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Long-Term Care Policies and Social Representations of Dependency in Ageing Societies: A Comparison Between France and Japan

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Abstract

Population ageing is transforming health and social care systems and raises important questions about how dependency and loss of autonomy among older adults are understood and addressed in public policy. This paper examines how long-term care policies are shaped not only by institutional arrangements but also by social and cultural representations of ageing and dependency. Focusing on a comparison between France and Japan, the study explores how different cultural contexts and policy frameworks influence the definition of care needs and the organization of support systems for older adults. The research adopts a qualitative comparative approach combining policy analysis and a review of existing literature in social gerontology and ageing policy. The analysis examines institutional frameworks for long-term care in both countries and considers how social representations of autonomy, family responsibility and public support interact with policy instruments. The comparison highlights how distinct institutional and cultural contexts contribute to shaping different approaches to supporting older adults experiencing loss of autonomy. The paper argues that long-term care policies cannot be understood solely through institutional design but must also be analysed in relation to the social representations that inform them.

Keywords: Autonomy; Comparative Analysis; Cultural Context; Policy Frameworks; Social Gerontology