

Childcare as Intergenerational Support

by

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Abstract

Working today's demanding labour market is not easy. Especially finding a balance between work and family life within the families with small children can be difficult. Even if public day-care-system is quite well-organized in Finland, need for extra childcare help because of family relations, overtime work, business trips etc. is often outward in the families with (under school-age) children. It is possible to buy extra childcare services from the market, but own parents or respectively spouse's parents are more often those to whom parents of small children turn first to, because of the safety and price aspects. In the wider context of intergenerational change, childcare help is a major element of parental support, and according to studies more than half of grandparents provide some type of childcare help to their adult children. This study took the view of two generation perspective in studying childcare help as intergenerational support. First, a general picture about childcare was portrayed. Then frequency of received/given help was considered. The results suggest that especially parents' ability and willingness to look after grandchildren were important factors to provide help. Also high socio-economic position was positive related both to the given and received childcare help. Results are based on questionnaires obtained from two family generations who were relatives with each other. Baby boomers' sample consisted of 1,115 randomly selected Finns born in 1945–50 and the sample of the baby boomers' adult children consisted of 1,435 young adults. The analysis was done with multinomial logistic regression.

Introduction

Public child day-care is orientated in many European countries towards older pre-school children and it is usually organized on part-time basis, which does not favour full-time employment of both parents. However, the Nordic countries are seen as the forerunners in the field of family policies (OECD 2001). Even if the public day-care-system has been well-organized in the Nordic countries and conflicts between work and family are not that explicit than in many other countries (Cromton and Lyonette 2006), the contemporary labour market is demanding with overtime hours, atypical working hours and temporary jobs. Taylor-Gooby (2004) has seen the problems in balancing working life and family commitments as a one form of the 'new social risk'. Especially mothers, who are working on full-time basis, have problems in combining work and family life (Cromton and Lyonette 2006). In balancing the conflict of interests in the work and the family life, informal childcare help has become more essential for many families with small children.

Private networks of help and support consist for example on friends, neighbours and siblings, but especially grandparents are seen some kind of “reserve army” for families with children (Hagestad 2006). In fact, previous studies have shown that more than half of grandparents provide some type of childcare help for their adult children (Ritamies and Fågel 1998; Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000; Hank and Buber 2009). Most often childcare help is provided by those grandparents aged 50 – 59, however regular childcare givers come more commonly from the age group of 60 to 69 years (Hank and Buber 2009). Even if Finnish welfare state has been seen as an important provider of childcare help, and a general norm do not “obligate” grandparents to look after grandchildren, parents of young children have reported that they receive childcare help especially from own or spouse’s parents (Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009).

This paper concentrates on analysing childcare help from two viewpoints – perspectives of the childcare help receivers and the givers. First, the prevalence behind the received and given childcare help is studied. After that more precise analysis of help is made. Two postal surveys used in this study, the anchor generation were Finnish baby boomers, born in 1945–50. The descending generation consisted of baby boomers’ adult children, who were 18–46-year-old in time of survey, in 2007.

Why extra childcare help is needed?

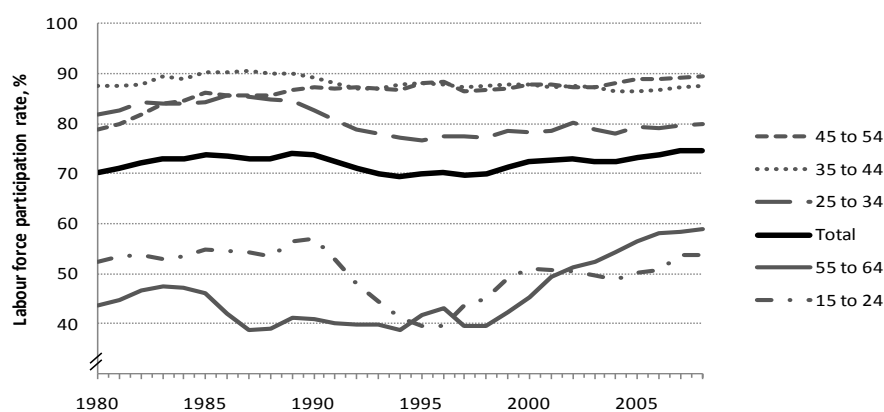
Expansion of the Nordic welfare states have gone hand in hand with increasing female labour force participation, allowing women to return the labour market also after child has born. One reason behind this phenomenon is the Finnish family-policy model, which provides a quite continuous support to parents with small children to combine their care and career commitments (OECD 2005). First of all, during paid parental-leaves periods one of the parents is able to look after the born child(ren) until the child is eight to nine months old. Secondly, subsidised and well established childcare system promotes full-time employment of both parents until child enters to school (at age of six to eight). On the other hand, as an alternative also homecare is subsidized; one of the parents is entitled to stay at nursing leave¹ from her/his job until the youngest child reaches the age of three. Thirdly, out-of-school-hours care became obligatory in 2004 and nowadays pupils from first and second grade are entitled for care after the school-hours during the school year. Parents can also reduce their working hours and take partial care leave until the child completes his or her second

¹ The amount of child home care allowance was 314€ for one child under age of three in 2010

year of school. In this case one of the parents must reduce her/his working hours to be no more than 30 hours a week on average.

Well organized family-policy is one reason behind the high female labour force participation rate in Finland, especially among women in their thirties, but also tradition of high female labour force participation has been outward for many decades. In 2008 about 75% of 15–64-year-old Finnish women were participating in the labour markets (Figure 1) remaining only 4 percent units from the men’s labour force participation rate. In fact, nowadays almost 90% of women aged 35 to 54 are in the labour market, but also women aged 25 to 34 are highly represented (Figure 1). Interestingly, during last ten years, women’s labour force participation rate has increased especially among the aged 55 to 64, as the rate has increased about 49% among women in their late fifties and early sixties (Figure 1). This increase is related to the fact that employment in the labour market has been improving strongly after 1990s recession, also among older age groups. Some changes in the retirement schemes² also decreased the share of the unemployment and disability pensions among the older age groups (OECD 2010), which can be seen the increasing attendance of this age group in the labour market. Women in this age group need very seldom childcare services for their own children, but more than half of women in this age group have already at least one grandchild (Suomalainen lapsi 2007). This means that they possibility to provide childcare help to their adult children is probably more occasional.

Figure 1 Trends in the female labour force participation rates by age groups in Finland 1980–2008, %



Source: OECDstat, Labour Force Statistics

² A comprehensive Pension Reform in 2005: for example, a flexible retirement age (between 63 to 68 years old) instead of the fixed system of retirement at age of 65. The early retirement and unemployment pension are abolished step by step.

However, the working life itself has met many changes recently; increasing uncertainty, competition and greater efficiency requirements are causing more pressures (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Also working time in the labour markets has changed as we are moving closer to the 24/7 economy (Presser 2003). When business or services are more often available after 'the office hours', it means that also mothers and fathers have to work during the evenings, nights and weekends. Lehto and Sutela found (2008) that in 2008 about 33% of women and 30% of men worked out of the office hours and this tendency has increased over the last 25 years. Also overtime work is common in the workplaces, and among working mothers approximately 30% had to make some overtime hours in 2008 (Lehto and Sutela 2008). Among the men the rates were somewhat higher, whereas about third of working fathers made over-time work, on regularly basis the share was almost 30% (ibid). Most often overtime work was made among the white collar employees and management, since more than 50% of this group made overtime work on regular basis (Lammi-Taskula and Salmi 2004?).

Even if, Finnish childcare system is well established, resources to organize childcare services during weekends and evenings as well as for school age children are inadequate, and more flexible childcare arrangement are needed (Färkkilä, Kahiluoto and Kivistö 2006, see also Kröger 2005). In fact, only three per cent of small Finnish municipalities informed that they have enough places for children who need shift care; none of medium or large size municipalities did have completely enough places (Färkkilä, Kahiluoto and Kivistö 2006). Irregular working-hours, overtime work and work during evenings and weekends mean that out of public organized childcare help is more probably needed. In fact, according to Lehto and Sutela (2008) in 2008 over 60% of working parents in Finland received extra help from the relatives and friends to balance the work and family commitments, whereas five years earlier the share was about 55%.

Besides high female labour force participation rate, increasing number of one parent families has been typical feature for Nordic countries. In Finland, the share of single-parent families has almost doubled since the 1970s. In fact, nowadays about fifth of children who are less than 18 years of age live the in household with one parent, usually with a mother (Miettinen 2009). The growth in single-parenthood is especially due to the increasing number of divorces and separations among families with small children (Lehmann and Wirtz 2004). So, changes in the labour market are not the only reasons behind the need for extra childcare help, but also certain changes in the family structure can be highlighted.

Mutual affection and reciprocity

Self-interest seems to be more prevalent between the different generations in the society as overall, whereas on the family level, solidarity seems to be strong between the generations. For example, younger age cohorts would like to direct public money for childcare and education, whereas older age cohorts prefer elder and health care (Daatland et al. 2010). However, on the individual level solidarity between family members seems to be strong and stable across Europe, even if there are strong country differences (Hank & Buber 2009). Solidarity among family members is most often outward, but there are many reasons behind the solidarity and some overall reasons have been noticed.

In the case of childcare support, not only the work and family life balance, but also the grandparents or the grandchildren's own wish to spend time together are seen important reasons to childcare help (Fingerman et al. 2010). Furthermore, in many families, there seems to be some kind of reciprocity system, in which reciprocity between the generations is changing over the course of life (Coleman 1990). Young adults are living the stage of life in which help is most often received, whereas the middle age parents are most often the givers of the help. But as parents get older and frailer, adult children turn to be the givers of support. Rossi and Rossi (1990) have even found some kind of substantial reciprocity - those who give less receive less and vice versa.

Financial support and practical help is often needed while young adults are trying to establish their position in the labour market, or grandchild has been born. Indeed, parents give material and practical support to own adult child, especially, to young adults in need (see e.g. Björnberg and Latta 2007; Fingerman et al. 2009). However, solidarity between the generations is not outward and "the importance of grandparents" can be recognized until help or support is not received. Not all (grand)parents have resources, ability or willingness to give financial or practical support and help to their offspring. This puts families with small children into very unequal position.

Childcare help by grandparents - Previous research results and more precise research questions

In the wider European context, childcare help is an important form of parents support, and the intensiveness of help varies by welfare regimes. Looking after grandchildren seems to be more frequent but less intense in the Nordic countries than in the Southern European or the Continental ones (Albertini et al. 2006). In the Nordic countries the state provides more extensive childcare services than in the Southern European or the Continental countries, and grandparents are needed only occasionally to compensate institutional care (Hank et al. 2007). However, it seems that extra

childcare help is more often needed and received in attempt to balance work and family life commitments, especially in the higher social strata (Ritamies et al. 1998; Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000; Lammi-Taskula et al. 2004; Albertini et al. 2006). Even so, regular care in Finland is quite rare, whereas about every tenth of the baby boomers told that they look after their grandchildren on regular basis. Also among childcare help receivers, about 10% informed that grandparent look after their child(ren) regularly (Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009).

Possibility to give childcare help is often limited and is based on excess time resources of grandparents. For example, grandparents' activeness in the labour market reduces they possibility to give childcare help (Ritamies et al. 1998; Albertini et al. 2006). Also parents who have many adult children may not have time to support all of them equally, in fact, children in the larger families receive less support on average than children in the smaller families (Fingerman et al. 2010). Furthermore, it has been noticed that grandmothers look after their grandchildren more often than grandparents, regardless the child's gender. However, it seems that and help is given especially to own daughters (Hank and Buber 2009). This so called 'female linkage' is well marked in the previous studies (see e.g. Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000). Phenomenon can be partly explained by the fact that childcare responsibility has mostly been on mothers' shoulders. Hagestad (2006) also found that in families where there is no competition between children, for example in the situation where there is only one adult child who has own child(ren), the female linkage relating to the childcare help is more probable. However, support of grandfathers seem to be also important as married grandmothers look after grandchildren more often than alone living grandmothers (Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000).

Typical feature for childcare help is that it can be given by all parents regardless of their financial position. However, the smaller the child is, more physical resources are needed to satisfy the basic needs of the child. The likelihood of looking after grandchildren has been negatively associated with health limitations of grandparents (Hank and Buber 2009). Furthermore, as a good health status is positively linked to the higher educational level/occupational status (lähde), it can be assumed that high occupational status is associated positively to given childcare help. Finally, but not surprisingly, the increasing geographic distance between the younger and older generations is negatively associated to the given childcare help (Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000; Hank and Buber 2009). However, the long distance is not crucial obstacle for some childcare help, but it probably diminishes more frequent childcare help given by grandparents (see also Lammi-Taskula et al. 2004).

More precise research questions

In general, solidarity between generations, especially the financial support and practical help which adult children receive from their own parents is social interaction which is self-evident for most. However, all parents are not eager or do not have a possibility to give extra help for their adult children. Uniqueness of the data gives possibility to study childcare from the childcare help receivers' as well as givers' perspectives. First more general picture of the sources and the targets of childcare help were presented by asking *from whom* the adult children of Finnish baby boomers received childcare help, and *to whom* Finnish baby boomers gave childcare help? However, the main focus of the paper was to study the childcare help when also the *magnitude* of the received/given childcare help was considered. Finally, the light of the motive behind the childcare help was considered by asking *why* childcare help is received and given? Even if the spouse's parents are also an important source of childcare help, the lack of background information of spouse and spouse's parents meant that childcare help could not be studied from the perspective of the spouse's parents.

Data

The results of this paper were obtained from a two different questionnaires. The anchor generation was Finnish baby boomers, born in 1945–50. The other family generation was baby boomer's adult children (de facto) who were born in 1962–88. The anchor sample consisted of 1,998 randomly selected baby boomers and the younger generation's sample consisted of 3,391 young adults. The data was drawn by the Statistics Finland in 2007, and with permission of respondent some individual level register data from earlier years' registers was merged into the survey data. Registers contained, for example, information about employment, the level of education and occupational status from the years 2004 and 2005. Because of the quite modest respond rates, among baby boomers it was 56% (n=1,115) and among their adult children 42% (n=1,435), non-response analyses were made with help of register data from the 2004 or 2005 (Majamaa 2009). Analyses were made separately for men and women, and according to the results both data were fairly representative.

In the questionnaires the respondents were asked about various aspects of received and given financial transfers and practical help, their social relations and health. Social interactions among the baby boomers and their adult children were studied within many groups of relatives, for example

among one's siblings, one's parents, the parents-in-law, one's cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and among friends and workmates. In this study, the flows of childcare help were more closely studied between parents and adult children. Given and received help were measured over the 12 months preceding the survey. Only those adult children who had at least one own child, had at least one parent alive and who did not live in the parental home were included into the final analysis (see Table 2 and 3). Among baby boomers, those who had at least one adult child who lived outside the parental home and who had at least one child, were included in the analysis. These analyses consisted of 577 baby boomers and their 675 adult children.

Independent variable

Received and given childcare help was divided from two to three categories depending on the ground of the analysis. In the descriptive part with an overall viewpoint, two groups were distinguished; those who did not receive or give any childcare help and those who received or gave at least some childcare help (Figure 2 and Table 1). In all three Tables (1 - 3) childcare help was considered when the adult child did not live in the parental home and had at least one child/grandchild.

In the study, the childcare help given to all children was summed up to get a more accurate picture of the contribution of the grandparents. This means that childcare help was not necessarily given to one child, but there might be two or more sharers. Childcare help received from own mother and father was not summed up, but kept separately. It was not possible to distinguish if the respondent had received at the same time childcare help both from their mother and father, for example, when grandparents lived together. In the other words, in the analysis of received childcare help there is probably some under estimation related to frequency of the *parental* help. Receivers and givers of the childcare help were distinguished in three groups in the interpretative part of the study. So called base group were those who did not receive/give any childcare help. Those who received/gave not over 12 times childcare help over the 12 months preceding the survey were placed to the group of *minor* childcare help. To the third group were placed those who received/gave at least 13 times childcare help over the 12 months preceding the survey. This group was called *major* childcare help receivers/givers. In the questionnaire of the baby boomer's adult children, the information about received childcare help was collected with two questions, which were asked separately from own

and spouse's parents³ and from the others⁴. In the questionnaire of baby boomers the relevant information was collected with two questions relating to their adult children⁵ and the others⁶.

Control variables

Six control variables about socio-demographic characteristics of the baby boomers' adult children were included in the analysis of received childcare help (Tables 1 and 2). First two control variables were *gender* and *age* (under age of 30; 30 – 34 years old; at least 35). *Number of siblings* was categorized into four groups (no siblings; one; two; three or more siblings). Information about *highest education in 2005* was also included in the analyses (basic or unknown; secondary; and tertiary). Adult children were also asked they *Opinion about parent's health*. This variable was distinguished in to three categories; good; moderate and poor. Finally, the last variable is *the average geographical distance to parent* (less than 20 kilometres; 20 – 99 km; at least 100 km).

The second analysis was related to the given childcare help and it consisted of parental socio-demographic characteristics. Also here six variables were included into the analysis. First three are *gender*, *living with a spouse* (living alone or together with a spouse) and *number of children* (one; two; three or more). Last three are, *occupation status in 2004* (upper white collar employee; lower white collar employee; self-employed, include farmer; manual worker or the others), *opinion about own health* (good; moderate or poor) and *the average geographical distance to child* (only those adult child(ren) who had at least one child were included). Three categories were distinguished: less than 20 kilometres; 20 – 99 km; at least 100 km.

Methods

First, the prevalence of receiving and giving childcare help among the adult children and the baby boomers were presented in 2007. The amounts were always proportioned to the size of studied sub groups, for example to those adult children who had at least one sibling. In the explanatory analyses multinomial logistic regression was used. In the binary logistic regression response variable was dichotomous and the comparison was made between these two categories. In the multinomial case,

³ 'In the last 12 months, did you get help with childcare?' and 'How often on average did she/he look after your children, in the last 12 months?' Four response alternatives were given: 1 to 6 times; 7 to 12 times; 13 to 25 times and more than 25 times.

⁴ 'In the last 12 months, have you received any unpaid help with childcare from another person living outside your household?' and 'Which person (someone else than your or your spouse's parents) outside your household has helped you with childcare in the last 12 months? Circle all that apply.'

⁵ 'In the last 12 months, have you looked after your grand-child(ren)?' and 'How often on average did you look after your grandchildren, in the last 12 months?' Four response alternatives were given: 1 to 6 times; 7 to 12 times; 13 to 25 times and more than 25 times.

⁶ 'What kind of help have you given to another person (who is not living in your household) in the last 12 months?' Childcare help was one of the response alternatives.

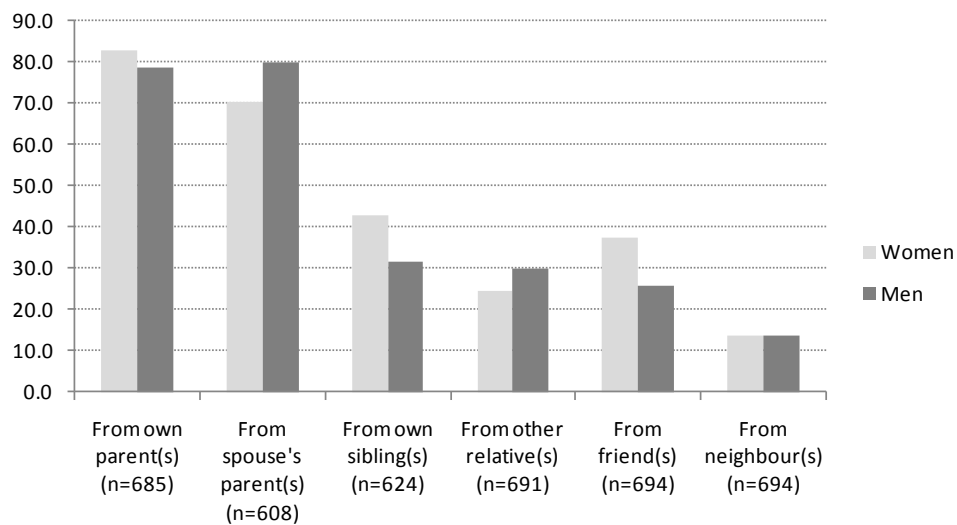
the response variable has more than two categories and comparison is between category x and the base category (Liao 1994). In multinomial analyses two comparisons are made between two groups; received/gave *1 - 12 times childcare help* (minor) and received/gave *no childcare help* (base); and received/gave *more than 12 times childcare help* (major) and received/gave *no childcare help* (base). Each explanatory variable's first category was the reference group with an odds ratio (OR) of 1. First, each main effect was fitted one at a time in the model (Model 1) in order to study how each variable was associated to receiving/giving childcare help in the Tables 2 and 3. Then, in order to control all presented characteristics of baby boomer's adult child/baby boomers, all main effects were fitted in the Model 2. When interpreting the OR it is important to notice that comparisons are made always to the base category. For example, in Table 2 (Model 1) odds for women who gave more than 12 times childcare help to own adult children compared to those who did not give any childcare help (base category), is 1.79 times as high as the same odds for men. In other words, women are more likely than men to give childcare help to their adult children when those who gave more childcare help are compared to those who did not give any childcare help. Cluster robust standard errors were computed with help of STATA's *cluster* option because of clustered data of adult children (children of baby boomers are likely to be more similar together than to non-members of the same family line).

Results

Receiving and giving childcare help – an overview

The survey results indicate that about 90 % of younger generation who had at least one child, received childcare help from own or spouse's parents. This result is congruent with previous finding from Finland (Lammi-Taskula, Suhonen and Salmi 2004, 108). However, own parents were most often the source of the childcare help, 82% received at least once childcare help from own parents in the study period (see Figure 2). Spouse's parents were a second most important source of childcare help as 74% of young adults received at least some help from them. Own siblings, other relatives, friends and neighbours also helped with looking after the children, and about 64% of the adult children received childcare help from these other sources. As expected, women, more often than men, reported that they received childcare help from own parents, whereas men received more often help from the spouse's parents (Figure 2). As previous studies have also shown childcare help is received especially from the maternal side (Hagestad 2006; Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000).

Figure 2 Proportions of Finnish baby boomers' adult children who received childcare help in 2007, %.



Source: Gentrans 2007, collected by Statistics Finland

When studying childcare help from baby boomers' view of point, it was interestingly to notice that they gave childcare help almost solely to their own adult children. Only 11% gave at least some childcare help to the others, whereas 77% gave it to own adult children. Women gave more often childcare help than men as 83% of grandmothers looked after their grandchild(ren) at least once in the study period. Among grandfathers the rate was 69%.

Adult child's age as well as the number of siblings was negatively associated to the received childcare help, older the respondent was or more the siblings had, the share of childcare receivers decreased (Table 1). Also the level of education was strongly related to the received childcare help, as among those with tertiary education the share of receivers were about 55% larger than among those with basic education. Short average geographical distance between adult child and the parent(s) increased received childcare help, but less straightforward. Also opinion about parents' health were associated to the received childcare help; those who described their parents health good, received greater share of childcare help than those who described their parents health as moderate or poor (Table 1).

When the givers were considered, more often women than men gave childcare help to their adult children (Table 1). Larger share of those baby boomers who lived with a spouse looked after their grandchildren than those who lived without a spouse. Interestingly, those who had more than one child gave more often childcare help to their adult children. This relates probably to the fact that childcare help is given at least to one of the child. Also higher occupation status predicted larger share of given childcare help as well as the low average geographical distance to children and an

good health (Table 1). In general, the directions of interdependency are almost consisted with previous studies.

Table 1 The different characteristics of baby boomer's adult children (receivers of the childcare help) and the baby boomers (givers of the childcare help), %

| Characteristics of baby boomers or their adult children | All, % | Adult children as receivers, % | All % | Baby boomers as givers, % |
|---|--------|--------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Women | 65.5 | 80.5 | 59.1 | 82.7 |
| Men | 34.5 | 76.8 | 40.9 | 69.1 |
| All | 100.0 | 79.6 | 100.0 | 77.1 |
| Adult child's age-group | | | | |
| Under 30 | 17.6 | 89.9 | - | - |
| 30 - 34 | 43.0 | 83.8 | - | - |
| At least 35 | 39.4 | 69.6 | - | - |
| Live with a spouse | | | | |
| No | 9.2 | 74.2 | 21.1 | 70.5 |
| Yes | 90.8 | 79.8 | 78.9 | 78.9 |
| Number of siblings | | | | |
| No siblings | 9.5 | 87.5 | - | - |
| 1 | 40.3 | 85.3 | - | - |
| 2 | 28.6 | 76.2 | - | - |
| 3+ | 21.6 | 68.5 | - | - |
| Number of children | | | | |
| One child | - | - | 15.9 | 70.7 |
| 2 children | - | - | 46.5 | 78.7 |
| 3 or more children | - | - | 37.6 | 77.9 |
| Highest education in 2005 | | | | |
| Tertiary | 51.1 | 84.6 | - | - |
| Secondary | 41.8 | 76.6 | - | - |
| Basic or unknown | 7.1 | 56.3 | - | - |
| Occupation status in 2004^a | | | | |
| Upper white collar employee | - | - | 15.4 | 83.2 |
| Lower white collar employee | - | - | 34.8 | 82.6 |
| Self-employed include farmer | - | - | 26.5 | 72.6 |
| Manual worker | - | - | 8.8 | 74.5 |
| Others (pensioner, unemployed) | - | - | 14.4 | 67.5 |
| Average distance to child/parent | | | | |
| Less than 20 km | 44.2 | 83.9 | 27.0 | 87.2 |
| 20 - 99 km | 21.0 | 75.4 | 20.5 | 82.2 |
| At least 100 km | 34.8 | 75.7 | 52.5 | 70.0 |
| Baby boomers' health ¹⁾ | | | | |
| Good | 65.0 | 83.6 | 44.5 | 81.3 |
| Moderate | 29.9 | 72.8 | 45.8 | 75.8 |
| Poor | 5.0 | 61.8 | 9.7 | 64.3 |
| N | 675 | | 577 | |

¹⁾ Among baby boomer's adult children their opinion about their parents' health were asked.

^aIf Baby boomers socioeconomic position were in 2004 student, pensioner or unknown, it was replaced with register based data from 2000 if other than student, pensioner or unknown.

Source: Gentrans 2007, collected by Statistics Finland

Association between received childcare help and six control variables are studied separately with multinomial logistic regression (Table 2, Model 1). A low age of the adult children, a low number of siblings a high educational level and a good parental health predicted minor received childcare help (less than 13 times per year) to adult child(ren) compared to those who did not receive any childcare help from their parents (Table 2, Model 1, first column). However, neither gender nor the living distance from the parents predicted minor childcare help from own parents when compared to those who did not receive any childcare help from own parents. In addition to previous findings, a positive association was found with women and among those who received major (more than 12 times) childcare help, as well as with those whose average geographical distance to own parents were less than 20 kilometres (Table 2, Model 1, second column).

Ability to give matters

Childcare help receivers

The outcomes of the control variables hardly changed after all main effect were controlled simultaneously in the Model 2. Adult children received more often both minor and major childcare help from own parents if they were younger, had no or only low number of siblings and their parents had a good health (in child's opinion). In the previous studies (see Hank and Buber 2009) limitations in the activities of daily living lowered the propensity of childcare help. Interestingly in this study, also opinion about parents' health predicted received childcare help; those who thought that their parent had a good health received more often both minor and major childcare help from own parents than those who thought that their parent's health were poor. Apparently, adult children were quite aware of their parents' health. Adult children's educational status was related to their propensity to receive childcare help from their parents. Those with higher educational level were clearly more likely to receive help than their counterparts who had only basic education. Results suggests, that especially in the higher social strata childcare help will be received, which may be an attempt to balance work and family life commitments (see also Lammi-Taskula et al. 2004; Albertini et al. 2006).

Younger the respondent was, the more outward the probability to receive childcare help was. One explanation for greater probability of childcare help is that the older respondents have usually older children, who do not need extra childcare that often. Grandparents look after grandchildren who are under age of school more probably than grandchildren who are in school-age (results not shown here). Furthermore, women appeared to receive more numerous childcare help than men (Model 2, the right side) emphasizing the close mother-daughter bond (see also Attias-Donfut and Wolff

2000a). This highlights the fact, that mothers have still the main responsibility of organizing the childcare in the family, also in Finland (see also Pääkkönen and Niemi 2002), even if dual earner model have been prevailing for decades. Furthermore, being only child increased the probability to receive major childcare help from own parents. This finding was not surprising, while parents who have many adult children have less time on average to support them. The result is also congruent with the previous studies findings (see e.g. Fingerman et al. 2010; Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000a).

Previous studies have found that geographical distance to parent is negatively associated to received/given childcare help (Hank and Buber 2009). However, results from this study show that geographical distance is not associated childcare help when minor amount (not over 12 times a year) of received childcare help is considered. The grandparents can look after their grandchildren couple of times in a year even if the geographical distance is longer. However, positive association between major received childcare help and a short geographical distance were valid after all socio-demographic variables were included in the model.

Table 2 Childcare help received by baby boomers' adult children from their parents. Multinomial logistic regression (OR), base group: did not receive any childcare help (n=135)

| Adult children N=675 | Model 1 ^a | | Model 2 ^b | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | 1-12 n=362 | > 12 n=173 | 1-12 n=362 | > 12 n=173 |
| Gender (ref. Men) | | | | |
| Women | 1.07 | 1.79 * | 0.93 | 1.76 * |
| Age group (ref. At least 35 years old) | | | | |
| 30 - 34 years old | 2.08 ** | 2.74 *** | 1.98 ** | 2.57 ** |
| Under age of 30 | 3.32 ** | 5.43 *** | 4.19 *** | 7.92 *** |
| Number of siblings (ref. At least 3 siblings) | | | | |
| No siblings | 2.28 + | 5.21 ** | 2.47 + | 5.78 ** |
| 1 sibling | 2.67 *** | 2.66 ** | 2.55 ** | 2.51 ** |
| 2 siblings | 1.60 + | 1.19 | 1.55 | 1.17 |
| Highest education in 2005 (ref. Basic or unknown) | | | | |
| Secondary | 3.02 ** | 1.85 | 2.62 * | 1.48 |
| Tertiary | 4.80 *** | 3.53 ** | 4.69 *** | 3.54 * |
| Opinion about parent's health (ref. Poor) | | | | |
| Moderate | 1.72 | 1.52 | 1.80 | 2.04 |
| Good | 3.17 ** | 3.12 * | 2.97 * | 3.42 * |
| Average distance to parents (At least 100 km) | | | | |
| 20 - 99 km | 0.89 | 1.45 | 1.23 | 2.20 * |
| Less than 20 km | 1.03 | 5.09 *** | 1.24 | 6.79 *** |

^aEach main effect at a time in the model

^bAll main effects in the model at once

Significance levels: + p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Source: Gentrans 2007, collected by Statistics Finland

Childcare help givers

Gender, occupational status and self reported health predicted minor given childcare help (not over 12 times) to own adult child(ren) compared to those who did not give any childcare help to their adult children (Table 3, Model 1, first column). However, neither number of children nor living with a spouse or average distance to child predicted minor childcare help by baby boomers. When major childcare help (more than 12 times) were considered, all socio-demographic characteristics of baby boomers were associated to given childcare help (Table 2, Model 1, second column). Being women, having more than one child, living with a spouse, being upper white collar employee, having good health and low average geographical distance to children, were significant predictors of giving childcare to own offspring.

When all the main effects were put in the model simultaneously, outcomes changed only slightly. Still women looked more often their grandchildren than men, and increasing number of own children predicted numerous amount of given childcare help among baby boomers. In previous studies (see e.g. Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000a) a low number of children have predicted given childcare help to own offspring, whereas in this study high number of children was positively interacting with major support. Given childcare help was here studied by summing all given childcare help up, thereupon the probability to give childcare at least to one of the child increases with amount of children. However, from the receivers' view of point, here from adult children's, probability to receive childcare help decreased, while there were more sharers of received help (see Table 2, Model 2). Interestingly, the number of children was not associated to the minor childcare help among parents. It have been noticed that married grandmothers look after grandchildren more often than alone living grandmothers (Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000). Results also in this study suggest that living with a spouse increased both minor and major given childcare help among the baby boomers (Model 2, first and second columns).

Only among upper white collar employee the risk to give childcare help to own adult children were higher than among the others ($p < 0.05$). The results probably relates to the fact that a good health status is positively linked to the higher social stratum, and the likelihood of looking after grandchildren is negatively correlated with health limitations of grandparents (see also Hank and Buber 2009). As in the previous studies (Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2000; Hank and Buber 2009) the increasing geographic distance between the younger and older generations were negatively associated to the given childcare help. Especially those whose average distance to child is less than 20 kilometres gave both minor and major childcare help when they were compared those who did not give any childcare help to their adult children. Long distance seems not to be crucial obstacle

for some childcare help, but it seems to diminish more frequent childcare help given by grandparents (see also Lammi-Taskula et al. 2004).

Table 3 Childcare help given by baby boomers to their adult children. Multinomial logistic regression (OR), base group: did not give any childcare help (n=132)

| Baby boomer N=577 | Model 1 ^a | | Model 2 ^b | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | 1-12 n=262 | > 12 n=183 | 1-12 n=262 | > 12 n=183 |
| Gender (ref. Men) | | | | |
| Women | 2.01 ** | 2.27 *** | 2.33 ** | 2.74 *** |
| Number of children (ref. One child) | | | | |
| 2 children | 1.26 | 2.22 * | 1.51 | 3.85 *** |
| 3 or more children | 1.07 | 2.22 * | 1.26 | 3.42 ** |
| Live with a spouse (ref. No) | | | | |
| Yes | 1.52 | 1.62 + | 1.85 * | 2.17 ** |
| Occupation status in 2004^a (ref. Others (pensioner, unemployed)) | | | | |
| Upper white collar employee | 2.86 * | 2.05 + | 2.67 * | 2.16 + |
| Lower white collar employee | 2.34 * | 2.09 * | 1.76 | 1.62 |
| Self-employed include farmer | 1.29 | 1.18 | 1.29 | 1.16 |
| Manual worker | 1.50 | 1.16 | 1.52 | 1.36 |
| Self reported health (ref. Poor) | | | | |
| Moderate | 1.54 | 1.75 | 1.56 | 2.15 + |
| Good | 2.36 * | 2.20 * | 2.33 * | 3.02 * |
| Average distance to child (At least 100 km) | | | | |
| 20 - 99 km | 1.38 | 2.67 ** | 1.75 + | 3.51 *** |
| Less than 20 km | 1.79 + | 4.31 *** | 2.64 ** | 7.93 *** |

^aEach main effect at a time in the model

^bAll main effects in the model at once

Significance levels: + p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

^aIf Baby boomers socioeconomic position were in 2004 student, pensioner or unknown, it was replaced with register based data from 2000 if other than student, pensioner or unknown.

Source: Gentrans 2007, collected by Statistics Finland

Reasons behind the intergenerational childcare help

Most often childcare help was both *received* and *given* because the grandparent wanted to be with a child. 73% of adult children reported that the grandparents wanted to be with grandchild(ren), whereas among the givers, among baby boomers, the share was 64%. However, reasons related to the working life were the second most common reason. 64% of young adults had received childcare help from grandparents for that reason, whereas 45% of the parents mentioned working life behind the given childcare help. Hobbies and other engagement rose to the third common reason related to

the received childcare help from the grandparents (55%), among the baby boomers the share was 36%. Family matter was reported most seldom reason behind the received childcare help, also among the givers (40% and 28%). Interestingly, the reasons behind the given and received childcare help were in the same order in both studied subgroups.

Table 4 Reasons for childcare help received from own or sibling's parents and from the others, among those adult children who received childcare help in 2007 (%).

| <i>Reasons for childcare help</i> | <i>Received from own or spouse's parents', %</i> | <i>Given to own adult child(ren), %</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Working life (e.g. work trip, child's illness) | 64.3 | 44.6 |
| Family matter (e.g. sibling was born, holiday trip) | 40.4 | 27.6 |
| Hobbies or other engagements | 54.9 | 36.4 |
| Desire to spend time with child(ren) | 73.0 | 63.7 |
| N | 614 | 579 |

Source: Gentrans 2007, collected by Statistics Finland

According to Lammi-Taskula and the others (2004) every fifth of parents considered that the grandparents help is essential in their everyday life. Also results in this study confirm that especially grandparents are an important source of childcare help, however help is received also from the other sources, like from the siblings, friends and neighbours (see Figure 2). Even if the desire to be with own grandchild and grandparent was the most often mentioned to be behind the childcare help also reconciling work and family life was often mentioned as a major reason for the childcare help.

To sum up, we may confirm also with Finnish data that helping patterns of parents are related, especially to the parent's ability and willingness to give help. Those parents whose geographical distance to their adult children is short have better chances to help their adult children, as well as if the parents are in a good physical condition. Socio-economic factors have in some extent interplay with childcare help, those adult children and baby boomers who had better socio-economic status received or gave more often childcare help. At least partly it may relate to the demands of a working life and health status of the parent, however, there may be other associations, which were not recognized in this study.

Conclusions

This article analyzed the childcare as intergenerational support in Finland. Previous studies have not studied childcare help at the same time from the perspectives of childcare help *receivers* and *givers*.

Our data consisted of baby boomers and their adult children. The study showed that adult children of the Finnish baby boomers received most often childcare help from their own parents, but also from their spouse's parents help was received. Baby boomers gave help most often to their own adult children. The results also displayed that the younger, here those who were under age of thirty, received childcare help more probably from their own parents than the older age groups. Especially parents' ability and willingness, for example low geographical distance and good health, increased the probability to receive/give childcare help to own adult child.

Even if intergenerational support flows typically both horizontally and vertically, upwards and downwards depending on many factors, it seems that especially parent-child relationship is strong predictor of support and help. Results suggest that grandparents are the most important source of childcare help, at least when the prevalence of help is studied, and especially parents' ability and willingness to give help are fundamental. In this study was not possible to study those factors which relate to the unwillingness to give help, while it was not asked in the questionnaires. However, in the questionnaire was asked baby boomers' opinion about their responsibility to look after their grandchildren. Interestingly, only about 25% agreed with this argument, whereas about 50% disagreed with the statement (Haavio-Mannila et al. 2009, 90). Well-organized childcare system in Finland may be seen as a main responsible actor in the producer of childcare, and grandparents are seen as an extra source. This statement gets extra support also from the younger generation, because also among baby boomers adult children more than 50% disagreed with the statement (the grandparents have responsibility to look after their grandchildren) (ibid.).

From a public finance perspective, generous family-policy constitutes extra pressure for public budgets, which has to deal, for example, with expenses derived by population ageing. Hank and Buber (2007) have posed an argument about the joint responsibility of grandmothers and welfare states to provide adequate childcare for future generations. However, if and when female labour force participation is continuing to increase among the older age groups (see Figure 1) grandparents' possibility to attend on their grandchildren's life is somewhat limited. At least Finnish government's target is to increase the average retirement age by at least three years in next twenty years (Ministry of Finance 2008).

Finland has been one of the forerunners countries in the field of well-organized public childcare system. However, there have many changes in the labour market, especially moving closer to the 24/7 economy, have influenced also working mothers. Municipalities have already problems to guarantee sufficient care for all under school-age children, and welfare state's possibility to maintain childcare services may weaken due to aging population structure and cost containment

goals. Intergenerational support is an important source of extra help for families with (small) children, but all do not have supportive parents who are both able and willing to look after their grandchildren in the post-industrial society.

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