Academic Article

The Role of Family in Mental Health Care: Approaches to Empowerment and Mental Well-being Enhancement

Woraruthai Boonkongchon

Affiliated: Graduate Student, Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology of Life and Death), Faculty of Humanities,
        Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, 13170, Thailand
✉: Woraruthai.B@mcu.ac.th (Corresponding Email)

Abstract: This study focuses on analyzing the role of families in mental health care and approaches to empowerment and mental well-being enhancement. This descriptive documentary study compiled data from research and related literature between 2018-2022 to analyze the importance of families in the mental health recovery process. The findings revealed that families play a crucial role in providing emotional support, social care, and empowerment to mental health patients. Family involvement in the treatment process results in better adaptation and recovery. This study proposes approaches to developing family capabilities in caring for mental health patients, which include knowledge provision, skill training, and support network creation. These findings are significant for developing policies and practical guidelines for participatory family-centered mental health care.

Keywords: family, mental health care, empowerment, mental well-being, mental health

1. Introduction

Mental health problems are increasingly important issues in Thai society and worldwide. The World Health Organization reports that approximately 1 in 8 people globally have mental health problems (World Health Organization, 2022). Thailand has approximately 2.8 million mental health patients, representing 4.2% of the total population (Department of Mental Health, 2021). Mental health care is therefore a significant challenge for health systems and society, particularly for families who are the fundamental unit providing care and support to patients.

Families play a crucial role in caring for the mental health of family members, serving as both a source of support and a factor affecting patient recovery. Family involvement in treatment and recovery processes has been widely recognized in mental health circles (Fadden, 2018). Numerous studies show that family support positively affects treatment outcomes, reduces readmission rates, and improves patient quality of life (Ewertzon et al., 2019). However, caring for mental health patients is a complex challenge, as families must face stress, anxiety, and psychological burdens.

The concepts of empowerment and mental well-being are important components in contemporary mental health care. Empowerment refers to the process by which individuals and communities can control and influence factors affecting their health and lives (Zimmerman,

2000). Mental well-being is a state of psychological wellness where individuals can cope with stress, utilize their abilities to the fullest, and participate in community life. Enhancing family empowerment is therefore an important strategy for developing effective mental health care capabilities.

2. Importance and Role of Families in Mental Health Care

Families have diverse roles in caring for the mental health of their members, which can be divided into several important dimensions. Harvey and Broome's (2019) study reveals that families are both support systems and environments that affect mental health development and recovery. The role of families in mental health care involves not only providing basic care but also being partners in long-term treatment and recovery processes. Family involvement in mental health care is supported by empirical evidence demonstrating effectiveness in improving treatment outcomes.

Providing emotional support is one of the most important family roles. McFarlane's (2020) study found that emotional support from families has a positive relationship with mental health patient adaptation and recovery. Families that provide appropriate emotional support can reduce patient stress and anxiety, enhance self-confidence, and promote treatment motivation. Understanding, listening, and encouragement are important components of emotional support that affect patient mental health. Emotional support also helps create feelings of security and safety, which are important foundations for mental health recovery.

Providing social support is another important family role. Chadwick and Cardew's (2018) study shows that families are the most important social support network for mental health patients. Social support from families helps reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, increases opportunities for social activity participation, and promotes interpersonal relationship development. Families can serve as bridges between patients and communities, helping create broader support networks and promoting social reintegration. Having strong social support networks has a positive relationship with mental health patient adaptation and quality of life.

3. Empowerment Concepts and Family Capability Enhancement

The empowerment concept is a core principle important in modern mental health care. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) define empowerment as the process by which individuals, organizations, and communities gain control and influence over factors affecting their lives. In the context of mental health care, family empowerment refers to families' ability to meaningfully participate in mental health care decision-making, access resources, and control factors affecting family member well-being. Enhancing family empowerment is an important strategy that helps increase care effectiveness and promotes better outcomes for mental health patients.

Knowledge and skill enhancement is an important component of empowerment creation. Nordby et al.'s (2021) study found that providing families with knowledge about psychiatric disorders, treatment, and care affects confidence and ability in patient care. Important knowledge includes understanding symptoms and nature of psychiatric disorders, managing challenging behaviors, recognizing relapse warning signs, and methods of seeking help. Having adequate knowledge helps reduce family anxiety and uncertainty, increases confidence in care provision, and improves the quality of care given to patients.

Communication skill development is another important component of empowerment creation. Lobban et al.'s (2020) study shows that communication skills training helps improve relationships between families and patients and reduces family conflicts. Important communication skills include effective listening, expressing understanding and empathy, providing constructive feedback, and managing conflicts. Having good communication skills

helps create family atmospheres conducive to recovery, increases treatment cooperation, and reduces family stress. These skills can be developed through training and daily life practice.

Creating support networks is an important strategy in enhancing family empowerment. Eassom et al.'s (2019) study found that families with strong support networks have better ability to cope with stress and challenges in patient care. Support networks include extended family, neighbors, support groups for mental health patient families, and mental health professionals. Having support networks helps share care burdens, provide advice and information, and create feelings of not being alone in facing challenges. Participating in family support groups is an important method for creating networks and exchanging experiences.

4. Models and Methods of Family-Centered Care

Family-centered care is an approach that recognizes families as important partners in health care. This approach emphasizes family involvement in all stages of care, from assessment and planning to treatment and recovery. Keet et al. (2019) explain that family-centered care requires a shift from traditional concepts that view families merely as service recipients to viewing families as service providers and care partners. This approach acknowledges that families have knowledge and expertise about family members and can meaningfully participate in decision-making and care planning.

Collaborative care planning is a core component of participatory care. Berry et al.'s (2018) study shows that family involvement in care planning results in more appropriate and practical care plans. Collaborative planning includes setting treatment goals, identifying family resources and strengths, problem management planning, and recovery preparation. Families can provide important information about needs, preferences, and factors affecting patients. Participation in planning helps increase ownership feelings and responsibility for care plans.

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of participatory care. Östman and Kjellin's (2019) study found that family involvement in symptom monitoring and treatment outcome evaluation helps improve accuracy and continuity of care. Families can closely observe changes in patient behavior, emotions, and functioning. Reporting this information to mental health teams helps adjust treatment and care plans to suit changing situations. Participation in evaluation also helps increase family understanding of recovery processes and realistic expectations.

Communication approaches are important factors in the success of participatory care. Lakeman's (2020) study emphasizes the importance of open, straightforward, and mutually respectful communication. Mental health teams must create atmospheres where families feel comfortable expressing concerns, asking questions, and sharing information. Using easily understood language, avoiding technical terms, and providing adequate time for communication are important. Effective communication helps build trust, reduce conflicts, and increase care cooperation.

5. Factors Affecting Care and Family Challenges

Family mental health patient care faces several factors and challenges that affect care effectiveness and quality. Tompkins and Koenig's (2021) study identifies that these factors can be divided into internal family factors, social factors, and health service system factors. Understanding and managing these factors is important for developing effective family support strategies. Identifying and addressing these barriers will help increase family capabilities in mental health patient care and improve overall care outcomes.

Psychological burden and stress are main challenges families must face. Pharoah et al.'s (2018) study found that family members caring for mental health patients have higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than the general population. This psychological burden arises

from several factors, including concerns about patient futures, excessive guilt and responsibility feelings, facing challenging behaviors, and lack of adequate support. Psychological burden that is not appropriately managed may affect family member mental health, family relationships, and quality of care provided to patients.

Economic and financial problems are another significant challenge. Gupta et al.'s (2019) study shows that mental health patient care has high direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include medical treatment, medication, and health service expenses, while indirect costs include reduced or stopped work by family members to care for patients, income loss, and reduced productivity. This financial burden may affect ability to access appropriate treatment, purchase medications, and use other support services. Families with low economic status may experience problems in securing necessary resources for quality care.

Lack of knowledge and correct information is a significant barrier to effective care. McCann et al.'s (2020) study found that many families lack basic knowledge about psychiatric disorders, treatment, and care methods. This ignorance results in misunderstanding, fear, and inappropriate practices. Lack of reliable and easily accessible information causes families to rely on unreliable sources, which may lead to inappropriate decisions. Providing correct, current, and easily understood knowledge and information is therefore important for enhancing family capabilities.

Social stigma and negative attitudes toward psychiatric disorders are external factors with significant impact. Thornicroft et al.'s (2019) study shows that stigma affects both patients and families. Families may experience discrimination, labeling, and social isolation. This stigma may cause families to hesitate in seeking help, hide problems, or avoid participation in social activities. Fighting stigma requires cooperation from multiple sectors, including awareness creation, education provision, and changing social attitudes.

6. Approaches to Promoting Family Mental Well-being

Promoting family mental well-being is an important component in sustainable mental health patient care. Family mental well-being not only affects ability to care for patients but also affects quality of life and well-being of all family members. Cuijpers et al.'s (2018) study reveals that families with good mental well-being can better manage stress and challenges, have flexibility in adaptation, and create environments conducive to patient recovery. Developing strategies and approaches for promoting family mental well-being is therefore necessary for holistic mental health care.

Stress management is a basic skill important for families caring for mental health patients. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) study, which remains relevant today, shows that effective stress management can reduce negative effects of stress on mental and physical health. Effective stress management techniques include relaxation, meditation practice, exercise, and breathing techniques. Samuelson et al.'s (2020) recent study found that stress management technique training for families results in reduced stress levels and improved quality of life. Teaching families to identify stress warning signs, understand causes, and use appropriate management techniques is important.

Creating resilience and adaptability is another important approach. The resilience concept refers to the ability to recover and adapt when facing challenges and difficulties. Walsh's (2018) study suggests that families can develop resilience through enhancing positive beliefs and attitudes, developing problem-solving skills, and creating strong relationships within families. Families with high resilience often view challenges as opportunities for learning and growth, have hope and determination, and can effectively use family resources and strengths. Promoting resilience can be done through counseling, training, and creating positive experiences.

Self-care for family members is an important component often overlooked. Richardson's (2021) study emphasizes that family members caring for mental health patients must prioritize self-care to maintain their own mental and physical health. Self-care includes having personal time, adequate rest, maintaining social relationships, engaging in favorite activities, and seeking help when necessary. Having good health among family members is an important foundation for providing quality and sustainable care. Families must understand that self-care is not selfishness but responsibility to themselves and their families.

Creating balance between patient care and personal life is a significant challenge. Martinez et al.'s (2019) study shows that families who can create balance have better quality of life and life satisfaction. Creating balance requires planning, setting boundaries, and sharing burdens within families. Families must learn to prioritize, allocate time appropriately, and accept that they cannot do everything perfectly. Having realistic goals and flexibility in adjusting plans when situations change is important for maintaining life balance.

7. Model and Practice Approach Development

Developing participatory family mental health patient care models requires integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines. Anderson et al.'s (2020) study proposes a conceptual framework that incorporates family systems theory, empowerment concepts, and participatory care principles. Effective models must consider the complexity of mental health care, family diversity, and social and cultural contexts. Model development should be a participatory process involving families, patients, and experts to achieve models that align with real needs and are practical in real environments.

The family empowerment model for mental health care can be divided into four main components: knowledge and skills component, participation component, support component, and evaluation component. Thompson and Lee's (2021) study shows that balanced integration of all four components results in the best outcomes. The knowledge and skills component emphasizes education and training provision to families. The participation component emphasizes opening opportunities for families to participate in decision-making and planning. The support component emphasizes creating networks and support systems. The evaluation component emphasizes continuous monitoring and improvement.

Implementing models in practice requires adaptation to suit each service unit's context. Robinson et al.'s (2020) study proposes a gradual implementation approach, starting with system and personnel readiness assessment, personnel training, tool and process development, and monitoring and evaluation. Having change champions in each service unit is an important factor for success. Creating organizational culture that supports family participation and providing opportunities for personnel to learn and develop new skills is necessary. Continuous monitoring and evaluation helps improve model effectiveness.

Policy development approaches are another important issue in widespread model implementation. Henderson et al.'s (2021) study reveals that national-level policies must support family participation in mental health care. Policies should include setting participatory care standards, budget allocation for training and personnel development, creating information systems that support outcome monitoring, and creating quality assessment mechanisms. Involving all stakeholders, including families, patients, experts, and policymakers, in policy development processes is important for creating feasible and effective policies.

8. Outcomes and Benefits of Participatory Care

Family-centered mental health patient care has demonstrated positive outcomes in multiple dimensions. Numerous empirical studies support the effectiveness of this approach in both short-term and long-term periods. Smith et al.'s (2021) systematic literature review found

that family involvement in mental health care positively affects patients, families, and overall health systems. These outcomes are important for developing and expanding participatory care approaches on a broader scale. Understanding these outcomes and benefits will help create confidence and support from all stakeholders.

Patient outcomes show significant improvement in several areas. Mueller et al.'s (2020) study found that mental health patients receiving family-centered care have higher treatment adherence rates, shorter hospital treatment periods, and lower readmission rates. Patients have higher treatment satisfaction, feel more supported, and have greater confidence in managing their symptoms. Having families as treatment partners helps patients feel less isolated and motivated for recovery. Improvements in patient quality of life and social functioning are also important outcomes found in multiple studies.

Family outcomes show increased capability and confidence in care provision. Patterson et al.'s (2019) study found that families participating in empowerment programs have increased knowledge about psychiatric disorders, improved skills in managing challenging situations, and reduced stress. Families report feeling more empowered and in control of situations, having better relationships with patients and other family members, and having more hope about the future. Receiving support and acceptance from experts helps increase feelings of value and importance of care roles. Reduced burden and stress positively affects family member mental and physical health.

Health system outcomes show efficiency and economic cost-effectiveness. Brown and Williams' (2022) study found that family-centered care results in reduced overall treatment costs due to decreased hospital admissions, emergency service use, and treatment duration. Efficient resource use and reduced service duplication are important benefits. Additionally, having families as care partners helps expand health system capacity to serve more patients without requiring significant additional resources.

Social outcomes are another important dimension to consider. Clark et al.'s (2021) study shows that promoting family participation in mental health care affects stigma reduction and increased social awareness. Families receiving support and having more knowledge can serve as representatives in creating understanding and acceptance of mental health problems in communities. Creating communities that understand and support mental health patients and families is a valuable long-term outcome. Reducing inequality in mental health service access and promoting social justice are also important benefits of this approach.

Tables and Knowledge Models

Table 1: Factors Affecting Family Mental Health Patient Care

Factor	Details	Impact	Solutions
Knowledge and Skills	Understanding about diseases, treatment, and care	Effective care, reduced anxiety	Education provision, training
Social Support	Support networks from family, friends, and community	Reduced stress, increased coping ability	Creating support groups, network linking
Financial Resources	Ability to pay for treatment, medication, and services	Access to appropriate treatment	Financial support, health insurance
Social Stigma	Negative attitudes, labeling, discrimination	Avoiding help-seeking, isolation	Awareness creation, social education

Family Mental Health	Stress, anxiety, depression	Reduced care ability, low quality of life	Self-care, stress management

Table 2: Components of Family Empowerment Model

Component	Objective	Activities	Indicators
Knowledge and Skills	Increase understanding and care skills	Education provision, training, demonstration	Knowledge scores, practical skills
Participation	Increase participation in decision-making and planning	Joint meetings, collaborative planning	Participation levels, satisfaction
Support	Create strong support systems	Support groups, counseling, home visits	Network size, support quality
Evaluation	Monitor and improve care	Outcome evaluation, reporting	Outcome indicators, progress
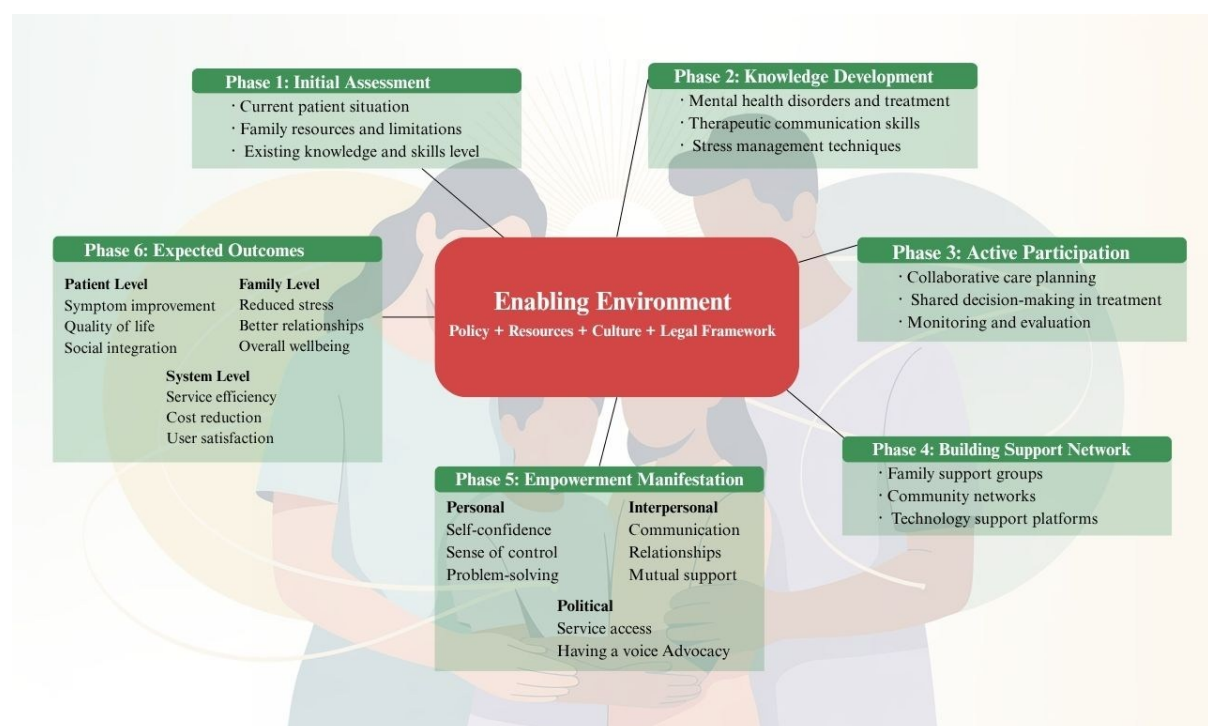
Figure 1: Family Empowerment Model for Mental Health Care

7. Conclusion

The study of family roles in mental health patient care and approaches to empowerment and mental well-being enhancement has revealed the importance and complexity of this issue. Families have diverse important roles in mental health care, not only as providers of emotional and social support but also as important partners in treatment and recovery processes. Promoting family empowerment through knowledge provision, skill development, and support

network creation is an important strategy that affects better care outcomes. Family-centered care has demonstrated clear benefits for patients, families, and overall health systems.

Important findings from literature review reveal that family involvement in mental health care results in improvements in several areas. Patients have better treatment adherence, reduced readmission rates, and improved quality of life. Families have increased knowledge and care skills, reduced stress, and greater sense of empowerment. Health systems benefit from efficient resource use and reduced treatment costs. Developing family empowerment models that integrate knowledge, participation, support, and evaluation components is an approach likely to create sustainable outcomes.

Practice recommendations include developing systematic knowledge provision and training programs for families, creating community-level family support groups, and improving mental health service systems to accommodate greater family participation. Training health personnel to have skills in working with families and creating social awareness about the importance of families in mental health care is necessary. Developing policies that support family participation and allocating adequate budgets for operations are important factors for long-term success.

Research recommendations for the future include studying the effectiveness of family empowerment models in the Thai context, studying factors affecting successful model implementation in various service units, and developing family empowerment assessment tools suitable for Thai cultural contexts. Long-term studies on the impact of family-centered care on mental health patient recovery outcomes and quality of life remain interesting issues. Comparative studies of different family support model effectiveness and economic cost-effectiveness studies of family support investments are important research directions for future policy and practice development.

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