

RESEARCH OUTLINE

Intergenerational Parenting Practices in Families with First-Generation Mental Illness

While much work has been done in understanding the experiences and outcomes of children of parents with mental illness, research involving adult children has only gained traction in the last decade. In particular, more research is needed in understanding the challenges and needs of adult children who are required to simultaneously provide caregiving to their elderly parents and children. In families where the elderly parent has or continues to experience mental illness, it is likely that the caregiving responsibility of adult children increases considerably thus impacting on other life areas. However, research has indicated that not all adult children of parents with mental illness go on to experience adverse outcomes, with some even developing adaptive coping skills that have enhanced their overall resilience and outlook on life. Learning from those who have experienced parental mental illness first hand and understanding what has helped them, is the first step towards developing targeted supports and programs for future generations, who may find themselves in a similar position.

The other aim of this thesis is to explore the links between early attachment and adult attachment and current parenting practices in families with first-generation mental illness, with foundations drawn from intergeneration theory. To the best of the research teams' knowledge, this is the first study that seeks to explore how adult children from families with parental mental illness perceive and cope with parenting their own children.

Collectively, a deeper understanding of the needs of adult children in relation to: (i) how their early experiences living with a parent with mental illness has shaped them as parents and (ii) protective factors are imperative components that need to be documented so that knowledge base in this area is further extended and appropriate supports are put in place. The

aforementioned aims and objectives will be achieved through three empirical studies as part of a three-year PhD. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the first two studies that will be conducted in 2018.

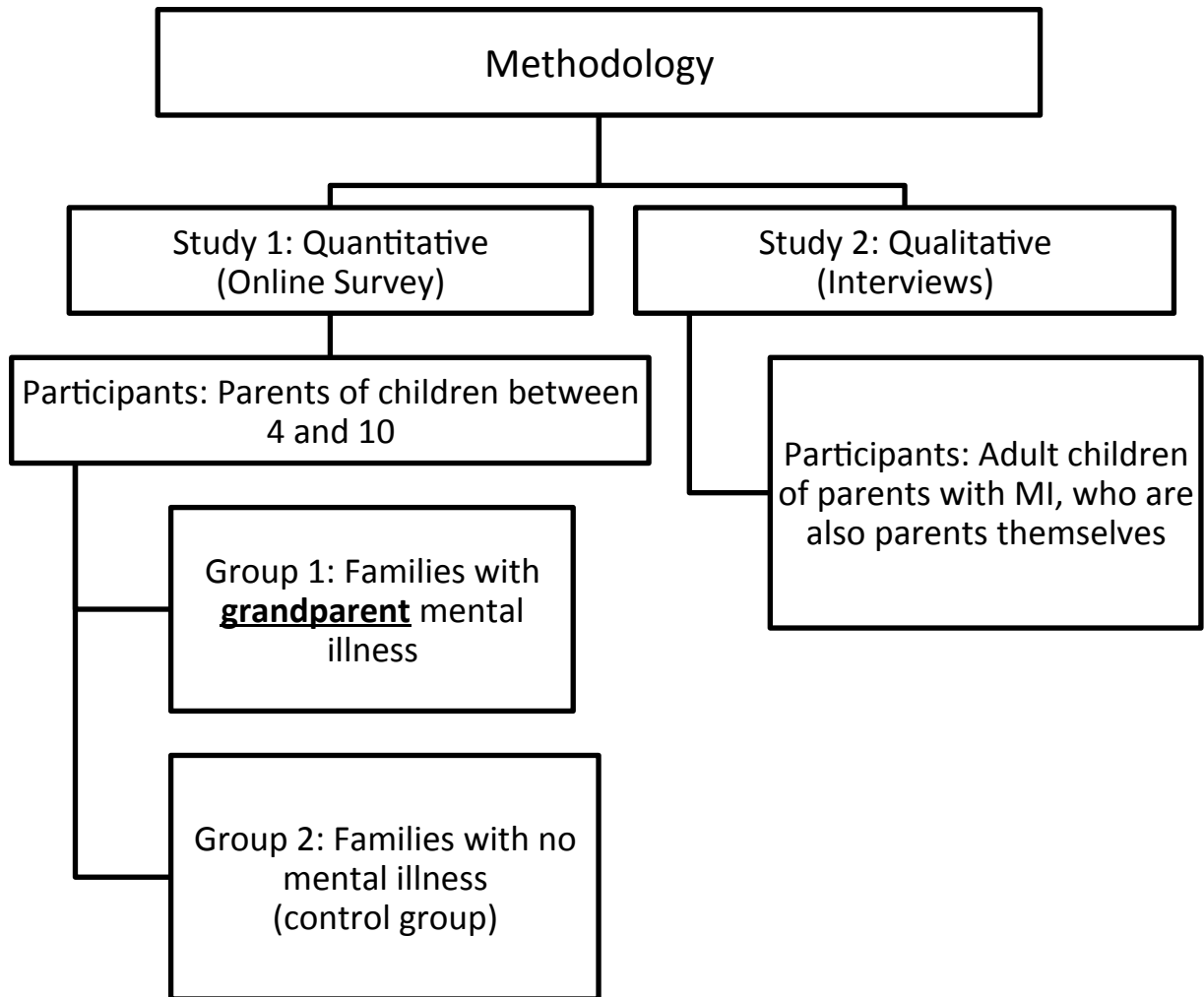


Figure 1. Research methodology.