



**Support for the Elderly afforded by children's family living separated from
parents in China Rural Areas
-----A Study in Seven Provinces**

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Abstract

Using sample data from a survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China conducted by Institute of Population and Labor Economics, China Academy of Social Science in seven provinces in 2010, this paper analyzes the differences of the support for the elderly afforded by child family living separated from parents in China rural areas. And the determinants of the support for the elderly are also analyzed.

The result indicates that living arrangements of parents influence the family support. Parents living alone or in nuclear families receive more practical support than parents in lineal family. Couple families get higher financial support than parents in lineal family. Parent families being economic self-sufficiency received less financial support than those not being self-sufficiency. The more the number of the progeny family, the less the financial support from progeny family to parental family. The causes of the children family separated from parents, such as non-farm employment and family division, have significant effects on the support for the elderly. The farther the child family lives from where parent family lives, the more the financial support for parents, and the less the practical support for parents. The better the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the more the financial help parent family receive; the worse the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the less the practical support and emotional support offered by child family.

The intergenerational relationships among the parents and children's family have the characteristics of patterns of reciprocity and exchange.

Background

Due to the relatively young and healthy older were inclined to live alone, and the adult children moving to work in cities, in the 1990 of the 20th century, the proportion of the Chinese urban and rural elderly parents living with their adult children declined rapidly (Zeng and Wang, 2004). According to the third national census in 1990, the fourth national census in 2000, and the fifth national census in 2010, the total ratio of the age of 65 and above living in core and single households in rural areas were 26.29%, 31.01% and 39.08% respectively (Wang, 2013). With the socio-economic development, rural elderly parents living apart from their children are rising. Family support includes three aspects: economics support, practical support, and emotional support. Some scholars have pointed out that although the parents and progeny families do not live together, the two families are closely related to each other by the genetic relationship. In urban areas in China, many married children reside near parents' house, so that they can take good care of their parents (Lin, et al., 1999). Urban elderly living arrangements have a significant effect on children's support of their parents in three ways: daily activities such as doing household chores for the parents, continuance of financial support, and other considerations. Those who live with their parents are most likely to provide support for their parents in all three aspects, those who do not live with their parent but who live close to them come next, and those who live far away from their parents are least likely to do so (Yan, Chen, and Yang, 2004). On the other sides, labor emigration has significant effects on the rural old people's life. With the adult children migrating to cities, family structure of the elderly was changed, and How far child family live from where parent family live was increased, those directly and indirectly weaken the function of the family pension. Specially, the equipment and emotional support were reduced, but the financial supports from the children were increased in some families (Zhang and Li, 2004). But those researches mainly concerned the influences on the family support deriving from the factors, such as How far child family live from where parent family live, and the older people's living arrangement. So far, it is rare to analyze the family

support severed by children family living separated from parents from the perspective of the family, focusing on the parents' family factors, descendants' family factors, and family relations between the elder's family and the young's family.

With China's social, economic and demographic change, household sizes are getting smaller in rural and urban areas, nuclear families increase, son family and daughter family living separated from parents become popular, especially in rural areas. Due to the imperfection of the rural pension scheme system, family endowment is still the primary mode of China's rural pension currently, child families are the main support for parents. It is important to reveal the support for the elderly afforded by the progeny family, especially those children family living separated from the elderly. These findings may help to clarify the problems in China's rural pension insurance, and perfect the security system for the aged in the countryside.

Study Design

Researches on the family support indicate that parent family factors, child family factors, and factors of the relationship between parent family and child family have effects on the supports for the parent family provided by the children family living separated from the parent family.

Parent family factors

Living arrangement has significant influence on children's support of their parents. According to the principle whether parent living with their children and grandchildren, living arrangement of the older person can be categorized into four types: one person household, nuclear family (living with spouse), lineal family (at least living with child, child's spouse), skipped-generation household (living with grandchildren). Zhu and Xu indicated that labor migration result the change of the living arrangement of the older parent, reduce the daily care and emotional support due to the decreasing of the number of children living together or living nearby, ultimately deteriorate the welfare and health of the elderly in rural areas (Zhu and Xu, 1992).

In East Asia, supports for the elderly are always closely related to age, infirmity, widow, low incomes (Lee, Parish, and Willis, 1994). The elderly with high income will decrease the dependent on their children. The possibility of getting daily living care is low for the elder living alone (Liu and Yang, 2000).

Child family factors

Studies have showed that children quantity has the directly effects on the family support, such as the day-to-day care, emotional support and financial support (Zimmer and Kwong, 2003). Son mainly provides parents with economics support, while daughter offers more daily living care and emotional support (Yang, 1996). In traditional society in China, daughter's marriage and son's separation after marriage is the main method for son to begin his own family. At present, with the reduction of the number of son, it is popular that son and his wife live apart without dividing up family property with his parents after marriage. And labor emigration also becomes a new type for adult children living separated from parents' family. Different method that child living separated with parents will have different result to the relationship among children' family and their parents, which will have different effects on the family support children' family provide for the parents.

How far child family live from where parent family live will have effect on the supports provided by children family. Living close to the parents will benefit both parents and child to provide day care, and promote intergenerational emotional communication (Crimmins, and Ingegneri, 1990). Children living far way tended to provide financial support whereas coresident children were more likely to provide instrumental support (Bian et al., 1998; Shi, 1993; Sun, 2002).

Factors of the relationship between parent family and child family

The relationship among the offspring's spousal and parents is an important kind of the intergenerational relations. Fei Xiaotong noted that interrogational cooperation, especially the harmonious relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the rural areas in China is a high effectiveness way to make family wealth and happiness (Fei, 1983). We argues that the more harmonious the relationship among

parents and daughter-in-law (or son-in-law) is, the more endowment supports the children's family provide for the parents.

It is popular that the older parents help look after grandchildren in China. For the older parents caring for grandchildren, the young couple can go out to work. As compensation to the parents, children's family will provide the parents more support, especially financial support (Song, et. al, 2008).

Data & Methods

Data

Data used in this study come from the survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China conducted by Institute of Population and Labor Economics, China Academy of Social Science in seven provinces in 2010. The survey aims to reveal the family structure and intergenerational relationship in current China. Multistage stratified random cluster sampling was used. First, the seven provinces were stratified according to the level of economic development, which were Hebei, Jilin, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guangdong and Shaanxi provinces, and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Second, six counties or cities in every selected province were stratified according to the level of economic development. Third, five communities or villages were selected in each county or city according the total households of streets in city or townships in county. The 210 surveys, including 81 counties and 129 villages, were determined. Last, 20 families were randomly determined by interviewer while on-site survey. And respondent of questionnaire investigation in each family was selected based on two-dimensional random table. The number of satisfactory responses is 4425.

In our analysis, each observation corresponded to one parent-child dyad. Parents were the older at the age of 60 and above living in rural areas. Child was son or daughter living separated from parent, including those living in the same or other village after marriage, and living in cities for at least six months and seldom returning village in a year. There are 511 samples of the older at the age of 60 and above living

in rural areas. Among them there are 432 samples of the older having at least one child without living together with them for at least six months. And 1277 parent-child dyads were used in the analysis.

Methods

Our analysis is divided into two parts. The first analyzes the status of the support for the parent family afforded by son family and daughter family. Based on the information of the money and goods that children gave parents, helping parents do household works, and the emotional exchange among parents and children, the status of the support for the parent family in last 12 months are revealed.

The second employs multi-linear regression models to explore the factors influencing the financial support, the practical support and the emotional support for the parent family afforded by son family and daughter family living separated from parents.

The dependent variables

The dependent variables in the models are respectively the total money child family giving to his parents (using the common logarithm), how much that child family helps parent family do household work (0= never do, 1=once a year or several times a year, 2= several times a month, 3= several times a week, 4= do every day), and how much child listen to their parents telling their own business (0= parent not willing to tell, 1= child always not willing to hear, 2= child not willing to hear sometimes, 3= child always willing to hear) in the last 12 months.

The independent variables

The independent variables in the models are parent family factors, child family factors, and factors of the relationship between parent family and child family. Parent family factors include the living arrangement of the parent, the economic conditions of the parent family. Child family factors include the number of child family, type of the child family, reason without living together with parent, family economic source, how far child family live from where parent family live. Factors of the relationship between parent family and child family include the relation between parents and child's spouse, whether parents help look after grandchildren.

Results

The status of the of supports for parent family

Table 1 shows the status of financial support for the parent family provided by children without living together with parents during the last 12 months. The result indicates that about 22.9% of child family often gave parents money or goods, 55.0% sometimes gave financial assistance to parents, and about 22.2% never gave parents money. The average amount of the financial support was about 818.2 Yuan. T-test result revealed that amount of the financial support among the elderly had significant difference. The average amount of financial support of the older parent living alone was lower than other older parents living in nuclear family, lineal family and skipped-generation household. The average amount of financial support of the skipped-generation household was higher than other families. The possible reason is older people living with their grandchildren, and part of money children family living separated provided included the living expenses of the older people's grandchildren.

Table 1 Financial support

Content	Frequency (%) (N=1277)				The amount of the financial support (Yuan) (N=1277)				
	Never	sometimes	often	Likelihood test	minimum	maximum	mean	Standard deviation	T-Test
One person household	24.70	59.04	16.27	ns	0.0	8000.0	550.8	886.430	①、②:** ①、③:ns
Nuclear family	22.73	52.88	24.38		0.0	10000.0	928.7	1522.141	①、④:** ②、③:**
Lineal family	19.27	57.81	22.92		0.0	12000.0	660.5	1188.877	②、④:ns
Skipped-generation household	25.00	50.83	24.17		0.0	25000.0	1133.3	2791.299	③、④:**
Total	22.16	54.97	22.87		0.0	25000.0	818.2	1544.269	***

Data resource: the survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China

Note: *** P<0.001, ** P<0.01, * P<0.05, +P<0.1.

Table 2 shows the status of practical support for the parent family provided by children family without living together with parents during the last 12 months. The result reveals that only about 30.0% of descendent families did housework for the old parent; the others did not help parents with housework in daily life. Parent living alone got more practical support than parents living in skipped-generation household, lineal household and nuclear family. Likelihood test results show that practical support among different living arrangements of older people have significant differences.

Table 2 Practical support %

Content	Rarely do	Once a month	Several times a month	Several times a week	Do every day	Likelihood test	Sample
One person household	65.66	6.63	10.24	7.23	10.24	***	166
Nuclear family	63.92	9.23	14.83	7.74	4.28		607
Lineal family	64.84	16.93	9.90	6.77	1.56		384
Skipped-generation household	71.67	15.00	8.33	1.67	3.33		120
Total	65.15	11.75	12.14	6.81	4.15		1277

Data resource: the survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China

Note: *** P<0.001, ** P<0.01, * P<0.05, +P<0.1.

Table 3 shows the status of emotional support for the parent family provided by children family without living together with parents during the last 12 months. The result indicates that 18.7% of old people did not be willing to tell child what were on their heart. It was more common among the old parents living alone. More than 50% of children were willing to listen to parents telling their worries. The proportion of children not willing to listen to parents disclosing their mind was relatively low. The proportion of children sometimes not willing to parents living in skipped-generation household speaking their matters was relatively high. There are significant differences among old parents living in one person household, nuclear family, lineal family, and skipped-generation household.

Table 3 Emotional support %

Content	Parent not willing to speak with child	Always not willing to listen to parents	Sometimes willing to listen to parents	Always willing to listen to parents	Likelihood test	Sample
One person household	26.51	4.22	17.47	51.81	**	166
Nuclear family	18.12	7.41	19.11	55.35		607
Lineal family	19.27	4.43	16.93	59.38		384
Skipped-generation household	9.17	5.00	30.00	55.83		120
Total	18.72	5.87	19.26	56.15		1277

Data resource: the survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China.

Note: *** P<0.001, ** P<0.01, * P<0.05, +P<0.1.

Determinants of the family support

Descriptions of the variables in the analysis of determinants of family support

Table 4 gives the descriptions of the variables in the analysis of determinants of family support. About 13.0% of elderly respondents were living alone, 47.5% were living with wife, and 9.4% were living in skipped-generation households. About 41.0% of parent families were economic self-sufficiency. Every elderly respondent has an average of 3.6 children living separated from parents, and about 46.4% were son family. There were 15.3% of child family living separated from parents because of migration, and 24.3% due to family separation. About 50.9% of child family is mainly depending on non farm income and about 5.6% without having fixed income. About 38.6% of relationship between parent and children's spouse is better, 36.3%, 19.2% is bad. 60.0% of older parents took care of the grandchildren, 31.6% not help child look after children.

Table 4 here

Determinants of family support afforded by child family

Table 5 reports the determinants of family support afforded by child family living separated from parents. There are three models in multi-linear regressions. Model 1 to 3 estimates the odds ratios of the financial support, practical support, and emotional support respectively. The results are summarized as follows.

Table 5 here

Model 1 shows that financial support provided for couple families is significantly higher than that for parents living in lineal family. Parent families being economic self-sufficiency received less financial support than parent families not being self-sufficiency. The more the number of child families without living parents, the less the amount of financial support parents received. Financial support provided by child families whose incomes mainly come from non farm income is significantly higher than child families mainly depend on farm incomes. The former is about 1.63 ($e^{0.488}$) times of the latter. Financial support offered by child families with no fixed income is lower than those families whose mainly income coming from farm. Child family current residence far from parent family over 100 km gives more money to parent than those living in the same village as parents, and the former is about 1.65 ($e^{0.500}$) times of the latter. The better the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the more the financial help parent family receive. Whether parents have cared of grandchildren has no significant effect on financial support offered by

child family. Financial support for parent family has no significant difference among different survey regions.

Model 2 shows that one person household or couple families received more practical support than lineal families. The former are 1.34 ($e^{0.291}$) and 1.29 ($e^{0.251}$) respectively. Parent families being economic self-sufficiency received less practical support than parent families not being self-sufficiency. Child families without living with parents because of separation among brother families do less housework for parents than those children leaving parents due to marriage. The former is 75.7% ($e^{0.279}$) of the latter. Child families without fixed income do less housework for parents in daily life. How far child family live from where parent family live has significant effect on practical support provided by child family. The farther child family live from where parent family live, the less practical support child family provide for parent family. Bad relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law results of less practical support offered by child family. Practical support for parent family has significant difference among different survey regions.

Model 3 shows that parents living in skipped-generation family receive less emotional support than those living in lineal family. Parent families being economic self-sufficiency received less emotional support than parent families not being self-sufficiency, and the former is only 82.7% ($e^{0.190}$) of the latter. Child families without living with parents because of separation among brother families give parents less emotional support than those leaving parents due to marriage. While the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law is bad, emotional support child family give to parents is relatively less. Emotional support for parent family has significant difference among different survey regions.

Discussion & Summary

Using sample data from a survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China conducted by Institute of Population and Labor Economics, China Academy of Social Science in seven provinces in 2010, this paper reveals the status of the economic support, practical support, and emotional support for the parent family. And determinants of the supports for the parent family from the perspective of the family using multi-linear regression models are also disclosed. There are several observations and findings from the analyses of this study.

First, Due to marriage, labor emigration and separation among brother families, rural elderly parents living apart from their children are rising in China. And living arrangement of old parents have been changed, which result in the differences of family support among old parents. This paper finds that parents living alone receive the lowest financial support, and the most practical support among old parents. Parents living in skipped-generation family get the highest financial support. On the whole, there are significant differences among old parents living in one person household, nuclear family, lineal family, and skipped-generation household.

Second, parent family factors have effects on family support provided by child family living separated from parents. Living arrangements of parents influence the family support. Parents living alone or in nuclear families receive more practical support than parents living in lineal family. Couple families get higher financial support than parents living in lineal family. It is maybe because parents living in lineal family have accepted much support provided by the child living with them in daily life; accordingly they reduced the need of supports provided by children not living with them. Parent families being economic self-sufficiency received less financial support than those not being self-sufficiency. In real life, majority of the rural old people being economic self-sufficient can work in the fields, and take care of their own life. Therefore, they have a relatively weak dependency on their children.

Third, Child family factors influence the family support. The more the number of child family, the less the amount of money parent family receives. To some extent, children share the responsibilities of supporting old parents; so to each descendant family, supply for old parent drops. It embodies that family support has the feature of cooperate model. Child families without living with parents because of separation among brother families give parents less practical support and emotional support than those leaving parents due to marriage. The possible reason is that separation inevitably resulted in transfer of family property from parents to descendent family, and after separation resources being available for parents to intergenerational exchange were reduced, the family authority of parents were weaken, those all reduced the possibility for children to exchange and communicate with parents in

daily life. Child families whose incomes mainly come from non farm income provide more financial support for parents, whereas child families with no fixed income give less financial support to parents. To some extent, stable and relatively high family income is a guarantee of child family to provide financial support for parents. As incomes increase, children will also raise their parents' financial support. How far child family lives from where parent family lives have significant influence on family support provided by child family living separated. The farther the child family lives from where parent family lives, the more the financial support for parents, and the less the practical support for parents. How far child family lives from where parent family lives restricts child family's providing parents with practical support. As the compensation for the lack of taking care of parents in daily life, children living far away from where parents live will supply parent with more financial support. Those living near where parents live always provide more practical support. It indicates that there is division of labor cooperation on support for the elderly among children family.

In addition, there is no significant difference between son family and daughter family on supporting for parents, stating that at the current daughters also take responsibility for family support in rural areas in China. With the development of modern means of communication and transportation, how far child family lives from where parent family lives have no effect on exchange of emotional support among child family and parents.

Fourth, Relationship among parents and son-in-law or daughter-in-law has significant influence on family support. The better the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the more the financial help parent family receive; the worse the relationship among parents and daughter-in-law or son-in-law, the less the practical support and emotional support offered by child family. Whether it is because spousal relationship has been regarded as more important in current family is need to do further study. Taking care of grandchildren does not significantly influence family support, which does not reflect exchange characteristic of intergenerational relations.

The possible reason is that parent and children consider that it is fit that parents take care of grandchildren, and do not regard taking care of child as the resource for intergenerational exchange.

Lastly, supports for parent have significant difference among different survey regions. Financial supports provided by children family in Anhui, Zhejiang, and Guangdong are higher than in Hebei; practical supports are lower in Shaanxi, Anhui, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Guangxi than in Hebei; and emotional supports are less in Jilin, Shaanxi, Anhui, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Guangxi than in Hebei. On the one hand, it is influenced by traditional cultural custom about support for the elderly in different areas. On the other hands, it maybe subject to economic development level, household income, rural-urban migration, and so on. The geographical differences in rural family support for the elderly still need further in-depth study.

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Table 4 Descriptions of the variables in the analysis of determinants of family support

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Financial support	4.973	2.767
Practical support	0.731	1.161
Emotional support	2.128	1.161
Parent family factors		
Family type of parent (linear family)		
One person household	0.130	0.336
Nuclear family	0.475	0.500
Skipped generation family	0.094	0.292
Economic situation of Parent family (not self-sufficient)		
Self-sufficient	0.410	0.492
Factors of child family without living together with parents		
Total number of the child family	3.610	1.471
Type of the child family (daughter family)		
Son family	0.464	0.499
Causes of child family not living with parent (marriage)		
Child's non-agriculture employment	0.153	0.360
Separation among brother families	0.243	0.429
Family economic source (agricultural income)		
No-agricultural income	0.509	0.229
No fixed income	0.056	0.229
How far child family live from where parent family live (0 km)		
0~5 km	0.278	0.353
5~20 km	0.190	0.448
20~100 km	0.106	0.392
100+ km	0.255	0.320
Factors of the relationship between parent family and child family		
Relationship between parent and children's spouse (child without spouse)		
Good	0.386	0.487
Average	0.363	0.481
Bad	0.192	0.394
Parent's caring of grandchildren (child not having children)		
Do not look after (child having children)	0.316	0.465
Look after	0.600	0.490
Province (Hebei province)		
Jilin province	0.080	0.271
Shaanxi province	0.241	0.430
Anhui province	0.189	0.391
Zhejiang province	0.060	0.237
Guangdong province	0.155	0.362
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	0.182	0.386
Sample	1277	

Reference categories appear in parentheses.

Data resource: The survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China.

Table 5 Determinants analysis of the family support

Viabile	Financial support	Practical support	Emotional support
Parent family factors			
Family type of parent (linear family)			
One person house-hold	-0.188	0.291**	-0.160
Nuclear family	0.309+	0.251***	-0.101
Skipped generation family	-0.138	0.129	-0.198+
Economic situation of Parent family (not self-sufficient)			
Self-sufficient	-1.248***	-0.255***	-0.190***
Factors of child family without living together with parents			
Total number of the child family	-0.121*	0.016	0.012
Type of the child family (daughter family)			
Son family	0.060	0.111	-0.046
Causes of child family not living with parent (marriage)			
Child's non-agriculture employment	0.431	-0.164	-0.045
Separation among brother families	0.244	-0.279**	-0.245**
Family economic source (agricultural income)			
No-agricultural income			
No fixed income	-1.734***	-0.229+	-0.235+
How far child family live from where parent family live (0 km)			
0~5 km	0.137	-0.091	-0.029
5~20 km	0.341	-0.444***	-0.081
20~100 km	0.394	-0.570***	-0.019
100+ km	0.500*	-0.948***	0.032
Factors of the relationship between parent family and child family			
Relationship between parent and children's spouse (child without spouse)			
Good	1.471***	-0.030	0.249
Average	0.506	-0.070	0.035
Bad	0.156	-0.320*	-0.534***
Parent's caring of grandchildren (child not having children)			
Do not look after (child having children)	0.653+	-0.055	0.110
Look after	0.367	0.151	0.173
Province (Hebei province)			
Jilin province	-0.470	-0.233	-1.010***
Shaanxi province	-0.403	-0.664***	-0.866***
Anhui province	0.506	-0.745***	0.044
Zhejiang province	0.517	-0.875***	-0.738***
Guangdong province	0.602+	-0.572***	-0.585***
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	-0.209	-0.700***	-0.306*
-LL	-2948.517	-1839.726	-1768.617

Data resource: the survey of urban-rural family structure and intergenerational relationship in China

Note: *** P<0.001, ** P<0.01, * P<0.05, +P<0.1.