



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Gender differences in grief and burden in family members participating in the Family Connections programme

Presenter

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North Lee Adult Mental Health Service

- ▶ Second level community care; acute and enduring mental health difficulties in the northern part of Cork city and its hinterland (170,000 population)
- ▶ 2010: Introduction of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for persons with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
- ▶ How do we assist in structuring the environment?



Considering Families and BPD

- ▶ First line of care for relatives with BPD- multiple roles such as advocate, caregiver, coach and guardian
- ▶ Stress can over time deplete the family members' capacity to cope effectively, compromising their health and life agenda (Hoffman et al., 2005)
 - feel **overwhelmed and traumatised** by behaviours that accompany BPD
 - highly **stressful and chaotic interactions** (transactional nature of relationships)
 - at high risk of **emotional burnout**



What is Family Connections?

- ▶ A multi-family group intervention for family members/ significant others of individuals with a diagnosis of BPD (Hoffman, Fruzzetti et al., 2005)
- ▶ Structurally based on two well-known theoretical models
 - Stress, Coping and Adaptation Model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)
 - Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (Linehan, 1993)



Aims and Structure of Family Connections

Three Key Objectives

1. Education about BPD and family functioning
2. Skills building: Individual and family
3. Group peer support

(Hoffman, Fruzzetti et al., 2005)

12 weeks – 6 modules

Module 1 Module 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Family Education
Module 3 Module 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship Mindfulness• Family Environment
Module 5 Module 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Validation• Problem Management



Previous Research

- ▶ Hoffman, Fruzzetti et al. (2005)
 - Significant decrease in levels of burden and grief
- ▶ Hoffman, Fruzzetti and Buteau (2007)
 - Significant decrease in burden, grief and depression
- ▶ Rajalin et al., (2009)
 - Significant reduction in burden
- ▶ Flynn et al. (2016, submitted for review)
 - Significant decrease in levels of burden and grief



Focus of Current Study

- ▶ Hoffman, Fruzzetti and Buteau (2007)
 - Females scored higher on grief and subjective burden than males at pre-intervention. At post-intervention, females remained statistically higher than males on grief only.
- ▶ Exploration of gender differences in an Irish population
- ▶ Comparison of results with previous international studies



Method

- ▶ Design
 - Closely modelled on Hoffman, Fruzzetti et al. (2007) study

 - ▶ Participants
 - 51 family members/ significant others
(representing 38 service users with a diagnosis of BPD on local DBT programme)
 - 23 males; 28 females
 - Relationship type:
 - 29 parents
 - 7 siblings
 - 14 partners
 - 1 brother-in-law
-



Measures

- ▶ **Burden** (*Reinhard et al., 1994*)
 - Burden Assessment Scale
 - Objective Burden
 - Subjective Burden

- ▶ **Depression (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)**
 - Revised Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale

- ▶ **Grief** (*Struening et al., 1995*)
 - Grief Assessment Scale



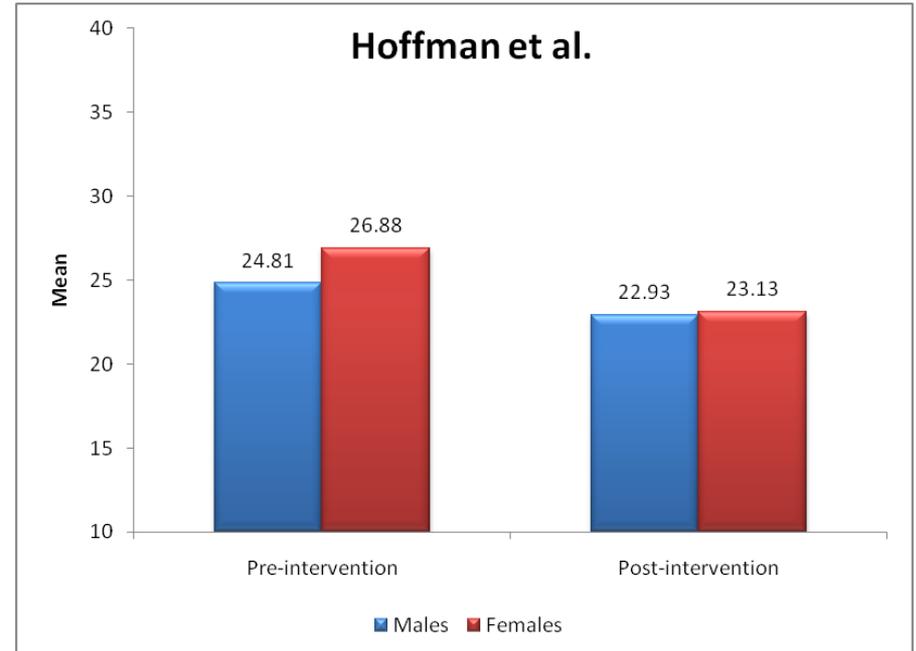
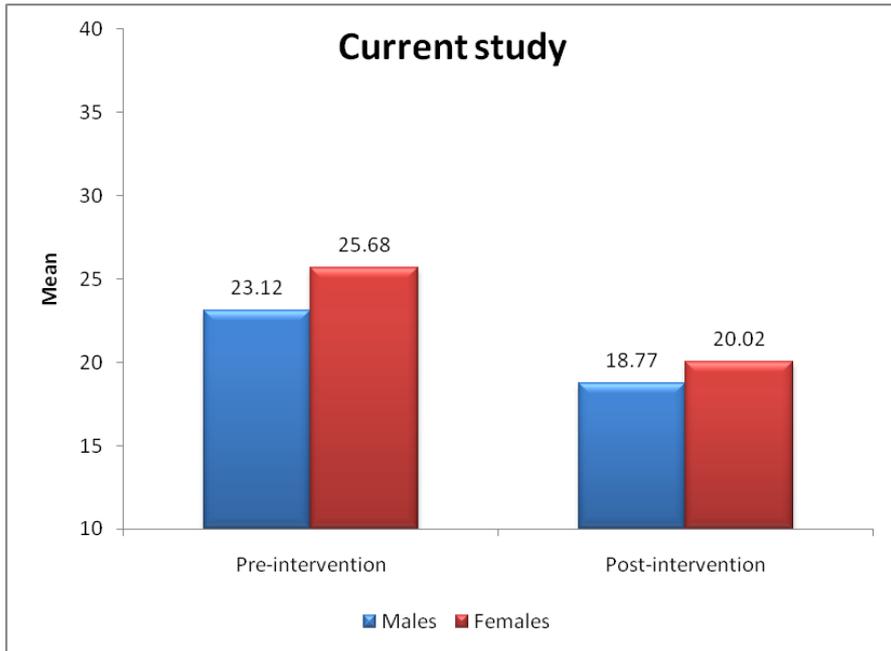
Results

Independent samples t tests to explore differences between males and females on constructs of:

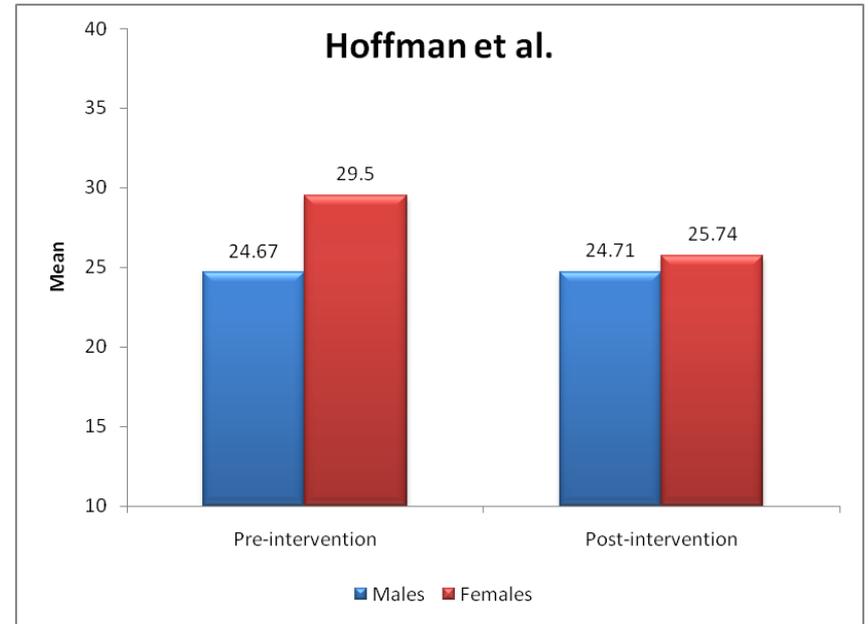
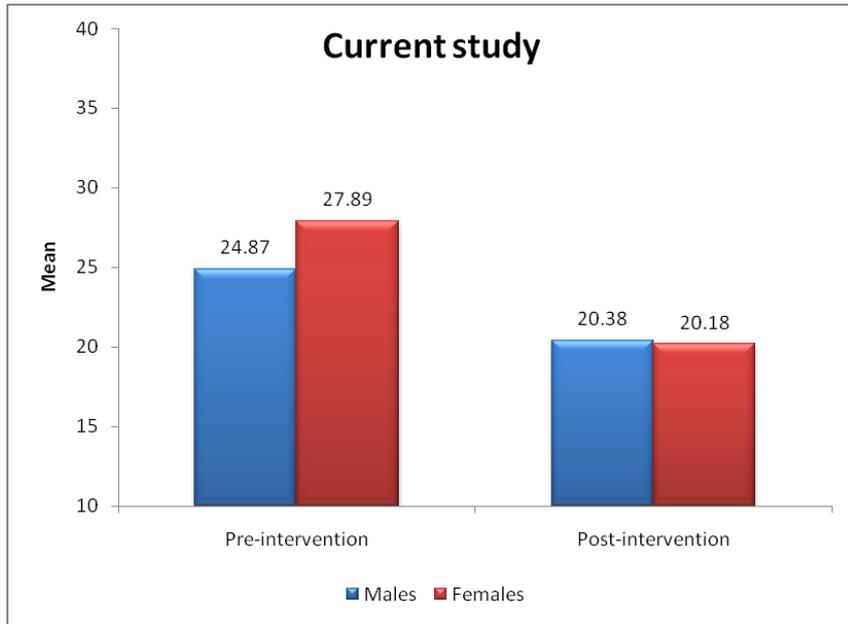
- objective burden,
- subjective burden,
- grief
- depression



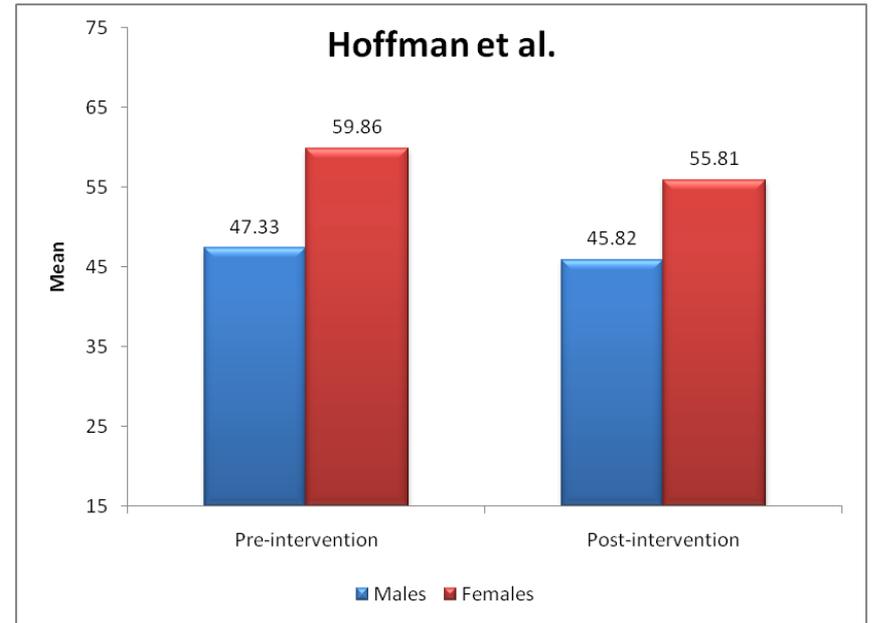
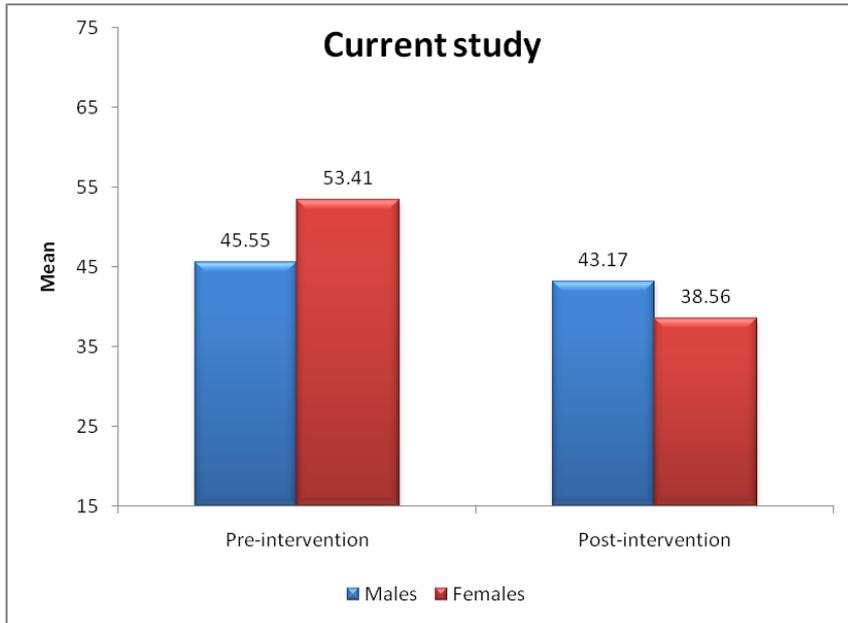
Results – Objective Burden



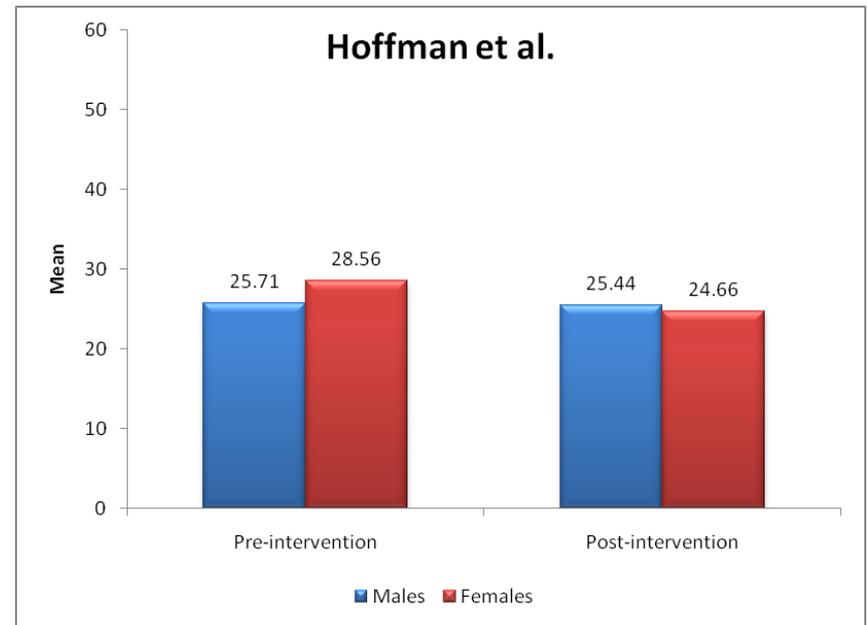
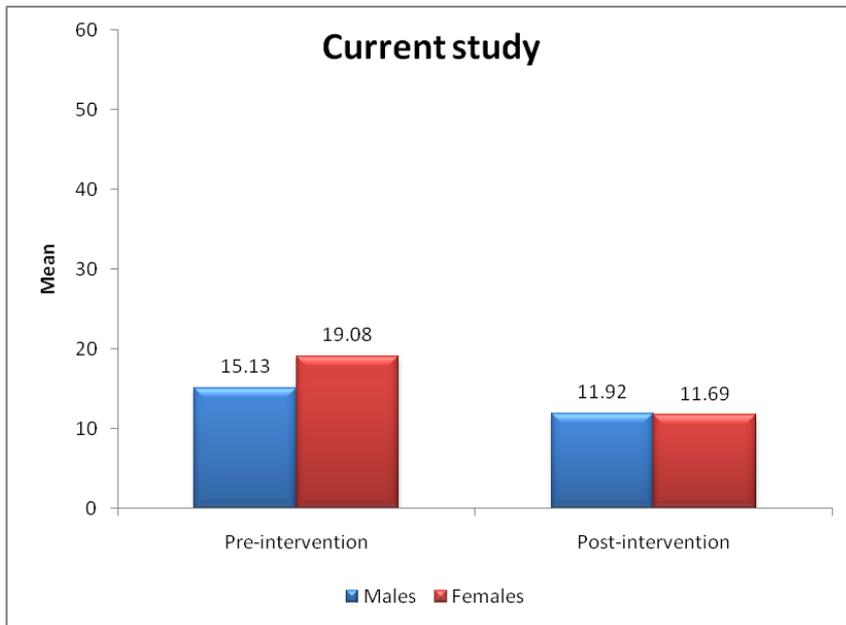
Results – Subjective Burden



Results - Grief



Results - Depression



Conclusion/Clinical Implications

- ▶ Caution in interpretation
- ▶ Tentative: females higher levels of grief pre-intervention but lower at post intervention
- ▶ Greater FC intervention gain for females?
- ▶ Need to consider:
 - ▶ Primary caregiver?
 - ▶ Frequency of contact
- ▶ Extending sample size



Further Information

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