

Grandparents need to negotiate on child care

May 20 2014, by David Ellis

Grandparents derive great benefits from providing informal child care to their grandchildren, but often feel left out of the loop and out of pocket as a result, according to research from the University of Adelaide.

In a study published in the *Journal of Family Studies*, researchers at the University of Adelaide's School of Psychology sought to better understand the impact on grandparents' emotional wellbeing from providing regular child care.

"We know that many families are feeling the financial squeeze, especially single parent families, and they often turn to grandparents as an inexpensive and available source of ongoing child care," says Cecily Young, a Clinical Psychologist who has conducted this study for her Master of Psychology (Clinical) degree at the University.

"Grandparents are usually pleased to be more closely involved in their grandchildren's lives, and they derive great satisfaction from that.

"However, they can also suffer from stress, increased fatigue, a sense of social isolation and a fair amount of financial strain, especially if the parents are not reimbursing them for out-of-pocket expenses."

Ms Young's study measured grandparents' wellbeing in two ways: looking at self-esteem as a representation of positive factors; and psychosocial distress as a representation of the negatives.

"Our results showed that grandparents' level of satisfaction with the care

arrangements had much to do with their wellbeing," she says.

"The specific details of the arrangements aren't important in and of themselves, what's really important is whether the grandparent feels they've been able to play an active role in making those agreements, that they have been heard, and that their needs are being taken seriously.

"The most important message arising from our work is for grandparents to feel confident and comfortable in expressing their needs when negotiating [child care](#), and for all families to have frank and open discussions about this."

Ms Young says parents should also be mindful that [grandparents](#) are potentially dealing with many issues at once, and it's important to take their other cares and responsibilities, as well as financial pressure, into account when discussing care-giving.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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