

Study on Childcare and Housework by Working Couples (1)

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Abstract

With recent increase in the employment rate of women, the numbers of women working after marriage and having babies are increasing. For management of their work and family life, the husband's cooperation is indispensable. Studies on fathers have been recently increasing, but they are still are insufficient compared to those on mothers.

In this study, we investigated the involvement of couples and their task share in childcare and housework using questionnaires of 135 couples whose children were cared for in 3 nurseries in Toyama Prefecture, and analyzed differences in recognition between fathers and mothers.

Of the women in their 30s who cared for their children, the traditional concept of "GENDER" (husband-dominance, man- dominance, work for men and housework for women) was considered to be "wrong" in 31.9%, "partially right" in 59.3%, "largely right" in 7.4%, and "right" in 1.5%. Their working types were part-time jobs (26.2%), self-employment (11.1%), and full-time jobs (62.2%). After day nurseries, some women asked their mother-in-law or own mother to care for their children, and a small number of mother utilized prolonged care in the nurseries.

Husbands were found to be more involved in playing and chatting with children, cuddling, sending the children to the nurseries and collecting, and shopping than in order childcare and household work, but none of them reached the levels that their wives expected.

Key words

Behavior of working couples, childcare by husband, housework by husband, behavior of husband expected by wife

Introduction

With recent increasing participation of women in public affairs and a decrease in the number of children per women in Japan, circumstances of childcare have been considerably changing, and husbands are expected to perform childcare and housework.

In these circumstances, studies on fathers have been increasing. Fujiwara et al¹⁾ indicated that one factor affecting husbands' behaviors of childcare and housework was employment of their wife, and reported that husbands did more housework in families where their wife had a job and that childcare and housework by husbands were more expected by their wife. In the present study, we surveyed working couples whose children were cared for in 3 nurseries in Toyama Prefecture, and analyzed the problems of childcare and housework by using questionnaires.

Methods

I. Subject

The subjects were 315 couples whose children were cared for in H and K nurseries in Toyama City and in M nursery in Fuchu-machi.

II. Investigation methods

We prepared two kinds of questionnaires, one for fathers and the other for mothers. With consent of the head teachers of the nurseries, we explained about our investigation to parents at the time of sending their children to the nurseries. After consent was given, we asked them to answer 2 kinds of questionnaires and to return them to a collection box within 2 weeks.

III. Investigation items

The investigation items for husbands were

the ages of the couple, family type, dwelling type, employment type, time in the house, comments on birth of their babies, and the frequency of childcare and housework they do, which were to be answered item by item by choosing from "always", "sometimes", "occasionally", and "never".

The investigation items for wives were the presence or absence of employment, the person who looks after their children during work, the actual and expected frequency of their husband's childcare and housework (same items as in the questionnaire for husbands) to be answered by 4 grades, and their views about "GENDER". The statistical differences were analyzed by using t-test.

Results

The questionnaires were answered by 135 of 315 couples (49.2%). Of the 155 couples, wives of 135 couples were employed. Twelve couples of which the wives were not employed were excluded because of the small number.

The effective collection rate was 42.8%.

I. Background

- (1) Age: Husband, 35.0 ± 4.9 years; Wife, 32.4 ± 4.2 years
- (2) Family type: Nuclear family, 43.7%; Extended family, 56.3%
- (3) Dwelling type: Detached house, 81.0%; Multistoried apartment, 19.0%
- (4) Dwelling environment: Rural areas, 23.1%; Urban residential areas, 72.4%; Others, 4.5%
- (5) Employment condition: Work ends at regular time, 43.2% (60 persons); Work ends at irregular time, 48.2% (67 persons)
- (6) Time at home husbands on weekdays: Mean, 11.3 ± 2.9 hours (1-20 hours); Less than 5 hours, 3.8% (5 person); 5-10 hours, 26%

(7) Time at home of husbands on days off:
Mean, 19.0±4.9 hours

(8) Employment of wives and its type: All wives had a job. The employment types were part-time (36 wives, 26.2%), self-employment (15 wives, 11.1%), and full-time jobs (84 wives, 62.2%). Of the 84 full-time mothers, 42 finished their work at a regular time, while the others always worked after ending regular time as well, worked on Sundays, worked in 2nd- or 3rd-shifts, were researchers or students, or could not come back home at

regular ending time because of management jobs or outside duties. The mothers who could not care for their children after day nurseries utilized prolonged care in the nurseries or asked their mother-in-law or own mother to care for their children.

II. Frequencies of childcare and housework performed by the husbands and the frequencies expected by the wives

(1) The actual state of affairs of behavior by husband. The results were as Fig.1.

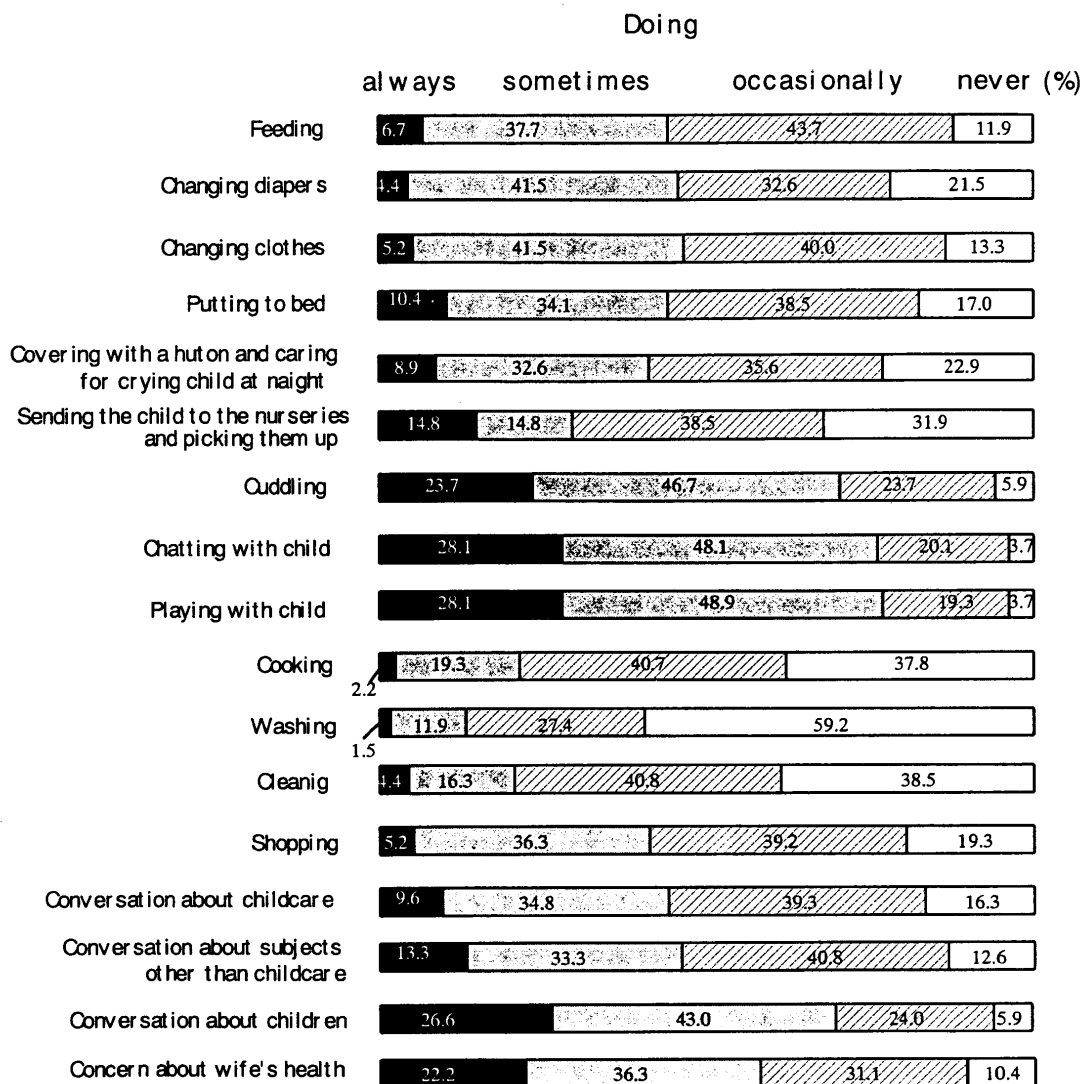


Fig. 1. The percentage childcare and housework performed by the husbands

(2) The frequencies of childcare and housework performed by the husbands, and their frequencies expected by the wives were scored and compared. For each item, if a husband "always" did it and a wife "always" expected her husband to do it, it was scored 4, if it

was "sometimes", the score was 3, if it was "occasionally", the score was 2, and if it was "never", the score was 1. Table 1 shows the mean scores of the husbands and wives, and Fig.2, Fig.3, graphically shows the results.

The highest score of the husbands was

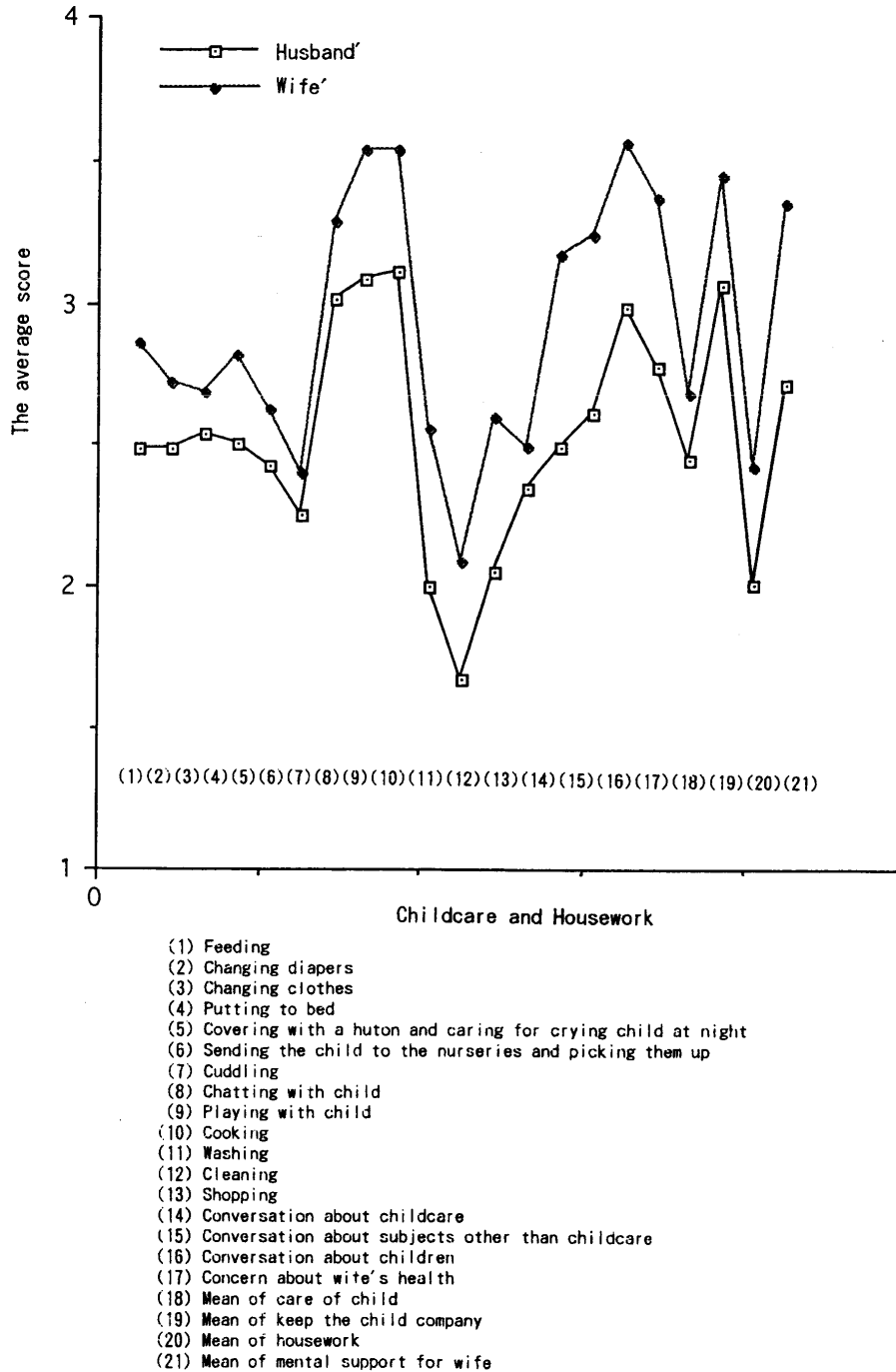


Fig. 2. Behavioral item of childcare and housework performed by the husbands and those expected by the wives
 Vertical axis : The average score
 Horizontal axis : childcare and housework

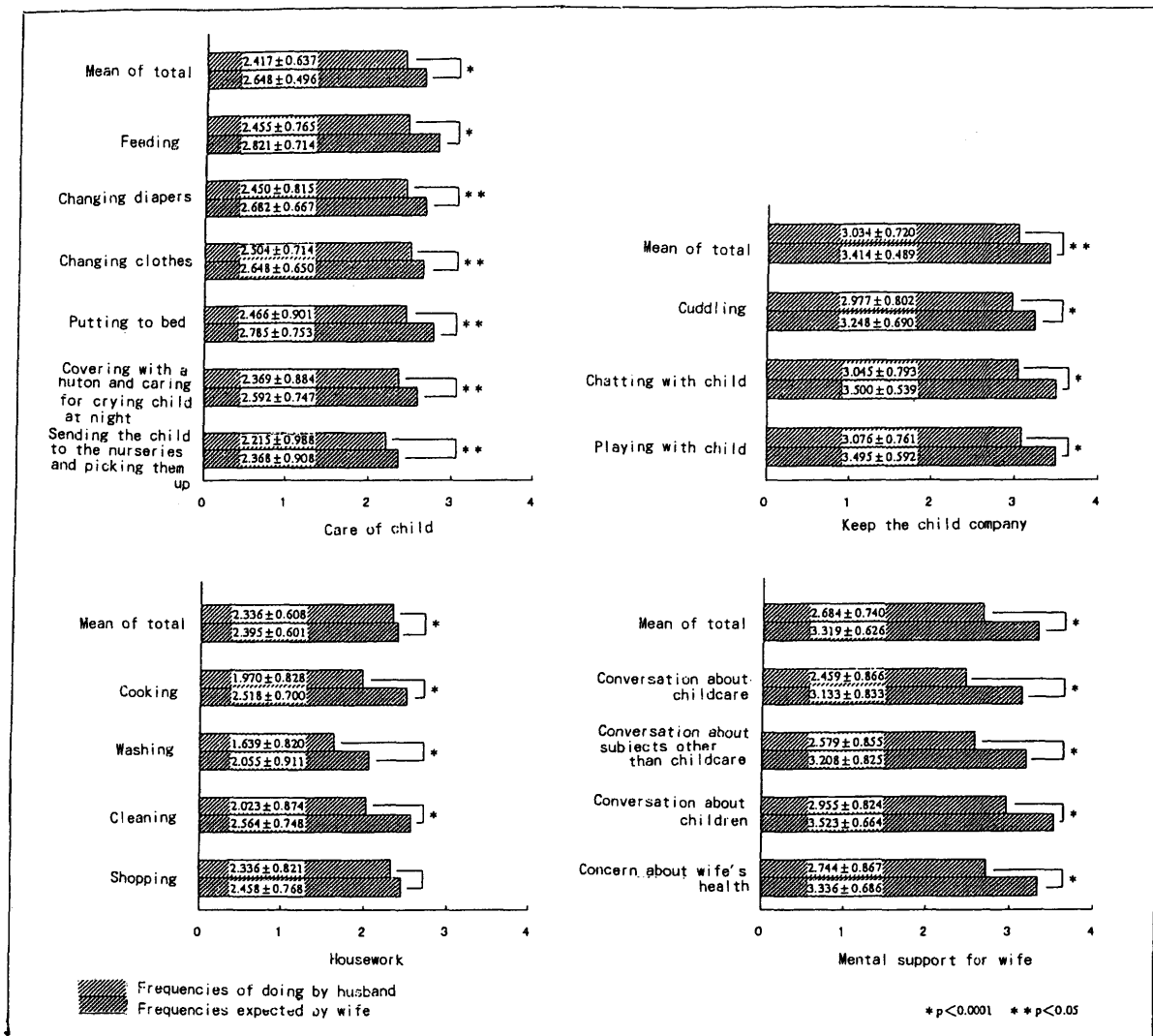


Fig. 3. Behavioral item of childcare and housework performed by the husbands and those expected by the wives
The statistical differences were analyzed by during : t-test Horizontal axis : The average score

3.076 of "playing with children", which is followed by 3.045 of "chatting with children" and 2.977 of "cuddling", but these scores did not reach those expected by their wives. Among the housework items, the scores of "shopping" in the husbands and wives were close to each other, but the "cleaning", "cooking", and "washing" scores of the husbands were low. The scores of direct care of the children such as "feeding", "changing diapers", "changing clothes", "putting to bed", and "covering with a futon and caring for crying child at night", and those of indirect mental support such as "conversation about childcare",

and "concern about wife's health" clearly showed big differences between the husbands and wives.

(3) Differences between the frequencies performed by the husbands and those expected by the wives.

All scores were significantly different between the husbands and wives (Table 1).

(4) Frequencies of childcare and housework performed by the husbands and relation of number of childcare or family style, etc. That was does not, but has only "GENDER" ($r=208, p<0.05$).

Table 1. The state of childcare and housework performed by the husbands and the frequency expected by the wives

A : Frequency of husbands, B : Frequency expected of wives

Behavioral Item	A		B		t-test
	M	S. D	M	S. D	
Childcare	2.417	0.637	2.648	0.496	4.588 *
Feeding	2.455	0.765	2.821	0.714	4.811 *
Changing diapers	2.450	0.815	2.682	0.667	2.912 **
Changing clothes	2.504	0.714	2.648	0.650	2.525 **
Putting to bed	2.466	0.901	2.785	0.753	3.547 **
Covering with a futon and caring for crying child at night	2.369	0.884	2.592	0.747	2.970 **
Sending the child to the nurseries and picking them up	2.215	0.988	2.368	0.908	2.453 **
Keep the child company	3.034	0.720	3.141	0.489	5.777 *
Cuddling	2.977	0.802	3.248	0.690	3.028 **
Chatting with child	3.045	0.793	3.500	0.539	5.777 *
Playing with child	3.076	0.761	3.495	0.592	5.880 *
Housework	2.336	0.608	2.395	0.601	6.727 *
Cooking	1.970	0.828	2.518	0.700	7.052 *
Washing	1.639	0.828	2.055	0.911	4.977 *
Cleaning	2.023	0.874	2.564	0.748	5.977 *
Shopping	2.336	0.821	2.458	0.768	1.742 ***
Mental support for wife	2.684	0.740	3.319	0.626	9.075 *
Conversation about childcare	2.459	0.866	3.133	0.833	6.849 *
Conversation about subjects other than childcare	2.579	0.855	3.208	0.825	6.846 *
Conversation about children	2.955	0.824	3.523	0.664	6.300 *
Concern about wife's health	2.744	0.867	3.336	0.686	7.431 *

* p<0.0001

** p<0.05

*** p<0.1

III. Views about "GENDER"

The traditional concept of "GENDER", "work for men and housework for women", was considered to be "right" in 1.5% (2 women), "largely right" in 7.4% (10 women), "partially right" in 59.3% (30 women), and "wrong" in 31.9% (43 women).

IV. Comments on having children

Almost all husbands and wives answered that they were very happy.

Discussion

1. Among the childcare and housework items, the scores of "sending the children to the nurseries and picking them up" and "shopping" by the husbands were close to what their wives expected, but the remaining items remained far below the levels expected by the wives. The husbands still placed priority on their job, and were involved in childcare and housework only when they had time. The involvement of the husbands, which never reached the levels of the working wives, was still on the assistant and

secondary levels. The scores clearly demonstrated these circumstances, i.e., working mothers were performing childcare and housework with only limited assistance from their husbands.

On the other hand, it was also demonstrated that the husbands were considerably involved in childcare such as "feeding", "changing diapers", "changing clothes", "putting to bed", and "covering with a futon and caring for crying child at night", and housework such as "cooking", "washing", and "cleaning". Although these scores of the husbands were lower than those expected by the wives, the husbands showed an attitude of cooperation, attention to their wife, mental support, and intention of doing household work including childcare, which is a good trend, though insufficient. Similar results have been obtained in order recent studies²⁻⁴⁾.

It is necessary for dramatic improvement of the scores to change the whole social system in Japan such as working environments and conditions, consciousness and sense of values,

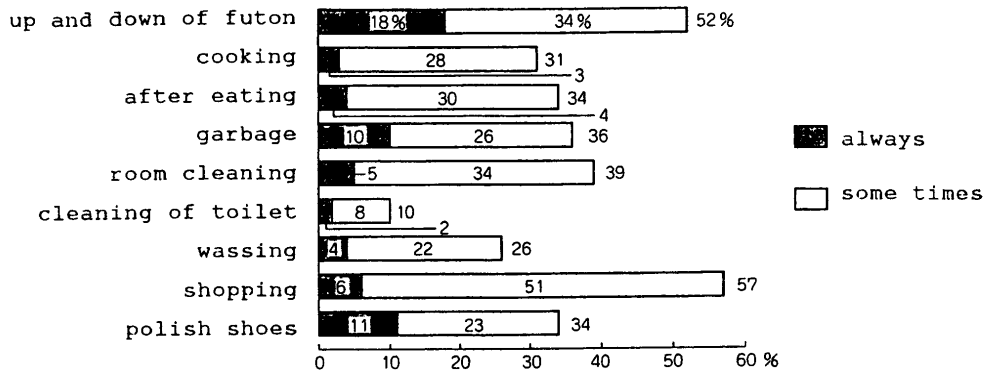


Fig. 4-1. Behavior of housework by husbands with a schoolchild (regardless of works) provide : NAKANO district (TOKYO) 1992. (answer by wives)

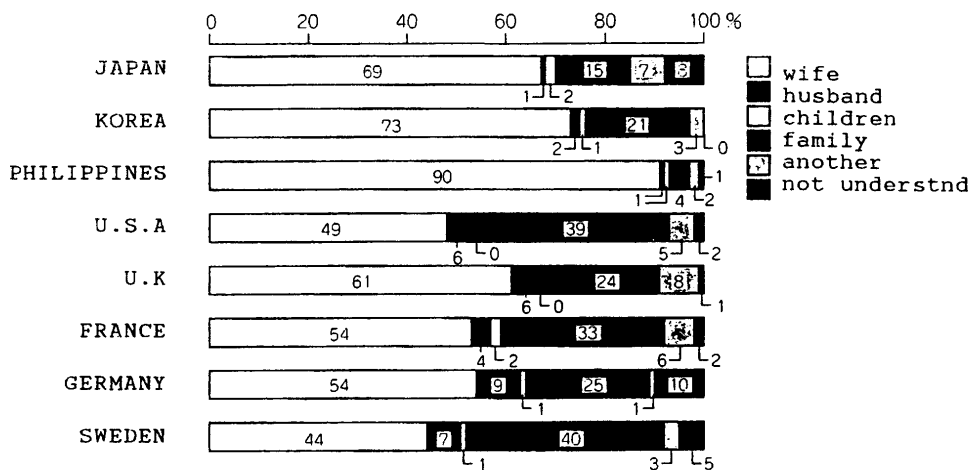


Fig. 4-2. A share of childcare (a comparison in the world 1992) provide : Andrew Harvey (consultant of Statistics' Society of the U.N.)

and recognition of childcare and housework as important work and to carry out plans for their improvement. It is concerned that women will be tired from overwork without actualization of the "society with equal involvement of both sexes" which was proposed by the United Nation and has been aimed at in Japan.

2. The differences in the scores between the husbands and wives, which reflect the above circumstances, will be reduced by changing the social system.

3. The view about "GENDER", which was similar to that as observed in order recent the

data of references⁵⁻⁷⁾, was favorable, but there is a gap between the ideal and the reality. The refore, these results may better be interpreted as wishful thinking because there are limitations in resolving the problems by the couples alone.

4. Almost all husbands and wives answered that they were very happy with having had their children. It has been said that the numbers of parents hating childcare and abusing their children are increasing, but the couples in the present study generally had mature and sound minds, and maintained ties of family, which

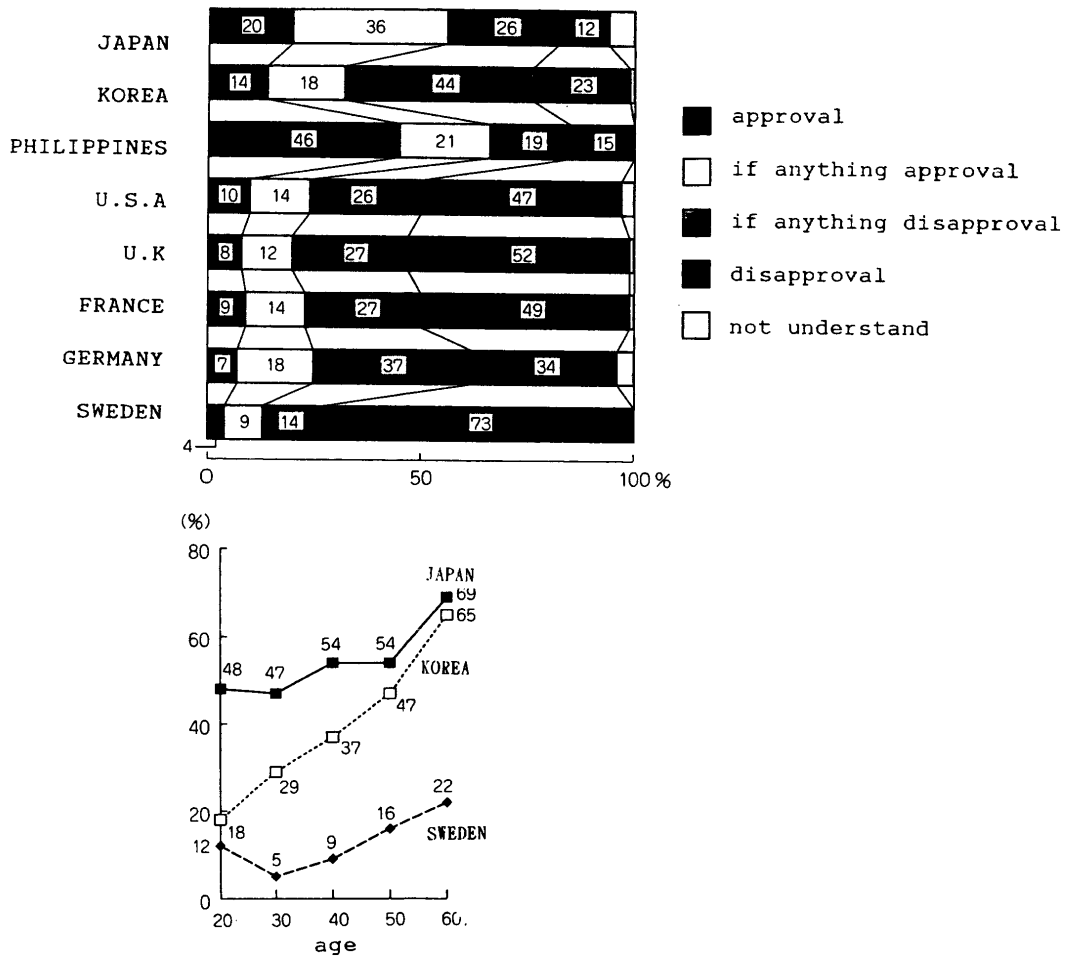


Fig. 5-1. A way of thinking for the "GENDER" provide : Andrew Harver
 (a comparison in the world 1992) provide : Andrew Harver
 "GENDER" : Husband-dominance work for men, householdwork
 and childcare for women

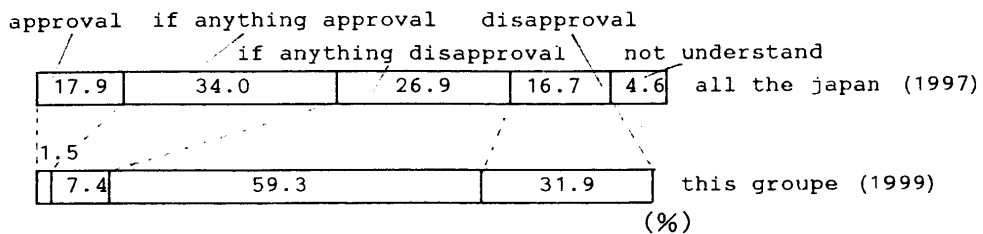


Fig. 5-2. A way of thinking for the "GENDER" (in Japan)
 upper...Data of The Prime Minister's Office (public opinion) 1997
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should be highly evaluated.

5. Although the couples in the present study were considered to have insufficient time at home because of the wives' work, many husbands and wives wrote that they agreed to divide childcare and housework between them without being constrained by the traditional roles of a father or a mother. The present study also revealed that many husbands were concerned about their wife's health, giving indirect support in this way, while being directly involved in childcare and housework. These facts indicate that the society is changing in a desirable direction and we can be hopeful.

Conclusions

1. Among the investigation items of childcare and housework, the scores of "sending the children to the nurseries and picking them up" and "shopping" in the husbands were close to those expected by the wives, but all scores of the other items were significantly different between them, and their mean scores were also considerably different.

2. It may be difficult for the husbands to perform sufficient childcare and housework because of their time limitation, and their involvement was at the assistant and secondary levels.

3. It a way of thinking for the "GENDER" by wife was an affirmative answer, behavior of husband being more a little.

4. Many of the wives had full-time jobs or irregular working-time jobs, and still struggled with their work, childcare, and housework without having sufficient cooperation of the husband. However, many wives answered that they were happy with having had their children, probably because mental support was given by the husband.

5. Only small number of wives considered the traditional concept of "Gender" to be right, and most of them regarded the view of cooperative and equal relationship between a husband and a wife to be right.

Acknowledgment

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子どもを持ち仕事を続ける夫婦が執る育児・家事行動に関する研究（その1）

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要 約

近年、女性の就業率が高まり、結婚・出産後も継続して働く人が増えている。そのような中で女性が仕事と家庭をうまく両立させていくためには、夫の協力が不可欠である。最近、父親研究が脚光を浴びはじめたものの、母親研究ほど十分には行なわれていない。

本研究は、富山県内3ヶ所の保育施設に子どもを預けている135組の夫婦の日常から両者の育児・家事への関わりと分担の実像を探り、それに対する両者間の認識について調査し、分析したものである。

その結果、現在子育て中の30代の女性は、『ジェンダー』（伝統的性別認識による夫中心、男性上位、男は仕事・女は家庭）に対する考え方について、「全然思わない」と答えた人が31.9%、「いくらかそう思う」人が59.3%、「かなりそうだと思う」人が7.4%、「全くそうだと思う」1.5%であった。母親の就業形態は、パート勤務が26.2%、自営業が11.1%、フルタイム勤務の人が62.2%あり、この人たちは、保育所終了後は夫の母や実家の母に子どもを見てもらっており、少数だが延長保育を利用している人もあった。

夫の育児・家事に関わる行動では、子どもの遊びの相手や話し相手、抱っこ、保育園の送り迎えと買い物に比較的多く関わりが見られたものの、妻の期待するレベルまでにはどの項目も到達していない状況にあることが分かった。

キーワード

共働き両親の行動, 父の育児行動, 父の家事行動, 父の行動と母の期待度