Analysis of the moderating effect of self-efficacy domains in different points of the dementia caregiving process

R. Romero-Moreno**, A. Losada⁵, B.T. Mausbach⁶, M. Márquez-González⁵, T.L. Patterson⁶ and J. López⁷

*Department of Psychology, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid, 28922 Alcorcón, Madrid, Spain; ⁵Department of Psychiatry, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0680, USA; ⁶Department of Biological and Health Psychology, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Campus de Cantoblanco, 28049 Madrid, Spain; ⁷Department of Psychology, Universidad CEU San Pablo de Madrid, Campus de Montepríncipe, 28668 Boadilla del Monte, Madrid, Spain

(Rceived 18 February 2010; final version received 13 June 2010)

Introduction: Studies analyzing the moderator role of self-efficacy have centered their attention on the relationship between stressors and distress. However, drawing upon the stress and coping model, the moderator effects of self-efficacy may appear in the relationship between other key elements of the stress process.

Objectives and method: The purpose of this study was to analyze, in a sample of 167 dementia family caregivers, (1) the moderating effect of self-efficacy for managing behavioral problems on the relationship between frequency of behavioral problems and burden; and (2) the moderating effect of self-efficacy for controlling upsetting thoughts on the relationship between burden and caregivers’ distress (depression and anxiety).

Results: While no support has been found for the hypothesis that self-efficacy for managing behavioral problems moderates the relationship between frequency of behavioral problems and burden, our findings support the moderator role of self-efficacy for controlling upsetting thoughts in the relationship between burden and distress.

Conclusion: Self-efficacy for controlling upsetting thoughts may be particularly effective for caregivers who report high, caregivers with high self-efficacy for controlling upsetting thoughts report significantly lower levels of distress than caregivers with low self-efficacy for controlling upsetting thoughts.

Keywords: behavioral problems; burden; caregivers; dementia; distress; moderation

Caregiver self-efficacy: A multidimensional construct

Caregivers’ self-efficacy is another variable that has been studied in the dementia caregiving research as a potential moderator in the relationship between stressors and distress, with research consistently showing the positive effects that this variable has on dementia caregivers’ distress (Márquez-González, Losada, López, & Peñacoba, 2009; Rabinowitz, Mausbach, Thompson, & Gallagher-Thompson, 2007; Steffen, McKibbin, Zeiss, Gallagher-Thompson, & Bandura, 2002).

Traditionally, self-efficacy has been defined as the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviors required to produce certain outcomes. In the dementia caregiving context, self-efficacy has been conceptualized as the belief in the ability to carry out different activities related to caregiving (Steffen et al., 2002). Researchers have highlighted the multidimensionality of self-efficacy, which means that it is not a global entity but varies across activity domains, task demands, and situational characteristics (Bandura, 1997; Steffen et al., 2002). Several dimensions have been described for caregiving self-efficacy. For example, Steffen et al. (2002) identified three dimensions...