

CFPR SEMINAR SERIES 2018

CHILDLESSNESS AND AGING ALONE: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES FROM EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Adult children play a predominant role in old-age support in Asia. Recent demographic shifts, particularly childlessness and geographic dispersal of adult children, have significantly reduced the availability of children in parental locality. In this study, we examine the extent to which childlessness contributes to older persons aging alone in selected East and Southeast Asian countries (South Korea, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar). Our analysis is based on harmonized, cross-sectional, national-level survey data from five countries conducted during 2011-2014. First, we investigate prevalence and dimensions of childlessness, particularly distinguishing between actual childlessness (elderly without children) and de-facto childlessness (elderly whose all children migrated elsewhere). Second, we examine the extent to which actual and de-facto childlessness is associated with three aspects of aging alone: solitary living arrangement, social isolation, and loneliness. The analysis focuses on gender and SES differentials. We find that both actual and de-facto childlessness are associated with solitary living in all countries except China, where only actual childlessness is associated with solitary living. Both types are associated with greater loneliness in Southeast Asia, whereas in Korea, only actual childlessness is, and in China, neither type is significant. Actual childlessness, but not de-facto childlessness, contributes to greater social isolation in Southeast Asian countries. Being female tends to mitigate the negative effect of childlessness, while the effect of wealth is mixed. We discuss the implications of childlessness across the five countries.

Bussarawan (Puk) Teerawichitchainan is Associate Professor of Sociology and Lee Kong Chian Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University. Her research interests include social demography, the life course and aging, population health, inequality, and sociology of family. She conducts research on these topics mostly in the context of Southeast Asia. Her ongoing research includes an NIH-funded study on the long-term impacts of war and trauma exposure on health and wellbeing of older Vietnamese survivors in northern Vietnam.



Chaired by: DR FENG QIUSHI, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, NUS

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Venue: AS7-06-42 - FASS RESEARCH DIVISION SEMINAR ROOM

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