

JUSTICE OF CARE FOR THE ELDERLY FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN THAI SOCIETY

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Abstract

Justice of care for the elderly among caregivers in Thai society reflects perspectives on justice in elderly care in the family. It was found that in Thai society justice of care exists, but cannot serve as a general basis for any perspective on fairness and equal justice. Care in each family differs according to gender, economic level and religious belief. Justice is a matter of rationality; therefore, justice of care is reflected in the care of family elders in Thai society. In this way, justice is based on cooperation and mutual support without allowing elder care to become the sole responsibility of any one family member. Consequently, caregivers may apply concepts of justice of elder care, demonstrating that the elder care system in Thai society remains fair in terms of caring about older persons. This article presents the concepts and perspectives of justice from different facets. The depiction of justice in family care in Thai society from a case study of the Bang Si Thong area in Nonthaburi includes debates on justice of elderly care in the family.

Keywords: Justice of Care, Elder care, Family, Thai society

Introduction

With the increases in the aging population throughout the globe, the United Nations has predicted that this increase would lead to an absolute aging society by 2050, in which the number of older persons, i.e., aged 65 years and over, will be higher than 14% of the total population. This reflects that, in 2050, one-fourth of the global population will be aged over 65 years (United Nations, 2017). As for Thailand, there are 12 million people in the aging population, accounting for 18% of the country, thus having reached the complete aging society in 2022 with a dropping rate of population growth and an increase of older persons by an average of 4% each year. From 2023 onwards, one million Thai people will become 60 years of age each year, and the number will be even higher in the next 20 years, that is, the number of senior citizens will be up to 20 million. This means that one out of five Thais will be an

older person (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2020, p.7; 2021, p.6).

The Aging population in Thailand is classified into 3 major groups. First, older persons who can live independently. Second, older persons who can live independently but still need some assistance. Third are the elderly dependents, who cannot help themselves at all, or always require a caregiver. Those who tend the elderly may be a family member, friend, neighbor, volunteer, or official care worker. However, those suffering from chronic diseases and health deterioration to an extent that it obstructs one's daily activities and care becomes mandatory, whether it be economic, social, or health care, will experience long-term dependency for which will affect himself/herself, his/her family and the country.

Additionally, there were 245,907 cases of elderly dependents, representing 2% of the elderly

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population (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2021). This reflects that the number of elderly caregivers included in the system represents 35% of the elderly dependents. In 2017, 100 working-age population were subjected to the burden of 51 older adults and younger populations. This number expected to increase to 64 in 2027 (Phutchapong Nodthaisong, 2018). This situation reflects the needs of manpower for older person caregiving due to shortages of caregivers, be they a family member or official caregiver.

At present, it is known that family caregivers are the key to taking care of older adults. Nonetheless, there is a decrease in the number of family caregivers as they have to work outside, or move out due to marriage. By studying family caregivers, it is undeniable that most caregivers tend to have a relationship with the older adult they provide care for. For example, the older adult is their parent, husband, wife, sibling, etc. In addition, women and those who earn less income, compared to other family members, are expected to take the caregiving role (Sasipat Yodpetch et al., 2009; Siranee Srihaphak, 2013). Practicing “*Katanyu katavedi* (gratitude)” refers to a desire to repay their kindness through providing elderly care, an influence of Buddhism. With such a notion, it makes most caregivers feel that they are required to return the grace they have received and are hence willing to continue to provide care, even though the word gratitude may bring about a feeling of pressure and dissatisfaction sometimes. This is because, on one hand, caregivers cannot figure out a proper solution to deal with their inner feelings, as not taking care of older adults or providing improper care is often condemned due to ethical reasons, and there is a belief that not taking care of older adults is a sin, ingratitude, etc.

In addition to having to adhere to the ethical values where one must take care of older adults, when taking the role of family caregiver, they often

encounter costs and loss of opportunities. Some of them may have to resign from work or study to take up the responsibility full-time. Not only that, caregivers are also at risk of physical and mental health problems resulting from not participating in social activities (Sattra Sudsawat et al., 2021). Therefore, elderly caregiving is a supportive task and should be a shared responsibility among family members in the form of primary and secondary caregivers. Each tier is responsible for different roles and duties of elderly care. With respect to the primary caregiver, he/she is required to tend an older adult by assisting him/her in every activity engaged, from early morning until nighttime, starting with bathing, preparing food, administering medication, and accompanying them to the toilet. The responsibility of this tier is thus greater than that of those taking the secondary role, as the latter is required to provide minor support to the elderly, e.g., accompanying to doctor visits, providing financial support and other things.

The allocation of responsibilities above may reveal another interesting ethical aspect (apart from the aspects of sin and merit). It is about the ethic of justice, which Virginia Held (2006, p.15) provides that care should reflect justice, equality of the individuals while also preserving equality and freedom, promoting social relations and cooperation. When any of the family members takes a greater role of elderly care than other members, the primary caregiver needs to be supported and shared of their responsibility. In this regard, justice is an ethical demand that relates to caring for human beings, in this case, family members should communicate with each other another and do the same with older adults. In addition, Sara Ruddick (1998, p.217) proposes that “when there is justice, there is always care”. This shows that when studying justice, it can be learned from caring activities. In other words, when talking about care, there is always an issue of justice. Therefore, the aim of this academic article is to reflect the perspective on justice in elderly care,

especially for older adults as part of the family. The contents presented by the author consist of 1) concepts and perspectives of justice in various dimensions; 2) justice in family care in Thai society: a case study of the Bang Si Thong area, Nonthaburi Province; and 3) the debate on the issue of justice in elderly care in Thai family. Details are as follows:

Concepts and Perspectives of Justice in Different Dimensions

The importance of justice of care is regarded as a core concept in caring. When referring to caring, an image of care practices between caregivers and care receivers may represent that the latter are always older adults. They receive empathy, attention, and are taken care of. At the same time, with respect to the relative homology of care, the persons responsible for the caring, or caregivers, are equally important, should be recognized and supported, especially when they are a family member. This thereby shapes a concrete representation of the justice of care. When it requires to broaden the knowledge about justice in elderly care in Thai society and consider whether there is the notion of justice in the culture, and which aspect it is referred to, the author then gathered contributions of notable thinkers as a guideline to understand the perspectives on justice in elderly care by dividing the concept of justice into 5 concepts as follows:

Concept 1 Justice as fairness This is a concept proposed by John Rawls in a book called *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls proposes that justice is reflected in “social infrastructure” or “the way in which social institutions allocate fundamental rights and duties, including decision-making to suitably share benefits and share some responsibilities required toward one another in society”. However, this fair arrangement begins when everyone is in their primal state. Rawls (1971, p.12) mentions that “The relations of all are balanced with others when there is justice between

individuals, and everyone has their own morality.” As for the primal state, which is a scenario where no one knows what state each person is currently in, it is hypothesized that individuals will be subjected to the same attributes, that is, being reasonable and independent, from which bonding and duties to each other are shaped. Thus, everyone is in a situation where they do not have knowledge about the true self of others due to having “the veil of ignorance”. Rawls focuses on the principles of justice in two dimensions: 1) Each person having equal rights based on fundamental freedoms; and 2) Taking into account the “principle of difference” and providing equal opportunity to all on the basis of equality in accordance with the “Equality of Opportunity”. However, Rawls' justice is not a single consideration, because Rawls considers that, in order to achieve justice, a fair system is required, and having a fair system needs the cooperation of people in society. Therefore, sharing must be suitably done.

Concept 2 Justice as equality This is the basic principle by which decisions are made about how to treat individuals with regard to them being equally ethically worthy. The concept of justice as equality tends to focus on the rational way of treating one another. The scholar who presented this idea was Kai Nielsen (1979, p.211). He presented the theory of justice as equality, egalitarian justice, with two principles. The first principle is Equal Claims of Individuals ‘So that all systems are equal in part of fundamental freedoms and inclusive opportunities, as well as similar work and treatment for everyone’. The second principle is to manage and satisfy public needs as ‘Income and Wealth have been shared, whereby each individual will have the right to the equal share.’ However, this kind of concept includes the promotion of equal living, taking into account limitations of individuals due to different abilities and situations.

Concept 3 Justice as impartiality A scholar, Brian Barry, presented the essence of this idea in a book called *Treatise of Social Justice*, Barry (1989, p.3), stating that justice is a theory related to social arrangements that keep individuals protected in order “to prevent inequality,” in terms of both political and social dimensions, or economic resource control. That is to say, regardless of gender, age, social status, status quo, one will be eligible for similar and equal arrangements, sharing, or treatment. According to Rawls, regarding the primordial state where it is unlikely that one would be the one he/she currently is, thus they gradually developed in pursuit of the normal conditions of human life. Barry presents a way to negotiate rationally, clearly stating that he wanted to witness a rational negotiation between individuals, because each one is selfish and eager for their own best interests. Therefore, everyone needs fair treatment; however, in reality, not everyone is equal as their fundamental statuses (gender, class, social status) are not equal. As a result, in order to prevent inequality in negotiation, he defines a condition of equality in participatory decision. Nevertheless, there is a limitation that negotiating may not guarantee fair distribution of things or assets in all cases.

Concept 4 Justice in Confucian philosophy This is a concept based on the context of the Eastern world, where justice may be understood using the term “morality or righteousness.” Confucian philosophy accepts the principle of justice as the fundamental virtue of society. It reflects that the role of justice in Confucian philosophy is also a virtue intended to solve social problems. As Piyarudee Chaiyaporn (2004, p.226) noted, Confucianism considers justice in the form of giving a person what he deserves on the basis of his merits and contributions he has made to others. This results in individuals being able to fulfill their moral obligations to these relationships without conflicting with legitimacy. As for legitimacy, when combined with the duty of an individual to comply

with such obligations, Confucius believed that each person in society would always have their own status, and that each person’s status is not equal. As an example of inequality in family relationships, by principle, practices of people with different statuses will not be the same. However, with that status, there is a bond that binds the relation of practices between the parties. The criteria to classify the relationships are seniority, knowledge, and experience. When family relationships carry on as intended, society is likely to be peaceful. The persons who have a decent family relationship tend to have smooth relationships with others and will not cause problems to society. Children and younger siblings that respect their father and elders and know their responsibilities within the family will also know how to perform their duties in society appropriately. In Confucius's view, this is a status inequality. It is neither oppression nor advantage, but indeed mutually beneficial. It can be concluded that Confucian equality is not an objective equality that judges equality based on external factors. For example, treating other people equally. Nonetheless, Confucian equality is subjective equality suitably and equally allocated to a person. Humans do not necessarily get the same thing, but it is not considered negative equality. It is the inequality that is supportive.

Concept 5 Buddhist justice Justice in this concept is influenced by Theravada Buddhism based on the rules of karma. By this, two persons with the same offense will not be subjected to the same penalty as prescribed by laws, as it will depend on karma committed by the individual. Every action has a consequence. Everyone is equal with respect to the opportunity to do good deeds and face the consequences of karma, which will still be effective in their next life. In this sense, 'karma' is the basis for thinking about fairness (Suwanna Satha-anand, 2007). This is consistent with what (Kaufman, 2004, cited in Channarong Boonnuon, 2007) suggested that justice depends on morality in two aspects: 1) using the law of

karma as a guarantee of justice. That is, karma committed by humans with intentions will have a consequence, whether good or bad, thus eventually resulting in happiness or sadness. This is a universal law of supreme justice that ensures equal justice for all; 2) combining the concept of karma with the belief in rebirth results in a belief that consequences of karma are possible in this world and the next. This results in the view that karma is a matter of individuals who are responsible for their own actions. Each person's duty is to create the best karma and should not interfere with or intervene in the happiness or suffering of others, because it is the result of their own karma. Looking at this aspect, solving social problems in order to achieve justice becomes an unfair action as it violates the law of fairness. Hence, in this sense, the doctrine of karma allows the inequality of human beings in all dimensions to become acceptable, appropriate, and fair. Class divisions and inequalities that occur in society are thus common and righteous according to the law of karma.

Based on the different groups of justice concepts above, it is interesting that it can be applied to explain the phenomenon of caring for the elderly in Thai families in finding an answer to whether there is justice and whose concept of justice can be used to explain clearly the phenomena. The author will present an analysis in the next topic.

Justice in elderly care in Thai society

With respect to the studies on justice in elderly care in Thai society, there are very few as it is sensitive and difficult to conduct straightforwardly. However, when the author had the opportunity to broaden understanding about elderly care in families through research on "Care and ethic values in caregivers of elder people: A case study of Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, Nonthaburi Province," where multi-sibling families were studied, the author used the concepts of justice

to interpret meanings in terms of behavior, expressions, and discussions with elderly caregivers who are willing to provide information on such matters. Therefore, the information demonstrates that elderly care in families has a cloud dimension of justice. If not deliberately considering it, it would be impossible to see the set of knowledge in the care.

When discovering the body of knowledge on the issue of justice in elderly care in the families living in Bang Si Thong subdistrict, the author divides justice in elderly care in family into 3 characteristics (Wannalak Miankerd, 2015, p. 109 – 115): 1) Justice is not about an equal allocation of duties; 2) Justice is a matter of collaborations in taking the burden of care; and Justice is a matter of sharing elderly care responsibilities within the family. Details are as follows:

1) Justice in care is not an equal sharing of duties

This issue reflects family structures of caretakers in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, where some families within the area are still large and extended. When it comes to elderly care, usually there is only one primary caretaker and sometimes, the responsibilities are taken by secondary caretakers, which may be siblings or relatives. The implication of justice for family caregivers is that when taking care of the elderly, children would assist one another as much as they could as one would say "take care of them whenever you are free". Therefore, it is difficult to find an equal distribution of care work within a family, because justice in care is not an equal division of duties, but rather a classification of primary and secondary roles, meaning each person will fulfill needs of the elderly. From the observation of elderly care in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, Nonthaburi Province, the author has noticed that the primary caregivers are the ones being responsible for taking care of the elderly for most of the time, and are subjected to more duties than others as they need to assist the elderly with their daily chores from early in the

morning until nighttime (food preparation, bathing, dressing, feeding, escorting to the toilet, excreting, having conversations, etc.). For household expenses, medical expenses of the elderly will be provided by the secondary caretakers, or a family member who works outside. However, most siblings never officially agree on such responsibility of care. If further consideration is made about whether caregivers feel that elderly care at home is a tougher responsibility compared to working outside, it was found that caregivers never consider their duties of elderly care as unfair. This is because it is the responsibility of siblings, which requires no official agreement or clear instructions of what, when, and what type of responsibility should be and what should the quality of care be like. Therefore, when the author talks about the division of responsibilities, there are not many answers, or little of this experience was expressed as unfair treatment. For example, they talked about it only briefly, or showed that it is not important, or the issue was quite difficult to tell outsiders. A Thai idiom states that “Every family has a skeleton in the cupboard”. Thus, the answer was found that siblings help each other, they fill up gaps, because everyone understands that what all members have done are for the sake of the elderly person’s own happiness.

2) Justice is a righteous and rational bargaining between family members.

The reasons why caregivers think taking the elderly care responsibility is unfair has been discussed; for instance, being a daughter or having a low-income career. As a result, these people need to decide on providing elderly care. However, when studying this matter, caregivers argued that the decision of taking the elderly care responsibility and engaging in care activities are righteous. This is because the caregivers do not work outside and earn no income, thus they are able to take care of the elderly, unlike other siblings who have worked and earn more income. While the latter should

work outside, the former is more suitable for the task of elderly care. This often means that the family has broadly agreed on the task arrangement. For example, they agree among themselves on who will be responsible for housework and who will earn money. Reasons in making the decision of taking the elderly care responsibility are based are as follows:

First is the matter of earning. Caregivers give a reason that, among their siblings or family members, if one earns less income, compared to other members, or serves in a less significant economic role, or is unemployed, the person will be asked to be responsible for elderly care tasks. The second reason is that people with health problems and illness, or with disabilities, may take up the role of elderly care. The third reason is that the person with less education, which also implies that he/she may not have a stable career, or earn less income, is normally asked to leave the job and provide elderly care. The fourth reason is that unmarried persons usually devote time to taking up the role of elderly care. The fifth reason is about the distance between one’s accommodation and that of older adults. The person living with the elderly tends to take the role of elderly care automatically. It will be an obstacle if a person not living together or living in other provinces need to be responsible for elderly care, thus those who live close to the accommodation of the elderly, or living with them, normally take the role of caregiver.

The reasons above demonstrate bargaining among siblings or family members as who will be serving as a caretaker. However, in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, there were not only female or daughters serving as caregivers. There were also husbands or sons taking the role. Therefore, caregivers will understand the roles of the primary and the secondary caregiver and realize how each of them provides care to the elderly, or treats the other caregiver.

Justice is a matter of allocation to support the elderly in the family. According to the study of elderly care in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, not all primary caregivers demand equal sharing of elderly care responsibility, be it equal sharing of expenses or fixed schedule to spend with the elderly, i.e., numbers of days per week. Instead, they prioritized having a practical guideline to enable elderly care in a reciprocal way, e.g., expenses incurred from care. This means that the member who earns more income will share a larger portion of expenses than the others. Moreover, one can share tasks with the primary caregiver whenever they have free time so that the primary caregiver has time to rest, that is, perhaps one day a week. Such tasks can be, for example, cooking, bathing, or grocery shopping for the elderly and the primary caregiver. If time is not possible, other family members may provide the primary caregiver with financial support, which can be spent either on elderly care or personal preferences.

For some caregivers, some activities are not required as the older person they provide care for is overweight; or the caregivers may not be strong enough to handle such an activity alone. In such a case, the caregivers may ask for assistance from other family members. Whenever they need to go outside, other family members may also need to stay with the older person instead. This kind of switching is a pattern called “free and switch”. That means that whenever a member is free from his/her work, he/she will share some elderly care tasks; or whenever he/she is not available, there will be other members to take up the role. In the view of family caregivers, they admitted that elderly care is tough and exhausting work; however, it never came to their mind that elderly care is an unfair task. This is because the meaning of justice from the view of the caregivers differs from the concept of justice in general. Instead, the caregivers considered justice as how the primary and the secondary caregivers share the task on a basis of societal conditions of the caregiver and family

members. Finally, it can be concluded that justice in care within a family is how they help provide care for the elderly.

From the study of justice in care above, it leads to a new interpretation of justice in elderly care in the family. It can be seen that the caretaking members define justice as “something that is not a sharing of responsibilities or equal allocation of caring tasks among siblings,” but it is about explaining the caring behavior within the family in a reciprocal way among brothers and sisters. The major caregiver, who usually has to be physically active in elderly care, is no less tiring than other members of the family who support the elderly through other means, e.g. those responsible for household and medical bills, visits whenever they have free time, or provides financial support for expenses not provided by other members. Justice in elderly care in Thai society is thus an attribute that encourages family members to join forces in providing elderly care. Moreover, Thailand’s aging situation results in a greater number of caregivers. Therefore, it is imperative to take into account the relative homology of care from the health perspective, according to Section 5 of the National Health Act where everybody is entitled to a living environment conducive to good health (National Health Commission Office., 2007). Based on Ben Davies’ research (n.d.) , non-discrimination on health of the caregivers as a relative homology in caring is the justice of care, where the balancing of health and advantages/disadvantages in life is key.

A conceptual controversial on the issue of justice in elderly care in Thai families

The study of the ethics of justice stems from statements by some scholars that “In care there is fairness” and “When there is justice, there is always care” (Held, 2006, p.15; Ruddick, 1998, p.217). The author took this opportunity to map out the concept of justice to broaden understanding about the actual context of family elderly care. Hence,

this part will present important arguments that will shed light on the study of justice in care in the following areas:

1) Elderly care in Thai society reflects the ethic of justice.

When considering care in the family, it is generally the study of caring practices, obstacles in care, and needs for good care support. However, there are no studies on care justice. This may be because the issue of justice in elderly care is fragile. However, when the author had the opportunity to study about elderly care in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, Nonthaburi Province, it was found that elderly care embeds an aspect of justice that we can learn from. Care reflects justice, but not in the sense that care responsibilities are divided equally, or where one thinks that having to take care of parents becomes a disadvantage and he/she chooses to avoid expressing that feeling externally. This differs from studies found in other countries where several aspects of justice in care are presented. A work of Berit Ingersoll-Dayton et al. (2003, p.202), for example, reflects the issue of injustice in the care of aging parents among family members. It was found that siblings who provided parental care at a high level expected that other siblings would have a sense of duty to help take care of their parents. However, when siblings did not support the aging parents as much as they expected, they felt disappointed (David Merrill, 1997). This is in consistent with the results of a study of J. Jill Suiter and Karl Pillemer (1993, 1996), where it was found that siblings who provided high levels of elderly care were disappointed when their siblings did not offer assistance in caring for the aging parents or claimed that they had their own family to take care of. Therefore, the above issues reflect an unfair division of care responsibility among siblings. The major caregivers usually have to bear the burden alone and must “endure” in such situations.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Linda K. George (1986) presented the issue of responsibility allocation among siblings where it

was indicated that primary caregivers feel the situation is unfair. The results of the study also provide answers given by siblings responsible for fewer responsibilities of parental care. The siblings giving less care are dissatisfied and feel frustrated that siblings who are primary caregivers are unwilling to share their tasks and decision power in regard to parental care. The primary caregivers are often not open to the opinions of other siblings who take the secondary role. In addition, a work of Elaine M. Brody (1990) found that siblings who are secondary caretakers feel dissatisfied as they are not being appreciated for their care for their own parents and also feel guilty for not taking care of their parents as much as they should.

With respect to the cases above, it is considered that caregivers in Thai society barely mention sharing of care responsibility or call for justice in care duties because they are afraid that they would lose their family bonds. Therefore, the caregivers choose to be flexible and maintain family ties and bonds. This is consistent with what Virginia Held (2006, p.134-135) mentioned: Justice may not be the primary matter to consider when it comes to elderly care, as one needs to protect relationships in the care network unless the circumstance affects the safety of that person’s life. It is not inconsistent with the principle of justice that caregivers choose to maintain a relationship in care before demanding justice. On the other hand, this is because caregivers are interpreting justice in another dimension, that is, to maintain a relationship in care.

2) Justice in Thai social contexts emphasizes neutrality in participatory choice.

Overall, the study of justice in elderly care in Thai society through a case study conducted at Bang Si Thong Subdistrict, Nonthaburi Province, reflects the view of justice in elderly care in the family that there is justice when it comes to elderly care, but the concepts of impartial justice proposed by John Rawls and that of equitable justice proposed by Kai

Nielseu's view cannot be completely applied. This is because elderly care of each family differs based on the gender contexts, economic status, and religious beliefs. When applying the concept of rationality and justice proposed by Brian Barry and reciprocal justice of Confucian philosophy for further understanding, it can reflect cultural contexts of Thai families where family members have different roles and responsibilities. When siblings have different and unequal caring roles, the concept of equal allocation of roles cannot be used for explanation. In addition, it is also found that care is fair if we consider it from the religious viewpoint, as it prioritizes the law of karma, which can be used as a guarantee of justice for elderly caregivers, meaning that whenever ones have taken care of their elderly parents, they have committed a good karma, or preferable duty. The consequence will be happiness in life, which is also an ethical value in that they are recognized, honored, or rewarded from what they have done for the elderly. In this regard, if to further describe justice based on Buddhist concepts, Channarong Boonnoon (2007) stated that when a person enjoys a benefit in return that suits his/her status as a result from his/her action, it means that the person has received moral justice based on the teachings of the law of karma.

3) Acceptance of injustice in elderly care in the family depends on complex conditions.

Although elderly care differs from family to family, the same criteria cannot be used for consideration, as the conditions of each family are different. For example, for the role of caregivers, it is often a female, e.g. the eldest or youngest daughter, or the daughter that has a lower economic status compared to others or that with disabilities rather than a son, or children whose career is better than that of others within the family. Considering this, we can broadly discuss the points. However, many families do not consider such injustice a big deal, because the caregivers

understand and accept that taking up the caregiving role is suitable given family conditions. As Cicirelli (1992, p.179) hypothesizes that recognition of the injustice in care among siblings may depend on complex conditions for consideration. For example, there are siblings who work to earn money. This is consistent with the concept of justice in Confucian philosophy, which emphasizes that the principles of conduct applied to people of different statuses are not the same. Confucian equality is a subjective equality that allocates what suits them equally. However, it is not necessary for humans to get the same thing. It is the injustice in a reciprocal way, which is likely to be applicable for the analysis of justice in Thai culture.

However, in Thai society, if household members negotiate their care responsibilities reasonably with balanced allocation of tasks (not equivalent to equal), or are able to describe or ensure acceptance of why the caregiver takes up the responsibility and the caregiver indeed accepts the role, there will be no conflict within the family.

4) Management is a “method” to create justice in elderly care.

Elderly care in Thai society under the context of family care, which has a reflection of justice in care, both in the form of task allocation or negotiation for care responsibilities. Although members cannot share the tasks equally, similarly, or may face problems in the allocation, they have indeed tried to figure out ways to balance or create justice in the care of elderly parents.

(1) The method of request. This method is often found in elderly care, as the primary caregiver may request secondary caregivers to be more supportive, or, in the case where the primary is unable to provide care for the elderly. For example, some caregivers in Bang Si Thong Subdistrict often request or are asked whether which day secondary caregivers can take up the role, or they may request for more financial support in the case where the elderly are sick. This

point is consistent with a study of Merrill (1997), which supports the idea of request. Asking straightforwardly can lead to a lifestyle change where people share the care responsibility. This is what Merrill emphasizes as an effort to create care justice. Berit Ingersoll-Dayton (2003, p.206) considers that siblings who are secondary caregivers are allowed to take up more caring tasks as they are often asked straightforwardly by the primary caregiver whether they can provide more care to their elderly parents. A reason Ingersoll-Dayton found in the study was that the siblings that are primary caregivers feel frustrated with the unbalanced relationship and demand the siblings that are secondary caregivers to take up more caregiving responsibilities. This reflects the fact that primary caregivers often demand or request assistance in elderly care, or support for some activities that they cannot do alone. Another way to get involved in elderly care of siblings that are secondary caregivers is to make calls and encourage distant siblings to visit the parents, or provide social support in different forms, e.g. financial support. This reflects a team work, or switching roles (Ingersoll – Dayton, 2003; Wannalak Miankerd, 2015, p.114). This is also consistent with the situation of elderly care in Thai society. It is therefore a matter of bargaining for shared support between family members to achieve a balance in care which is regarded as care justice.

However, the way to reclaim justice by the primary caregiver requesting for assistance may not always be successful, as other siblings can possibly ignore it. In such a case, it can lead to anger, resentment, or stress of the caregiver. At worst, it can lead to inappropriate care of the elderly and quarrels between siblings in the family, which are not preferred in the care relationship.

(2) The method of compensation of care. This method is often found among secondary caregivers who wish to lessen the feeling of being neglected of the primary caregiver, and to lessen

the feeling of guilt of the secondary for not taking care of the elderly. In this case, the primary caregiver does not request secondary caregivers to take on more elderly caring roles. This is because he/she understands the current situation of each family member and is still able to handle the caring tasks. Therefore, secondary caregivers may compensate for guilt by sending money, items, or make a visit as often as possible while also explaining their limitations to the primary caregiver.

The above are proposed as an argument about justice in care. It shows that the relationship in elderly care is also fair, even though justice in the family is rarely mentioned. This can be understood on the basis of Thai culture where family members support and help the elderly to the best of their ability and help one another to ensure that inappropriate care will not happen with elderly care. For the community-based care contexts, there are different views on justice. However, it does not mean that other aspects of justice are invalid. Moreover, this study shows that none of the principles of justice are perfect or lead to a caring society of complete justice. Therefore, it may lead further to public debate in the future as to what kind of justice would be appropriate in the situation we are currently facing, including the introduction of justice of care as the basis of ideological policy to establish a fair, robust, and sustainable elderly care system.

Conclusion

An analysis of justice in elderly care in Thai society found that, in reality, there is justice in care, which is defined as mutual support and care, not a task equally shared. However, the definitions rather differ from context to context and none of the caregivers express straightforwardly that elderly care results in unfair relationships. This may be because the caregivers do not feel that they are bound to a larger burden than the others, thus it is

not unfair or disadvantageous to an extent that it causes resentment or dissatisfaction when they need to take up the role of the caregiver. Instead, they feel proud to perform such duties even when other family members do not explicitly share the elderly care tasks, or provide the caregivers with support. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that caregivers do feel tired and would like to request other members recognize the need to lessen the burden of care. In reality, they only request for some time, thus it reflects that the topic of justice in care in Thai society is not explicitly discussed. This leads to controversy about the justice of elderly care in Thailand, neutrality in participation, acceptance of injustice with complex conditions and management of the justice of elderly care within the family.

In the author's view, most of the primary elderly caregivers tend to explain their caring roles from the religious point of view, especially on the law of karma, filial piety, or the concept of the value of giving back to the elderly. Therefore, the injustice in caring relationships is rarely seen when not conducting a deeper analysis. This article is aimed to broaden understanding of the importance of this dimension. It may be time for Thai society to understand the relationship of care in the dimension of justice. The author does not suggest that all caregivers provide equal or similar shares of care responsibilities, because the state of care and livelihood of each family is not based on the same economic or social contexts. The key point of this article is to reflect that the primary elderly caregivers deserve support and assistance. In this regard, based on the experience gained from studies, research, and first-hand learning about elderly caregivers in families, it is found that caregivers often demand justice for themselves. For example, when the caregiver expresses being tired, another family member will take up more caring tasks to support them. When the caregiver feels relaxed and able to continue the care for the elderly, the other family member will gradually step back and lessen the caring roles to return the

primary role to the primary caretaker. An aspect of elderly care in families that are aware of justice is to prevent neglect and leave the burden of caretaking to any one family member alone. This may be a small scale of justice within the context of care that needs to be extended to other aspects of justice in the future.

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