

Do ages and living statuses of grandparents influence fertility of adult children?

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Abstract

Empirical research has explored links between grandparental childcare and fertility of adult children. These links are usually hypothesized to operate through reductions in childcare costs incurred by parents. Much of this research has been hampered by the possible endogeneity of grandparental care, in that grandparental care may be a response to parents' inability to obtain or pay for alternate care – thus indicating parental monetary and time strain. Instead of relying on reported frequency of grandparental childcare, we use data on the ages and living statuses of grandparents as (more) exogenous indicators of the *potential* for grandparental care. In addition, ages and living statuses of grandparents may be associated with the availability of financial support to adult children in the form of intergenerational transfers while grandparents are alive, or after they die.

This study analyses data which include all individuals from the 2015 population registry of Israel, and offer many advantages: (1) individuals are linked to their parents, spouses, spouses' parents, children, siblings and nieces/nephews; (2) ages, living statuses and dates of death of parents of adult children (and their spouses) are known; (3) adults with no living parents are included; (4) location of residence is available – when registry data is linked to census data – so proximity to kin can be measured. We use fixed effect regression techniques to estimate the influence of grandparental aging and death on the fertility of adult children, and to test whether the effects of aging and death differ depending on the geographic proximity of kin.