



Associates and Gender Differences in Caregiving to Parents-in-law in Mainland China



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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, 1985; Silverstein & Giarrusso, 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 (Grujters, 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

	Men		Women		p
	Mean (SD)	range	Mean (SD)	range	
Independent Variables					
Contact					
Face-to-face with mother-in-law	4.01 (1.48)	1 - 8	4.96 (2.01)	1 - 8	***
Face-to-face with father-in-law	4.00 (1.46)	1 - 8	4.97 (2.02)	1 - 8	***
Other contact with mother-in-law	4.46 (1.36)	1 - 8	5.10 (1.82)	1 - 8	***
Other contact with father-in-law	4.46 (1.35)	1 - 8	5.11 (1.82)	1 - 8	***
Received Support from parents-in-law					
Financial	1.73 (.91)	1 - 5	1.84 (.99)	1 - 5	NS
Instrumental	1.90 (.96)	1 - 5	2.23 (1.14)	1 - 5	***
Gender Role Ideology					
Wife helps husband's career	4.80 (1.19)	1 - 7	4.62 (1.26)	1 - 7	*
Husband earns money, wife cares home	4.56 (1.30)	1 - 7	4.44 (1.42)	1 - 7	NS
Marital Satisfaction					
	3.98 (.64)	1 - 5	3.95 (.68)	1 - 5	NS
Dependent Variables					
Financial support to In-Laws	2.50 (.93)	1 - 5	2.57 (1.01)	1 - 5	NS
Instrumental support to In-Laws	2.17 (.99)	1 - 5	2.65 (1.06)	1 - 5	***
Control Variables					
Age	37.96 (8.77)	22 - 69	35.71 (8.48)	20 - 63	***
Education	9.85 (3.36)	0 - 21	9.20 (3.77)	0 - 19	**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

RESULTS

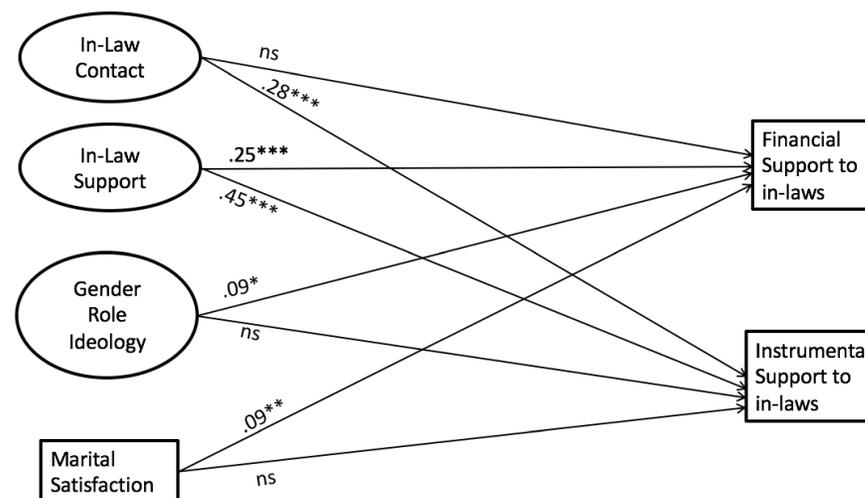


Figure 1. Associates of Caregiving to Parents-in-law in Mainland China
Notes. Standardized path coefficients are shown. The covariate effects of participants' age and educational levels are not depicted. Chi-Square = (61, 252.34; $p < .001$). RMSEA = .054; CFI = .978; SRMR = .050.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

RESULTS cont.

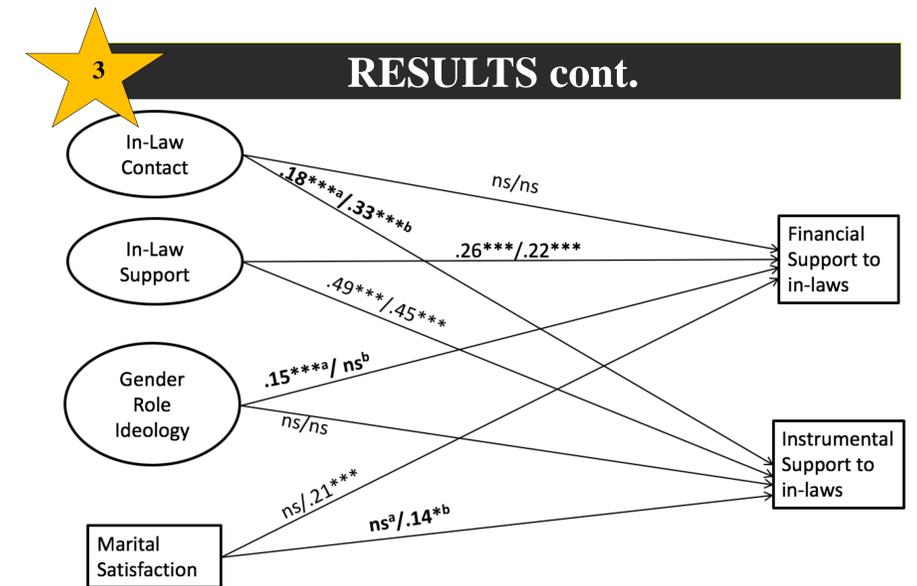


Figure 2. Associates of Caregiving to Parents-in-law in Mainland China: Differences in Daughters-in-law and Sons-in-law.

Notes. Standardized path coefficients are shown for men/women. Different superscript letters indicate path differences by gender. The covariate effects of participants' age and educational levels are not depicted. RMSEA = .053; CFI = .981; SRMR = .059. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

STUDY FINDINGS

- 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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