

# **Enhancing the wellbeing of older people in Mauritius**

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. Ph. Eijlander, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de Ruth First zaal van de Universiteit

op

dinsdag 12 november 2013 om 10.15 uur

door

**Sivalingum Subramanien**

geboren op 25 mei 1941 te Port Louis, Mauritius

**Promotores:**

Prof. dr. J.B. Rijsman

Prof.dr. M. Gergen

**Overige commissieleden:**

Prof. dr. A. Contarello

Prof. dr. D. Wulff

Dr. B. Cottor

Dr. L. Wens

## ABSTRACT

To curb overpopulation, Mauritius resorted to an intense program of fertility control from the 1950's. Today, low fertility combined with improved health of the people has resulted in rapid population aging. For more than half a century, older people in the country benefit from a universal old age pension and free health service. But no research has ever been conducted to find their level of satisfaction with life. The objective of this study is to address this gap.

This mixed methods research collected data from older persons through a questionnaire survey (N = 244), a Critical Incident Technique Study, and a series of 24 interviews. The data were examined using a social constructionist lens.

The study shows that opinions are divided about the level of wellbeing among older people. Those with higher socioeconomic status (Chairpersons of Senior Citizens' Associations) say they enjoy a good level of wellbeing, but they believe other older people experience low wellbeing. On the contrary, other older people themselves, with the exception of a third among them, state that they are satisfied with their level of wellbeing. The main reasons given for low wellbeing are lack of family attention and care, low education and low income.

The main interventions identified by the study to enhance wellbeing are ensuring attention and care from the family, better income and improved health. Other actions believed to help enhance wellbeing are better social relations, provision of housing, more leisure, counselling and better security.

As a result of these findings, recommendations are made in the context of the national aging policy to improve the wellbeing of older people in Mauritius.

