

## Impact of Caring Responsibilities on Older People's

Meyer, M. M. and Derr, Paul

Department of Education, International University, Bamenda, Cameroon

---

### ABSTRACT

An ageing population is a perspective faced by most parts of the world nowadays, and UN projected that the age cohort of 60 and over to grow faster than all other age groups in the next few decades. It is forecasted to make up more than one quarter of the population by 2050 in all regions except Africa. Longer longevity means that people may have to work longer, yet it is not clear how the motivations to work differ among older people. Also, the motivations can vary significantly across countries where the cultural and institutional settings are different. In this review, it will specifically look at the impact of caring responsibilities on age ones in the society in general.

Keywords: Age ones, Caring Responsibilities, Culture and Institution.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Worldwide populations are aging and as medical care improves, people are living longer with long-term disabling conditions. In the United Kingdom (UK) the number of people aged 75+ is expected to almost double in the next 25 years, rising from 5.2 million in 2014 to 9.9 million in 2039 [1]. Much of their support comes from unpaid, often family carers or caregivers as they are also known.

The term carer can be difficult because it means different things to different people. Carer can refer to paid and unpaid, professional and lay carers [2]. Some family and friends may not consider themselves as a carer because they may see themselves as simply playing their part as a supportive partner, father, sister, daughter or friend. According to Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary, Carers is define as a family member or paid helper who regularly looks after a child or a sick, elderly, or disabled person [3].

Elderly care, or simply eldercare (also known in parts of the English speaking world as aged care), is the fulfillment of the special needs and requirements that are unique to senior citizens. This broad term encompasses such services as assisted living, adult day care, long term

care, nursing homes (often referred to as residential care), hospice care, and home care. Because of the wide variety of elderly care found nationally, as well as differentiating cultural perspectives on elderly citizens, it cannot be limited to any one practice [4]. For example, many countries in Asia use government-established elderly care quite infrequently, preferring the traditional methods of being cared for by younger generations of family members. Elderly care emphasizes the social and personal requirements of senior citizens who need some assistance with daily activities and health care, but who desire to age with dignity [5]. It is an important distinction, in that the design of housing, services, activities, employee training and such should be truly customer-centered [6]. It is also noteworthy that a large amount of global elderly care falls under the unpaid market sector.

#### **Cultural and geographic differences**

The form of care provided for older adults varies greatly among countries and is changing rapidly [7]. Even within the same country, regional differences exist with respect to the care for older adults [8]. However, it has been observed globally that older people consume the most health expenditures out of any other

age group [9]. An observation that shows comprehensive eldercare may be very similar. One must also account for an increasingly large proportion of older people worldwide, especially in developing nations, as continued pressure is put on limiting fertility and decreasing family size [10]. Traditionally, care for older adults has been the responsibility of family members and was provided within the extended family home [6]. Increasingly in modern societies, care is now being provided by state or charitable institutions [11]. The reasons for this change include decreasing family size, greater life expectancy, the geographical dispersion of families. Although these changes have affected European and North American countries first, they are now increasingly affecting Asian countries as well. [12] In most western countries, care facilities for older adults are residential family care homes, freestanding assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) [13]. A family care home is a residential home with support and supervisory personnel by an agency, organization, or individual that provides room and board, personal care and habilitation services in a family environment for at least two and no more than six persons.

#### **Gender discrepancies in caregivers**

According to Family Caregiver Alliance, the majority of family caregivers are women [9]. Many studies have looked at the role of women as family caregivers. Although not all have addressed gender issues and caregiving specifically, the results are still generalizable to the list below:

- Estimates of the age of family or informal caregivers who are women range from 59% to 75%.
- The average caregiver is age 46, female, married and worked outside the home earning an annual income of \$35,000 [14].
- Although men also provide assistance, female caregivers may spend as much as 50% more time providing care than male caregivers.

There are many benefits to working with the elderly. Not only is it an important job for our society, caring for our elders can be extremely rewarding and fulfilling too [15].

We all hope to retire and live out our golden years in comfort, surrounded by friends and entertained by our favourite activities [16]. After years of working, raising families and contributing to society, many of us look forward to settling back and watching the world go by. Caring for the elderly enables them to not worry about the things they cannot do anymore and celebrate the things that they can, not only supporting them in their care needs, but also providing them with a valued friend and confidant [12].

Here are our top 5 reasons why we love to work with the elderly: [12]

1. You really make a difference to their lives
2. They appreciate your time and what you do for them
3. It gives you some perspective
4. You can learn from their experiences
5. It's fun!

#### **You really make a difference to their lives**

For people with high levels of care needed, your support is invaluable [13]. With proper, attentive and respectful care, you can ensure that they retain their dignity and independence during the latter stages of life [13]. It's a great accomplishment and feels highly rewarding, knowing that you have turned what could have been a really difficult day into a great one, full of laughter and fun activities.

#### **They appreciate your time and what you do for them**

Your visit or time could be the highlight of someone's day. Many elderly people look forward to their interactions with their care staff and your empathetic and friendly presence could mean the difference between a tough day and a good day. They are also often quite willing to show their gratitude [14]. They appreciate your time and the work you do, and are often happy to compliment and thank you for good work.

### **It gives you some perspective**

Working with the elderly gives you a valuable insight into the ageing process and what's to come, giving you an opportunity to think about what matters most to you in life and how you will look after yourself as well as them [12]. Every day you help people through struggles you may never have known about if you hadn't been caring.

### **You can learn from their experiences**

Most elderly people have lived full and fascinating lives. Not only do you learn from their experiences while you are with them, you can learn from their knowledge and stories as well. This is what people often say is the best thing about caring [5]. Their memories can give you a wonderful insight into a different time and can help you to understand more about history as well as the human experience over time. They have a wealth of knowledge to share and lots of time to share it with you.

### **Its fun**

Some people outside the care sector can think quite negatively about caring but we think working with the elderly can be really fun [7]. There are regular activities to get involved in, some great events to enjoy, as well as some fantastic and funny people to work with. Some of the stories and jokes you hear from the elderly can keep you laughing for hours and the greatest thing is that they are there to have a good time with you too [13]. Time with them is not only valuable but it can be highly enjoyable too. We applaud all of our care staff for their time and dedication to making the days of our clients the best they can be and would encourage more people to join us caring for the elderly [9]. It is such a rewarding field to work in and, as the elderly population rises at an ever-faster rate, it is a vital one for our local communities and society. If you are interested in starting a career in care or would like to join us working with the elderly, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our Recruitment Team.

### **Challenges of Caring**

Caring can be very demanding and often restricts the lives of carers and their

families. Carers are often left to bear too much responsibility for the person they care for, without enough support [15]. Carers NSW advocates for practical reforms that will help protect carers from the problems too often associated with caring.

### **Financial hardship**

- Approximately 40% of primary carers are on a low income and many find it hard to cover living expenses, save money or build up superannuation [3].
- The extra costs of caring can be enormous. Carers and their families often have to find money for extra expenses like heating and laundry, medicines, disability aids, health care and transport.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- Caring can be emotionally taxing and physically draining. Carers have the lowest wellbeing of any large group measured by the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index [8].
- Carers often ignore their own health and are 40 per cent more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition. Some health problems, like back problems, anxiety and depression, can be directly linked to caring.
- Many carers are chronically tired and desperately need to refresh with just one night of unbroken sleep, a day off or an extended period with no caring responsibilities.

### **Social isolation and relationships**

- Many carers feel isolated, missing the social opportunities associated with work, recreation and leisure activities [4].
- The demands of caring can leave little time for other family members or friends.
- Carers often have to deal with strong emotions, like anger, guilt, grief and distress that can spill into other relationships and cause conflict and frustration.

### **Disadvantage**

- Many carers miss out on important life opportunities, particularly for paid work, a career and education [5].
- Caring can take the freedom and spontaneity out of life.

### **Promoting Independence**

Older adults are scared of losing their independence more than they fear death [8]. Promoting independence in self-care can provide older adults with the capability to maintain independence longer and can leave them with a sense of achievement when they complete a task unaided. Older adults that require assistance with activities of daily living are at a greater risk of losing their independence with self-care tasks as dependent personal behaviours are often met with reinforcement from caregivers [9]. It is important for caregivers to ensure that measures are put into place to preserve and promote function rather than contribute to a decline in status of an older adult that has physical limitations. Caregivers need to be conscious of actions and behaviors that cause older adults to become dependent on them and need to allow older patients to maintain as much independence as

possible. Providing information to the older patient on why it is important to perform self-care may allow them to see the benefit in performing self-care independently [16]. If the older adult is able to complete self-care activities on their own, or even if they need supervision, encourage them in their efforts as maintaining independence can provide them with a sense of accomplishment and the ability to maintain independence longer [5]. Elderly-friendly interior design plays a vital role in promoting independence among senior people. One great example for this can be integration of Internet of Things (IoT) in residential interiors. Smart homes have a plethora of sensors in the house to monitor patterns of an individual. It provides remote monitoring system which allows caregivers to keep a track of the daily activities of elderly even from distant places [16]. Due to this, adults can live on their own confidently knowing the fact that a feedback alarm will be sent to their caregivers immediately in case of any emergency. This not only allows the aging population to maintain their independence and confidence, but also brings peace of mind to their friends and family.

### **CONCLUSION**

At some stage in our lives most of us will be, or will need, a carer. No matter who you care for, taking on a caring role is a significant event that brings many challenges and rewards. It should also not be assumed that caring always has a negative impact on older carers or that they always want or need support. Caring

can be mutual and satisfying and support provided should be focused on what these older carers and those they care for want. Further research is needed, but including older carers in research design should ensure the relevance of research and the interventions offered.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
2. Kane, Robert L. (2011). Medical Care for the Elderly in Other Western Countries. *Home Health Care Services Quarterly*. 7 (3-4): 307-315.
3. Huang, S., Thang, L. and Toyota, M. (2012). Transnational mobilities for care: Rethinking the dynamics of care in Asia. *Global Networks*. 12 (2): 129.
4. Sundström, G. (2014). The Elderly, Women's Work and Social Security Costs. *Acta Sociologica*. 25 (1): 21-38.
5. Sandhu, H. S., Gilles, E. Devita, M. V., Panagopoulos, G. and Michelis, M. F. (2009). Hyponatremia associated with large-bone fracture in elderly patients. *International Urology and Nephrology*. 41(3): 733-7.
6. Majumder, S., Aghayi, E., Nofaresti, M., Memarzadeh-Tehran, H.,

- Mondal, T., Pang, Z. and Deen, M. (2017). Smart Homes for Elderly Healthcare—Recent Advances and Research Challenges. *Sensors* (Basel, Switzerland). 17 (11): 2496.
7. Barton, E. M., Baltes, M. M. & Orzech, M. J. (2017). Etiology of dependence in older nursing home residents during morning care: The role of staff behavior, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 38 (3): 423-431.
  8. Buffardi, L. C., Smith, J. L., O'Brien, A. S., and Erdwins, C. J. (2016). The impact of dependent-care responsibility and gender on work attitudes. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 4(4), 356-367.
  9. Hernandez, A. M. and Bigatti, S. M. (2010). Depression among older mexican american caregivers *Cult. Divers. Ethnic Minor Psychol.*, 16, pp. 50-58.
  10. J. Kochar, J., Fredman, L., Stone, K. L. and Cauley, J. A. (2007). Sleep problems in elderly caregivers depend on the level of depressive symptoms: results of the caregiver-study of osteoporotic fractures *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.*, 55 (12): 2003-2009.
  11. Carter, J. H., Lyons, K. S., Stewart, B. J., Archbold, P. G. and Scobee. R. (2010). Does age make a difference in caregiver strain? Comparison of young versus older caregivers in early stage Parkinson's disease, *Mov. Disord.*, 25 (6): 724-730.
  12. Ekwall, A. K., Sivberg, B. and Hallberg. I. R. (2017). Older caregivers' coping strategies and sense of coherence in relation to quality of life, *J. Adv. Nurs.*, 57 (6): 584-596.
  13. Turner, M., King, C., Thomas, C., Brearley, S. G., Seamark, D., Wang, X., Blake, S. and Payne, S. (2016). Caring for a dying spouse at the end of life: 'It's one of the things you volunteer for when you get married': a qualitative study of the oldest carers' experiences, *Age Ageing*, 45, pp. 421-426.
  14. Black, H. K., Schwatz, A. J., Caruso, C. J. and Hannum, S. M. (2008). How personal control mediates suffering: elderly husbands' narratives of caregiving, *J. Mens. Stud.*, 16 (2): 177-192.
  15. Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Always on call, always concerned. A survey of the experiences of older carers. Princess Royal Trust for Carers: Essex, 2011.
  16. FCA: Family Caregiver Alliance Archived 2014-02-14 at the Wayback Machine.