
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

A Scoping Review to Map the Evidence on Family Carers Who Combine Work with Care

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Doreen Mucheru¹, Dominique Phillips, Gillian Paul, Majella Fahy, Linda Dowling-Hetherington, Breda Moloney, Clare Duffy, Thilo Kroll, Gerard Fealy, Attracta Lafferty

1: University College Dublin, Ireland

Introduction: Family carers provide a wide range and significant amount of assistance to relatives, friends and neighbours who are ill or disabled. Statistical data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that at least 1 in 10 adults is involved in informal, and most often unpaid care. About half of the proportion of those who participate in a caring role combine this with paid employment and balancing both roles can be a challenge. Consequently, there is increased demand for the introduction of measures to reconcile paid work and care-provision. Unfortunately, much remains unknown about the lives of family carers who balance work with care. Aim: The present work endeavours to illuminate this topic by scoping the extent, range and nature of available evidence on 'family carers who are in paid employment'.

Methods: Steps followed when carrying out the scoping review included: i) Clarifying the research purpose and question; ii) Identifying relevant research studies from various electronic databases, reference lists of identified studies, and grey or unpublished literature; iii) Selection of studies by two independent reviewers; iv) Collating data using an excel data sheet; and v) Analysing and summarising data using qualitative thematic analysis.

Results: Two-hundred-and-sixty-three publications were incorporated, and these comprised a variety of research study designs, which were based in different countries. Six themes were emergent from the scoping review findings. The first was the compound carer's experience who is a working family carer; subthemes relevant to this group were coping, health outcomes and employment outcomes. A subsequent theme was health outcomes for working family carers; health outcomes were subdivided into mental health, physical health, and health behaviour outcomes. The theme on the profile of characteristics for working family carers comprised of subthemes indicative that caring was largely a gendered activity, with age as another important variant — caring increasing at older ages. The economic impact of caring on working family carers was an eminent theme with a clear personal economic impact and national economic impact. A significant finding was the theme on conflicting priorities among working family carers; subthemes related to this were either work-to-family conflict or family-to-work conflict. The most important theme in the present work was that on employment outcomes among working family carers with subthemes characterised by employment participation, employment-related disadvantages, work-place provisions in place for this group and positive employment impacts. Finally, it was clear that there were support services for working family carers and thus this was an apparent theme; subthemes related to this were the formal services and social support services.

Conclusions: Evidence on working family carers is vast and covers a wide range of topics such as compound caring, health, demographic profile, conflicting priorities, finances, employment, and support services. Working family carers face the difficult task of balancing work with care which could lead to negative outcomes related to employment, finances, and health.

Implications for applicability: The pressures associated with the dual responsibility can be alleviated via the introduction of support services and policies to support working carers.