

The Advantage of Co-residence of Grandparents and Sufficient Household Wealth on Life Satisfaction of Preadolescent Grandchildren in Thai Society

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Abstract

Family without elderly parents have been generally throughout Western culture, however, typical Thai norm is somehow respected on extended family which grandparents living in the same household. This study is focusing on the benefit of co-residence of grandparents on psychological development of grandchildren at early adolescence. Participants were at age 12 – 15 years in a district of Central Thailand. Self-administrative questionnaires were used to assess individual-household characteristics and psychological outcomes. Results support the significant of intergeneration family on youth's life satisfaction. Household wealth is associated with youth's life satisfaction, however, interaction between intergeneration family and household wealth is not statistically significant. Regardless parental attachment, intergeneration family based on sufficient household wealth could contribute life satisfaction among early adolescents.

Key words

Intergeneration family, household wealth, life satisfaction

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Introduction

Family structure has been changed due to industrialization. Male breadwinner household model has been altered. Labor market participation of women has dramatically increased in order to survive among higher living cost. Nuclear family has been generally emerged as modernization. For Thai context, however, typical norm of society is somehow respected. Family formation is based on a matrilineal residence, that is, at least one adult child (adult daughter is preferred) with couple would permanently stay in the same household with their own parents like an extended family, while other adult children leave to form their own families in other households nearby (Podhisita, 2011). A recent survey studying on family in Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam emphasizes the regional cultural context (KNODEL & NGUYEN, 2015). Authors state that elderly person age 60 and older commonly co-reside with adult children and provide grandchildren care. It represents the reciprocal intergenerational obligations which is not only one-directional but grandchildren can also support grandparents.

A recent study in Thailand on child development (Chaimongkol, 2012) mentions the causal link of attachment security in Thai group, which is the nature of extended family could play their roles as either primary or secondary caretaker. Some studies reflect the role of grandparents on grandchildren's care (Chivanon, Wacharasin, Homchampa, & Phuphaibul, 2013; Kamnuansilpa & Wongthanavas, 2005). Other grandparents devote their fulltime for grandchildren as a parental substitute, whilst some take action on daycare for childrearing during working commitment of parents (Kamnuansilpa & Wongthanavas, 2005). They play their roles on feeding, playing, teaching, disciplining, and daily-routine caring, as well as interaction with grandchildren as encouraging, supporting, ignoring, and threatening (Chivanon et al., 2013).

Socioeconomic change push the pressure on the regulation of maternity and parental leaves for better jobs. Many parents are absent in order to get better work in the big city, however, they are taking accountability on grandchildren's financial support. Some of them stay away for continuous long time, whilst others leave for hours or days, and return home in the evenings or weekends. Childrearing by grandparents is common for Thai family, nevertheless, some studies present the delayed intellectual development of children aged 6 – 12 years who brought up by grandparents when comparing to those brought up by parents (Nanthamongkolchai,

Munsawaengsub, & Nanthamongkolchai, 2009, 2011). On the other hand, a recent study on the psychological well-being of children aged 8 – 15 years who grew up with grandparents while their parents on out-migration found that the children's psychological outcomes was not different from those living with their parents (Jampaklay et al., 2012). It is unclear to make a conclusion about the effect of childrearing by grandparents on their kids. So this study aims to examine the relation between family with grandparents and life satisfaction of children by controlling for household wealth and parental attachment. It is to prove that co-residence of elderly person in family could contribute the positive outcomes among early adolescents who are during physical and psychological transition.

Method

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 1,390 adolescents aged 12 – 15 years in four secondary schools in a district of Central Thailand. A self-administered questionnaire was completed during class time. Data collection took place between December 2014 and January 2015. The study was approved by the Institutional Review board (IRB) of the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University, Thailand (COA. No. 2014/1-1-35).

Thirty-six of the 60 grade 7 – 9 classes were randomly selected to participate in the study. The school directors and teachers were contacted to take part in the study. All eligible students were given a study information sheet and consent form to give to their primary caregivers. Caregiver consent was determined through an opt-out procedure (43.38%). Students whose caregivers did not opt-out were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary before being given the assessment and students completing questionnaires. Each student was given a pen as a token of thanks for participating. Participants completed their own questionnaires within the 50-minute class. The researcher and assistant team were available in the room to provide more information if needed.

Study setting and population

The study was conducted in Phanat Nikhom, a suburban district in the Chon Buri province of Central Thailand. The district was chosen as it closely matches the demographic composition of the country (see population pyramid in Figure 1). The total population of Phanat Nikhom in 2013 was approximately 97,306 and 4.87% were aged between 12 – 15 years. (Official statistics registration systems, 2013). There are four schools providing secondary education in the district. During the 2014 academic year, there were 2,536 students in 60 classes enrolled in grades 7 – 9 (57.10% female). The mean ordinary national education test (O-NET) scores of youth within the province were not different from the rest of the country.

Figure 1 Population pyramids of Thailand, and Phanat Nikhom respectively (data from Official Statistics Registration Systems, 2013)

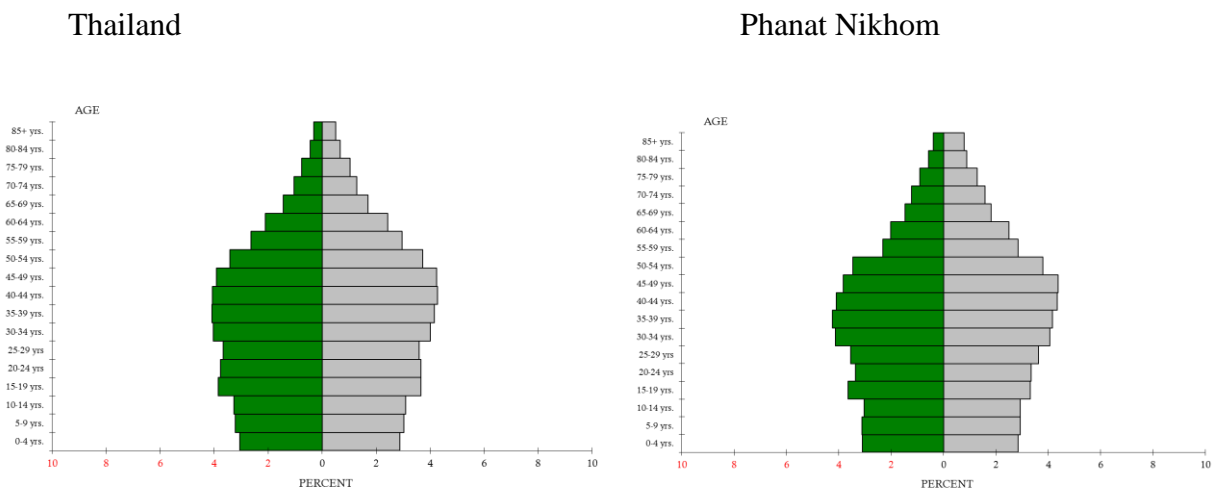
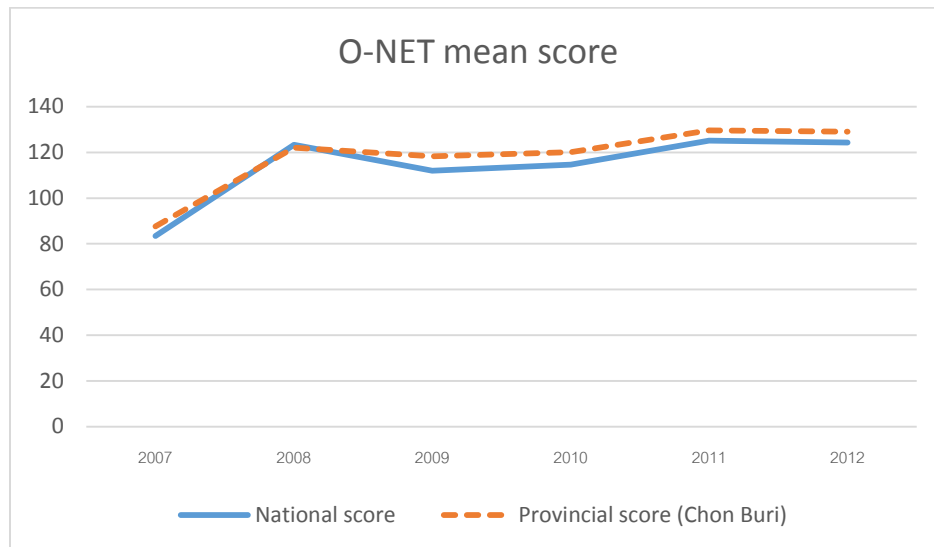


Figure 2 Mean score of ordinary national education test (O-NET) among students in the 6th, 9th, and 12th grade (2007 - 2012)



Source: Office of data and social indicators development, analyzed by National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization)²

² 2007-2008: test for grade 6th evaluated by 3 subjects; Thai language, Mathematics, and Science; 2007: test for grade 9th evaluated by 5 subjects; Thai language study, Social study, English language study, Mathematics and Science; 2005-2006: test for grade 6th evaluated by 5 subjects; Thai language study, Social study, English language study, Mathematics and Science; 2009-2013: test for all evaluated by 6 subjects; Thai language study, Social study, English language study, Mathematics, Science, Health education

Measurements

Intergeneration family

Intergeneration family was referred to the presence of at least one grandparent in the household. It was encoded by information about who living in the household, which were (1) family with at least one grandparent living in; and (0) family without grandparent.

Household wealth

Household wealth was derived from ownership of various household items (e.g. microwave oven, refrigerator, television, washing machine, car, mobile phone, etc.) by the principle components analysis (PCA). The proxy of household wealth was defined into three groups; poor (the bottom 40% or two bottom quintiles), moderate (the middle 40% or third and fourth quintiles), and rich (the top 20% or fifth quintile) (Jampaklay et al., 2012).

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction was assessed using the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) (Huebner, 1991). The SLSS is a 7-item measure which assesses global life satisfaction. Each item is scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Two items are reversed scores. Scores for each item are summed to create a total life satisfaction score. The range of sum scores is between 7 and 42. The higher scores present the greater life satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is satisfactory at 0.72.

Parental attachment

Parental attachment was assessed using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment – Revised (IPPA-R) for Children (Gullone & Robinson, 2005). Measurement for parent subscales has 28 items to which the adolescent rates on a 3-point scale ranging from 'never true' to 'always true' (3). Items negatively worded are reverse scored. The measure is scored on two subscales: parental (28 items; range: 28 – 84) and peer (25 items; range: 25 – 75). Cronbach alpha's coefficient is satisfactory at 0.88.

Analysis

Principle components analysis (PCA) was employed to aggregate the number of various household assets. A proxy of household wealth was referred by the first component from PCA. Table 1 displays the mean scores, standard deviations and factors scores of the components.

ANCOVA was used to examine the effect of intergeneration family, household wealth, and the two-way interaction between intergeneration family and household wealth on changes in the life satisfaction. Parental attachment was employed as covariate in order to assess the impact of intergeneration family independently of parental attachment. In all analyses, I am interested in the within-subjects main effect of intergeneration family and in its interaction with household wealth. When a statistically significant multivariate effect of intergeneration family, or an interaction of intergeneration family with household wealth, or both occurred, the univariate analyses by the Bonferroni test were examined.

Table 1 Principle components analysis and summary statistics for asset variables**N = 1360**

Variables	Mean	SD	Factor score for 1st principle component
Gas stove	1.39	.765	.418
Electric stove	.50	.638	.344
Microwave oven	.63	.567	.543
Electric thermos	1.08	.621	.540
Refrigerator	1.46	.771	.626
Electric pot	.67	.805	.338
Electric rice cooker	1.38	.679	.516
Electric iron	1.32	.630	.501
Electric fan	4.15	2.186	.617
Television	2.24	1.234	.735
Video / VCD player	1.27	.909	.554
Washing machine	1.10	.640	.530
Air conditioner	1.12	1.361	.618
Electric water heater in bathroom	.44	.731	.519
Computer (PC / notebook)	1.25	.985	.583
Tablet	.88	.971	.497
Mobile Phone	4.20	2.189	.608
Sedan	.57	.783	.511
Little truck / Pick-up truck / Van	.90	.952	.445
Farm tractor or other similar machinery	.53	1.144	.257
Motorcycle	1.99	1.256	.388
Bicycle	1.53	1.269	.433

Eigenvalue associated with 1st component 5.884

Share of variance associated with 1st component 26.75%

Cronbach's alpha coefficient .843

Results

One thousand three hundred and ninety six students completed the questionnaire (86.76 % of total target samples). However, 20 cases (1.43%) were excluded from the analysis as they were aged over 15 years. As a result, 1,360 participants are included in the analysis (61% girls). Adolescents currently lived with at least one grandparent (27.1%).

The relationship between life satisfaction and parental attachment was linear at a statistically significant level ($F(1, 1289) = 354.844, p < .001$). The assumption of normality was satisfied with skewness and kurtosis between +1.0 and -1.0 at both variables. To test the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes, the probability associated with the interaction (intergeneration family x household wealth x parental attachment) was greater than the alpha of diagnostic test ($F(5, 1326) = 1.787, p = .112$). Levene's test for equality of variance was also satisfied ($F(5, 1330) = 0.753, p = .589$).

The main effect for life satisfaction by intergeneration family was statistically significant ($F(1, 1329) = 5.758, p = .017$, partial eta squared = .004). Then the Bonferroni test was used to interpret the effect. The group with the highest mean of life satisfaction was respondents who were in the intergeneration family which their grandparents living with.

The main effect for life satisfaction by household wealth was also statistically significant ($F(2, 1329) = 3.376, p = .034$, partial eta squared = .005). The Bonferroni test indicated that the group with highest mean of life satisfaction were in the rich household wealth, however, the mean difference between rich and moderate household wealth was much smaller than the mean difference between rich and poor household wealth.

The interaction between intergeneration family and household wealth was not statistically significant ($F(2, 1329) = 0.805, p = .447$, partial eta squared = .001). So the relationship between intergeneration family and life satisfaction is not contingent on level of household wealth. However, the plots on Figure 1 demonstrate the trend of which youths living in intergeneration family with household wealth at moderate and rich level are more likely to have life satisfaction than those with poor household wealth.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and linearity test of life satisfaction and parental attachment

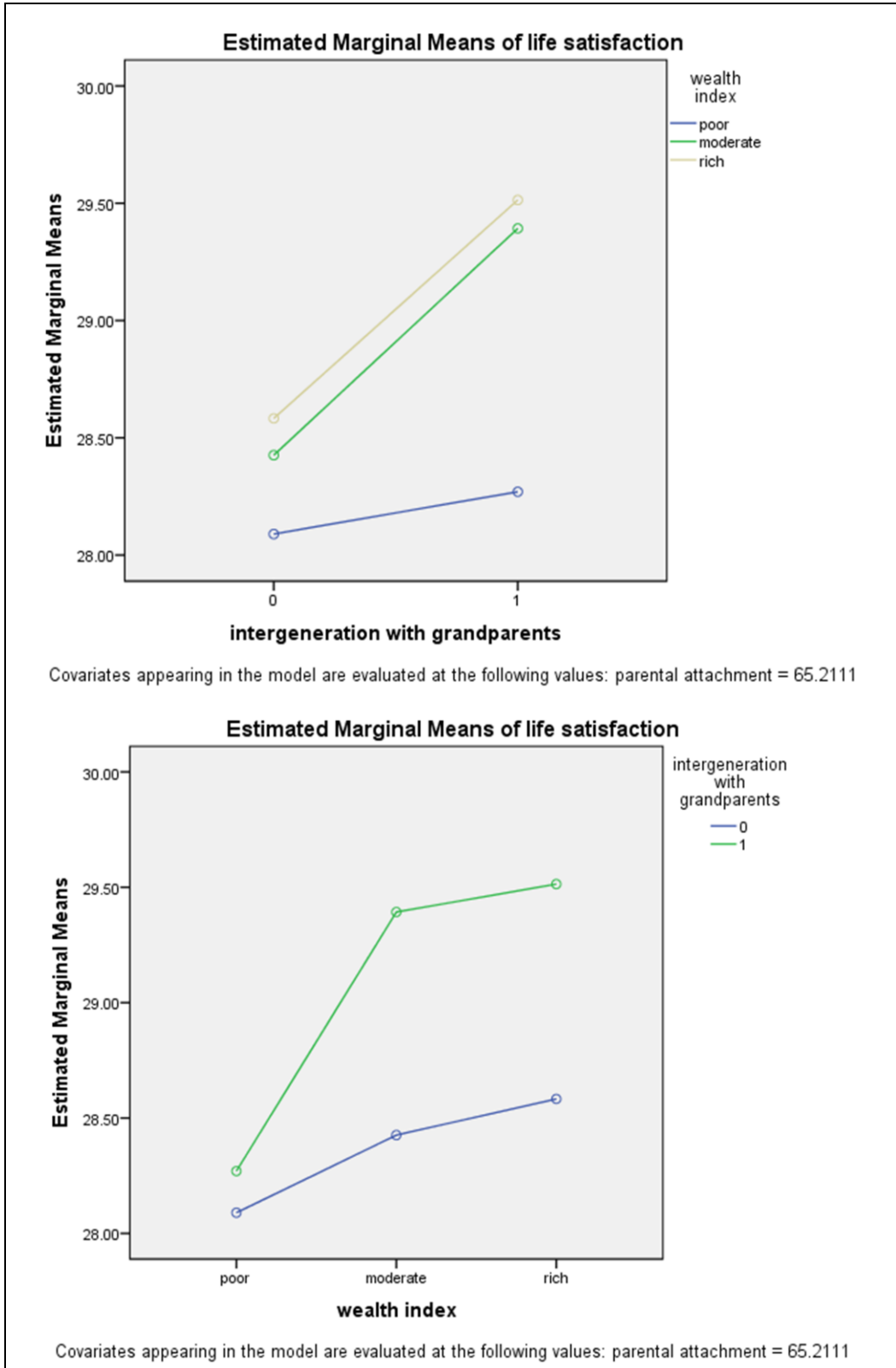
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Linearity
life satisfaction	1348	7.00	42.00	28.5163	5.05388	-.481	.830	F (1, 1289) = 354.844 ***
parental attachment	1346	35.00	84.00	65.2370	8.13764	-.351	-.172	

*** p < .001

Table 3 Mean scores and standard deviations of life satisfaction on categories of intergeneration family and household wealth

		Intergeneration family		N
		Family with grandparents	Family without grandparents	
Household wealth	Poor	28.00 (SD = 4.31) N = 97	28.01 (SD = 5.09) N = 439	536
	Moderate	29.62 (SD = 4.76) N = 142	28.36 (SD = 5.15) N = 392	534
	Rich	29.70 (SD = 4.28) N = 121	28.80 (SD = 5.73) N = 145	266
N		360	976	1336

Figure 1 Changes in life satisfaction among household wealth and intergeneration family



Conclusion and Discussion

Regardless parental attachment, results indicate that early adolescents from intergeneration family are more likely to report their life satisfaction much more than those from family without grandparents. Even though, some previous studies indicated the delayed intellectual development on children who brought up by grandparents (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2009, 2011), this current study points out the importance of grandparents co-residence on early adolescents' life satisfaction. Similarly, good relationship with grandparents was also found to be the protective factor for positive development among preadolescents (Grizenko & Pawliuk, 1994). So it could be the best if elderly parents should co-reside in the family as intergeneration or extended family rather than living apart or being left-behind due to adult children on out-migration. This could be great benefit for both elderly and children. Grandparents could involve on childrearing included teaching, disciplining, and transferring their own experiences to younger generations. On the other hand, grandchildren could support affective fulfillment of elderly by their energetic lives.

Moreover, the multivariate shows the significant relation between household wealth and life satisfaction and the univariate testing the mean differences among groups of household wealth demonstrates the higher mean of life satisfaction on the moderate and rich household wealth respectively. It is consistent with a previous study which indicated that the insufficient family income have impact on child development (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2009). However, the mean difference between rich and moderate household wealth was much smaller than the mean difference between rich and poor household wealth. This indicates that youths should increasingly satisfy their lives when they get sufficient wealth, and their life satisfaction would seem constant afterwards. Later, being rich and richer would not greatly contribute life satisfaction among early adolescents.

Even the interaction between intergeneration family and household wealth was not found significantly, the plots show the trend of which youths living in intergeneration family with either moderate or rich household wealth are more likely to have life satisfaction than those with poor household wealth. So it could conclude that not only living in family included grandparents but also having sufficient household wealth are the significant factors to promote life satisfaction during early adolescence period.

Recommendations

Family should be encouraged to recognize the importance of elderly grandparents and welcome their co-residence as it could be benefit on mental health of both elderly and children. However, the family intervention on how to deal with intergenerational person should be concerned in order to cope the gap of generations. Furthermore, in-house work should supportedly provide for elderly, for example basketry, handicraft, or what else depending on capacity of elderly. These activities are not only for household wealth support, but also for worthiness of active elderly themselves.

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