

The Impacts of Domestic Helpers on Hong Kong People's Activity and Travel Behavior

Donggen Wang

Household responsibilities such as maintenance and childcare not only induce activities and travel but also impose time constraints on individuals' participation in discretionary activities and associated travel. Instead of sharing household responsibilities, household members may hire domestic helpers or live-in maids to take some or most of the household maintenance activities and childcare. This is a common practice in some Asian cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong. The presence of live-in maids in households may lead to changes in many aspects of households and individuals' activity-travel behavior: destination, timing, duration, etc. Would the release from household maintenance activities leads to more or less out-of-home activities and travel? Despite of the significance of this issue, to my knowledge, there is hardly any research on this topic reported in the literature. In an attempt to answer this research question and to make a contribution to the literature on the relations between household responsibilities and activity travel behavior, this paper presents some empirical evidence on how the presence of live-in maids in households affect the activity-travel behavior of the male and female household heads. The data are derived from the 2002 Travel Characteristic Survey of Hong Kong. The structural equation modeling framework is used to study the effects of live-in maids on the participation in out-of-home activities. We found that the presence of live-in maids significantly increase the time spent for subsistence activities by female head. As expected, it significantly reduces the probability of male and female heads to implement maintenance activities. Apart from these generation and replacement effects, we also find that the presence of live-in maid may increase the participation in joint discretionary activities, but reduce the individual discretionary activities of male and female heads. The findings of this research provide a new perspective to the understanding of the relationships between household responsibilities and activity and travel behavior.