Projecting social support needs of informal caregivers in Malaysia

Siti Hajar Abu Bakar PhD1, Richard Weatherley PhD1, Noralina Omar MSc1,*,
Fatimah Abdullah PhD2, Nur Saadah Mohamad Aun PhD3

Article first published online: 11 SEP 2013

DOI: 10.1111/hsc.12070

© 2013 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Keywords:
- chronically ill;
- family caregivers;
- informal caregivers;
- Malaysia;
- social supports

Abstract

This article presents the findings of a self-report study of the consequences of being an informal caregiver in Malaysia. The aim of this exploratory study was to examine Malaysian efforts in assisting informal caregivers, based on an analysis of the issues and concerns raised by the caregivers themselves. Data were obtained from a cross-sectional survey of informal caregivers in 2009. This sample comprised parents, spouses and/or adult siblings, and adult children, caring for their children, spouses or siblings and parents who were chronically ill and/or had a disability. Of 300 prospective participants, only 175 could be located (58%), but all those contacted agreed to participate. Respondents were randomly selected and interviewed using a structured questionnaire to identify the emotional, financial, social and physical issues consequent upon being a caregiver. Most respondents reported that their care-giving responsibilities had impacted their emotional, financial, social and/or physical well-being. Inadequate and/or uncertain income was by far the greatest concern followed in descending order by social, physical and emotional consequences. The one-way analysis of variance showed significant differences among the three categories of caregivers with respect to physical and emotional consequences. The findings show that care-giving has detrimental effects on the lives of informal caregivers, and that they are in significant need of social support to help them deal with care-giving tasks and responsibilities. Based on the findings, an integrated social support programme is proposed, tailored to the needs of informal caregivers.