

FAMILY BELIEF SYSTEM SHAPING THE PERCEPTION OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS' BURDENS IN TAKING CARE OF STROKE PATIENTS, MANDALAY, MYANMAR

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ABSTRACT

Myanmar is experiencing an increasingly aging population along with the global trend of aging societies. The prevalence of chronic disease, especially strokes, is relatively high with an increasingly aging people. As strokes are a long-term disable disease, stroke patients need family caregivers to take care of them for long time. So, family caregivers have to sacrifice their own life by caring for stroke patients at home. They suffer some types of burdens such as financial, social, emotional and physical while caring. But, family beliefs are an important part of family caregivers' burdens, whether acknowledged or not.

This study aims to describe how the perceptions of burdens were shaped by the family belief system and how to cope with the burdens. Data were collected from a purposive sample of twenty family caregivers living in Mandalay, Myanmar, by using in-depth interviews and participant observation at the caregivers' houses. Particularly, interviews were carried out with nine daughters, five wives, two sisters, three husbands and one son.

When choosing a caregiver within a family, single, jobless and women assume the caring task. But, twelve out of twenty caregivers are married and they have to perform more roles than single people. Among the married caregivers, women have to perform more roles such as caring, doing housework, nurturing and working at the same time. If they do not receive enough support from other family members, they feel the burdens more than others. In fact, one female caregiver suffered family separation (divorced) because of reduced role sharing from her partner. In addition, caregivers who have financial burdens suffer from the rest of burdens at the same time because they have no time for social relations or no time for rest even when they are sick. Moreover, elderly caregivers who suffer from some kinds of diseases experienced many physical and emotional burdens. Hence, the family is one unit and they shared sadness and happiness with each other by filling one another needs. According to the family belief system, they perceive caring is family duty, care with love and respect, caring leads to 'good karma' or merit and suffering burdens is 'bad karma' or 'bad luck'. Finally, they use coping mechanisms such as doing exercise, visiting friends and doing religious things to reduce the burdens.

KEY WORDS- MYANMAR, FAMILY BELIEF SYSTEM, FAMILY CAREGIVERS, PRECEPTION ON BURDENS, COPING WAYS

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