

The health impact of caring for grandchildren on grandparent caregivers: A longitudinal study in Taiwan

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Abstract: This dissertation seeks to determine the impact of caring for grandchildren on the health and health care utilization of Chinese grandparent caregivers. While the current literature on grandparent caregiving has largely shown negative health impact, most of these studies were based in the U.S. and thus grandparents in other countries and cultures have been under-represented. Using four waves of the Survey of Health and Living Status of the Elderly in Taiwan, this longitudinal study not only contributes to cross-cultural comparisons but also addresses methodological issues in the current literature. Panel data analyses are used to estimate the effect of caregiving while controlling for caregiver selection using both fixed effects and instrumental variables. Results show health improvement among grandparent caregivers in measures of self-rated health, mobility limitations, and depressive symptoms. No significant difference is found in health care utilization by grandparent caregiving status, except that caregivers in skipped-generation households or those who have continued to provide care for more than three years are more likely to report having unmet health needs. The overall findings support our hypothesis that caring for grandchildren can be beneficial for the health of grandparents in the Chinese cultural context.

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