

Do norms towards elderly care coincide with actual behavior? The impact of international migration on elderly parents left behind in Lithuania

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Introduction

Even if Lithuania's emigration rate is among the highest in the European Union, there was no research addressing the effects of adult children migration for elderly parents who stay behind. Lithuania represents a case where a system of formal social care is rather limited. At the same time, based on GGS survey results, the norms that adult children should provide care for elderly parents are rather strong. The paper aims to reveal the consequences of international migration for intergenerational relationships and answer if strong filial obligations coincide with actual behaviour in transnational families.

The analysis of empirical data opens up with the evaluation of attitudes towards elderly care (based on the second wave of GGS). The results on more specific question – the attitudes towards the situation when elderly parents need care and their adult children live abroad are presented (based on representative Sample Survey). Based on the results of logistic regression the predictors enhancing the chances of agreement on filial responsibilities are presented.

On the second part of empirical data analysis, the effects of adult children migration to elderly parents left behind are analysed. The effects on associational (*frequency of contacts*) and affectual solidarity (*evaluation of relationships*) are evaluated. Finally, the effects on functional solidarity are discussed: what type of support elderly parents receive from their migrant children (financial, emotional), care models of elderly parents who have at least one adult child living abroad are analysed, the networks of care providers are revealed.

The paper is concluded if strong filial obligations coincide with actual behaviour in transnational families

Theoretical background

Based on transnationalism approach, the family members who stay behind in origin country in various ways are being affected by migration (Baldassar et al. 2007). International migration is often thought to enhance the financial welfare for migrants who may then remit more to elderly parents at home. At the same time, the migrant may be restricted from travelling home and providing personal care for the elderly parent. These facts raise several important policy questions: how does migration affect contributions and time assistance to aging parents?

The intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson et al. 1991, Bengtson 2001) approach is helpful in the paper to identify the forms that are affected by adult children emigration. The following dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are analysed in the paper: associational, affectual, functional, normative.

Methodology and instruments of analysis

The paper is based on few surveys. The analysis of attitudes towards elderly care in Lithuania is based on results of second wave of Gender and Generations Survey (GGS), conducted in

year 2009. Sample size was 8042. 2294 respondents have also participated in the first wave, but for the purposes of this research only the data of new respondents was analysed (N=5748). The field research was conducted by the “Baltic Survey Ltd.”.

The normative attitudes usually are affected by historical, social, economic and political changes. Thus as an analytical instrument three conditional generations were excluded: grandparents (1925–1949), parents (1950–1969) and children (1970–1991). This allows to compare if there are any significant differences between generations.

The method of binary logistic regression was applied to assess the significant predictors of stronger filial obligations. The regression models on agreement on the following sentences were applied:

- ✓ *children should take responsibility for caring for their parents when parents are in need,*
- ✓ *children ought to provide financial help for their parents when their parents are having financial difficulties;*
- ✓ *children should have their parents to live with them when parents can no longer look after themselves*
- ✓ *children should adjust their working lives to the needs of their parents*
- ✓ *when parents are in need, daughters should take more caring responsibility than sons*

The effects of adult children migration on elderly parents are assessed by a national representative survey¹. The stratified quota sampling procedures were applied. The sampling unit was the household with elderly parents (60 years and older), who have at least one adult children living abroad at least six month prior to the survey. Sample size was 303 respondents. The field research was conducted by the “Baltic Survey Ltd.”. The database for analysis will be ready by the 20th of November.

The following variables will be used to assess the effects of migration:

- ✓ frequency of contacts (two variables: face to face contacts and via phone, skype)
- ✓ the means of communication,
- ✓ financial assistance (provided and received),
- ✓ evaluation of relationships,
- ✓ evaluation of emotional support (provided and received),
- ✓ if and from whom respondent received personal care

These variables will be compared between the groups of migrant and non-migrant children.

During national representative Sample Survey some additional questions measuring attitudes towards adult’s children migration when elderly parents stay behind, also attitudes towards the most appropriate ways to take care of elderly parents when adult children live abroad were asked (N=1000).

Cultural attitudes towards elderly care in Lithuania

The analysis of filial responsibilities for elderly parents revealed a high level of normative solidarity. Most respondents agree with the statement where the support type for elderly parents is not defined (i.e. *that children should take responsibility for caring for their parents when parents are in need*). When the types of support are defined, the respondents are also likely to agree (i.e. *children ought to provide financial help for their parents when their parents are having financial difficulties; children should have their parents to live with them when parents can no longer look after themselves*). Less agreement was found on the statement requiring the reorganisation of children’s lives in order to fulfil filial responsibilities (i.e. *that children should*

¹ The survey conducted as part of Postdoctoral Fellowship, funded by Lithuanian Science Foundation

adjust their working lives to the needs of their parents) and on the statement measuring gender division in care provision for elderly parents (i.e. *when parents are in need, daughters should take more caring responsibility than sons*). The differences in attitudes between children's, parents' and grandparents' generations were not statistically significant. The logistic regressions revealed that significant predictors enhancing the chances of agreement on filial responsibilities are respondents' gender, age, partnership and occupational statuses and type of residential area.

Work in progress (results will be complemented with attitudes towards question "How you would evaluate situation when elderly parents need personal care and their adult children live abroad")

The effects of migration for elderly parents

Work in progress (*database will be received on 20th on November*).

Conclusion

The paper will be concluded to what extent the norms towards elderly care coincide with actual support received from migrant children. The effects of adult children migration on intergenerational solidarity will be evaluated.