

CARING FOR OLDER ADULTS WITH DISABILITY:
LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN RURAL THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown the burden and stress of family caregivers, but less in depth research has explored family caregivers' lived experiences. The main purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and everyday life of family caregivers who are taking care of older adults in rural Thai villages. This study applied a phenomenological approach consisting of interviews with ten participants who willingly shared their personal experiences on caregiving to the elderly.

Based on the findings, family caregivers experienced various feelings during their care duties. Those were 1) changing in their life path; 2) suffering alone; 3) double trouble; 4) disheartenment; and 5) the need for freedom. The justifications, which persuaded family caregivers continuing to undertake caring duties for disabled older adults were 1) compassion; 2) moral responsibility; 3) commitment; and 4) belief in the law of karma. The findings also revealed that the older adults who had an unhealthy relationship with his/her caregivers would not be provided with the best care. Many case studies shown people's bias against caregiving for the elderly. And taking care of the elderly separated both family caregivers and care-receivers out their communities.

This study highlighted some key recommendations, such as health resources, rewards, encouragement, and material assistance should be provided to family caregivers. The need for family-oriented mental health services should be developed and the more certain interventions should be made in support of the well-being of family caregivers in rural areas, especially among the aged spousal caregivers. A campaign for healthily family relationships within the family should be addressed upon a public policy on aging. The experience of family caregivers in urban areas and other regions should be conducted in future research.

KEY WORDS: FAMILY CAREGIVER / ELDERLY CAREGIVING /
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