An old relative at home: A burden or an asset for the Italian mid-life generation?

An analysis with the Time Use Survey

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Abstract

Intergenerational co-residence is among the strategies that can be adopted to organize support and care, especially in societies characterized by strong family ties as Italy. This paper is aimed to evaluate whether an older family component at adult children' home is a burden in terms of time transfers or rather a beneficial source of help, according to the different characteristics of the older component (age, sex, health condition) and to the family typologies (number and age of children). Using the most recent Time use survey available for Italy (2008-09), we analyze how the use of time of mid-life couples men and women is effected by either the presence of children and/or of an older member in multi-generational households, following both an intergenerational and gender perspective.

Preliminary results indicates as the presence of an old relative does not significantly affect the time devoted by women and men to unpaid work on the whole, but only increases the time dedicated to care of adult member. Further analysis will allow: 1) to estimate the effect of the old component in specific family typologies (e.g. with pre-school children); 2) to evaluate whether the impact changes according to the old men characteristics and in relation to specific activities; 3) to estimate the effect on leisure time and paid work.

Key-words: Time use, childcare, care of adult members, gender roles, sandwich generation, Italy

EXTENDED ABSTRACT (15.11.2013)

1. Introduction

Recently, thanks to the increasing availability of time use surveys, many scholars made attempts in order to evaluate the extent of gender division of unpaid domestic work in a plurality of context (e.g Abraham and Mackie, 2005). A number of individual and household characteristic seems to affect gender differences in time dedicated to household and family care. So far, among the characteristics of the household, most of the studies have focused on the effect of young children on parental time (e.g. Anxo et al. 2011, Tanturri 2012). According to Tausing and Fenwick (2010), being a parent is the most consistent family characteristic predicting gender imbalances in the allocation of time between work and family. On the other hand, less attention has been accorded to the role of elderly in household production. This is especially important for Italy, which - as it is well known -shows one of the most severe ageing process in the world and among the highest rate of both co-residence and residential proximity between adult-children and their old parents.

Intergenerational co-residence is among the strategies that can be adopted to organize support and care, but also a way to share domestic work between generations. This is particularly true in a context characterized by strong family ties and obligations, as Italy seems to remain (Reher 1998). Literature sustains the idea that exchange of social support is greater and easier among parents and adult children living together than among parents and adult children who do not share a household (Campbell & Martin-Matthews, 2000; Hank & Buber, 2009; Hank 2007; Hoyert, 1991; White & Rogers, 1997). Lyberaki and Tynios have noted, 'cohabitation with children is probably the oldest social protection mechanism for old age' (2005: 308), although it is not always clear who who lived with whom or who was helping whom. Leopold (2012) for instance underlines that extended co-residence, is positively associated with intergenerational provision of support, from the older generation to the younger generation but also vice-versa. Similarly, Ogg and Renaut (2006) - with SHARE data – found that the help received by the mid-life cohort in Italy (born between 1945 and 1954) from their parents exceed the help given.

A number of scholars has referred to 'sandwich generation' as those prime age adults who simultaneously raise dependent children and care for elderly parents (e.g. Grundy and Henretta, 2006). However, it is not clear whatever this mid-generation, and especially women who have been traditionally committed in care responsibility, are overburden by intergenerational obligations in both directions or not. Trends toward delayed and decreasing childbearing, for example, may be an

answer to women time squeeze between responsibilities for child rearing, elder care and labor force participation. Alternatively, the elderly may lighten the load of obligations by contributing to some domestic activities, as childcare.

In this paper, we try to shed light on the effect of the presence of an elderly relative on time devoted to unpaid work by women and men in Italian multi-generational households, following both an intergenerational and gender perspective. The aim is to evaluate if an older family component at adult children' home is a burden in terms of time transfers or rather a beneficial source of help, according to the different characteristics of older component (age, sex, health condition) and to the family typologies (number and age of children).

2. Data and methods

The analysis builds on micro data from the most recent Italian Time Use Survey (TUS) conducted during year 2008 on a sample of 44,606 individuals and 18,250 households. We select a sub-sample of more than 5.182 mid-life couples, 12% with an old component at home.

TUS includes three data files: the individual file, the daily diary and weekly diary. The daily diary consists of time data collected through the diary technique: respondents record the time use during the previous 24 hours using their own words. Time diaries are randomly distributed across the days of the week to all households members aged 3 years and over[1]. Diaries provide extremely detailed information, including the description of the main activity carried out by the respondent, the eventual presence of a parallel secondary activity, the location were the activity was performed and the eventual presence of another person.

A generalized linear model (GLM) is used in order to evaluate the effect of an elder component on the time devoted to household and family care by the pivotal generation:

$$T_j = \mu_j + \beta_{j1} \cdot X_{j1} + \ldots \beta_{jm} \cdot X_{jm} \qquad [1]$$

Where T are the hours per week used for housework by a j-person (where j=1 if the person is man, and is equal to 2 if the person is a woman), X are independent variables while μ e β are parameters that must be estimated.

[1] Diaries of young illiterate children are filled by their parents

In order to obtain a better insight on gender differences in the distribution of household and family responsibilities, the model is implemented separately for men and women. The Wald test is used to test differences between coefficients for the two genders (table 3).

In the model we present in this extended abstract, our variable of interest is the simple presence of a component of the older generation in adult children's home (with two modalities: yes, not), but in the paper we will distinguish the impact according to the characteristics of the oldest components (age, sex, and health status primarily). We control for a number of covariates, regarding both individual and household characteristics. More precisely, we considered the following variables: age (as a continuous variable), there dummies for education (low, medium and high level of education), three for the employment status (full time, part time, not employed), three for family income (*low*, *medium* and *high income level*), two for paid care service (with two categories: yes, not), presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years (with two modalities: yes, not), presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years (with two modalities: yes, not), presence of children older than 18 (with two modalities: yes, not).

3. Preliminary results

Not surprisingly, our first results confirms the existence of relevant gender differences in the number of weekly hours dedicated to unpaid domestic and care work, controlling for both individual and household characteristics (table 1 and 2). The reference man dedicate more than 13 hours and a half a week to unpaid work, while the reference woman close to 38. Older women and men are more involved in domestic tasks and care than the younger. Education is an influential factor for both men and women but with an opposite pattern: the more men are educated the more they dedicate time to unpaid work, while for women the opposite is true. The employment status clearly affects the amount of disposable times: long hours dedicated to market work are reflected in lower levels of time dedicated to domestic work. The economic situation of the family is not relevant for men but the opposite is true for women for which higher levels of income correspond to lower levels of domestic time, probably because of the recourse to paid services in the market. The geographic area of residence exercises a considerable influence. Men living in the North and the Centre of Italy invest more time in household chores and care compared to the Southern men, while women in the South spend considerably more time in unpaid domestic work than those in the rest of the country. The presence of children increase the time that men and women dedicate to unpaid work, with relevant difference according to the age of children. Pre-school children (from 0 to 5

years) increase the time that both mother's and fathers' dedicate to domestic and care activity, while older children have a significant impact only on mothers' time.

Surprisingly, the presence of an old member in the household does not seem to affect domestic time neither for men nor for women. However, this result should be investigated further, and may change according to the old component characteristics and according to family typologies. For instance, an elder component of the family may imply an higher investment of time by prime-adult ages for some domestic activities, compensated by lower levels of time dedicated to other activities for which the old person may provide a contribution. Therefore, in order to evaluate the effect of an elder component on couples time for household and domestic care, it is necessary to further disaggregate domestic time into more detailed categories. Results reported in table 4-5 shows that the time that men and women dedicate to care for other adults in the family is increased by the presence on an old component, and the effect is similar in magnitude.

In this paper, relying on the very detailed information provided by TUS, we will go further into the detail of household and care activities in order to obtain a more exhaustive insight into the role of the elderly in Italian families of different typologies. This will allow us to evaluate to what extent do the elderly contribute or overload the burden of unpaid domestic time, attenuating or embittering the gender division of labor.

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Table 1 Men - Generalized linear model results for housework and care activities (estimates in weekly hours and fraction)

Variables	Estimate	Standard error	t value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	13.6986	1.8592	7.37	< 0,0001
Age	0.0996	0.0382	2.61	0.0092
Education				
high	1.5888	0.7121	2.23	0.0257
medium	1.7169	0.4444	3.86	< 0,0001
low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Employment				
full time	-9.0387	0.9148	-9.88	< 0,0001
part time	-6.5743	1.4644	-4.49	< 0,0001
not employed (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Family income				
High	-0.8220	1.6254	-0.51	0.6131
Medium	-1.0843	0.4374	-2.48	0.0132
Low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Paid care service				
yes	0.0655	0.8293	0.08	0.9370
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years				
yes	5.3330	0.4968	10.73	< 0,0001
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years				
yes	0.0348	0.4218	0.08	0.9343
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over				
yes	-1.0727	0.5793	-1.85	0.0661
not (rif)	0.0000			
Presence of an old member				
yes	-1.4141	1.3438	-1.05	0.2927
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Geographic aerea				
North	4.6687	0.4541	10.28	< 0,0001
Centre	3.0024	0.6048	4.96	< 0,0001
South(rif)	0.0000	.	.	.

Table 2 Women - Generalized linear model results for housework and care activities (estimates in weekly hours and fraction)

Variables	Estimate	Standard error	t value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	37.8051	1.9149	19.74	< 0,0001
Age	0.2237	0.0472	4.74	< 0,0001
Education				
high	-1.1360	0.8604	-1.32	0.1868
medium	-0.1811	0.5767	-0.31	0.7536
low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Employment				
full time	-16.1751	0.6165	-26.24	< 0,0001
part time	-11.7618	0.7406	-15.88	< 0,0001
not employed (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Family income				
High	-2.5197	2.0155	-1.25	0.2113
Medium	-1.3686	0.5425	-2.52	0.0117
Low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Paid care service				
yes	-1.1511	1.0410	-1.11	0.2689
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years				
yes	12.1992	0.6310	19.33	< 0,0001
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years				
yes	3.9598	0.5303	7.47	< 0,0001
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over				
yes	1.6064	0.7269	2.21	0.0272
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of an old member				
yes	1.0368	1.6551	0.63	0.5311
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Geographic aerea				
North	-2.6062	0.5831	-4.47	< 0,0001
Centre	-2.0263	0.7588	-2.67	0.0076
South(rif)	0.0000	.	.	.

Table 3 Comparison of women and men GLM parameter estimates for housework and care activities (Wald test)

Variables	Coefficients			Wald value	Pr > |W|
	Woman	Man	difference		
Intercept	37.8051	13.6986	24.1065	81.58	< 0,0001
Age	0.2237	0.0996	0.1241	4.18	0.0410
Education					
high	-1.1360	1.5888	-2.7248	5.95	0.0147
medium	-0.1811	1.7169	-1.8980	6.80	0.0091
low (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	.
Employment					
full time	-16.1751	-9.0387	-7.1364	41.85	< 0,0001
part time	-11.7618	-6.5743	-5.1875	9.99	0.0016
not employed (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	.
Family income					
High	-2.5197	-0.8220	-1.6977	0.43	0.5120
Medium	-1.3686	-1.0843	-0.2843	0.17	0.6833
Low (rif)	0.0000	0.0000			.
Paid care service					
yes	-1.1511	0.0655	-1.2166	0.84	0.3607
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000			
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years					.
yes	12.1992	5.3330	6.8662	73.10	< 0,0001
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years					
yes	3.9598	0.0348	3.9250	33.55	< 0,0001
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000			.
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over					
yes	1.6064	-1.0727	2.6791	8.31	0.0039
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of an old member					
yes	1.0368	-1.4141	2.4509	1.32	0.2503
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	.
Geographic aerea					.
North	-2.6062	4.6687	-7.2749	96.89	< 0,0001
Centre	-2.0263	3.0024	-5.0287	26.86	< 0,0001
South(rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	.	.

*Level of statistical significance: n.s P>0,05; * P<0,05 ;** P<0,01; *** P<0,001*

Table 4 Men - Generalized linear model results for adultcare (estimates in weekly hours and fraction)

Variables	Estimate	Standard error	t value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	1.3762	0.3699	3.72	0.0002
Age	0.0092	0.0076	1.21	0.2254
Education				
high	0.0951	0.1417	0.67	0.5020
medium	0.0284	0.0884	0.32	0.7476
low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Employment				
full time	-0.8909	0.1820	-4.90	< 0,0001
part time	-1.0080	0.2913	-3.46	0.0005
not employed (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Family income				
High	0.0782	0.3233	0.24	0.8089
Medium	-0.0323	0.0870	-0.37	0.7106
Low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Paid care service				
yes	-0.0609	0.1650	-0.37	0.7121
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years				
yes	-0.1133	0.0988	-1.15	0.2518
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years				
yes	0.0314	0.0839	0.37	0.7085
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over				
yes	0.3593	0.1152	3.12	0.0018
not (rif)	0.0000			
Presence of an old member				
yes	0.7071	0.2673	2.65	0.0082
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Geographic aerea				
North	0.0294	0.0903	0.33	0.7448
Centre	0.1281	0.1203	1.06	0.2871
South(rif)	0.0000	.	.	.

Table 5 Women - Generalized linear model results for adultcare(estimates in weekly hours and fraction)

Variables	Estimate	Standard error	t value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	0.3058	0.2183	1.40	0.1612
Age	0.0020	0.0054	0.37	0.7069
Education				
high	0.0802	0.0981	0.82	0.4136
medium	0.0090	0.0657	0.14	0.8907
low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Employment				
full time	-0.2264	0.0703	-3.22	0.0013
part time	-0.1574	0.0844	-1.86	0.0623
not employed (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Family income				
High	-0.1965	0.2297	-0.86	0.3923
Medium	-0.0210	0.0618	-0.34	0.7336
Low (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Paid care service				
yes	0.0744	0.1187	0.63	0.5308
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years				
yes	-0.1123	0.0719	-1.56	0.1185
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years				
yes	-0.0788	0.0604	-1.30	0.1923
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over				
yes	0.1615	0.0829	1.95	0.0514
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Presence of an old member				
yes	0.7090	0.1887	3.76	0.0002
not (rif)	0.0000	.	.	.
Geographic aerea				
North	-0.0705	0.0665	-1.06	0.2885
Centre	0.0024	0.0865	0.03	0.9779
South(rif)	0.0000	.	.	.

Table 6 Comparison of women and men GLM parameter for adultcare activities (Wald test)

Variables	Coefficients			Wald test
	Woman	Man	difference	
Intercept	0.3058	1.3762	-1.0704	*
Age	0.0020	0.0092	-0.0072	n.s.
Education				
high	0.0802	0.0951	-0.0149	n.s.
medium	0.0090	0.0284	-0.0194	n.s.
low (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Employment				
full time	-0.2264	-0.8909	0.6645	***
part time	-0.1574	-1.0080	0.8506	*
not employed (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Family income				
High	-0.1965	0.0782	-0.2747	n.s.
Medium	-0.0210	-0.0323	0.0113	n.s.
Low (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Paid care service				
yes	0.0744	-0.0609	0.1353	n.s.
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Presence of a child aged from 0 to 5 years				
yes	-0.1123	-0.1133	0.0010	n.s.
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Presence of a child aged from 6 to 17 years				
yes	-0.0788	0.0314	-0.1102	n.s.
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Presence of a child aged 18 years and over				
yes	0.1615	0.3593	-0.1978	n.s.
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Presence of an old member				
yes	0.7090	0.7071	0.0019	n.s.
not (rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	
Geographic aerea				
North	-0.0705	0.0294	-0.0999	n.s.
Centre	0.0024	0.1281	-0.1257	n.s.
South(rif)	0.0000	0.0000	.	