

## Research Article

# Grandparents' Family Functions in Grandchild-rearing in Japan, and Its Effect Factors

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## Abstract

Midwives have the role of helping grandparents enhance their family functions as they welcome new family members. However, their specific functions and effect factors remain unclear. Therefore, we conducted a survey with the aim of clarifying the family function of grandparents in raising grandchildren. We conducted an online survey of 2,000 Japanese grandparents and analyzed the data using factor analysis and multiple regression.

Four functions of the grandparents were revealed: daily care and healthcare, emotional support for parents, grandchildren's character development, and own well-being. Raising grandchildren exerts a great influence on family dynamics. Grandparents who did not feel burdened reported that grandchild-rearing was one of their lives' passions and helped them maintain their strength and youth. To enhance their family functions grandparents, it is necessary to assess the four functions of grandparents, support them in maintaining an appropriate distance from their grandchildren and parents, and set up a forum for discussion between grandparents and parents.

**Keywords:** *Childcare, Family function, Grandchildren, Grandparents*

## Contribution to the Field

- The family function of grandparents in raising Japanese grandchildren was clarified. Therefore, in the future, the viewpoints of the four family functions mentioned above will be used as an assessment tool, which may lead to the implementation of midwives' care that enhances the family functions of grandparents.
- To improve the quality of life of grandparents, the need to maintain a moderate distance from grandchildren was revealed. New grandparents of both sexes can be educated in advance about the role of grandparents.

## Introduction

Against the backdrop of declining family functions, problems such as depression, suicide among pregnant women [1], and infant abuse continue to persist [2]. The birth of a new child represents a developmental crisis because the family roles of both parents and grandparents change considerably. The main purpose of family support is to enable families welcoming new children to smoothly fulfill their roles and functions and enhance family functions. In Japan, for grandparents, the birth of a grandchild is the achievement of family succession, and the involvement of grandparents in childcare improves the grandparents' own quality of life [3,4]. For mothers, the influence of grandparents has the merits of physical recovery after childbirth, elimination of anxiety about childcare, and passing on childcare skills [5]. In recent years, the employment

rate of Japanese mothers has increased [6]. Mothers need access to formal childcare schemes [7] and informal family support to balance childcare and work. The Japanese tend to choose informal support from grandparents when they need childcare support [8,9]. Furthermore, 53% of Japanese couples receive childcare support from their mothers until their children are three years old. If wives are employed, this number rises to 58% [6]. In addition, the role of grandparents as caretakers of grandchildren is associated with an increase in the number of births [10]. All of this indicates a growing expectation that grandparents will take on a role in providing childcare for their grandchildren. However, involvement in grandchild-rearing adds a physical and emotional burden on grandparents [11,12]. Differences in childcare policies between mothers and grandparents have created issues such as burden and stress on mothers [5,13]. In the future, as the average life expectancy increases further [14] it is conceivable that as grandparents get older, the physical burden will increase, making it more difficult for them to be involved in the regular rearing of their grandchildren [15]. Midwives have a role to play in helping families, including grandparents, adapt to the birth of a new child [16]. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the family functions of grandparents and provide appropriate support. In recent years, grandparents who welcome new grandchildren have been educated about childcare and the roles of grandparents so that they can understand the role and take charge of raising their grandchildren [17]. However, these supports are not sufficient to meet the needs of grandparents because they are care plans based on an assessment of the family functions of grandparents

raising grandchildren and remain ambiguous. Previous studies have cited the role of grandparents as providing basic care to their grandchildren, ensuring their safety and health [18] and identifying themselves as role models and educators [18-20]. In addition, the extent and impact of grandparents' involvement in parenting have been clarified, but the exact family functions of grandparents remain unknown. Grandparents often refer to the ambiguity of their role within the family and the concomitant challenge of adjusting the parents' roles, which can lead to the drawing of boundaries and severing of family ties [21]. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the role function of grandparents responsible for raising grandchildren to support the family so that they can perform individual functions in the family without crossing boundaries. Accordingly, this study aimed to determine grandparents' family functions in grandchild-rearing in Japan and factors that influence them.

## Methods and Materials

### Operational Definitions and Conceptual Framework

#### *Grandparents*

Men and women with grandchildren between 0 and 5 years of age, with the infants' parents being over the age of 40.

#### *Grandparents' Family Functions*

Grandparents' family function was defined as the state in which grandparents maintain and improve their own well-being in harmony with their work, hobbies, and community activities while building relationships with their own children and their children's families [22].

### Research Design

This cross-sectional observational study used a questionnaire survey.

### Participants

The sample comprised 2,000 individuals (50% women), 40–89 years of age, with preschool-aged grandchildren with whom they interacted at least once a year.

### Survey Period and Methodology

In July 2021, we commissioned a Japanese internet research firm to conduct an online survey, ensuring participants' anonymity. The sample was selected from a list of people registered with this firm. The internet research company's monitors are registered in accordance with the rules and have 1.12 million monitors. Participants were selected from among them.

### Survey Contents

#### *Participants' Attributes and the Burden of Raising a Grandchild*

The participant attributes surveyed included gender, age, cohabitation, and employment. The respondents who indicated being "very" (scored as 4) or "somewhat" involved (scored as 3) in their grandchildren's development, supporting the parents, and general

housework, were defined as "involved." Those who indicated being "not very involved" (scored as 2) and having "almost no involvement" (scored as 1) were defined as "not involved." Regarding the burden of child-rearing (e.g., caring for their grandchildren, disciplining them, supporting their parents, and doing general housework), those who indicated feeling "very" (scored as 4) and "somewhat" (scored as 3) burdened, were assigned to the "burden" group, whereas those who indicated feeling "not very burdened" (scored as 2) and "almost no burden" (scored as 1) were assigned to the "no burden" group.

### *Grandparents' Family Functions*

In order to clarify the family function of grandparents, 15 items that assessed grandparents' family functions were extracted from previous studies [11,23-25]. Experts examined the constructs of the extracted items. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("not at all applicable") to 5 ("very applicable").

### *Analysis Method*

Basic statistics were calculated for each variable, and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted for the grandparents' family function items. After confirming multicollinearity using the correlation coefficient variance inflation factor (VIF), a linear regression analysis (i.e., forced entry method) was conducted with the grandparents' family functions as the dependent variables and basic attributes as the independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was conducted between the grandparents' family functions subscale and basic attributes. Gender was coded as 0=male and 1=female. Employment and cohabitation status were both coded as 0=no and 1=yes. The dummy variables for involvement in grandchild-rearing and the degree of grandchild burden were set as 0=none and 1=yes. The significance level was set at 5%. Statistical analyses were performed using IBM's SPSS Statistics software, Ver. 27.

### *Ethical Considerations*

A statement clearly stating the ethical considerations (e.g., guarantee of voluntary research cooperation and anonymity, confidential handling of data after completion of the research, existence of conflicts of interest, and monitoring) was displayed on the screen before the beginning of the survey. The study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee for Nursing Research of Dokkyo Medical University (approval number: Nursing 03008). Because this was an online survey, the study participants provided informed consent by checking a box to indicate that they agree with the ethical statements that appeared on the screen.

## Results

### *Overview of the Participants*

A summary of the participants' characteristics is presented in Table 1. The participants' age averaged 63.4 years (6.9 SD); 67 of them (3.4%) were in their 40s, 451 (22.6%) were in their 50s, 1,092 (54.6%) were in their 60s, and 390 (19.5%) were in their 70s or older. Further, 715 participants (35.8%) lived with their grandchildren, whereas 1,285 (64.3%) did not. Additionally, 1,088 (54.4%) were involved in grandchild care, 1,085 (54.3%) were involved in supporting their own

**Table 1:** Outline of eligible persons (N=2,000).

Item		n (%)	
Gender	Men	1,000	(50.0)
	Women	1,000	(50.0)
Age	40–49	67	(3.4)
	50–59	451	(22.6)
	60–69	1,092	(54.6)
	> 70	390	(19.5)
Living with grandchildren	Yes	715	(35.8)
	No	1,285	(64.3)
Employment	Employed	1,305	(65.3)
	Unemployed	695	(34.8)
<b>Involvement in grandchild-rearing<sup>1</sup></b>			
Raising grandchildren	Yes	1,088	(54.4)
	No	912	(45.6)
Supporting their own children	Yes	1,085	(54.3)
	No	915	(45.8)
Doing general housework	Yes	813	(40.7)
	No	1,187	(59.4)
<b>Felt burdened by raising grandchildren<sup>2</sup></b>			
Caring for grandchildren	Yes	754	(37.7)
	No	1,248	(62.3)
Disciplining grandchildren	Yes	789	(39.5)
	No	1,211	(60.6)
Supporting their own children	Yes	376	(18.8)
	No	1,624	(81.2)
Doing general housework	Yes	898	(44.9)
	No	1,102	(55.1)
Item		Mean	± SD
Average age		63.4	± 6.9

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Involvement in child-rearing: Yes (very involved, somewhat involved); No (not very involved, almost no involvement).

<sup>2</sup>Burden of child-rearing: Yes (very burdened, somewhat burdened); No (not very burdened, no burden).

children, and 1,102 (55.1%) were not involved in general housework. Of the respondents, 1,248 (62.3%) did not feel burdened by grandchild care, 1,211 (60.6%) did not feel burdened by disciplining grandchildren, 1,624 (81.2%) did not feel burdened by supporting their own children, and 1,102 (55.1%) did not feel burdened by general housework.

### Grandparents' Family Functions and Effect Factors

The 15 items of grandparents' family functions were confirmed by calculating basic statistics; no ceiling or floor effects were found. These items were subsequently subjected to exploratory factor analysis, based on the maximum likelihood method. Judging from the possibility of interpretation, a factor analysis of Promax rotation was performed with four factors. As a result, two items, "I am troubled by the gap between my own child-rearing experience and that of my own children" and "I try to ease the strained relationship between my grandchildren and their parents," were deleted because their factor loadings were lower than 0.4, and factor analysis was conducted again using maximum likelihood method and Promax rotation. Table 2 presents the factor loadings.

The following four dimensions of grandparents' family function were identified: Function 1 was named daily care and health care

because of its high loadings in "contributing to grandchildren's health and growth by helping them eat and bathe," "contributing to grandchildren's health recovery by taking care of them when they are sick," "taking time away from work and hobbies to take care of them," "contributing to the stability of family life for the parental couple," and "providing relaxation time for the parental couple by taking care of the grandchildren." Function 2 was named emotional support for parents due to the high loadings of "I respect the parenting policies of my own children and am involved in my grandchildren's lives," "I watch the human development of my own children through child-rearing," and "I ask myself whether the degree to which I help my children and their spouses with child-rearing is excessive". Function 3 was named grandchildren's character development owing to its high loadings for "I help my grandchildren develop lifestyle habits and learn social rules". "I help my grandchildren learn compassion and patience," and "I am a good role model for my grandchildren". Function 4 was named own well-being because of its high loadings for the items "raising grandchildren is one of the things that makes life worth living," and "being involved in my grandchildren's lives helps me maintain my own physical strength and youthfulness". Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for dimensions 1–4 were 0.91, 0.86, 0.78, 0.81, and 0.86, respectively. The inter-factor correlations are depicted in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Grandparents' family function: exploratory factor analysis (N=2,000).

Item	Mean	SD	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Reliability factor
			Daily care and healthcare	Emotional support for parentals	Grandchildren's character development	Own well-being	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Total score							0.91
Factor 1: Daily care and healthcare	13.95	4.4					0.86
Contributing to grandchildren's health and growth by helping them eat and bath	2.81	1.1	0.89				
Contributing to grandchildren's health recovery by taking care of them when they are sick	2.73	1.1	0.73				
Taking time away from work and hobbies to take care of grandchildren	2.21	1.1	0.7				
Contributing to the stability of the family life of the parental couple	3.05	1.1	0.49				
Providing relaxation time for the parental couple by taking care of grandchildren	3.15	1.1	0.37				
Factor 2: Emotional support for parents	10.04	2.6					0.78
I respect the parenting policies of my own children and am involved in my grandchildren's lives	3.47	1		0.98			
I watch the human development of my own children through child-rearing	3.35	1		0.66			
I ask myself whether the degree to which I help my children and their spouses with child-rearing is excessive	3.22	1.1		0.62			
Factor3: Grandchildren's character development	8.26	2.6					0.86
I help my grandchildren develop lifestyle habits and learn social rules	2.77	1			0.8		
I help my grandchildren learn compassion and patience	2.85	1			0.75		
I am a good role model for my grandchildren	2.64	0.9			0.58		
Factor 4: Own well-being	5.92	2.1					0.81
Raising grandchildren is one of the things that makes life worth living	2.88	1.2				0.86	
Being involved in my grandchildren's lives helps me maintain my physical strength and youthfulness	3.04	1.1				0.78	
Cumulative contribution rate			47.12	57.25	60.98	63.09	

Notes: Maximum likelihood method; Promax method with Kaiser normalization. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin .93; Bartlett spherical test of:  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3:** Grandparents' family function: correlation between factors.

Factor name	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4
	Daily care and health care	Emotional support for parents	Grandchildren's character development	Own well-being
Dimension Daily care and healthcare	1.00	.46	.81	.72
Dimension Emotional support for parents	0.46	1.00	.48	.57
Dimension Grandchildren's character develop	.81	.48	1.00	.67
Dimension Own well-being	.72	.57	.67	1.00

Note: Maximum likelihood method; Promax method with Kaiser normalization.

Linear regression analysis of grandparents' family functions and participants' characteristics is presented in Table 4. Multiple regression analysis was performed, with grandparents' family functions as dependent variables and basic attributes as independent variables. All variables were included because there were no variables with  $r > 0.8$ . The VIFs were all lower than 10.0; therefore, there were no problems with multicollinearity.

Function 1 was significantly affected by grandchildren's involvement

in childcare: ( $\beta=0.392, p<0.000$ ), support for the parents ( $\beta=0.189, p<0.000$ ), general housework ( $\beta=0.181, p<0.000$ ), co-residence ( $\beta=0.058, p<0.003$ ), and age ( $\beta=-0.048, p<0.009$ ) had a significant effect.

Function 2 was significantly affected by support for their own children: ( $\beta=0.203, p<0.000$ ), involvement in raising the grandchildren ( $\beta=0.102, p<0.000$ ), age ( $\beta=0.056, p<0.017$ ), and the burden of support for their own children ( $\beta=-0.066, p<0.009$ ), and gender ( $\beta=-0.096, p<0.000$ ).

**Table 4:** Comparison of grandparents' family function and grandparents' attributes.

Factor	Grandparents' total family function score			Factor 1 Daily care and health care			Factor 2 Emotional support for parents			Factor 3 Grandchildren's character development			Factor 4 Own well-being			
	NSCs		p	NSCs		p	NSCs		p	NSCs		p	NSCs		p	
	B	β		B	β		B	β		B	β		B	β		
Gender	0.411	0.021	.314	0.236	0.027	.186	-0.497	-0.096	.000	0.341	0.067	.002	0.332	0.08	.001	
Age	-0.008	-0.005	.78	-0.031	-0.048	.009	0.021	0.056	.017	0.012	0.033	.100	-0.01	-0.033	.124	
Living together	0.976	0.048	.017	0.537	0.058	.003	-0.091	-0.017	.49	0.392	0.074	.001	0.138	0.032	.154	
Employment	0.184	0.009	.659	-0.032	-0.003	.862	-0.043	-0.008	.748	0.172	0.032	.134	0.087	0.02	.378	
Involvement in grandchild-rearing																
Raising grandchildren	6.663	0.344	.000	3.488	0.392	.000	0.529	0.102	.000	1.462	0.285	.000	1.184	0.284	.000	
Supporting their own children	4.471	0.231	.000	1.683	0.189	.000	1.057	0.203	.000	1.099	0.215	.000	0.631	0.151	.000	
Doing general housework	2.856	0.145	.000	1.631	0.181	.000	0.056	0.011	.681	0.75	0.144	.000	0.418	0.099	.000	
Burden of raising grandchildren																
Caring for grandchildren	-1.261	-0.063	.006	-0.186	-0.02	.35	-0.237	-0.044	.107	-0.211	-0.04	.094	-0.627	-0.146	.000	
Disciplining grandchildren	-0.289	-0.015	.525	-0.06	-0.007	.762	0.252	0.048	.085	-0.44	-0.084	.000	-0.04	-0.009	.71	
Supporting their own children	0.359	0.015	.49	0.419	0.037	.065	-0.435	-0.066	.009	0.314	0.048	.028	0.061	0.012	.617	
Doing general housework	0.763	0.039	.067	0.292	0.033	.108	0.168	0.032	.21	0.271	0.053	.018	0.032	0.008	.747	
Linear regression Analysis:		Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .371			Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .432			Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .090			Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .320			Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .239		
Forced Input		Analysis of variance: p < .000 Dubin-Watson = 1.998			Analysis of variance: p < .000 Dubin-Watson = 1.982			Analysis of variance: p < .000 Dubin-Watson = 2.016			Analysis of variance: p < .000 Dubin-Watson = 2.005			Analysis of variance: p < .000 Dubin-Watson = 1.969		

Gender: Male = 0, Female = 1

Cohabitation: None = 0, Yes = 1

Employment: None = 0, Yes = 1

Involvement in child-rearing: None = 0, Yes = 1

Burden of grandchild-rearing: None = 0, Yes = 1

Notes: SCs: Standardized Coefficients; NSCs: Non-Standardized Coefficients

Function 3 included involvement in childcare ( $\beta=0.285$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), support for the parents ( $\beta=0.215$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), general housework ( $\beta=0.144$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), cohabitation ( $\beta=0.074$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), gender ( $\beta=0.067$ ,  $p<0.002$ ), the burden of general housework ( $\beta=0.053$ ,  $p<0.018$ ), and the burden of support for parents ( $\beta=0.048$ ,  $p<0.028$ ). The burden of general housework ( $\beta=0.053$ ,  $p<0.018$ ), burden of support for parents ( $\beta=0.048$ ,  $p<0.028$ ), and burden of disciplining grandchildren ( $\beta=-0.084$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) had significant effects.

Function 4 was significantly affected by involvement in childcare: ( $\beta=0.284$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), support for parents ( $\beta=0.151$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), general housework ( $\beta=0.099$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), gender ( $\beta=0.080$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and the burden of childcare ( $\beta=-0.146$ ,  $p<0.000$ ).

## Discussion

### Characteristics of the Target Population

Over 50% of participants were involved in grandchild-rearing, which is in line with the finding that 53% of Japanese couples receive childcare support from their grandmothers by the time their children are three years old [6] half of grandparents in China [26], and 42-44% of grandparents in Europe and other countries take care of their

grandchildren [27]. In the United States, 25% of children under five years of age are in the care. Thus, it can be said that the subjects of this study are a general population.

Furthermore, 64.3% of participants did not live with their grandchildren. In a survey of Japanese people's perceptions regarding cohabitation, 22% of respondents stated that living apart from their grandparents was preferred, but that living in the same neighborhood as their parents was ideal [28]. This suggests that Japanese people prefer to maintain a moderate distance from their parents. The reason for this may be that, for the parental generation, grandparents provide childcare support when needed, which is beneficial to both the parental and grandparental generations' psychological health.

### Grandparents' Family Functions

The four family functions of grandparents were extracted: daily care and health care, emotional support for parents, grandchildren's character development, and own well-being. Shiraiishi and Inoue (2017) categorized grandparents' participation in grandchild care as support for grandchildren's daily life, support for parents' daily life, emotional support for parents, and support for grandchildren's emotional and social needs [29]. The three functions revealed in this study: daily care and health care, emotional support for parents, and

grandchildren's character development were consistent with Shiraishi and Inoue (2017) [29]. According to a survey by the Cabinet Office (2014), 50-60% of the parents' generation expected grandparents to talk and play with their children and pass on their experiences and wisdom to their children, whereas 40% of the parents' generation expected grandparents to discipline them in daily life [28]. It has also been demonstrated that grandparents perceive themselves as role models and educators [18-20]. Grandparents play an essential role in the character development of grandchildren even in today's era of nuclear families [30-36]. In this study, the family functions of grandparents were shown by daily care and healthcare and character formation of grandchildren. It was found that grandparents are involved in the child-rearing policy of the parent couple as emotional support for parents and think about whether the scope of helping the parent couple raise the child is excessive. According to Sumikawa (2016), grandparents state that it is the role of parents to raise their grandchildren and that they are involved in "not intervening too much in the childcare of their grandchildren as grandparents" [31]. Many grandparents tend to play a supportive but non-interfering role, set clear boundaries with the parents to avoid family conflict, respect parental wishes, and ensure family harmony and consistency in parenting [32-35]. The current study shows that emotional support for parents respects the child-rearing policy of parents and couples and protects their personal growth. To enhance the family function of grandparents, it is necessary to discuss in detail the division of roles between parents and grandparents, and midwives need to set up a discussion place for parents and grandparents. The role function of grandparents' characteristics in this study was "own well-being. Grandparents expressed that raising their grandchildren was one of their purpose in life, whereas that the function of maintaining their own health was to maintain their own health. Grandparents experience a "rejuvenating effect" by being involved in childcare [37]. It was also revealed to result in better physical health [3]. Therefore, assessing the family functions related to the health balance of grandparents themselves will lead to support according to the needs of grandparents.

### Factors Affecting the Family Functioning of Grandparents

The four family functions of grandparents were affected by the degree of involvement of grandchildren. Grandparents involved in raising grandchildren scored higher on four factors. Grandparents who did not feel burdened by taking care of their grandchildren recognized that raising their grandchildren helped them maintain their physical strength and youth. For grandparents, raising grandchildren has a positive impact on their health.

Regarding gender differences, grandfathers scored higher on the function of grandchildren's character development and own well-being, whereas grandmothers scored higher on emotional support for parents. Further, grandmothers were more likely to raise their grandchildren for longer periods [38,39]. Grandparents' employment status had no significant effect on their family functions. However, compared to those who were unemployed, grandparents working full-time perceived child-rearing as one of their reasons for living, whereas unemployed grandparents perceived that it reduced the time they could

spend on work and hobbies. Grandparents who were unemployed held the belief that they respected the child-rearing policies of the parents [40] suggesting that further investigation is needed to determine whether grandparents' employment influences their functions in the family. Grandparents' age affected the dimensions of daily care and healthcare and emotional support for parents. Grandparents in their 40s and 50s were more involved in grandchild-rearing, recognizing that grandchild-rearing was one of their reasons for living and that grandchild-rearing was contributing to the family's quality of life, even though it reduced their time available for work and hobbies [40]. It is assumed that grandparents, especially those who are younger, take on the role of caretakers while also having jobs and hobbies; we speculate that the balance between these two roles may affect grandparents' family functions. It goes without saying that the closer the physical distance to the grandchildren, the more the family function of the grandparents. This study revealed that grandparents living with their grandchildren scored higher in daily care and healthcare and grandchildren's character development than grandparents who did not live with them. Those who lived with their grandchildren had more intense parenting responsibilities and burdens, and the pressure to do a good job of raising their grandchildren often caused psychological stress, burnout, frustration, and feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless [19,41,42]. In contrast, grandparents who were only moderately involved in grandchild rearing, enjoyed the traditional laid-back grandparenting role without a sense of obligation to provide childcare [43]. The attitude of grandparents toward raising their grandchildren is that they consider it the responsibility of the parents to raise their grandchildren, but also to be involved when requested, and it is clear that they are responsible for raising their grandchildren in response to the parents' requests [33,35,40]. Also, even if grandparents do not live with their children and grandchildren, they will watch over and adjust to them to maintain balance and live [44]. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of life of grandparents in their later years, it is necessary to provide support such as education and environment improvement so that grandparents can perform family functions, including maintaining an appropriate distance in preparation for welcoming new grandchildren.

### Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study clarified the family functions of grandparents with infant grandchildren. However, the family functions of grandfathers and grandmothers may be different in other scenarios. In some cases, grandparents responsible for grandchild rearing were at a higher risk of developing health problems and serious medical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis, and generalized pain [45,46]. These topics should be explored in future research, as grandparents' health status may affect their family functions. We also included grandparents with grandchildren aged 1 to 5 years and did not analyze their ages in detail. Grandparents have reported fatigue and lack of rest when caring for younger grandchildren [12,46]. In addition, differences in the choice of grandparents to assume the role of grandparents themselves or as obligations may affect the family function of grandparents [47]. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the possibility that the burden of the role of grandparents is influenced by the recognition of whether or not they are responsible for raising their grandchildren as a duty.

## Conclusions

The survey revealed grandparents' family functions: daily care and healthcare, emotional support for parents, grandchildren's character development, and own well-being. Grandparents who did not feel burdened reported that grandchild-rearing was one of their life passions and helped them maintain their own strength and youth. Grandparents' involvement in raising their grandchildren affected their functions in the family. To enhance their family functions grandparents, it is necessary to assess the four functions of grandparents, support them in maintaining an appropriate distance from their grandchildren and children, and set up a forum for discussion between grandparents and parents.

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## Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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