

The Intergenerational Linkage in Married Women's Labor Force Participation in Taiwan

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1. Introduction

In recent years the population of Taiwan has been aging rapidly. According to a government report the size of the population in Taiwan will reach its pick in 2020, and then it will decline continuously from 23 million in 2014 to 20 or even 17 million in 2060; within the same period the share of 25-64 years old in the population, potential workforce, will drop from 74% to 51%. Such a decline in population will cause a shortage of labor supply in the near future seriously. In order to maintain the size of the workforce the government, among other policies such as encouraging the rise of birth rates, is encouraging women to enter the labor force and thus to increase the labor supply. Since female labor force participation rates are lower in Taiwan than its

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neighboring countries, especially for women above 45 years old (see diagram 1), there are plenty of room for Taiwan to raise its female labor force participation rates. However, how to raise Taiwan's female labor force participation rates is a difficult task for the government because in recent years the government had implemented several policies to encourage women to enter the labor market but the results were very limited.

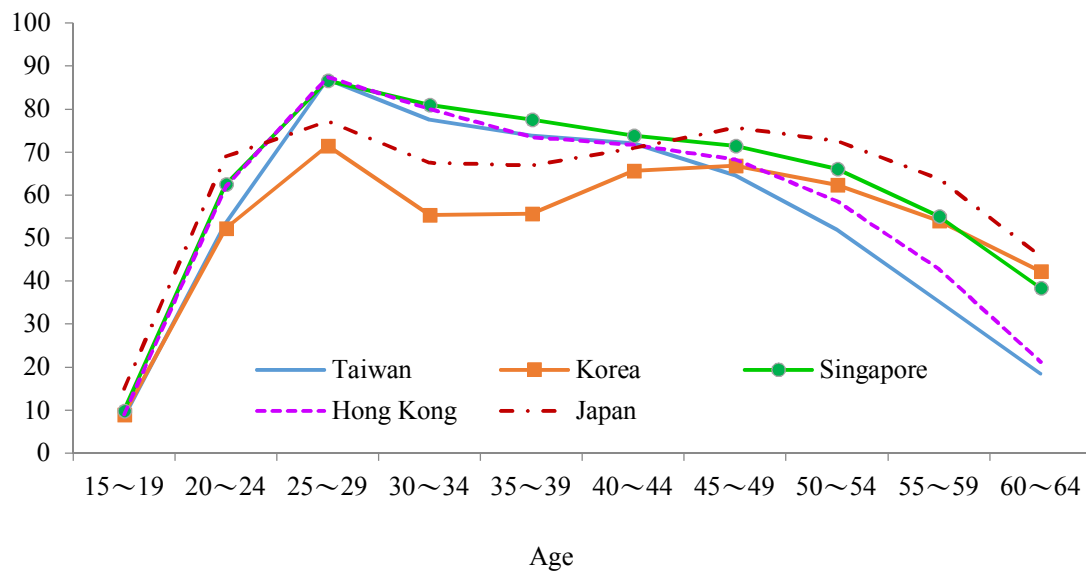


Diagram 1 15~64 years old female labor force participation rates

Exactly what factors affecting women decision to participate in the labor force, most studies have pointed to factors such as marital status, educational attainment, number of young children, income level of the husbands, but there are few studies on and mothers-in-law's attitude towards their daughters-in-law's labor market work and their decision to participate in the labor market(Shih,2010 · Eikenburg, and Rbin 2008). This factor is important since in Asian countries mothers-in-law have great influence on their

daughters-in-law's behavior, because in Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore, even in Vietnam and Thailand their culture, family structure, and family life are heavily influenced by Confucianism. One of the key influences of Confucianism is filial piety, which means a person must take good care of their parents, respect and obey and even sacrifice themselves in order to advance the happiness of their parents(include in-laws). As Confucius once said: "In serving his parents, a filial son reveres them in daily life; he makes them happy while he nourishes them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great sorrow over their death that was for him; and he sacrifices to them with solemnity"(Baker, 1979). For Confucius, filial piety was not merely blind loyalty to one's parents, more importantly it is an important general norm for dealing with all elders as well as intergenerational relations. Filial piety was emphasized in Confucianism because in Asian society devotion to one's parents was often associated with one's devotion to the state, and in such a way all rulers emphasized filial piety since this practice was able for them to rule their subjects easily, peacefully, and harmoniously. In short, it is because of this filial piety doctrine parents and parent-in-laws have great influence on daughters and daughter-in-laws' social behavior. It is the purpose of this paper to investigate how do mothers-in-law's attitude towards their daughters-in-law working outside of the house affect the younger generation's decision to participate in the labor force.

2. Background on mothers-in-law's work experience on daughters-in-law's decision to participate in labor market activities

2.1 The influence of mothers-in-law on daughters-in-law's behavior in Western countries

In Western countries the society place great emphasis on individualism and independency, thus basically in-laws have not much influence on daughters-in-law's behavior once they are married. In fact, in western countries mothers-in-law are often the staple of comedians' jokes; even so there are many stories about the difficult relationship between mothers-in-law with their daughters-in-law. Teri Apter (2010) in her recent book "What Do You Want from Me?" explains that in Western countries when a man and a woman married they believe the bond is between only two of them, however, in many occasion the power of their in-laws exert over their lives. Apter found that two-thirds of daughters-in-law in her study had experienced difficult time with their mothers-in-laws. Wall Street Journal has one report on the problems between daughters-in-law and their mothers-in-law in western countries, "I can't do anything without my mother-in-law second-guessing me," "She sees me wearing a pink dress and tells me I would look thinner in black. I put a sweater on my son and she insists he needs his winter coat. If I cook with butter, she gives me a lecture about cholesterol. She's always telling me what to do. I am nearly 40 years old and she treats me like I'm a child. Besides,

I have my own mother to nag me. I certainly don't need another nag master."

In terms of mothers-in-law's influence on daughters-in-law's decision to work, Del Boca et. al. (2000) in their study found, in Italy the employment decisions of daughters-in-law are influenced by their mothers-in-law's work experience. Fernandez, Fogli, and Olivetti (2004) found that in America, mothers-in-law's work experience had more influence on the daughter-in-law's decision to participate in labor market activities than her natal mother's work experience. Morrill and Morrill (2013) found in their study that there is a link between mothers-in-law's work experience with their daughters-in-law's employment decision and the association is stronger for mother-in-law and daughter-in-law than for natal mother and daughter. However, they also found that the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in law may be due to a woman's own preferences formed before selecting a spouse and the formation of such a preference is through the channel hers have an indirect influence on their daughter-in-law's labor force participation via their son's behavior. In other words, these studies show that if the mothers-in-law had worked in the labor market and had a good experience in taking care of household work and labor market work, then they themselves not only have a positive attitude towards their daughter-in-law's entering into the labor market, but also have a favorable demonstration effect for their daughters-in-law to enter the labor market.

2.2 The influence of mothers-in-law on daughters-in-law's behavior in Asian countries

In Asian society the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law is much more complicated and difficult than those in Western countries; this is mainly due to the deep rooted Confucianism's filial piety philosophy in Chinese families. Therefore According Confucianism when a woman is married to a man she is required to leave her natal home and to live with her husband's family, and become part of her husband's family (Lu 1990). One of the most important roles for this newly moved in daughter-in-law is to take good care of her parents-in-law and whether the daughter-in-law is accepted as a member of this new family depends very much on the attitude of the mother-in-law, and in turn depends very much on her ability to be obedience, timidity, reticence, and adaptability (YU et.al. 2004), and her natal mother is supposed to provide her with good education in all these areas. If there is any tension or conflicts between her and her mother-in-law, her husband has no alternative but to side with his mother and if the situation is serious her husband could go even so far and comply with his mother's request to devoice his wife (Lu 1990, Yang 1995, Yang 1999), once she is divorced it is taken as a shame for her natal family because it is seen by the society as her natal mother has not given her the proper domestic education, as a consequence the natal mother is blamed. Thus mothers-in-laws have great authority over their daughters-

in-laws' behavior and tension can start from a very minor issue. For example, in one case the mother-in-law is from Sichuan province, who used to spicy food as all people from Sichuan do; the daughter-in-law is from Canton who is not accustomed to spicy food and prefers slightly sweet food as all Cantonese do. The mother-in-law expects the daughter-in-law to adapt to the family taste and prepare spicy food for the family and to eat spicy food as well. The daughter-in-law prepares spacy food for the family but cooks different food for herself; such a behavior is viewed by her mother-in-law as the daughter-in-law does not like her and tension started between these two women, from that point on it is very difficult for the daughter-in-law to maintain a good relationship again because whatever she does the mother-in-law objects. Mothers in Taiwan also treat sons as their own asset because according to filial piety doctrine the son is response for the welfare of the family and to take care of his mother when she grows old, the son is also the source of her authority and power over other family members. Thus, when the wife spends more time with her husband the mother-in-law feel jealous and furious because she thinks her son is being stolen by her daughter-in-law. Another common source of tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is if the grand children are not taken care of by the daughter-in-law in the way her mother-in-law prefers. Thus in one daughters-in-law's view Chinese mothers-in-laws are sharp-tongued, bitter, cynical, double standard, insulting, overruling. Filial piety in the traditional Chinese

society makes it "Parents are always right." even when they are wrong. Chinese mother-in-laws are pretty much some of the worst tyrants to handle (Wall Street Journal May 1, 2013). This may be an over statement, but it certainly tells how much power a mother-in-law has over her daughter. Even in today's modernized and industrialized Taiwan, there are plenty of stories about the prevalence of the practices of filial piety deep rooted Chinese society (Ackerman, 2012, Hsieh 1985, Kung 1997). Therefore one can imagine how important is mother-in-law's attitude towards daughter-in-law's decision to participate in labor market activities. Regardless mothers and mother-in-laws have such important influence over their daughters and daughter-in-laws there is no study on the intergenerational links on daughters' labor market participation. Most of the studies on factors affecting daughters' labor force participation concentrate on factors such as marital status of the daughters-in-law (Jen 2004), educational attainment (Yi 2001, Chang 1999), age of the children and number of children (Cebula and Coombs 2008, Lee et.al. 2004, Chang 1980 ; Lo 1986, shih 2010, Eikenburg 2009), and income of her husband (Lo1986).

In view of this research gap it is the purpose of this study to fill this gap by investigating into how does mothers-in-law's work experience affect daughters-in-law's labor market activities in Taiwan and in what way the Taiwan government can help to increase women labor force participation and to replace part of the decline in

labor supply due to the aging of population.

3. Hypotheses of this study

According to the previous discussion one can hypothesize that

- 1) The post marriage work experience of a mother-in-law has a positive impact on her daughter-in-law's labor force participation.
- 2) A working mother-in-law who has a daughter-in-law living with her would have a strengthening effect on the daughter-in-law's labor force participation.
- 3) The intensive mother-in-law in the labor market has a positive effect on daughter-in-law intensive labor market experience.

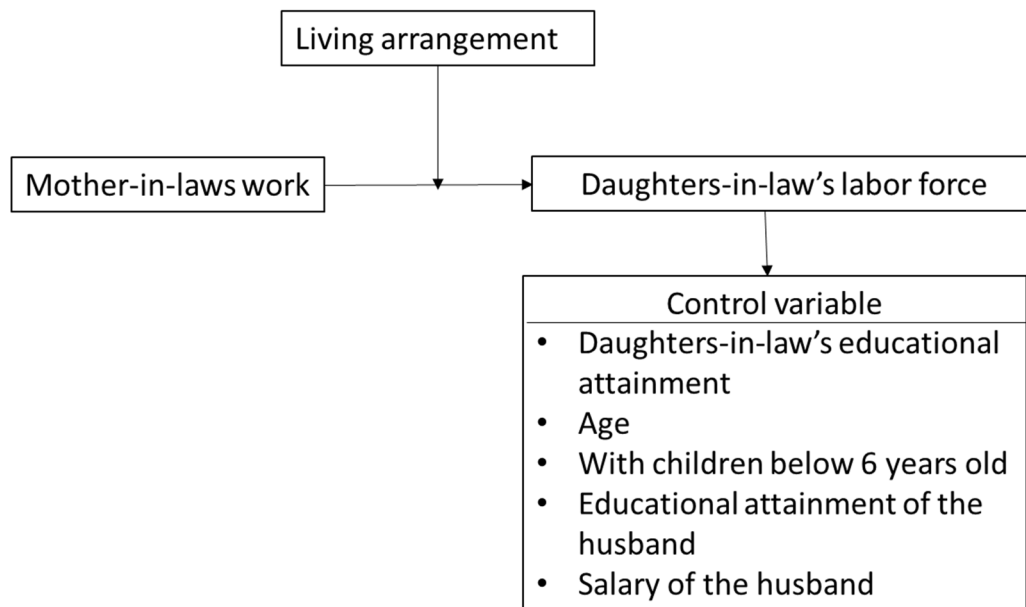


Diagram 2 Research Framework

4. Empirical study

4.1 The subject of this study

The subjects of this study were taken from a sample of parents of undergraduate students at National Central University, and their married female relatives who are between the ages of 25-54 years old, we excluded married women above 55 years old from our study because too few of the married women of this generation had work experience outside of their house as the social custom prohibited them from working out side of the house except for urgent economic necessity. 1400 questionnaires were distributed and 1063 of them were returned, however only 999 of them were useful.

The characteristics of these respondents are as follows: most of the respondents are in mid-30s and early 40s, for only 18.9% of them are under 34 years of age, and 31.7% of them are between 35 and 44 years old, and close to half (49.3%) are between 45 and 54 years old (Table 1). They are well educated since only 35% of them have senior high school or less formal education, 21% have two years of junior college education and 43% have 4 years of college degree or above. Most of these respondents have grown up children, only 32% of them have children less than 6 years old, and two-thirds (68.3%) of them have children older than 6 years old. Most of the husbands of these respondents have higher educational attainment than their wives; this is normal because in Taiwan women always marry up, to someone whose education attainment social status is higher than her, and not marry down, therefore their husband's income level is also higher. Slightly more than one-third (37.1%) of

the respondents' mother-in-law had never worked in the labor market since her own marriage; rest of them had participated in labor market work sometime or all of the time after her own marriage. Our survey data also revealed that few daughters-in-law live with her mother-in-law , which the custom of moving into husband's family is still a common practice in Taiwan.

Table 1 Characteristic of the Sample

Variable	Definition	N	%
Age	34 years old and below	189	18.9%
	35-44	317	31.7%
	45-54	493	49.3%
Education	Senior high school and below	350	35.0%
	Junior college	218	21.8%
	College and above	431	43.1%
With children below 6 years old	No	616	68.3%
	Yes	286	31.7%
Monthly Salary	below NT \$30,000 (US\$1,000)	215	21.5%
	30,000 to 49,999	260	39.2%
	50,000 to 69,999	128	19.3%
	70,000 to 89,999	41	6.2%
	90,000 and above	24	3.6%
Age of the husband	34 years old and below	147	14.7%
	35-44 years old	274	27.4%
	45-54 years old	422	42.2%
	55-59 years old	136	13.6%
	60 years old and above	20	2.0%
Education attainment of the husband	Senior high school and below	282	28.2%
	Junior college	220	22.0%
	College and above	497	49.7%
Salary of the Husband	below NT \$30,000	195	19.7%
	30,000 to 49,999	431	43.6%
	50,000 to 69,999	210	21.3%
	70,000 to 89,999	96	9.7%
	90,000 and above	56	5.7%

Table 1 Characteristic of the Sample (continue)

Variable	Definition	N	%
Mother-in-law's work experience since her own marriage	Never work in the labor market	371	37.1%
	Worked part-time sometime after her own marriage	158	15.8%
	Worked part-time ever since her own marriage	83	8.3%
	Worked full-time sometime after her own marriage	166	16.6%
	Worked full-time ever since her own marriage	221	22.1%
mother-in-law after marriage	Living with her natal mother after marriage	156	15.6%
	Living with her mother-in-law after marriage	502	50.3%
	Live independence	341	34.1%

Table 2 Daughter-in-law Employment Situation: by her educational attainment and her mother-in-law's work experience

			Educational attainment of the married daughter																		Total		
			Junior high and below						Senior high and junior college						University and above								
			Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total		Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total		Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total				
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			N
mother-in-law's work experience	Never worked	N	16	48.5	17	51.5	33	8.9	113	55.4	91	44.6	204	55.0	95	70.9	39	29.1	134	36.1	371	100.0	
		%		37.2		54.8		44.6		39.4		44.0		41.3		28.5		39.8		31.1		37.1	
	worked part-time intermittently	N	12	100.0	0	0.0	12	7.6	57	66.3	29	33.7	86	54.4	51	85.0	9	15.0	60	38.0	158	100.0	
		%		27.9		0.0		16.2		19.9		14.0		17.4		15.3		9.2		13.9		15.8	
	worked full-time intermittently	N	4	40.0	6	60.0	10	6.0	41	55.4	33	44.6	74	44.6	65	79.3	17	20.7	82	49.4	166	100.0	
		%		9.3		19.4		13.5		14.3		15.9		15.0		19.5		17.3		19.0		16.6	
	worked part-time since her own marriage	N	4	66.7	2	33.3	6	7.2	25	54.3	21	45.7	46	55.4	25	80.6	6	19.4	31	37.3	83	100.0	
		%		9.3		6.5		8.1		8.7		10.1		9.3		7.5		6.1		7.2		8.3	
	worked full-time since her own marriage	N	7	53.8	6	46.2	13	5.9	51	60.7	33	39.3	84	38.0	97	78.2	27	21.8	124	56.1	221	100.0	
		%		16.3		19.4		17.6		17.8		15.9		17.0		29.1		27.6		28.8		22.1	
	Total			43	100.0	31	100.0	74	100.0	287	100.0	207	100.0	494	100.0	333	100.0	98	100.0	431	100.0	999	100.0

How much influence does a mother-in-law's working experience have on the daughters-in-law's labor force participation? Figures in Table 2 shows that mothers-in-law have less influence on their daughters-in-laws' decision to participate in the labor market, because only 22% of the daughters-in-law whose mother-in law never worked in the labor market were in the labor force as compared with 26.5% of the daughters-in-law participated in the labor market if her mother-in-law had worked in the labor market.

4.2 The regression analysis

Up to this point other variables have not been under controlled, Table 4 is the results of a logistic regression analysis in which other variables are being controlled. Figures in Table 4 show that personal factors such age, educational attainment, age of the children, and spouse' income level of the married woman are all important determining factors of her labor force participation, same as found by scholars in other studies. In general, the older the daughter the less is her chance to participate in the labor market, the higher the educational attainment the greater the chance for her to participate in the labor market, a daughter-in-law with no children under 6 years old the chance for her to participate in the labor market is higher, and finally the higher of her husband's income the higher the chance for her to participate in the labor market.

After controlling all these factors, figures in Table 4 shows that the more intensive of the labor market experience of a mother-in-law has a positive impact on her daughter-in-law's participation in labor market activities; however the coefficient is not

statistically significant at 10 % level. Table 5 shows that if the daughter-in-law stays with her mother-in-law and the interaction of her mother-in-law's work experience. The reason for this phenomenon is discussed in the next section.

Table 3 Daughter-in-law's Employment Situation: by living arrangements

living arrangement		Educational attainment																		Total	
		Junior high and below						Senior high and junior college						University and above							
		Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total		Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total		Worked in the labor market after marriage		Never worked in the labor market after marriage		Sub-total			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
living with mother-in-law	N	33	63.5	19	36.5	52	10.4	179	63.0	105	37.0	284	56.6	124	74.7	42	25.3	166	33.1	502	100.0
	%		76.7		61.3		70.3		62.4		50.7		57.5		37.2		42.9		38.5		50.3
living independently	N	6	37.5	10	62.5	16	4.7	66	45.8	78	54.2	144	42.2	143	79.0	38	21.0	181	53.1	341	100.0
	%		14.0		32.3		21.6		23.0		37.7		29.1		42.9		38.8		42.0		34.1
Total		43	100.0	31	100.0	74	100.0	287	100.0	207	100.0	494	100.0	333	100.0	98	100.0	431	100.0	999	100.0

Table 4 Logistic Analysis of the Impact of Mother-in-law's Work Experience Since her Own Marriage

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)
Control Variable												
Age	-0.155**	4.669	0.856	-0.149**	4.203	0.862	-0.143*	3.825	0.867	-0.153*	4.360	0.858
Education	0.243***	30.116	1.275	0.242***	29.913	1.274	0.250***	31.424	1.285	0.251***	31.318	1.285
with children below 6 years old	-0.539**	5.341	0.583	-0.549**	5.502	0.577	-0.520**	4.902	0.594	-0.504**	4.563	0.604
Education Attainment of the Spouse	-0.128**	9.587	0.880	-0.128**	9.577	0.880	-0.123**	8.810	0.884	-0.127**	9.343	0.880
Salary of the Spouse	0.033	0.255	1.034	0.030	0.212	1.031	0.047	0.490	1.048	0.037	0.307	1.038
Independent Variable												
Mother-in-law's Work Experience				0.033	0.479	1.034	0.030	0.384	1.030	0.054	1.152	1.056
Moderator												
Living with Mother-in-law							0.319**	4.592	1.376	0.495**	7.265	1.641
Interaction Effect												
Mother-in-law's Work Experience * Living with Mother-in-law										-0.260*	2.765	0.771
Goodness of Fit Test												
χ^2 Value		42.937***			43.417***			48.031***			50.797***	
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test Value		19.320**			15.942**			8.900			5.957	

註：* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$ ，N=999

Table 5 Logistic Analysis of the Impact of the Mother-in-law's Work Experience Since her Own Marriage

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)	β	Wald	Exp(β)
Control Variable												
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Hosmer-Lemeshow Test Value		19.320**			15.942**			8.900			5.957	

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$, N=999

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Several interesting points have been revealed by this survey.

- 1) The structure of Today's Taiwanese family has changed. While traditionally when a married daughter was required to move into her husband's home and became part of her husband's family. Our survey shows this tradition has changed because only half (50.3%) of the married women live with their mother-in-law, slightly more than one-third of them live independently, and one-sixth live with their natal mother. Our study also reveals that the better the educational attainment of a married woman is greater the chance that her family independently from her mother or mother-in-law. For example, 26% of the married women with junior high school or less education live independently from their mother or mother-in-law, 29.1% of those with senior high school education and 42% of those with college or above education do so.
- 2) Mothers-in-law have less impact on daughters-in-law labor market work.
- 3) Figures in Table 3 revealed a very interesting phenomenon, that is if the daughter-in-law lives with her mother-in-law whom had more work experience, the less the chance for her daughter-in-law to participate in the labor market. How do we explain this phenomenon? This can be interpreted by the fact that since a much higher percentage of the less educated daughters-in-law with their mothers-in-law which implies that the educational attainment of the husbands of these women is also low, with low income made them less afford to live independently. To save rent expenses they live with their in-law and stay home to take care of their children and family chore and while their mothers-in-law continue to work in the labor market for the

purpose to support the family.

- 4) This generation of women are much better educated than her mother-in-law and therefore have higher labor force participation rates, when they become mother-in-law their own labor market experience should have a good demonstration effect for their daughter-in-laws, thus the labor force participation of the next generation of women in Taiwan should be higher than this generation and should be even higher the generation after.
- 5) However an uncertainty is developing, recent government reports show that for daughters –in-law with very high level of education, i.e., college education or above, their labor force participation rates are lower than junior college educated daughters. This is because recently highly educated daughters find that their husband’s earning is high and there is no need for them to work in the labor market, instead they are able to provide higher quality of child care to their children and also contribute their time to community service which can improve the quality of the community service much better because of their higher ability and the social connection provided by their husband. In their opinion they can make higher contribution to the society and greater meaning of their own life.

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