

Suffering in silence —The voices
of caregivers of mentally ill
persons in Hong Kong

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Background of the author

- Aged 58
- Married
- Jointed to Heart to Heart Club since April 2004
- Her youngest sister was suffering from depression
- Her sister has received rehabilitation services by RFHK



Difficulties and Challenges to Face by Caregivers

1. Lacked of knowledge about mental illness and skills to manage

- ◆ Distressed by symptoms, especially the negative symptoms
- ◆ Felt difficulty to interact their behavior problems
- ◆ Did not know how and where to get information



2. Too emphasis on family role in treatment and rehabilitation of people with mental illness

- ◆ Shouldered responsibility of care with no or limited support from Government

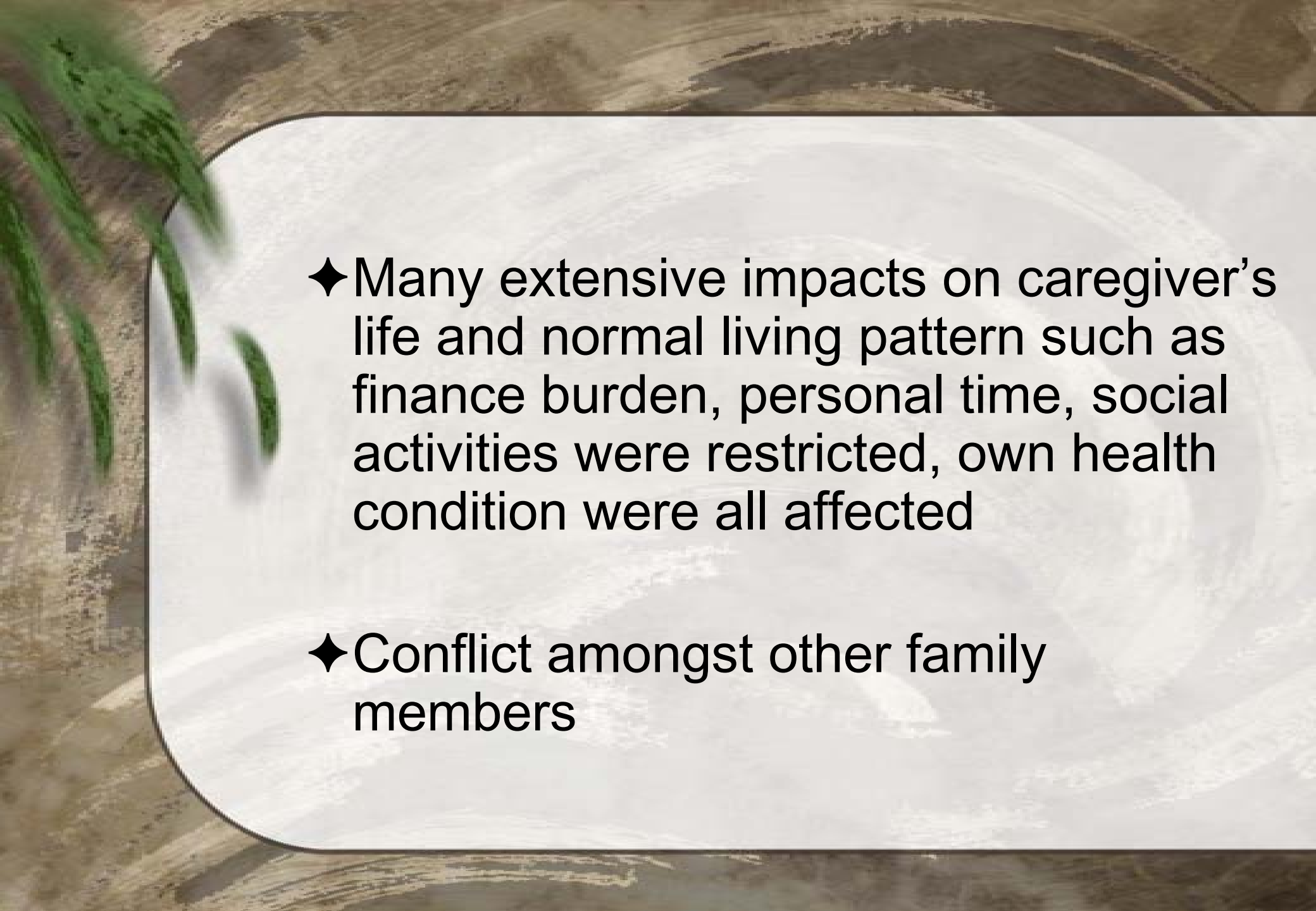
- Few services for the caregivers supported by HK Government

- Views the family as the main source for caring:

The aim of the family resource centre supported by Government:

“It provides emotional support and practical advice to relatives/parents of people with disabilities to enhance their acceptance of their disabled dependants, and to....as well as in taking proper care of them at **HOME**” (<http://www.swd.gov.hk>)



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- ◆ Many extensive impacts on caregiver's life and normal living pattern such as finance burden, personal time, social activities were restricted, own health condition were all affected
 - ◆ Conflict amongst other family members

3. Social Stigmatization On Mental Illness

- ◆ Family pathogenesis belief remain strong
- ◆ Retribution (deserved fate): The family do the bad things in the past and receive punishment at present
- ◆ Mass Media usually biased the public against the people with mental illness
- ◆ Portrayed to have negative image as behaving with violence, crazy mind and bizarre behaviors
- ◆ General public ie. neighbors have discrimination toward MI and their family members

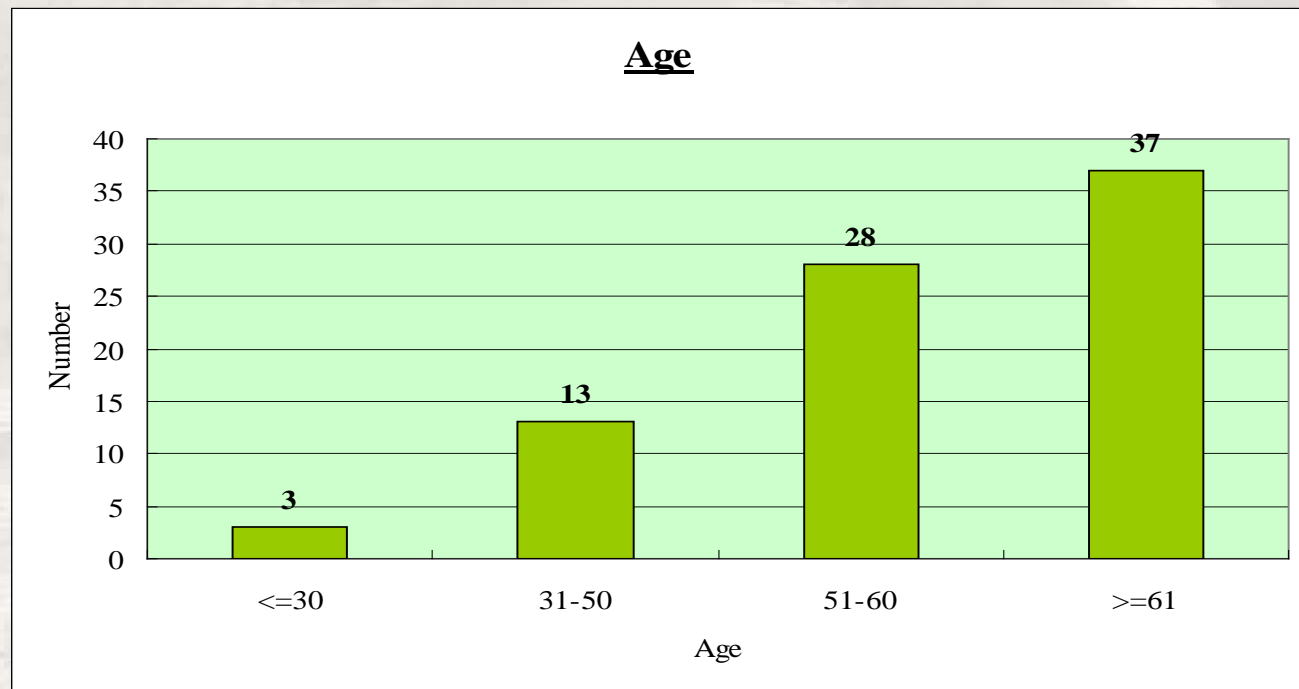


4. Chinese Traditional Culture Influence

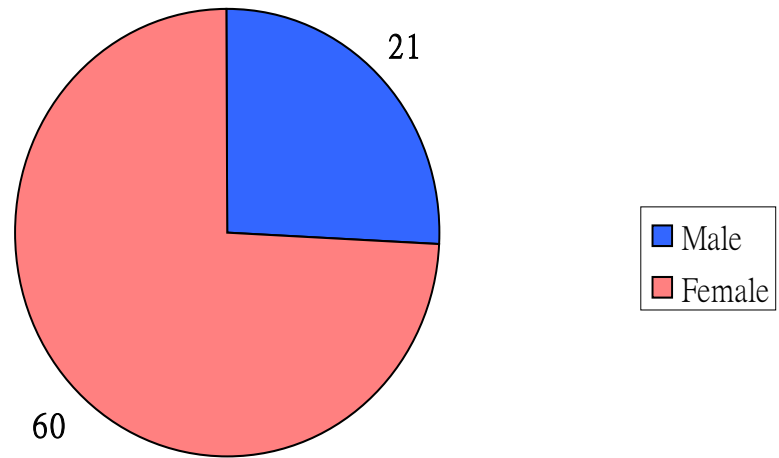
- ◆ The elder sister is need to take up mother role
- ◆ Too emphasis of family tie where the caregivers are vital resources for maintaining the frail family members in the community
- ◆ Caregivers' stress and need were ignored

5. Less Support (Sample from HHC)

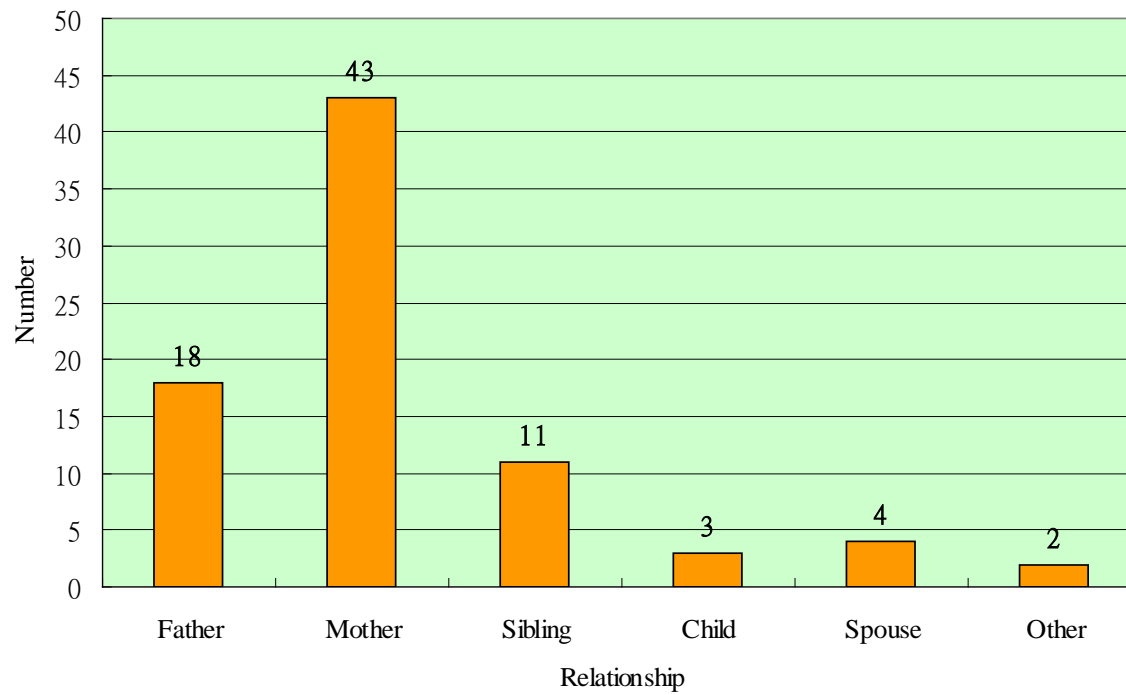
- ◆ Number of member: 81 (as on 31 July 08)
- ◆ Most caregivers are the deprived/disadvantage group



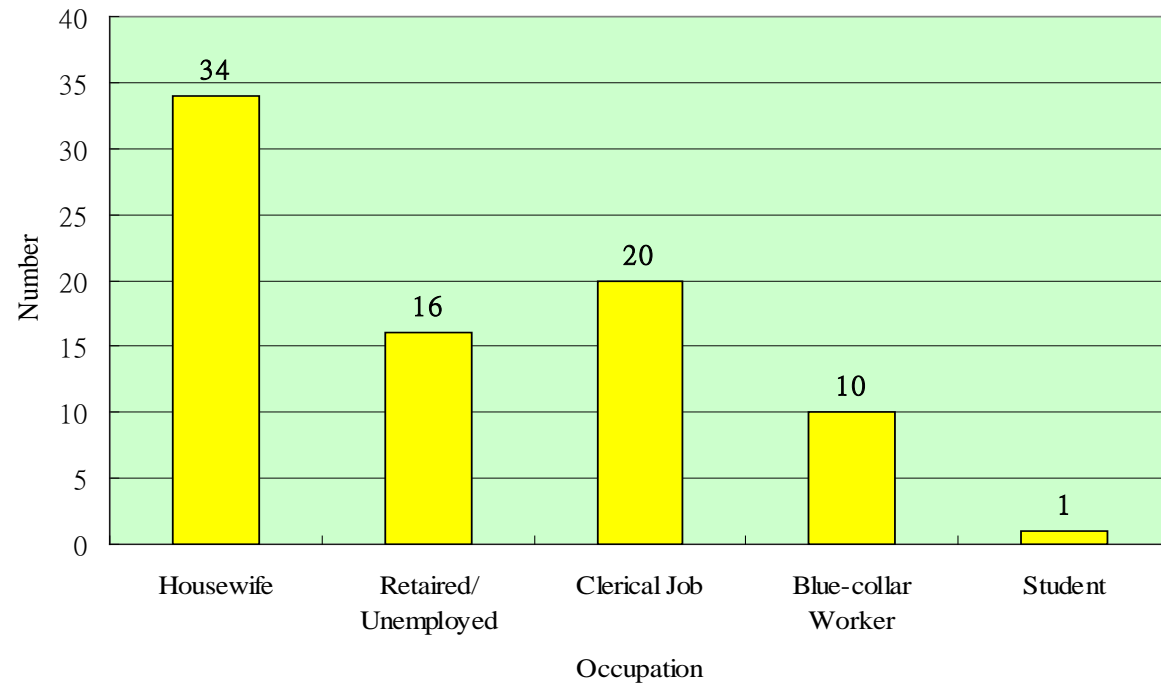
Sex



Relationship



Occupation



Heart to Heart Club

聯心社

A Mission from the Heart

*"Helping and encouraging others with
love, care and concern"*



How the caregivers met together???

- ◆ The services receivers of Richmond Fellowship of HK
- ◆ Most of them to face with similar situation
- ◆ Set up in 04/2004
- ◆ Formed Committee with 10 core members
- ◆ Started to recruit caregivers to be the members

Aims and Objectives

- ◆ To Empower the carers in capacity in managing the caring demands
- ◆ To address the carers' personal instrumental and emotional needs
- ◆ To enhance the knowledge of mental illness with appropriate skills to manage the problems
- ◆ To network the caregivers with the community

Services Provided by Heart to Heart Club

- ◆ Psycho-educational programs —to help caregivers to manage the problems of people with mental illness
- ◆ Social & Recreational activities —to release their stress
- ◆ Mutual-help group activities —to share feelings, gain emotional support, exchange the information

Services Provided by Heart to Heart Club

- ◆ Sharing in workshops and Public Education Program —to provide the positive and proper message on the mental illness to the public
- ◆ Volunteer services and visits—got satisfaction since they could contribute themselves

Mission & Hope

Striving for the acceptance of people with mental illness to re-integrate into the community

A wooden table with a white, textured surface. The table has a dark wood grain and a white, textured top. On the left side, there are green leaves, possibly from a plant. The text "Thank You!" is written in red on the white surface.

Thank You!