

RESEARCH BRIEF

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Assessing Health Risk & Activity-Travel Behaviour of Carer-Employees

KEY POINTS

- Assisted-transport is the most common and one of the most demanding caregiving tasks.
- Carer-employees doing assisted-transport are more overwhelmed than those not performing the task.
- A multi-pronged framework was designed to provide guidance in developing prevention strategies, such as caregiver-friendly transport programs. The framework includes:
 - Phase I – National (Canada) analysis
 - Phase II – Metropolitan (Hamilton) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis
 - Phase III – Individual analysis (n = 25)

What is the topic of this research?

Carer-employees struggle with work-life balance due to juggling full-time paid work with their caregiving responsibilities. Caregiver-friendly workplace programs (CFWPs), such as unpaid leave or telecommuting, are designed to improve the carer-employees' work-life balance. However, CFWPs are rarely available and often do not recognize the strain of one of the most common caregiving tasks, that being the provision of assisted-transport for care-recipients.

Assisted-transport involves running errands related to the care-recipient's needs, such as transporting the care-recipient to health care appointments. Despite being the most common and one of the highest demanding tasks, not much is known about it. This is particularly true with respect to how assisted-transport alters the carer-employees' travel behaviour. Travel behaviour is a direct measurement of wellbeing.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives address this issue:

1. How can we identify the national differences between carer-employees who provide assisted-transport, and those carer-employees who don't?
2. From an urban and health planning perspective (i.e. Hamilton), how does the location of the care-recipient's residence potentially impact the carer-employee's work-life?
3. Individually and collectively, how can we efficiently highlight the actual travel behaviour of carer-employees?

How was the study done?

Phase I

- Data: General Social Survey Cycle 26 (Statistics Canada)
- Methods: Statistical analysis

Phase II

- Data: Locations of vital services and public transit stops in Hamilton.
- Methods: multi-GIS analysis

Phase III

- Data: Individual GPS, Trip Diaries & Questionnaires from eligible participants (n = 25)
- Methods: Mixed-Methods

What did the researchers find?

(1) Addressing the **first research objective**, carer-employees conducting assisted-transport are:

1. more likely to be female;
2. have higher education and household income;
3. provide **more** caregiving hours per week, and;
4. feel more tired and overwhelmed than those carer-employees who don't provide assisted-transport.

(2) Addressing the **second research objective**, GIS results show that, in the Hamilton Metropolitan area:

1. 62% (71.6k) of the older adult (age 65+) population are within 10 min. walk to nearest vital service, whereas 82% (94.6k) are within a 10 min. walk to the nearest public transit stop. This leaves 20-25% situated in underserved areas.
2. Implementation of new services in suggested areas would improve access for older adults, ranging from:
 - a) 62% to 80% (vital services)
 - b) 82% to 86% (public transit stops)
3. Additional info including maps can be viewed on this [StoryMap](#).

(3) Addressing the **third research objective**, the classification of travel behaviour identifies the carer-employee's level of time flexibility, while outlining specific factors that impact it.

1. Qualitative results – Several thematic keywords describe the carer-employees' travel behaviour; they include: “time”, “pressure”, “parents”, “run”, and “long”
2. Quantitative results – three types of carer-employees' travel behaviour were identified.
 - a) Flexible (n = 10)
 - b) Between flexible & fixed (n = 8)
 - c) Fixed (n = 7)

Key Message

There is a need to develop caregiver-friendly transport programs (CFTPs) as it is shown that carer-employees performing assisted-transport are more overwhelmed than those carer-employees who don't. City planners need to ensure access to vital services for both older adults and their caregivers.

Who are the researchers?

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