

Research Article

Attitude towards future elderly support: a study among Indonesian young adults

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ABSTRACT

Background: Demographic phenomenon of population ageing in Indonesia has raised concern over number of issues including the provision of long-term support for older people. Since young generation has been influenced by social economic development, this may affect the willingness of taking care for their ageing parents. This study is intended to examine adult children's willingness to parent care in the future and factors that associated with.

Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted among well-educated young adults who have a potential conflict between work responsibility and obligation to care for elderly parent in the future. A total of 300 final year students of a state university in Purwokerto district, Central Java, Indonesia, participated in this study. A self-administered questionnaire, using Likert scale (1-4), was used to measure attitudes in four types of support. A higher score meant a higher willingness to provide supports.

Results: The highest score was noted in emotional supports (3.67), followed by appraisal, instrumental and informational supports (3.50, 3.33 and 3.25 respectively). Gender and number of children in the family were significantly associated with commitment to provide support. Daughter showed higher willingness to provide emotional supports than son. Meanwhile, lower instrumental, appraisal and total supports were demonstrated by adult children who have one or less sibling than those who have two or more siblings.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that Indonesian young adult is likely to continue to uphold the value of intergenerational support. The findings also indicate that the gendered nature of care remains unchanged.

Keywords: Filial piety, Intergenerational support, Family caregiving

INTRODUCTION

Population ageing is a demographic phenomenon that indicated by increasing of the proportion of elderly to total population. This phenomenon has occurred in developed countries. Whereas, developing countries, including Indonesia will experience it soon. In 2015, the number of people aged 60 years old and over in Indonesia was over 8.2% of its total population. This number is expected to increase and reach 19.2% in 2050.¹ On one hand, population ageing could be seen as a success story in the history of mankind. People could live longer; even they suffer from chronic diseases, thanks to advancement

in health care and disease treatment. However, on the other hand, as the number of older people increase, it is expected that the need of long term care will also increase significantly in the future.

In Indonesia, long term support for older people has primarily come from family members.² The responsibility, including for physical, emotional and financial assistance, is usually shared among adult children.³ The role of government in this case is considered very limited.²

However, there is a concern over the availability of long term supports for older people in the coming years. Social economic changes, including urbanization, woman participation in workforce, change in size and family structure, and also change in social norms, have been occurring in the country.³ Thus, the willingness and ability of family member to provide long term supports, such as physical care or daily assistances for their elderly parents are being questioned.³

A qualitative study conducted among well-educated young adult in Indonesia found that the traditional notion which perceives that to be a filial children one has to live together in one house with their parents and provide direct care or physical assistance is no longer valid. As they identified potential conflict in the future over choice between employment and responsibility to care for their elderly parents, they would like to re-negotiate the enactment of filial obligation which might be slightly different to previous generation.⁴ Those findings indicate that older people will no longer be able to depend exclusively on assistances from family members as in the past. It is not impossible that they might have to be ready to seek assistances or supports from external resources.

The current issue of intergenerational support for elderly parents in Indonesia remains under investigation. By exploring the attitude of adult children as a prospective caregiver for their elderly parent, future needs regarding elderly care in Indonesia can be determined. This study is undertaken to examine the willingness of well-educated young adult to provide future support to their elderly parents and factors that might influence it.

METHODS

Subject and recruitment

The cross-sectional study was carried out on sample of undergraduate students of a state university in Purwokerto district, Central Java, Indonesia. University students were selected because they are well-educated young adults who possibly have to negotiate dilemmas in the future over choices between employment and caring responsibilities. Furthermore, university students were chosen as they are quite diverse, in terms of ethnicity background. This would give more general viewpoint of Indonesian. Inclusions for participation were as follows: 1) a final year student (4th or 5th year), and 2) has a living parent/s with any marital status (married, divorced or widowed).

A total of 300 students participated in this study who recruited using two stages of sampling; quota and convenience sampling. In the first stage, 25 students were allotted from each of 6 faculties. Next step, research assistant approach students based on the convenient accessibility.

Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire, using 4 point Likert scale (1= almost never to 4= almost always), was used to measure attitude toward future elderly support. A total of 20 items which classified into four types of support: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, was developed by researchers from literature review.

In the information sheet, it was explained that the participation was not compulsory and the participants' privacy would not be compromised. Written inform consent was obtained from each participant.

Data analysis

SPSS was used to manage data and for carrying out quantitative analysis of data. Categorical data, including respondent's gender, number of sibling, birth order, number of living parent, parent-children relationship, elderly parents, parents' health status, family type, family economic, and type of residence were explained using frequency distribution. Meanwhile, the distribution of numerical data, including age and attitude toward intergenerational support score were described using central tendency and dispersion. Since data are not normally distributed, instead of mean and standard deviation, median and min-max were used to explain the distribution. For bivariate analysis, Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare score of intergenerational supports between groups that classified based on demographic characteristics.

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics

Overall, 300 final year students were recruited to take part in this study. Table 1 describes demographic characteristics of children, parents and family. The median age of respondents was 22 years old (20-24), with 65% of them are female. Approximately two third of respondents have 2 or more sibling (63.3%). Based on birth order, respondents are distributed relatively even among first child, last child and other (40%, 32% and 28% respectively). The majority of respondents have both parents who still alive (93.6%), biologically related (99%), aged <60 years old (90%) and in a good health (87%). Related to family type, the majority are a nuclear family (90%). There is an equal distribution between groups of respondent who come from double income and single income family. Approximately two third of the families live in urban (64.3%).

Intergenerational supports

The attitude of adult children toward intergenerational support is shown in Table 2. In general, it is likely that respondents have high willingness to provide supports to

their parent in the future. The average of total support was 3.42 (on the possible range from 1 to 4). The highest

Table 1: Demographic characteristics (n=300).

Characteristics		n (%)
Age (years) [#]		22 (20-24)
Sex	Male	105 (35)
	Female	195 (65)
Number of sibling	0 (the only child)	12 (4)
	1	98 (32.7)
	2 or more	190 (63.3)
Birth order	First child	120 (40)
	Last child	96 (32)
	Other	84 (28)
Living parent	Both	281 (93.6)
	Only one	19 (6.3)
Biological parent	Both	297 (99)
	None or one	3 (1)
Elderly parent (≥ 60 yrs.)	None	270 (90)
	Both or one	30 (10)
Parents' health status	Both in a good health	261 (87)
	One or both not in a good health	39 (13)
Family type	Nuclear	272 (90.7)
	Extended	28 (9.3)
Family economics	Double income	156 (52)
	Single income	141 (47)
	No income	3 (1)
Type of residence	Urban	197 (64.3)
	Rural	107 (35.7)

[#]Age is not normally distributed, so it is described in median (min-max).

score was observed for emotional support emotional supports (3.67), followed by appraisal and instrumental supports (3.50, 3.33 respectively). Meanwhile, the lowest support was noted for informational support (3.25).

Factor associated to intergenerational supports

Statistical analysis was performed to examine demographic characteristics might influence the attitude toward future elderly support (Table 3). Two demographic characteristics namely gender and numbers of children in the family were found to be associated with intergenerational supports. There was a significant difference in emotional support score between female and male children ($p < 0.05$). For number of sibling, there were significant differences in instrumental, appraisal and total supports between adult children who have one or less sibling and those who have two or more siblings ($p < 0.01$; $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.01$ respectively). Other demographic variables were not significantly associated with attitude toward future elderly support.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the willingness of well-educated young adult to provide future support to their elderly parents and factors that might influence it. Results show that young adults are more willing to provide emotional and appraisal supports, yet less willing to give instrumental and informational support to parents in the future.

Table 2: Intergenerational supports (n=300).

Type	Median (Min-Max)
Emotional	3.67 (1.50-4.00)
Instrumental	3.33 (1.50-4.00)
Informational	3.25 (1.00-4.00)
Appraisal	3.50 (1.75-4.00)
Total	3.42 (1.73-4.00)

Data are not normally distributed, so they are explained in median (min-max). The possible range of score is 1-4. The higher score means the higher supports.

Table 3: Factors associated to intergenerational support (n=300).

	Em	Inst	Inf	App	Total
Sex					
Male	3.50*	3.17	3.25	3.5	3.38
Female	3.67	3.33	3.25	3.5	3.46
Number of sibling					
≤1	3.58	3.00**	3.00	3.25**	3.28**
≥2	3.67	3.33	3.50	3.75	3.46

Em: Emotional supports; Inst: Instrumental supports; Inf supports; App: Appraisal support. Data are not normally distributed, so they are explained in median. The possible range of score is 1-4. The higher score means the higher supports. *Significantly different at $p < 0.05$ level; **significantly different at $p < 0.01$ level. Bivariate analysis was conducted to all demographic variables, yet table only shows those significantly associated with intergenerational supports.

Having the high commitment to give parents emotional and appraisal support could be explained by the following reasons. First, young adults are more likely to choose the most possible way to demonstrate filial responsibility amidst uncertainty they might face. It is likely that providing emotional supports such as paying attention, showing respect, staying connecting, keeping in touch and praising are less costly and less problematic compare to other form of supports. Financial supports expect adult children to be financially equipped, while daily life assistance requires them to be physically present.⁵ Respondents in this study are students that mostly have not yet joined in paid work. Thus it seems sensible that they feel unsure about giving financial assistances.

Second, the respondents of this study are well educated; therefore they might acknowledge that it is very important to maintain parent's psychological comfort

above and beyond physical. This could be achieved through giving emotional supports. As an expression of children's love to parents, showing affection and giving comfort is considered to be more important than merely supporting them with material riches.⁶

Another interesting point of this study is the willingness of respondents to provide an informational support hold the lowest score. This kind of support is actually also inexpensive and less complicated but this is the least support that young adult want to do for the elderly in the future. In Indonesian culture, there is a tendency to assume that as ones being older, they would have more knowledge and experiences. Thus, they are expected by society to be a wise man who could give guidance and advice to the young one. Therefore, it is unlikely to young people, though well-educated, to give an advice to elder because they are considered to have less life experience.

Gender, in this study, was significantly associated with the desire to provide support to parents. Adult daughters have a greater willingness to meet psychological needs of elderly parent through emotional support than son. The culture, traditionally, defines gendered division on responsibility and task in the family. Society upholds the view that female and male adult children were assigned to distinct roles based on how care tasks were shared.⁴ Daily life assistances and affective support are gendered activities in which men cannot be expected to participated.⁷

Two factors are suggested to contribute to this reality. First, is the traditional gendered-based division of labour. Within this tradition, men are perceived as family breadwinners and their primary responsibility is fulfilling family financial needs. The second contributing factor is perceived "caregiver personality". Women are believed to be naturally born with the personality traits commensurate to being good caregivers, such as patience, caring, and attentiveness.⁴

Furthermore, number of sibling is significantly associated with willingness to take care of parent in the future. Children with no or one sibling, logically, have higher sense of responsibility in caring for the elderly, but this study showed different results. As a single child in the family or only have one sibling, where all or most the parents' attention given to them, it not always make them become more obligate to care for parent. In the absence of the child's sibling, or if only has one sibling, children less learn about sharing and caring, so that they may developed poor sense of familial responsibility.⁸ Conversely, the children with siblings, they are well trained for sharing and caring that apparently they will have more developed sense of familial responsibility.

However, it should be noted that, the presence of siblings doesn't always mean that everyone in the family would have equal contribution to parental caregiving. Previous

study found that there were many cases where siblings, though well-intended and wanting to share parental care responsibilities, could not really contribute equally in terms of financial and physical parental care.⁵

The university where this study conducted is situated in a small town in Central Java, which is less urbanized and less industrialized. Though, the students come from different parts of Indonesia, it is very possible that they have been influenced by the local norms or values which is likely to be more conventional. Thus, this finding cannot be generalized to all young Indonesian adults. Further research is suggested with larger sample from heavily industrialized city.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that the value of intergenerational support continues to be upheld by society. Thus, health care professionals should appreciate and could help preserve the values, for example by involving family members in the care activity. Furthermore, high willingness to provide emotional supports indicates that psychological well-being of elderly parents is important in the view of young people. Health care professionals should take this into accounts and not merely focusing on fulfilling physical needs when dealing with older people. The findings also indicate that the gendered nature of care remains unchanged. It implies the need to promote equality between men and women in regard to caregiving responsibility.

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