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Literature Review

Filial Piety and Family Support for Elderly Model of China

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INTRODUCTION

As a consequence of increasing aging population globally, the problems concerning the support for elderly draw great attention in public. No matter the “society-support for elderly model” of the Western countries or “family-support model” of the Eastern countries, they are all challenged on different levels. Family support has a long tradition in China and still remains the main form of supporting the elderly, especially in rural areas (Wu, 2008). The aging China would inevitably encounter huge challenges in its family supporting system.

Filial piety occupies a vital place in Chinese ideology. Coming to addressing the family supporting problem, I find lots of scholars highlight the significance of filial piety. And “having children makes one’s old age secure (yang er fang lao)” or “filial piety for supporting the elderly(yi xiao yang lao)” has its deep root in Chinese culture. Thus there must be some relationship between filial piety and family support for elderly.

In recent days, the phenomena of unfilial behaviors or the old parents suing children for care become quite common which encourages me to have deeper thinking about filial piety and the family support model of China. After researching, I found a voluminous scholarly literature has involved in discussing this issue so far. In order to explore the role of filial piety in functioning China’s family support model, some related articles have been chosen for my further study.

So my literature review consists of three parts: first is about the basic concepts of filial piety and family support model. The second part discusses their relationship.
And thirdly the importance and implication of promoting filial piety and developing family support model would be explained.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

1. The Concepts of Filial Piety and Family Support for Elderly Model

**Filial Piety**

Filial piety or the Chinese word “Xiao” has a long history in China. Its origin can be traced from as early as the Shang dynasty. The Shuo Wen Jie Zi, a dictionary of ancient Chinese, defines it as "one being good at serving one's parents" (Xie & Zhou, 2013). It means there is a moral obligation for the children to support and honor their parents (Li, 1997).

Filial piety has long been at the center of traditional Chinese value. Well-known scholars, like Chien Mu and Hsieh Yu-wei, even described Chinese culture as "the culture of filial morality" (Li, 1997). The Chinese saying, “Of all virtues, filial piety is the first”, clearly demonstrates its importance. (Xie & Zhou, 2013)

**Family Support for Elderly Model**

It is generally believed by most scholars that based on the resource provider, the supporting for the elderly can be categorized into three types: society support, family support and self-support. Considering the different development levels, history background and institutions, these three kinds of support for elderly show different proportions with own characteristics in different countries (Shi, 2012).

In China, family support is the most vital and the main form especially in villages but
its proportion shows a declining trend (Li, 1997). Sung (1998) pointed out that it featured by cohesive ties among family members and there was a family responsibility for individual members to use the resource to promote the well-beings of the parent and family. It includes the economic support, life care and mental supports (Li, 2006).

2. The Relationship between Filial Piety and Family Support Model

Filial piety has played a significant role in family support model for thousands of years. On one hand, filial piety provides the ideological foundation for family support (Sung, 1998). Family support is not just about the familial behavior of caring for old parents, but more importantly it relies on the moral foundation of filial piety (Bao, 2001).

On the other hand, filial piety is reflected in the practice of family-centered care and support for parents (Sung, 1998). Within the Chinese cultural context, family support is a realistic choice naturally for the old in China (Wu, 2008). He (2011) further contented that family support model was the inheritance and development of traditional culture and ethics. In other words, the existence of family support model plays positive role in protecting the tradition culture.

In addition, Ren (2011) added they were tightly connected not only in terms of morality, value, habitude and ideology but also from the economical and social perspectives. So the family model of supporting for the elderly has close relationship with filial piety.
3. The Implication of Promoting Filial Piety and Developing Family Support Model in Aging China

In ancient China, filial piety behavior consists of supporting one’s parents, harmonizing the family centralized around parents, making filial sacrifice and expression affection toward parent (Li, 1997). With social transformation and changes of value, the traditional expression of filial piety is shifting in today’s society. But it still remains its central status and promoting filial piety has more practical and realistic implications.

Xiao (2001) have highlighted that promoting filial piety not only benefits the inheritance of tradition of respecting the elderly, but also helps in solving supporting problem nowadays. Moreover, filial piety is beneficial for the civilization of modern family and provides the moral support for the elders’ happiness.

Therefore, Wu (2008) suggested the education and publicity about filial piety needed to be promoted. Otherwise, China’s aging crisis would be intensified by moral deficiency of filial piety. He also believed the government is advised to establish a sound incentive system to courage family support for the elderly.

Nowadays, it is an undeniable fact that an aging China is inevitable. And the accompanying aging problems, like the medical treatment, are not just within the old themselves, but also do harm to economic growth and political stability. To some extent, supporting the elderly from family could reduce the nation’s budget of social endowment insurance. In addition, China is undergoing social transitional period.
Because of the current incompletion and limitation of social security system, the family support still deserves special attention. However, even in developed countries, the system of society support for the elderly is not a perfect model because it compromises the economic growth and investment of the whole country (Lv, 1999).

**CONCLUSION:**

After my review, I have had a synthetic understanding about filial piety and China’s family support model as well as their relationship. Filial piety has its deep root in Chinese ideology and it remains its central significance throughout the centuries. As China’s oldest model supporting for elderly model, family support model is based on filial piety traditionally and also vital for protecting and encourage filial piety. In one sense, they are highly interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

Therefore, facing the challenges of China getting old before getting rich, it is necessary to promote filial piety in order to relieve social pressure caused by the aging population. Meanwhile as China’s social pension system is still underdeveloped, family support is still the most popular model and should be encouraged.

Hence, my research is significant towards the understanding on the further study of the role of filial piety in functioning China’s family support model.
REFERENCE


