

A Systematic Review Exploring the Relationship Between Family Factors and Symptom Severity, Relapse and Social or Occupational Functioning in First Episode Psychosis

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Abstract

Aims: Research on family functioning in psychosis has typically focused on specific family-related factors and their impact on symptomatology, finding strong associations between high expressed emotion and poor outcomes, especially in those with long-term illness. The objective of this review is to examine the impact of a broad range of family-related factors and their relationship with clinical, social, occupational, and relational outcomes in first-episode psychosis (FEP). **Method:** A systematic search of databases PsycInfo, Pubmed, Embase and CINHAL between 1990 and August 2023 was completed. In total, 1408 articles were screened, and study quality was assessed using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklists for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies and Cohort Studies. A narrative synthesis approach was used to analyse the data. **Results:** Of the 1408 identified articles, 80 full-text articles were screened. Fifteen studies were included for data extraction. The objectives and scope of the selected studies varied considerably. Studies consisted of cross-sectional and prospective cohort designs. Participants consisted of FEP patients and family members, with the patient age range varying from 15.9 to 30.8 (MD=24.5). Significant associations were identified between family factors (high EE, family environment and carer burden) and symptom and social outcomes. **Discussion:** While findings emphasised the significant impact of family factors on symptomatic and social outcomes, the literature had significant limitations due to the absence of underlying theoretical models and understanding of the dynamics of distress in families within FEP. Future research should seek to develop a model accounting for such processes.

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