

Balancing Work with Life: Child Care and Family Care

Summary

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Research Period

FY2003 to 2005

Objective of the Research

The employment environment in Japan is changing dramatically due to the decrease in the workforce caused by the declining birthrate, a rapidly aging society, and the diversification of workers' values and lifestyles. In order to build a vital society while dealing with these changes, it is important to develop an environment in which both men and women can have a fulfilling career that is balanced with life(family life)

In our project research "Research on Establishment of Social System that Brings Harmony between Work and Life" from 2003 to 2006, we have been attempting to comprehensively examine the support systems for balancing (harmonizing) work with life, and to identify problems in the systems and policies that involves companies, families and communities.

Challenges in balancing work with life are linked to all stages in ones' working life, involving many areas of social system such as family, company and community. Therefore, we have set our goal to elucidate the mechanisms of balancing work and life based on comprehensive approach using one's life course as one axis and life space (such as company, family, and community) as another.

This paper is an interim report of our study, and using a multifaceted examination based on the national survey "Survey on Work and Life," it identifies the conditions and problems of balancing work and child care and family care. Below is a summary of the

current situation and problems suggested by the results of our analysis

Outline of Research Results

1. Summary of Analysis Results

Our report identified the current situation and problems in balancing work with life regarding women's childbirth and childcare, and men's participation in housework and childcare during the stage of childcare, and family care, based on data analysis of the "Survey on Work and Life." The results are summarized below:

- a. While the number of women who stay on the job without having children has increased, most women quit working after childbirth even today; they are in a situation to choose between work and childcare.
- b. Although the demand by men for childcare leave is high, very few of them take time off from work or adjust their schedules to become involved in housework and childcare.
- c. The majority of workers require family care leave, but they do not declare the leave; most workers use paid leave or go absent to take care of their family.
- d. To resolve these conditions, a support system that enables flexible and organized support by companies, families, and communities must be built.

Each chapter of the report is summarized below.

2. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1. Problems of Support Policies and Study for Balancing Work with Childcare

We looked at changes in support systems and existing studies on support for balancing work and childcare by companies, families and relatives, and community; we then identified the issues presented in each.

Companies, families, and communities are trying to improve current support systems as one measure against the declining birthrate. Since the support systems suggested so far vary considerably, we must build effective measures through cooperation among companies, families, and communities that support each of their respective characteristics. There have been valuable experimental studies in regards to companies, families, and communities, but going forward, we must identify highly

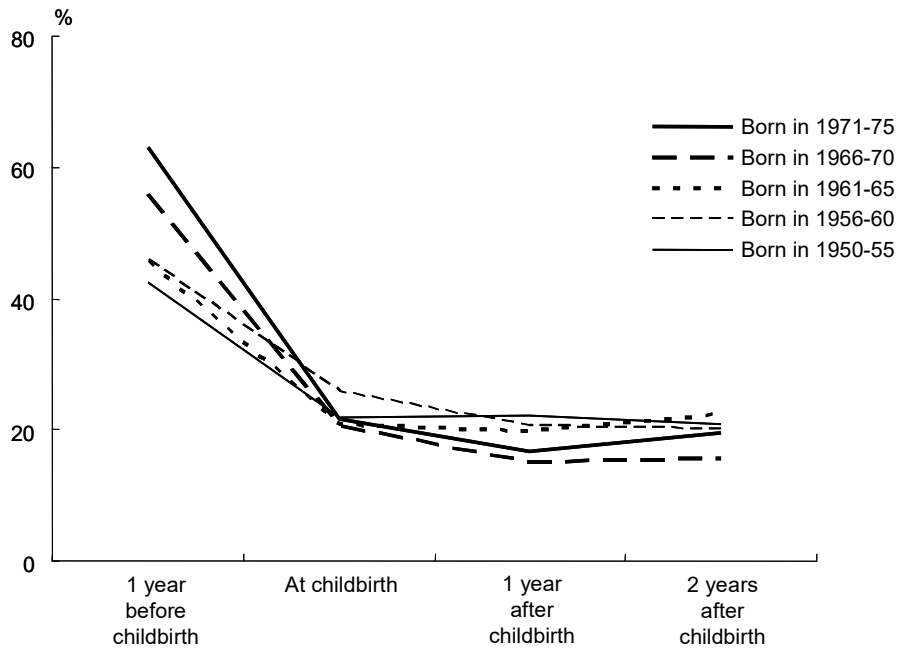
effective support measures by looking at each area from multiple disciplines.

Chapter 2. Outline of Life Course of Childbirth, Childcare and Work

Support systems for balancing work and childcare have improved remarkably over the last twenty years through the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law and Child-Care Leave Law and through the measures against declining childbirth after the “1.57 shock.” We conducted a cohort comparative study of how individual life courses in regards to childbirth/childcare and work have or have not changed along with the trends described above. The outline of our analysis is as follows:

- a. The trend in the employment rate at each ages has an M-shaped curve for all cohorts, but the curve is shallower as the age of the cohorts becomes younger. However, as for women had childbirth, the bottom of the curve in cohort of starting the first job after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law is not shallower than older cohorts of the same category. The reason that the bottom of the M-shaped curve for the generation following enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law is shallower than that of the prior generation is that the increase in the ratio of women remaining in the labor force without having childbirth.
- b. Employment rates for women around the birth of their first child decreased dramatically for the 1-year period leading up to the child's birth, which shows that many women leave the workforce before childbirth even after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted (Figure 1).

In other words, the number of women remaining in the workforce has increased because of the growing number of unmarried women with no children, but there has been no increase in the number of women who stayed on the job after having children. The generation of women who started their first job after the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law are still faced with the "either-or" situation of choosing to work or to stay at home.

Figure 1. Employment Rates for Women around The Birth of Their First Child

Chapter 3. Employment Environment of the First Workplace and the Decision to Have Children

In this chapter, we identified the influence of environment of women's first workplace on their decision to have children. We compared the cohorts of those who were born in 1950-60, who began working before the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, and those who were born in 1961-75, who began working after implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law.

The results are summarized as follows:

- a. Women born in 1961-75 have a higher rate of being unmarried and a lower rate of having children compared to those who were born in 1950-60, regardless of their academic background and the attributes of their first job.
- b. Determining factors of marriage and children vary according to cohorts. Among the 1950-60 cohorts, the lower the educational background, the higher the childbirth rate, although no correlation was observed between the attributes of their initial jobs and marriage/childbirth. For the 1961-75 cohorts, on the other hand, no significant difference in childbirth rate was found among educational backgrounds, and the childbirth rate was higher if the first job was a full-time job and if the employer provided childcare leave.

Therefore, in order to support the life stage transition from unmarried to married and to childbirth, it is important that companies provide the younger generation with stable employment opportunities and childcare leave systems.

Chapter 4. Work Environment Prior to Birth of First Child and Women Quitting Job

We compared cohorts of women who quit the job before having (or early in their pregnancy of) a first child with those who continue to work up to childbirth in terms of their work environment. The analysis results are summarized in the following three points:

- a. The ratio of workers who quit the job one year before the birth of their first child or earlier was lower with those born in 1961-75 than those born in 1950-60. However, workers born in 1961-75 have a high rate of quitting during pregnancy, and consequently, the rate of staying on the job until the child was born was not higher than 1950-60 cohorts.
- b. In the 1950-60 cohorts, proportion of those who continued the job after the birth of the first child was relatively high in; professional or technical occupation; medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare industries; public offices with 1,000 or more employees. In the 1961-75 cohorts, however, those who continued the job tended to work in a wider variety of occupations, industries and company size due to the diffusion of childcare leave system. On the other hand, those groups that showed relatively high ratio for continuing the job in the 1950-60 cohorts were lower in the 1961-75 cohorts. As a result, the 1961-75 cohorts' overall ratio of those who continued the job was lower.
- c. Women with access to childcare leave and shorter work hours tended to work longer compared to those with access to childcare leave only. To further enable women to continue their job at the stage of childbirth, it is important to increase the synergy of both systems.

In short, the number of women who continue their job is increasing because of the wider availability of childcare leave system, but the pregnancy period is still a major obstacle. Furthermore, the groups that tended to continue the job in the 1950-60 cohorts quit the job in the 1961-75 cohorts, and therefore the ratio as a whole did not increase. It is necessary that individual companies, in addition to childcare leave system, introduce measures such as shortened work hours in order to synergistically

increase the effectiveness of support.

Chapter 5. Problems on Taking the Childcare Leave

To see if childcare leave systems are functioning and to identify the problems on continuing the job by taking childcare leave, we conducted an inter-cohort comparison in terms of the relation between taking childcare leave and continuing the job by focusing on the period from pregnancy to childbirth. The results are summarized as follows:

- a. Among women who were in employment at the period of pregnancy, no significant difference was found between the 1950-60 and 1961-75 cohorts in the ratio of those continuing the job while using childcare leave.
- b. In both cohorts, the more childcare leave provided by employers, the more women continued to work by taking advantage of the system.
- c. The 1961-75 cohorts had a higher ratio of working for employers with childcare leave than the 1950-60 cohorts, but there were many of those who did not take the childcare leave due to the contents of the system and the work environment.
- d. The 1961-75 cohorts had a higher ratio of taking childcare leave in various occupation, industry and company size than the 1950-60 cohorts; however, the groups which had high ratio of using the childcare leave in the 1950-60 cohorts had a higher ratio of quitting work without using the leave in the 1961-75 cohorts. As a result, those taking childcare leave did not increase.

In short, even now that childcare leave is legally guaranteed, it is important that individual company make necessary rules and eliminate factors in the workplace that discourage its use.

Chapter 6. Interrelation of Companies, Families and Communities on Support Systems for Balancing Work with Childcare

By analyzing mutual relations of support systems, we identified in this chapter that collaboration between companies, families, and communities is important for workers to continue their job until the birth of their first child.

The analysis results are summarized as follows:

- a. Introduction of childcare leave and shortened work hour system in the company, husbands' participation in housework and childcare, and availability of childcare centers in communities all increase the ratio of women continuing the job until her first child is born.
- b. These support systems are ineffective unless they are introduced together. Combining these measures improve women's job continuity.
- c. Job continuity through the use of childcare leave further improves with availability of childcare centers when the child is 0-1 year old.

In short, these measures for balancing work with childcare must be introduced together to have a synergic effect on workers job continuity. It is important for companies, families, and communities to collaborate in order to have an effective support system.

Chapter 7. Men's Role in Housework and Childcare —Conditions and Problems on Promoting Men's Participation in Housework and Childcare

By analyzing the responses of men, we examined the conditions and determining factors of their participation in housework and childcare; we particularly examined the environmental factors of their workplace, such as work hours.

When parents are living together, ratio of men who depend on relatives regarding housework and childcare is high. If they have a working wife and the necessity for the husband to take childcare leave is high, husbands' responsibility for housework and childcare increases while their wives' responsibility decreases. However, if husbands work long hours, frequently work overtime until midnight, have a long commute, or believe in traditional gender roles, then their wives' responsibility for housework and childcare increases while husbands' responsibility decreases.

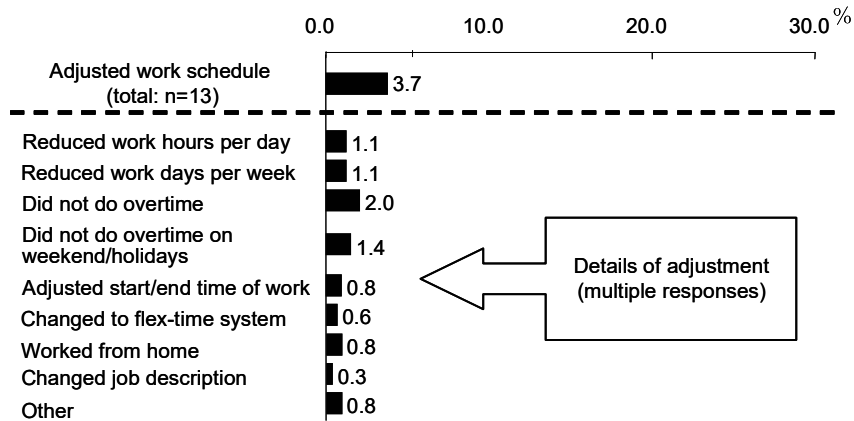
Chapter 8. Conditions of Support Systems for Balancing Work with Childcare and the Need of Childcare Leave for Men at the Stage of Childcare

By analyzing the responses of men at the stage of childcare, we examined the conditions of workplaces' support systems for balancing work with childcare and the actual needs for childcare leave of those men who are considered to have potential needs.

a. Conditions of Support Systems that Balance Work and Childcare

The support systems in the workplace are inadequate, and the systems themselves are not well recognized by men.

Figure 2. Experienced Work Adjustments Due to Childcare (Employers having childcare leave or not was disregarded. M.A.)



Married men with youngest child of age 12 or younger (Employee during wife's pregnancy and still currently employed: n=352)

Only 1.0 % of the men took childcare leave, and also those who adjusted their work schedule in some way by the time their youngest child reached school age, regardless of the presence of childcare leave, were mere 3.7% (Figure 2). This result shows that taking time off and adjusting work schedule for childcare is very rare among men. On the other hand, approximately 40 % took time off when their children were sick, indicating a strong need for sick care leave for men as well.

b. The Need for Childcare Leave

Approximately 30 percent of the men wished to take childcare leave. Particularly over one third of those in “single” and “married with no children”, both of which may have children in the future, replied that they wish to take the leave, a significant gap with the reality of only 1 percent of men using childcare leave.

Those who believe in traditional gender roles tend to have lower needs for childcare leave compared to those who do not. And those who have longer work hours, those who work night or midnights, and those who frequently work weekends and holidays have higher needs for childcare leave. Also, those who work at smaller companies or companies without childcare leave have higher needs.

Chapter 9. Family Care and Its Influence on Work—What Type of Support is Needed?

This chapter analyzed the reality of family care in the respondents' lives and what they did to balance work with family life.

a. Family care

Those who had experience in providing family care were 10%. The ratio was high among female respondents, with which 30 % in 50-54 year-olds had experience. The average age that they began providing family care was 38 years old, and that they ended was 41 years old. Some began providing care at a younger age while others began in their 50's or older. The average period of providing care is approximately 3 years, but the dispersion is high. Those who care for parents accounted for 80 %; 70 % among men care for their own parents, while women had a higher ratio of caring for their spouses' parents. Of the women, 47.0% responded that they were the primary care provider. Generally, women and older age groups are the main caretaker, indicating that men tend to depend for such care on their mothers, wives, or sisters.

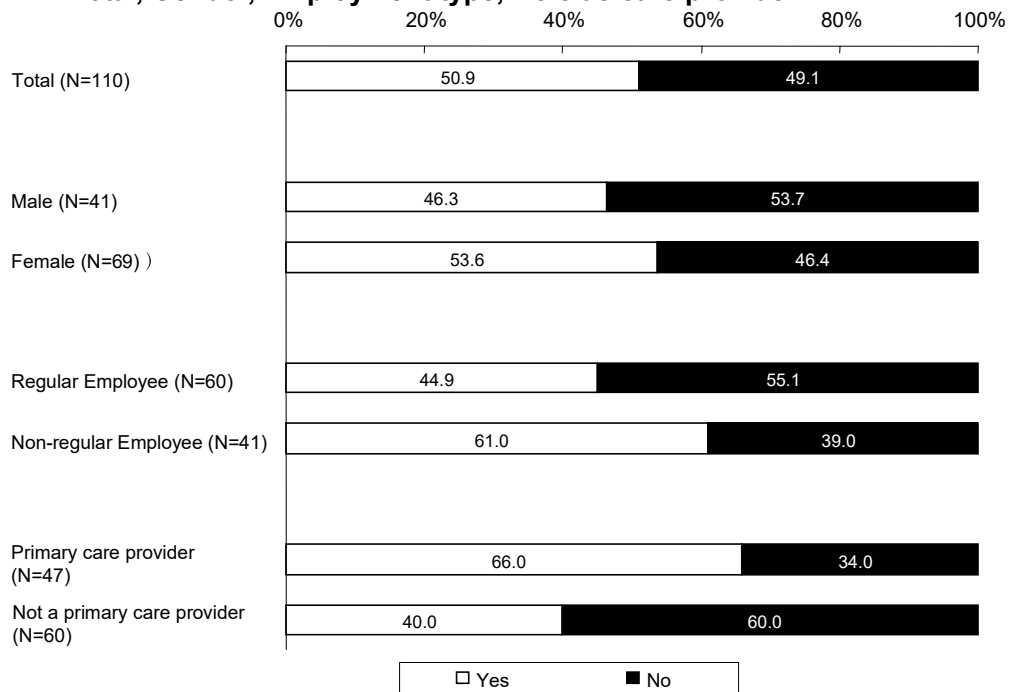
b. Balancing Family care and Work

Around 80 % of the employed respondents continued their job even when they had care provider responsibilities. Almost 70 % of them did not make any adjustments at work during the care period. Women, non-regular employees, and main care providers, however, did make adjustments of work. The period of adjustment varied depending on the needs of the family member being cared for.

Only 6 people took family care leave (6.6% of the respondents who were employed workers during the care period). Although the system was legislated to promote the balancing of work with family life, the ratio of those using the system is low. The primary reason cited was that their employer did not have such a system.

Although work schedule adjustments and the use of family care leave were infrequent, approximately half of the respondents did take time off from work to provide such care (Figure 3). In such occasions, they used their paid leave or simply went absent.

Figure 3. Experienced Taking Time Off from Work - Total, Gender, Employment type, Role as care provider -



The responsibilities of the care tend to concentrate to primary care providers, who are often women, unemployed, or non-regular workers.

The number of respondents who were currently providing care was 51. The number is not large, but the problem that they face in balancing work with family care is grave.

Also, those who had experience in providing care was not so many, but still there are those who find it difficult in balancing work with family care as well as those who do not, and their difficulty depends on the condition of family member being cared for, availability of other family members for such care and work itself,. Whether being the primary care provider or not greatly affects one’s success in balancing.

Chapter 10. Need for Family Care Leave and Conditions of Support Systems in the Workplace

This chapter examined the need and conditions of workers regarding the balance of work and family care to find out who needs family care leave and what kind of support measures have been introduced in the workplace.

Most of the respondents, particularly women, expect to become involved in caring for family members. As for age groups, one in four respondents in the age 50-54 group replied that they expect to face the necessity for providing family care of family

members in the near future.

When asked how they intend to manage their work if there arises the need to provide family care, many of the respondents took reserved attitude by answering they “do not know”, but the overall preference is to continue the job rather than quitting or changing jobs. Approximately 70 % of men preferred to remain in their current job, while this trend is weak for women, with some considering for quitting the job to concentrate on family care. Non-regular workers tended to either take reserved attitude or to prefer quitting or changing the job.

Of the respondents, 54.4 % said they “prefer to take family care leave.” The need is high among older age groups, among those who expect to begin providing care in the near future, and also among those who intend to leave or change jobs when there arise the necessity for providing family care.

As to the conditions in the workplace, the ratio of the respondents replied that their employers have systems that support the balancing of work with family care remained at one fourth, and mostly limited to family care leave only.

Although there is demand for family care leave, many reported that it is not provided by their employers. In particular, women, age group of 45-54 years old, and part-time employees tend to face the situation that the employer does not have the system, although they have a high demand.

Also, many respondents have concerns about taking family care leave. On one hand, the respondents' concern for their supervisor eases when there are support measures for their use in the workplace; however, on the other hand, it was revealed that those who have good support measures in their workplace are more concerned about taking the family care leave than those who do not.

Although there are many who need the family care leave, the system is not available in the workplace. Even if it is available and employees wish to use it, the work environment may not allow taking such leave. There is a gap between ideal and reality, and that gap must be filled.

Appendix : Summary of the Survey on Work and Life

(1) Survey Items

- a. Job history
- b. Marital history
- c. Education
- d. Childcare experience
- e. Family care experience
- f. Family background
- g. Current work situation and income
- h. Attitudes towards work, career, and life

(2) Survey Samples

4000 men and women (ages 30-54) and their spouses in Japan

(3) Survey Method

- a. Stratified two-stage random sampling method
- b. Survey Method

Individual interviews were conducted for respondents. Lay away entries were requested of spouses.

- c. Survey Period

June 17-July 18, 2005

- d. Survey Implementation

The study was conducted by Shin Joho Center, Inc.

- e. Responses

Respondents: 2,448, Spouses: 1,425 (recovery rate of respondents: 57.9 % including 230 preliminary samples)

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Addendum: Survey Sheet from the Survey on Work and Life