

‘It’s a disaster’: youth care and support for older adults in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Research on the provision of care and support for older adults in Zimbabwe has not fully engaged with or focused on young people’s attitudes towards the care of older adults. Drawing on arguments from the philosophy of Ubuntu and intergenerational theories, we argue that although caring for older adults is an entrenched norm within the cultural value system, the prevailing harsh neoliberal economic environment makes it difficult for younger Zimbabweans to care for their older family members ungrudgingly. These findings are based on a qualitative study of 12 residents of Gweru (Zimbabwe’s third largest city) aged between 21 and 35. They confirm that the extended family network has weakened. The findings also reveal the reciprocal nature of care and support, the negative effects of neoliberalism on the ability to provide care, the government’s reluctance to care for older adults, and the perception of rural areas as spaces of retirement for older adults.