

# Consequences of obligations: Family care for elders with Pakistani background

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## **Keywords**

*elderly, Health Care, migrants, Family*

People with Pakistani background constitute one of the biggest migrant groups in Norway with nearly 30 000 persons. The first Pakistani migrants came to Norway in the 1970s, and are now approaching old age. In Norwegian-Pakistani families the tradition of family care for elderly people continue to be an obligation, despite Norway's well developed public care system. Few frail elderly with Pakistani background use institutions like nursing homes or retirement homes. The care for elderly people may impose a heavy burden on younger people, who also may have jobs and children to take care of. This paper will explore the consequences of caregiving for various members of Norwegian-Pakistani families. How do they manage their daily life with elderly people in need of care, and why do they continue this duty in a welfare state like Norway?

The Norwegian public care system may be less adapted to elders with migrant backgrounds, because the health care system is adjusted and organised in accordance with ethnic Norwegian elders' need. This may be one reason why few elderly people with migrant background use public care institutions. There may however be other reasons as well, at least in families with Pakistani background. Elderly people expect their adult children to take care of them in return for their caring of them. This obligation can be described as a generation contract, a lifelong reciprocity of caregiving in the family. In Pakistani families this requires that at least one of the sons, preferably the youngest, stays with their parents and take on the financial and social responsibility for elderly parents. When the son marries his wife becomes the daily carer for parents-in-law. This may be a necessity in Pakistan where welfare services are scarce, but is less required in Norway.