

Married Women's Attitudes toward Their Elderly Parent Support in the Rural Japan

Shoji Okuyama

While the unprecedented economic development since 1955 has brought about ever widening gap between the urban and rural areas in almost all facets of family and community life in Japan, the traditional farming areas have been experiencing drastic changes in their successors and elderly (parent) support, among others.

This study examines women's attitudes toward elderly support in the rural area in the Mogami District of Yamagata Prefecture in North-Eastern Japan.

METHODS

(1) Geographical area:

- Tozawa village of Northern Mogami County in Yamagata Prefecture.
- Population: 5,915 (2005 census) and 30.1% of which are elderly.
- Landscape: Mountain (83.3 %), farming (6.4 %), residential and others (9.7%)

(2) Survey:

- Period: August 28 through September 10, 2006.
- Age: 30–69 years old females, including Asian immigrants who



Figure 1 Japan (Area of Study)



Figure 2 Tozawa Village

married to local males.

- Household Drop-off survey: 1,000 letters of questionnaire were delivered and 766 (76.6 %) valid letters were recovered. Included were 8 Chinese, 7 Koreans, and 6 Filipinos.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The Variables:

A. The dependent variable: the sense of filial responsibility to support their elderly parents.

- The components of elderly support: (a) financial support, (b) physical support (health care), and (c) emotional support.
- The concept of the sense of filial responsibility to support their elderly was defined as the total sum of financial support, physical support, and emotional support.
- The sense of filial responsibility to support their elderly parents was measured in terms of the total sum of responses to the following 11 statements in each category of support.

The sense of filial responsibility for elderly support=value of financial support (a)+value of physical support (b)+value of emotional support (c)

We quoted 11 statements of questionnaire which Ota & Kai (2002) is designed.

a. Statements in Financial Support

1. Children have the financial responsibility to support their elderly parents whenever necessary.
2. It is natural for the children to financially support their elderly

parents.

3. Children have no responsibility to financially support their elderly parents.

b. Statements in Physical Support

4. It is natural for the elderly parents to expect physical support from their children.
5. It is children's neglect, if they do not physically support their elderly parents.
6. It is not necessarily children's responsibility to physically support their elderly parents.
7. Children should prepare physical support for their elderly parents.
8. It is natural for the children to physically support their elderly parents.

c. Statements in Emotional support

9. Children sometimes should provide opportunity for travel or hobby for their elderly parents.
10. Children should enjoy time doing with their parents.
11. Children should spend time with their elderly parents.

The respondents were asked to choose an answer to each of the above statements.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Agree..... | 5 points |
| 2. Somewhat agree..... | 4 points |
| 3. Neither agree nor disagree..... | 3 points |
| 4. Somewhat disagree..... | 2 points |
| 5. Disagree..... | 1 point |

- Each answer has an assigned value on the scale from 1 (the low-

est) to 5 (the highest).

The highest score of total value means the highest sense of filial responsibility for elderly support.

When respondents answered “agree” in statements no. 3 and statement no. 6, we reverse from 1 point to 5 point

- The maximum points of an individual person are 55 (=5x11), and the minimum, 11 (=1x11)..
- The more positive answers (i.e., Agree), the higher sense of filial responsibility for supporting their elderly parents.

The independent variables

There are two kinds of the explanatory variables in this study.

1. The primary attributes
 - a. Age and age group
 - b. Living arrangement -- i.e., living with husband's parents
 - c. Status of the husband in the family -- i.e., husband is the first son
2. Support network.
 - a. The source and the subject of support network -- i.e. the “provider” and the “receiver” of support in the support network.

Who was/were the provider (s) and the receiver (s) in the support network?
 - b. The “number of providers” and the “number of receivers” in support network.

How many people participated in the support network?

HYPOTHESES

- (1) The first set of hypotheses is concerned with the relationship between the primary attributes and the sense of filial responsibility.
 - a. Older children would have a stronger sense of responsibility for financial support.
 - b. The children who live with their elderly parents would have a stronger sense of responsibility for physical support.
 - c. The family of “husband and wife alone, “or “nuclear family” would have a stronger sense of responsibility for emotional support.
- (2) The second hypothesis is related to the support network and the sense of filial responsibility for elderly support.
 - The larger the support network, the higher sense of responsibility to support elderly financially, physically, and emotionally.
 - The large support network means that the large number of people are supported by multiple persons. Because they are supported, they feel obliged to support the elderly parents in return. This is a general trend throughout Japan.

Findings (1) Age group and Living Arrangements

(2) The Distribution of the sense of filial responsibility points

Notice: The values of filial responsibility for elderly parents are the total sum of three categories of parent support (financial, physical, and emotional supports).

As Table 1 and Figure 5 shows, the highest scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Financial Support is 15 point, the lowest is 3 point

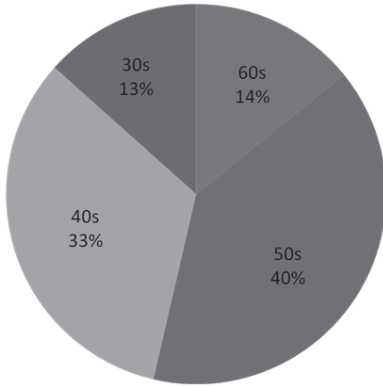


Fig. 3 The Distribution of Age Group

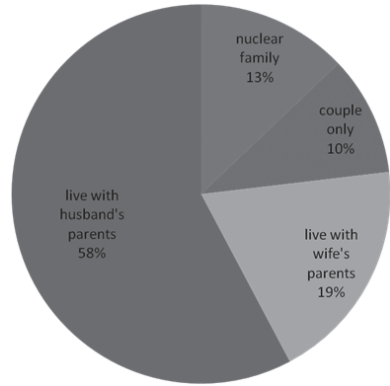


Fig. 4 Living Arrangements

Table 1. The Distribution of the Sense of Filial Responsibility Points

		Financial support (score)	Physical support (score)	Emotional support (score)	Filial Responsibility (score)
df	validity	766	752	753	730
	missing values	47	61	60	83
mean		7.53	13.56	7.16	28.19

and score of mode is 9 point. Also the highest scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Physical Support is 25 point, the lowest is 5 point and score of mode is 15 point (Table 1 and Figure 5).. Also the highest scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Physical Support is 25 point, the lowest is 5 point and score of mode is 15 point (Table 1 and Figure 5).

Total sum of the sense of filial responsibility for elderly support (mean of core) =value of financial support (a)+value of physical support (b)+value of emotional support (c) are 28.16.

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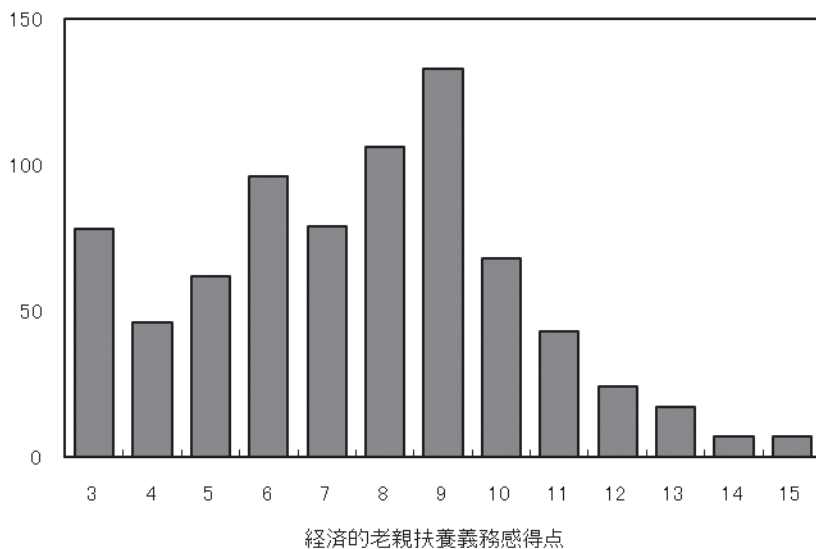


Fig. 5 The Scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Financial Support

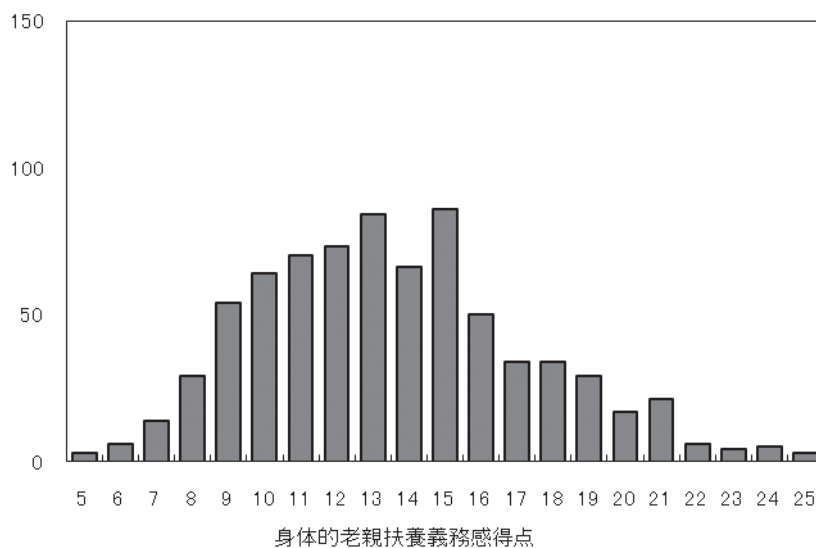


Fig. 6 The Scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Physical Support

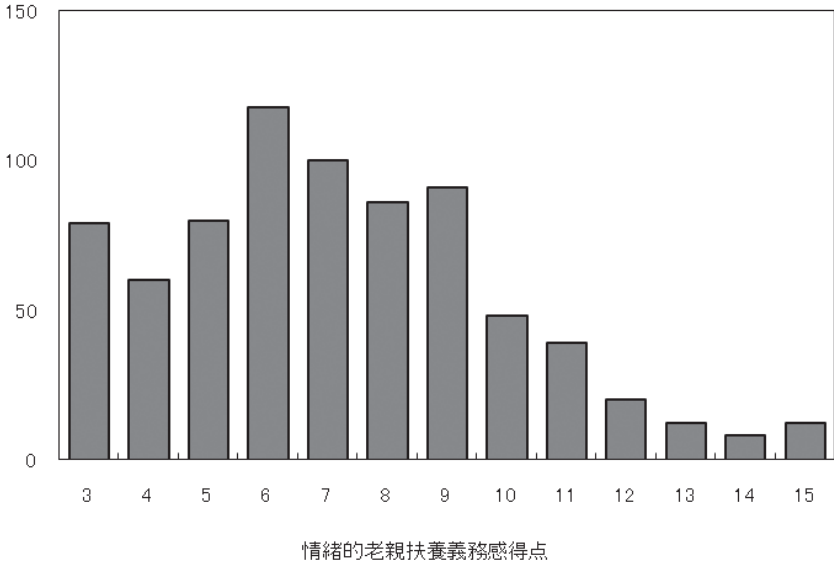


Fig.7 The Scores of the Sense of Responsibility for Emotional Support

(3) ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)

ANOVA of the filial responsibility in each of financial, physical, and emotional support based upon the independent variables (age, living arrangement, and husband’s status in the family)

(a) Age

No statistical significance was found in the relationship between the age and each of financial, physical, and emotional support.

However, the ANOVA of the age group shows us a statistical significance in the financial support. Further, this study applied the multiple comparison and the Bonferroni correction to examine detailed relationships in each age group.

ANOVA between and within the Age Groups and the Sense of Re-

Married Women's Attitudes toward Their Elderly Parent Support in the Rural Japan
responsibility for Financial, Physical, and Emotional Support

The age group is significantly related to the sense of filial responsibility for financial support at the significance level of 0.1% .

The average value shows that the age of the 40s holds the highest (10.92) and the 50s, the lowest (10.04), but there are high levels (over 10) of responsibility regardless of different age groups.

The Bonferroni Correction of the Age Group and Filial Responsibility for Financial, Physical, and Emotional Support

In order to find the meaning of statistical significance between the 40s and the 50s, this study analyzed the relationship between the type of support network (i.e., receiver and provider) and the number of receivers and providers in the support network.

For this purpose this study applied the ANOVA and the Bonferroni correction and found that the 40s are both the greater receivers and providers of support network than other age groups.

With respect to the provider of support there was statistical significance at the significance level of 1% ($p=0.003$).

At the same time, these analyses found that the 40s are receiving more support than the 50s. As a consequence, the 40s who are receiving support in their daily lives tend to show greater sense of responsibility for elderly parents.

The fact that there is statistical significance only in the financial support coincides with a general trend throughout Japan, because it is rather easier to provide the financial support than other supports.

(b) Living Arrangements

No statistical significance was found between the living arrange-

ments and filial sense of responsibility for financial, physical, and emotional support.

Statistical Description of the Relationship between the Living Arrangements and the Sense of Filial Responsibility for Financial, Physical, and Emotional Support Even though there was no statistical significance in the living arrangement, the average value of “living with the husband’s parents” is lower than others.

This seems to indicate the fact that “brides” who grew up in the different environment are facing many difficulties.

(c) The husband’s status in the family

There was no statistical significance between the status of husband in the family and the sense of filial responsibility for financial, physical, and emotional support.

Statistical Description between the Status of Husband in the Family and the Sense of Filial Responsibility for Financial, Physical, and Emotional Support of Their Elderly Parents

This study shows that the status of husband other than the first son in the family demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility for the elderly support.

The question is why this is so, statistically speaking. There are two explanations.

1. The first explanation is related to the tension between the “reality” of female attitudes toward the sense of responsibility and the “traditional norm” of Japanese family system that obliges the wife of the first son in the family to take care of her

husband's elderly parents, the physical care in particular.

Even though this traditional norm lingers on throughout generations in the rural areas, the past decade or so has witnessed a drastic change in the sense of female responsibility.

2. The second explanation is that the wife of the first son in the family who is in fact taking care of her husband's parents daily might feel a deep resentment against the traditional norm of obligation.

CONCLUSION

The independent variables such as the primary attributes (age and living arrangement) do not explain the sense of filial responsibility for elderly support.

However, because the traditional norm of the Japanese family system still prevails, there is a high level of the sense of filial responsibility to support their elderly parents.

Middle-aged and older females in the rural areas are the generation who has to support their elderly parents, on the one hand, and they are no longer able to expect support from their children, on the other.

This generation must be living in the age of dilemma or ambivalence.

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