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Caregiver experiences and the perceived role of social workers in caring for people with disabilities in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Worldwide, research into experiences of caregivers are gradually increasing and their central role in the care of people with disabilities is being acknowledged. Caregivers of persons with disabilities experience a range of problems associated with the caregiving role and requisite support is sparce. Social workers play a crucial role in assisting them navigate the tasks of caregiving. Informed by the Ubuntu lens as an indigenous social work approach, the aim of this qualitative study was to explore the caregiving experiences and the perceived role of social workers in helping them care for the disabled. Semi structured interviews with ten caregivers from a special day care centre in the Eastern Cape, South Africa were conducted. Study findings indicated that caregivers experienced the role as burdensome due to lack of some forms of support such as social, emotional, financial, communal whilst also having an array of unfulfilled training needs. Caregivers of the disabled perceived social workers as instrumental is relieving them of the burden of care and in the provision of adequate support. The implications for social work practice such as establishment and running of support groups in working with the disabled and their caregivers are also depicted as suggested by the findings.

KEY TERMS: *ubuntu, caregiver, experiences, social worker roles, disabled, South Africa*

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INTRODUCTION

Caregivers play a crucial role in the care of the disabled (term used interchangeably with disabled persons, people with disabilities or people living with disabilities), however; most of them encounter difficulties and challenges which adversely impact on their caregiving task. More often than not, caregivers are overwhelmed with the responsibilities and demands of the role and yet receive limited support, consequently influencing the caregiving experience negatively. Despite the pivotal role they play in the lives of disabled persons, there is paucity of qualitative research which seeks to grasp the challenges that caregivers contend with. Their empirical voices are key in establishing responsive social work interventions and bottom-up systems that will foster support towards them. In a bid to bridge the gap, this qualitative study involved the use of semi structured interviews with caregivers in a special day care facility for the disabled located in Alice, Eastern Cape province, South Africa.

BACKROUND

The problem

Caregivers of people with disabilities play a central role in their care and rehabilitation. Quite often, they experience caregiver burdens including lack of support, training and adequate skills in caregiving, poor emotional health, financial concerns and isolation, making their role difficult to navigate (Muller-Kluits & Slabbert, 2020). The researchers state that social workers play an important role in addressing and relieving caregiver burdens and in service delivery to people with disabilities in alignment with the 2015 South African policy document, the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, this has not been the case for the persons with disabilities as studies have shown that caregivers lack support from the social welfare systems (Mutale, 2020; van der Mark, 2019; Kontrimiene, Sauseriene, Blazeviciene, Raila, & Jaruseviciene, 2021). Caregivers of disabled persons, navigate aspects of care, with limited if any support from social workers. The social work profession has a mandate to provide adequate services, support and resources to vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities (and their caregivers) and that responsibility is seemingly neglected in most instances (Mutale, 2020). The caregivers are therefore left disempowered. This has negative implications on caregiving efficiency with consequences for the persons with disabilities. In order to ease the burden of caregiving, prevent burnout and social disadvantages, a comprehensive approach and appropriate interventions are needed from social workers as part of the social welfare system (Kontrimiene et al., 2021). For that to be a success, understanding the experiences of caregivers is therefore an important theme in disability and care studies worldwide (van der Mark, 2019). The authors therefore argue that understanding the caregiver experiences and the perceived role of social workers in the care of disabled persons is key in the development of appropriate services interventions and support structures to cover the highlighted gap in social welfare and has implications for social work practice and Ubuntu approach in provision of these services.

Theoretical lens

The authors purport that usage of European theories by social workers fosters the promotion of individualism, while Western ways of addressing African problems diminishes their strength as indicated by Mugumbate and Chereni (2019). The neglect of Indigenous Knowledge Systems such as Ubuntu means that people (for instance caregivers of the disabled persons) and communities are left disempowered. Mupedziswa, Rankopo and Mwansa (2019) stipulate that community strength comes out of community support, and that dignity and identity are achieved through the values of mutualism, empathy, generosity, and community commitment. This suggests that adopting Ubuntu minimises individualism in addressing challenges that are encountered in caregiving for the disabled. The theory therefore does not view caregiving as the sole responsibility of the caregiver but a collective effort between the caregiver, families of the disabled persons, community members and social workers. Caregivers and the disabled persons belong to a community. That is the reason why collective efforts are encouraged in addressing social isolation, lack of support and disempowerment for the caregivers. Applying Ubuntu in caregiving through values of humanness, human dignity, empathy and human solidarity as stated by the Code of Ethics of Social Workers in Zimbabwe (cited in Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) is transformational as it eases the burden from the caregivers. Collective efforts in supporting the caregiver automatically translate to benefits and quality service to the disabled person thus living up to what Ubuntu means through "being human through other people" (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). In that vein, Mupedziswa et al (2019) further posit that Ubuntu emphasises reciprocity, a spirit of sharing, and a belief that one earns respect by respecting and empowering others. Thus, the caregivers' serving of the disabled persons can be seen as an investment for assistance in future, making it a satisfying and fulfilling experience. Given social work's emphasis on using strengths perspectives;

those broader frames that deliberately look for and build on the strengths of clients and client systems, one is more inclined to think that social work practice in Africa should, as a matter of principle, engage with Ubuntu (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; 2020). Ubuntu has emerged as the overarching theory that describes African social work and thus seems appropriate and relevant to the context of caregivers' experiences in South Africa.

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

Caregivers of persons with disabilities experience a multi-dimensional range of problems; perceive the role as heavily burdensome and associated with emotional/psychological distress while there is inadequate support (Oshodi, Adeyemi, Aina, Suleimah, Erinfolami & Umeh, 2012; Uwakwe & Modebe, 2007). Muller-Kluits and Slabbert (2020) describe caregiver burden as an umbrella term used to describe the physical, emotional and financial experiences of a caregiver in response to the challenges and demands of providing help for a person with a disability. The burden is known to bear negative outcomes on the caregiving role. International studies conducted in the USA by Murphy, Christian, Caplin and Young (2006) and Lithuania by Kontrimiene et al (2021) respectively found that caregivers experienced negative physical, emotional, social wellbeing and functional health consequences resulting from caregiving. Their studies recommended that interventions be put in place to positively impact the caregiver experience. In Nigeria, Hlabyago and Ogunbanjo (2009) also established that caregivers experienced similar adverse results attributed to caregiving on their financial, physical and emotional aspects including lack of assistance from social welfare services. Whilst in South Africa, Khan, Isaacs, Makoae, Fluks, Mokhele and Mokomane (2020) study found that caregivers faced a myriad of challenges attributed to the caregiving role. A Ghanaian study by Zuurmond et al, (2018) suggested that interventions can be developed to alleviate that burden as these had the potential to provide much needed social support for caregivers. There is thus strong evidence that the experiences of most caregivers of people with disabilities are negative and burdensome, impacting on their caregiving role and capabilities. Despite that, there are few interventions developed and implemented by social workers to support caregivers in their role in the South African context. In fact, Thomas and Greenop (2008) and Muller-Kluits and Slabbert (2018) maintain that there is insufficient research in African countries concerning caregivers and their experiences of caregiving. They highlighted gaps in social work systems (such as lack of support) that are in need of attention and further development including expanding research and knowledge base on the issue. Given these burdensome experiences, researchers (Oshodi et al., 2018; Muller-Kluits & Slabbert, 2020) recommend that effectively planned interventions be implemented, targeted at alleviating the burden and improving the ability of caregivers to cope. Muller- Kluits and Slabbert (2020) suggest that social workers play an important role in addressing caregiver burden and in service delivery to persons with disability in alignment with the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Whilst Hlabyago and Ogunbanjo (2009) recommend that social workers should be trained on available support both from government and private sectors in order to serve the needs of the caregiver and the disabled persons. Ignoring the burdensome caregiver experiences means that people with disabilities are being neglected too. The researchers therefore argue that development and implementation of such interventions is only possible after comprehensively understanding the caregiver experiences and what they perceive the role of the social worker to be, in addressing their caregiving burdens and needs.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of caregivers and the perceived role of social workers in caring for persons with disabilities. The study adopted a qualitative approach oriented towards exploration, discovery and inducing logic to gain in-depth understanding and experiences and perceptions of the caregivers. Elements of phenomenology were used as study design to enable understanding of the in-depth participants' experiences and perceptions. This design is grounded in people's views and perceptions placing emphasis on people's lived experiences (Pathak, 2017) and is thus appropriate for the study in understanding caregiving experiences and perceptions of the social work role in caregiving. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants from the research population, which was made up of caregivers at the facility, the only special day care centre for persons with disabilities in the Nkonkobe municipality, Eastern Cape Province and thus the closest and physically accessible participants. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 10 caregivers based at a special day care facility for disabled persons. The participants age varied from 26 to 54 years, all Xhosa speaking, Black Africans. Despite the selection criteria being gender inclusive, participants were made up of predominantly female caregivers. The inclusion criteria were 1) one should have worked at the special day care facility for a minimum period of 6 months, 2) either males or females 3) participants provide written consent to partake in the study and 4) be a willing participant and employed as caregivers at the special day care centre. The thematic content analysis was utilised to make sense of the collected raw data. Presentation of data was also done in a thematic framework. Prior to undertaking the study, permission was sought from the Department of Social Development and from the Board and Director of the Special Day Care Centre. Permission and written consent were also sought from the participants, who received an information sheet with all the study details including benefits and disadvantages of partaking in the study prior to data collection. Thereafter they signed written consent and voluntarily participated in the study. The study itself was approved and received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee, at Forthare University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Alice campus. In the dissemination of the findings to the participants, member checking was done to ensure that findings were interpreted correctly enhancing credibility of the study. To protect confidentiality and maintain anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used in the presentation of the findings. The final research report was also provided to the special day care facility for easy access to the participants and interested stakeholders.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in a thematic framework to describe caregiver experiences and the perceived role of social workers in the provision of care to persons with disabilities. The experiences were captured by the following themes: Personal fulfillment; Burdensome due to lack of support (social, emotional, financial and communal), no formal training and limited resources. Perceptions of the social worker role were engrossed in the following themes, provision of adequate support, resources and advocacy for the persons with disabilities.

Caregiver experiences

Personal fulfillment

Caregivers of the disabled persons at the facility experienced their role as personally fulfilling. All the participants stated that they devote their time to caring for the disabled people despite the fact that they get little financial rewards in return. They indicated that people with disabilities are normally neglected and live-in isolation in communities. Through provision of caregiving, the participants had a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment as they felt they were making a huge difference whilst caring for persons with disabilities. For five of the participants, this role also came about due to their own personal experiences of having family members living with disabilities. They understood exactly what the challenges were and found the caregiving experience to be fulfilling and humane (*ukwenza ubuntu*) attributing this to the continued motivation with the caregiving role, which some had been doing for more than five years. As Siphokazi indicated.

> *Disabled people are not treated with respect and dignity that every human being deserves but they are subjected to poverty and humiliation due to ignorance of parents, relatives and community members. Me providing care to them is a show of ubuntu and that makes me happy.*

This finding is similar to results from a study by Murphy et al (2007) on UK caregivers' perspectives, who indicated that the role had a positive personal impact and great caregiving satisfaction for them. Another study by Khan et al (2020) also found that there were positive aspects of caregiving which included a sense of fulfillment. It is possible that the personal fulfillment reward of the role could balance the negatives of caregiving, thus continued motivation to undertake this role despite its difficulties. The principles of Ubuntu such as humanness, empathy and human dignity (Ditlhake and Maphosa, 2021) are also aligned to this finding as participants believe in the goodness of helping each other and human dignity and worth for the disabled persons as well. The intrinsic worth and value of a human being as social work values underlie the profession and thus can be built upon to buffer and serve as a protective factor for caregivers, enhancing their caregiving experiences.

Burdensome

Unsurprisingly, the research participants found the caregiving experience to be 'burdensome' despite its positivity such as personal fulfillment. The caregivers indicated the burden of the caregiving experience was attributed to the lack of support they received. The financial incentives of caregiving were not satisfactory, given the difficulties the role came with. They had no formal salary and only received a stipend, less than a R1 000 at the time of the study, from the Department of Social Development. The caregiver role seems to have been done on a voluntary basis due to lack of monetary incentives received in the provision of care to persons with disabilities. Mupedziswa et al (2019) state that the notion of volunteering is consistent with Ubuntu philosophy. Many African societies have traditionally been used to (informally) caring for needy community members, in this case, the disabled persons. Money therefore did not serve as the only and major motivator to carry out the caregiving role for the participants. As indicated, the participants first put the worth and dignity of the disabled persons, considering their humanness before anything else, a custom common with African communities. However, this brought financial frustrations (considered a burden) to the caregiver as found in other studies where financial resources are scarce (Murphy et al, 2007; Khan et al, 2020).

The financial burden was also exacerbated by the fact that most community members whose children and family members were cared for the in the facility, did not support the centre and caregivers financially. These community members neglected to pay R50 monthly school fees despite receiving a disability grant on behalf of the beneficiaries of the facility. Participant Holomisa lamented:

> *They use disability grants for alcohol and buying nice phones, yet they fail to pay the R50 monthly school fees and they prefer school fees for able bodied children and not these ones.*

Six participants reported that non-payment of fees meant that that they at times had to rely on asking for food parcels from a nearby town to feed the disabled persons. They had to contribute financially on a monthly basis as caregivers to buy food for the disabled people. The financial problems compromised the diet, hygiene and quality of education of the persons with disabilities affecting day to day running of the centre. Caregivers believed the community could change all that through financial contributions and fee payment adherence. Four participants indicated that the lack of support and cooperation from the community was stressful and discouraging thus increasing the caregiver's burden of care and contributing to emotional turmoil. They viewed caregiving as a collective effort by the family members of the disabled persons and the community at large, not as the sole responsibility of the caregiver. Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) concur viewing Ubuntu as expectations and practices of how individuals, families and communities must interact with one another. Ditlhake and Maphosa (2021) also state that relationships among people through social, kinship and associational networks that exist in communities have intrinsic values which enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of the community and all its members (including disabled persons and their caregivers). Addressing these issues (caregiver burdens) without community support will thus impede on how caregivers fulfill their responsibilities.

Emotional distress

Participants reported that the caregiving experience was associated with great emotional distress, in line with findings from Murphy et al., (2006), Oshodi et al., (2012) & Hlabyago and Ogunbanjo (2009). The emotional distress was attributed to lack of support amongst other issues. Muller-Kluits (2017) also had a similar finding in his study of Cape Town caregivers of disabled persons and stipulates that there is a clear correlation between lack of services or support and negative emotional health. The other cause of their emotional distress was constantly witnessing abuse and ill-treatment of the disabled persons they cared for by their own families. Participants felt discouraged as the social workers and community did not respond to their reports of abuse. This impacted them emotionally thus making the caregiving experience burdensome. They needed a platform or someone to share their pain with, and there was no one.

This is a common research finding on caregivers' experiences as they find the journey lonely (Zuurmond et al., 2018) and thus burdensome. This necessitates the need for social networks for support, companionship and assistance such as support groups as indicated by Uwakwe and Modebe (2007). Murphy et al (2007) also identifies social support as a mediator of stress attributed to the caregiver burden stressing that sources of support such as community and support groups have helped reduce negative emotions for many caregivers. In many instances, the sharing of caregiving experiences strengthens endurance, resolve, learning from each other makes the experience empowering. Khan et al (2020) concur, stating that strategies to reduce stressors for caregivers include caregiver support groups to strengthen coping capabilities. The support thus improves the outcomes of the caregiving experiences ultimately benefitting the persons with disabilities. Zuurmond et al (2018) study on support programmes for caregivers of children with disabilities concurs with this finding as they confirmed that support groups offer an important social safety net for caregivers often socially excluded from their own communities. This also aligns with the philosophy of Ubuntu which promotes teamwork and collaboration, group cohesiveness and group support. Its cornerstone is a deep sense of belonging to a group, be it the extended family, the clan, or the community (Mupedziswa et al., 2019) and its use can positively influence the caregiving experience.

Lack of formal training

Lack of formal training was also a finding viewed as a burden to the caregiver experience. Participants reported that the Department of Labour had promised formal training to equip them with appropriate skills to effectively carry out their caregiving role but to no avail. This impacted the caregiving outcomes. They indicated that some of the disabled people in the facility were slow learners, had mood swings and some were epileptic thus overstretching the caregiver with no training to handle these issues. Without the appropriate formal training, they had to heavily depend on the experience that they gained as they interacted with the disabled people at the center. Martha remarked "*... I just learned and somehow you get the strength, but I don't know where it comes from...*" Mutale (2020) had similar findings in his study, stating that lack of support and training impacted negatively on caregivers who cared for children with disabilities. Thomas and Greenop (2008) concur and posit that caregivers need to be equipped with appropriate information and support to fulfil the challenging and demanding role of caregiving whilst providing them with solid background on what to do when caring for disabled persons as well as empower them with coping mechanisms to deal with stress and burnout related issues. The participants experienced emotional distress resulting from unmet needs such as lack of training, being overwhelmed and uncertain about how to handle daily tasks as caregivers. Formal training provides an opportunity for the caregivers to learn the techniques they need to provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment for the persons with a disability. In the context of crisis and stress, informal skills and commitment are not enough. Kontrimiene et al, (2021) found that caregivers' social wellbeing was negatively impacted by their difficult work situations caused by lack of training which led to exceeding limits of their competence thus development of caregiver training programmes was key in improving caregiving outcomes to the benefit of the disabled persons.

Lack of resources

Lack of resources was another issue identified and attributed to the burdensome experience of caregiving, prohibiting caregivers from fulfilling their duties adequately. This led to frustrations as indicated by one participant who said, "*There is no drama equipment at the Centre and this makes it impossible for me to share my skills with the disabled people*". Six participants identified lack of transport, medical aid for the disabled people, office equipment, lack of drama equipment and adequate land as some missing resources that are essential to ensure effective service delivery. Ditlhake and Maphosa (2021) state that people have the capacity to overcome problems if they are provided with the appropriate support and resources. Provision of adequate resources therefore has potential to improve caregiver experience, relieving the burdens associated with caregiving. This also aligns with the principles of Ubuntu which believe in empowering individuals and communities.

Perceptions on the role of social workers

Understanding caregiver's perceptions of the social workers role in caring for persons with disabilities is crucial in the development of appropriate interventions to support them in the caregiving role. The two subthemes that emerged were i) provision of adequate support and resources and ii) advocacy for people with disabilities.

Provision of adequate support and resources

The research participants perceived the role of social workers to be brokers through provision of adequate support and linking them to resources. This also included provision of training needs to the caregivers as this would enable the caregiver to provide quality care to the disabled. Findings suggested that the caregivers felt neglected by the same people whom they perceived as responsible for providing them with adequate support and resources. Below are their frustrations as shared by one participant:

> *Social workers are insensitive to our problems...we have been reporting cases of disability grant abuse by parents, but they just promised to hold a meeting…to our surprise nothing has been done"*

Muller Kluits and Slabbert (2020) state that social workers play pivotal roles in the delivery of services to persons with disabilities and their caregivers. The roles include educator, broker, and enabler. Social workers therefore have a responsibility of ensuring that caregivers are provided with adequate support and resources to alleviate caregiver burden. Mugambate and Chereni (2019) support the use of Ubuntu theory in the provision of social work services as they believe it can empower social workers and provide solutions that acknowledge or increases the strengths of individuals, families and communities. The support from social workers includes designing and providing services for the caregiver to ease the burden of caregiving (Khan et al*.,* 2020). Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) encourage the use of Ubuntu theory in fostering the spirit of mutual support and caring for each other's wellbeing, postulating that social workers have a twin responsibility of embracing Ubuntu and using the values of Ubuntu to influence their peers and clients (and contribute to positive caregiver experience).

Advocacy for people with disabilities

The participants perceived social workers as professionals mandated with protecting the rights of everyone including disabled persons. They viewed social workers as neglectful of their advocacy role given their neglect of abuse reports of the disabled persons. The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires social workers to advocate for the rights of the disabled persons in the community (Muller-Kluits, 2017). Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) indicated Ubuntu stands for a humane social work, using humane methods to achieve human goals thus advocacy for the disabled persons aligns to that.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The study's objective was to explore the caregiver experiences and the perceived role of social workers in caring for persons with disabilities. Given the findings, the study concludes; that experiences of caregivers in South Africa are both negative and positive. The caregivers found the role personally fulfilling despite the challenges and limited financial incentives. Notwithstanding the positive experiences, most found the role burdensome attributing this to the lack of support from community and social workers including lack of training and resources. Provision of formal and appropriate training and adequate resources is thus seen as essential in enhancing caregiving experience. In conclusion provision of ongoing support and services from social workers using Ubuntu approach in delivery would alleviate the burden of care and improve the quality of services they provide to the people with disabilities.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

This study has reiterated the importance of understanding the caregiver experiences in caring for people with disabilities as this has implication for training and practice of social work. Knowledge gained from the research can inform further training in continuous learning for social work students before they enter the field as well as social workers in practice. This is attributed to the fact that social workers currently seem to be neglecting their role in assisting caregivers in caring for persons with disabilities. The research implications for social work practice call for adequate knowledge and skills in addressing the needs of the disabled persons whilst alleviating the caregiving burden. The authors therefore recommend that social work with disabled persons should be covered holistically as a special field when social workers are being trained for them to have a thorough understanding of what issues caregivers are grappling with in their caregiving task and the role social workers have to play in alleviating the caregiver burden and ultimately improving the quality of care for the persons with disabilities. Such knowledge is gained from context specific studies such as this one, thus arming future practitioners and current social workers with adequate capacities to develop and implement relevant interventions which are needed to alleviate caregiver burden. These findings also denote the importance of using a bottom-up approach when planning service delivery or policy development for persons with disabilities and their caregivers in order to address caregiver burden as service users are consulted on their specific needs. Seeing that caregivers are currently without adequate support, the establishment and running of support groups by social workers to provide opportunities for sharing caregiving experiences, acquire emotional support whilst they get empowerment should be a top priority for social workers. Provision of such a resource would probably reduce high levels of emotional distress whilst engendering a positive influence to the caregiving experience.

The authors also implore the social work profession to utilize Indigenous Knowledge systems such as Ubuntu theory. As evidenced by the study findings, use of Ubuntu theory can positively influence the caregiving role. The values of Ubuntu advocates for collectivism, empathy, human solidarity and humanness in addressing such issues -everyone has a role to play, 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', in ensuring that disabled persons come to be. For them to reach their full potential and be socially integrated in communities, caregivers, social workers, families of disabled persons and communities have certain responsibilities in serving the needs of the disabled persons (and their caregivers) effectively whilst promoting individual and societal wellbeing. The theory is rooted in the African way of doing things by fostering empathy, compassion and mutual support in caregiving. It denounces individualism through application of Ubuntu ethos incorporating human solidarity and collectivism, social workers in collaboration with caregivers can help raise disability awareness amongst families and communities. The Ubuntu philosophy promotes teamwork and collaboration thus working together to influence the caregiving role positively will be beneficial. Collaboration between social workers and caregivers can help to promote social inclusion, human dignity and community living for the persons with disability in alignment with the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, whilst appreciating the dignity and value inherent in each person regardless of their abilities. The authors also urge social workers to ensure that caregivers are provided with adequate resources and appropriate training to empower them in meeting the needs of the disabled persons whilst enhancing their caregiver experience. Provision of formal training will also assist in solidifying the vital role of caregiving in social welfare systems. Based on the spirit of Ubuntu, human service professions like social work are expected to assist their clients to harness their energies and knowledge in the promotion of the goals of social development (Mupedziswa et al, 2019).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, caregiving experiences have implications on how social workers develop and implement appropriate services policies and programmes to alleviate caregiver burden whilst providing adequate support. Development of systems and strategies to enhance positive experiences such as personal fulfillment and timeous provision of support will improve the overall wellbeing of caregivers. This will consequently improve the quality of caregiving to persons with disabilities. Provision of formal training and adequate resources to the caregivers cannot be over emphasized given the benefits it provides to the disabled persons. Interventions that enable caregivers to gain further positive experiences in their roles should be encouraged given that caregiving is an essential complement of any welfare ecosystem in the world. Using the Ubuntu theory in social work practice, effective caregiving should be thus seen as a collaborative effort with the relevant stakeholders such as community members, caregivers and families.

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