reports, 67% corresponded to the category of feelings of anger and frustration. Furthermore, 18% of the answers represented sadness. Ten per cent were linked to anxious feelings; and the last 5% corresponded to emotions related to being misunderstood.

Regarding the factor “Excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility”, the most frequent reaction was anger, with 79% of the reports. A further 13% of the answers corresponded to feelings of sadness, 5% of the answers were of acceptance and awareness of the criticisms and 3% of the cases made reference to feelings of being misunderstood.

Concurrent validity

Associations with outcome variables

In order to explore the associations between the assessed variables, Pearson correlations were carried out (see Table 6.5). Regarding the CGIQ-CR total scale (care-recipient), the frequency of guilt-inducing behaviors was significantly and positively associated with anxious and depressive symptoms, general guilt feelings, and the frequency and stress associated with behavioral problems. Furthermore, the induced guilt from these behaviors also correlated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, guilt feelings and frequency of behavioral problems, whereas it was negatively associated with the frequency of leisure activities performed by the caregiver. Regarding the CGIQ-OR (other relatives), the frequency of guilt induction behaviors carried out by other relatives was positively associated with anxiety and depression levels, higher frequency and stress of behavioral problems, and negatively so with the frequency of leisure. Finally, the guilt induced by other relatives was positively related to anxiety, guilt, frequency, and distress related to behavioral problems.

Associations with socio-demographic characteristics

Regarding the CGIQ-CR, those caregivers taking care of a parent obtained a statistically higher frequency on the factor of “global disqualifications” compared with those participants caring for their spouse (spouses mean = 0.72 and offspring mean = 1.42; $t(193) = -1.95, p < 0.05$).

Guilt feelings in caregivers

Meanwhile, offspring caregivers reported statistically significant higher scores in CGIQ-OR (other relatives) frequency subscale (frequency mean = 3.37) compared with spouses (mean for spouses = 0.70), $t(193) = -5.24, p < 0.001$. These mean differences were statistically significant in the “Other relatives criticism of the caregiver's role” factor (spouses = 0.40 and offspring = 1.67; $t(193) = -3.67, p < 0.001$); and the factor of “Excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility” (spouses = 0.29 and offspring = 1.67; $t(193) = -4.93, p < 0.001$). Also, in the guilt reaction subscale, offspring caregivers reported higher levels of guilt (mean = 0.79) than spouse caregivers (spouses mean = 0.29), $t(193) = -2.24, p < 0.001$. No other differences were found in the CGIQ related to socio-demographic characteristics ($p > .05$).

Table 6.5. Associations between the assessed variables

| | Anxiety | Depression | Guilt | Frequency of behavioral problems | Appraisal of behavioral problems | Frequency of leisure |
|---|---------|------------|--------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| CGIQ-Care recipient frequency total subscale | 0.31** | 0.19** | 0.33** | 0.45** | 0.45** | -0.09 |
| CGIQ-Care recipient-Criticism of the caregiver's role factor | 0.33** | 0.18* | 0.29** | 0.45** | 0.44** | -0.07 |
| CGIQ-Care recipient-Global disqualifications factor | 0.18* | 0.15* | 0.29** | 0.32** | 0.33** | -0.09 |
| CGIQ-Care recipient guilt subscale | 0.27** | 0.22** | 0.44** | 0.30** | 0.43** | -0.14* |
| CGIQ-Other relatives frequency total subscale | 0.15* | 0.15* | 0.16* | 0.23** | 0.27** | -0.10 |
| CGIQ-Other relatives criticism of the caregiver's role factor | 0.11 | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.17* | 0.21** | -0.04 |
| CGIQ-Other relatives excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.16* | 0.21** | 0.22** | -0.13 |
| CGIQ-Other relatives guilt subscale | 0.11 | -0.04 | 0.25** | 0.13 | 0.19** | -0.05 |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

6.4 Discussion

The objective of the present study was to develop the CIGQ in order to provide a measure for assessing the existence of guilt induction processes in the context of dementia caregiving. The CIGQ is an instrument for assessing the frequency and guilt originated by this type of behaviors, with two subscales aimed at assessing guilt induction processes by the care-recipients and by other relatives (CIGQ-CR and CIGQ-OR) aimed at the caregivers.

The results of the study suggest that both CIGQ subscales show acceptable to good psychometric properties, as assessed through reliability, factor and concurrent validity indexes. Even though the scores in the CGIQ scales may be considered low, the obtained data also provide support for the existence of guilt induction processes in the dementia caregiving process, generated by both the care-recipient and other relatives, and their association with higher distress in caregivers.

Regarding the findings yielded by the scale aimed at assessing guilt induction behaviors employed by the care-recipient (CGIQ-CR), the exploratory factor analysis suggests a two-dimensional structure for this scale. The two factors obtained were labeled *Care recipient's criticism of the caregiver's role* and *Global disqualifications*. These two factors explained a significant percentage of the variance of the guilt induction construct. The *Care recipient's criticism of the caregiver's role* factor measures behaviors and verbalizations performed by the care-recipient with the aim of criticizing or expressing his/her opposition with the actions performed by the caregiver. The *Global disqualifications* factor makes reference to behaviors or verbalizations by the care-recipient related to opposition to and disappointment by the caregiver's global behavior. Both types of guilt induction behavior are coherent with the different types of

psychological control enumerated by Barber (1996) and the factors of the Maladaptive Guilt-Induction measure developed by Donatelli et al. (2007), which included items assessing the control techniques of mothers. Specifically, behaviors putting down their adolescent children or highlighting their own needs and problems and minimizing those of the adolescents. The obtained results suggest that the criticisms of the caregiver's role were more frequent than global criticisms (e.g. about being a bad wife/husband/son/daughter). In addition, the results suggest that those caregivers who take care of a parent report a greater frequency of global disqualifications by the care-recipient than those who care for a partner. This may be due to the differences in the long-term family dynamics and ways of interacting between the parent and the child maintained since childhood (e.g. emotional manipulation as a normal way of influencing by the child), something that has been found to have a negative impact on caregivers' psychological health (Quinn, Clare, & Woods, 2009; Steadman, Tremont, Davis, 2007). These findings may also be explained by the presence of higher role strain in offspring caregivers, who must cope with caregiving alongside other roles such as work or childcare (Rosa et al., 2010; Stephens, Townsend, Martire, & Druley; 2001). These results are in line with previous research in the dementia caregiving literature. Several studies have shown that those caregivers caring for a parent report higher frequency of BPSD and psychological distress compared with those caring for their partner (Romero-Moreno et al., 2013). Perhaps these caregivers are more likely to identify and then report these type of behaviors in their cared-for relative.

Furthermore, the results showed the significant association between the induction processes and higher psychological distress suffered by caregivers. Those caregivers exposed to a higher frequency of both factors of guilt induction behaviors performed by their cared-for relative reported higher levels of anxiety, general guilt feelings, and

depressive symptomatology. These results are coherent with the previous literature about guilt induction processes in children and its association with depressive problems (Donatelli et al., 2009; Rakow et al., 2009), and the work of Fisher and Lieberman (1996), who found the predictor role of emotional management (which included guilt induction behaviors) on negative outcomes in offspring dementia caregivers. In addition, guilt induction behaviors, especially those related to criticism of the caregiver's role, were significantly correlated with frequency of behavioral problems by the care-recipient. It may be that the guilt induction behaviors are identified as problematic by the caregiver, in a similar way as items included in scales measuring disruptive behaviors in care-recipients. In fact, in the present study the RMBPC questionnaire (Teri et al., 1992) was administered and contains items measuring behaviors which may be related to behavior patterns assessed by the GICQ-CR (e.g., the item of RMBPC “*My relative argues or is irritable*” may include contents similar to those measured through the CGIQ-CR, as for example the item “*Criticizes my actions and choices about her/his care*”). Given the evidence of the negative effect of the problematic behaviors by the dementia patient on the caregiver's physical and psychological health (e.g. Logsdon et al., 2008), the association between the higher frequency of guilt induction behaviors and higher stress associated with this type of care recipient's behavior is not surprising.

Similarly, the subscale of guilt induced by the behaviors assessed in the frequency subscale of CIGQ-CR showed a good internal consistency index. Despite the scores being low for both factors, a positive association between induced guilt and general guilt experienced by the caregivers, as assessed through the *Caregiving Guilt Questionnaire* (Losada et al., 2010), was found. This finding supports the relevance of including interpersonal perspectives in order to understand this emotion in the caregiving literature (Baumeister, 1995). It could be hypothesized that these types of care recipient behaviors

can act as a triggering stimuli of negative self-evaluations about the role as a caregiver or not being good enough for their loved relative, which have been shown to lead to experiencing guilt feelings (Prunty & Foli, 2019; Samuelsson et al., 2001). Furthermore, these levels of guilt induced by the care recipient were significantly associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression, which supports the previous findings about the negative impact of guilt feelings on caregivers' psychological states (e.g., Feast et al., 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010). Interestingly, induced guilt levels were negatively associated with the frequency of leisure activities carried out by the caregivers. This result is coherent with previous findings by Romero-Moreno et al. (2013), who highlighted the moderating role of guilt feelings in the association between depressive symptoms and frequency of free time activities. It seems that those caregivers who feel more guilt perform fewer leisure activities and this may lead them to experience higher distress, such as depression (Romero-Moreno et al., 2013). Moreover, Losada et al. (2010) found that higher levels of guilt were associated with lower frequency and satisfaction with free time activities.

The second scale of the CIGQ (CIGQ-OR) was developed to assess the guilt induction behaviors employed by other relatives intended for caregivers. As with the CIGQ-CR, good reliability, as well as factors and concurrent validity indexes were found. The first of the two factors obtained, labeled *Other relatives' criticism of the caregiver's role*, groups the behaviors performed by other people with the aim of criticizing and expressing their opposition to the caregiver's acts and decisions regarding the care provided. The fact that this factor was not found to be associated with caregiver distress but with behavioral problems in the care-recipient was unexpected. The lack of validation by other relatives of the caregivers' behaviors towards the care-recipient may debilitate

caregivers' coping strategies and their perception of being exposed to a stressful environment.

The second factor obtained was labeled *Excessive attribution of caregiving responsibility*, measuring those behaviors and comments by other relatives loading all the responsibility of caregiving on the caregiver, thereby diminishing their own role in the care process. Scores in this factor were also associated with general guilt feelings and frequency and reaction to behavioral problems. It may be that some families may interpret the caregiving task as obligatory and this leads members to engage more frequently in criticisms aimed at the caregiver. These attitudes and behaviors could activate the caregiver's schemas relating to the obligatory nature of the caregiving task and the sense of responsibility regarding the situation, increasing the perceptions of caregiving as an obligation (and an extrinsic motive for caring associated with the cultural value labeled familism; Losada et al., 2019), rather than a shared family responsibility. Perceiving caregiving as an obligation has been found to be associated with higher distress and frequency of behavioral problems in the care-recipient (Romero-Moreno, Márquez-González, Losada, & López, 2011).

Regarding the observed differences in the CGIQ-OR between offspring and spouses, these results suggest that sons and daughters who are caring for a parent are more exposed to guilt induction processes. Role conflicts (e.g., in addition to caring for the parents, they may have children needing care or paid work responsibilities) may contribute to explaining the findings. In line with previous research (Romero-Moreno et al., 2013), it is likely that offspring caregivers may be exposed to a larger number of sources of demands and stress, thereby increasing their perception of failing to meet the

challenges of caregiving or neglecting other relatives or responsibilities, and thus being exposed to increased triggers of guilt feelings.

Furthermore, the subscale assessing the levels of guilt derived from the behaviors assessed in the CGIQ-OR showed acceptable psychometric properties. In a similar way to the guilt subscale of the CIGQ-CR, the levels of reported guilt were low. Despite the low means, the guilt induced by other relatives was associated with higher general guilt feelings and higher stress associated with behavioral problems. This finding supports the idea of the multidimensional and interpersonal nature of the emotion of guilt (Baumeister, 1995), and the presence of guilt induced by other individuals in the caregiving context (Spillers et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, guilt feelings were not the only emotional reactions to the behaviors assessed in both scales of CGIQ. With the aim of exploring a greater range of emotions experienced by caregivers when facing behaviors or comments made by care-recipients or other relatives, we added an open-ended question in each item about other possible emotional reactions. The findings suggest that, in most cases, feelings of anger, irritation and frustration arise from the guilt induction behaviors engaged in both by care recipients and by other relatives. The second most frequently observed emotional reaction was sadness and hopelessness, followed by anxious reactions. Another emotional reaction was the feeling of being misunderstood by the person making the criticism. In the case of emotions experienced through exposure to the assessed care recipient's behavior, some caregivers reported feelings of being threatened by their relative with dementia.

The present study has several limitations. First, the sample is composed of caregivers who volunteered to participate in the study, so the findings may not be generalizable to the caregiving population as a whole. In addition, the cross-sectional

design of the study does not allow us to make causal interpretations of the findings, hence the need for longitudinal and experimental research. Furthermore, the sample comprises only Spanish caregivers. Considering that cultural differences may have an influence on the caregiving process (e.g., Knight & Sayegh, 2010; Losada et al., 2006), future studies should test the replicability of the findings in other socio-cultural contexts. These limitations suggest that the findings of this study be taken with caution, and that there is a need for further studies which may confirm the usefulness of the described scales.

In spite of its limitations, the study's findings suggest that guilt induction processes may be an important source of distress for dementia family caregivers. It seems that being exposed to guilt induction behaviors performed by the care-recipients and other relatives increases the chances of negative outcomes in the caregiving process. Guilt induction processes are clinically relevant for the explanation of guilt levels and other negative emotions experienced by dementia caregivers. Interventions aimed at reducing caregiver distress may benefit from including specific techniques to identify these types of negative interpersonal dynamics and increase the caregivers' skills for handling these types of situations.

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Capítulo 7:

*Study four: Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic
intervention for reducing guilt feelings in
dementia family caregivers with high levels of
distress*

**Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic intervention
for reducing guilt feelings in dementia family
caregivers with high levels of distress**

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Moreno, and Isabel Cabrera

Submitted: Dementia

Abstract

Objective: Guilt is a common negative emotion experienced by dementia family caregivers. Guilt feelings have been linked to higher levels of psychological distress. However, the literature about guilt and the efficacy of psychological interventions on it is scarce. This study is a pilot study of a psychological intervention specifically developed for decreasing caregivers' guilt feelings.

Method: The sample was composed by four dementia family caregivers, two women and two men. Individual interviews were carried out before and after the intervention. The guilt focused intervention consisted in eight group sessions and was based on cognitive-behavioral, acceptance and self-compassion techniques.

Results: The results showed that three participants obtained clinically significant changes (reliable change) in guilt feelings. Reliable change was also observed in anxiety and depression. Only one caregiver did not report any change at post-treatment.

Conclusions: Our results suggest that the intervention has the potential to reduce caregivers' distress.

Keywords: dementia, caregiver, guilt, acceptance and commitment therapy, self-compassion.

7.1 Introduction

Research has consistently shown the negative impact of caring for a relative with dementia on caregivers' psychological and physical health (Mausbach et al., 2010; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). Specifically, in terms of psychological distress, high prevalence rates of anxious and depressive symptoms have been found in caregivers (Cooper, Balamurali, Selwood, & Livingston, 2007; Cuijpers, 2005; Schulz & Martire, 2004). However, other negative emotions frequently experienced by caregivers in their daily routine taking care of their relatives, such as guilt feelings, have been scarcely studied (Gonyea, Paris, & de Saxe Zerden, 2008; Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba, & Romero-Moreno, 2010; Spillers, Wellisch, Kim, Matthews, & Baker, 2008), even though they are an important source of suffering for the caregivers (Losada et al., 2010; 2018).

Guilt has been described as “the dysphoric feeling associated with the recognition that one has violated a personally relevant moral or social standard” (Kugler & Jones, 1992, p. 318), and several studies have shown associations between this type of emotion and feelings of anxiety and depression (Ghatavi, Nicolson, MacDonald, Osher, & Levitt, 2002; Jones & Kugler, 1993). In fact, experiencing guilt is a relevant factor in the prediction and maintenance of psychological problems, such as major depression (Ghatavi et al., 2002; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss, & Gilbert, 2002), one of the most common mental health problems suffered by caregivers (Sallim, Sayampanathan, Cuttilan, & Ho, 2015).

Some authors proposed that guilt is more frequent and stronger in close relationships such as family relationships and/or caring for a loved one (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherthon, 1994; Duggleby, Doell, Cooper, Thomas, & Ghosh, 2014). The relevance of guilt in dementia family caregivers is highlighted by findings showing that

Guilt feelings in caregivers

guilt is linked with higher distress in these type of populations (Losada et al., 2010; Martin, Gilbert, McEwan, & Irons, 2006; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014; Springate & Tremont, 2014). For example, guilt has been found to be a significant predictor of higher levels of depressive symptomatology and expressed emotion in caregivers of patients with schizophrenia (Boye, Bentsen, & Malt, 2002; Cherry, Taylor, Brown, Rigby, & Sellwood, 2017; Wasserman, De Mamani, & Suro, 2012). Different studies have demonstrated the association between these variables and a higher severity of symptoms in patients (e.g., Hooley, 2007). In caregivers of relatives diagnosed with cancer, guilt has been linked with higher distress (Spillers et al., 2008). Recently, Feast, Orrel, Charlesworth, and Moniz-Cook (2017) showed that guilt was an important predictor of the distress experienced by dementia caregivers.

Potential correlates of guilt feelings

Despite the growing literature on guilt, studies about factors involved in its emergence are scarce (Baumeister et al., 1994). In this sense, the beliefs and thoughts about the caregiving task are likely to play an important role in the emergence of guilt feelings. This idea is congruent with cognitive-behavioral models, that argue that the presence of irrational or dysfunctional beliefs or schemas increase the incidence of this type of negative emotion (e.g., Ellis, 2001). According to these models, caregivers' beliefs and norms, strongly influenced by cultural norms, are the main source of guilt and other emotions as anger and anxiety that are likely to arise when caregivers perceive they have failed to reach that norm or behave according to their belief. Evidence supporting the association between dysfunctional beliefs and guilt has been found in the general population (Víslá, Flückiger, Grosse Holtforth, & David, 2016) and in dementia caregivers (Losada et al., 2010). For example, O'Connor et al. (2002) found that the

relationship between depression and guilt arose from these omnipotent beliefs, like maintaining an exaggerated sense of responsibility and concern for the well-being of others. On the basis of these findings, and assuming the cognitive-behavioral model, these variables have been considered to be relevant to explore when measuring and analyzing caregivers' guilt feelings (Losada et al., 2010). Examples of these dysfunctional beliefs are thoughts about providing a wrong care, failing to meet the challenges of caregiving, neglecting other relatives, and/or devoting time to self-care. Also, perception of a lack of competence derived from these self-judgements is linked with higher levels of guilt in dementia caregivers (Feast et al., 2017). Therefore, caregivers reporting dysfunctional thoughts and perfectionist attitudes (e.g., to be the "best" caregiver, to have all the situations under their control) experience higher levels of guilt when they do not meet their standards or duties (Werkander Harstade, Roxberg, Andershed, & Brunt., 2012).

Caregivers' feelings of guilt have been associated with a decreased realization of relevant activities like the self-care due to the dysfunctional beliefs about the caregiving task. For example, dementia family caregivers with higher levels of guilt associated with the perception of not doing enough for the care recipient reported a decreased time devoted to other relatives and self-care activities (Samuelsson, Annerstedt, Elmståhl, Samuelsson, & Grafström, 2001). Paradoxically, the lack of self-care has been reported as a source of guilt by caregivers (Morris, Morris, & Britton, 1988). Caregivers' guilt feelings have been also associated with lower rates of frequency of leisure activities in dementia family caregivers (Losada et al., 2010; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014).

Another relevant source of guilt is the experience of negative emotions towards the relative cared. It is very common that caregivers feel guilty for having natural aversive emotions -such as sadness or angry- and thoughts (e.g. "I lost my nerves, and I screamed to my relative", "I feel guilty about being sad and feel hopeless") that can arise in

caregiving situations. The experience of this source of guilt may be related to experiential avoidance (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). Experiential avoidance has been described as the attempts to avoid or escape from negative thoughts or emotions (Hayes et al., 1999). The avoidance of natural distress may lead to an increase of suffering. In caregivers, higher levels of experiential avoidance have been associated with higher psychological distress (e.g., depression), dysfunctional thoughts and higher blood pressure (Losada, Márquez-González, Romero-Moreno & López, 2014; Márquez-González, Losada, & Romero-Moreno, 2010; Spira et al., 2007), with caregivers who avoid images related to caregiving showing higher blood pressure (Márquez-González, Cabrera, Losada, & Knight, 2018).

Other correlates of guilt are the consequences or effects that these feelings may have in the caregiving process. Given the averseness of guilt, caregivers may likely avoid performing adaptive behaviors (e.g., self-care and leisure activities) in order to avoid these feelings. Hence, caregivers' feelings of guilt may likely predict the use of maladaptive coping strategies in stress contexts. For example, they may be associated with a decreased realization of relevant activities, such as those related to self-care, due to irrational beliefs about the caregiving task. Dementia family caregivers with higher levels of guilt associated with the perception of not doing enough for the care recipient reported a decreased time devoted to other relatives and self-care activities (Samuelsson et al., 2001). Caregivers' guilt feelings have been also associated with lower rates of frequency of leisure activities in dementia family caregivers (Losada et al., 2010; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014).

Psychological interventions and guilt

Despite the growing literature on the development and outcomes of psychotherapeutic interventions for reducing dementia family caregivers distress (e.g., Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2012; Piquart & Sörensen, 2006), most of the available interventions have been mainly focused on reducing depressive symptomatology or burden (Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2012), and, to a lesser extent, anxiety (Li, Cooper, Austin, & Livingston, 2013). Considering the above mentioned relationships between guilt and caregivers distress, it is surprising the dearth of interventions aimed at targeting caregivers' guilt feelings. Targeting dementia family caregivers' levels of guilt may be of strong clinical interest, due to the distress associated this feeling and its relevant role in the explanation of caregivers' depression (Losada et al., 2017). Furthermore, guilt can act as a mediator of the effects of the intervention in the reduction of caregivers' levels of burden, as has been found in caregivers of patients with schizophrenia and dementia caregivers (Feast et al., 2017; Weisman de Mamami, & Suro, 2016).

One of the most effective types of psychological intervention for caregivers is the cognitive behavioral approach (Piquart & Sörensen, 2006). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) offers interesting conceptual tools and interesting techniques to address guilt feelings in dementia caregivers. As revised above, according to this model, caregivers' standards and beliefs are one relevant source of the feelings of guilt and other emotions, such as anger and anxiety, which are likely to arise when caregivers perceive they have failed to reach that norm or to behave according to their belief. As also stated above, in the context of these irrational beliefs about caregiving (e.g., "I should not devote time to myself when having a relative with dementia"), caregivers may not involve in performing adaptive behaviors (e.g., self-care and leisure activities) in order to prevent the guilt that may arise from its performance. CBT therapeutic techniques for addressing guilt typically

include cognitive restructuring of these rigid beliefs (norms), behavioral activation and assertiveness training (e.g., asking for help).

To our knowledge, only one study has analyzed the efficacy of a psychological intervention (CBT) for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings (Mahmoudi, Mohammadkhani, Bonan, & Bagheri, 2017). The results showed a reduction in guilt feelings at post-treatment and follow-up. Other studies examining effects of CBT interventions on guilt in non-caregiving populations have obtained mixed results. For example, a decrease in guilt feelings but with no large effect sizes was observed by Nixon and Singer (1993). Taylor, Walters, Vittengl, Krebaum, and Jarrett (2010) found that 18% of the participants reported residual guilt feelings after the CBT treatment. No significant reductions in guilt feelings were observed in participants with social anxiety in a CBT intervention (Hedman, Ström, Atünkel, & Mörtberg, 2013). One of the possible explanation of the presence of residual guilt feelings after treatments is that any of the cited studies developed and implemented specific exercises or techniques for addressing guilt feelings.

It is important to acknowledge some limitations of CBT interventions with caregivers. Change in patterns of thoughts and beliefs in CBT interventions takes time and, according to contextual theoretical approaches, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes et al., 1999), it may not be always a requisite for changing behavior. Actually, the literature suggests that negative emotions such as guilt are normal reactions when a person is taking care for a loved one (Hanson, 2008). Therefore, there may be important sources of guilt that may be unavoidable and normal, at least in the first steps of change toward an adaptive way of coping with caregiving (e.g., wanting to spend as much time as possible with the care-recipient and avoid losing control of emotions). ACT's focus on acceptance may be especially appropriate to help caregivers

deal with guilt feelings and thoughts, with defusion and mindfulness techniques likely being effective tools for coping with this emotion, as well as with guilt-provoking thoughts (e.g., acceptance guilt associated to caregivers' mistakes or "failures" for not being perfect caregivers, Márquez-González et al., 2010). Furthermore, ACT's emphasis on personal values as the frame of the intervention may help caregivers to reconnect with their sources of positive reward and aspirations, and to optimize their ability to extract meaning in their difficult situation, despite the aversive experiences inherent in it. Evidence supporting the effectiveness of an ACT-based intervention for reducing caregivers' distress, with substantive maintenance of therapeutic gains at follow-up, has been recently found in a study (Losada et al., 2015).

Another approach that may facilitate the acceptance of guilt feelings is self-compassion. Self-compassion has been described as the disposition to face up the own suffering and treat oneself with understanding and concern (Neff, 2003). Neff and Germer (2013) proposed that self-compassion is a relevant variable for understanding suffering and difficult life situations, such as dementia family caregiving. In addition, the authors recommend self-compassion as a therapeutic strategy when people display negative self-judgements about personal inadequacies, one of the possible main sources of feeling guilty. In this line, different studies have shown that higher levels of self-compassion are linked to lower levels of depression, anxiety, perfectionism and self-criticism (Gilbert & Procter, 2006; Neff & Germer, 2013), all factors associated with guilt feelings.

Considering the gap in the availability of interventions specifically developed for treating dementia family caregivers' levels of guilt, and that treating guilt feelings will likely have an impact on other negative emotions such as depression or anxiety, the objectives of the present study are two: 1) To design and describe a group intervention specifically developed for decreasing guilt feelings experienced by caregivers, and that

merges CBT focuses on irrational beliefs with ACT and self-compassion techniques; and 2) to provide preliminary data of a pilot study analyzing the effects of this intervention in dementia family caregivers with high levels of guilt and distress (depressive or anxious symptomatology).

7.2 Method

Participants

Participants were 20 caregivers of a relative affected by dementia who attended an adult day care center in Madrid (Spain). Inclusion criteria for participation in the intervention were: a) being at least 18 years old; b) self-identifying as the primary caregiver of the relative with dementia; c) caring for at least an average of one hour per day during at least three consecutive months; d) reporting clinically significant scores on depressive (scores higher than 16 in the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale; Radloff, 1977) and/or anxious (scores higher than 13 in the Tension-Anxiety subscale from the Profile of Mood States scale; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971) symptomatology; e), and obtaining significant levels of guilt (scores higher than 16 in the Caregiver Guilt Questionnaire; Losada et al., 2010).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through different adult day care centres (ADC) in Madrid. Initial contact was established by telephone to check whether participants were primary caregivers and met other inclusion criteria. This was followed by face-to-face interviews in the day care centres. Through this interview, it was possible to check whether participants met the inclusion criteria about the clinically significant distress. Before enrolling in the study all participants signed an informed consent. Figure 1 represents the flowchart for the recruitment. After completed the intervention,

participants were assessed for the same variables again at post-treatment, approximately eight weeks after the first interview. The study was approved by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Ethics Committee of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos.

Guilt focused intervention

A specific group intervention for reducing guilt feelings in caregivers was designed for the study. The program was based on the previous literature about effective psychological interventions for caregivers (Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2012; Losada et al., 2015; Pinquart and Sorensen, 2006), data regarding relevant factors associated with guilt feelings (Gallego-Alberto, Losada, Márquez-González, Romero-Moreno, & Vara, 2017; Gonyea et al., 2006; Losada et al., 2010; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014; Spillers et al., 2008), and the authors' previous clinical experience. The intervention is developed around three dysfunctional beliefs based on the factors associated with the origin or maintenance of guilt feelings in family caregivers developed along the introduction section. The main dysfunctional statements are: a) "I have to be a competent and perfect caregiver. I must have the diverse caregiving "under control"; b) "Self-care is a selfish behaviour. The wellness and happiness of my relatives are my main and unique responsibility"; and c) "I have to experience positive feelings and thoughts about my relative and my role as a caregiver. It is not correct to experience caregiving-related negative emotions and thoughts". In this intervention, caregivers are guided to explore and acknowledge their guilt and other negative feelings in the frame of these irrational beliefs; however, instead of using cognitive restructuring techniques to change these beliefs, caregivers' ability to tolerate and accept guilt and distressing emotions and thoughts is fostered, through exercises based on ACT (Hayes, et al., 1999) and Compassion Focussed Therapy (Gilbert, 2009).

The principal aim of the intervention was to increase the acceptance of negative private events (mainly guilt feelings) related to caregiving, and the commitment to personal values through the increase in the frequency of actions oriented to these values, and, by this way to reduce the distress experienced by them. The specific objectives of the interventions are:

- To increase the awareness and the acceptance of the three dysfunctional beliefs, their relation with guilt, and their negative impact of acting fused with these verbal rules on their health and daily routine.
- To increase the acceptance of negative emotions, primarily guilt, and negative thoughts.
- To increase the frequency of actions oriented to personal values, despite experiencing guilt feelings during their performance.
- To increase compassionate self-judgement.

The intervention consisted of eight weekly group sessions, each lasting approximately two hours. In the first part of each session (except for the first session) the two therapists and participants analysed caregivers' home works and worked on possible difficulties or doubts related to the contents of the sessions. In the second part of the session, the therapists introduced theoretical contents and promoted active participation of the participants in exercises related to the main topics of the session, including experiential exercises, metaphors, and other techniques. Finally, the therapist explained the homework for the next session. The sessions and principal contents of each one are shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Contents of the psychological intervention for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings

| Session | Main objective | Content of the session | Homework |
|---------|---|--|---|
| 1 | Identifying and understanding guilt feelings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of the participants and the therapists. -Experiential exercise: Visualizing and activating my guilt feelings. -Debate: Definition of guilt. Unhealthy guilt versus healthy guilt. Consequences of unhealthy guilt. -Work with personal values: Identifying my values. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. -Revising my personal values. |
| 2 | Working with the belief "I have to be a perfect and competent caregiver". | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Experiential exercise: Experiencing guilt about doing wrong with my relative with dementia. -Focus on the belief about perfectionism and the consequences of acting fused with this belief. -Working with personal values: Garden's metaphor (Hayes et al., 1999) -Mindfulness exercise: Breathing exercise. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. -Drawing my personal garden. -Session trained mindfulness exercise. |

Table 7.1. Contents of the psychological intervention for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings (cont.)

| Session | Main objective | Content of the session | Homework |
|---------|---|--|--|
| 3 | Working with the belief, "Self-care is a selfish behaviour. The entire wellness and happiness of my relatives are my main and unique responsibility". | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Case exercise: Herminia's case (I). Analyzing the Herminia's garden, the not self-care behavior and its consequences. -Focus on the belief "Self-care is a selfish behavior" and its consequences of acting fused with this belief. -Negative consequences of the absence of self-care: Reviewing my own plant and guilt feelings derived from caring for one-self. -Mindfulness exercise: Working with uncomfortable sensations and emotions. - Working with personal values: Schedule for committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. -Conducting committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. -Session trained mindfulness exercise. |

Table 7.1. Contents of the psychological intervention for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings (cont.)

| Session | Main objective | Content of the session | Homework |
|---------|---|---|--|
| 4 | Increasing the new strategy of acceptance of dysfunctional beliefs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working on the barriers for committed action and schedule new actions. - Exercise: Guilt as a sign of change my life. Working with guilt as a barrier of committed actions. - Exercise: My watering can. Working on the incompatibilities between life areas: Identifying guilt when I am not able to meet all my life aspects. -Exercises for reorganizing tasks and time. -The influence of the cultural and social environmental factors in guilt feelings and beliefs. -Bus metaphor (Hayes et al., 1999). Promoting the acceptance of guilt and other negative private events. -Working with personal values: Scheduling new committed actions and working with barriers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. -Conducting committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. -Identifying my bus passengers |

Table 7.1. Contents of the psychological intervention for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings (cont.)

| Session | Main objective | Content of the session | Homework |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| 5 | Working with the belief "I have to experience positive feelings and thoughts. It is not correct to experience caregiving related negative emotion and thoughts". | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Case exercise: Herminia's case (II). Focus on the belief about how I should and should not feel in caregiving, and on the consequences of acting fused with this belief: Experiential avoidance. -Exercises for accepting guilt and negative thoughts. -Mindfulness exercises for negative and uncomfortable thoughts -Working with personal values: Scheduling new committed actions and working with barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. Identifying my bus passengers. -Conducting committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. |
| 6 | Reviewing the three dysfunctional beliefs: What is a good caregiver? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Exercise: Analyzing my caregiver role and my dysfunctional beliefs about caregiving. -Review of the three dysfunctional beliefs discussed in the previous sessions. -Accepting guilt feelings with the help of mindfulness exercises. -Mindfulness exercise: Working with uncomfortable sensations and emotions. -Working with personal values: Scheduling new committed actions and working with barriers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. Identifying my bus passengers. -Conducting committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. -Session trained mindfulness exercise. |

Table 7.1. Contents of the psychological intervention for reducing caregivers' guilt feelings (cont.)

| Session | Main objective | Content of the session | Homework |
|---------|---|--|---|
| 7 | Reviewing my guilt sources and my own's limitations Promoting a Self-compassionate judgement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assertive rights: The right of making mistakes without feeling guilty. -Self-compassion experiential exercise: Self-compassion as a strategy to accept my limitations and my mistakes. -Working with personal values: Scheduling new committed actions and working with barriers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diary of guilt and distress. Identifying my bus passengers. -Conducting committed actions with self-care and a relevant personal value. -Session trained self-compassion exercise. |
| 8 | Final | -Closing, summarizing and reinforcement of the advances obtained through the intervention. | |

Measures

Socio-demographic variables. Caregivers' gender and age of the participants, their relationship with the care recipient, care recipients' gender and age, as well as the number of hours per day devoted to caregiving and time since care began, were assessed.

Guilt feelings. Guilt was assessed through the Caregiver Guilt Questionnaire (CGQ; Losada et al., 2010). This instrument measures the caregivers' guilt feelings during the previous week. It consists of 22 items (e.g., "I have felt guilty about the way I've sometimes behaved with my relative") with Likert-type responses from 0 = "never" to 4 = "almost always". The cut-off for determine significant levels of guilt was 16, the average punctuation obtained in the original study conducted by Losada et al. (2010). The internal consistency for this scale (Cronbach's alpha) was .88 (Losada et al., 2010).

Depressive symptomatology. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was used. The scale has 20 items for evaluating the experimentation of different depressive symptoms over the past week (e.g., "I felt sad"). Answers vary from 0 = "rarely or none of the time" to 3 = "most or all of the time". The cut-off for clinical depression are scores equal to or higher than 16 (Kohout, Berkman, Evans, & Cornoni-Huntley, 1993). This instrument has shown Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .90 in Spanish population (Soler, Pérez-Sola, Puigdemont, Pérez-Blanco, Figueres, & Alvarez, 1997).

Anxious symptomatology. The Tension-Anxiety subscale from the Profile of Mood States (POMS; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971) was used. This scale assesses the frequency of anxious symptoms in the caregivers during the last week. This instrument consists of 9 items (e.g., "nervous") with a Likert-type option of response

ranging from 0 = “not at all” to 4 = “extremely”. A score equal to or higher than 13 is considered as an indicator of the presence of clinically significant anxiety (Losada et al., 2015). This scale has shown good psychometric properties ($\alpha = .92$; Losada et al., 2015).

Data analysis

In order to analyze the clinical significance of the observed changes in participants' scores in the outcome variables, the Jacobson and Truax's criteria (Jacobson & Truax, 1991) for reliable change was used. Following the Jacobson and Truax's criteria (1991), we assumed that a participant obtained a clinically significant change if its change punctuation (result of the rest between the post and pre values) were greater than the RCI value, which was calculated through reliability data of the reference groups. The Leeds Reliable Change index calculator (Morley & Dowzer, 2014) was used to calculate the reliable change index (RCI).

7.3 Results

Description of participants

As shown in the flowchart (Figure 7.1), five of the 20 participants met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. Of these five participants, one dropped out of the intervention due to schedule incompatibilities and four completed the interventions and were evaluated at post-treatment.

Participants included in this study were four family caregivers (two women and two men) of a relative affected by dementia who attended an adult day care center (ADC) in Madrid (Spain). Details of the participants of the study can be found below:

Guilt feelings in caregivers

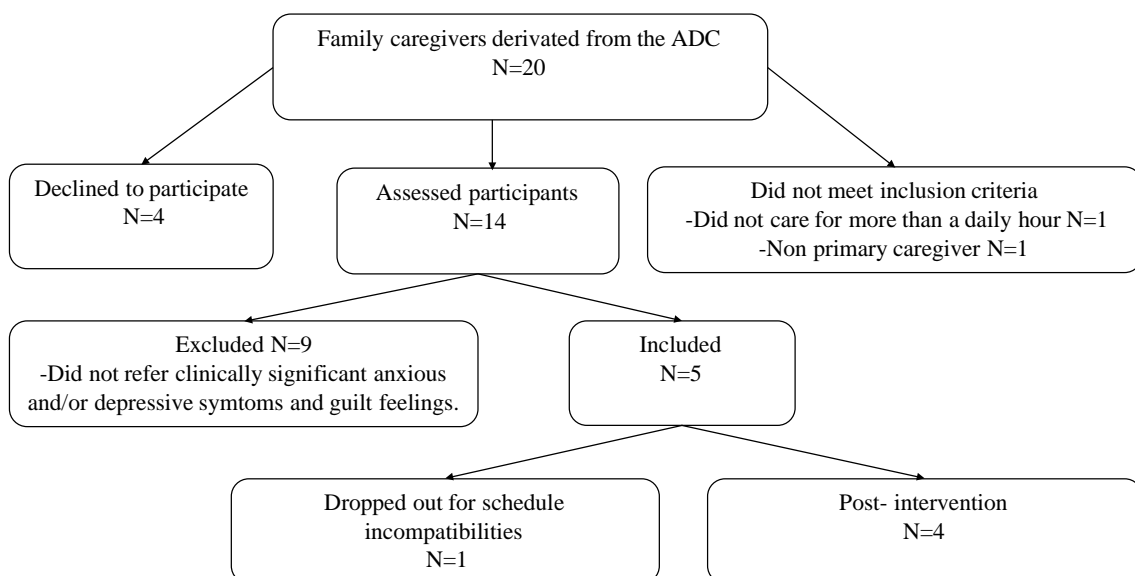
Caregiver 1: The first caregiver was a 57 years old woman taking care for her 83 years old mother diagnosed with Alzheimer's type dementia. She was caring for her mother an average of one hour per day and had been caring for the last two years.

Caregiver 2: The second participant was a 70 years old woman taking care for her 78 years old husband who had Alzheimer's type dementia. She was caring for her husband an average of nine daily hours and had been caring for the last seven years.

Caregiver 3: The third participant was a 64 years old man taking care for his 60 years old sister who had a Korsakov's dementia. He reported caring for his relative for an average of 17 daily hours and had been caring for the last three years.

Caregiver 4: The fourth caregiver was a 77 years old man taking care for his 72 years old wife who had Alzheimer's type dementia. He was caring for his wife for an average of 14 daily hours and had been caring for the last six years.

Figure 7.1. Flowchart of the study



Changes in assessed variables

Table 7.2 shows the descriptive data for each participant in the measured variables at baseline and at post-intervention.

Table 7.2. Caregivers' scores in outcome variables from pre to post-intervention and change.

| Variable | | Caregiver | Caregiver | Caregiver | Caregiver |
|-------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Guilt | Pre | 26 | 32 | 23 | 26 |
| | Post | 4 | 29 | 9 | 12 |
| | Change | 22* | 3 | 14* | 14* |
| Depression | Pre | 21 | 8 | 16 | 27 |
| | Post | 14 | 17 | 11 | 17 |
| | Change | 7 | -9 | 5 | 10* |
| Anxiety | Pre | 12 | 22 | 23 | 17 |
| | Post | 12 | 21 | 2 | 13 |
| | Change | 0 | 1 | 21* | 4* |

*Note: *Reliable change.*

After the intervention, three caregivers reported scores under the cut-off point for guilt feelings. Three caregivers reported scores under the cut-off score for depressive symptoms, while one reported an important increase in depressive symptoms. One scored under the cut-off point for anxiety symptoms.

The obtained RCI value for guilt was 3.62 ($p < .05$). Therefore, caregivers 1, 3 and 4 showed a clinically relevant change in guilt feelings. Regarding depressive

symptomatology, the RCI value was 7.72 ($p < .05$). Caregiver 4 showed a clinically relevant change in this variable. However, caregiver 2 obtained a clinically relevant deterioration. Finally, in terms of anxiety, caregivers 3 and 4 showed a clinically relevant change for that variable (RCI = 3.97; $p < .05$).

7.4 Discussion

The aim of the present work was to describe a psychological intervention aimed at targeting dementia family caregivers' guilt symptoms that merges CBT focus on irrational beliefs with ACT and self-compassion techniques and to present the preliminary findings of its efficacy through a pilot study of four caregivers with high levels of guilt feelings and distress (high levels of depressive and/or anxious symptomatology).

The obtained results suggest that the intervention has the potential to significantly reduce caregivers' guilt symptoms. Three of the four participants reported clinically significant changes (reliable change) in guilt feelings (Caregivers 1, 3 and 4). All these three caregivers showed at post-intervention a guilt score punctuation under the cut off points, which was considered as suggestive of clinical relevance. Clinically significant reductions were also observed in these three caregivers in depressive and anxious symptoms (as measured through the RCI or by obtaining at post-intervention a score in the depression or anxiety scales lower than the cut-off point), except for caregiver 1, who reported no change in anxious symptoms (Caregiver 1). No clinically significant changes were obtained for one participant in guilt feelings (Caregiver 2), even though a change in the expected direction was observed that was very close to meet the RCI value considered as a reliable change for guilt feelings. One possible explanation for that result is that Caregiver 2 presented higher levels of guilt, as compared with the other participants at the beginning of the intervention. The limited number of sessions of the intervention may

not be enough for reaching clinically significant effects in all participants. In this line, a limited number of sessions or lack of follow-up or booster sessions may be one of the principal causes for not finding positive outcomes after the treatment (Brodaty, Green, & Koschera, 2003; Piquart & Sörensen, 2006). Future studies should consider adding booster sessions after the end of the intervention, as is recommended in Bellg et al. (2004).

In spite of the above mentioned issues regarding the findings for guilt feelings, Caregiver 2 showed a clinically significant deterioration in depressive symptomatology. Even though external influences not related with the intervention may be influencing the results. Caregiver 2 reported at post-intervention that her son had a car accident a week earlier and was hospitalized. On the other hand, the mentioned limited number of sessions and the group format of the intervention may not contribute to meet the specific needs of the participants, as it does not allow to tailor or individualize the exercises and techniques used in the intervention, one of the most important outcomes for a psychological treatment (Seligman, 1995; Zarit, Femia, Kim, & Whitlatch, 2010). Another possible explanation to the deterioration reported by Caregiver 2 is the social comparison phenomenon facilitated by the group format. During the last sessions, Caregiver 2 commented her worries about her husband's future decline and the possible apparition of functional, legal and other problems related to higher disability in the care recipient commented by the others caregivers. Hence, it would be interestingly to assess the efficacy of the application of this intervention in an individual format, which has been shown higher levels of efficacy (Piquart & Sörensen, 2006).

As commented, the distress experienced by all except one of the participants was reduced after the intervention. These results suggest that the developed psychotherapeutic

intervention has a strong potential for helping caregivers with significant levels of guilt feelings, as well as clinically relevant anxious and/or depressive symptomatology.

The present study has several limitations. The findings should be considered with caution due to the limited sample size and the lack of a control group. More studies with larger sample and a randomized controlled design are needed. Also, the lack of follow-up data limits the power of our results, and futures studies are needed that include a follow-up assessment in order to clarify the long term effects of the intervention. Also, as different authors recommend (Bellg et al., 2004; Pincus & Sörensen, 2006), it may be positive to include booster sessions after the end of the main intervention in order to reinforce the trained techniques and skills, preventing possible relapses in the assessed outcomes. Another limitation of our study is the absence of data of relevant variables in the intervention that may be acting as the mediators of the results (e.g., acceptance of negative private events, cognitive fusion). Given the focus of the present intervention on promoting the use of this type of strategies, the changes and effects of the intervention on these variables may play an important role in the decreased distress. Futures studies should control and test the intervention effects on these other variables.

Conclusion

In spite of the mentioned limitations, the present study represents a first approach to developing a psychotherapeutic intervention specifically designed for targeting significant guilt feelings in caregivers. The obtained results, although preliminary, suggest that the intervention has the potential for clinically reducing guilt levels as well as related distress constructs such as depression or anxiety in caregivers showing baseline clinical scores on these measures. Our data support the relevance of the developing and testing the efficacy of techniques and interventions for targeting specific problematics,

advocated by some authors (Zarit et al., 2010). Specifically, our results shed light on the experience of guilt in the context of caregiving, an under-researched emotion that is very common in dementia family caregivers, and that causes significant levels of suffering.

7.5 References

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Capítulo 8:

Study five: Psychosocial predictors of anxiety

in nursing home staff

Psychosocial predictors of anxiety in nursing home staff

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- Cite: Gallego-Alberto, L., Losada, A., Vara, C., Olazarán, J., Muñiz, R., & Pillemer, K. (2018). Psychosocial predictors of anxiety in nursing home staff. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 41(4), 282-292. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317115.2017.1370056>

Abstract

Objectives. Although research shows that nursing home staff experience significant levels of stress and burnout, studies analyzing the relationship of psychosocial variables on their feelings of anxiety are scarce. This study aims to analyze the relationship between psychosocial variables and levels of anxiety among staff.

Method. Participants were 101 nursing home professionals. In addition to anxiety, socio-demographic variables, depersonalization, burden, relationship with families of the residents and guilt about the care offered to the residents were assessed. A hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to analyze the contribution of the assessed variables to staff anxiety levels.

Results. The obtained model explained 57% of the variance in anxious symptomatology. Guilt about the care offered and poor quality of the relationship with residents' family were associated with anxiety. Further, working at nursing homes where the staff report higher levels of anxiety symptoms, the presence of depersonalization and burden were also associated with anxiety.

Conclusion. The findings suggest that in addition to work-related variables (burden and burnout), problems with family members and guilt about the care offered are relevant variables for understanding staff's anxious symptomatology.

Clinical implications. Interventions that address issues of guilt about the quality of care, and problematic relationships with family members of residents, may have potential to reduce staff anxiety and promote their well-being.

Keywords: Long-term staff, anxiety, burden, guilt, relationship with families.

8.1 Introduction

The growth of the older population worldwide is linked to an increase in the number of individuals affected by chronic diseases, including neuropsychiatric disorders, such as the different types of dementia (Alzheimer Association, 2014). The increase in the prevalence of these disorders leads to a greater need for care resources (Pitfield, Shahriyamolki & Livingston, 2011). Indeed, in many countries rates of institutionalization of older persons will increase significantly over the coming years (Comas-Herrera et al., 2011).

Despite generally high levels of commitment to their jobs, several studies report elevated levels of stress and burnout among nursing home staff (Brodaty, Draper & Low; 2003; Cooper et al., 2016; Duffy, Oyebode & Allen, 2009; Pillemer & Lachs, 2002; Woodhead, Northrop & Edelstein, 2016). These consequences can have a negative impact on the efficiency and quality of care received by residents (Cohen-Mansfield, 1997; Edvarsson, Sandman, Nay & Karlson, 2008). Additionally, the elevated levels of mental health problems found among nursing home staff contribute to high rates of job turnover (Pillemer et al., 2008). Considering that increasing our knowledge about the variables contributing to a reduction in the well-being of nursing home staff may support the development of interventions directed at this population, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between different psychosocial variables and the feelings of anxiety among nursing home staff.

Burnout is an individual response to prolonged work-related stress that can affect the job satisfaction, productivity, performance, turnover and well-being of professionals (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion (decreased emotional resources and energy), depersonalization (negative attitudes and feelings towards care recipients), and a lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson,

1981). Burnout in nursing home professionals has been linked to personal factors, the organizational environment, conflicts with family members of residents, and experiencing aggressive behaviors from residents (Edvarsson et al., 2008; Miyamoto, Tachimori & Ito, 2010; Moniz-Cook, Woods & Gardiner, 2000; Montoro-Rodríguez & Small, 2006; Pillemer et al., 2003).

In terms of organizational factors, long-term care employees often work long hours, experience high levels of time pressure, and are paid low wages (Zimmerman et al., 2005). Evidence suggests that these stressful characteristics of the job play an important role in explaining burnout in nursing home staff (Cooper et al., 2016). Workload is also a relevant predictor of burden and job pressure (Chappel & Novak, 1992). Further, support provided by supervisors is linked to lower stress levels among long-term care staff (Woodhead et al., 2016). Edvarsson, Sandman, Nay and Karlsson (2009) found that perceived organizational climate and the likelihood of involvement in discussions about care problems and ethical difficulties were predictors of job strain.

An additional source of stress and burnout in nursing home staff is relationships with family members. Several studies have demonstrated that difficulties frequently emerge in interactions between nursing home staff and relatives of residents (Abrahamson, Pillemer, Sechrist & Sutor, 2011; Bramble, Moyle & Shum, 2011; Chen, Sabir, Zimmerman, Sutor & Pillemer, 2007; Law, Patterson, Muers, 2016; Utley-Smith et al., 2009). Some conflicts are related to discrepant views about the appropriate tasks for families and staff (Duncan & Morgan, 1994; Train, Nurock, Manela, Kitchen & Livingston, 2005). Additional contributors to conflict are problems in communication due to high time pressure among workers, and family members' fears about negative consequences resulting from expressing concerns about residents' care (Hertzberg &

Ekman, 1996; Train et al., 2005). The presence of negative attitudes on the part of both staff and families also contributes to difficulties in the relationship (Pillemer et al., 2003). In a qualitative study, Train and colleagues (2005) found that long-term care staff were generally positive about their relationships with families. However, the respondents were also resentful about the demands families make regarding resident care. Further, conflicts with one another leads to distress for both staff and family members (Abrahamson, Suitoer & Pillemer, 2009; Pillemer et al., 2003).

Residents' behavioral symptoms are another source of stress and burden among nursing home personnel. Several studies have shown that resident's behavioral symptoms increase the workload and burden experienced by the staff (Miyamoto et al., 2010; Mooniz-Cook et al., 2000; Sourial, McCusker, Cole & Abrahamowicz, 2001). In a recent study, Zwijsen et al. (2014) demonstrated that behavioral symptoms such as aggression predict staff distress.

Despite extensive evidence regarding the negative relationship between chronic exposure to stressors and family caregivers' well-being (Vitaliano, Zhang & Sacanlan, 2003), only a few studies have explored psychological distress among nursing home workers (Ejaz, Noelker, Menne & Bagaka's, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2005). However, studies involving other health professionals have demonstrated the negative association between work-related stress, burnout and psychological and physical health (Khamisa, Peltzer & Oldenburg, 2013; Ilhan et al., 2008). Anxiety, depression and somatization have been linked to work-related stress and burnout (Khamisa et al., 2013). Boey and colleagues (1997) found a negative effect of work stress on anxiety and depression. Similarly, Jourdain and Chenevert (2010) found a significant association between higher levels of depersonalization and higher psychosomatic complaints.

Further, elder care professionals must cope with populations with a range of diseases, levels of dependency, and varying needs. This situation may increase the negative effects on the mental and psychological health of staff (Ejaz et al., 2008). Although research on mental health outcomes among nursing home staff is scarce, factors such as staff burnout have been linked to the workers' physical and mental health (Woodhead et al., 2016). Ejaz et al. (2008) found high levels of depression in a large sample of long-term care workers, with 26% of the sample showing clinically relevant levels of depressive symptomatology. To our knowledge, however, there are no studies analyzing predictive factors of anxious symptomatology in nursing home staff.

Anxiety is an important outcome, given that it can be a significant precursor of other mental health problems, such as depression (e.g. Wittchen, Kessler, Pfister, & Lieb, 2000), and is likely to have an impact on workers' attitudes toward residents, quality of care, or job satisfaction (Cohen-Mansfield, 1995). Increasing our knowledge about predictors can assist in the development of interventions aimed at decreasing staff distress, and thereby improve the quality of the care received by residents.

The study hypotheses are the following: a) Variables related to work conditions such as number of working hours will be related to staff anxiety levels; b) guilt and burnout (depersonalization) levels will be associated with staff anxiety levels; and c) variables associated with the time spent with families and quality of this contact will be associated with staff-reported anxiety levels.

8.2 Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were 101 staff members of five nursing homes located in the extended metropolitan area of Madrid, Spain. All of the facilities agreed to participate in a larger

study that tested a collaborative intervention between nursing home staff members and families of residents. The data used in this study are from the baseline assessment that was conducted in the nursing homes by psychologists unaware of the main hypothesis of the study. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Rey Juan Carlos University.

Measures

Staff and nursing home characteristics. We obtained information on staff gender, occupation, number of years working with older people, number of years working in his/her current position, number of weekly hours in contact with the residents, and number of weekly hours in contact with the relatives of the residents. In addition, the average levels of staff anxiety levels per nursing facility was also assessed using the anxiety scale described below. Although additional descriptive data would be useful, the limited time available for staff to complete the assessment instruments precluded obtaining such information.

Anxiety symptoms. Staff members' anxious symptomatology was measured using the tension sub-scale of the Profile of Moods State (POMS, McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971) questionnaire. This sub-scale contains 9 items, each of which is a mood descriptor (e.g., nervous) and participants are asked to indicate how often they have experienced that particular mood recently using a 5-point Likert-type response scale (from 0 "never" to 4 "extremely"). This scale has shown good psychometric properties in previous studies (e.g., Brown, Coogle & Wegelin, 2016; Ruiz-Robledillo, Sariñana-González, Pérez-Blasco, González-Bono, & Moya-Albiol, 2015), including strong associations with other anxiety measures (e.g., Gibson 1997). The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale in the present study was .86.

Guilt feelings in caregivers

Quality of the relationship with the resident families. The quality of the relationship with the families was measured through a single item: "How would you rate the quality of your relationship with residents' families?". Answers ranged from 1 ("very poor") to 4 ("very good").

Difficulties in daily contact with families. The degree to which the staff rated difficulties in daily contact with family members was measured through the single item: "To what extent is daily contact with family members difficult for you." Answers ranged from 1 ("not at all difficult") to 4 ("very difficult").

Depersonalization. An adaptation of the depersonalization subscale of the Maslach burnout inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used. It is a 5-item scale (e.g, "I feel like I don't care about what happen to residents or to their families") with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 "never" to 7 "every day." This scale measures depersonalization symptoms of the staff regarding residents and their relatives. Cronbach's alpha for this scale in this study was .61.

Caregiving burden. The level of burden due to resident care was measured by a single item ("How much burden do you feel due to the care of the residents?") with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 "not at all" to 5 "extremely").

Guilt feelings. Staff were asked the degree to which they feel guilt regarding inability to provide care as well as they would like and was measured through a single item ("How guilty do you feel for not being able to care for the residents as you would like?"). Answers ranged from 0 ("Not at all guilty") to 10 ("very guilty").

Statistical analyses.

Following Tabachnick & Fidell's (2001) criteria, analyses for sample normality and outliers (univariate and multivariate) were conducted. Sample characteristics were analyzed through descriptive data. The associations and differences between the assessed variables were tested through t-test, ANOVAs, and Pearson correlation analysis. To analyze the contribution of each of the assessed variables to the staff's anxious symptomatology, a two-step hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. In the first step, sociodemographic data were controlled (gender, years working with elderly population, years working in the current position, hours per week of work with the residents, and hours per week of contact with family members of the residents). Included in the second step were depersonalization, quality of the relationship with the resident families, guilt feelings, workload, and difficulties in daily contact with families. All analyses were conducted using SPSS v.23.

8.3 Results

Outliers

No univariate (z scores greater than 3.29, $p < 0.001$) nor multivariate (Mahalanobis distance = $p < 0.001$) outliers were found in the sample.

Sample characteristics

The sample was primarily female (84.2%). Respondents were primarily nursing assistants and nurses (59.4%), 24.8% were other health professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physicians), and 19.6 % were administrative staff in the facilities (e.g., receptionists, managers). Means, standard deviations, and ranges of the assessed variables are shown in Table 8.1. Differences in weekly hours spent with relatives and difficulties with them were found between professionals: nurses and nursing assistants spent less time with relatives than the other professionals (nurses and nursing

assistants mean = 11.29; SD = 14.25; other professionals mean: 23.49; SD = 17.01; $t = 3.90$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, differences in average anxious symptomatology were found between facilities. Specifically, the staff from one nursing home reported lower anxiety levels than the staff from the other nursing homes (facilities with higher anxiety levels mean = 12.62; SD = 6.53; facility with lower anxiety level: 6.25; SD = 4.71; $F = 2.86$; $p < 0.05$). With the aim of controlling for these differences in the following analyses, the variables occupation and nursing facility have been dummy coded, with a score of 1 indicating “nurses and nursing assistants” and “nursing homes where the staff reported lower anxiety levels”.

Table 8.1. Characteristics of the sample

| | | All staff (N=101) | Nursing staff (N=60) | Other professionals (N=41) |
|--|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Years working with older population | Mean | 7.05 | 6.79 | 7.45 |
| | S.D. | 5.48 | 6.03 | 4.60 |
| | Range | 0-25 | 0-25 | 0-24 |
| Years working in current position | Mean | 4.20 | 3.78 | 4.83 |
| | S.D. | 3.12 | 3.33 | 2.86 |
| | Range | 0-12 | 0-12 | 0-10 |
| Weekly hours in contact with residents | Mean | 39.37 | 41.66 | 36.02 |
| | S.D. | 13.13 | 13.74 | 11.56 |
| | Range | 0-12 | 7-84 | 8-51 |
| Weekly hours in contact with relatives | Mean | 16.24 | 11.29 | 23.48 |
| | S.D. | 16.48 | 14.25 | 17.01 |
| | Range | 0-49 | 0-49 | 0-49 |

Table 8.1. Characteristics of the sample (cont.)

| | | All staff (N=101) | Nursing staff (N=60) | Other professionals (N=41) |
|---|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Guilt | Mean | 5.27 | 5.58 | 4.80 |
| | S.D. | 2.36 | 2.30 | 2.40 |
| | Range | 0-10 | 0-10 | 0-9 |
| Care burden | Mean | 2.66 | 2.93 | 2.27 |
| | S.D. | 1.12 | 1.00 | 1.16 |
| | Range | 1-5 | 1-5 | 1-5 |
| Depersonalization | Mean | 10.45 | 10.87 | 9.85 |
| | S.D. | 4.60 | 4.73 | 4.41 |
| | Range | 5-24 | 5-24 | 5-24 |
| Quality of relationship with relatives | Mean | 2.98 | 2.98 | 2.98 |
| | S.D. | 0.60 | 0.57 | 0.65 |
| | Range | 1-4 | 1-4 | 1-4 |
| Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | Mean | 1.84 | 1.82 | 1.88 |
| | S.D. | 0.67 | 0.57 | 0.81 |
| | Range | 1-4 | 1-4 | 1-4 |
| Anxiety | Mean | 12.11 | 12.90 | 10.98 |
| | S.D. | 6.62 | 6.33 | 6.94 |
| | Range | 0-29 | 1-28 | 0-29 |

Correlations

The correlations among variables are shown in Table 8.2. Staff's anxious symptomatology was significantly and positively associated with guilt for not caring as well as they wished, caregiving burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in daily contact with relatives. In addition, a lower perceived quality of relationship with the relatives of the residents was negatively and significantly associated with anxious symptomatology. No significant associations were found between the other assessed variables and anxiety.

Guilt feelings in caregivers

Staff who reported devoting more weekly hours in contact with the relatives and those reporting lower difficulties in daily contact with relatives reported lower levels of caregiving burden. In addition, being a nurse or nursing assistant was associated with higher levels of burden. Further, working in the nursing home in which professionals reported lower anxiety levels was significantly associated with more years working with older population and in the same position, and more weekly hours spent in contact with relatives.

Table 8.2. Correlations matrix

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Gender (1 = male) | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Years working with older population | -0.19 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Years working in current position | -0.18 | 0.61** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Weekly hours in contact with residents | 0.11 | -0.04 | -0.10 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Weekly hours in contact with relatives | 0.10 | -0.14 | -0.06 | 0.06 | - | | | | | | | |
| 6. Occupation (1 = nurses and nursing assistants) | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.16 | 0.21* | -0.37** | - | | | | | | |
| 7. Nursing facility (1 = nursing homes where staff reported lower anxiety levels) | -0.13 | 0.30* | 0.49** | -0.11 | -0.22* | 0.17 | - | | | | | |
| 8. Guilt | 0.10 | 0.02 | -0.18 | 0.16 | -0.04 | 0.16 | -0.07 | - | | | | |
| 9. Care burden | -0.04 | 0.14 | 0.06 | 0.06 | -0.31** | 0.29** | -0.08 | 0.15 | - | | | |
| 10. Depersonalization | 0.07 | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.17 | 0.00 | 0.11 | -0.04 | 0.05 | 0.38** | - | | |
| 11. Quality of relationship with relatives | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.07 | -0.01 | 0.15 | 0.07 | -0.06 | 0.16 | -0.05 | -0.04 | - | |
| 12. Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | -0.22* | 0.20* | -0.04 | -0.04 | -0.09 | -0.05 | -0.04 | 0.15 | 0.29** | 0.36* | -0.26* | - |
| 13. Anxiety | -0.12 | 0.03 | -0.06 | 0.10 | -0.08 | 0.14 | -0.26** | 0.28** | 0.52** | 0.41** | -0.23* | 0.41** |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Regression model

The results of the regression model for analyzing the influence of the independent variables on staff's anxious symptomatology is shown in Table 8.3. Of the variables included in the first step of the analysis, only the nursing facility reporting lower anxiety contributed significantly to the model, explaining 15% of the variance of the staff's anxious symptomatology. All variables included in the second step contributed significantly to the explanation of anxious symptomatology. The variables included in the second step contributed significantly to the explanation of anxious symptomatology, explaining 42% of this variance. The final model explains 57% of the variance ($F = 9.79$, $p < 0.0001$). The following variables contributed significantly to the explanation of staff anxiety levels: working in nursing homes where the staff showed higher average anxiety levels, guilt feelings, care burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in interactions with families and quality of the relationship with the families. Guilt feelings, care burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in the interactions with families were positively associated with anxious symptoms. Conversely, quality of relationships with families was negatively associated with staff anxiety levels.

Table 8.3. Hierarchical regression for the prediction of anxious symptomatology

| | Step 1 | | Step 2 | |
|--|---------|----------|---------|----------|
| | β | T | β | T |
| Gender (1 = female) | -0.140 | -1.415 | -0.124 | -1.653 |
| Years working with older population | 0.000 | 0.000 | -0.154 | -1.653 |
| Years working in current position | 0.141 | 0.987 | 0.218 | 1.970 |
| Weekly hours in contact with residents | 0.050 | 0.494 | -0.039 | 0.969 |
| Weekly hours in contact with relatives | -0.071 | -0.665 | 0.902 | 0.370 |
| Occupation (1 = nursing assistants and nurses) | 0.192 | 1.715 | 0.113 | 1.301 |
| Nursing facility (1 = nursing homes where staff reported lower anxiety levels) | -0.390 | -3.307** | -0.313 | -3.501** |
| Guilt | | | 0.233 | 3.061** |
| Care burden | | | 0.282 | 3.255** |
| Depersonalization | | | 0.246 | 3.615** |
| Quality of relationship with relatives | | | -0.181 | -2.399** |
| Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | | | 0.273 | 3.231** |
| R ² | | 0.15 | | 0.57 |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

8.4 Discussion

The aim of the present study was to analyze the effects of psychosocial variables on the anxiety of nursing home staff. In addition to variables that have usually been associated with distress among nursing home workers (such as burden and burnout), we found that anxious symptoms are also associated with feelings of guilt about care provision and having difficulties with the relatives of the residents. In contrast, we did not find support for the hypothesis regarding the association between the work variables and staff anxiety levels.

Our findings are consistent with studies showing associations between burden and mental health consequences among professionals (Banglioni, Cooper & Hingley, 1990; Ejaz et al., 2008; Escribà-Agüir, & Pérez-Hoyos, 2007; Ilhan et al., 2008) and family caregivers (Black & Almeida, 2004; Cooper, Balamurali & Livingston, 2007; Savundranayagam, Montgomery, & Kosloski, 2010). Similar findings have been obtained regarding burnout. In particular, depersonalization has been shown to predict anxiety levels in long-term care staff (Khamisa et al., 2013). This result is consistent with our hypothesis regarding the relationship between depersonalization and anxiety levels of nursing home staff.

Support was also found for the hypothesis regarding contact with families and staff anxiety levels. The results further suggest that the quality of the relationship between staff and relatives, as well as difficulties in daily contact with the relatives, are associated with staff anxiety symptoms. Similarly, our results showed that working at a nursing facility whose professionals displayed significantly lower anxiety levels was correlated with more time spent with relatives. Thus, it appears that the contact with family members may play a role in the anxiety experienced by workers. These findings are consistent with

studies of family and staff relationships (Abrahamson et al., 2011; Abrahamson, et al., 2009; Bramble et al., 2011; Chen, et al., 2007) and also with studies of interventions aimed at improving the relationship between the two groups, which reduced levels of distress (e.g., depressive symptoms; Robison et al., 2007).

To our knowledge, this is the first study to analyze the relationship between guilt feelings and anxiety in nursing home staff. Guilt feelings have been shown to be associated with mental health in family caregivers (Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba & Romero-Moreno, 2010). The results of this study suggest that guilt feelings also play a role in professional caregivers' mental health. Specifically, experiencing guilt for not providing care as well as desired is associated with higher anxiety levels. This result is consistent with research by Bourbonnais and Ducharme (2010), in which nursing home staff expressed guilt feelings about not having enough time to spend with the residents. In addition, they experienced guilt when they were unable to resolve problematic situations and felt inefficient. Further, Chung (2012) showed that perceptions of nursing home staff about the care provided were negative when they were unable to perform their tasks as well as they would like.

Additionally, issues related to limited available resources (e.g., number of staff) may contribute to staff guilt levels. However, considering that perceptions of self-efficacy have been found to be related to burnout (Duffy et al., 2009; Evers, Tomic & Brouwers, 2001; Mackenzie & Peragine, 2003), workers who perceive a lack of training in performing tasks or who have lower perceived self-efficacy may be less satisfied with the quality of care they are able to provide. This situation in turn results in guilt about the discrepancy between the care they offer and the care they aspire to provide. Thus, it appears that when long-term care workers perceive difficulties in their professional tasks, for example lack of time or training, they in turn feel guilt. Considering the association

between guilt levels and distress, future studies should continue to explore this potential path between limited resources, guilt, and staff distress.

The present study has several limitations. First, the sample is composed of a limited number of professionals and information is not available for non-responders. Second, there may be differences between professionals (e.g., nursing assistants or psychologist) in the time spent with residents or families that may have different effects on their anxiety levels. Similarly, our results showed differences between facilities in average anxiety levels. These results are consistent with prior research regarding the influence of the organizational factors in workers' mental health (Cooper et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2005). There may be differences in working conditions among the facilities that influence the staff's level of anxiety. It would be useful to replicate this research in larger and more diverse samples. Third, complex interactions between staff and families may be not captured through the measures we have used. For example, staff may have positive interactions with some members of one family but not with others. Fourth, we do not have data regarding the number and characteristics of professionals who declined to participate in the study, and therefore we cannot analyze differences between respondents and non-respondents. Although confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed to participants, their responses may be affected by social desirability. These aspects limit the generalizability of the results to the general nursing home staff population. Fifth, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, alternative explanations for the results may exist. For example, higher anxiety levels among nursing home staff could predict both poor relationships with families and feelings of guilt about the care offered. Given the strength of the findings in this initial study, longitudinal and experimental research is recommended to confirm the results.

Sixth, another potential limitation of this study relates to the assessment instruments used. It was necessary to develop an assessment battery that was relatively brief (to accommodate busy staff schedules) and easy to understand. Therefore, most of the assessed variables were measured through single items created for the present investigation. Based on research showing that measuring psychosocial constructs through single items can be a successful way of obtaining relevant information (Bayes, Limonero, Barreto, & Comas, 1995), we feel reasonably confident in the results. However, further research should replicate this study using multi-item scales with established psychometric properties (cf., Davey, Barratt, Butow, & Deeks, 2007).

Finally, other variables that may contribute to an understanding of staff levels of anxious symptoms were not measured. For example, conflicts with other professionals in the facility may also contribute to staff levels of anxiety. Lee and Akhtar (2011) obtained a significant association between burnout and the existence of difficulties with other workers. More specifically, the burnout dimension of depersonalization was positively associated with conflicts with colleagues and care recipients, and with workload. Also, some factors related to the nursing home population affect the well-being of nursing home staff. Working with more cognitively impaired residents (e.g., a person with Alzheimer disease) is associated with higher levels of work-related stress (Brodaty et al., 2003; Zimmerman et al., 2005). In addition, the exposure to aggressive behaviors in residents is associated with significant levels of stress and burden (Zeller, Dassen, Kok, Needham & Halfens, 2011), contributing significantly to the staff's anxious symptomatology (Moniz-Cook et al., 2000).

Despite the mentioned limitations, the present study contributes to the existing literature by showing specific psychosocial dimensions that explain a significant percentage (57%) of variance of nursing home workers anxious symptomatology. In

Guilt feelings in caregivers

addition to variables associated with staff well-being in prior research, the findings highlight the relevance of problems in daily interaction with families, quality of the relationship with families, and staff feelings of guilt as relevant predictors of workers' levels of anxiety.

Clinical implications

The results of this study extend the literature on distress experienced by nursing home staff. Specifically, work-related factors (burden and burnout), problems with family members, and guilt about the care offered are relevant variables for understanding staff anxious symptomatology. These findings can serve as a useful guide for the development of interventions to increase staff well-being. Ultimately, such interventions may also improve the well-being and the quality of care received by the residents.

Given that guilt feelings about care provision contributes to staff anxiety, it is important to address factors that contribute to those guilt feelings and to develop interventions that may reduce their effect. Guilt feelings may be activated by different situations, such as not having enough time to spend with the residents or finding it difficult to face problematic situations with families or residents (Bourboinais & Ducharme, 2010). Therefore, increasing personnel or adapting work tasks so that they contribute to increased time spent with the residents may decrease guilt feelings. Other interventions could provide staff members with skills or tools for optimizing their interactions with the residents without increasing time spent caring, for example by improving communication skills during care (Burgio et al., 2001). Training in psychological skills for managing negative feelings such as guilt or anxiety may also contribute to reducing staff members' levels of distress.

Additionally, our findings support the development of interventions aimed at improving family-staff relations (e.g., Pillemer et al., 2003; Tisher, Dean & Tisher, 2009; Bauer, Fetherstonhaugh, Tarzia y Chenco (2014). Considering that the quality of the relationship between staff and families contributes to staff members' anxiety, developing and implementing interventions targeted at improving this relationship are recommended. A number of strategies have been proposed in the literature, including decreasing and modifying negative attitudes of both groups; changing unrealistic expectations of family members about the care of their relatives, and improving communication between staff and families (Abrahamson et al., 2009; Bauer & Nay, 2011; Haesler et al., 2007; Pillemer et al., 2003; Tisher et al., 2009; Utley-Smith et al., 2009). Intervening in factors such as guilt that in turn reduce staff anxious symptoms has the potential to improve the overall quality of care in nursing homes.

Bullet points

- Psychosocial variables explain a significant percentage of the variance in staff anxious symptoms (57%).
- Staff member's feelings of guilt about the care provided, and having difficulties and poor quality relationships with family members, contribute to the levels of anxiety.
- Developing interventions targeting staff member's guilt feelings and quality of family-staff relationships may improve workers well-being, and, in turn, the quality of care received by residents.

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Capítulo 9:

Discusión general

En este apartado se exponen las principales aportaciones y conclusiones resultantes de los estudios que componen la Tesis Doctoral.

En un primer momento se comentarán las características de la muestra con el fin de comprobar su semejanza con la población cuidadora de investigaciones previas, con el fin de confirmar la posibilidad de comparación de los resultados obtenidos con los encontrados en estudios anteriores. En segundo lugar, se revisarán los objetivos inicialmente planteados en cada estudio, los hallazgos obtenidos y se comentarán las principales aportaciones de cada uno de ellos. Así mismo, se realizará una reflexión conjunta de las aportaciones de todos los estudios al área de conocimiento sobre la culpa experimentada a la hora de cuidar a una persona mayor con demencia. Tras esta reflexión, se desarrollarán las principales implicaciones prácticas de los resultados, las limitaciones de los estudios y las posibles líneas de investigación futuras. Finalmente, se presentan las conclusiones principales de los estudios realizados, a modo de resumen de las aportaciones centrales de la Tesis Doctoral comentadas en la discusión.

9.1 Características sociodemográficas de la muestra

Dado que la presente Tesis Doctoral se compone de cuatro estudios realizados en el ámbito del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia y un quinto estudio sobre la población de cuidadores formales de personas mayores, en el presente subapartado se analizarán por separado las muestras de los cuatro primeros estudios (cuidadores familiares) y del quinto trabajo (cuidadores formales).

9.1.1 Características sociodemográficas de la muestra de cuidadores familiares

De manera general, los datos descriptivos de los participantes en los estudios realizados con cuidadores de familiares afectados por algún tipo de demencia se asemejan a los encontrados en otros estudios nacionales e internacionales. Así, la muestra empleada

en los estudios estaba compuesta en su gran mayoría por mujeres, al igual que en trabajos previos e informes estadísticos sobre la población cuidadora (ver p. ej., Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006a). De modo más específico, las características de la muestra no difieren de las expuestas en el estudio representativo llevado a cabo por el IMSERSO (2005) sobre la figura del cuidador familiar en nuestro país. Concretamente, el informe del IMSERSO señaló que en el 83.6% de los casos el cuidador familiar era una mujer. Este dato no difiere de manera significativa de las cifras obtenidas en los estudios que componen la Tesis Doctoral, en los que las muestras empleadas estaban compuestas en su mayoría por mujeres. De manera específica, en los estudios uno, dos y tres el porcentaje de mujeres cuidadoras fue de 77.2%; 77%, y; 66.2%, respectivamente. A pesar de que el porcentaje de mujeres en el estudio cuatro fue del 50%, podemos señalar que el dato expuesto es el número de cuidadores que finalizaron la intervención piloto implementada. No obstante, este dato concuerda por los ofrecidos en el meta-análisis sobre eficacia de intervenciones psicológicas para la población cuidadora de Pinquart y Sörensen (2006b). En su trabajo, los autores calcularon que el porcentaje de cuidadoras participantes en estudios de intervención se encuentra entre el 40% y el 100%, siendo la media de mujeres participantes de un 69%, algo inferior a las cifras señaladas por los estudios descriptivos. No obstante, nos parece significativo resaltar que, de los 20 casos inicialmente derivados, el 80% eran mujeres y, en el 100% de los casos que rechazaban la participación en el estudio de intervención, el cuidador era una mujer. De la misma manera, datos concernientes a otras variables sociodemográficas, como la edad, parentesco con la persona cuidada, las horas cuidado del familiar, son similares a los proporcionadas por el informe sobre la figura del cuidador en España (IMSERSO, 2005) y otros estudios internacionales (ver p. ej., Alzheimer's Association, 2018; Butterwoth et al., 2010; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006a).

En relación a las características de la persona cuidada, los datos también se asemejan a las cifras aportadas por los informes realizados tanto a escala nacional como internacional. En este sentido, la mayoría de las personas cuidadas presentaban el diagnóstico de enfermedad de Alzheimer. El porcentaje de familiares afectados por ese tipo de demencia en nuestros estudios osciló entre el 61.4% y el 76.5% de los casos. Estas cifras son similares a las expuestas en los informes mundiales que sitúan a la enfermedad de Alzheimer como el tipo de demencia más prevalente (ver p. ej., Alzheimer's Association, 2018; OECD, 2018). En esta línea, otras investigaciones realizadas en España enmarcadas en el ámbito del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia también han obtenido datos semejantes (p. ej., Losada et al., 2018).

Por otro lado, las puntuaciones de la variables relacionada con el estrés del cuidado (frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos realizados por el familiar cuidado) y las de resultado evaluadas en esta Tesis Doctoral (p. ej., sintomatología depresiva y ansiosa) son comparables a las puntuaciones obtenidas en otros estudios que utilizan las mismas escalas para su medición (p. ej., Burgio, Stevens, Guy, Roth, y Haley, 2003; Gallagher et al., 2011; Losada et al., 2015; Roach et al., 2013; Romero-Moreno et al., 2010; Springate y Tremont, 2014).

En conclusión, parece que las características sociodemográficas de las muestras de los diferentes estudios pueden equipararse a las de otros estudios realizados con cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia, por lo que los resultados obtenidos pueden ser comparados con ciertas garantías con los estudios previos en dicho ámbito.

9.1.2 Características sociodemográficas de la muestra de cuidadores formales

El quinto estudio desarrollado en el Capítulo 8 contó con una muestra de cuidadores formales, concretamente trabajadores de residencias de personas mayores. En

relación a la similitud de las características sociodemográficas de las muestras utilizadas en el estudio y en la literatura previa, parece que éstas se asemejan entre sí. Al igual que sucedía en los estudios realizados con cuidadores familiares (ver estudios 1, 2, 3 y 4), la muestra estuvo compuesta en su mayoría por mujeres (84.2%). Estos datos son similares a los estudios previos realizados con profesionales de residencias de personas mayores, en los que la muestra estaba conformada mayormente por mujeres (p. ej., Bishop et al., 2008; Chisholm et al., 2018; Muntaner et al., 2006), llegando en ocasiones hasta el 91% de los participantes (Brodaty et al., 2003). Así mismo, la mayor cantidad de respuestas obtenidas fueron emitidas por trabajadores que ocupaban puestos de enfermería y de auxiliar de enfermería (también llamados gerocultores). En este sentido, los datos se corresponden con investigaciones previas realizadas en residencias, en las que la mayoría de participantes eran auxiliares y personal de enfermería (Brodaty et al., 2003), mientras que un gran amplio número de estudios se centran de manera exclusiva a esta población (p. ej., Abrahamson et al., 2009; Bishop et al., 2008). En cuanto a los niveles de burnout (medidos a través de la dimensión de despersonalización del instrumento MBI), la muestra de nuestro estudio informó de niveles medios (puntuación de 10.39). Estos valores son ligeramente superiores a los informados por trabajos previos (p. ej., Duffy et al., 2009). De hecho, el reciente meta-análisis llevado a cabo por Costello, Walsh, Cooper y Livingston (2018) obtuvo valores de 6.29 para la dimensión de despersonalización en profesionales de residencias. No obstante, los mismos autores encontraron un rango de valores entre 2.39 y 10.19 para la despersonalización (Costello et al., 2018), siendo este último dato más cercano a los resultados de nuestro estudio. Por lo tanto, dada la semejanza de las características entre nuestra muestra de cuidadores formales y las empleadas en otros estudios parece que es posible la realización de comparaciones entre nuestros resultados y la literatura existente.

9.2 Principales aportaciones de los estudios

A lo largo de las últimas cuatro décadas, un amplio número de investigaciones se ha dirigido a analizar el malestar experimentado por los cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia, tomando como punto de partida diferentes adaptaciones del modelo de estrés y afrontamiento propuesto por Lazarus y Folkman (1984). Uno de los modelos explicativos del estrés y consecuencias del cuidado más reciente y con mayor apoyo empírico es el modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado propuesto por Knight y Sayegh (2010). Este enfoque entiende que el malestar de los cuidadores no es el simple resultado de la mera exposición a diferentes estresores (p. ej., comportamientos problemáticos), sino que diferentes variables, tanto del cuidador como de la persona cuidada e incluso del contexto sociocultural, modulan el impacto de los estresores en el estado de los cuidadores. Tomando este modelo como referencia, diferentes investigaciones han analizado el malestar físico y psicológico de los cuidadores, siendo las variables psicológicas más estudiadas los niveles de depresión, la carga y, en menor medida, la ansiedad (por ej. Cuijpers, 2005; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2003). Sin embargo, la literatura muestra que los cuidadores experimentan un mayor rango de reacciones emocionales, habiendo sido infraestudiadas otro tipo de emociones, entre las que podemos encontrar la culpa.

Como puede leerse en el apartado de Objetivos, la presente Tesis Doctoral tiene como objetivo general el análisis en profundidad de los sentimientos de culpa experimentados por los cuidadores. A través de los primeros tres estudios se han analizado los diferentes factores implicados en su etiología y mantenimiento en el ámbito del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia. En primer lugar, se ha explorado la relación existente entre el compromiso con valores personales y la culpa (Estudio 1). A continuación, se realizó un acercamiento global a los factores implicados en la aparición

y mantenimiento de los sentimientos de culpa (Estudio 2). En tercer lugar, tomando como partida los resultados obtenidos en el Estudio 2 e investigaciones en otras poblaciones sobre los procesos de inducción de culpa se analizó la existencia de este tipo de procesos y su relación con los niveles de malestar de los cuidadores. Específicamente, se desarrolló un instrumento específico para la medición de los procesos de inducción de culpa en el cuidado (Estudio 3). Asimismo, se ha diseñado e implementado una intervención específica para cuidadores con elevados niveles de culpa y malestar psicológico, analizando su eficacia (Estudio 4). Por último, a través del Estudio 5 se ha realizado un primer acercamiento al estudio de la culpa y factores asociados a ésta en cuidadores formales de personas mayores.

A continuación, se describen las principales aportaciones de cada uno de los estudios (para un análisis más detallado de las aportaciones de cada estudio se remite al apartado de discusión incluido en cada uno de los estudios anteriormente presentados).

9.2.1 Estudio 1: Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers

El estudio 1 tuvo como objetivo el análisis de la relación existente entre el grado de compromiso con distintos valores personales y los sentimientos de culpa experimentados por cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia.

En primer lugar, los resultados obtenidos proporcionan apoyo empírico a la adecuación de las concepciones multidimensionales del estrés y malestar experimentado por cuidadores. En concreto, apoyan la importancia de tener en cuenta la existencia de variables moduladoras del efecto de los estresores, en este caso los valores personales, a la hora de explicar los sentimientos de culpa. En esta línea, los resultados mostraron que uno de los principales estresores en el cuidado, la frecuencia de comportamientos problemáticos, dejó de ser predictor significativo de la culpa cuando se incluyó en el

modelo el compromiso con los valores personales. Además, teniendo en cuenta que los valores personales pueden considerarse como altamente influenciados y moldeados por el contexto social y cultural, los resultados de este estudio son consistentes y sirven como una evidencia más para respaldar el modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado propuesto por Knight y Sayegh (2010), así como los trabajos de Dilworth-Anderson et al. (2002). Según estos autores, el contexto cultural afecta a los valores y creencias de los cuidadores, así como a sus roles, responsabilidades e incluso el uso de servicios formales. En este caso se ha demostrado cómo los valores personales influyen a la hora de explicar el malestar emocional del cuidador, concretamente, los sentimientos de culpa presentes en esta población.

En segundo lugar, los resultados muestran la importancia del compromiso con valores relacionados con la vida y esfera familiar, y su relación con menores niveles de culpa. Así pues, aquellos cuidadores que otorgan mayor importancia y trabajan de manera activa en estas áreas de su vida parecen experimentar menos culpa. De forma congruente con este resultado, el compromiso con el valor del cuidado del familiar con demencia fue asociado de manera negativa con la culpa, es decir, aquellos cuidadores más comprometidos con su rol de cuidador sentían menos culpabilidad. Puesto que el cuidado del familiar suele ser un área de valor nuclear para la mayor parte de los cuidadores familiares, es entendible que aquellos que tengan la percepción de realizar acciones dirigidas al cuidado, esto es, de comportarse de forma coherente con dicho valor, experimenten menos sentimientos de culpa.

Por otro lado, los cuidadores más comprometidos con el valor de ocio también presentaban menores niveles de culpa. Con ello, este estudio suma evidencia a la literatura previa que señala el ocio como un factor protector contra el malestar psicológico en cuidadores, especialmente de procesos depresivos (p. ej., Mausbach et al., 2012; Romero-

Moreno et al., 2014), y subraya la importancia de la inclusión de técnicas dirigidas a aumentar este tipo de actividades en las intervenciones psicoterapéuticas dirigidas a cuidadores (p. ej., Losada, Márquez-González, y Romero-Moreno, 2011). Finalmente, y en contra de lo esperado, los cuidadores con mayor compromiso con la vida laboral informaron sentir más culpa. Estos resultados son congruentes con los trabajos de Spillers et al. (2008) y Bernard y Guarnaccia (2003), en los que aquellos cuidadores que trabajan al mismo tiempo que cuidan de sus familiares presentan mayores niveles de culpa. En este sentido, Rosa et al. (2010) encontraron que aquellos cuidadores de familiares con demencia que experimentan mayor conflicto de roles entre su vida laboral y familiar experimentan mayor malestar emocional, que podría conducir a sentimientos de culpa. En otras palabras, la exposición de los cuidadores a demandas incompatibles originadas en el contexto laboral y el familiar, en este caso aumentadas por las necesidades del familiar con demencia, ocasiona una situación en la que los cuidadores pueden sentirse sobrepasados y con sensación de falta de competencia, que podría conducir a la aparición de sentimientos de culpa derivados del no cumplimiento con sus roles de la manera deseada.

Por tanto, podemos concluir que las principales aportaciones del Estudio 1 son: a) el compromiso de los cuidadores con sus valores personales modula la relación entre el estrés y la culpa experimentada por los cuidadores, b) no todos los valores personales parecen influir de igual manera en el estado emocional del cuidador y sus sentimientos de culpa; y c) pueden identificarse perfiles de protección y vulnerabilidad a la culpa en cuidadores. De forma específica, los resultados sugieren, por un lado, el papel protector del compromiso con valores relacionados con la familia, el cuidado del familiar con demencia y, el ocio; y, por otro lado, el compromiso con el trabajo como factor de vulnerabilidad a la culpa.

9.2.2 Estudio 2: "I feel guilty". Exploring guilt-related dynamics in family caregivers of people with dementia

El segundo estudio, de naturaleza cualitativa, tuvo como objetivo principal el análisis en profundidad de la experiencia psicológica de la culpa, así como, los factores implicados en su etiología y mantenimiento en el proceso de cuidado de un familiar con demencia.

Los hallazgos de este estudio revelan la complejidad del fenómeno de la culpa en cuidadores. En este sentido, se han identificado dificultades relacionadas con la evaluación y trabajo terapéutico de la emoción de culpa. No han sido infrecuentes las ocasiones en las que se han identificado patrones evitativos del malestar y la culpa. Estos patrones podían variar en gravedad, desde las dificultades de etiquetación de la experiencia emocional como culpa hasta la organización del comportamiento con el fin de evitar esta emoción. Sirviendo como apoyo a la línea de investigaciones sobre la evitación experiencial en el cuidado y su efecto sobre los niveles de malestar físico y psicológico (ver p. ej., Márquez-González et al., 2018).

En relación con la etiología de la emoción de culpa, se han identificado siete factores implicados en su aparición y mantenimiento, respaldando las concepciones de la emoción de culpa como un constructo de naturaleza multidimensional (Losada et al., 2010; Punty y Foli, 2019). Una de las principales fuentes de culpa en cuidadores fueron todas aquellas autovaloraciones del comportamiento como inadecuado, insuficiente o alejado de las expectativas o ideales personales. Aquellas ocasiones en las que el cuidador valoraba que su comportamiento en el contexto del cuidado (p. ej., pérdidas de control, realizar acciones de autocuidado) no encajaba con sus creencias o ideales sobre cómo debe ser un buen cuidador o cómo debería comportarse y/o manejar la situación eran un factor clave en la aparición de sentimientos de culpabilidad. Estos resultados respaldan las

formulaciones tradicionales de la culpa (Kugler y Jones, 1992) y las adaptadas al contexto del cuidado de familiares con demencia (Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010; Prunty y Foli, 2019), en las que se propone la culpa como la emoción resultante de las autoevaluaciones negativas ante la inadecuación del comportamiento de uno mismo en relación con sus creencias e ideales de acción significativos. Es probable que aquellos cuidadores que presentan esquemas más rígidos (inflexibilidad cognitiva) sobre cómo debe ser un buen cuidador, y se autoevalúan y juzgan de manera más crítica cuando no cumplen con sus estándares, sufran una mayor culpabilidad y, también, un mayor malestar. Estos resultados son coherentes con los estudios que proponen la existencia de esquemas rígidos y pensamientos disfuncionales, de tipo “debería” como una de las principales fuentes de malestar psicológico en cuidadores (p. ej., Losada et al., 2006).

Por otro lado, diferentes participantes del estudio informaron de sentimientos de culpabilidad asociados a los cambios producidos por la demencia y, por ende, a la adopción del rol de cuidador (p. ej., sentirse culpable por ser el encargado de ordenar hacer alguna actividad al familiar con demencia). Este resultado sirve como apoyo a la literatura sobre el impacto negativo de los cambios en la relación con el familiar cuidado en el estado emocional del cuidador (Braun et al., 2009). Otra fuente de culpabilidad identificada fue la percepción de incompatibilidad entre las diferentes áreas vitales del cuidador y su insatisfacción con la atención proporcionada a éstas. Este hallazgo supone un apoyo a la reciente formulación de culpa propuesta por Prunty y Foli (2019), en la que la percepción de abandono de otras áreas de vida por el cuidado supone una de las dimensiones relevantes de la culpa. Asimismo, estos datos son coherentes con los resultados del Estudio 1, en el que se identificó una menor culpa en aquellos cuidadores con mayor compromiso (tendencia opuesta al abandono) con sus valores, en general, informaban de menos culpa), así como con los estudios que identifican el conflicto de

roles como fuente de malestar y culpa en cuidadores (Colin Reid, Stajduhar, y Chappell, 2010; Rosa et al., 2010; Spillers et al., 2008).

Finalmente, los resultados de este estudio cualitativo han puesto de manifiesto la existencia de la culpa como producto de la interacción con el familiar cuidado y/u otros familiares. Estos datos reafirman las posturas teóricas que definen la emoción de culpa desde una perspectiva interpersonal (Baumeister et al., 1994). Precisamente, se ha evidenciado la aparición de culpa como fruto de interacciones establecidas tanto con la persona cuidada como con otros familiares. Aquellos cuidadores que informaban ser objeto de críticas u otro tipo de comportamientos despectivos realizados por el familiar con demencia u otras personas allegadas, eran especialmente vulnerables a sentir culpabilidad. Este hallazgo supone la confirmación de la existencia de procesos de inducción de culpa en el contexto del cuidado, únicamente estudiados hasta la fecha en el trabajo de Fisher y Lieberman (1996), quienes los relacionaron con un mayor malestar en cuidadores hijos.

Como conclusiones de este estudio pueden formularse las siguientes: a) la existencia de patrones evitativos de la culpa en el cuidado; b) apoyo a las visiones de culpa como fenómeno multidimensional; c) el papel relevante de los esquemas cognitivos rígidos y disfuncionales (“deberías”) en la aparición de la culpa, y; d) la evidencia de la existencia de los procesos de inducción de culpa.

9.2.3 Estudio 3: Family guilt induction processes in dementia caregiving. The Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire (CGIQ)

El objetivo principal fijado en el tercer estudio fue el desarrollo de un instrumento dirigido a evaluar la frecuencia y la culpa derivada de diferentes comportamientos inductores de culpa realizados por el familiar cuidado y otros familiares.

El instrumento desarrollado mostró adecuadas propiedades psicométricas, así como adecuados índices de ajuste en su estructura factorial y niveles de validez convergente. Los resultados apoyan la utilización del *Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire* (CGIQ) como un instrumento útil para la medición de la frecuencia de exposición a este tipo de procesos en el contexto del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia.

En relación a los procesos de inducción de culpa realizados por la persona con demencia, el estudio demuestra la existencia de dichos comportamientos, tanto en el familiar cuidado como en otros familiares. A pesar de la frecuencia relativamente baja de este tipo de procesos identificada en este estudio, los cuidadores expuestos a estas dinámicas obtenían mayores niveles de estrés y malestar, concretamente, mayor sintomatología ansiosa, depresiva y culpa en general. Estos resultados son consistentes con los hallazgos de estudios previos, relativos al impacto negativo de la exposición a este tipo de procesos tanto en cuidadores (Fisher y Lieberman, 1996) como en adolescentes expuestos a este tipo de pautas parentales (p. ej., Donatelli et al., 2007; Rakow et al., 2009).

En cuanto al análisis del constructo, el análisis de la escala revela dos factores diferenciados; el primero de ellos, relativo a comportamientos y comentarios con intención de crítica y/u oposición al cuidado recibido por el cuidador (p. ej., *crítica mis acciones y decisiones en relación a su cuidado*). El segundo, en cambio, se refiere a todas aquellas críticas de carácter más global realizadas hacia el cuidador (p. ej., *me dice que soy una decepción para él*). Por otra parte, se extrajeron dos factores para la escala dirigida a medir los comportamientos inductores de culpa realizados por otros familiares distintos de la persona cuidada. De manera similar a la escala relativa al familiar cuidado,

el primer factor hace referencia a las críticas hacia las acciones del cuidador con respecto al cuidado de la persona con demencia (p. ej., *me hacen responsable del malestar de mi familiar*). El segundo factor comprendía comentarios con la intención de incrementar el grado de responsabilidad del cuidador sobre la situación del cuidado, evitando y diluyendo la responsabilidad de aquel que realiza la crítica sobre la tarea del cuidado (p. ej., *me recriminan que tienen otras responsabilidades y que mi situación es más idónea para el cuidado que la suya*). Tanto en el caso de los procesos de inducción realizados por el cuidador como por otros familiares, aquellos cuidadores que cuidaban a su progenitor informaban de una mayor frecuencia de estos comportamientos inductores, así como de la culpa inducida por estos, en comparación con aquellos encargados del cuidado de su pareja.

Además de la confirmación de la presencia de estos procesos de inducción, los resultados evidencian la presencia de culpa ocasionada por los diferentes comportamientos evaluados en las escalas del CGIQ. La asociación encontrada entre esta dimensión de culpa y las puntuaciones de culpa general medidas a través del CGQ suponen una evidencia adicional de la naturaleza multidimensional e interpersonal de la culpa (Baumeister et al., 1995). Conforme a lo hipotetizado, mayores niveles de culpa inducida se asocian con un malestar psicológico incrementado. Se identificó una asociación negativa entre la culpa inducida y la frecuencia de actividades de ocio, dato consistente con el estudio realizado por Romero-Moreno et al. (2014), en el que las hijas con mayores niveles de culpa realizaban menos actividades de ocio, en comparación con aquellas que no sentían culpa.

Finalmente, los resultados de este tercer estudio mostraron la presencia de otras emociones diferentes a la culpa como resultado de la exposición a los procesos de inducción de culpa, entre las destacan el enfado, la ira, la tristeza y la ansiedad. No

obstante, teniendo en cuenta las dificultades para utilizar la etiqueta de culpa reveladas por el Estudio 2 y el trabajo de Gonyea et al. (2008), que sugiere que en ocasiones la culpa se encuentra presente y “oculta” por otro tipo de emociones (p. ej. frustración, ira, etc.), podría ser posible que en esos el informe de otra emoción sea indicativo de los procesos de evitación anteriormente comentados, o bien que la culpa se encuentre de manera menos consciente y se “oculte” bajo esas otras reacciones. Son necesarios más estudios en esta línea que profundicen sobre estos aspectos.

En conclusión, los datos obtenidos proporcionan apoyo empírico a la hipótesis sobre la existencia de los procesos de inducción de culpa en el contexto del cuidado, siendo otras de las principales aportaciones las siguientes: a) obtención de un instrumento válido y fiable para la medición de los procesos de inducción de culpa en el cuidado; b) identificación de una asociación entre mayor frecuencia y culpa derivada de estos procesos y mayor malestar psicológico, y; c) identificación del parentesco como una variable clave, siendo los hijos/as especialmente vulnerables a estos procesos.

9.2.4 Estudio 4: Pilot study of a psychotherapeutic intervention for reducing guilt feelings in highly distressed dementia family caregivers

El cuarto estudio tuvo como objetivo general el desarrollo e implementación de una intervención psicológica específicamente desarrollada para abordar los sentimientos de culpa. La intervención se diseñó con base en tres creencias disfuncionales implicadas en el origen y mantenimiento de los sentimientos de culpa: a) *Tengo que ser una cuidadora competente y perfecta, teniendo siempre bajo control la tarea del cuidado*; b) *El autocuidado es un comportamiento egoísta. El bienestar y felicidad de los demás es mi principal responsabilidad*, y; c) *Hay formas correctas de sentir, debo experimentar emociones y pensamientos positivos hacia mi familiar y mi rol de cuidadora y no debo*

sentir determinadas emociones negativas. Partiendo del trabajo dirigido a la identificación de estos esquemas cognitivos, el objetivo terapéutico era favorecer la aceptación de la culpa y de las emociones negativas provenientes de las creencias disfuncionales, mediante la utilización de ejercicios y técnicas basadas en la terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (Hayes et al., 1999) y la terapia Centrada en la Compasión (Gilbert, 2009). Una importante asunción de partida en relación con este objetivo era que la normalización, comprensión y aceptación de la culpa finalmente llevarían al cambio adaptativo hacia una menor interferencia de esta (menor frecuencia e intensidad) en la vida de la persona.

Los resultados de este estudio mostraron la potencial eficacia de la intervención propuesta para la reducción clínicamente significativa de los niveles de culpa, sintomatología depresiva y ansiedad. De hecho, tres de los cuatro participantes obtuvieron índices de cambio fiables en la culpa experimentada y la sintomatología depresiva, mientras que dos de ellos informaron de reducciones clínicamente significativas en su nivel de ansiedad tras completar la intervención. Por consiguiente, y de modo consistente con la sugerencia de Zarit et al. (2010), se pone de manifiesto la utilidad de la aplicación de intervenciones específicas, que tengan en cuenta los perfiles y que estén dirigidas a trabajar las problemáticas concretas de los cuidadores. En esta línea, la implementación de programas psicoterapéuticos flexibles y que permitan la individualización de las técnicas y de los objetivos terapéuticos (como el aplicado en este Estudio 4) podrían ser una eficaz alternativa y solución a los problemas de tamaño del efecto de los programas protocolizados dirigidos a reducir el malestar en cuidadores.

Por otro lado, la reducción clínicamente significativa del malestar de los participantes tras la aplicación del programa específico para los sentimientos de culpa sirve como apoyo empírico para la utilización de técnicas basadas en enfoques

contextuales. Concretamente, la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso o ACT (Hayes et al., 1999) y la Terapia Centrada en la Compasión (Gilbert, 2009). En esta línea, han sido escasos los estudios dirigidos al análisis de la eficacia de ACT en cuidadores, a pesar de haber demostrado una eficacia similar a los tradicionales enfoques cognitivo-conductuales en cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia (Losada et al., 2015). Los resultados relativos a la potencial eficacia de las técnicas relacionadas con la compasión por uno mismo incluidas en la intervención aplicada son una de las principales aportaciones novedosas de este estudio. Los resultados respaldan los datos obtenidos por, hasta donde sabemos, el único estudio realizado hasta la fecha en el que se aplican técnicas basadas en la compasión en cuidadores de personas con demencia (Danucalov et al., 2013). No obstante, son necesarios ensayos controlados aleatorizados (*Randomized Controlled Trial; RCT*) para poder afirmar la eficacia de este tipo de enfoque terapéutico.

Recapitulando, las principales aportaciones de este cuarto estudio han sido: a) desarrollo de una intervención psicoterapéutica específica para elevados niveles de culpa y malestar; b) evidencia de su eficacia para la reducción clínica de niveles de culpa, depresión y ansiedad, y; c) respaldo empírico a la utilidad de enfoques terapéuticos basados en las terapias contextuales.

9.2.5 Estudio 5: Psychosocial predictors of anxiety feelings in nursing homes staff

Finalmente, el quinto estudio consistió en un primer acercamiento al estudio de la culpa en cuidadores formales de personas mayores. En este sentido, el objetivo principal fue la explorar la influencia de diferentes variables relativas a características socio-demográficas, psicológicas e interpersonales, entre ellos los sentimientos de culpa, sobre la sintomatología ansiosa de profesionales de residencias de personas mayores.

Por un lado, los resultados obtenidos acerca de la relación entre la dimensión de despersonalización y una mayor intensidad de la sintomatología ansiosa apoyan los planteamientos establecidos en la literatura sobre el impacto negativo del burnout en la salud psicológica de profesionales de enfermería (ver p. ej., Khamisa et al., 2015) y cuidadores formales de personas mayores (Griffiths, Wood, y Tai, 2018). Otro de los hallazgos coherentes con lo hasta ahora propuesto en la literatura sobre trabajadores de residencias de personas mayores, es la relación existente entre las dificultades de relación con los familiares de residentes y los niveles de malestar de los profesionales (p. ej., Abrahamson et al., 2009; Bauer et al., 2014). Estos datos apoyan la idoneidad y utilidad de programas de intervención dirigidos a los profesionales con los objetivos de mejorar las habilidades de comunicación y manejo de situaciones estresantes en lo respectivo a las relaciones con las familias de los residentes (Pillemer et al., 2003).

En cambio, la evidencia de la asociación entre los niveles de culpa y mayor sintomatología ansiosa suponen una aportación novedosa en la literatura sobre profesionales de residencias de personas mayores. De manera específica, los profesionales que informaban sentirse culpables por el cuidado que ofrecían a los residentes experimentaban más síntomas ansiosos. Este resultado respalda los datos obtenidos por Bourbonnais y Ducharme (2010), apoyando la hipótesis sobre la existencia de la emoción de culpa en el cuidado formal de personas mayores. A su vez, la asociación significativa entre los sentimientos de culpa por el cuidado ofrecido y el malestar experimentado por los cuidadores es coherente con la literatura sobre el cuidado informal o familiar, que señala la culpa como una emoción incapacitante y con impacto negativo sobre el estado psicológico del cuidador (p. ej., Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2010, 2018; Feast et al., 2017) y, por consiguiente, con los demás estudios que componen la presente Tesis Doctoral. Dada la influencia de diferentes factores organizacionales y

relacionales sobre el estado emocional de los profesionales, se pueden identificar diferentes perfiles de vulnerabilidad a la culpa a partir de los resultados obtenidos. Podríamos suponer que aquellos cuidadores que trabajan bajo mayor presión de tiempo, con menos recursos relativos a material o habilidades, percibirán que el cuidado ofrecido se aleja en mayor medida del cuidado deseado y, en consecuencia, experimentarán una mayor frecuencia e intensidad de sentimientos de culpabilidad. De hecho, estas hipótesis son coherentes con los hallazgos sobre la asociación entre las percepciones de satisfacción con el cuidado ofrecido y menores niveles de estrés y malestar en el cuidado familiar (p. ej., Lai, 2010) y, en el cuidado profesional en residencias (p. ej., Banglioni et al., 1990; Ejaz, et al., 2008).

A modo de conclusión, las aportaciones más reseñables de este estudio son: a) la diversidad de factores explicativos de la ansiedad experimentada por los profesionales de residencias de personas mayores, entre los que encontramos la culpa, y; b) la evidencia del impacto negativo de los sentimientos de culpa sobre la salud psicológica de los cuidadores formales.

9.3 Discusión general de los cinco estudios

En este apartado se ofrece una reflexión global sobre los resultados obtenidos en los distintos estudios que componen la presente Tesis Doctoral

9.3.1 Naturaleza multicausal de la culpa

Una de las principales aportaciones de la Tesis Doctoral es el apoyo empírico a las concepciones multidimensionales y multicausales del malestar en cuidadores, siendo en este caso destacada su relevancia a la hora de comprender los sentimientos de culpa. Así, los resultados muestran que la emoción de culpa no tiene un origen único y específico, sino que diversas variables y condiciones interactúan y modulan su aparición

y mantenimiento. Por ejemplo, en el Estudio 1 se muestra la necesidad de tener en cuenta el nivel de compromiso con los valores personales a la hora de explicar este tipo de emoción. Los hallazgos obtenidos no muestran una relación simple directa entre el compromiso con cualquier valor y los sentimientos de culpa; más bien, dependiendo del valor que sea, la relación entre compromiso con este y nivel de culpa varía. Mientras que el compromiso con valores relacionados con la familia, el cuidado del familiar con demencia y las actividades de ocio mostraron un potencial papel “protector” frente a los sentimientos de culpa, el compromiso con el trabajo, de manera contraria, predisponía a la experimentación de esta emoción.

Por su parte, la obtención de siete factores relacionados con el inicio y mantenimiento de culpa en el Estudio 2 evidencia, una vez más, la concepción multidimensional y multicausal de la culpa. Por ejemplo, la categoría *Culpa derivada de las propias acciones* es congruente con los planteamientos propuestos hasta ahora en la literatura sobre culpa en la población general (Kugler y Jones, 1992; Tangney y Dearing, 2002; Tilghman-Osborne et al., 2010;) y en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia (p. ej., Lee et al., 2017; Losada et al., 2010; Prunty y Foli, 2019), que señalan a la culpa como resultado de las valoraciones negativas que hace la persona sobre la adecuación de sus acciones a sus ideales. De manera recurrente, los cuidadores confesaban sentir culpa tras evaluar de manera negativa su actuación desde dicho rol y sus acciones dirigidas hacia su familiar con demencia. El comportamiento que el cuidador juzgaba como alejado, y en ocasiones contrario, a su ideal, valores y esquemas referentes a cómo debe ser el cuidado y cómo debe actuar un buen cuidador, podía ser de diversa índole. Concretamente, se identificaron los siguientes comportamientos evaluados como “negativos”: pérdidas de control con el familiar o “mal” comportamiento con éste; falta de estrategias para manejar situaciones difíciles las situaciones que implicaban una

separación del familiar, entre las que destacaban la realización de actividades de autocuidado y/u ocio o la utilización de recursos formales como ayuda domiciliaria; y las propias reacciones emocionales del cuidador. Por su parte, los resultados encontrados en la muestra de cuidadores formales o profesionales son coherentes con esta línea de argumentación. De hecho, en el Estudio 5 se apoya la visión de la culpa como resultado de la evaluación negativa del cuidado que ofrecían a las personas mayores que vivían en la residencia.

No obstante, la culpa experimentada por los cuidadores no se produce exclusivamente en relación al cuidado del familiar mayor, ya que también puede ser el resultado de autovaloraciones negativas sobre las acciones relacionadas con otras áreas relevantes de la vida de la persona. En este sentido, los cuidadores se sentían culpables cuando percibían que sus acciones en otras áreas de su vida (p. ej., cuidado de hijos pequeños, amistades, etc.), eran insuficientes o deficitarias, muchas veces como consecuencia de la alta dedicación de su tiempo y energía al cuidado del familiar con demencia. Por tanto, se refuerza la concepción reciente de culpa de Prunty y Foli (2019), en la que se señala la percepción de abandono de otras áreas como dimensión relevante para la culpa experimentada por cuidadores familiares.

Otra aportación importante del presente compendio de estudios es que se han identificado otras variables moduladoras de la culpa hasta ahora escasamente estudiadas en la literatura sobre cuidadores. En concreto, los cambios en la relación previa con la persona cuidada suponían otra fuente relevante de este tipo de sentimientos. Hasta donde sabemos, ningún estudio ha analizado la relación entre los cambios en la relación y culpa, por lo que podemos señalar este resultado como otra de las principales aportaciones de la Tesis Doctoral.

Otro de los hallazgos principales de esta Tesis Doctoral tiene que ver con la evidencia de la presencia de culpa inducida por una tercera persona. De manera inicial, en el segundo estudio, correspondiente a una aproximación cualitativa a la culpa, se puso de manifiesto la presencia de procesos de inducción de culpa, ya fueran realizados por el familiar cuidado o por otros familiares. Posteriormente, el Estudio 3 confirma la existencia de este tipo de procesos y su impacto sobre la salud psicológica del cuidador. Específicamente, se encuentra que estos procesos y la culpa inducida por estos se asocian con mayores niveles de sintomatología depresiva y ansiosa y una menor frecuencia de actividades de ocio, considerada esta última como condición potenciadora de la aparición y mantenimiento de problemas depresivos (p. ej., Romero-Moreno et al., 2012). Otra de las principales aportaciones del tercer estudio ha sido el desarrollo de un nuevo instrumento de evaluación en la literatura sobre cuidado familiar y los procesos de inducción de culpa, el *Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire* (CGIQ), que ha mostrado adecuadas propiedades psicométricas y una estructura multidimensional.

Podemos resaltar que los hallazgos de la presente Tesis Doctoral proporcionan apoyo empírico al modelo sociocultural de estrés y afrontamiento adaptado al cuidado, en este caso relativo a la capacidad explicativa del modelo para la comprensión del fenómeno de la culpa (Knight y Sayegh, 2010). Los resultados han encontrado evidencia que sugiere el impacto del compromiso con los valores personales, los juicios sobre el propio comportamiento y las dinámicas de interacción familiar sobre los niveles de malestar del cuidador, así como su papel modulador en la relación entre la exposición a estresores y los sentimientos de culpa. Por otra parte, como se ha comentado anteriormente, los resultados también sugieren que los planteamientos acerca de la influencia del contexto sociocultural en la explicación de la culpa son pertinentes, dada la gran permeabilidad de valores personales, los esquemas cognitivos y el funcionamiento

familiar a dicha influencia a la cultura. En este caso, en nuestro país los valores de la familia y la tradición cristiana y, más concretamente, católica (que favorece la culpa como resultado de la comisión de pecados/errores) aún ejercen un peso relevante y podrían facilitar el desarrollo de esquemas cognitivos rígidos (p. ej., un buen cuidador no debe equivocarse nunca, nunca puede pedir ayuda, etc.) que estarían en la base de juicios negativos sobre el propio comportamiento, generadores de culpa, cuando este no se ajusta a dichos esquemas. De manera similar, los procesos de inducción de culpa pueden hipotetizarse como más frecuentes e influyentes en aquellas familias en las que este tipo de valores estén activos, siendo estas familias, por tanto, un contexto potencialmente facilitador de críticas al cuidador cuando este no se comporta de acuerdo con tales valores (p. ej., salir a tomar un café, decidir llevar al familiar a un centro de día). A su vez, en aquellos cuidadores con creencias desadaptativas, estos esquemas facilitadores de la culpa se activarían con mayor facilidad ante esos comentarios del familiar cuidado u otros, facilitando la aparición de culpa inducida.

En conclusión, los resultados de esta Tesis Doctoral resaltan dos aspectos fundamentales. Por un lado, los resultados señalan la necesidad de considerar la influencia del contexto interpersonal en el origen y mantenimiento de la culpa. Por lo que se hace evidente la necesidad de ampliar las definiciones de culpa, que limitan su aparición a un resultado de juicios cognitivos de la propia persona, que tengan en cuenta las dinámicas de interacción existentes entre los cuidadores y su entorno familiar y social.

9.3.2 La identificación de perfiles en los cuidadores en las variables moduladoras

A lo largo de los cinco estudios, se ha puesto de manifiesto que los cuidadores (tanto formales como familiares) que informaban de mayores niveles de culpa experimentaban a su vez un elevado malestar emocional. Específicamente, en el caso de

los cuidadores familiares, estos padecían mayor estrés y sintomatología depresiva y ansiosa; en el caso de los cuidadores profesionales la culpa se asoció con el nivel de ansiedad. Estos resultados son coherentes con los señalados en la literatura científica sobre la culpa y su asociación con problemas psicológicos (sobre todo, depresión) en población general (p. ej., Ghatavi et al., 2002) y en población cuidadora de familiares con demencia (p. ej., Feast et al., 2017; Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2018; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). De hecho, los resultados obtenidos apoyan el papel modulador de la culpa en los procesos depresivos en cuidadores. Por ejemplo, en el Estudio 3 se obtuvo una relación negativa entre los niveles de culpa inducida y la frecuencia de realización de actividades ocio (importante factor de inicio y mantenimiento de la depresión). En esta línea, podemos señalar el trabajo de Romero-Moreno et al. (2014) que evidenció que aquellas cuidadoras hijas con mayores niveles de culpa y que realizaban menos actividades de ocio reportaban mayor sintomatología depresiva en comparación con las que tenían menos culpa. Igualmente, el reciente trabajo de Lee et al. (2017) propone a la culpa como mediadora entre las cogniciones y los niveles de carga en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia. De similar manera, Gil-Monte (2009) demostró el papel mediador de los sentimientos de culpa entre los niveles de burnout y depresión en cuidadores profesionales de personas con discapacidad intelectual. Teniendo en cuenta lo anteriormente expuesto, podemos deducir que la propia presencia de niveles elevados de culpa desdibuja un perfil de vulnerabilidad en el proceso de cuidado familiar y profesional, especialmente para el desarrollo y/o mantenimiento de la sintomatología depresiva.

Como ya se ha ido introduciendo a lo largo de este capítulo, los resultados de los cinco estudios desarrollados en la Tesis Doctoral permiten identificar algunos perfiles de cuidadores en riesgo de experimentación de culpa y, por ende, mayor malestar

psicológico. Tal y como indican Zarit y Femia (2008) la identificación de este tipo de perfiles resulta importante a la hora de desarrollar e implementar intervenciones psicológicas diseñadas a tratar el malestar de los cuidadores, permitiendo la máxima individualización y abordaje de necesidades específicas.

A continuación, se enumeran los perfiles de vulnerabilidad a la culpa en cuidadores:

- Cuidadores que presentan mayores niveles de compromiso con su trabajo y vida laboral (Estudio 1).
- Cuidadores con esquemas y creencias rígidos y disfuncionales sobre cómo es el buen cuidador (p. ej., no debe pedir ayuda, no debe cometer errores, el familiar cuidado debe ser siempre feliz, etc.) (Estudio 2).
- Cuidadores que perciben sus acciones como cuidadores y el cuidado ofrecido a la persona como insuficientes y/o alejados del ideal (Estudio 2 y 5).
- Cuidadores expuestos con mayor frecuencia a procesos de inducción de culpa, tanto por parte del familiar con demencia como de otros. Especialmente, a las críticas por el familiar con demencia sobre las críticas sobre el cuidado obtenido (Estudio 2 y 3).
- Cuidadores hijos/as. En el Estudio 3 se mostró que las personas que cuidan su madre/padre informan, de manera significativa, de una mayor exposición a las dinámicas familiares de críticas e inducción de culpa, así como mayor culpa derivada de estas interacciones (Estudio 3). Teniendo en cuenta que un 77% de la muestra de participantes que cuidaban a algún progenitor eran mujeres, y con base en los resultados de otros estudios (Gonyea et al., 2008; Losada et al., 2018; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014; Stephens et al., 2001), podemos deducir que las hijas son especialmente vulnerables a los sentimientos de culpa.

Del mismo modo, los resultados de este trabajo permiten identificar perfiles de cuidadores que podrían ser más adaptativos o protectores en el proceso de estrés del cuidado. Concretamente, cuidadores con mayores niveles de compromiso con los valores familiares, y de manera individual a su rol de cuidador y al ocio (Estudio 1). En otras palabras, aquellos que otorgan más importancia y a su vez trabajan de manera activa hacia áreas de su vida como la familia (relación de pareja, hijos), el cuidado de su familiar y las actividades de ocio informan de menos sentimientos de culpa. A pesar de lo anterior, la presencia de estos perfiles no quiere decir que no necesiten ayuda o intervenciones psicoterapéuticas. Dado que el cuidado es una situación que se mantiene durante un largo período de tiempo, y a los estresores y otras variables moduladoras van variando a lo largo del tiempo, los cuidadores con estos perfiles adaptativos podrían ser población diana de intervenciones de corte preventivo, con el fin de mantener su situación actual y maximizar las posibilidades de afrontar de la mejor manera posible la dura tarea del cuidado.

En cualquier caso, el resultado de un menor nivel de culpa en los cuidadores más comprometidos con sus valores familiares podría no estar reflejando un perfil “resiliente” o fuerte en todos los casos, ya que puede indicar, simplemente, que estas personas se comportan de modo coherente con sus normas o “deberías” y, de este modo se sienten menos culpables; sin embargo, esto no implica necesariamente que tengan niveles altos de bienestar o salud psicológica o física. La no experimentación de culpa no puede equipararse con el bienestar. De hecho, puede reflejar perfiles evitativos, con rigidez psicológica. En el siguiente apartado se analiza esta cuestión en mayor profundidad.

9.3.3 Dificultad de las aproximaciones directas a la culpa: patrones evitativos de culpa y malestar

Los resultados asociados a los estudios realizados en el contexto de una intervención (Estudios 2 y 4) muestran el grado de dificultad y desafío que supone el trabajo explícito con los sentimientos de culpa en terapia.

En primer lugar, hay que señalar que, en bastantes ocasiones, existen problemas en la etiquetación de la experiencia emocional como culpa. Muchos cuidadores dicen no sentirla o sentirla poco y, sin embargo, puede inferirse la presencia de sentimientos similares a la culpa en base a otras de sus verbalizaciones. Si bien esto puede ser debido a un pobre vocabulario emocional de las personas, este tipo de conductas podrían ser resultado de patrones de afrontamiento negativos, como la negación, que se podrían relacionar con mayor malestar psicológico o físico (somatización) en cuidadores (Cooper et al., 2008). No obstante, el hallazgo de este tipo de dificultades para la etiquetación emocional, e incluso la utilización de otras etiquetas en lugar de culpa (p. ej. “no es culpa, es tristeza”), concuerda con los resultados de Gonyea et al. (2008) que señalaban que, en ocasiones, la culpa estaba “disfrazada”, siendo experimentada por las cuidadoras en forma de sentimientos de ira, frustración y cansancio físico. Sería interesante que futuros estudios profundizaran en esta línea de investigación.

Por otro lado, no han sido infrecuentes los ejemplos de conductas evitativas de la emoción de culpa en cuidadores. Específicamente, y en la línea ya comentada en el apartado anterior, puede hipotetizarse, que muchos cuidadores organizan su vida y acciones con el fin de no experimentar culpa, por ejemplo, no realizando ninguna actividad de ocio para no sentirse culpable al dejar al familiar. Esta tendencia a la “culpa contenida” puede llevarles, incluso, en ocasiones, a rechazar los recursos de ayuda, tales

como la asistencia a una intervención dirigida a reducir su malestar o el disfrute de ayuda domiciliaria, por sentirse culpable (Estudio 2). Por otro lado, resulta llamativa que las respuestas de negación ante la participación en un programa terapéutico para reducir el malestar procedieran de mujeres en todos los casos (Estudio 4). Es probable que este rechazo sea reflejo de este tipo de patrón evitativo y que, ante la posibilidad de experimentar culpa por dejar al familiar por acudir al taller, las cuidadoras rechazasen la intervención.

Este tipo de patrones de evitación refuerzan los planteamientos de enfoques terapéuticos basados en ACT (Hayes et al., 1999), como los utilizados en el Estudio 4, que promueven la identificación de emociones de culpa y la aceptación y apertura a su experimentación mientras se trabaja en la activación conductual del cuidador enmarcada en sus propios valores.

9.3.4 Eficacia terapéutica de la intervención psicológica específica para los sentimientos de culpa

Los resultados obtenidos a través de la intervención psicológica propuesta en el Estudio 4 sugieren su eficacia para reducir los niveles de culpa, depresión y ansiedad de cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia. Estos datos proporcionan apoyo empírico a los planteamientos que promueven la necesidad de dirigir las intervenciones hacia necesidades y variables específicas, con el fin de maximizar su eficacia (Zarit y Femia, 2008; Zarit et al., 2010).

Una de las razones del éxito puede tener que ver con la cuidadosa y novedosa combinación de enfoques terapéuticos que la componen. Como se expone en el Estudio 4, la intervención se nutre de los enfoques cognitivos a la hora de realizar el trabajo de identificación de creencias y esquemas cognitivos rígidos y desadaptativos que facilitan

el surgimiento de la culpa. Sin embargo, el trabajo terapéutico no se dirigía a su cambio directo por otros pensamientos más realistas y adaptativos a partir de técnicas como la reestructuración cognitiva, tradicionalmente utilizadas en programas de intervención para cuidadores (Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2003; Losada et al., 2015; Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006b). En concreto, la intervención propuesta incluye técnicas derivadas de las terapias contextuales, en concreto, de la terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (Hayes et al., 1999) y la Terapia Centrada en la Compasión (Gilbert, 2009). A partir de estas técnicas, se trabajaba en la dirección de incrementar la conciencia de las normas internas inflexibles que promueven juicios “intransigentes” con uno mismo y la consecuente aparición de la culpa. En paralelo, se trabaja la aceptación y apertura a experimentar el malestar y la culpa (punto clave si tenemos en cuenta lo comentado en el epígrafe 9.3.3), la necesidad de ser compasivo con uno mismo, así como el aumento de acciones comprometidas con los valores personales. La obtención de índices de cambio fiables en culpa y malestar tras la intervención apoyan la utilidad y eficacia de este tipo de enfoques terapéuticos en el abordaje psicológico de cuidadores (Losada et al., 2015; Márquez-González et al., 2010).

En este punto, cabe resaltar algo que puede ser visto como una incoherencia del estudio de intervención. Los análisis utilizados para la evaluación de su eficacia estuvieron basados en la reducción de los niveles de culpa y malestar tras la aplicación de la intervención. Sin embargo, el enfoque de eliminar o reducir experiencias internas aversivas no encaja con la filosofía de ACT, que busca aceptar y “hacerse amigo” de estas experiencias, sin objetivos iniciales directos de cambio cuantitativo. El motivo que llevó a formular el objetivo de la reducción de la culpa tenía que ver con que, si bien no se buscaba una reducción de ésta a través del empleo de estrategias directas de cambio (p.ej., reestructuración cognitiva), sí se esperaba que, al incrementar la aceptación de estas

experiencias y entenderlas mejor (p.ej., verlas como resultado de normas o “deberías” rígidos), la frecuencia e intensidad de la experiencia de culpa acabarían disminuyendo y reduciendo su interferencia en la vida de la persona.

En cualquier caso, la realización de estos estudios nos ha permitido aprender de la experiencia y, actualmente, una vez revisado y reflexionado sobre la intervención, cabría replantearse el modo analizar la eficacia de las intervenciones bajo el enfoque contextual. Concretamente, la reducción de la frecuencia de la culpa no tiene por qué ser un objetivo explícito, ni la reducción de la culpa ser interpretada en sí misma como indicador de eficacia terapéutica porque, como hemos visto, por un lado, la “no culpa” puede esconder perfiles evitativos y, por otro lado, puede haber culpa sana o “adaptativa” si esta surge de la mano de la realización de actividades adaptativas o positivas para los cuidadores (p.ej. realización de actividades relacionadas con el valor del autocuidado).

9.3.5 Culpa como emoción adaptativa

Si bien la literatura previa y los resultados obtenidos en esta Tesis Doctoral apoyan la postura sobre la culpa como factor con un significativo impacto negativo sobre la salud del individuo que las experimenta (p. ej., mayor ansiedad, depresión, etc.), es importante señalar la importancia de no adoptar una visión reduccionista negativa y patologizante de esta emoción. Es indudable que los sentimientos de culpa tienen una relevante función a la hora de mantener y reparar, cuando es necesario, los vínculos establecidos con personas importantes para el individuo. A modo de ejemplo, la culpa tendría una función positiva si tras una pérdida de control, la aparición de sentimiento de culpa en el cuidador facilita que éste realice acciones encaminadas a reparar las consecuencias negativas de su acción (p. ej., pedir perdón a la otra persona).

A su vez, tal y como se ha comentado en el punto anterior, la presencia de culpa podría ser un indicativo de la realización de actividades adaptativas en los cuidadores, especialmente en el caso de aquellos con altos estándares y esquemas rígidos sobre cómo debe ser un buen cuidador. En otras palabras, cuando un cuidador con este tipo de creencias (p. ej., un buen cuidador debe estar siempre con su familiar, es egoísta que se dedique tiempo a sí mismo) comienza a realizar acciones adaptativas que contradicen a esos esquemas (p. ej., empezar a ir a una intervención para cuidadores o hacer alguna actividad de ocio) lo más probable es que al principio se sienta culpable al no actuar conforme a sus ideales. En este caso, podríamos etiquetar a la culpa como “sana”, ya que su aparición puede ser un indicativo de cambio en cuidadores con este tipo de creencias y o con patrones de evitación ante la culpa (ver subapartado 9.3.3).

9.4 Implicaciones prácticas

En primer lugar, los resultados de la presente Tesis Doctoral ponen de manifiesto la relevancia de los sentimientos de culpa en el proceso de estrés del cuidado y la necesidad de estudios dirigidos a su análisis e intervención. De manera adicional, el hallazgo de patrones evitativos de esta emoción, caracterizados por diversas dificultades de reconocimiento, etiquetación y experimentación, pueden ser indicativos de que en los escasos estudios que analizan la culpa, ésta esté infrarrepresentada (Estudio 2).

El papel de las creencias y esquemas cognitivos disfuncionales en la aparición de la culpa sugiere la probable utilidad de técnicas que persiguen la modificación de los patrones disfuncionales de pensamiento por otros más adaptativos o realistas, mediante técnicas como la reestructuración cognitiva (p. ej., Burgio et al., 2003; Gallagher-Thompson et al., 2003). No obstante, los resultados obtenidos en cuanto al papel del compromiso con los valores personales y la presencia de elevados niveles de evitación

experiencial de la culpa avalan la utilidad de enfoques contextuales, especialmente el de la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso o ACT (Hayes et al., 1999). A través de este tipo de terapia, se enfatizan dos aspectos fundamentales: la aceptación de eventos internos negativos (emociones, pensamientos, etc.) y la realización de acciones comprometidas con valores importantes para la persona. De acuerdo con este planteamiento, y conforme a lo hipotetizado, la eficacia de la intervención basada en este tipo de enfoque descrita en el Estudio 4 supone una evidencia adicional de su utilidad clínica en la población cuidadora. De hecho, estos resultados son similares a los hallados en literatura previa sobre cuidadores de familiares con demencia (Losada et al., 2015) y con otro tipo de poblaciones, como la población con dolor crónico (McCracken y Yang, 2006). De manera específica, dados los resultados del Estudio 1, el trabajo explícito con el compromiso con el valor del cuidado y el ocio en las intervenciones podría ser una herramienta útil en los programas tanto preventivos como de intervención para cuidadores.

Por otro lado, los resultados de la Tesis Doctoral sugieren la eficacia y utilidad potencial de otros modelos de intervención contextuales, como es la terapia centrada en la compasión (Gilbert, 2009). Inicialmente, la terapia centrada en la compasión se desarrolló para problemas y situaciones crónicas que, en la mayoría de ocasiones, estaban ligadas a niveles de autocrítica (generadora de culpa) y los sentimientos de vergüenza (Gilbert, 2009). La situación de cuidado encaja muy bien en este escenario ya que la tarea de cuidar se alarga a lo largo del tiempo y facilita la autocrítica y la consiguiente culpa, asociada, a su vez, con el sufrimiento psicológico. Dado su énfasis en la culpa y autocrítica, este tipo de enfoque terapéutico puede ser especialmente eficaz para cuidadores con elevados niveles de culpa. A partir de las técnicas autocompasivas los cuidadores trabajan sobre la aceptación de las limitaciones propias de la naturaleza

humana (recursos, tiempo limitados), la aceptación de los propios errores o limitaciones como un aspecto inevitable en la experiencia humana y las habilidades como el perdón y la autoaceptación de uno mismo, y la continuación con el trabajo en acciones comprometidas dirigidas a valores personales. A modo de ejemplo, en cuidadores con elevados niveles de perfeccionismo y esquemas rígidos sobre el cuidado y que, en consecuencia, con frecuencia se sienten culpables al no cumplir sus expectativas y cometer errores, las técnicas compasivas van encaminadas a que identifiquen sus esquemas rígidos incongruentes con la naturaleza humana (“una no es omnipotente, puede cometer errores), a la aceptación de sus limitaciones, al perdón y cese de autocríticas y a dirigir sus acciones hacia áreas de vida relevantes para él.

Teniendo en cuenta los resultados sobre la influencia de las relaciones interpersonales y las dinámicas familiares en la culpa y malestar experimentados por los cuidadores, se pone de manifiesto la necesidad de incluir este tipo de variables tanto en la evaluación como intervención con cuidadores. En el caso del proceso de evaluación, el instrumento creado a partir del Estudio 3, el *Caregiving Guilt Induction Questionnaire* (CGIQ) se postula como una herramienta útil para la medición de los procesos de inducción de culpa a los que se expone el cuidador. La inclusión de este cuestionario en los protocolos de evaluación y/o su utilización en el contexto clínico puede facilitar la identificación de perfiles vulnerables con niveles significativos de culpabilidad u otro tipo de malestar (p.ej., emociones como enfado, rabia, tristeza). La identificación de este tipo de dinámicas disfuncionales en el funcionamiento familiar permitiría la inclusión de técnicas dirigidas a su manejo en las intervenciones dirigidas a los cuidadores que experimentan con frecuencia esta culpa inducida. Esto potenciaría la efectividad de la intervención, al facilitar la individualización de la misma, ya que se dirigiría a las necesidades específicas de este perfil de cuidadores, como recomendaban Zarit et al.

(2010). Dada la parcial correspondencia entre algunos comportamientos problemáticos medidos a través del RMBPC (Teri et al., 1992) y este tipo de conductas realizadas por el familiar con demencia, puede hipotetizarse que las estrategias de intervención eficaces para el manejo de conductas problemáticas que frecuentemente se incluyen en los programas de intervención para cuidadores sean eficaces también para manejar este tipo de conductas inductoras de culpa (p. ej., Gitlin, Winter, Dennis, y Hauck, 2007; Moniz-Cook et al., 2012). En esta línea, el estudio realizado por Nogales-González, Losada, Márquez-González y Zarit (2014) analizó la eficacia de una intervención conductual (con técnicas basadas en el manejo de antecedentes y consecuencias) para el manejo de comportamientos problemáticos relacionados con la resistencia del familiar con demencia a asistir al centro de día, una de las situaciones que podría actuar como contexto de conductas de inducción de culpa (p. ej., comentarios sobre abandono, egoísmo del cuidador, etc.). Los resultados post-intervención mostraron reducciones significativas de la frecuencia de este tipo comportamientos y los niveles de ansiedad y depresión de los cuidadores. Por otro lado, otras técnicas potencialmente útiles para el manejo de este tipo de situaciones podrían ser varias, desde técnicas cognitivo-conductuales como la reestructuración cognitiva (p. ej., facilitar la reinterpretación de algunas quejas del familiar con demencia como consecuencia de la enfermedad y no como chantaje emocional), hasta enfoques de aceptación y compromiso, tales como incrementar la conciencia sobre la presencia de estos comportamientos, la apertura a la experimentación del malestar (p.ej., saludar a la culpa: “Hola, culpa, ¡ya te esperaba!”)- y mantener o incrementar el compromiso con los valores. Por otro lado, en el caso de las interacciones con otros familiares (pareja, hermanos, etc.) las técnicas como el entrenamiento en habilidades de comunicación asertiva, petición de ayuda o resolución de problemas podrían ser de utilidad para el manejo de este tipo de situaciones por parte del cuidador.

Sin embargo, dado que este tipo de culpa y malestar estaría modulado por la intervención de diferentes “actores” en escena, se hace manifiesta la idoneidad de realizar intervenciones de corte familiar en estos casos (Benbow y Sharman, 2012). Por ejemplo, Mittelman et al. (1995) demostraron que cuando se incluye a otros familiares en la intervención psicológica para cuidadoras esposas se obtenían incrementos en los grados de cohesión familiar y apoyo social, así como menores niveles de síntomas depresivos en el cuidador principal de la persona con Alzheimer. Además, parece que son las hijas cuidadoras las que en mayor medida se benefician de las intervenciones terapéuticas que incluyen a otros familiares (Eisdorfer et al., 2003). Lamentablemente, los programas basados en enfoques cognitivo-conductuales o de aceptación y compromiso fundamentalmente se dirigen a la persona de manera individual, con un énfasis en sus acciones, esquemas, emociones, quedando a veces limitada su capacidad para abordar aspectos relacionados con su ambiente familiar o social. De este modo se hace necesario trabajar en la dirección de potenciar un enfoque del cuidado de tipo familiar o grupal, que mire e integre (en la medida de lo posible) a la familia completa y los procesos o dinámicas familiares en la atención psicológica en el contexto del cuidado. En este sentido, futuros estudios deben investigar la utilidad de enfoques terapéuticos centrados en las relaciones y dinámicas establecidas en la familia, como puede ser la terapia sistémica (p. ej., Keeling, Dolbin-Macnab, Hudgins, y Ford, 2008).

Atendiendo a la población cuidadora profesional, los resultados obtenidos también sugieren importantes implicaciones prácticas. Como se ha comentado a lo largo del Estudio 5 y en este capítulo, se confirma la necesidad de tener en cuenta las relaciones con los familiares de los residentes y la utilidad de los programas dirigidos a incrementar las habilidades y confianza de los profesionales en esa área (p. ej., Pillemer et al., 2003). Por otra parte, dado que la culpa ha mostrado ser un factor explicativo de la

sintomatología ansiosa, queda manifiesta la necesidad de abordaje de este tipo de emoción a la hora de diseñar intervenciones dirigidas a reducir los niveles de ansiedad u otro malestar psicológico de los profesionales, hasta ahora nunca incluida en las intervenciones dirigidas a esta población. A partir de los resultados del Estudio 5 se pueden sugerir diferentes aproximaciones a la intervención, no incompatibles, para el abordaje de este tipo de emoción en profesionales. En primer lugar, que los profesionales perciban no realizar sus tareas de cuidado como desearían podría ser consecuencia de la elevada carga de trabajo, la protocolización de las actuaciones, la presión por realizar la tarea en el menor tiempo posible y/o la falta de recursos materiales (p. ej., poco personal, instrumentos no actualizados, etc.). Por tanto, mejorando los recursos y factores organizacionales, de modo que se permita que el profesional dedique el tiempo que estime necesario o los instrumentos adecuados para la tarea del cuidado podría favorecer que el cuidado otorgado sea percibido como más cercano al ideal, disminuyendo la culpabilidad y, en consecuencia, los niveles de ansiedad. Así mismo, se ha encontrado respaldo a la hipótesis, manejada cada vez más en este ámbito del cuidado formal, de que los modelos de atención centrada en la persona, que fomentan la individualización del cuidado, reducen los niveles de malestar en profesionales (Edvardsson, Sandman, y Borell, 2014). Es probable que la implementación de este modelo de atención facilite una mayor congruencia entre el cuidado otorgado y el deseado, al permitir que los profesionales proporcionen un cuidado más completo y adecuado y acerca las necesidades del residente. Esta mayor congruencia redundaría en una disminución del malestar, ya sea por reducción de conflictos con los familiares o los sentimientos de culpa. Por otro lado, otra de las fuentes probables de culpa tiene que ver con la falta de habilidades o estrategias personales para manejar el cuidado. En esta línea, la aplicación de programas formativos en habilidades específicas o la creación de guías de actuación podrían mejorar el

rendimiento de los profesionales y así disminuir sus sentimientos de culpa. En congruencia con estas propuestas, en la literatura científica sobre cuidadores en residencias se ha puesto de manifiesto la capacidad de aumentar la satisfacción con el cuidado realizado tras la aplicación de programas formativos sobre habilidades de comunicación con residentes afectados por demencia (p. ej., Broughton et al., 2011). Por tanto, cabría esperar que este tipo de programas fomenten la percepción positiva sobre el cuidado ofrecido por los propios profesionales y deriven en menos culpa.

Por otro lado, dado el papel mediador de la culpa entre los niveles de burnout y depresión (Gil-Monte, 2009), y su papel en la explicación de la ansiedad (Estudio 5) en cuidadores de residencias, se sugiere la necesidad de incluir técnicas o módulos dirigidos a esta emoción en programas psicoterapéuticos dirigidos a disminuir el malestar psicológico en cuidadores profesionales. Por un lado, podrían ser de interés las técnicas de reestructuración cognitiva con el fin de disminuir posibles perfiles perfeccionistas que estén manteniendo los niveles de culpa (p. ej., no cometer ningún error). Sin embargo, de acuerdo a lo comentado anteriormente en este capítulo, las técnicas basadas en las terapias contextuales, como la aceptación de las propias limitaciones y la compasión y perdón hacia uno mismo, podrían favorecer que los profesionales experimenten menores niveles de malestar emocional. De hecho, de manera reciente se ha evidenciado la eficacia de este tipo de modelos terapéuticos en profesionales. Por ejemplo, el estudio de Blanco-Donoso et al. (2017) demostró el impacto positivo de una intervención breve basada en la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso sobre los niveles de vitalidad y propósito con la vida en una muestra de personal de enfermería.

A modo de conclusión, los resultados obtenidos en la presente Tesis Doctoral avalan la necesidad del abordaje clínico de la emoción de culpa en cuidadores familiares

y profesionales, así como la posible utilidad de los nuevos enfoques contextuales, como los propuestos por la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (ACT; Hayes et al., 1999) y la terapia centrada en la compasión (CFT; Gilbert, 2009).

9.5 Limitaciones de los estudios

Pese a las contribuciones e implicaciones prácticas extraíbles de los resultados de la presente Tesis Doctoral, los estudios presentan una serie de limitaciones que deben mencionarse.

Un primer conjunto de limitaciones de este trabajo tiene que ver con la muestra empleada. En primer lugar, se trata de una muestra de conveniencia, ya que estuvo compuesta por cuidadores familiares y profesionales que participaron de forma voluntaria y fueron reclutados de distintos centros de la Comunidad de Madrid. Si bien las características de las muestras son similares a las que habitualmente se exponen en otros estudios, los resultados no pueden generalizarse a todos los cuidadores familiares ni profesionales. En este sentido, se ha evidenciado que las muestras no aleatorias proporcionan mayores niveles de malestar (Izal, Nuevo, Montorio, y Pérez-Rojo, 2009). Y, en el caso de cuidadores familiares, aquellos que utilizan recursos de apoyo formales, como Servicios Sociales o centros de día, poseen más estrategias adaptativas de afrontamiento que los que no lo usan (Lamura et al., 2008). Por tanto, los resultados no estarían siendo representativos de toda la población cuidadora informal y formal, por lo que sería interesante que futuros estudios ampliaran la muestra objeto de estudio a aquellos cuidadores familiares que no utilizan ningún recurso.

Por otro lado, el número de participantes constituye otra limitación, especialmente en los estudios 4 y 5. En el caso del estudio 4, de los 20 cuidadores inicialmente derivados sólo cuatro finalmente finalizan la intervención específica para los sentimientos de culpa.

Si bien es cierto que el estudio constituye un estudio piloto de la intervención, el limitado número de participantes dificulta la generalización de los resultados. En este sentido, es posible que el criterio de inclusión que exigía una puntuación en el cuestionario de culpa superior a un punto de corte superior a 16 haya sido demasiado exigente. Dadas las ya comentadas dificultades para identificar la culpa en muchos cuidadores y la complejidad de la conciencia y manejo de esta emoción, cabe reflexionar sobre la conveniencia de seguir empleando este criterio restrictivo o, de modo alternativo, abrir más el filtro, permitiendo la participación de cuidadores con niveles menores informados de culpa. En cualquier caso, serían de interés futuros estudios que aumenten el número de participantes en el estudio de la eficacia del programa terapéutico planteado. En el caso del estudio 5 se obtuvo un limitado número de respuestas válidas (101 trabajadores), por lo que, si se tiene en cuenta que participaron cinco centros residenciales, queda patente el significativo porcentaje de profesionales que rechazaron participar en el estudio, lo que podría estar afectando a los resultados obtenidos y no reflejar la realidad de todos los trabajadores. Por ello, se recomienda replicar los resultados encontrados en estudios llevados a cabo con muestras más representativas, así como explorar otro tipo de medidas que permitan facilitar la participación de los profesionales reticentes a rellenar este tipo de encuestas en el trabajo (p. ej., a través de un diario personal o de manera informática).

Otra limitación de este compendio de estudios es la naturaleza transversal de los mismos, que no permite realizar inferencias causales entre las variables evaluadas. Dada esta limitación, los resultados deben ser interpretados con precaución, teniendo en cuenta la posible existencia de hipótesis y explicaciones alternativas para las relaciones entre variables encontradas en este trabajo. Por ejemplo, en el Estudio 1 la variable de culpa ejerce el papel de variable dependiente del compromiso con los valores, pero no podemos descartar la posibilidad de que la culpa funcione como una variable independiente. Es

decir, aquellos cuidadores que experimentan más culpa podrían encontrar más dificultades para ser consistentes o comprometidos con sus valores, por lo que los niveles de culpa influirían en el grado en el que el cuidador se compromete con sus valores. Por su parte, el Estudio 5 analiza la culpa como factor independiente potencialmente predictor de los niveles de ansiedad; sin embargo, es posible que aquellos profesionales que más ansiedad experimenten se sientan más culpables por no ofrecer el cuidado deseado por su malestar. Por tanto, son necesarias investigaciones longitudinales y experimentales para poder confirmar la interpretación de los resultados.

En tercer lugar, la utilización de medidas de autoinforme para la evaluación variables evaluadas plantea una limitación adicional a este trabajo. A pesar de que los cuestionarios son frecuentemente utilizados en la investigación psicológica, conllevan el riesgo de que existan sesgos de respuesta, como puede ser la deseabilidad social, y otros problemas como las dificultades de introspección o acceso a la experiencia subjetiva, que podrían estar afectando a los resultados finales de la investigación (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, y Podsakoff, 2003). En este sentido, cabe señalar que la culpa podría tener una dimensión implícita, no consciente, que podría ser evaluada a través de métodos de evaluación implícitos (ver, p. ej., Márquez-González et al., 2018).

Para finalizar la reflexión sobre las limitaciones, existen otras variables que no se han controlado en este estudio y que pueden estar contribuyendo a la explicación de los resultados, como puede ser la toma de medicación antidepresiva o ansiolítica por parte de los cuidadores o los niveles de ambivalencia del cuidador, que han mostrado una fuerte asociación con la culpa en cuidadores (Losada et al., 2018). Otra variable relevante que no ha sido incluida en el trabajo ha sido la calidad de la relación previa entre el cuidador y la persona con demencia, que ha sido reflejada como un factor influyente en los sentimientos de culpa y que además podría ser indicativa de la presencia de

comportamientos de inducción de culpa del familiar al cuidador previos a la enfermedad y situación de cuidado. Por último, no se ha evaluado ninguna variable positiva del cuidado, como satisfacción con la vida o los niveles de resiliencia (Roth, Haley, Owen, Clay, y Goode, 2001), ni tampoco variables relacionadas con aspectos del funcionamiento familiar, tales como la cohesión o el nivel de comunicación, que también, como ya se ha comentado, podrían tener un papel importante en el proceso de afrontamiento del cuidado. En el caso de los profesionales, se destaca la ausencia de medidas sobre el apoyo de otros compañeros y responsables. Además, la concepción unidimensional de la culpa en el Estudio 5 es otra limitación destacable. Ésta fue evaluada a través de un único ítem creado ad-hoc (*¿Se siente usted culpable por no poder atender a los residentes como a usted le gustaría?*). Dada la multidimensionalidad de esta emoción sería deseable que futuros estudios apliquen o desarrollen instrumentos que tengan en cuenta diferentes dimensiones de esta emoción en profesionales.

9.5.1 Limitaciones específicas del estudio de intervención (Estudio 4)

Dada la naturaleza aplicada del cuarto estudio, en este apartado se exponen, de manera general, sus principales limitaciones.

Al limitado número de participantes ya expuesto anteriormente, la ausencia de grupo control o de comparación supone una de las principales limitaciones del estudio, imposibilitando la confirmación de que los cambios en la evaluación post sean debidos a la intervención. Por tanto, se considera necesario la realización de estudios con grupo control, que comparen diferentes condiciones experimentales, y que la asignación de los participantes a cada condición sea totalmente aleatorizada. Así mismo, el diseño AB (medición de línea base y post intervención) es otra limitación que afecta a los resultados. Este tipo de diseño es el más utilizado en la literatura psicológica (Cooper, Heron, y

Heward, 2007), aunque no permite la identificación de posibles variables mediadoras del cambio o explicativas del cambio en el momento posterior a la intervención. Debido al limitado número de participantes, el método de análisis de eficacia utilizado fue el índice de Cambio Confiable (RCI; *Reliability Change Index*). A pesar de que los autores proponen este tipo de medidas como más útiles en el ámbito clínico que los cambios meramente estadísticos (Atkins, Bedics, McGlinchey, y Beauchine, 2005), futuras comparaciones de eficacia entre esta intervención y otras condiciones, en estudios con muestras superiores, se beneficiarían de análisis estadísticos como modelos lineales mixtos. Por último, la ausencia de seguimiento posterior (p. ej., en los 3, 6 o 12 meses siguientes a su finalización) dificulta la observación de los efectos a largo plazo de la intervención.

9.6 Futuras líneas de investigación

A pesar de que los datos de la tesis han esclarecido diferentes factores moduladores del proceso de estrés del cuidado y, especialmente, de la emoción de culpa, se necesitan futuros estudios que profundicen en más mecanismos a través de los cuales estas variables impactan en el estado de salud de los cuidadores. Como se indicó en el apartado de limitaciones, sería interesante analizar el efecto de otras variables sobre los sentimientos de culpa, tales como la rumiación. En este sentido, estudios previos han mostrado una asociación entre los niveles de rumiación y la culpa (p. ej., Kim, Thibodeau, y Jorgensen., 2011) y, de hecho, algunos autores señalan a la rumiación como una dimensión central de la culpa (Tangney, Stuewig, y Hafez, 2011). Teniendo esto en mente, futuras investigaciones longitudinales podrían esclarecer cuál es el impacto de las conductas rumiativas en la culpa, y analizar la direccionalidad de esta relación, es decir, si la culpa explica la presencia de rumiaciones, si es la rumiación la que predice la culpa, o si la relación se produce en ambas direcciones. De manera similar, sería interesante que

futuros estudios analizaran el rol de otras variables contextuales, como la flexibilidad cognitiva y la fusión cognitiva, sobre los sentimientos de culpa. Dado que trabajos sobre fusión cognitiva han evidenciado una correlación positiva entre los niveles de fusión cognitiva y la culpa en cuidadores (Romero-Moreno, Márquez-González, Losada, Gillanders, y Fernández-Fernández, 2014), futuras investigaciones podrían esclarecer la dirección de esta relación y su impacto sobre el estado psicológico del cuidador.

Por otro lado, dada la importancia del contexto socio-cultural en la culpa experimentada por los cuidadores, sería interesante replicar los estudios en otros contextos diferentes. Como se indicó en limitaciones, los resultados obtenidos proceden de una muestra concreta de cuidadores que residen en España. En el ambiente cultural de nuestro país, los valores de la familia y la importancia otorgada tienen un peso mayor que en otros países más individualistas como podrían ser países del norte de Europa o EEUU. En esta línea, en variables como el familismo se han encontrado diferencias significativas entre los cuidadores españoles y de otros contextos culturales (Losada et al., 2006). Por tanto, se hace patente la necesidad de estudios transculturales con el fin de esclarecer el impacto de los valores culturales sobre la culpa en cuidadores.

Así mismo, tal y como señalan las estadísticas y el informe del IMSERSO (2005), la principal cuidadora suele ser una mujer. De manera congruente a esta realidad, en nuestros estudios la mayor proporción de la muestra estaba representada por mujeres. Teniendo en cuenta que en la literatura científica las mujeres suelen ser más vulnerables al malestar psicológico (p. ej., Pinquart y Sörensen, 2006a), especialmente a la culpa (Losada et al., 2010), se hace evidente la necesidad de estudios que analicen en qué medida estas diferencias en culpa en función del género son debidas a variables culturales, como variables culturales sobre el papel cultural de la mujer como cuidadora. Es

altamente probable que la visión cultural de la mujer como principal encargada de los cuidados (ya sea hijos, familiares dependientes, etc.) esté generando que las mujeres interioricen esquemas o expectativas sobre sus responsabilidades o “deberes” que, en numerosas ocasiones, no se cumplen (ya sea por su rigidez, incompatibilidad entre roles cuidadora, madre, trabajadora, amiga-, etc.) y, en consecuencia, sean más vulnerables a experimentar elevados niveles de culpa y malestar. De hecho, en el estudio de intervención, el 100% de los rechazos fueron mujeres. Como ya se comentó, la posibilidad de participar en una intervención y no atender al familiar u otras áreas durante el tiempo que dure la intervención podría haber activado esos esquemas rígidos asociados a la culpa, siendo esta activación un antecedente del rechazo de dicha intervención, que cumpliría la función de evitar sentirse culpables. En este sentido, son necesarios estudios que analicen las causas de rechazo de intervenciones en cuidadores con el fin de identificar posibles perfiles con mayor riesgo y el desarrollo de otros formatos de intervención (p. ej., intervenciones telefónicas, on-line, o partir de aplicaciones informáticas) que maximicen las probabilidades de participación.

Volviendo al tema de género, existen múltiples indicadores de que las mujeres pueden ser más vulnerables a la culpa y a sus efectos desadaptativos (Benetti-McQuoid, y Bursik, 2005; Gonyea et al., 2008; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014), revelando la importancia de avanzar en la dirección de integrar una perspectiva de género en la investigación sobre el cuidado, en la que los estudios analicen y tengan en cuenta el impacto sobre el proceso de estrés del mero hecho de ser mujer y de los roles que la sociedad asocia a esta figura (p. ej., el cuidado de los hijos, de otros familiares dependientes, etc.).

Por otro lado, a lo largo de la descripción de los estudios sobre culpa realizados con cuidadores se ha observado que los hijos, especialmente hijas, experimentan mayores

niveles de culpa (Gonyea et al., 2008; Romero-Moreno et al., 2014). A pesar de que en esta Tesis Doctoral el parentesco no ha sido una variable objetivo, sí se ha evidenciado que los cuidadores hijas son un perfil vulnerable a la exposición a procesos de inducción y la culpa derivada de éstos. Dado que el parentesco con la persona cuidada parece ser una variable clave en la culpa, futuras investigaciones podrían analizar de manera específica esta variable y su efecto modulador en el proceso de estrés y culpa del cuidado. Asimismo, atendiendo a las dinámicas de inducción, sería interesante identificar variables de la persona cuidada que permitan detectar perfiles de la persona mayor que realiza estos comportamientos de inducción de culpa, así como analizar en profundidad las diferencias entre los diferentes perfiles y el malestar en los cuidadores.

Por último, dadas las limitaciones anteriormente comentadas de los tradicionales métodos de evaluación consistentes en el autoinforme, sería de interés que futuros estudios aplicaran otro tipo de herramientas de medición. Por ejemplo, en el caso de los procesos de inducción de culpa, la evaluación a través de tareas de observación de la interacción entre el cuidador y otros familiares (persona cuidada y otros) permitiría obtener información clara sobre la frecuencia y aparición de este tipo de conductas, así como sobre posibles comportamientos del cuidador que podrían estar siendo clave en el mantenimiento de los procesos de inducción de culpa a lo largo del tiempo. Finalmente, y como también se ha comentado ya, para la evaluación de creencias asociadas al origen de la culpa las herramientas de evaluación implícitas podrían ser un recurso de gran utilidad, ya que evitan la influencia de sesgos de deseabilidad social. A su vez, estos estudios podrían comparar los diferentes patrones de asociación entre las medidas explícitas (autoinforme) e implícitas con los niveles de culpa y malestar de los cuidadores.

9.7 Conclusión final

Los resultados de la presente Tesis Doctoral han permitido evidenciar, a través de metodología cuantitativa y cualitativa, diferentes factores implicados en la aparición y mantenimiento de la culpa en cuidadores. Entre ellos, cabe destacar el compromiso con diferentes valores personales o la presencia de creencias rígidas y del tipo “deberías” sobre el propio comportamiento y el rol de cuidador. A su vez, se ha mostrado la existencia de procesos de inducción de culpa y su impacto en el bienestar emocional, confirmados empíricamente a través del desarrollo de una escala original para su medición. Otra de las principales aportaciones del trabajo ha sido el desarrollo y evaluación preliminar de una intervención psicológica específicamente diseñada para abordar los sentimientos de culpa en cuidadores sometidos a elevados niveles de malestar psicológico. Por último, también se ha realizado un primer acercamiento a los sentimientos de culpa de cuidadores profesionales en residencias de personas mayores, mostrando que la culpa también juega un papel relevante a la hora de explicar el estado psicológico de esta población. Consideramos que estos resultados pueden contribuir de manera relevante al desarrollo de iniciativas que mejoren la situación personal y emocional de los cuidadores y familias que cuidan de familiares que padecen demencia.

General conclusions

Conclusiones generales

1. Guilt plays a relevant role in the explanation of the psychological distress experienced by family and professional caregivers of elderly people.
2. The set of studies included in this Doctoral Thesis provides evidence to the multidimensional and multicausal nature of guilt feelings.
3. While there has been support for the classical definitions of guilt, which define it as a result of the cognitive appraisal of the person about transgressions of personal values or standards, this dissertation has suggested and provided support for additional sources of guilt, showing the role of interpersonal factors (e.g., interactions with the care recipient and/or other relatives) and socio-cultural factors (e.g., values) in the appearance and maintenance of guilt.
4. Commitment to personal values is a relevant variable in the explanation of guilt feelings. Specifically, commitment to values related to family, the caregiving role and leisure represents a protective profile against feelings of guilt in family caregivers. On the other hand, commitment to work represents a profile of vulnerability to guilt.
5. Evidence for the existence of guilt induction processes in the family care of people with dementia has been obtained. These processes have a negative impact on caregivers' psychological health.
6. The CGIQ instrument is a suitable measure of (a) the frequency of guilt induction behaviors and (b) the guilt derived from these behaviors. It allows the measurement of the induction behaviors performed by the care-recipient, as well as the induction behaviors performed by other family members.
7. The results of this Doctoral Thesis show the complexity of the experience of guilt, as well as the difficulties involved in explicitly assessing and treating guilt. Qualitative information suggests that caregivers use avoidant approaches to guilt,

showing difficulties for labeling the emotion or even refusing to recognize it (e.g., “it is not guilt, its sadness”), and performing behaviors for preventing the appearance of guilt (e.g., not performing self-care actions). These findings suggest the utility of using indirect or implicit methods for the measurement of this construct.

8. Empirical support has been obtained for the need of developing specific interventions to address specific aspects of the caregiving stress process (Zarit et al., 2010). In this thesis, preliminary support (through a pilot study) is provided for the usefulness of an intervention designed specifically for addressing guilt feelings.
9. The use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy based techniques (Hayes et al., 1999), jointly with a focus on compassion (drawing upon previous work on the Compassion Focused Therapy; Gilbert, 2009) seem to be an effective strategy for addressing dementia family caregivers’ guilt feelings.
10. Guilt feelings reported by nursing home staff related with the care offered to nursing home residents plays a relevant role in the explanation of their psychological distress. The utility of including specific techniques addressing guilt in psychotherapeutic interventions aimed at increasing the emotional well-being of formal caregivers is suggested.

1. La culpa juega un papel relevante a la hora de entender el malestar psicológico experimentado por cuidadores familiares y profesionales de personas mayores.
2. El compendio de estudios presentados en esta Tesis Doctoral sirve como una evidencia de la naturaleza multidimensional y multicausal de los sentimientos de culpa.
3. Si bien se ha obtenido respaldo a las definiciones clásicas de la culpa, que la sitúan como resultado de los juicios cognitivos de la persona ante trasgresiones de los valores o estándares personales, este trabajo sugiere y proporciona evidencia sobre fuentes adicionales de culpa, demostrado el papel de factores interpersonales (p. ej. interacciones con la persona cuidada u otros familiares) y socio-culturales (p. ej. valores) en la aparición y mantenimiento de los sentimientos de culpa.
4. El compromiso con los valores personales es una variable relevante en la explicación de los sentimientos de culpa. De manera específica, el compromiso con valores relacionados con la vida familiar, el cuidado del familiar con demencia y con las actividades de ocio representan un perfil protector ante los sentimientos de culpa en cuidadores familiares. Por otro lado, el compromiso con el trabajo conforma un perfil de vulnerabilidad a la culpa en el cuidado de familiares con demencia.
5. Se ha obtenido evidencia de la existencia de procesos de inducción de culpa en el cuidado familiar de personas con demencia. Estos procesos tienen un impacto negativo sobre la salud psicológica de los cuidadores.
6. El instrumento CGIQ resulta adecuado para medir (a) la frecuencia de los comportamientos de inducción de culpa y, (b) la culpa derivada de esos comportamientos. Permite la medición de los comportamientos inductores de

culpa realizados tanto por la persona cuidada como los llevados a cabo por otros familiares.

7. Los resultados de la presente Tesis Doctoral muestran la complejidad de la experiencia de culpa, así como las dificultades de los acercamientos explícitos en la evaluación y trabajo terapéutico de la culpa. Los resultados cualitativos sugieren que los cuidadores utilizan estilos de afrontamiento evitativos ante la culpa, mostrando dificultades para etiquetar la emoción e incluso no reconociendo su presencia (p. ej. “no es culpa, es tristeza”), y realizando conductas con el fin de evitar su aparición (p. ej. no realizar acciones de autocuidado). Este tipo de resultados sugieren la utilidad de métodos de evaluación indirectos o implícitos para la medición de este constructo.
8. Se ha obtenido apoyo empírico a la necesidad de desarrollar de intervenciones específicas para abordar aspectos concretos de la tarea de estrés de los cuidadores (Zarit et al., 2010). En esta tesis se proporciona apoyo preliminar (a través de un estudio piloto) a la utilidad de una intervención diseñada específicamente para abordar los sentimientos de culpa.
9. La utilización de técnicas basadas en la Terapia de Aceptación y Compromiso (Hayes et al., 1999) unidas a la focalización en la autocompasión (con base en trabajos previos de la Terapia Centrada en la Compasión; Gilbert, 2009) parece ser una estrategia eficaz a la hora de abordar los sentimientos de culpa de los cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia.
10. Los sentimientos de culpa informados por profesionales de residencias tienen un relevante papel en la explicación del malestar psicológico experimentado por éstos. Los resultados de este trabajo sugieren la importancia de incluir técnicas

para abordar la culpa en las intervenciones psicoterapéuticas dirigidas a incrementar el bienestar emocional de los cuidadores formales.

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Anexos

Anexo I: Consentimientos informados

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (Estudios 1 y 3)

Este documento certifica que yo, _____, he recibido la siguiente información:

- 1) El propósito del proyecto de investigación titulado **“Culpa, creencias, valores culturales y salud mental y física de cuidadores familiares de personas con demencia: análisis longitudinal, de intervención y experimental”**, financiado por el **MINECO (PSI2015-65152-C2-1-R)** es avanzar en el conocimiento sobre los efectos psicológicos y físicos del cuidado familiar de personas con demencia.
- 2) En la evaluación que se realizará se me pedirá que conteste a diferentes cuestionarios sobre variables psicológicas o relacionadas. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de dos horas. Entiendo que tengo libertad para irme en todo momento o para no responder a cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. Asimismo, entiendo que tengo derecho a que se me explique en detalle el propósito de las tareas y a solicitar en cualquier momento que se me aclare cualquier duda que se me pueda presentar.
- 4) La participación es totalmente voluntaria y no tendrá ninguna consecuencia negativa sobre otros servicios que esté recibiendo o pueda recibir de otras instituciones.
- 5) La información recogida es totalmente confidencial y mi nombre o cualquier dato que pudiera identificarme no será difundido ni usado de ninguna manera, garantizando en todo momento lo establecido a este respecto en la Ley Orgánica de Protección de Datos de Carácter Personal 15/1999, especialmente en lo que respecta a derechos de acceso, rectificación, oposición y cancelación de los datos obtenidos. Igualmente, tiene derecho a revocar su autorización. El conjunto de los datos obtenidos en el estudio serán utilizados para actividades científicas (publicaciones científicas o comunicaciones a congresos) o docentes.
- 6) Si tengo alguna duda o cuestión en el futuro puedo consultar directamente al responsable de la investigación, Dr. Andrés Losada, de la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid, Teléfono: 914888941, e-mail: andres.losada@urjc.es

Madrid, a _____ de _____ de 201__

Fdo.: Participante _____

Fdo.: Entrevistador _____

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (Estudios 2 y 4)

Este documento certifica que yo, _____, he recibido la siguiente información:

1) El propósito del proyecto de investigación es ofrecer ayuda psicosocial a cuidadores de familiares que padecen demencia.

2) En las evaluaciones que se realizarán, se le pedirá que conteste a diferentes cuestionarios sobre variables psicológicas o relacionadas. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 1 hora y media. Entiendo que tengo libertad para irme en todo momento o para no responder a cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. Asimismo, entiendo que tengo derecho a que se me explique en detalle el propósito de las tareas y a solicitar en cualquier momento que se me aclare cualquier duda que se me pueda presentar.

3) Como parte del programa de ayuda en el que se me ofrece participar GRATUITAMENTE, se me ofrecerá participar en un **taller psicoeducativo** que consistirá en un curso de 8 sesiones semanales cada una con una duración máxima de 120 minutos.

El momento de participación será inmediato (desde la realización de la entrevista a una o dos semanas aproximadamente) o con una demora no superior a los 6 meses. En cualquiera de los casos, soy consciente de que, según datos obtenidos en la primera entrevista, será posible realizar otra entrevista similar a la que hoy se realizará, si bien la duración será algo menor a la de hoy.

4) La participación es totalmente voluntaria y que no tendrá ninguna consecuencia negativa sobre otros servicios que esté recibiendo o pueda recibir de otras instituciones.

5) La información recogida es totalmente confidencial y mi nombre o cualquier dato que pudiera identificarme no será difundido ni usado de ninguna manera, garantizando en todo momento lo establecido a este respecto en la Ley Orgánica de Protección de Datos de Carácter Personal 15/1999, especialmente en lo que respecta a derechos de acceso, rectificación, oposición y cancelación de los datos obtenidos. Igualmente, tiene derecho a revocar su autorización. El conjunto de los datos obtenidos en el estudio serán utilizados para actividades científicas (publicaciones científicas o comunicaciones a congresos) o docentes.

6) Si tengo alguna duda o cuestión en el futuro puedo consultar directamente al responsable de la investigación, Dr. Andrés Losada, de la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid, Teléfono: 914888941, e-mail: andres.losada@urjc.es

Madrid, a _____ de _____ de 201__

Fdo.: Participante _____

Fdo.: Entrevistador _____

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO (Estudio 5)

Este documento certifica que yo, _____, he recibido la siguiente información:

- 1) El propósito del proyecto de investigación es contribuir a mejorar el bienestar del personal y de las familias que atienden a un familiar en el entorno de una residencia.
- 2) Entiendo que tengo libertad para irme en todo momento o para no responder a cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. Asimismo, entiendo que tengo derecho a que se me explique en detalle el propósito del proyecto y a solicitar en cualquier momento que se me aclare cualquier duda que se me pueda presentar.
- 3) La participación es totalmente voluntaria y no tendrá ninguna consecuencia negativa sobre mí persona.
- 4) La información recogida es totalmente confidencial y mi nombre o cualquier dato que pudiera identificarme no será difundido ni usado de ninguna manera. Los datos recogidos se utilizarán únicamente por parte del personal investigador, y nunca serán consultados por otras personas, incluido el personal de la residencia ni su dirección.
- 5) Si tengo alguna duda o cuestión en el futuro puedo consultar directamente al responsable de la investigación, Rubén Muñiz, de la Fundación María Wolff, ruben@mariawolff.es.

En _____, a _____ de _____ de 201__

Fdo.: Participante _____

Fdo.: Entrevistador _____

Anexo II: Instrumentos de evaluación aplicados a cuidadores familiares

Ansiedad

A continuación, le voy a leer una lista de palabras que describen cómo se pueden sentir las personas. Por favor, indique **con qué frecuencia se ha sentido así últimamente**

| | Nada | Un poco | Moderadamente | Bastante | Muchísimo |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1.Tenso/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2.Agitado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3.A punto de estallar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4.Descontrolado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5.Relajado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6.Intranquilo/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7.Inquieto/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8.Nervioso/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9.Con ansiedad | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Valores personales

A continuación, le voy a pedir que valore, de 1 a 10, la importancia que tiene cada una de estas áreas en su vida, el grado de consistencia entre lo que hace y lo que valora (esto es, hasta qué punto su comportamiento y sus acciones en este área han sido coherentes con sus valores en dicha área) y su satisfacción con cómo ha sido su vida en cada área **durante el último mes.**

| Área | Importancia (1-10) | Coherencia (1-10) | Satisfacción (1-10) |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Familia / relaciones familiares | | | |
| Relaciones íntimas /pareja | | | |
| Rol de padre / madre | | | |
| Rol de cuidador/a de mi familiar | | | |
| Amistades y relaciones sociales | | | |
| Educación/Crecimiento/Desarrollo Personal | | | |
| Trabajo / estudios/ vida profesional | | | |
| Ocio y tiempo libre / aficiones | | | |
| Religión /Espiritualidad | | | |
| Inquietudes sociales/vida comunitaria / | | | |
| Salud / bienestar físico | | | |
| Cuidado de uno/a mismo | | | |

Depresión

A continuación, se le presentan unas frases que describen como usted podría haberse sentido durante la **semana pasada**.

| | Raramente o nunca (menos de 1 día) | Alguna vez pocas veces (1 o 2 días) | Ocasionalmente o varias veces (3 o 4 días) | Todo el tiempo (5-7 días) |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1- Me molestaron cosas que habitualmente no me molestan | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2- No tuve hambre; tenía poco apetito. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3- Sentía que no podía librarme de la tristeza incluso con la ayuda de mi familia o amigos. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4- Sentí que era, al menos, tan bueno como otras personas. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5- Tuve problemas para concentrarme en lo que hacía. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6- Me sentí deprimido. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7- Sentí que todo lo que hacía era un esfuerzo. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8- Me sentí optimista sobre el futuro. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9- Pensé que mi vida había sido un fracaso. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10- Me sentí temeroso. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11- Mi sueño era inquieto, no descansaba. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12- Estaba contento. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13- Hablaba menos de lo habitual. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14- Me sentí solo/a. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15- La gente me resultaba antipática. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16- Disfruté la vida. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17- Lloré en ocasiones. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18- Me sentí triste. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19- Sentí que no le gustaba a la gente. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20- No tenía ganas de nada. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Frecuencia de actividades de ocio

Durante el **mes pasado**, ¿con qué frecuencia ha realizado alguna de las siguientes actividades?

| | Nada | Un poco | Mucho |
|---|------|---------|-------|
| 1. Estar tranquilo | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Ir a la iglesia u otras reuniones de grupos u organizaciones | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 3. Aficiones u otros intereses | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 4. Ir a comer o cenar fuera o a otras actividades sociales | 0 | 1 | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.Pasar buenos ratos con otras personas | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 6.Visitar a la familia y/o amigos | 0 | 1 | 2 |

Sentimientos de culpa

A continuación, se le presentan unas frases que describen como usted podría haberse sentido **últimamente**.

| | Nunca | Rara vez | Algunas veces | Bastantes veces | Casi siempre |
|---|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Me he sentido mal por haber hecho algún plan o actividad sin contar con mi familiar. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Me he sentido culpable por la forma en que me he comportado en ocasiones con mi familiar. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Me he sentido mal por no atender a mis otros familiares (marido, mujer, hijos...) como debería. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Me he sentido mal por no poder dedicar más tiempo a mi familia (marido, mujer, hijos...). | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. He pensado que no estoy haciendo las cosas bien con la persona a la que estoy cuidando. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. He pensado que, teniendo en cuenta las circunstancias, estoy haciendo bien mi tarea como cuidador/a. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Cuando he salido a hacer alguna actividad agradable (p.ej., ir a cenar a un restaurante), me he sentido culpable y no he dejado de pensar que debería estar cuidando o atendiendo a mi familiar. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Me he sentido mal por cosas que quizá había hecho mal con la persona a la que estoy cuidando. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. He pensado que quizá no estoy cuidando bien. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Me he sentido mal por haberme enfadado con la persona a la que estoy cuidando. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Me he sentido mal por haber regañado por alguna razón a la persona a la que estoy cuidando. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Me he enfadado conmigo mismo/a por tener sentimientos negativos hacia la persona a la que cuido. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Me he encontrado pensando que no estoy a la altura de las circunstancias. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Me he sentido mal por no tener más paciencia con la persona a la que estoy cuidando. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Me he sentido mal por dejar a mi familiar al cuidado de otra persona mientras yo hacía mis tareas (ej., trabajo, compra, ir al médico, etc.). | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Me he sentido mal por dejar a mi familiar al cuidado de otra persona mientras yo me divertía | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Me he sentido culpable por desear que a otros “les toque esta cruz” o sufran lo mismo que yo. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. Me he sentido mala persona por odiar y/o envidiar a otros familiares que podrían hacerse cargo y no lo hacen. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Me he sentido mal por tener sentimientos negativos (p.ej., odio, enfado o rencor) hacia algunos familiares. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Me he sentido culpable por el hecho de tener tantas emociones negativas en relación al cuidado. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. He pensado que la forma en la que cuido de mi familiar podría no ser adecuada y contribuir a que su problema vaya a peor. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. Me he sentido culpable al pensar que mi falta de información y preparación podría hacer que no estuviera manejando el cuidado de mi familiar de la mejor forma posible. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Frecuencia y reacción a comportamientos problemáticos del familiar

Ahora me gustaría realizarle una serie de preguntas para evaluar si su familiar tiene problemas de conducta y de qué tipo son. Para ello, de cada problema de conducta voy a hacerle dos preguntas, la primera es para saber si el problema se da y con qué frecuencia. La segunda es para saber cuánto le estresa a usted que esta conducta ocurra. Para ello, use la siguiente escala:

| Frecuencia |
|---------------------------------------|
| 0 = nunca ocurrió |
| 1 = Ocurrió, pero no la semana pasada |
| 2 = 1 ó 2 veces la semana pasada |
| 3 = de 3 a 6 veces la semana pasada |
| 4 = diariamente o más a menudo |

| Reacción |
|-------------------------------|
| 0 = no me estresó nada |
| 1 = Me estresó un poco |
| 2 = me estresó moderadamente |
| 3 = me estresó mucho |
| 4 = me estresó extremadamente |

| Conducta | Frecuencia | Reacción |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1- ¿Hace la misma pregunta una y otra vez? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 2- ¿Tiene dificultades para recordar eventos recientes? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 3- ¿Tiene dificultades para recordar eventos importantes del pasado? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 4- ¿Pierde o cambia cosas de lugar? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 5- ¿Olvida qué día es hoy? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 6- ¿Empieza tareas que no termina? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 7- ¿Tiene dificultades para concentrarse en una tarea? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 8- ¿Destruye la propiedad? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 9- ¿Hace cosas que le hacen pasar vergüenza? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 10- ¿Le despierta a usted u otros miembros de la familia durante la noche? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 11- ¿Habla demasiado alto o demasiado rápido? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 12- ¿Parece ansioso o preocupado? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 13- ¿Realiza acciones que son potencialmente peligrosas para él o para otros? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 14- ¿Amenaza con dañarse a sí mismo? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 15- ¿Amenaza con dañar a otros? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 16- ¿Es agresivo verbalmente con otras personas? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 17- ¿Parece triste o deprimido? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |
| 18- ¿Expresa sentimientos de desesperanza o tristeza respecto al futuro? | 0 1 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 3 4 |

| Conducta | Frecuencia | | | | | Reacción | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| 19- ¿Llora? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20- ¿Hace comentarios sobre su muerte o la de otros? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21- ¿Habla de sentimientos de soledad? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22- ¿Hace comentarios acerca de “sentirse una carga”? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23- ¿Hace comentarios acerca de sentimientos de fracaso? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24- ¿Discute, se muestra irritable o presenta otro tipo de queja? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Frecuencia y reacción a procesos de inducción

| FRECUENCIA | GRADO DE CULPA EXPERIMENTADA |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0 = Nunca | 0 = Nada |
| 1 = Raramente | 1 = Un poco |
| 2 = Algunas veces | 2 = Moderadamente |
| 3 = Muchas veces | 3 = Mucho |
| 4 = Siempre o casi siempre | 4 = Extremadamente |

Mi familiar...

| | Frecuencia | | | | | Culpa | | | | | Otra emoción |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|---------------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 1. Crítica mis acciones y decisiones en relación a su cuidado | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 2. Me hace responsable de sus problemas o malestar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 3. Me culpa de situaciones problemáticas del cuidado (problemas de memoria, para asearse, vestirse, otros problemas de conducta) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 4. Me echa en cara que soy un estorbo y/o no le dejo vivir tranquilo | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 5. Me dice que soy una decepción para él | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 6. Me recrimina los sacrificios, esfuerzos y cosas que ha hecho por mi | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 7. Me dice que le abandono y que soy una mala cuidadora cuando me dispongo a salir de casa para realizar algún plan | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 8. Me dice que si de verdad me importara o quisiera, no haría cosas que le causaran malestar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 9. Me acusa de ser un mal cuidador | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 10. Me acusa de ser una mala hija/esposa/hermana/etc. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |

Mis familiares...

| | Frecuencia | | | | | Culpa | | | | | Otra emoción |
|--|------------|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 1. Critican mis acciones y decisiones en relación al cuidado de mi familiar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 2. Me hacen responsable del malestar de mi familiar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 3. Me culpan por el declive o empeoramiento de mi familiar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 4. Me culpan por las situaciones problemáticas del cuidado (problemas para aseo, vestirse, etc.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 5. Me acusan de ser una mala cuidadora | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 6. Me echan en cara que cuidar es lo que he elegido yo | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 7. Me recriminan que tienen otras responsabilidades y que mi situación es más idónea para el cuidado que la suya | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 8. Me echan en cara que no me organizo bien con las tareas que tengo que hacer | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |

Capacidad funcional del familiar

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| Comida: | | |
| | 10 | Independiente. Capaz de comer por sí solo en un tiempo razonable. La comida puede ser cocinada y servida por otra persona |
| | 5 | Necesita ayuda para cortar la carne, extender la mantequilla, pero es capaz de comer sólo/a |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Necesita ser alimentado por otra persona |
| Lavado (baño) | | |
| | 5 | Independiente. Capaz de lavarse entero, de entrar y salir del baño sin ayuda y de hacerlo sin que una persona supervise |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Necesita algún tipo de ayuda o supervisión |
| Vestido | | |
| | 10 | Independiente. Capaz de ponerse y quitarse la ropa sin ayuda |
| | 5 | Necesita ayuda. Realiza sin ayuda más de la mitad de estas tareas en un tiempo razonable |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Necesita ayuda para las mismas |
| Arreglo | | |
| | 5 | Independiente. Realiza todas las actividades personales sin ayuda alguna, los complementos necesarios pueden ser provistos por alguna persona |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Necesita alguna ayuda |
| Deposición | | |
| | 10 | Continente. No presenta episodios de incontinencia |
| | 5 | Accidente ocasional. Menos de una vez por semana o necesita ayuda para colocar enemas o supositorios. |
| | 0 | Incontinente. Más de un episodio semanal |
| Micción | | |
| | 10 | Continente. No presenta episodios. Capaz de utilizar cualquier dispositivo por si solo/a (botella, sonda, orinal ...). |
| | 5 | Accidente ocasional. Presenta un máximo de un episodio en 24 horas o requiere ayuda para la manipulación de sondas o de otros dispositivos. |
| | 0 | Incontinente. Más de un episodio en 24 horas |
| Ir al retrete | | |
| | 10 | Independiente. Entra y sale solo y no necesita ayuda alguna por parte de otra persona |
| | 5 | Necesita ayuda. Capaz de manejarse con una pequeña ayuda; es capaz de usar el cuarto de baño. Puede limpiarse solo/a. |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Incapaz de acceder a él o de utilizarlo sin ayuda mayor |
| Transferencia (traslado cama/sillón) | | |
| | 15 | Independiente. No requiere ayuda para sentarse o levantarse de una silla ni para entrar o salir de la cama. |
| | 10 | Mínima ayuda. Incluye una supervisión o una pequeña ayuda física. |
| | 5 | Gran ayuda. Precisa ayuda de una persona fuerte o entrenada. |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Necesita una grúa o el alzamiento por dos personas. Es incapaz de permanecer sentado |
| Deambulación | | |
| | 15 | Independiente. Puede andar 50 metros o su equivalente en casa sin ayuda supervisión. Puede utilizar cualquier ayuda mecánica excepto un andador. Si utiliza una prótesis, puede ponérsela y quitársela solo/a. |
| | 10 | Necesita ayuda. Necesita supervisión o una pequeña ayuda física por parte de otra persona o utiliza andador. |
| | 5 | Independiente en silla de ruedas. No requiere ayuda ni supervisión |
| | 0 | Dependiente |
| Subir y bajar escaleras | | |
| | 10 | Independiente. Capaz de subir y bajar un piso sin ayuda ni supervisión de otra persona. |
| | 5 | Necesita ayuda. Necesita ayuda o supervisión. |
| | 0 | Dependiente. Es incapaz de salvar escalones |

Anexo III: Instrumentos de evaluación aplicados a cuidadores profesionales***Relación con los familiares de los residentes***

¿Hasta qué punto resulta difícil para usted el trato con familiares de los residentes?

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| Nada difícil | Un poco difícil | Bastante difícil | Muy difícil |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

¿Cómo valora la calidad de su relación con los familiares de los residentes?

| | | | |
|-----------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Muy pobre | Pobre | Buena | Muy buena |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Carga

¿Cuán cargado se siente por el cuidado de los residentes?

| | | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------------|----------|----------------|
| Nada en absoluto | Un poco | Moderadamente | Bastante | Extremadamente |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Ansiedad

A continuación, le voy a leer una lista de palabras que describen cómo se pueden sentir las personas. Por favor, indique **con qué frecuencia se ha sentido así últimamente**

| | Nada | Un poco | Moderadamente | Bastante | Muchísimo |
|-----------------------|------|---------|---------------|----------|-----------|
| 1.Tenso/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2.Agitado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3.A punto de estallar | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4.Descontrolado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5.Relajado/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6.Intranquilo/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7.Inquieto/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8.Nervioso/a | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9.Con ansiedad | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Sentimientos de culpa

¿Se siente usted por no poder atender a los residentes como a usted le gustaría?

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Nada culpable | | | Término medio | | | | Muy culpable | | | |

Despersonalización

| | Nunca | Pocas veces al año o menos | Una vez al mes o menos | Unas pocas veces al mes | Una vez a la semana | Pocas veces a la semana | Todos los días |
|---|-------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Siento que estoy tratando a algunos residentes y familiares como si fueran objetos impersonales | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Siento que me he hecho más duro con los residentes y sus familiares | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Me preocupa que este trabajo me esté endureciendo emocionalmente | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Siento que realmente no me importa lo que les ocurra a los residentes o a sus familiares | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Me parece que los residentes o familiares me culpan de alguno de sus problemas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Anexo IV: Publicaciones

International Psychogeriatrics: page 1 of 9 © International Psychogeriatric Association 2016
doi:10.1017/S1041610216001393

Commitment to personal values and guilt feelings in dementia caregivers

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ABSTRACT

Background: Caregivers' commitment to personal values is linked to caregivers' well-being, although the effects of personal values on caregivers' guilt have not been explored to date. The goal of this study is to analyze the relationship between caregivers' commitment to personal values and guilt feelings.

Method: Participants were 179 dementia family caregivers. Face-to-face interviews were carried out to describe sociodemographic variables and assess stressors, caregivers' commitment to personal values and guilt feelings. Commitment to values was conceptualized as two factors (commitment to own values and commitment to family values) and 12 specific individual values (e.g. education, family or caregiving role). Hierarchical regressions were performed controlling for sociodemographic variables and stressors, and introducing the two commitment factors (in a first regression) or the commitment to individual/specific values (in a second regression) as predictors of guilt.

Results: In terms of the commitment to values factors, the analyzed regression model explained 21% of the variance of guilt feelings. Only the factor commitment to family values contributed significantly to the model, explaining 7% of variance. With regard to the regression analyzing the contribution of specific values to caregivers' guilt, commitment to the caregiving role and with leisure contributed negatively and significantly to the explanation of caregivers' guilt. Commitment to work contributed positively to guilt feelings. The full model explained 30% of guilt feelings variance. The specific values explained 16% of the variance.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that commitment to personal values is a relevant variable to understand guilt feelings in caregivers.

Key words: caregivers, dementia, guilt, values

Introduction

Caring for a relative with dementia is considered a chronically stressful situation (Vitaliano *et al.*, 2003) that has negative consequences for the caregivers psychological and physical health (Pinquart and Sörensen, 2003; Mausbach *et al.*, 2010), including guilt feelings, a common and disabling emotion frequently suffered by this population (Gonyea *et al.*, 2008; Losada *et al.*, 2010a).

Kugler and Jones (1992) described guilt as the dysphoric feeling associated with the recognition that one has violated a personally relevant moral or

social standard. In studies focused on caregivers, it has been described as the perception of having violated (or being able to violate) a moral or social standard related to the care of the relative, both in terms of thought and action (Gonyea *et al.*, 2008). Even though guilt seems to be a relevant theme for dementia caregivers from different cultural backgrounds (Roach *et al.*, 2013), the number of studies aimed at analyzing the effects of guilt in caregiving is limited (Martin *et al.*, 2006; Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2014), and it has been said that "research into clinical assessment of and intervention for maladaptive guilt is in its infancy" (Roach *et al.*, 2013; p. 2009). The available studies suggest that guilt in dementia caregivers is significantly associated with higher levels of distress, depressive symptoms, anxiety,

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and burden in dementia caregivers providing care in the community (Martin *et al.*, 2006; Gonyea *et al.*, 2008; Losada *et al.*, 2010a; Roach *et al.*, 2013) and in nursing homes (You and Tak, 2014). More specifically, Gonyea *et al.* (2008) found in a sample of 142 dementia caregivers that around 65% of adult daughters experienced feelings of guilt related to their caregiver role. In another study, Romero-Moreno *et al.* (2014) analyzed the role of guilt as a moderator in the relationship between the frequency of leisure and depressive symptomatology in a sample of dementia caregivers. The results demonstrated a moderator effect of guilt feelings in this relationship, but only in daughters. Daughter caregivers with high levels of guilt may thus be especially vulnerable to suffering emotional distress (Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2014).

Drawing upon the sociocultural stress and coping model (Knight and Sayegh, 2010), the relationship between caregiving stressors and distress-related variables such as feelings of guilt is influenced by many different variables, which may increase or minimize the negative impact of the caregiving situation on caregivers' psychological and physical health. Among these modulating variables, caregiver-specific psychological resources may reduce caregivers vulnerability to feelings of guilt. These resources include coping strategies and cultural values (e.g. motives for care) that have been found to have a significant impact on caregiver distress (Dilworth-Anderson *et al.*, 2002; Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2011; Sayegh and Knight, 2013). Research focused on analyzing the effects of psychological resources on caregivers' feelings of guilt is scarce, and studies are needed that allow the identification of potential resources preventing the emergence of these uncomfortable feelings.

One of the many variables involved in the caregiver stress process is personal values (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). These have been considered as global directions for life, chosen, desired, and verbally constructed (Hayes *et al.*, 1999, p. 206) that give meaning, direction, and purpose to the individual's behavior (Paez-Blarrina *et al.*, 2006). The commitment to personal values can be described as the degree to which a person is living in accordance with the most important values in their lives (Wilson *et al.*, 2010). In non-clinical populations, being engaged with personal values is negatively associated with experiential avoidance or the tendency to control or avoid the occurrence of negative and uncomfortable internal events (Hayes *et al.*, 1999). Also, commitment to personal values has been negatively linked with cognitive fusion – or the tendency to believe in the literal content of thoughts and feelings

(Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2016) – anxiety, stress, depression, and somatization (Smout *et al.*, 2014; Trindade *et al.*, 2015). In clinical populations, commitment to values is a relevant variable for explaining individuals health. In populations with chronic pain, MacCracken and Yang (2006) demonstrated the association between commitment to personal values and lower levels of physical distress, depression, and pain anxiety. Wetterneck *et al.* (2013) found that commitment was a significant predictor of OCD severity. However, the effects of commitment to values on caregiver distress have hardly been studied in the caregiving field (Márquez-González *et al.*, 2010).

Recently, Romero-Moreno *et al.* (2016) created an adaptation of the Valued Living Questionnaire (VLQ; Wilson *et al.*, 2010) to the caregiver population that, in addition to the assessment of ten relevant areas for people (e.g. family, parenting, or personal growth), added the roles of caregiving and self-care. The results showed that commitment to personal values significantly predicted levels of depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction, after controlling for the effects of sociodemographic and other resources variables, which provides support for the importance of personal values in the explanation of caregivers psychological well-being (Márquez-González *et al.*, 2010). Even though guilt and commitment to personal values have been shown to be related to caregiver distress, to our knowledge the effect of personal values on caregivers' guilt feelings has not yet been studied. The analysis of variables such as personal values on guilt can provide relevant information about predictive factors of guilt feelings and also suggestions regarding protective or vulnerability factors that may impact caregivers' health. The aim of this paper is to analyze the effect of commitment to personal values on caregivers' guilt feelings. We hypothesize that caregivers' commitment to personal values will significantly and negatively contribute to caregivers' guilt feelings.

Method

Participants

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 179 dementia family caregivers from Madrid. The inclusion criteria for the study were: self-identification as the main source of help for their relatives with dementia, being 18 years or older, and caring for at least one hour per day during at least three consecutive months. As shown in Table 1, most of the sample was composed of women with a mean age of 60. The majority of caregivers were

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

| | N = 179 |
|--|---------|
| Gender % | |
| Women | 77.2 % |
| Men | 22.8 % |
| Relationship to the care-recipient % | |
| Spouse | 40.5 % |
| Son/daughter | 49.5 % |
| Other (e.g. mother-in-law) | 10 % |
| Work/employment while providing care | |
| Yes | 37 % |
| No | 63 % |
| Caregiver age | |
| Mean | 61.62 |
| SD | 14.60 |
| Range | 21–88 |
| Care-recipient age | |
| Mean | 79.56 |
| SD | 8.78 |
| Range | 55–101 |
| Time since caregiving began (years) | |
| Mean | 3.66 |
| SD | 2.79 |
| Range | 0.5–18 |
| Hours dedicated daily to caregiving | |
| Mean | 13.69 |
| SD | 8.27 |
| Range | 7–24 |
| Care-recipient illness of (%) | |
| Alzheimer | 76.5 % |
| Other dementia (e.g. vascular dementia or dementia with Lewy Bodies) | 23.5 % |

children (49.5%) or spouses (40.5%) of the person being cared for.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through different procedures. First, agreements for participation in the study were reached with social and health centres in the Community of Madrid (a) that were contacted by the researchers of the study or (b) that showed interest in collaborating with the researchers. In both cases, the centres identified potential participants for the study among their users and provided their contact data to the researchers. A second recruitment procedure took place through advertisements appearing in different media, including radio and Internet. In these cases, caregivers contacted the researchers directly. Initial contact was established by telephone to check whether participants met the inclusion criteria

of the study. This was followed by face-to-face interviews in the participating centres. Before enrolling in the study, participants were invited to sign the informed consent form. The study was approved by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Ethics Committee at the Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid.

Materials

Following the stress and coping model adapted to caregiving (Knight and Sayegh, 2010), the following variables were assessed:

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Gender and age of the participants, their relationship with the care recipient as well as the number of hours per day dedicated to caregiving and time since care began were assessed.

CARE RECIPIENT FUNCTIONAL STATUS

The Barthel Index (Mahoney, 1965) was used to assess the ability of the person with dementia in ten basic activities of daily living. In this study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's α) for the scale was 0.91.

CARE RECIPIENT COGNITIVE STATUS

In order to assess the cognitive status of the care recipient, the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS; Reisberg *et al.*, 1982) was administered.

FREQUENCY OF BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

This variable was assessed through the Spanish version (Nogales-González *et al.*, 2015) of the Revised Memory and Behaviours Problems Checklist (RMBPC; Teri *et al.*, 1992). This scale is composed of 24 items that evaluate the frequency of observable disruptive behaviour during the previous week with a response format ranging from 0 = "not at all" to 4 = "extremely". The internal consistency (Cronbach's α) obtained in this study was 0.73.

PERSONAL VALUES

Commitment to personal values was measured using the Valued Living Questionnaire Adapted to Caregiving (VLQAC) (Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2016). The questionnaire consists of two factors. The first factor is labelled *Family values* and is composed of different aspects or family life domains (family relations; marriage/couples/intimate relationship; parenting; the role of the relative's caregiving), with an internal consistency of 0.60. The second factor is *Own values*, consisting of other different domains (friendships and social relations; education, training, personal development/growth;

employment/professional life; recreation, leisure and free time/hobbies; religion, spirituality; citizenship/community life; health/physical well-being, and caring for oneself). The internal consistency for this factor was 0.75 (Cronbach's α).

GUILT

Guilt feelings were measured through the Caregiver Guilt Questionnaire (CGQ; Losada et al., 2010a). This instrument measures the frequency of guilt feelings in the caregivers during the previous week. It consists of 22 items (e.g. I have felt guilty about the way I've sometimes behaved with my relative) with Likert-type responses from 0 = "never" to 4 = "almost always". The internal consistency found in this study (Cronbach's α) was 0.88.

Data analysis

First, assumptions for normality and outliers were analyzed. Descriptive analyses of the assessed variables were run (means, standard deviations and range). To analyse the effects of commitment to personal values on caregiver guilt, two hierarchical regression analyses were carried out, the first one analysing the effect on caregiver guilt of the two factors that compose the commitment to values questionnaire, and the second one analysing the effect of the 12 specific values that compose the scale. In order to ascertain whether commitment to values adds significant explained variance to guilt, this variable was included in a second step after controlling in a first step for variables usually considered in the stress and coping model (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). Specifically, in the first step of the regression, the socio-demographic variables (gender and caregiver age) and the stressors (daily hours devoted to caregiving, time since caregiving begun, type of dementia, cognitive and functional status, and frequency of behavioural problems) were included. Commitment to values was included in the second step. Considering that the required sample size for obtaining a medium effect size (f^2) with a statistical power higher than 0.80 and a probability level of 0.05 using 21 predictors is 160, the sample size of the present study is sufficiently large for the analyses that are included.

Results

Normality and outliers

The results suggest that the assessed variables follow a normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis were within expected values). Neither univariate (z scores greater than 3.29, $p < 0.001$) nor

multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distance = $p < 0.001$) were found.

Contribution of commitment to personal values to the explanation of guilt feelings

First, the effect of the factors *commitment to own values* and *commitment to family values* on caregiver guilt was assessed. As shown in Table 2, in the first step 14% of the variance in guilt was explained through the frequency of behavioral problems. In the second step, commitment to the two factors (*own values* and *family values*) were included. The results showed that the second step contributes significantly to the explanation of the variance in guilt feelings (7%), and the variables that contributed significantly to the explanation of guilt feelings were the commitment to family values and the frequency of behavioral problems. A higher commitment to the family values factor predicts lower guilt levels. In addition, a higher frequency of behavioral problems predicts more feelings of guilt. The full model explains 21% of the guilt feelings variance ($F = 3.773$; $p < 0.0001$).

In a second regression analysis, the 12 specific values assessed by the VLQAC were included. The results (see Table 3) show that the variables that contribute significantly to the explanation of guilt were commitment to the caregiving role, leisure, and work. A higher commitment to the caregiving role and to leisure is associated with less guilt, whereas a major commitment to work predicts higher levels of guilt. Through this second step, an increase of 16% of variance was obtained. The full model explains 30% of the variance in guilt feelings ($F = 2.939$; $p < 0.0001$).

Discussion

The present study aimed to analyze the influence of the commitment to personal values on the guilt feelings experienced by dementia caregivers. The results confirm our hypothesis that commitment to personal values is an important variable for the explanation of the caregivers' guilt feelings. Even though to our knowledge the effects of commitment to personal values on caregivers' well-being have not been previously studied, except for the VLQAC development study (Romero-Moreno et al., 2016), the findings of this study are consistent with the previous literature in non-caregiving samples (McCracken and Yang, 2006; Wetterneck et al., 2013; Smout et al., 2014; Trindade et al., 2015). Our results confirm the association between commitment to personal values and psychological well-being, in this case guilt feelings. However, our results suggest that when commitment to

Table 2. Hierarchical regression with VLQAC factors

| DV. GUILT | STEP 1 | | STEP 2 | |
|---|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| | β | T | β | T |
| Gender | -0.030 | -0.073 | 0.019 | 0.047 |
| Caregiver age | -0.133 | -1.537 | -0.061 | -0.699 |
| Hours dedicated daily to care | -0.095 | -1.119 | -0.035 | -0.411 |
| Frequency of behavioural problems | 0.260* | 3.328** | 0.172* | 2.153* |
| Time since caregiving began | -0.024 | -0.299 | -0.026 | -0.326 |
| Kinship (daughters = 0; other = 1) | -0.137 | -0.332 | -0.061 | -0.154 |
| Relative's functional status | 0.063 | 0.732 | 0.091 | 1.089 |
| Relative's mental status | -0.082 | -0.939 | -0.066 | -0.786 |
| Type of dementia (Alzheimer = 0; other = 1) | 0.153 | 1.922 | 0.138 | 1.785 |
| Commitment to family values | | | -0.324** | -3.793** |
| Commitment to own values | | | 0.061 | 0.771 |
| ΔR^2 | | 0.137* | | 0.074** |
| R^2 | | 0.137 | | 0.211 |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression with Individual values assessed in the VLQAC

| DV. GUILT | STEP 1 | | STEP 2 | |
|---|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| | β | T | β | T |
| Gender | -0.030 | -0.073 | 0.057 | 0.142 |
| Caregiver age | -0.133 | -1.537 | -0.123 | -1.304 |
| Hours dedicated daily to care | -0.095 | -1.119 | 0.004 | 0.042 |
| Frequency of behavioural problems | 0.260** | 3.328** | 0.144 | 1.789 |
| Time since caregiving began | -0.024 | -0.299 | 0.016 | 0.192 |
| Kinship (daughters = 0; other = 1) | -0.137 | -0.332 | 0.016 | 0.192 |
| Relative's functional status | 0.063 | 0.732 | 0.067 | 0.793 |
| Relative's mental status | -0.082 | -0.939 | -0.067 | -0.801 |
| Type of dementia (Alzheimer = 0; other = 1) | 0.153 | 1.922 | 0.147 | 1.828 |
| Commitment to caregiving role | | | -0.309** | -3.618** |
| Commitment to self-care | | | 0.116 | 1.204 |
| Commitment to family | | | -0.031 | -0.349 |
| Commitment to couple | | | -0.097 | -1.125 |
| Commitment to parenting | | | -0.037 | -0.418 |
| Commitment to friendship | | | 0.001 | 0.006 |
| Commitment to leisure | | | -0.187* | -2.168* |
| Commitment to religion | | | 0.005 | 0.056 |
| Commitment to work | | | 0.161* | 1.944* |
| Commitment to citizenship | | | 0.052 | 0.616 |
| Commitment to health | | | -0.030 | -0.318 |
| Commitment to personal growth | | | 0.008 | 0.084 |
| ΔR^2 | | 0.137* | | 0.161* |
| R^2 | | 0.137 | | 0.299 |

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$.

values is assessed through the VLQAC factors, only commitment to *family values* was negatively associated with guilt. No significant association was found for commitment to *own values*. These results are consistent with interpersonal theories of guilt, such as that developed by Baumeister *et al.* (1994), who argued that guilt occurs more frequently in

close relationships, whose function is to reduce violations of social and other norms. The factor of commitment to *family values* is composed of vital areas related to relations with other relevant people for caregivers, and it is expected that commitment to this factor is associated with less distress.

When commitment to values is assessed through specific values, again not all the values contributed significantly to the explanation of caregiver's guilt feelings. The results suggest that the commitment to the caregiving role, leisure, and work contributed significantly to the explanation of guilt feelings. Higher scores in commitment to the caregiving role value are associated with lower levels of guilt. This result is consistent with previous research in the area of care. Spillers *et al.* (2008) analyzed the feelings of guilt on a sample of 635 cancer caregivers and found that caregivers experience guilt and sense of incompetence when their care does not contribute to the improvement of the relative. These results can be transferred to the area of dementia caregiving because this population is also exposed to uncontrollable situations such as the cognitive decline of the family, and other highly stressful situations, for example, the presence of a relative's disruptive behavior, which can lead to feelings of incompetence in their role as a caregiver.

A higher commitment to the value of care may indicate that the caregiver grants high importance to and is consistent with his/her actions as a caregiver. With regard to the definition of commitment to values, it can be expected that for caregivers with high commitment to caregiving, the performance of many actions committed to the care of the person with dementia provides an area of particular relevance in their lives. These data can be related to other studies showing that greater satisfaction with care is linked to positive outcomes on caregivers (Lai, 2010). That is, those caregivers who live with greater commitment to their role as caregivers are likely to be more satisfied with their actions and therefore experience less distress and, as a result, less guilt.

On the other hand, our findings also suggest that commitment to leisure protects caregivers from suffering guilt. This result is consistent with the findings of Romero-Moreno *et al.* (2014), which showed that guilt plays a moderator role in the relation between leisure activities and depressive symptomatology, particularly in daughters. Those daughters with more guilt and with lower leisure activity frequency were more vulnerable to suffering depression. In this sense, it is possible that caregivers with greater commitment to leisure carry out more and more coherent actions in this area, which may protect them from guilt feelings and ultimately from depressive symptoms. The findings obtained are also consistent with research showing the positive effects of engaging in leisure activities (Thompson *et al.*, 2002; Losada *et al.*, 2010b), suggesting the important of measuring, in addition to important values (e.g. leisure), the degree to which they act consistently with their values.

Helping caregivers to engage in actions coherent with their values may contribute to increase the effects of valuable interventions such as respite services on caregivers' distress. As suggested by Lund *et al.* (2014), interventions may be helpful for helping caregivers to make more beneficial use of respite time, targeting the intervention to their specific needs and desires (values). However, not all the values seem to be associated with lower levels of guilt. Commitment to work appears to show a profile of vulnerability to guilt. Our results show that a higher commitment to the value of work increases caregivers' feelings of guilt. In line with the work of Spillers *et al.* (2008) and Bernard and Guarnaccia (2003), those caregivers who work while caring for their families have higher levels of guilt. Similarly, Rosa *et al.* (2010) found that those dementia caregivers who experience a greater role conflict between work and family life have major difficulties in developing adaptive emotional reactions and new roles, which in turn can lead to guilt feelings. In other words, being exposed to incompatible demands in the context of work and family, in this case exacerbated by the needs of the relative with dementia, creates a situation in which caregivers may feel overloaded and experience guilt feelings.

Our findings also show that the frequency of behavioral problems predicts caregiver guilt. This result is coherent with the findings of Ankri *et al.* (2005), who also found that a higher score in guilt was associated with more behavioral problems in the care recipient. However, when commitment to specific values is included in the second step of the regression, this effect disappears. This finding may be suggesting a mediator effect of engagement with personal values in the relationship between behavioral problems in the care recipient and caregivers distress, specifically guilt feelings.

These data have important clinical implications. Our results suggest that commitment to personal values may contribute to putting caregivers in a position of vulnerability to develop guilt feelings. Specifically, low levels of commitment to the caregiving role and to leisure and high commitment to work are associated with guilt feelings. Detecting these profiles may be relevant for the development, implementation, and optimization of psychological interventions aimed at preventing or reducing levels of guilt in caregivers. The perspective of contextual therapies and, specifically, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, Hayes *et al.*, 1999), offers an interesting frame for these interventions, as it states that the realization of committed actions increases psychological well-being. Along these lines, Losada *et al.* (2015) demonstrated the effectiveness of ACT in decreasing caregivers' levels

of depression and anxiety. Future studies could analyze the effects of this type of intervention for decreasing levels of caregiver guilt.

The present study has various limitations. First, the sample is composed of caregivers who volunteered to participate in the study, and the study has a cross-sectional design. These issues limit the generalizability of the results to the rest of the caregiver population. Another source of limitations that may impact the generalizability of the obtained results has to do with the cultural background of the participants in this study. The influence of cultural variables on the caregiving stress process has received strong empirical support (Knight and Sayegh, 2010). For example, differences have been found between cultures associated with variables such as familism (Losada *et al.*, 2006), and cultural issues may have a significant impact on commitment to personal values. Future studies should confirm if the findings obtained here are generalizable to samples with different cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, the correlational nature of the study does not permit us to make any causal inferences. The present results should be interpreted with caution, given the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations for relationships between variables found in this work. For example, an alternative explanation of the obtained results can be formulated, if we consider guilt feelings as an independent variable, rather than a dependent one as is the case in the present study. Hence, it is possible that the relationship between guilt and commitment to values takes an alternative direction, with guilt functioning as a predictor of commitment to values. That is, those caregivers who experience higher levels of guilt might find more difficulties in being consistent and engaged with their values so that levels of guilt influence the degree to which the caregivers are engaged with their values. Longitudinal and experimental research is needed to confirm the interpretation of these results.

The assessment measures that have been used capture caregivers' subjective feelings associated with their role. For example, some caregivers reported to be caring for 24 hours per day, and the maximum number of years caring was 18. Even though it is frequent to find caregivers who believe that they take care for their relative for 24 hours per day (up to 59% of the caregivers consider this in the last year of care and some Alzheimer's patients live 20 years after diagnosis (Alzheimer's Association, 2013)), most of the caregiving literature is based on subjective reports made by the caregivers (even cognitive and functional status; Pearlin *et al.*, 1990). Although these reports have been considered as

indicators of the demands and hardships that caregivers encounter in their daily lives, the use of objective indicators of the assessed variables may show a different pattern of results to the one reported in this study.

Finally, considering that feelings of guilt may have different consequences on caregivers' distress depending on their kinship (Gonyea *et al.*, 2008; Roach *et al.*, 2013; Romero-Moreno *et al.*, 2014), future studies should analyze the effects of personal values on caregivers' guilt considering kinship differences.

In spite of the limitations mentioned, our results show an association between psychological health and commitment to values. These findings suggest that commitment to values seems to be clinically relevant in explaining the dementia caregivers' levels of guilt.

Conflict of interest declaration

None.

Description of authors' roles

L. Gallego-Alberto formulated the research questions, carried out the statistical analyses and wrote the paper. A. Losada, R. Romero-Moreno and M. Márquez-González designed the study, carried it out, supervised the data collection and assisted with writing the paper. C. Vara assisted with writing the paper.

Acknowledgments

The study was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (PSI2012-31239 and PSI2015-65152-C2-1-R). The authors would like to all the caregivers for their participation in the project.

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Psychosocial Predictors of Anxiety in Nursing Home Staff

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Although research shows that nursing home staff experience significant levels of stress and burnout, studies analyzing the relationship of psychosocial variables on their feelings of anxiety are scarce. This study aims to analyze the relationship between psychosocial variables and levels of anxiety among staff.

Method: Participants were 101 nursing home professionals. In addition to anxiety, socio-demographic variables, depersonalization, burden, relationship with families of the residents, and guilt about the care offered to the residents were assessed. A hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to analyze the contribution of the assessed variables to staff anxiety levels.

Results: The obtained model explained 57% of the variance in anxious symptomatology. Guilt about the care offered and poor quality of the relationship with residents' family were associated with anxiety. Further, working at nursing homes where the staff report higher levels of anxiety symptoms, the presence of depersonalization and burden were also associated with anxiety.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that in addition to work-related variables (burden and burnout), problems with family members and guilt about the care offered are relevant variables for understanding staff's anxious symptomatology.

Clinical Implications: Interventions that address issues of guilt about the quality of care, and problematic relationships with family members of residents, may have potential to reduce staff anxiety and promote their well-being.

KEYWORDS

Anxiety; burden; guilt; long-term staff; relationship with families

Introduction

The growth of the older population worldwide is linked to an increase in the number of individuals affected by chronic diseases, including neuropsychiatric disorders, such as the different types of dementia (Alzheimer Association, 2014). The increase in the prevalence of these disorders leads to a greater need for care resources (Pitfield, Shahriyarmolki, & Livingston, 2011). Indeed, in many countries rates of institutionalization of older persons will increase significantly over the coming years (Comas-Herrera et al., 2011).

Despite generally high levels of commitment to their jobs, several studies report elevated levels of stress and burnout among nursing home staff (Brodaty, Draper, & Low, 2003; Cooper et al., 2016; Duffy, Oyeboode, & Allen, 2009; Pillemer & Lachs, 2002; Woodhead, Northrop, & Edelstein, 2016). These consequences can have a negative impact on

the efficiency and quality of care received by residents (Cohen-Mansfield, 1997; Edvardsson, Sandman, Nay, & Karlsson, 2008). Additionally, the elevated levels of mental health problems found among nursing home staff contribute to high rates of job turnover (Pillemer et al., 2008). Considering that increasing our knowledge about the variables contributing to a reduction in the well-being of nursing home staff may support the development of interventions directed at this population, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between different psychosocial variables and the feelings of anxiety among nursing home staff.

Burnout is an individual response to prolonged work-related stress that can affect the job satisfaction, productivity, performance, turnover and well-being of professionals (Maslach & Jackson, 1981b). Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion (decreased emotional resources and energy), depersonalization (negative attitudes and

feelings towards care recipients), and a lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981b). Burnout in nursing home professionals has been linked to personal factors, the organizational environment, conflicts with family members of residents, and experiencing aggressive behaviors from residents (Edvardsson et al., 2008; Miyamoto, Tachimori, & Ito, 2010; Moniz-Cook, Woods, & Gardiner, 2000; Montoro-Rodriguez & Small, 2006; Pillemer et al., 2003).

In terms of organizational factors, long-term care employees often work long hours, experience high levels of time pressure, and are paid low wages (Zimmerman et al., 2005). Evidence suggests that these stressful characteristics of the job play an important role in explaining burnout in nursing home staff (Cooper et al., 2016). Workload is also a relevant predictor of burden and job pressure (Chappell & Novak, 1992). Further, support provided by supervisors is linked to lower stress levels among long-term care staff (Woodhead et al., 2016). Edvardsson, Sandman, Nay, and Karlsson (2009) found that perceived organizational climate and the likelihood of involvement in discussions about care problems and ethical difficulties were predictors of job strain.

An additional source of stress and burnout in nursing home staff is relationships with family members. Several studies have demonstrated that difficulties frequently emerge in interactions between nursing home staff and relatives of residents (Abrahamson, Pillemer, Sechrist, & Sutor, 2011; Bramble, Moyle, & Shum, 2011; Chen, Sabir, Zimmerman, Sutor, & Pillemer, 2007; Law, Patterson, Muers, 2016; Utley-Smith et al., 2009). Some conflicts are related to discrepant views about the appropriate tasks for families and staff (Duncan & Morgan, 1994; Train, Nurock, Manela, Kitchen, & Livingston, 2005). Additional contributors to conflict are problems in communication due to high time pressure among workers, and family members' fears about negative consequences resulting from expressing concerns about residents' care (Hertzberg & Ekman, 1996; Train et al., 2005). The presence of negative attitudes on the part of both staff and families also contributes to difficulties in the relationship (Pillemer et al., 2003). In a qualitative study, Train and colleagues (2005) found that long-term care staff were generally positive about

their relationships with families. However, the respondents were also resentful about the demands families make regarding resident care. Further, conflicts with one another leads to distress for both staff and family members (Abrahamson, Sutor, & Pillemer, 2009; Pillemer et al., 2003).

Residents' behavioral symptoms are another source of stress and burden among nursing home personnel. Several studies have shown that resident's behavioral symptoms increase the workload and burden experienced by the staff (Miyamoto et al., 2010; Moniz-Cook et al., 2000; Sourial, McCusker, Cole, & Abrahamowicz, 2001). In a recent study, Zwijsen and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that behavioral symptoms such as aggression predict staff distress.

Despite extensive evidence regarding the negative relationship between chronic exposure to stressors and family caregivers' well-being (Vitaliano, Zhang, & Scanlan, 2003), only a few studies have explored psychological distress among nursing home workers (Ejaz, Noelker, Menne, & Bagaka's, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2005). However, studies involving other health professionals have demonstrated the negative association between work-related stress, burnout and psychological and physical health (Ilhan, Durukan, Taner, Maral, & Bumin, 2008; Khamisa, Peltzer, & Oldenburg, 2013). Anxiety, depression and somatization have been linked to work-related stress and burnout (Khamisa et al., 2013). Boey and colleagues (1997) found a negative effect of work stress on anxiety and depression. Similarly, Jourdain and Chênevert (2010) found a significant association between higher levels of depersonalization and higher psychosomatic complaints.

Further, elder care professionals must cope with populations with a range of diseases, levels of dependency, and varying needs. This situation may increase the negative effects on the mental and psychological health of staff (Ejaz et al., 2008). Although research on mental health outcomes among nursing home staff is scarce, factors such as staff burnout have been linked to the workers' physical and mental health (Woodhead et al., 2016). Ejaz and colleagues (2008) found high levels of depression in a large sample of long-term care workers, with 26% of the sample showing clinically relevant levels of depressive symptomatology. To our knowledge, however,

there are no studies analyzing predictive factors of anxious symptomatology in nursing home staff.

Anxiety is an important outcome, given that it can be a significant precursor of other mental health problems, such as depression (e.g. Wittchen, Kessler, Pfister, & Lieb, 2000), and is likely to have an impact on workers' attitudes toward residents, quality of care, or job satisfaction (Cohen-Mansfield, 1995). Increasing our knowledge about predictors can assist in the development of interventions aimed at decreasing staff distress, and thereby improve the quality of the care received by residents.

The study hypotheses are the following: a) Variables related to work conditions such as number of working hours will be related to staff anxiety levels; b) guilt and burnout (depersonalization) levels will be associated with staff anxiety levels; and c) variables associated with the time spent with families and quality of this contact will be associated with staff-reported anxiety levels.

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were 101 staff members of five nursing homes located in the extended metropolitan area of Madrid, Spain. All of the facilities agreed to participate in a larger study that tested a collaborative intervention between nursing home staff members and families of residents. The data used in this study are from the baseline assessment that was conducted in the nursing homes by psychologists unaware of the main hypothesis of the study. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Rey Juan Carlos University.

Measures

Staff and nursing home characteristics

We obtained information on staff gender, occupation, number of years working with older people, number of years working in his/her current position, number of weekly hours in contact with the residents, and number of weekly hours in contact with the relatives of the residents. In addition, the average levels of staff anxiety levels per nursing facility was also assessed using the anxiety scale

described below. Although additional descriptive data would be useful, the limited time available for staff to complete the assessment instruments precluded obtaining such information.

Anxiety symptoms

Staff members' anxious symptomatology was measured using the tension subscale of the Profile of Moods State (POMS, Lorr, McNair, & Droppleman, 1971) questionnaire. This subscale contains 9 items, each of which is a mood descriptor (e.g., nervous) and participants are asked to indicate how often they have experienced that particular mood recently using a 5-point Likert-type response scale (where 0 = "never" and 4 = "extremely"). This scale has shown good psychometric properties in previous studies (e.g., Brown, Coogle, & Wegelin, 2016; Ruiz-Robledillo, Sariñana-González, Pérez-Blasco, González-Bono, & Moya-Albiol, 2015), including strong associations with other anxiety measures (e.g., Gibson, 1997). The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of this scale in the present study was .86.

Quality of the relationship with the resident families

The quality of the relationship with the families was measured through a single item: "How would you rate the quality of your relationship with residents' families?" Answers ranged from 1 ("very poor") to 4 ("very good").

Difficulties in daily contact with families

The degree to which the staff rated difficulties in daily contact with family members was measured through the single item: "To what extent is daily contact with family members difficult for you." Answers ranged from 1 ("not at all difficult") to 4 ("very difficult").

Depersonalization

An adaptation of the depersonalization subscale of the Maslach burnout inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1986) was used. It is a 5-item scale (e.g., "I feel like I don't care about what happen to residents or to their families") with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 "never" to 7 "every day." This scale measures depersonalization symptoms of the staff regarding residents and their relatives. Cronbach's alpha for this scale in this study was .61.

Caregiving burden

The level of burden due to resident care was measured by a single item ("How much burden do you feel due to the care of the residents?") with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "extremely").

Guilt feelings

Staff were asked the degree to which they feel guilt regarding inability to provide care as well as they would like and was measured through a single item ("How guilty do you feel for not being able to care for the residents as you would like?"). Answers ranged from 0 ("Not at all guilty") to 10 ("very guilty").

Statistical analyses

Following Tabachnick & Fidell's (2007) criteria, analyses for sample normality and outliers (univariate and multivariate) were conducted. Sample characteristics were analyzed through descriptive data. The associations and differences between the assessed variables were tested through *t*-test, analyses of variance (ANOVAs), and Pearson correlation analysis. To analyze the contribution of each of the assessed variables to the staff's anxious symptomatology, a two-step hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. In the first step, sociodemographic data were controlled (gender, years working with elderly population, years working in the current position, hours per week of work with the residents, and hours per week of contact with family members of the residents). Included in the second step were depersonalization, quality of the relationship with the resident families, guilt feelings, workload, and difficulties in daily contact with families. All analyses were conducted using SPSS v.23.

Results

Outliers

No univariate (z scores greater than 3.29, $p < .001$) nor multivariate (Mahalanobis distance = $p < .001$) outliers were found in the sample.

Sample characteristics

The sample was primarily female (84.2%). Respondents were primarily nursing assistants and nurses (59.4%), 24.8% were other health professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physicians), and 19.6% were administrative staff in the facilities (e.g., receptionists, managers). Means, standard deviations, and ranges of the assessed variables are shown in Table 1. Differences in weekly hours spent with relatives and difficulties with them were found between professionals: nurses and nursing assistants spent less time with relatives than the other professionals (nurses and nursing assistants mean = 11.29; SD = 14.25; other professionals mean: 23.49; SD = 17.01; $t = 3.90$; $p < .01$). In addition, differences in average anxious symptomatology were found between facilities. Specifically, the staff from one nursing home reported lower anxiety levels than the staff from the other nursing homes (facilities with higher anxiety levels mean = 12.62; SD = 6.53; facility with lower anxiety level: 6.25; SD = 4.71; $F = 2.86$; $p < .05$). With the aim of controlling for these differences in the following analyses, the variables occupation and nursing facility have been dummy coded, with a score of 1 indicating "nurses and nursing assistants" and "nursing homes where the staff reported lower anxiety levels."

Correlations

The correlations among variables are shown in Table 2. Staff's anxious symptomatology was significantly and positively associated with guilt for not caring as well as they wished, caregiving burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in daily contact with relatives. In addition, a lower perceived quality of relationship with the relatives of the residents was negatively and significantly associated with anxious symptomatology. No significant associations were found between the other assessed variables and anxiety. Staff who reported devoting more weekly hours in contact with the relatives and those reporting lower difficulties in daily contact with relatives reported lower levels of caregiving burden. In addition, being a nurse or

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample.

| Characteristic | | All staff (N = 101) | Nursing staff (N = 60) | Other professionals (N = 41) |
|--|-------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Years working with older population | Mean | 7.05 | 6.79 | 7.45 |
| | S.D. | 5.48 | 6.03 | 4.60 |
| | Range | 0–25 | 0–25 | 0–24 |
| Years working in current position | Mean | 4.20 | 3.78 | 4.83 |
| | S.D. | 3.12 | 3.33 | 2.86 |
| | Range | 0–12 | 0–12 | 0–10 |
| Weekly hours in contact with residents | Mean | 39.37 | 41.66 | 36.02 |
| | S.D. | 13.13 | 13.74 | 11.56 |
| | Range | 0–12 | 7–84 | 8–51 |
| Weekly hours in contact with relatives | Mean | 16.24 | 11.29 | 23.48 |
| | S.D. | 16.48 | 14.25 | 17.01 |
| | Range | 0–49 | 0–49 | 0–49 |
| Guilt | Mean | 5.27 | 5.58 | 4.80 |
| | S.D. | 2.36 | 2.30 | 2.40 |
| | Range | 0–10 | 0–10 | 0–9 |
| Care burden | Mean | 2.66 | 2.93 | 2.27 |
| | S.D. | 1.12 | 1.00 | 1.16 |
| | Range | 1–5 | 1–5 | 1–5 |
| Depersonalization | Mean | 10.45 | 10.87 | 9.85 |
| | S.D. | 4.60 | 4.73 | 4.41 |
| | Range | 5–24 | 5–24 | 5–24 |
| Quality of relationship with relatives | Mean | 2.98 | 2.98 | 2.98 |
| | S.D. | .60 | .57 | .65 |
| | Range | 1–4 | 1–4 | 1–4 |
| Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | Mean | 1.84 | 1.82 | 1.88 |
| | S.D. | .67 | .57 | .81 |
| | Range | 1–4 | 1–4 | 1–4 |
| Anxiety | Mean | 12.11 | 12.90 | 10.98 |
| | S.D. | 6.62 | 6.33 | 6.94 |
| | Range | 0–29 | 1–28 | 0–29 |

Table 2. Correlations matrix.

| Characteristic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| 1. Gender (1 = male) | - | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Years working with older population | -.19 | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Years working in current position | -.18 | .61** | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Weekly hours in contact with residents | .11 | -.04 | -.10 | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Weekly hours in contact with relatives | .10 | -.14 | -.06 | .06 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Occupation (1 = nurses and nursing assistants) | -.03 | -.06 | -.16 | .21* | -.37** | - | | | | | | | |
| 7. Nursing facility (1 = nursing homes where staff reported lower anxiety levels) | -.13 | .30* | .49** | -.11 | -.22* | .17 | - | | | | | | |
| 8. Guilt | .10 | .02 | -.18 | .16 | -.04 | .16 | -.07 | - | | | | | |
| 9. Care burden | -.04 | .14 | .06 | .06 | -.31** | .29** | -.08 | .15 | - | | | | |
| 10. Depersonalization | .07 | .09 | .09 | .17 | .00 | .11 | -.04 | .05 | .38** | - | | | |
| 11. Quality of relationship with relatives | .01 | .06 | .07 | -.01 | .15 | .07 | -.06 | .16 | -.05 | -.04 | - | | |
| 12. Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | -.22* | .20* | -.04 | -.04 | -.09 | -.05 | -.04 | .15 | .29** | .36* | -.26* | - | |
| 13. Anxiety | -.12 | .03 | -.06 | .10 | -.08 | .14 | -.26** | .28** | .52** | .41** | -.23* | .41** | - |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

nursing assistant was associated with higher levels of burden. Further, working in the nursing home in which professionals reported lower anxiety levels was significantly associated with more years working with older population and in the same position, and more weekly hours spent in contact with relatives.

Regression model

The results of the regression model for analyzing the influence of the independent variables on staff's anxious symptomatology is shown in Table 3. Of the variables included in the first step of the analysis, only the nursing facility

Table 3. Hierarchical regression for the prediction of anxious symptomatology.

| Variable | B | T | ΔR^2 |
|---|-------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | | | |
| Gender (1 = female) | -.140 | -1.415 | .15 |
| Years working with older population | .000 | .000 | |
| Years working in current position | .141 | .987 | |
| Weekly hours in contact with residents | .050 | .494 | |
| Weekly hours in contact with relatives | -.071 | -.665 | |
| Occupation (1 = nursing assistants and nurses) | .192 | 1.715 | |
| Nursing facility (1 = nursing homes where staff reported lower anxiety levels) | -.390 | -3.307** | |
| 2 | | | .42** |
| Gender (1 = female) | -.124 | -1.653 | |
| Years working with older population | -.154 | -1.627 | |
| Years working in current position | .218 | 1.970 | |
| Weekly hours in contact with residents | -.039 | .969 | |
| Weekly hours in contact with relatives | .902 | 3.70 | |
| Occupation (1 = nursing assistants and nurses) | .113 | 1.301 | |
| Nursing facility (1 = staff from the nursing home reporting lower anxiety levels) | -.313 | -3.501** | |
| Guilt | .233 | 3.061** | |
| Care burden | .282 | 3.255** | |
| Depersonalization | .246 | 3.165** | |
| Quality of relationship with relatives | -.181 | -2.399* | |
| Difficulties in daily contact with relatives | .273 | 3.231** | |
| | | Total R ² | .57 |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

reporting lower anxiety contributed significantly to the model, explaining 15% of the variance of the staff's anxious symptomatology. All variables included in the second step contributed significantly to the explanation of anxious symptomatology. The variables included in the second step contributed significantly to the explanation of anxious symptomatology, explaining 42% of this variance. The final model explains 57% of the variance ($F = 9.79$, $p < .0001$). The following variables contributed significantly to the explanation of staff anxiety levels: working in nursing homes where the staff showed higher average anxiety levels, guilt feelings, care burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in interactions with families and quality of the relationship with the families. Guilt feelings, care burden, depersonalization, and difficulties in the interactions with families were positively associated with anxious symptoms. Conversely, quality of relationships with families was negatively associated with staff anxiety levels.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to analyze the effects of psychosocial variables on the anxiety of nursing home staff. In addition to variables that have usually been associated with distress among

nursing home workers (such as burden and burnout), we found that anxious symptoms are also associated with feelings of guilt about care provision and having difficulties with the relatives of the residents. In contrast, we did not find support for the hypothesis regarding the association between the work variables and staff anxiety levels.

Our findings are consistent with studies showing associations between burden and mental health consequences among professionals (Baglioni, Cooper, & Hingley, 1990; Ejaz et al., 2008; Escribà-Agüir & Pérez-Hoyos, 2007; Ilhan et al., 2008) and family caregivers (Black & Almeida, 2004; Cooper, Balamurali, & Livingston, 2007; Savundranayagam, Montgomery, & Kosloski, 2010). Similar findings have been obtained regarding burnout. In particular, depersonalization has been shown to predict anxiety levels in long-term care staff (Khamisa et al., 2013). This result is consistent with our hypothesis regarding the relationship between depersonalization and anxiety levels of nursing home staff.

Support was also found for the hypothesis regarding contact with families and staff anxiety levels. The results further suggest that the quality of the relationship between staff and relatives, as well as difficulties in daily contact with the relatives, are associated with staff anxiety symptoms. Similarly, our results showed that working at a

nursing facility whose professionals displayed significantly lower anxiety levels was correlated with more time spent with relatives. Thus, it appears that the contact with family members may play a role in the anxiety experienced by workers. These findings are consistent with studies of family and staff relationships (Abrahamson et al., 2011, 2009; Bramble et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2007) and also with studies of interventions aimed at improving the relationship between the two groups, which reduced levels of distress (e.g., depressive symptoms; Robison et al., 2007).

To our knowledge, this is the first study to analyze the relationship between guilt feelings and anxiety in nursing home staff. Guilt feelings have been shown to be associated with mental health in family caregivers (Losada, Márquez-González, Peñacoba, & Romero-Moreno, 2010). The results of this study suggest that guilt feelings also play a role in professional caregivers' mental health. Specifically, experiencing guilt for not providing care as well as desired is associated with higher anxiety levels. This result is consistent with research by Bourbonnais and Ducharme (2010), in which nursing home staff expressed guilt feelings about not having enough time to spend with the residents. In addition, they experienced guilt when they were unable to resolve problematic situations and felt inefficient. Further, Chung (2012) showed that perceptions of nursing home staff about the care provided were negative when they were unable to perform their tasks as well as they would like.

Additionally, issues related to limited available resources (e.g., number of staff) may contribute to staff guilt levels. However, considering that perceptions of self-efficacy have been found to be related to burnout (Duffy et al., 2009; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2001; Mackenzie & Peragine, 2003), workers who perceive a lack of training in performing tasks or who have lower perceived self-efficacy may be less satisfied with the quality of care they are able to provide. This situation in turn results in guilt about the discrepancy between the care they offer and the care they aspire to provide. Thus, it appears that when long-term

care workers perceive difficulties in their professional tasks, for example lack of time or training, they in turn feel guilt. Considering the association between guilt levels and distress, future studies should continue to explore this potential path between limited resources, guilt, and staff distress.

The present study has several limitations. First, the sample is composed of a limited number of professionals and information is not available for non-responders. Second, there may be differences between professionals (e.g., nursing assistants or psychologist) in the time spent with residents or families that may have different effects on their anxiety levels. Similarly, our results showed differences between facilities in average anxiety levels. These results are consistent with prior research regarding the influence of the organizational factors in workers' mental health (Cooper et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2005). There may be differences in working conditions among the facilities that influence the staff's level of anxiety. It would be useful to replicate this research in larger and more diverse samples. Third, complex interactions between staff and families may be not captured through the measures we have used. For example, staff may have positive interactions with some members of one family but not with others. Fourth, we do not have data regarding the number and characteristics of professionals who declined to participate in the study, and therefore we cannot analyze differences between respondents and non-respondents. Although confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed to participants, their responses may be affected by social desirability. These aspects limit the generalizability of the results to the general nursing home staff population.

Fifth, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, alternative explanations for the results may exist. For example, higher anxiety levels among nursing home staff could predict both poor relationships with families and feelings of guilt about the care offered. Given the strength of the findings in this initial study, longitudinal and experimental research is recommended to confirm the results.

Sixth, another potential limitation of this study relates to the assessment instruments used. It was necessary to develop an assessment battery that was relatively brief (to accommodate busy staff schedules) and easy to understand. Therefore, most of the assessed variables were measured through single items created for the present investigation. Based on research showing that measuring psychosocial constructs through single items can be a successful way of obtaining relevant information (Bayes, Limonero, Barreto, & Comas, 1995), we feel reasonably confident in the results. However, further research should replicate this study using multi-item scales with established psychometric properties (cf., Davey, Barratt, Butow, & Deeks, 2007).

Finally, other variables that may contribute to an understanding of staff levels of anxious symptoms were not measured. For example, conflicts with other professionals in the facility may also contribute to staff levels of anxiety. Lee and Akhtar (2011) obtained a significant association between burnout and the existence of difficulties with other workers. More specifically, the burnout dimension of depersonalization was positively associated with conflicts with colleagues and care recipients, and with workload. Also, some factors related to the nursing home population affect the well-being of nursing home staff. Working with more cognitively impaired residents (e.g., a person with Alzheimer disease) is associated with higher levels of work-related stress (Brodsky et al., 2003; Zimmerman et al., 2005). In addition, the exposure to aggressive behaviors in residents is associated with significant levels of stress and burden (Zeller, Dassen, Kok, Needham, & Halfens, 2011), contributing significantly to the staff's anxious symptomatology (Moniz-Cook et al., 2000).

Despite the mentioned limitations, the present study contributes to the existing literature by showing specific psychosocial dimensions that explain a significant percentage (57%) of variance of nursing home workers anxious symptomatology. In addition to variables associated with staff well-being in prior research, the findings highlight the relevance of problems in daily interaction with families, quality of the

relationship with families, and staff feelings of guilt as relevant predictors of workers' levels of anxiety.

Clinical implications

The results of this study extend the literature on distress experienced by nursing home staff. Specifically, work-related factors (burden and burnout), problems with family members, and guilt about the care offered are relevant variables for understanding staff anxious symptomatology. These findings can serve as a useful guide for the development of interventions to increase staff well-being. Ultimately, such interventions may also improve the well-being and the quality of care received by the residents.

Given that guilt feelings about care provision contributes to staff anxiety, it is important to address factors that contribute to those guilt feelings and to develop interventions that may reduce their effect. Guilt feelings may be activated by different situations, such as not having enough time to spend with the residents or finding it difficult to face problematic situations with families or residents (Bourbonnais & Ducharme, 2010). Therefore, increasing personnel or adapting work tasks so that they contribute to increased time spent with the residents may decrease guilt feelings. Other interventions could provide staff members with skills or tools for optimizing their interactions with the residents without increasing time spent caring, for example by improving communication skills during care (Burgio et al., 2001). Training in psychological skills for managing negative feelings such as guilt or anxiety may also contribute to reducing staff members' levels of distress.

Additionally, our findings support the development of interventions aimed at improving family-staff relations (e.g., Bauer, Fetherstonhaugh, Tarzia, & Chenco, 2014; Pillemer et al., 2003; Tisher, Dean & Tisher, 2009). Considering that the quality of the relationship between staff and families contributes to staff members' anxiety, developing and implementing interventions targeted at

improving this relationship are recommended. A number of strategies have been proposed in the literature, including decreasing and modifying negative attitudes of both groups; changing unrealistic expectations of family members about the care of their relatives, and improving communication between staff and families (Abrahamson et al., 2009; Bauer & Nay, 2011; Haesler et al., 2007; Pillemer et al., 2003; Tisher et al., 2009; Utley-Smith et al., 2009). Intervening in factors such as guilt that in turn reduce staff anxious symptoms has the potential to improve the overall quality of care in nursing homes.


- Psychosocial variables explain a significant percentage of the variance in staff anxious symptoms (57%).
- Staff member's feelings of guilt about the care provided, and having difficulties and poor quality relationships with family members, contribute to the levels of anxiety.
- Developing interventions targeting staff member's guilt feelings and quality of family-staff relationships may improve workers well-being, and, in turn, the quality of care received by residents.


Acknowledgments

The authors thank all the participants in the study and also the following facilities for their collaboration: Residencia de Mayores AMMA Pozuelo, Residencia de Mayores AMMA Coslada, Residencia de Mayores AMMA Valdebernardo, Residencia de Mayores AMMA Tías, and Residencia de Mayores AMMA Las Anjanas.

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