

## ABSTRACT

### Family Care-Giving in Barbados: Impacts and Experiences of Care-Givers in the Parishes of St. Lucy and St. James.

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There is no readily available empirical research on elderly care-giving at home, in Barbados. This qualitative exploratory study examined the financial, psychological and social impacts on a purposive sample of 34 family care-givers of 38 adult care recipients. Face-to-face interview data were collected using a semi-structured question guide. Thematic Analysis was applied to the qualitative data.

**Results:** Demographic analysis showed variation in care-giving environment. Some care-givers were co-residents with the recipients, others resided nearby. Some were employed outside the home; others were unemployed having left to care for their elderly relative. There was differentiation between the primary care-giver and the main decision maker in some households. The majority of care recipients and care-givers were female.

Consistent with the literature, findings revealed a feminist orientation in providing care. Care-givers reported contrasting levels of financial burden, stress, psychological and social burden and positive or negative effects of care-giving. The experience was mediated by the level of sibling and family support, community support, and involvement with church and spiritual matters. Spirituality was one coping mechanism for care recipients and some care-givers, while motivation through generational culture and values and a desire to ‘give back’ influenced carers. Caregivers contributed from their own personal resources and were concerned at the lack of state policy and programmes which addressed the needs of the elderly in the country.

**Conclusions:** In light of the ageing crisis, and the impacts on care-givers, sustainability of family care-giving in its present model appears to be at risk. The state should intervene in developing policies and programmes to meet the needs of this demographic. Evidence-based practice and research in social work at the micro, mezzo and macro levels are needed to inform policy development and carve sustainable models of care for the future.

**Keywords:** Barbados; Elderly; Family; Informal Care-giver; Care-Giving; Social Work.