Digital Neuropsychiatry
eISSN: 3122-6671
https://dn.cultechpub.com/index.php/dn

Family Environment and Adaptive Family Interventions for Schizophrenia in Pakistan

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Abstract

Background: Schizophrenia remains a significant mental health challenge in Pakistan, where family plays a crucial role in disease management. Despite the established importance of family interventions in Western contexts, little research has explored culturally adapted approaches in Pakistan's unique socio-cultural environment.

Objective: This study examines the relationship between family environmental factors and schizophrenia outcomes in Pakistan and evaluates the effectiveness of a culturally adapted family intervention protocol.

Methods: A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative assessment of 150 patient-family dyads with qualitative interviews with 25 family members. Quantitative measures included the Perceived Family Environment Scale (PFES), Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS), and Social Disability Screening Schedule (SDSS). The intervention group received a 12-session culturally adapted family intervention, while the control group received standard care.

Results: Preliminary findings indicate that specific family environment characteristics—including high expressed emotion, criticism, and overinvolvement—were significantly correlated with symptom severity and relapse rates. Patients receiving the culturally adapted family intervention demonstrated significantly greater improvements in symptom reduction (PANSS score reduction of 45.2% vs. 28.7% in controls), social functioning (SDSS improvement of 38.4% vs. 21.3% in controls), and relapse rates (22% vs. 48% in controls) at 9-month follow-up.

Conclusion: Culturally adapted family interventions show significant promise in improving outcomes for schizophrenia patients in Pakistan. Implementation should consider country-specific socio-cultural factors, including family structures, beliefs about mental illness, and healthcare access limitations.

Keywords

Schizophrenia, Family Intervention, Cultural Adaptation, Expressed Emotion, Relapse Prevention, Community Mental Health

1. Introduction

Schizophrenia represents a profound challenge for global mental health systems, affecting approximately 24 million people worldwide and characterized by disturbances in thought patterns, perceptions, and emotional responsiveness. In Pakistan, with its population exceeding 220 million, the burden of schizophrenia is particularly acute due to limited mental health infrastructure, widespread stigma, and only 0.19 psychiatrists per 100,000 people. Unlike Western contexts where deinstitutionalization has shifted care to community settings, Pakistan's mental healthcare system relies heavily on family members as primary caregivers, creating unique dynamics in disease management and treatment outcomes.

The role of family environment in schizophrenia course and recovery has been extensively documented in international literature. Cochrane systematic reviews indicate that family interventions may reduce relapse rates and alleviate caregiver burden. Particularly significant is the concept of Expressed Emotion (EE), comprising critical comments, hostility, and emotional overinvolvement from family members, which has been consistently associated with higher relapse rates across cultural contexts. However, the manifestation of these family dynamics and their impact on schizophrenia likely differs substantially in collectivist societies like Pakistan, where extended family structures are normative and mental illness is frequently attributed to supernatural causes rather than biological factors [1].

Previous research on family interventions for schizophrenia in Pakistan remains limited, with most evidence derived from Western contexts. International guidelines recommend family education, crisis intervention, and emotional support as standard components of care. The *Mayo Clinic* guidelines emphasize that "family therapy can help patients, and their families cope with the condition", while Chinese research demonstrates that "family interventions may reduce patient

relapse rates and alleviate caregiver burden". However, the direct application of these approaches in Pakistan is problematic without cultural adaptation, given fundamental differences in family systems, illness beliefs, and help-seeking behaviors.

This study aims to address this critical gap by developing and evaluating a culturally adapted family intervention for schizophrenia in Pakistan. Our specific objectives include: (1) identifying key family environment factors influencing schizophrenia outcomes in the Pakistani context; (2) developing a culturally appropriate family intervention protocol addressing these factors; and (3) evaluating the intervention's effectiveness on symptom severity, social functioning, and relapse rates compared to standard care [2].

The theoretical framework for this research integrates the stress-vulnerability model of schizophrenia with cultural psychology perspectives, recognizing that family environmental influences are filtered through cultural meaning systems and structural contexts. By situating this investigation within Pakistan's specific healthcare realities, we aim to contribute knowledge that is both clinically relevant and culturally informed, potentially offering a replicable model for other low-resource settings with similar characteristics.

2. Family-Based Care for Schizophrenia Across Cultures: Evidence, Challenges, and Lessons for Pakistan

2.1 Family Environment and Schizophrenia: International Evidence

The relationship between family environment and schizophrenia outcomes has been extensively researched globally. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses consistently demonstrate that family interventions can significantly reduce relapse rates. A *Cochrane review* of 26 randomized trials found that "family interventions may reduce patient relapse rates post-intervention (RR=0.66)" and "may alleviate caregiver burden". These interventions typically share common elements: psychoeducation about schizophrenia, communication skills training, problem-solving techniques, and emotional support for family members. However, the specific mechanisms through which family environment influences course of illness likely vary across cultural contexts [3].

Internationally, research has identified several key family factors that influence schizophrenia outcomes:

• **Expressed Emotion (EE)**: This construct, encompassing critical comments, hostility, and emotional overinvolvement, has demonstrated remarkable consistency in predicting relapse across cultures. A study comparing British and Indian families found that although high EE was associated with relapse in both groups, the specific emotional expressions differed, with British families showing more criticism and Indian families demonstrating more emotional overinvolvement.

• **Family Knowledge and Attitudes**: Misunderstandings about schizophrenia often lead to harmful practices, such as attributing symptoms to personal weakness or spiritual failure. *Mayo Clinic* guidelines emphasize that "education about the condition can help families better understand and support their loved one".

• **Caregiver Burden**: The chronic nature of schizophrenia creates substantial caregiver strain, which indirectly affects patient outcomes. Chinese research indicates that "family interventions may alleviate caregiver burden", highlighting the bidirectional relationship between patient symptoms and family stress.

Table 1. Key Family Environment Factors Affecting Schizophrenia Outcomes Identified in International Literature

Factor	Impact on Schizophrenia	Cultural Variations
Expressed Emotion	High EE associated with 2-3 times higher relapse rates	Criticism more predictive in Western cultures; emotional overinvolvement more significant in Asian contexts
Family Knowledge	Poor knowledge associated with longer treatment delays and lower medication adherence	Supernatural attributions more common in traditional societies; biological understanding more prevalent in Western contexts
Caregiver Burden	High burden correlates with poorer patient functioning and greater family distress	Collectivist societies may distribute burden more widely but experience greater stigma
Communication Patterns	Negative communication styles predict symptom exacerbation	Direct criticism more damaging in individualistic cultures; indirect communication more significant in collectivist cultures
Problem-Solving Capacity	Effective family problem-solving protects against stress-induced relapse	Western approaches emphasize explicit discussion; non-Western approaches may utilize implicit understanding

Table 1: This table is summarizes how family environmental factors influence outcomes in patients with schizophrenia, highlighting the differences in these factors across cultures. The table is divided into three columns:

• Family Factors
• Impact on Schizophrenia
• Cultural Variations

The family environment is crucial for schizophrenia recovery, particularly in terms of emotional expression, communication styles, and caregiving stress. Cultural differences influence how families understand the illness and their interaction styles, thus affecting disease progression and relapse risk.

2.2 Family Interventions in Non-Western Contexts

Evidence from various Asian contexts suggests that culturally adapted family interventions can achieve outcomes superior to direct transplantation of Western approaches. Chinese research demonstrates that "the longer the intervention duration, the better the outcomes" and that "individual family interventions produced more significant effects than multiple-family interventions". These findings challenge Western models that often emphasize multiple-family groups, suggesting cultural preferences for private family discussions in certain contexts [4].

Key cultural considerations emerging from non-Western research include:

- **Explanatory Models of Illness**: In Pakistan, mental illness is frequently attributed to spiritual causes, supernatural influences, or moral weakness, contrasting with Western biomedical models. These beliefs significantly affect help-seeking behaviors, with families often consulting religious healers before mental health professionals.

- **Family Structures and Roles**: Traditional Pakistani families typically feature hierarchical decision-making and collective problem-solving, differing from the more egalitarian structures assumed in many Western interventions.

- **Stigma and Social Isolation**: The profound stigma associated with mental illness in Pakistan creates unique challenges, with families often concealing the condition to protect marriage prospects and social standing.

2.3 Current Mental Health Services and Family Involvement in Pakistan

Pakistan's mental health system remains severely underresourced, with limited mental health legislation and minimal integration of mental health into primary care. The country allocates less than 1% of its health budget to mental health, resulting in substantial treatment gaps where an estimated 90% of people with severe mental disorders receive no appropriate care.

Within this constrained environment, families represent the de facto mental healthcare system, assuming responsibilities that in higher-income countries would be managed by professional teams. Previous small-scale studies in Pakistan have documented families' experiences of burden, stigma, and financial strain, but have offered limited guidance on how clinical services might effectively support them [5].

Table 2. Summary of Relevant International Studies on Family Interventions for Schizophrenia

Study/Author	Country	Intervention Type	Key Findings	Cultural Adaptations
Chien et al. (2024)	Multiple	Family-based vs. standard care	Reduced relapse (RR=0.66); reduced caregiver burden	Not specified
Liu et al. (2015)	China	Various family interventions	Longer interventions more effective; individual family sessions superior to multiple-family groups	Emphasis on family hierarchy and harmony
Xia et al. (2023)	China	Quality of life assessment	Family support significantly predicts quality of life	Collectivist values integrated
Rahman et al. (2022)	Pakistan	Culturally adapted CBT	Significant symptom reduction compared to treatment as usual	Integration of Islamic principles; involvement of religious leaders
Husain et al. (2020)	Pakistan	Collaborative care model	Improved medication adherence and family satisfaction	Family-based decision making; respect for patriarchal structure

Table 2: This table is reflects several important trends:

Family intervention improves outcomes in schizophrenia across different countries, including:

- Reduced relapse rates
- Easing of caregiving burden
- Increased medication adherence
- Improved symptoms and quality of life

The effectiveness of family intervention is greatly influenced by cultural differences and the different values emphasized in different cultures:

- China: Emphasis on family hierarchy, harmony, and collectivism
- Pakistan: Emphasis on religion, patriarchal structure, and shared family decision-making
- Multi-country studies: While not specifically emphasizing culture, they show general effectiveness

Culturally adapted interventions are more effective than one-size-fits-all treatments, for example:

- Religious principles
- Family hierarchical structure
- Collectivist values

3. Procedures for Developing, Adapting, and Testing a Culture-Sensitive Family Intervention for Schizophrenia

3.1 Study Design

We employed a sequential mixed-methods design, recognizing that complex cultural phenomena require both quantitative measurement and qualitative understanding. The study comprised three phases: (1) a cross-sectional survey examining relationships between family environment and patient outcomes; (2) qualitative interviews exploring family experiences and cultural meanings; and (3) a randomized controlled trial evaluating the culturally adapted family intervention. This paper primarily reports findings from the intervention trial, with reference to qualitative data that informed intervention development [6].

3.2 Participants

Participants were recruited from three major psychiatric facilities in Pakistan: Sir Cowasji Jehangir Institute of Psychiatry (Karachi), Fountain House (Lahore), and Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Islamabad). Inclusion criteria for patients were: (1) diagnosis of schizophrenia confirmed by a consultant psychiatrist using DSM-5 criteria; (2) age 18-55 years; (3) presence of at least one key family member involved in care; and (4) residence within commuting distance of the treatment facility. Exclusion criteria included: (1) comorbid substance use disorder; (2) intellectual disability; (3) organic brain disorders; and (4) inability to provide informed consent.

A total of 150 patient-family dyads were enrolled in the randomized controlled trial, with 75 randomly assigned to the intervention group and 75 to the treatment-as-usual control group. Randomization was conducted using computer-generated random numbers, with stratification by symptom severity and family type (nuclear vs. extended). Additionally, 25 family members participated in in-depth qualitative interviews to inform intervention development [7].

Table 3. Participant Demographic Characteristics (N=150)

Characteristic	Intervention Group (n=75)	Control Group (n=75)	p-value
Patient Age (years)	32.4 ± 8.7	33.1 ± 9.2	0.62
Patient Gender (% male)	58.7%	62.7%	061
Illness Duration (years)	6.2 ± 4.3	5.8 ± 4.8	0.58
Previous Hospitalizations	2.8 ± 1.9	2.6 ± 2.1	0.53
Family Type (% extended)	68.0%	64.0%	0.60
Socioeconomic Status (% low)	72.0%	75.0%	0.67
Baseline PANSS Score	78.3 ± 12.6	76.9 ± 13.4	0.49
Baseline SDSS Score	14.2 ± 5.3	13.8 ± 5.7	0.64

Table 3: This Table presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants and compares the two groups:

- Intervention Group (n=75)
- Control Group (n=75)

The p-value on the right is used to test whether there is a significant difference between the two groups. $p > 0.05$ indicates no significant difference, meaning the two groups are baseline equivalent. All p-values were greater than 0.05, indicating that there were no significant differences between the interventional group and the control group across all demographic and clinical characteristics, representing a good baseline balance, which makes subsequent comparisons of interventional outcomes more reliable.

3.3 Cultural Adaptation Process

The cultural adaptation of our family intervention protocol followed a systematic process incorporating both top-down (theory-driven) and bottom-up (experience-driven) approaches. We began with core evidence-based components from established family interventions, then modified them through: (1) literature review on Pakistani family systems and mental health; (2) consultation with cultural experts (anthropologists, religious scholars, and traditional healers); (3) focus groups with mental health professionals; and (4) pilot testing with five families.

Key cultural adaptations included:

- **Integration of Religious and Spiritual Frameworks**: We incorporated Islamic perspectives on mental health, collaboration with respected religious leaders, and reframing of biomedical information within spiritual worldviews.

• **Respect for Family Hierarchy**: We adapted communication techniques to acknowledge patriarchal authority while creating space for multiple family voices.

• **Attention to Local Stigma Concerns**: We developed specific strategies to address stigma, including techniques for managing community reactions and protecting family honor.

• **Adaptation to Economic Realities**: We designed brief, affordable interventions compatible with families' financial constraints and time limitations.

3.4 Intervention Protocol

The culturally adapted family intervention consisted of 12 weekly sessions, each approximately 90 minutes, conducted in participants' homes or local health centers by trained mental health professionals. The intervention comprised three phases:

• **Assessment and Engagement (Sessions 1-2)**: Comprehensive assessment of family dynamics, development of therapeutic alliance, and exploration of family explanatory models.

• **Psychoeducation and Skill Building (Sessions 3-8)**: Culturally adapted information about schizophrenia, communication training, problem-solving strategies, and emotion regulation techniques.

• **Relapse Prevention and Maintenance (Sessions 9-12)**: Early warning sign recognition, crisis planning, and long-term maintenance strategies.

Control group participants received standard care, typically involving monthly medication reviews and brief supportive counseling.

3.5 Measures

Primary Outcome Measures:

• **Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS)**: Standard 30-item assessment of schizophrenia symptoms, with established reliability and validity in Urdu versions.

• **Social Disability Screening Schedule (SDSS)**: Assessment of social functioning in ten domains, previously used in Pakistani populations.

• **Relapse Rates**: Defined as psychiatric hospitalization, significant clinical deterioration, or emergent suicidal/homicidal ideation.

Family Environment Measures:

• **Perceived Family Environment Scale (PFES)**: Locally developed instrument assessing key family dynamics in the Pakistani context, including criticism, overinvolvement, and spiritual coping.

• **Family Burden Interview Schedule**: Standard measure adapted for Pakistani context.

• **Knowledge About Schizophrenia Questionnaire**: 20-item assessment of family understanding.

Assessments were conducted at baseline, post-intervention (3 months), and follow-up (9 months). Qualitative interviews employed semi-structured guides exploring family experiences, explanatory models, and intervention perceptions.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis employed intention-to-treat principles using SPSS version 26. Between-group differences on continuous outcomes were analyzed using mixed-model repeated measures ANOVA, accounting for baseline scores. Categorical outcomes (relapse rates) were compared using chi-square tests. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d. Qualitative data utilized thematic analysis with NVivo software, following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach [8].

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the institutional review boards of all participating institutions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with special attention to literacy levels. Provisions were made for emergency care and referrals for participants experiencing clinical deterioration. Confidentiality was protected through use of identification numbers and secure data storage.

4. Culturally Adapted Family Intervention Improves Schizophrenia Outcomes in Pakistan

4.1 Family Environment Characteristics at Baseline

Our baseline assessment revealed distinctive family environment patterns in this Pakistani sample. High levels of emotional overinvolvement were present in 64% of families, while overt criticism was less frequent (28%) than typically reported in Western samples. Spiritual explanatory models predominated, with 72% of families initially

attributing symptoms to supernatural causes (evil eye, jinn possession) or spiritual punishment. Notably, 84% of families had consulted religious healers before seeking psychiatric care, with 36% continuing traditional treatments concurrently with biomedical care [9].

Qualitative data illuminated these patterns, with one mother explaining: "We first took him to the pir [holy man] for six months because we thought he was under the influence of black magic. When that didn't work, the doctor said it was a medical problem." This sequential help-seeking pattern created significant treatment delays, averaging 16.2 months from symptom onset to psychiatric contact.

4.2 Intervention Effects on Primary Outcomes

The culturally adapted family intervention demonstrated significant effects on all primary outcomes compared to treatment as usual:

Symptoms Severity: PANSS total scores decreased significantly in both groups, but improvement was substantially greater in the intervention group (45.2% reduction vs. 28.7% in controls, $F(1,148)=24.37$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.82$). The intervention group showed particularly strong improvements in negative symptoms, which are often resistant to medication alone.

Social Functioning: SDSS scores improved by 38.4% in the intervention group compared to 21.3% in the control group ($F(1,148)=18.92$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.71$), indicating significantly better social and occupational functioning.

Relapse Rates: At 9-month follow-up, significantly fewer intervention group participants (22%) had experienced relapse compared to controls (48%) ($\chi^2(1)=12.74$, $p<0.001$, NNT=3.8).

Table 4. Primary Outcomes at Baseline, Post-Intervention, and 9-Month Follow-Up

Outcome Measure	Group	Baseline	Post-Intervention	9-Month Follow-Up	Group × Time Effect
PANSS Total	Intervention	78.3 ± 12.6	52.4 ± 11.3	42.9 ± 10.8	F=24.37, p<0.001
	Control	76.9 ± 13.4	61.8 ± 12.7	54.8 ± 12.1	
SDSS Total	Intervention	14.2 ± 5.3	10.1 ± 4.6	8.7 ± 4.2	F=18.92, p<0.001
	Control	13.8 ± 5.7	12.3 ± 5.1	10.9 ± 4.8	
Relapse Rates	Intervention	-	8%	22%	χ^2=12.74, p<0.001
	Control	-	15%	48%	

Table 4: This table is compared changes in psychotic symptoms (PANSS), social functioning (SDSS), and relapse rate between the intervention and control groups. Results showed:

PANSS: The intervention group showed significant improvement in symptoms from baseline to 9-month follow-up, with a significantly greater improvement than the control group.

SDSS: The social functioning impairment score in the intervention group continued to decrease over time, while the control group also showed improvement, but to a lesser extent.

Relapse rate: The relapse rate in the intervention group was significantly lower than that in the control group (22% vs 48% at follow-up).

Overall, this intervention demonstrated significantly better efficacy than conventional treatment in improving symptoms, enhancing social functioning, and reducing relapse (statistically significant, $p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.001$).

4.3 Intervention Effects on Family Environment and Knowledge

The intervention produced significant improvements in family environment factors hypothesized to mediate clinical outcomes:

- **Family Knowledge**: Intervention group families showed substantially greater increases in schizophrenia knowledge (68% improvement vs. 24% in controls, $p<0.001$).

- **Expressed Emotion**: Critical comments decreased by 62% in the intervention group versus 28% in controls ($p<0.01$), while emotional overinvolvement declined by 51% versus 18% ($p<0.01$).

- **Spiritual Coping**: Notably, the intervention did not eliminate spiritual coping approaches but helped families integrate them with biomedical perspectives. One father noted: "Now I understand that medicine is the treatment, but prayer is the support. Both have their place."

4.4 Moderators of Treatment Response

We examined several potential moderators of treatment response, finding that intervention effects were consistent across most demographic and clinical variables. However, families with extended kinship structures showed significantly greater improvements in social functioning ($p<0.05$) compared to nuclear families, suggesting the intervention may leverage collective resources more effectively in traditional structures. Patients with shorter illness duration (<2 years) also showed stronger treatment responses across all outcomes ($p<0.05$), supporting early intervention approaches [10].

4.5 Qualitative Feedback on Intervention Acceptability

Qualitative interviews revealed high intervention acceptability, with families particularly valuing the integration of cultural and spiritual elements. One daughter commented: "The doctor respected our beliefs but also helped us understand the medical side. This combination made sense to our family." Families reported increased confidence in managing symptoms and reduced stigma, with 76% stating they would recommend the intervention to other families facing similar challenges [11].

5. Discussion of a Culturally Adapted Family Intervention for Schizophrenia

This study represents one of the first systematic attempts to develop and evaluate a culturally adapted family intervention for schizophrenia in Pakistan. Our findings demonstrate that such an intervention can achieve substantial improvements in symptom severity, social functioning, and relapse rates compared to standard care. The effect sizes observed (d=0.71-0.82) compare favorably with those reported in international literature on family interventions for schizophrenia, suggesting that cultural adaptation may enhance effectiveness in this context.

5.1 Key Mechanisms of Change

Several mechanisms may explain the intervention's effectiveness. First, by addressing spiritual explanatory models rather than dismissing them, the protocol likely enhanced engagement and reduced the cognitive dissonance that can occur when biomedical models directly challenge deeply held beliefs. Second, the focus on emotional overinvolvement—more prevalent than criticism in this sample—may have targeted the most relevant emotional expression pattern in Pakistani families. Third, the intervention's structured approach to problem-solving appeared to help families develop more effective coping strategies, reducing the helplessness frequently reported in qualitative comments [12].

Our findings align with Chinese research indicating that "family interventions may reduce patient relapse rates and alleviate caregiver burden" but extend this evidence by demonstrating how specific cultural adaptations enhance acceptability and effectiveness in the Pakistani context. The superior outcomes for extended families further support cultural alignment, suggesting the intervention successfully leveraged traditional structures rather than attempting to transform them into Western family models.

5.2 Integration with International Evidence

The relapse rate reduction observed in our study (22% vs. 48% in controls) is consistent with Cochrane review findings that "family interventions may reduce patient relapse rates post-intervention (RR=0.66)". However, our culturally adapted protocol appears to have achieved somewhat larger effects than the standardized approaches described in international guidelines, possibly due to its alignment with local cultural frameworks.

Similarly, our findings regarding social functioning improvement correspond with Chinese research showing that "family intervention might improve social function and negative symptoms". The social functioning gains in our intervention group (38.4% improvement) exceeded those typically reported in Western studies, possibly because our protocol specifically addressed community reintegration challenges unique to the Pakistani context, including stigma management and occupational limitations [13].

5.3 Clinical and Policy Implications

Our findings suggest several specific implications for clinical practice and mental health policy in Pakistan:

- **Integration of Family Interventions**: Family interventions should be incorporated into national mental health guidelines as essential components of schizophrenia treatment, not optional additions.
- **Task-Sharing Approaches**: Given Pakistan's severe mental health workforce shortages, consideration should be given to training supervised non-specialists in delivering simplified family interventions.
- **Cultural Competence Training**: Mental health professionals require training in culturally sensitive approaches that acknowledge spiritual worldviews while providing biomedical information.
- **Collaboration with Religious Healers**: Rather than dismissing traditional healers, mental health systems should develop collaborative frameworks that respect their cultural authority while gradually introducing biomedical perspectives.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Several study limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the relatively brief follow-up period (9 months) precludes conclusions about long-term outcomes. Second, the exclusion of non-family caregivers' limits understanding of other support systems. Third, the intervention's multicomponent nature makes it difficult to isolate specific active ingredients [14].

Future research should address these limitations through longer follow-up periods, component dismantling studies, and economic evaluations comparing intervention costs with healthcare savings from reduced relapse. Research should also

explore adaptations for other Pakistani cultural subgroups, particularly rural and tribal communities with distinct traditions and belief systems.

5.5 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the stress-vulnerability model of schizophrenia by demonstrating how cultural factors moderate the relationship between family environment and illness course. Second, it refines our understanding of Expressed Emotion by suggesting that its specific manifestations—and their impact—vary substantially across cultures. Third, it contributes to cultural adaptation theory by identifying specific adaptation strategies that enhance engagement and effectiveness without compromising evidence-based components [15].

6. Conclusion

This study provides robust evidence that culturally adapted family interventions can significantly improve outcomes for schizophrenia patients in Pakistan. By respecting cultural values while providing evidence-based care, such interventions represent a promising approach to reducing Pakistan's substantial mental health treatment gap. The successful integration of family-based approaches within Pakistan's healthcare system could transform care for thousands of individuals living with schizophrenia and their families, offering a model that may prove applicable to other low-resource settings with similar cultural characteristics.

As one family member expressed: "This approach helped us understand the problem better, reduced our shame, and gave us practical tools to support our son while maintaining our family honor." Such testimonials underscore the potential of culturally grounded interventions to bridge the gap between evidence-based practice and culturally meaningful care.

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