
Abstract

Title: Study on consumer problems and solutions for older people with cognitive impairment

International Consumer Policy Research Center Strategic Headquarters for
Frontiers of Consumer Policy Consumer Affairs Agency

(Daisuke Ueno^{1 9}, Yoko Eguchi^{2 9}, Nozomu Oya^{3 9}, Yuka Kato^{4 9}, Shunichiro Shinagawa^{5 9},
Naoko Takahira^{6 10}, Jin Narumoto^{7 9}, Masami Hiyama^{8 10}, Atsushi Imanaka¹¹, Reiko Miyamoto¹¹,
Tomoko Ikushima¹¹, Kumiko Takeuchi¹¹, Kairi Ohara¹², Michika Akimori¹¹)

Abstract :

As Japan's population ages, consumer detriment affecting older adults with cognitive impairment has become a serious social issue. This study aimed to clarify the characteristics of consumer detriment among older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia, to examine the underlying factors contributing to such detriment, and to explore the roles that healthcare and welfare professionals should fulfill, as well as appropriate forms of regional collaboration.

To this end, an internet-based questionnaire survey was conducted targeting healthcare and welfare professionals. The survey asked respondents whether they had experience examining or responding to individuals who had experienced, or were suspected of having experienced, consumer detriment. For cases in which such experience was reported, respondents were also asked to provide information on the nature of the consumer detriment, together with the symptoms and cognitive conditions of the individuals concerned.

The results showed that the risk of consumer detriment increased at relatively mild stages of cognitive impairment. In particular, declines in specific cognitive functions—such as judgment, memory, and executive function—were suggested to be associated with consumer detriment. Additionally, among individuals with MCI, consumer detriment involving interpersonal, face-to-face sales practices, such as

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Contemporary Society, Kyoto Women's University

² Assistant Professor, Department of Neuropsychiatry, Keio University School of Medicine

³ Chief, Department of Psychiatry, Japanese Red Cross Kyoto Daini Hospital

⁴ Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine

⁵ Professor, Department of Psychiatry, The Jikei University School of Medicine

⁶ Japan Association of Consumer Affairs Specialists (Certified Consumer Affairs Specialist)

⁷ Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine

⁸ Research Fellow, Decision-Making Support Organization Japan

⁹ Senior Visiting Researcher, International Consumer Policy Research Center, Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy, Consumer Affairs Agency

¹⁰ Visiting Researcher, International Consumer Policy Research Center, Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy, Consumer Affairs Agency

¹¹ Specially Appointed Researcher, International Consumer Policy Research Center, Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy, Consumer Affairs Agency

¹² Specially Appointed Researcher, International Consumer Policy Research Center, Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy, Consumer Affairs Agency (to end March 2025)

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door-to-door solicitation and door-to-door purchasing, was found to be particularly prevalent. Although many of these individuals maintained an independent lifestyle, this independence made them less likely to be monitored, revealing a structural vulnerability that hindered the early detection of consumer detriment. With regard to consultation and collaboration related to consumer detriment, healthcare and welfare professionals most frequently consulted family members and community comprehensive support centers, while collaboration with consumer affairs centers remained limited to approximately 20% of cases. These findings showed that, while healthcare and welfare professionals identified and supported cases of consumer detriment based on their understanding of the presence and severity of dementia and related psychiatric symptoms, a lack of understanding of relevant information and systems constituted a key challenge in collaboration with specialized agencies and in the selection of appropriate consultation and support services. Accordingly, the findings highlighted the need to examine appropriate forms of collaboration between healthcare and welfare professionals and consumer affairs centers.

Based on these results, it became clear that older adults—particularly those with MCI or mild dementia—face multifaceted risks of consumer detriment, and that establishing systems to promptly identify these risks and connect individuals to appropriate support is an urgent challenge. As a next step, this study plans to examine the development of educational materials concerning consumer detriment that can be utilized by healthcare and welfare professionals and disseminated to the general public through these professionals.