

## Psychological Wellbeing of Caregivers: Findings from a Large Cohort of Thai Adults

**Authors :** Vasoontara Yiengprugsawan, Sam-ang Seubsman

**Abstract :** As Thais live longer, caregivers will become even more important to social and healthcare systems. Commonly reported in many low and middle-income countries in Asia, formal social welfare services to support caregivers are lacking and informal family support will be required for all levels of care. In 2005, 87,151 open-university adults were recruited to the Thai Cohort Study, with the majority aged between 25 and 39 years, and residing nationwide. At the 4-year follow up in 2009 (n=60569) and the 8-year follow-up in 2013 (n=42785), prospective cohort participants were asked if they provide care for chronically ill, disabled, or frail family members. Among Thai cohort members reporting between 2009 and 2013, approximately 56% were not caregivers in either year, 24.5% reported providing care in 2009 only, 8.6% in 2013 only, and 10.6% reported providing care at both time points. Caregivers in the cohort reported providing financial support, help with shopping, emotional support, and assist with daily activities. Kessler 6 psychological distress scale, measured in both 2009 and 2013, was used as the primary outcome of a relationship between caregiving status and mental health. Using multivariate logistic regression, our 4-year longitudinal findings revealed that cohort members who reported providing care at both time points were 1.4 to 1.6 times more likely to report high psychological distress than non-caregivers, after accounting for potential covariates. With increasing needs for informal care provided by family members, the future health and social welfare system will need to provide adequate support to caregivers (e.g., respite care, clinical support and information for the family, and awareness of mental health among caregivers).

**Keywords :** family caregivers, psychological distress, prospective cohort, longitudinal study, Thailand

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