

Parent-Adult Child Relationships in Japan-Determinants of Parent-Adult Child Coresidence

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Japan is going to be a 'Hyper aged society' in the 21st century. One of the biggest questions facing Japan is how a family can support its elderly members and to what extent should the family be responsible for the care of them. The purpose of this report, which represents part of the effort to respond to and address the needs of an aged society, is to examine the current trends in mutual support and assistance between parents and their adult children. The study uses recent research data and compares it with the trends in other countries. Special focus has been given to care and assistance provided by adult children to their parents.

In Japanese society, the physical space and substance of the care given between the generations has traditionally been more intimate than in many other western societies. In other words, care for parents has, in most cases, meant physical care by living with them in the same house (co-residence). In this context, the report tries to define the living arrangements (living together with, or separately from, elderly parents) of adult children, although an examination from the viewpoint of the service provided by parents to their children into adulthood or have left their home is possible. This report analyzes the determinants of living arrangements that form the foundation of the care and assistance given by the child generation to the parent generation.

The study found that the determinants of parent-adult children co-residence are not personal characteristics such as education and profession, but normative factors such the position in the family (the first child or not). In fact, low-income families show higher rates of co-residence with their parents than high-income families. This suggests that greater choice is available with greater economic means.

The socialization of care provision is being promoted with the introduction of the Long-Term Care Insurance System in April 2000. If co-residence with parents is determined by economic factors as well as normative factors, and co-residence is indispensable in providing care to old parents, the issue must be handled very carefully, paying special attention to the status of traditional family care provision.