

EVIDENCE, PROBLEMS, NEEDS, WELL-BEING AND EMPOWERMENT IN FAMILY CAREGIVER OF CHRONICALLY ILL AGING

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study was conducted to examine the situation of caregiving and the influencing factors for empowerment among caregivers in the eastern region of Thailand. Data were collected by questionnaires assessing characteristics of the elderly with chronic illness and their caregivers, the elderly's ability to perform activities of daily living, the elderly's mental status, social support for caregivers, relationship between the elderly and caregivers, needs and burden of caregivers, and the empowerment of caregivers. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple regression.

The results revealed that among 610 elderly people in this study most of them were female with the average age of 73.5 years. The most common diseases in the elderly were diabetes mellitus and hypertension. Almost all subjects were taking medicine. Regarding characteristics of family caregivers, most of them were female, and about a half of them were the elderly's grown children. The most frequent activity of caring was providing food. The average duration of being a caregiver was 64.3 months, and the average hour of care per day was 11 hours and 30 minutes. Most of the elderly in the present study were able to perform their activities of daily living and could perform cognitive function at the normal level. For the caregivers, most of them were healthy, had sufficient social support, and felt empowered at the high level. The relationship between the elderly and caregivers was good. It was also found that the family relationship was the most significant influencing factor for empowerment of the caregivers, whereas the relationship between the elderly and their caregivers, the caregiver's needs, the caregiver's health status, and the caregiver's self-esteem also influenced on the empowerment of the caregivers. These influencing factors accounted for 38 % of the variance of the caregiver empowerment. ($p = 0.01$)

The findings in this study suggest that the family relationship was the most significant influencing factor for the empowerment of caregivers. Thus, to improve quality of caring for the elderly at home, the family relationship should be promoted. In addition, the children should be enhanced to realize their responsibility to take care of the elderly in their family as well.