

Parent-child Relationship in Contemporary Japan through the Empirical Analysis of the Pattern of Support from Parents to Grown-up Children

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the pattern of support from parents to grown-up children based on the empirical analysis of the nationally representative datasets. The parental care provided to grown-up children is usually less urgent in nature, compared with the care of infants. Recently, however, parental support to grown-up children has received increasing attention because it was considered as a major factor discouraging children from leaving the nest family ("Parasaito Singles") and contributing to the declining fertility rates.

The following four hypotheses about explaining parental support to grown-up children are tested. The first hypothesis is the stratification hypothesis which states that the socio-economic position of the person or household that provides support is an important determinant of the pattern of support to their children. The second hypothesis is the child attributes hypothesis which claims that the characteristics of the child who receives support (such as gender and age) are critical in determining the parental support. The third hypothesis is the intergenerational inheritance hypothesis which implies that the intergenerational exchange is the important determinant of providing the parental support to grown-up children, since the parents who provide support to their grown-up children tend to have received support from their own parents. Lastly, the children-first hypothesis claims that the tendency for the parents to place priority on children affects the likelihood of parental support to grown-up children.

The analysis is restricted to married women with grown-up children, aged 20 and over. Eleven survey items asking parental support are divided into two categories; (1) care-related support such as shopping, meal preparation, and taking care of grandchildren, and (2) finance-related support such as assisting marriage expense and loan for home ownership. The children-first hypothesis showed a certain degree of explanatory power in providing the parental care. Similarly, the child-attribute hypothesis and stratification hypothesis were partly supported. The stratification factors such as the employment status of the parent and the household income, and the child-attribute factors such as gender, marital status, and the residential distance between the parents and the child, were also important in explaining parental support. The generational inheritance hypothesis also showed the significant effect in explaining whether or not the parents provide the financial support. Thus, the parental support to their grown-up children is affected not only by the parental attitudes about how much priority they place on children, but also by the stratification factors of care-givers and the attributes of care-receivers.