

“Ethnographic Studies on the Role of Caregiver in Providing Care for Older Persons in Citengah Village, Sumedang, West Java and Its Implication of Care Giving Program”

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ABSTRACT

Many countries in the world will experience increasingly ageing populations in the 21st century. One of the countries that will have dramatic increase in the number of aged people in its populations is Indonesia. The increasing proportion of older persons in Indonesia also bring an impact on the issue of providing care for older persons especially for older persons who are no longer working. Most of study on elderly people are focused on social activities of the elderly. However, there are limited studies on the providing care for older persons in rural areas in Indonesia. Therefore, the decision to study providing care for Indonesian older persons was taken in order to broaden inquiry into the issues. Our study is a small scale study which is based on qualitative research in Citengah Village, Sumedang, West Java in 1999 – 2001..

The results showed that there is a flexibility in Citengah Village when older people were asked about who they wanted to care for them when ill or frail. For men, reliance on a wife or a daughter is clearly preferred, while women often state a preference for care by a daughter. Sometimes remarry will be done by older men in order to have wife to care for them. However, for both men and women care by a daughter-in-law, granddaughter, adopted child or even son or nephew is acceptable, especially if a daughter is not locally available or relations are not good. One rich elderly widower, who has six sons and one daughter, explained his decision to live with his only daughter after his wife's death with the comment: "With a daughter, I need not feel like a stranger (asing), nor reluctant (sungkan) to ask her to do my laundry or cook my favourite food."

For elderly men, where there is a wife (and often there is), she is by default the predominant carer. Indeed, in Citengah, a wife's role for ensuring men's domestic comfort and care in illness is recognised as so important that remarriage, even in old age, is not uncommon. Only if there is no wife do daughters emerge as caregivers. Care by a daughter is most common, but granddaughters, sons, and daughters-in-law also feature prominently. Caregiver played important roles in providing companionship, help and health care for elderly people. In relation to this, most caregivers were children or family of the elderly people.

From the study we concluded that further research is needed in order to increase capability of the caregiver. Hence, the implication of this research findings is the importance of care giving training to improve capability of caregiver (family and community) in caring the older persons, and developing support system to provide sustainability of this program.

Introduction

Many countries in the world will experience increasingly ageing populations in the 21st century. As the world experiences a demographic revolution towards a new era of ageing, comprehensive reforms to address social, fiscal, and health implications will be required. Yet while these impacts of ageing populations have largely focused on the developed world, the issue is also experienced by developing countries.

Literature has noted that the proportion of elderly people aged 60 years and above in the developing world will increase rapidly from 8 % in 2005 to approx. 20 % between 2015 - 2050 (Beard and Kunhariwibowo, 2001; United Nations, 2005). One of the developing countries that will experience these problems with its ageing population is Indonesia. This country has the third largest ageing population in the developing regions. Indonesia will have 13.2 % of elderly proportion in 2025: 7.8 % of elderly people population is on the island of Java and 5.4 % of older persons proportion is outside this island (Beard and Kunhariwibowo, 2001; United Nations, 2005).

This paper explores data from Ageing in Indonesia study of a rural West Javanese community. It employs qualitative methods. Ethnographic studies, analysis of elderly people's life histories, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion were conducted in the village. In addition, repeated in-depth interviews also conducted with 28 or 29 participants.

The Location

The location, Citengah village, is about 11 km away from the Sumedang city. The village was chosen because there is a remarkably high proportion of elderly people who are above 60 years old in this community. Citengah is a typical traditional West Javanese (Sundanese) village. Its local economy is predominantly based on agricultural production, with the majority of households (90%) engaged in rice cultivation. Simple irrigated sawah (paddy fields) for the production of rice, cassava, beans and tea trees are developed. The main activities are subsistence farming and agricultural wage labourer. Some people grow additional cash crops, usually the same products as for consumption, and own fishponds, cattle and poultry. The sole secondary industry comprises one small timber factory. Services within the community consist of two schools, 4 mosques, 5 prayer houses (musholla), 20 small stores, 2 village nurses (one female nurse or bidan desa and one male nurse or mantri), and 1 polindes (village medical clinic). The total population is recorded as 1200 people, with 143 people are 60 years of age and above. All inhabitants are Muslim.

Religious Adherence

Islam is important in Citengah. It is a visible presence in the life of Citengah village. Informal religious instruction for children begins with the instruction in Koran recitation (pangaosan). Calls to the five daily prayers, often heard from mosques in the village. Every Friday men and boys join the prayer known as Juma'ahan. Militant Islam is also important to the village. Citengah was one of the areas in West Java where the DI/ TII or militant Islamic movement built its headquarter in Citen-

gah's forest.

Islam is also integrated into the life of people in Citengah. Important aspects of Islamic faith and practice that has implications for care giving is the fact that Islam requires practices associated with care and positive views of life that stresses on respect and caring for older persons. The practices are part of everyday life.

The norms in Citengah emphasise on the importance of religious aspect in people's lives. One of participants was an honourable mullah and Islamic teacher in the village. He has been head of Citengah High mosque for approximately 18 years. Religion is one of the most important things in his life; he regularly attended religious events, and was anxious to keep Muslim laws (for example, he said it was necessary to take care of the older persons when they were getting older and older as it was a part of practicing Islamic values). Another participants received care from the village community in form of companionship. Village community also providing care for them inform of helping them with their activities of daily living such as dressing, feeding, washing, and toileting.

I would interpret these as symbolize of respect to older people. The caring that they receive do not automatically reduce their status in the village. Villagers still see them as old people to whom you should respect.

Care Preferences and Practices

There is a flexibility in Citengah when older people were asked about who they wanted to care for them when ill or frail. For men, reliance on a wife or a daughter is clearly preferred, while women often state a preference for care by a daughter. Sometimes remarry will be done by older men in order to have wife to care for them. However, for both men and women care by a daughter-in-law, granddaughter, adopted child or even son or nephew is acceptable, especially if a daughter is not locally available or relations are not good. One rich elderly widower, who has six sons and one daughter, explained his decision to live with his only daughter after his wife's death with the comment: "With a daughter, I need not feel like a stranger (asing), nor reluctant (sungkan) to ask her to do my laundry or cook my favourite food."

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Conclusions

This paper has examined The Role of Caregiver in Providing Care for Older Persons in Citengah Village, Sumedang, West Java including the care preferences and practices of older men and women in two different rural communities in Indonesia. The aims were to analyse people's preferences concerning appropriate sources of care in the light of their own understandings of kinship, morality and personhood, to identify the range of acceptable care arrangements around the general norm of 'daughter preference', to examine the constraints operating on people's attainment of preferred practices. Further research is needed in order to increase capability of the caregiver.

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