

Abstract

Title: Responsibility, Love and Maintenance On Employed Relative Carers in Sweden
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In Sweden the municipalities have the responsibility to provide the elderly, ill and disabled with the assistance they need to make home living possible. Still, most caring takes place in the family and is performed by relatives. Sometimes a relative carer can be employed and paid by the municipality to perform the help. The aim of this study is to explore the situation of employed family carers. Another purpose has been to investigate how responsibility and work are distributed between society and kin care providers. The results are based upon a project containing four partial studies; a survey investigation based on a random sample with replies from 1197 relative care providers in Sweden representing one fifth of all employed carers at the time. This was followed by an interview study comprising 40 relative care providers and care recipients. The other two partial studies were targeted at social and elderly care management and home-help service assistants respectively. The carers are made up of three main groups; children, spouses and parents. There is also a smaller group with siblings, daughters-in-law, other relatives and friends. The main part of the kin care providers consists of women, but 15 percent are men. The class status is principally that of workers and lower civil servants, although all social classes are represented.

Apparently, it is not easy to combine care for relatives with a full effort in the regular labour market. Despite the fact that most women were working part-time, it was sometimes problematic to combine shorter hours with the caring. Thanks to the salary, the majority of the kin care providers have not suffered any economic losses. Apart from the bread-winning aspect, the salary has another important significance - even though the monetary sum at times is extremely small, it is regarded as recognition of the work. One conclusion, which can be drawn from this investigation, is that the employment and salary are a very appreciated form of support. The salary is a replacement for a work effort, and it has also provided the possibility to quit or reduce other work in order to perform the care. The majority of the kin care providers are content, although many of them want better employment terms and higher wages - or rather conditions which correspond to other care work, and a salary which corresponds to the effort.

As far as the division between the society and the kin care providers is concerned, it can be said that a lot of the responsibility and work lies with the relatives. Some relatives do not want too much societal intervention, but settle with monetary replacement. Others have apparent needs of assistance, and a working situation which is inhumane. In some cases, it even amounts to a societal abuse of people's responsibility for their relatives.

Keywords: Paid informal care, gender, elderly care, handicap, body, social policy, ethics, welfare state, maintenance.