

原 著

# A Comparative Study Concerning Citizens' Comprehension and Attitude toward Aged People in Japan, Korea, India, Pohnpei Island and Brazil

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## Abstract

In order to clarify citizens' comprehension and attitude toward aged people in Asia and the Pan-Pacific area, investigations by questionnaire have taken place in the Honshu area of Japan, Inchon City in South Korea, Delhi City in India, São Paulo City in Brazil, Pohnpei Island in the Federated State of Micronesia. The following results were obtained.

Concerning citizens' comprehension and attitude toward the aged, the current religion or ethical norms (such as India's Hinduism or Korea's Confucianism) have strongly influenced them. Differences were seen among areas and age groups; namely, a majority of middle and older groups in Brazil has traditional ideas which intend to solve problems of the aged people in their own community, but younger age groups value modernization of a western style. But, in India, the differences among the age groups were few. In Brazil, differences were seen between Japanese Brazilians and Portuguese Brazilians concerning comprehension toward aged people.

## Introduction

In order to clarify citizens' comprehension and attitude toward aged people in Asia and the Pan-Pacific area, investigations by questionnaire have taken place in Inchon City in South Korea, Ishigaki Island in Japan, Delhi City in India, São Paulo City in Brazil, Pohnpei Island in the Federated State of Micronesia. A comparative study was done with

Japanese subjects whom the authors investigated formerly in mainland Japan.

## Material

The subjects chosen were 382 Koreans (Table 1) living in Inchon City ranging in age from the teenage years to the sixties. Other subjects were 500 Japanese (Table 1) living in Ishigaki Island which is 2,000 km from Tokyo, and this island is considered a unique

area where the traditional Japanese manners and customs still remain. The subjects ranged in age from the teenage years to the eighties. For a comparative study, 583 Japanese subjects of the Honshu area of the mainland were chosen. This group is considered a sample of a standard area of Japan. The subjects ranged in age from the teenage years to the twenties.

In India, the subjects chosen were 711 Indians (Table 2) living in Delhi City ranging in age from the teenage years to the fifties.

In Brazil, the subjects were 105 Japanese

Brazilians and 126 Portuguese Brazilians living in São Paulo City, ranging in age from the teenage years to the eighties (Table 3)<sup>1)</sup>.

Although answers were collected from 97 inhabitants of Pohnpei Island, statistical discussion was impossible. The reason will be discussed later.

## Results

In answering question 1 (Table 4) "What kind of phenomenon do you think "aging is"?—"weaken in physical function" was 78.6% for Korean subjects, and it was 57.3% for Japanese subjects in Honshu, remarkably

Table 1 Subjects of Korea and Japan

(N)						
sex years of age	Inchon (Korea)			Ishigaki (Japan)		
	m	f	total	m	f	total
10-19	6	271	277	48	36	84
20-29	28	46	74	38	39	77
30-39	10	9	19	47	47	94
40-49	5	1	6	33	47	80
50-59	4	0	4	35	36	71
60-69	2	0	2	11	25	36
70-79	0	0	0	30	25	55
80-	0	0	0	3	0	3
total	55	327	382	245	255	500
	382			500		

Table 2 Subjects of India (Delhi City)

(N)			
sex years of age	m	f	total
10-19	195	189	384
20-29	109	78	187
30-39	23	44	67
40-49	24	22	46
50-59	22	5	27
total	373	338	711
	711		

Table 3 Subjects of Brazil (São Paulo)<sup>1)</sup>

(N)									
sex years of age	Japanese Brazilians			Portuguese Brazilians			total		
	m	f	total	m	f	total	m	f	total
10-19	0	0	0	2	9	11	2	9	11
20-29	2	7	9	18	32	50	20	39	59
30-39	5	9	14	10	21	31	15	30	45
40-49	11	10	21	6	7	13	17	17	34
50-59	11	15	26	6	8	14	17	23	40
60-69	15	12	27	5	1	6	20	13	33
70-79	4	3	7	1	0	1	5	3	8
80-	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
total	49	56	105	48	78	126	97	134	231

higher than 50.8% for subjects in Ishigaki. In the same question, "Failing memory and losing of judgement" was 8.9% for Korean respondents, over 20% lower than the two other areas. To account for this remarkable difference, it is considered that a psychological background strongly affects Korean subjects; namely, the moral control of Confucianism, that humans should respect the elderly people in the clan is so strong that the majority of subjects feel psychological resistance to connecting the aging phenomenon with "Failing memory and losing of judgement."

Concerning why those aged people work (Table 4), Ishigaki subjects who answered "good for health" were 37.0%, high compared to 12.7% of the Honshu area and 7.6% of Korea. It shows that in Ishigaki working is regarded as a means of promoting aged people's health rather than a means of getting money or a procedure of attending to society.

Concerning why those aged people work, all answers of "make a living" were 14-17% and "get pocket money" were 5-6%. The percentages were apparently low, and few differences were seen among them.

They show that the time of regarding aged people as working for economic reasons was over.

In Brazilian subjects, concerning why the aged have to remain employed, a remarkable difference was seen; namely, the percentage of the answer "to support their daily life" was 68.3% in Portuguese Brazilians and 23.8% in Japanese Brazilians. A difference of average school career is speculated as one of the biggest reasons. (Fig. 1)<sup>1)</sup>

Concerning question 3 (Table 4), whether the aged with dementia get better by medical treatment, the affirmative answer was 54.7% in Korea and 54.9% in Honshu Japan; however, it was 71.6% in Ishigaki.

Considering why the percentage in Ishigaki was rather high, it is thought that the temper of its people is rather optimistic and they have an ingenuous expectation for the medical treatment.

Concerning question 4, the chances to keep company with the aged the percentage for Ishigaki was 59.2%. A big difference was seen comparing with the other two areas.

As to question 5, respecting aged, affirmative answers were rather high in Korea

Table 4 Attitude toward the aged

(%)

questions	get old			weaken of physical function			failing memory and losing judgement			losing of interest and will in things			none of above		
No.1 What kind of phenomenon do you think "aging is"?	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)
	6.5	14.6	12.2	78.6	50.8	57.3	8.9	27.8	20.8	5.0	4.2	6.5	1.0	0.8	0.9
questions	good for health			make living			get pocket money			for the worth of living			others		
No.2 What do you think the major reason that aged people work?	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)	Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)
	7.6	37.0	12.7	15.2	13.6	16.8	6.3	5.2	5.1	69.1	43.6	62.8	1.6	0.2	1.5
questions										Inchon (Korea)	Ishigaki (Japan)	Honshu (Japan)			
No.3 Do you think the dementia will get better by medical treatment?										54.7	71.6**	54.9			
No.4 Do you think have rather many chances to keep company with the aged over 65 years old?										35.3	59.2**	35.8			
No.5 Do you think you should keep company with the aged respecting an superiors?										92.2**	90.7**	72.7			
No.6 Would you like to listen to the aged and take their advice?										80.9*	99.4**	75.5			

\* p < 0.05    \*\* p < 0.01

(92.2%) and Ishigaki (97.7%), but were 72.7% in Honshu. On the other hand, for question 6, "take the aged's advice", affirmative answers were 99.4% in Ishigaki, 80.9% in Korea, and 75.5% in Honshu.

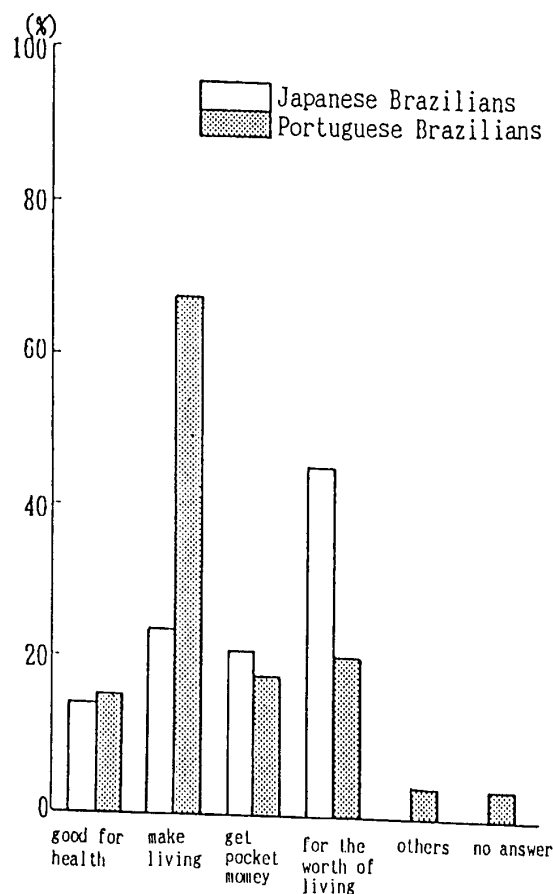


Fig. 1 The reason that the aged work<sup>1)</sup>

In correlating question 4, 5, and 6 (Table 4, Fig. 2), the moral conception that people should respect the aged, strongly affected by Confucianism, is widely spread in Korea. In Korea, "respect the aged" was 92.2%, but "take the aged's advice" was 80.9%. The gap between the moral conception and behavior in real life was seen.

In Ishigaki, the rate of "respect the aged" was 90.7%; furthermore, "take the aged's advice" was 99.4%. It is considered that the aged are respected in real life rather than in the moral conception alone.

In Honshu, the attitude of respecting and taking the aged's advice was rather weak compared to the other areas.

Concerning the question, "living with the parents" (Fig. 2), an affirmative answer was 82.5% in Korea, 67.0% in Ishigaki, and 48.4% in Honshu.

As to the question, "living with the children", an affirmative answer in Korea was 39.2%. A big gap was seen between the 82.5% of "living with the parents". Urbanization, the increasingly nuclear family, shortage of housing, etc, are considered to invade the traditional thought of Korea.

In India, concerning question 4 (Table 5), "the chance to keep company with the aged",

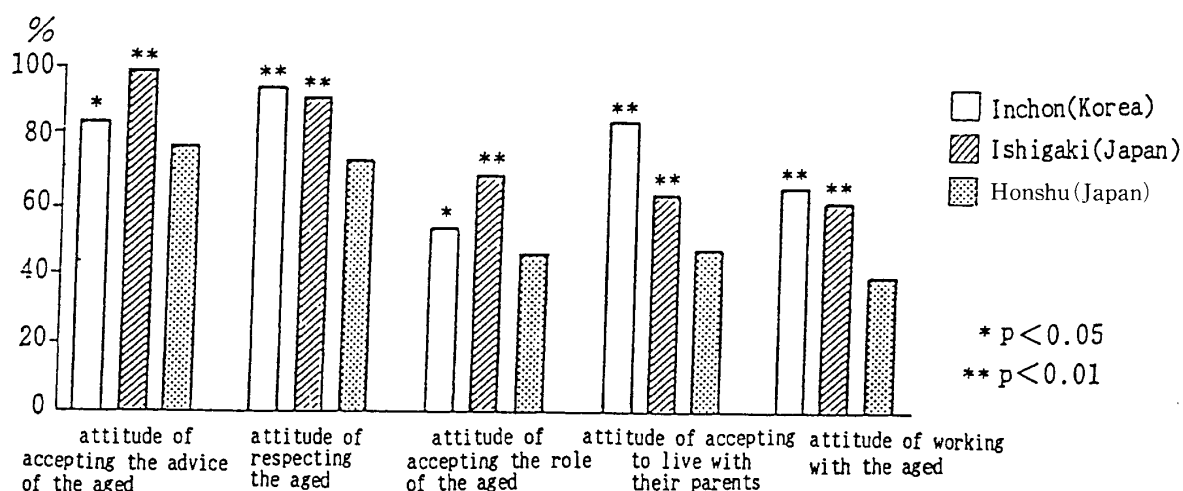


Fig. 2 Subjects' attitude of accepting the aged

**Table 5** Comprehension toward the aged (India and Japan (Honshu))

questions	age						(%)	
	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	India total	Honshu (Japan)
No.4 Do you think have rather many chances to keep company with the aged over 65 years old?	37.8	43.2	55.4	42.6	36.0	50.0	74.9	35.8
No.5 Do you think you should keep company with the aged respecting as superiors?	47.7	53.7	70.8	63.8	80.0	50.0	79.9	72.7
No.6 Would you like to listen to the aged and take their advice?	39.8	41.6	58.5	59.6	48.0	0	91.5	75.5
No.7 Would you like to live with your parents?	76.3	80.0	72.3	72.3	80.0	50.0	88.5	48.4
No.8 Would you like to live with your children?	56.8	58.9	67.7	55.3	64.0	50.0	76.2	39.6
No.9 Do you think you would enjoy working with the aged over 65?	30.5	28.9	21.5	23.4	20.0	50.0	73.3	40.1
No.10 Do you think the dementia will get better by medical treatment?	20.3	16.3	19.6	8.5	28.0	0	75.8	54.9

Notes. Percentale of each age group = Answer of only "Yes"

Percentale of total = Answers of "Yes" and "In some cases"

affirmative answers were 74.9%. As to the question 5, "respecting the aged", the affirmative answer was 79.9%; in addition, the percentage of question 6, "taking the aged's advice" was 91.5%. It seemed that the aged were respected in both of the moral conception and real life in Indian subjects.

Generally, it was characteristic that the differences among generations were few in the answer of subjects in India. The strong influence of Hinduism is considered the main reason.

### Conclusion

In Korean subjects, the attitude toward the aged was considered to be strongly ruled by the thought of Confucianism, that humans should respect their parents and be devoted to their family and their community. However, especially in the younger generation, the gap between the traditional ideology of Confucianism and their present sense of values seemed to be increasing.

Modernization such as industrialization, urbanization, and the increasingly nuclear family is considered to affect the traditional life style and thought in Korea.

In Japan, the difference of the attitude toward the aged between areas was remarkable; namely, the characteristics of advanced industrial countris were seen in the Honshu area on the mainland. On the other hand, the traditional attitude which accepts the aged in the community of the blood relation still remains on the solitary island of Ishigaki which is 2,000 km from Tokyo.

Generally, it was characteristic that the differences among generations were few in the subjects in India (Table 5).

Concerning the subjects' attitudes toward the aged, Brazilian subjects have more favorable consciousness to the aged than native Japanese subjects whom the authors investigated formerly in Japan. For this reason, it is considered that the unique community based on a family-like human relation system still remains among Brazilians as the norm of community.

However, comparing Brazilian age groups, the rate of affirmative answers concerning collaboration with the aged increases as the respondent age rises, while the youngage groups' consciousness of belonging to a community is decreasing.

Although answers were collected from 97 inhabitants of Pohnpei Island, statistical discussion was impossible. Most of the questions concerning comprehension and attitude toward aged people were nonsense or impossible to answer for the subjects.

For example, question 1, "What kind of phenomenon do you think "aging is"?" is a nonsense question for inhabitants who don't have an abstract conception of "aging".

As to question 2, "the reason why those aged people over 65 years of age work", they seemed to be puzzled because they don't have an idea of an age limit for working. They don't have a definite idea of "employment" or "retirement" as in the industrial countries. The aged inhabitants are only expected to dis-

charge their duties within their abilities in their community.

Concerning why this questionnaire investigation could not be achieved in Pohnpei Island, the following reason is considered; namely, this questionnaire is planned to ask the consciousness of citizens of industrial countries toward aged people. In industrial society, the value of individuals is determined by the ability to produce, and the aged people who don't have the means of production are regarded as worthless. But the aged people in Pohnpei don't lose entirely the means of production by aging, for they can support their lives by participating in fishing and agriculture in proportion to their abilities in their plentiful tropical environment.

#### Reference

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## 日本，韓国，インド，ポーンペイ島及びブラジル における住民の老人に対する意識調査

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#### 要 約

アジア及び環太平洋地域の人々の、老人に対する意識と態度を知るために、韓国仁川市、インドニューデリー市、ブラジルサンパウロ市、ミクロネシア連邦ポーンペイ島においてアンケート調査を行い、以下の結果を得た。

老人に対する理解と態度に関しては、インドのヒンドゥー教や韓国の儒教のような宗教や倫理観が強い影響を及ぼしていた。年齢や地域別による差異がみられた。即ち、ブラジルの中高年者の大多数は老人の問題を自らの共同体内で解決しようとする伝統的な考え方が強い

のに対し、若い年齢層は欧米風の新しい考え方をする者が多かった。しかし、インドでは、年齢の違いによる考え方の違いは少なかった。ブラジルでは、日系ブラジル人とポルトガル系ブラジル人の間に、老人に対する理解の仕方に相違がみられた。