

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reason that grandparents take the responsibility to nurture the grandchildren in the grandparent families that consist of grandparents and grandchildren, to understand the items of their caring and the experience and feeling of their role of playing the parents' duty, and to try to find out the personal life context which may affect the grandparents' experience and feeling. Furthermore, this study can enable the social workers to get deeper understanding for the grandparents' experience in order to help draft the action plans and supporting welfare measures or projects.

This research employed qualitative methods. The participants are fifteen persons, including six males and nine females, aging from fifty-one to eighty-one, with one or two grandchildren under their care on the average and the duration of caring ranging from two to fifteen years. The researcher conducted semi-structural interview with them individually, and collected in-depth data. The study findings after data analyzed are listed below:

First, the reasons for the interviewees in this research to take the responsibility to take care of the grandchildren are (1) showing the exchanging behavior between generations in order to minimize the family's caring cost and exchange the reward for their own need, (2) taking the responsibility of caring based on the affection toward their children and grandchildren, and (3) regarding "care" as the family's or women's duty because of the social norm and cultural value.

Second, the caring items of the parents' duty for grandparents include (1) care, (2) education and discipline, and (3) affective assistant and protection. The special backgrounds of these grandparents, "cross-generation" and "in the middle-age or old-age", make them have to face some challenges while they're taking the responsibility to take care of the grandchildren, including (1) dealing things relevant to the mid-generation (the parents), (2) re-learning the skills of taking care of the grandchildren, (3) staying or returning to the working market, and (4) preparing for death.

Third, while the grandparents are taking the role as parents, their experience and feeling can show in subjective and objective burdens. The objective burdens for the grandparents are (1) the care affecting their life, (2) facing the grandchildren's challenging behavior, and (3) dealing with the role-changing of their own; the subjective ones are (1) positive feeling such as happiness, gratification and companion and (2) negative emotion like powerlessness, worry, and anger.

Fourth, by analyzing the interviewees' words, we can know the factors that the personal life context affects the grandparents' experience and feeling are family

resources and family psychology. The family resources are (1) the resources and ability of the care-giver, (2) the self-caring capability, health situation, and numbers of the care-receiver, (3) the interaction in the family, and (4) the whole family resources and social supporting network; the family psychology means the meaning given by the family members, collective or individual, toward the grandparent families.

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher finds three points: First, the grandparent families are the phenomena under the interaction of private situation and public issue. Second, the grandparents raising their grandchildren are the group with unique experience, different from the traditional grandparents, and they have to be understood from their own experience and personal life context, but compared with the United States of America, our country lacks the organizations or units serving these grandparents. Third, the social resources which can support those grandparents should be accessible, accountable, and acceptable, and the outcome could be the suggestion for the social work practice, social policy and future research.

