INTRODUCTION

The population of adults over age 65 in China has rapidly increased and is projected to reach an estimate of 300 million by 2050 in mainland China (Banister, Bloom & Rosenberg, 2010; Today’s Research on Aging, 2010). Families in China who endorse traditional family values and patrilineal norms expect women to become primary family caregivers—especially married women to their in-laws (Borthwick, 2010). In recent years, there have been heated debates regarding whether the traditional caregiving system still prevails or if it has been transformed by increased globalization and urbanization. Research on intergenerational support in contemporary China is far from conclusive (Gruijters, 2017; Xie & Zhu, 2009). Little has been done to understand what factors might be associated with the extent to which Chinese adults provide support to their in-laws.

Hypotheses

The reciprocity hypothesis: The level of support provided to in-laws will be associated with the level of support received from parents-in-law and with frequency of intergenerational contact (Social Exchange Theory; Liang, Krause, & Bennett, 2001).

The interdependence of subsystems hypothesis (parent-in-law/child and marital): The level of support to in-laws will be positively associated with adult children’s marital satisfaction and gender role ideology (Family Systems Theory; Cox & Paley, 2003).

Given the historically differential role expectations for women and men in Chinese society, we also hypothesize that these associations will vary by gender.

PARTICIPANTS

- The 2006 China General Social Survey (CGSS) • Conducted in 2006 with 3,208 adults aged 18 or over in mainland China; • CGSS is part of EASS (East Asian Social Survey), a biennial survey of four East Asian countries: China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.
- We selected participants who were married and had 2 living parents-in-law (N = 1088).
- Gender: males (n = 536), females (n = 552).

MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Financial Support from parents-in-law</th>
<th>Instrumental support to In-Laws</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face with mother-in-law</td>
<td>4.01 (1.48)</td>
<td>4.96 (2.01)</td>
<td>1 - 8 **</td>
<td>Financial Support to In-Laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face with father-in-law</td>
<td>4.00 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.97 (2.02)</td>
<td>1 - 8 **</td>
<td>Instrumental Support to In-Laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other contact with mother-in-law</td>
<td>4.46 (1.36)</td>
<td>5.10 (1.32)</td>
<td>1 - 8 **</td>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other contact with father-in-law</td>
<td>4.46 (1.35)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.32)</td>
<td>1 - 8 **</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean (SD) range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

RESULTS

We found partial support for our first hypothesis, in that greater support received from in-laws was associated with both greater financial and instrumental assistance provided to in-laws, but frequency of contact with in-laws was associated only with provision of instrumental support.

Our interdependence of subsystems hypothesis was partially supported. Traditional gender role ideology and marital satisfaction are related only with level of financial support to parents-in-law.

There are gender differences among these associations ➔ Sons-in-law’s traditional gender ideology is associated with financial support provided to parents-in-law. ➔ Daughters-in-law’s marital satisfaction is associated with providing both types of support to parents-in-law.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

- According to our findings, providing support to children-in-law might be associated with receiving support from children-in-law concurrently, and possibly in later life.
- Given that a happy marriage is significant for wives’ provision of support to in-laws, our findings regarding the interdependence of subsystems are especially important for families who believe in and practice traditional family care systems, where daughters-in-law are the main caregivers.

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