

Current State of Dual-Career Couples with Children in Japan: Regulating Factors of Working Mothers "Doing the Challenging Work," Effects and Relation to Family Life

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ABSTRACT

In Japan, after 1945 the ratio of dual-career couples has been increasing year by year. Yet the age-specific labor force participation ratio of women has still shaped M-curve. Most of working mothers work as temporary employees much more than regular full-time ones. These days, the labor forces of women have been paid attention much more than ever, because of the decline of the total labor forces. We want to see the general overview of the dual-career couples with children, to analyze the regulating factors of working mothers "doing the challenging work," those effects and the relation to the family life, and then to consider better work-life balance.

We conducted a questionnaire survey to the 3930 dual-career couples in 5 unions of Japanese Trade Union Confederations from October to December in 2005. The recovered questionnaire sheets were 2358 (the recovery ratio was 60 percent).

Findings are as follows:

1. Most of the respondents work in family-friendly environment. But on the promotion, about a half of the respondents point out the gender discrimination. Over 70 percent took the child-care leave and receive some supports. About 60 percent satisfy with "family ties," and about 75 percent satisfy with "life as a whole."
2. There are significant positive relations between the consciousness of "doing the challenging work" and the items on development of work or evaluation of working environment. On the other hand, there are significant negative relations between the consciousness of "doing the challenging work" and the unimportant work or the work without promotion.
3. The husband who recognizes his wife's "doing the challenging work" does share their housework much more than those who don't. The more the respondent recognizes "doing the challenging work," the more the respondent satisfies the division of housework, income, and life as a whole.

KEYWORDS: dual-career couples, working mother, doing the challenging work

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OBJECTIVES

In Japan, after 1945 the ratio of dual-career couples has been increasing year by year. Yet the age-specific labor force participation ratio of women has still shaped M-curve because of housewives treated as favorable in social security such as income taxation and pension system. Most of working mothers work as temporary employees much more than regular full-time ones. In 2006, the total labor forces in Japan began to decline, so the labor forces of women have been paid attention much more than ever. We want to see the general overview of the current state of dual-career couples with children in Japan, to analyze the regulating factors of working mothers "doing the challenging work," those effects and the relation to the family life, and then to consider better work-life balance:

METHODOLOGY and DATA

We conducted a questionnaire survey to the 3930 dual-career couples in 5 unions of Japanese Trade Union Confederations from October to December in 2005. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and collected through each union. The recovered questionnaire sheets were 2358, and the recovery ratio was 60 percent.

Basic characteristics of working mothers "doing the challenging work" are as follows: the average age is 37.8 years old (SD 6.70), 56 percent are high school graduates, 44 percent are college, university or more graduates, 66 percent belong to the nuclear families, and the average age of the youngest child is 7.2 years old (SD 6.83). Three-fourth of them continue work from entering job, 39.8 percent work in the company having over 3,000 employees, about 90 percent are regular full-time workers, 58.7 percent are clerical workers, 87.1 percent don't hold managerial positions, the average of working years is 11.7 years (SD 8.13), and the average annual income is 3,274,000 yen (27,283 \$, SD 145.99).

RESULTS

General Overviews of Work, Childrearing and Life Satisfaction

70 percent of the respondents work in a family-friendly environment, such as "there is an atmosphere that woman could be working with child nurturing" in their offices ("agreed" + "moderately agreed"). But as for the promotion, 74.2 percent point out "my promotion is later than the man who has the similar career path."

Concerning the motive forces and the reasons for working, 97 percent work "for the money," 90 percent work "for the difficulty to find another job again as a regular worker after retirement," 85 percent think "for woman to be economically independent as well as man." However, 65 percent of the respondents "disagreed" with "for the targets in my life are related to present work." Therefore at present, they don't seem to do the work with strong professionalism. About 70 percent of the respondents took the child-care leave and receive some supports. About 60 percent of them satisfy with "family ties," and about 75 percent satisfy with "life as a whole."

Regulating Factors of Working Mothers "Doing the Challenging Work," Effects and Relation to Family Life

Now, we focus on the consciousness of "doing the challenging work" of working mothers

($n=2358$). The answers were "agreed," "moderately agreed," "moderately disagreed" and "disagreed." Our concern is to clarify the regulating factors of working women's consciousness of "doing the challenging work," those effects, current state of networks for supporting childrearing, and the relations to partnership of their couples and life satisfaction.

Regulating factors of working mothers' consciousness of "doing the challenging work" We analyze the items that showed the ordering relation by cross-classifications, and then use the chi-square test. In the characteristics of work, there is a positive straight relation between managerial positions ($\chi^2=36.849$, $p<.001$). Of course, there are a significant relation with annual income, 0.1 percent level ($F(3, 2146)=16.33$, $p<.001$). The averages of annual income of them, strongly, moderately, not moderately, not at all, are 3,581,000 yen, 3,398,000 yen, 3,087,000 yen, and 2,859,000 yen (29,842 \$ [1 \$=120yen], SD 167.6; 28,317 \$, SD 146.0; 25,725 \$, SD 135.0; 23,825 \$, SD 127.1) respectively. Therefore, the more the respondent agrees with "doing the challenging work," the more the annual income increases.

Next, we examine the relations between working hours of a day or a week and the consciousness of "doing the challenging work." There is a significant positive relation between working hours and the consciousness of "doing the challenging work" (a day: 0.1% level, $F(3, 2141)=7.48$, $p<.001$, a week: 1% level, $F(3, 1936)=4.15$, $p<.01$). But there is not a significant relation with the ages of the respondents or the youngest child.

We examined the influences of the experiences/changes of work and the working environment to the consciousness of "doing the changing work". There are significant positive relations among them. Those are observed in the items: according to the working years, "I am requested the talent and responsibility for judgment and planning more than ever" ($\chi^2=411.287$, $p<.001$), "I need the expertise and high skill more than ever" ($\chi^2=382.832$, $p<.001$), "I get discretion in work higher than ever", "my office is the place where women can keep hope to become managerial officials" ($\chi^2=145.085$, $p<.001$).

On the other hand, there are significant negative relations between the items "my work would not lead to the promotion" ($\chi^2=348.209$, $p<.001$) and "my work is changed to the assisted, fixed work after the birth and child nurturing" ($\chi^2=199.506$, $p<.001$).

Therefore, if the respondents recognize that their work becomes broader or higher-ranking work than the day entered job, they recognize they are "doing the challenging work."

Effects of "doing the challenging work" We examine the effects of the consciousness of "doing the challenging work" to the other items. The husband who recognizes that his wife is "doing the challenging work" does every house work much more than those who don't. If the respondent feels "doing the challenging work" much more, the rate of the respondent who feels "happy to do the work itself" becomes significantly higher ($\chi^2=709.365$, $p<.001$), and under the condition if there were no economical necessity for working, the rate of the respondent who wants to "work full-time" becomes significantly higher ($\chi^2=69.375$, $p<.001$). Further, the more the respondent recognizes "doing the challenging work," the more the respondent considers "my family understand my zeal/demand for working" ($\chi^2=208.040$, $p<.001$).

Family life of working mothers "doing the challenging work"

(1) *Informal network of child care* It is necessary for working mothers to construct and keep the various informal networks with dependability in order to concentrate to their work and child care, such as asking child care to someone without hesitation at the emergency, talking with someone about child nurturing frankly. We questioned about physical network for "caring the sick child,

when both of the couple cannot take leave from the offices or they have to do the sudden overtime work," and the mental network for "consulting someone when children cause the problems in the day care center or the kindergarten and others, or children become sick." The alternatives are "wife's relatives," "husband's relatives," "friends and neighbors," "paid baby-sitter," "Family Support Center" and "others." The binary variables use (0="I could not ask anyone at all" and "I could not ask someone so much", 1="I could ask someone mostly" and "I could always ask someone"). The sums are 0-6 points.

The average points of physical and mental networks are 1.15 and 1.68 respectively. The former is lower than the latter, and the variety of both networks cannot be observed. The combinations of physical and mental networks are (1, 2), (1, 1), (2, 2) and (2, 3), and the ratios are 21.5 percent, 19.9 percent, 12.1 percent, and 8.4 percent respectively. The combination ratio of (0, 0), in which the respondent construct neither physical nor mental network, is 5.5 percent. Needless to say, it is necessary to understand that it shows only the variety of kinds, but the number of the dependability.

We test the difference of mean values of the respondents' rate of "doing the challenging work" of both networks. There is a significant difference between the ratio of "doing the challenging work" and physical network ($F(3,657) = 2.66, p < 0.05$). However, the each value in mental network is almost equivalent among different consciousness levels ($F(3,752) = 1.03, n.s.$).

Then, we examine the attributes of the informal networks, and the relation between networks and the consciousness of "doing the challenging work." There is no difference by the reliable persons, and there is no difference among the respondents' groups having high consciousness or low consciousness of "doing the challenging work." In the physical networks the ratios of "wife's relatives" and "husband's relatives" are 63.3 percent and 42.3 percent respectively, and in the mental networks the ratios of "wife's relatives", "friends and neighbors" and "husband's relatives" are 74.5 percent, 58.8 percent and 38.7 percent respectively. The ratios of the other alternatives are under 10 percent. These results show that the informal working mothers' networks are still relatives centered, although they sometimes might ask to take care of children to the day care center or kindergarten.

- (2) *Division of housework between the couples and the use of housework agent services* We examine the relation between the division of housework or child care and the consciousness of "doing the challenging work." The evaluation scale of the division of housework uses 5-point scales (1="chiefly I do", 2="I do more than my husband", 3="my husband and I do the same", 4="my husband does more than me", 5="chiefly my husband does"). If the dual career couple shares the housework equally, the average of the scores will be 3 points, but the average ratios of husband sharing the housework are low: "cleaning the room, arranging and putting the room into order" (M 1.74, SD .95), "washing tableware and putting the table in order after meal" (M 1.69, SD 1.04), "washing and arranging clothes" (M 1.59, SD 0.91), "shopping of food and daily goods" (M 1.50, SD 0.80) and "preparation and cooking meals" (M 1.33, SD 0.68). However it is interesting that the more the respondent recognizes "doing the challenging work", the more the husband does the each housework. It is necessary to investigate further, such as time use, whether the husband of working mother shares housework actually, the husband evaluates his housework higher or not.

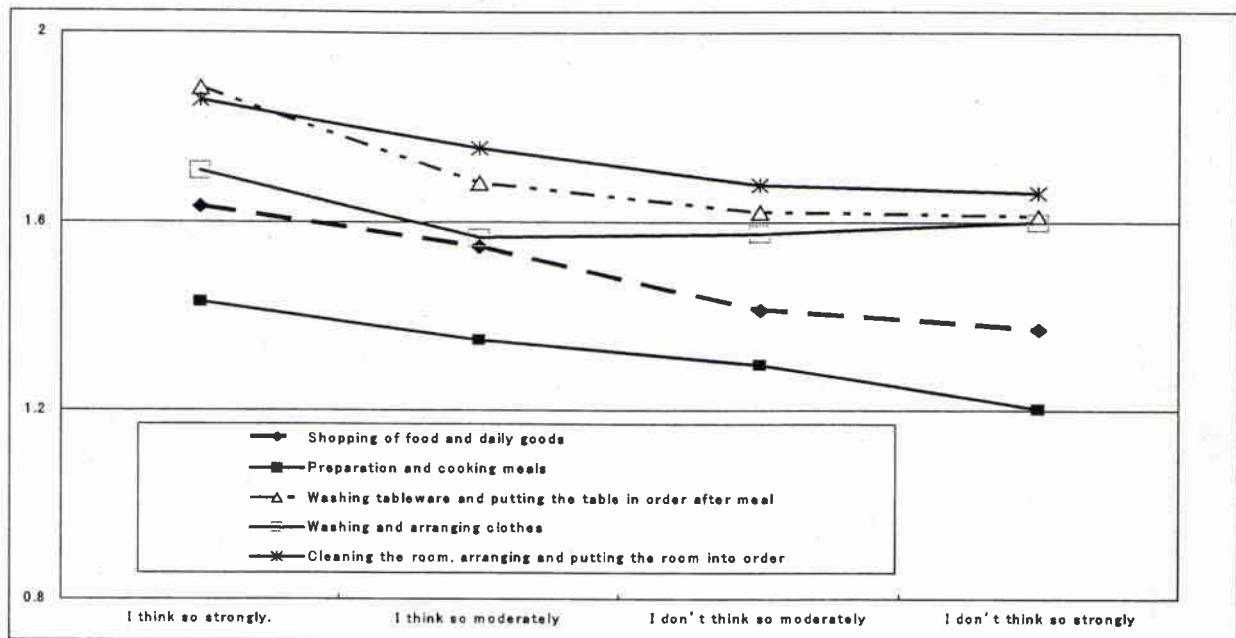


Figure 1. Husbands share the housework by the degree of working mothers' "doing the challenging work."

Moreover, when the respondent feels "doing the challenging work," her working hours of a day is significantly longer and her annual income is higher than the other groups statistically. We examine whether the ratio of use of the housework agent services of "housework as a whole (including childcare)" and "house cleaning" become higher or not. However the increase of the ratios is not observed significantly. One of the reasons might be their low ratio, 1.6% and 2.8% respectively.

(3) *Partnership of the couples* We examine the relation between the partnership of the couples and the consciousness of "doing the challenging work." There is a significant difference in the mental item whether the respondent satisfies with the communication with husband, although there is not a significant difference in physical items ($\chi^2=27.715$, $p<.01$). The more the respondent recognizes "doing the challenging work," the higher the ratios of the following items become: my husband "esteems my opinion" ($\chi^2=31.944$, $p<.001$), "clearly says his opinion to me" ($\chi^2=35.203$, $p<.001$), "often says the word of gratitude to me" ($\chi^2=25.643$, $p<.01$), "pays attention to the activities and schedules of the family" ($\chi^2=19.887$, $p<.05$), and "tries to have a lot of time to spend with children" ($\chi^2=17.364$, $p<.05$). Therefore, the ratio of the respondent's consciousness of "doing the challenging work" is higher in the couples having good partnership than in the other couples.

(4) *Becoming parents and life satisfaction* Finally, we examine how the respondent "doing the challenging work" evaluates becoming parents and "life satisfaction" as the general indicator. They evaluate affirmatively "becoming parents is happier than thought before" ($\chi^2=63.869$, $p<.001$). There are significant positive effects to the satisfaction of the division of housework ($\chi^2=31.224$, $p<.001$), annual income ($\chi^2=85.063$, $p<.001$) and "life as a whole" ($\chi^2=67.301$, $p<.001$).

SUMMARY

The working mothers' consciousness of "doing the challenging work" is seemed to be related to the working life and family life. We are going to do the further analysis of the collected data.

NOTES

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