Revelations on Grandmotherhood among High Fertility Women in the Philippines

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Introduction

The Philippines now stands as the 12th most populous country in the world (PRB 2007). For several decades its growth rate hovered above 2% since its initial descent from the 3% level in 1960-1970. It was only during the last census (2010) that the growth rate was recorded to have finally fallen below the 2% mark (1.9%) (NSO 2010, 2012). This growth trend is primarily the result of sustained high fertility in the country. The Philippine National Demographic and Health Surveys have recorded such dilatory decline: from a TFR of 6.0 in 1970 to 4.4 in 1986, then 3.7 in 1996 and 3.3 in 2008 (NSO and Macro 2008). More importantly, it was established that fertility was persistently and conspicuously higher in the lowest wealth quintile (TFR=5.2) relative to the highest quintile (TFR=1.9), and among elementary educated women (TFR=4.5) versus those with college education (TFR=2.3).

As a result therefore of the protracted fertility transition in the country, population aging in the Philippines has likewise been slow. Population projections from the National Statistics Office indicate that while the proportions of children (<15 yrs) and youth (ages 15-29) have already declined, their numbers will still increase in the next decade. Middle-aged and older adults (30-59 yrs) will constitute the biggest bulk of the population in years to come, while those 60 yrs old and above will not reach 10% before 2020 (Gultiano and Xenos 2006). Perhaps because of the relatively slow age-structural transition of the country, not sufficient attention has been given to studies on the aging population. Even less attention has been accorded to studying the 30-59 age group whose significance in fact temporally precedes that of the population 60 yrs and older insofar as the country's age-structural transition is concerned. It also bears noting that with high fertility in the recent past, population momentum is a significant force to contend in Philippine demography.

Amidst this demographic scenario, it is therefore valuable that research focus not solely on subpopulations belonging to specific age categories but rather on the interplay of various age categories. This is where the value of intergenerational studies comes in, particularly with the emerging extended childrearing roles of Filipino grandparents. As teenage pregnancy rises (NSO and USAID 2012) and/or more parents seek work overseas, an increasing number of children are needing their grandparents' care (Cruz and Laguna, 2009; Cruz et al. 2009).

Objective

This study describes grandmotherhood in a cohort of middle-age to older, high fertility Filipino women who are largely concentrated in the middle to lower socioeconomic strata of Philippine society. Sociodemographic characteristics, and relationships with grandchildren in terms of living arrangements and support, are examined across age categories.

Data Source

This study used data on mothers participating in the Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutrition Survey, a community-based prospective study in Metro Cebu, Philippines. These women were recruited into the survey by virtue of their having given birth within a one-year period (May 1983-April 84), which rendered the sample selective of high fertility, lower socioeconomic status women (Adair et al 1997; Gultiano 1999). This cohort of women and their index children have been followed since. As of the latest survey in 2007, 1977 mothers (or 58% of the original sample) continue to participate in the survey. Survey attrition was mainly due to migration out of the study area. The retained sample is more likely from rural areas, of lower education, and of higher parity than those who left the study.

Methods

The study is primarily descriptive and uses univariate, bivariate and multivariate approaches, including chi-square and anova, as well as logistic and linear regressions.

Key Findings

At recruitment in 1983-84, the mothers had an average of 2.5 pregnancies prior to their current (index) pregnancy. In 2007, the mean number of live born children had reached 6, further indicating a sample selective of high fertility women. Table 1 shows that, compared to the younger age groups, the oldest age group (>59.4) had more children, were poorer, less educated, were from rural areas (had lower urbanicity scores), and had more grandchildren. About 80% (n=1580) of the sample were biological grandmothers. Of these, 52% have grandchildren in the household. Tables 2-4 show that grandmotherhood is more likely experienced in higher parity women. Compared to those without grandchildren, grandmothers were older, poorer, less educated and more likely from multi-nuclear households. The majority of the co-resident grandchildren was in the 0-6 age group. Compared to the older age groups, the youngest grandmothers (<49.5) had the fewest and youngest grandchildren but had the highest percentage of grandchildren living with them. This group also provided the most physical and financial care to their grandchildren.

Mutivariate models (Table 5) further show that grandmothers who were older, had less education, and lived in urban areas had more grandchildren living with them. Compared to non-working grandmothers, those who were unpaid/self-employed were less likely to have co-resident grandchildren. These are perhaps indications of various time and resource constraints faced by both grandmothers and their children with respect to housing accommodation and care of their young.

These preliminary findings illustrate aspects of grandmotherhood in this Filipino sample that merit concern. For older grandmothers, who have poorer socioeconomic profiles than the younger grandmother, their extended childrearing roles with co-resident grandchildren may put them at further disadvantage. Having 80% of the co-resident grandchildren in the 0-6 age group, most of them receiving care from their grandmothers, further imposes physical demands on these aging women. Moreover, since about a one-fifth of grandchildren living apart from their

grandmother are still receiving financial support from her, the pressure on these women is further aggravated.

Subsequent studies will be looking into physical and financial care that these grandmothers receive from their grandchildren, while concurrent studies are looking into the health and psychosocial wellbeing of these grandmothers.

Acknowledgment

Table 1. Characteristics of sample mothers, by age category

Individual / Household Characteristic	Age Category (in years)			All Ages (N=1977)
	<49.5 (n=905)	49.5 - 59.4 (n=883)	>59.4 (n=189)	
Age in 2007 (range 38-71)	45.8	53.7	62.9	50.9
(S.D.)	(2.4)	(2.8)	(2.7)	(6.0)
Number of children born alive***				
1 – 3 (%)	21.9	18.2	7.4	18.9
4 or more (%)	78.1	81.8	92.6	81.1
Mean*** (range 1-16)				
(S.D.)	5.5	6.0	7.8	5.9
	(2.6)	(2.8)	(3.2)	(2.8)
Mean years of education in	7.2	7.5	6.1	7.2
2005*** (S.D.)	(3.1)	(3.9)	(4.5)	(3.7)
Mean assets score in 2005**	5.1	5.4	4.9	5.2
(S.D.)	(1.8)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(1.9)
Mean urbanicity index in 2005*	41.1	40.0	38.2	40.3
(S.D .)	(13.1)	(13.9)	(14.7)	(13.6)
Household density in 2005***	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.6
(S.D.)	(1.9)	(1.7)	(1.6)	(1.8)
Mean number of HH members in	6.7	6.4	5.6	6.5
2007*** (range 1-21)	(2.8)	(2.7)	(2.7)	(2.8)
(S.D.)				
Marital status 2007 (col %)***				
Never married	0.3	0.3	-	0.3
Legally married	79.6	78.5	56.6	76.9
Consensual union	9.3	4.2	2.1	6.3
Widowed	6.5	11.8	36.0	11.7
Separated	4.3	5.2	5.3	4.8
Work status 2007 (col %)***				
Not working	33.2	36.2	47.1	35.9
Unpaid/self employed	43.6	43.4	41.3	43.3
Wage worker	23.2	20.4	11.6	20.8
Household type 2007 (col %)***				
Single-person HH	0.1	0.9	1.6	0.6
One nuclear family HH	52.2	38.3	31.2	44.0
Horizontally extended HH	1.2	1.5	-	1.2
Vertically extended HH	13.9	20.8	22.7	17.8
Hor. & vert. Extended HH	1.0	0.7	1.6	0.9
Multi-nuclear HH	31.6	37.8	42.9	35.5
Mother or her spouse is HH head in 2007 (col %)*				
No	1.4	0.8	3.2	1.3
Yes	98.6	99.2	96.8	98.7
Owns house in 2007 (col %)*				
No	12.6	9.2	8.5	10.7
Yes	87.4	90.8	91.5	89.3
Has biological grandchildren in 2007 (col %)***				
No	28.0	16.9	5.8	21.1
Yes	72.0	83.1	94.2	78.9

Note: Asterisks indicate significant differences across age categories.

Table 2. Characteristics of sample mothers, by grandmotherhood status

Individual / Household Characteristic	Grandmotherhood Status		P value
	Has no grandchild	Has grandchild(ren)	
Mean age in 2007	48.6	51.6	0.000
Number of children born alive			
1 – 3 (%)	36.0	14.3	0.000
4 or more (%)	64.0	85.7	
Mean	4.5	6.3	0.000
Mean years of education in 2005	8.8	6.8	0.000
Mean assets score in 2005	5.8	5.1	0.000
Mean urbanicity index in 2005	42.7	39.7	0.000
Household density in 2005	2.4	2.7	0.002
Mean number of HH members in 2007	6.1	6.6	0.001
Marital status 2007 (col %)			
Never married	1.0	0.1	
Legally married	81.8	75.6	
Consensual union	5.0	6.7	0.002
Widowed	8.1	12.6	
Separated	4.1	5.0	
Work status 2007 (col %)			
Not working	34.8	36.1	
Unpaid/self employed	41.5	43.8	0.258
Wage worker	23.7	20.1	
Household type 2007 (col %)			
Single-person HH	-	0.8	
One nuclear family HH	68.1	37.5	
Horizontally extended HH	3.1	0.7	0.000
Vertically extended HH	16.3	18.3	
Hor. & vert. Extended HH	1.2	0.8	
Multi-nuclear HH	11.3	41.9	
Mother or her spouse is HH head in 2007 (col %)			
No	1.7	1.2	0.463
Yes	98.3	98.8	
Owns house in 2007 (col %)			
No	11.8	10.4	0.422
Yes	88.2	89.6	

Table 3. Characteristics of grandmothers, by age category

Individual / Household Characteristic of Grandmother	Age Category of Grandmother			All Ages (N=1580)
	<49.5 (n=652)	49.5 - 59.4 (n=747)	>59.4 (n=181)	
Mean age in 2007	45.9	53.8	63.0	51.6
Number of children born alive***				
1 – 3 (%)	19.0	12.5	4.5	14.3
4 or more (%)	81.0	87.5	95.5	85.7
Mean***	5.8	6.4	8.0	6.3
Mean age at birth of 1st grandchild***	41.6	45.6	47.2	44.2
Mean number of grandchildren***	3.1	6.2	13.3	5.7
Mean age of youngest grandchild	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.3
Mean age of oldest grandchild***	4.3	8.2	15.7	7.4
Mean number of co-residing grandchildren***	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.0
Mean number of grandchildren living elsewhere***	2.3	5.2	12.0	4.8
Percent of grandchildren co-residing with grandmother***	32.0	25.2	17.1	27.1
Percent of co-residing grandchildren belonging to age category:@				
0-6 yrs old***	92.9	76.3	58.8	80.1
7-18 yrs old***	6.9	23.1	35.0	18.7
18+ yrs old***	0.2	0.3	6.2	1.0
Percent of co-residing grandchildren according to sex:				
Grandson	48.0	47.8	48.5	48.0
Granddaughter	52.0	52.2	51.5	52.0
Percent of co-residing grandchildren receiving grandmother's care	80.7	76.6	75.8	78.0
Percent of grandchildren living elsewhere receiving grandmother's care***	31.6	24.5	14.9	26.0
Percent of grandchildren living elsewhere receiving grandmother's financial support***	23.1	17.6	10.6	18.9

@ Percentages may not exactly add up to 100 because data is sourced from a different mo
dule in the questionnaire.
* Asterisks indicate significant differences across age categories

Table 4. Indicators of Grandmotherhood and their Correlates

Characteristics (all women)	Indicator			
	Has at least one grandchild		Number of grandchildren	
	Odds Ratio	P value	Coeff.	P value
Model 1:				
Age group (ref: <49.5 yrs)				
49.5 – 59.4 yrs	2.115	0.000	2.638	0.000
>59.4 yrs	5.145	0.000	8.171	0.000
Total number of live births	1.237	0.000	0.798	0.000
Years of formal education	0.919	0.000	-0.273	0.000
Assets score	0.915	0.013	0.029	0.626
Urbanicity index	0.997	0.541	-0.009	0.226
In legal/consensual union	0.896	0.537	-1.079	0.000
Work status (ref: not working)				
Unpaid/self employed	1.023	0.870	0.046	0.836
Wage/salary worker	1.016	0.921	-0.183	0.509
Model 2:				
Age in years	1.103	0.000	0.435	0.000
Total number of live births	1.231	0.000	0.769	0.000
Years of formal education	0.918	0.000	-0.272	0.000
Assets score	0.910	0.009	-0.007	0.903
Urbanicity index	0.998	0.636	-0.006	0.430
In legal/consensual union	0.946	0.756	-0.905	0.001
Work status (ref: not working)				
Unpaid/self employed	1.019	0.888	-0.027	0.901
Wage/salary worker	0.998	0.992	-0.253	0.345

Table 5. Indicators of Grandmotherhood and their Correlates (cont.)

Characteristics (grandmothers only)	Indicator			
	Has at least one co-resident grandchild		Number of co-resident grandchildren	
	Odds Ratio	P value	Coeff.	P value
Model 1:				
Age group (ref: <49.5 yrs)				
49.5 – 59.4 yrs	1.360	0.006	0.243	0.001
>59.4 yrs	1.869	0.001	0.502	0.000
Total number of live births	0.986	0.468	0.019	0.137
Years of formal education	0.971	0.089	-0.024	0.026
Assets score	1.047	0.137	0.007	0.714
Urbanicity index	1.008	0.045	0.008	0.002
In legal/consensual union	1.086	0.560	0.067	0.465
Work status (ref: not working)				
Unpaid/self employed	0.802	0.058	-0.197	0.009
Wage/salary worker	0.760	0.061	-0.135	0.152
Model 2:				
Age in years	1.044	0.000	0.034	0.000
Total number of live births	0.980	0.309	0.014	0.265
Years of formal education	0.973	0.106	-0.023	0.034
Assets score	1.042	0.184	0.003	0.873
Urbanicity index	1.008	0.035	0.008	0.001
In legal/consensual union	1.138	0.365	0.105	0.252
Work status (ref: not working)				
Unpaid/self employed	0.802	0.059	-0.195	0.009
Wage/salary worker	0.767	0.070	-0.127	0.176

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