The Nature of the Relationship between the Caregiver and Care Recipient and its Effect on the Caregiver's Wellbeing: The Moderating Effect of Gender and Race

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the previous comparative research on caregiving has focused on the experience of spouse caregivers and adult children caring for an elderly parent.

However, there are growing numbers of aging parents caring for adult children with disabilities, and over the next decade, the U.S. will witness an increase in the numbers of sibling caregivers with the rapid growth in the numbers of unmarried older adults with disabilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
(1) Whether caregiving has a differential effect on well-being depending on the caregiver's relationship with the care recipient (i.e., spouse, parent, adult child or sibling), and
(2) Whether the effect of caregiving on well-being is moderated by the race and gender of the caregiver.

DESIGN AND METHOD

DATA:
The data were drawn from the second wave (N=5,555) and refresher cohort (N=2,152) of the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), a nationally representative sample of individuals in midlife and old age.

ANALYTIC SAMPLE:
• Caregivers (CG) were defined as respondents age 35+ who provided at least 1 hour of personal care for at least 4 weeks during the last 12 months (n=591).
• The caregiving sample included spouse CG (n=95), parent CG for a child with disabilities (n=99), adult child CG for an older parent (n=340), sibling CG (n=57).
• A comparison group consisted of respondents age 35+ with no caregiving responsibilities during the last 12 months (n=6,098).

MEASURES:
• Depression: Number of depressive symptoms reported during the past 12 months (7 symptoms)
• Physical health, self-rated: 1=poor, 5=excellent
• Satisfaction with life
• Control over life: 1=not at all satisfied, 4=at least satisfied

ANALYSIS PLAN:
• Bivariate t-tests or chi-square tests to explore differences across four types of caregivers as well as non-caregivers
• Multiple regression analyses to examine effects of caregiving on caregivers’ well-being (Model1) moderated by race (Model 2) and gender (Model 3)

RESULTS

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS
• Sibling CGs were more likely to be non-white and less likely to be married compared to non-caregivers and other groups of caregivers.
• Sibling CGs provided less extensive care than other caregivers (i.e., fewer weeks and hours giving care, less likely to co-reside with the care recipient).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(a) Spouse CG (N=95)</th>
<th>(b) Parent CG (N=95)</th>
<th>(c) Adult child CG (N=340)</th>
<th>(d) Sibling CG (N=57)</th>
<th>(e) Non-CG (N=6,098)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (M,S):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent CG</td>
<td>51 (19.9)</td>
<td>51.5 (12.3)</td>
<td>51.5 (8.9)</td>
<td>52.7 (10.9)</td>
<td>52.9 (12.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-residence</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Caregiving context
• Co-residence: 98% (a,b) 79% (c,d) 39% (e) 25% (f) 149% (g)
• Weeks giving care: (a) 30.1 (13.1) 36.1 (19.6) (b) 29.0 (10.1) 21.9 (8.9) 6.8% (c,d) 3.51 (0.1) 3.75 (0.5) 3.65 (0.8) 3.51 (0.5) 3.65 (0.8) 8.5% (e)
• Well-being measures
  - Depression: 96 (2.0) 1.31 (2.3) 1.14 (2.2) 1.72 (2.7) 62 (1.73) 15.8% (f)
  - Physical health: 3.45 (1.13) 3.15 (1.15) 3.53 (1.00) 3.21 (1.03) 3.51 (1.05) 4.1% (g)

** N= (a,b) (c,d) (e) (f) (g)

EFFECTS OF CAREGIVING ON WELL-BEING BY NATURE OF CAREGIVER-CARE RECIPENT RELATIONSHIP

• All types of caregivers experienced higher level of depression and less control over their lives compared to non-caregivers.
• In addition to depression and lower conceived control, spouse CGs and sibling CGs experienced less satisfaction with life, and parent caregivers of a child with disabilities experienced poorer physical health and less satisfaction compared to life compared to non-caregivers.
• **Moderation effect of race:** White sibling CGs were likely to experience higher levels of depression and less satisfaction with their lives than their non-white counterparts, while non-white spouse CGs had poorer physical health than their white counterparts.
• **Moderation effect of gender:** Female adult child CGs were likely to experience higher levels of depression than their male counterparts, while male sibling CGs reported lower control over life compared to female their counterparts.

Table 2. Effects of caregiving on well-being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(a) Spouse CG (N=95)</th>
<th>(b) Parent CG (N=95)</th>
<th>(c) Adult child CG (N=340)</th>
<th>(d) Sibling CG (N=57)</th>
<th>(e) Non-CG (N=6,098)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caregiver groups (Ref: non-caregivers):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse CG</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent CG</td>
<td>0.04***</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult child CG</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling CG</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG relationship</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6,522</td>
<td>6,522</td>
<td>6,521</td>
<td>6,521</td>
<td>6,517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Adjusted R²

** Adjusted R²

IMPLICATIONS

• Parent caregivers of children appear to be the most vulnerable to the toll of caregiving, especially regarding their physical health. Programs and services to help caregivers maintain their physical health are needed.
• This study is among the first to investigate sibling caregivers. Data suggest that caregiving takes a similar toll on sibling caregivers even though they provide less extensive care than other caregivers.
• Race and gender interactions with caregiving may suggest that sibling caregiving is a more normative experience in communities of color. Further research is needed to identify their unique caregiving context and needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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