

**Out-migration of Young Adults and Living Arrangements of the
Elderly
in Rural China: The Case of Chaohu**

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Background

With improving agricultural productivity and increasing size of the population, there have been more and more surplus laborers in rural China. The National Statistic Bureau predicted that there would be 180 million surplus farm laborers by 2005. The rapid development of market economy in urban areas has attracted a great number of farm laborers moving into cities. There was about 13 percent of all farm laborers working outside their home township by the end of 2001. The migration of rural surplus farm labor to urban has changed the household structures of rural families and separated many old people from their children, which has had significant effects on the elderly supported by family.

Data and methodology

Using data from a sample survey “The well-being of the elderly in Anhui province” conducted in 2001 by the Population Research Institute of Xi’an Jiaotong University in Chaohu city, Anhui province, in conjunction with the University of South California, this paper investigates effects of opportunities for living together, resources for living independently, living

preference and health status on three living arrangements of rural elderly including living independently, living with children as well as skip-generational living arrangement, from the needs of two generation perspectives. In the Multinomial Logistic model, the outcome variable of interest comprised three types of living arrangement: stem family, skip-generational family, empty-nest family.

Conclusion

The regression results indicated that, gender preference, economic resources, the number of children and health status have significant effect on the living arrangements of the elderly, and meeting the elders' needs for support has become the primary cause for their co residence with adult children. The elderly show strong son preference when choosing children for co residence, and sons have more extents of effect on the living arrangements of the elderly than daughters.

Sons outgoing with spouse reduce opportunities of the elderly for co residence, and increase their probability in skip-generational household. Many rural elderly is insufficient of resource, which increases the likelihood of the elderly living with children. Additional sons outgoing

and separated for job-related reason increases the elders' possibility of co residence with children. Skip-generational household is a special arrangement through which the elderly provide grandchild care for the sons outgoing.

The needs of old parents consisting two parts: the need for economic resources and the need for daily care, both of them have significant effects on the living arrangements between children and the elderly. The number of children and the preference of the living arrangement indicate the scope of alternatives for the co residence of parents. Limited by poor economic status and community service sources of rural area, the elderly have few choices to satisfy their needs and children especially sons are primary support sources, so they show stronger son preference in co residence than urban and western elderly.

Only the magnitude and physical distribution of sons has significant effect on the living arrangements of the elderly, which is the primarily reflection of son preference. Little geographic distance greatly increases opportunities of sons in same village to provide daily care for the elderly, and decreases the necessity of co residence with children aimed at

proving support for the parents. The sons outgoing reduce the alternative resources for co residence, and decrease the possibility of co residence.

As the substitute for the son, only the outgoing ones of all daughters have significant effects on the living arrangements of parents. Another reflection of son preference in living arrangement is that the elderly provide care for the grandchildren left by sons outgoing, additional sons outgoing, especially those have juvenile kids, increase the opportunities of the elderly living in skip-generational household. The Sons in marital crisis increase the possibility of the parent co residing with them, whereas, daughters have no such significant effects, which also reflected the son preference in the living arrangements of the elderly.