

# The Problems of the Women's Job Continuity and the Childcare Leave System

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## I. Issues

The support systems for balancing work and childcare have expanded under the measures against the declining birthrate, triggered by the so-called “1.57 shock,” which the total fertility rate dropped down to 1.57 in 1989.

Managing both work and childcare requires supports from multiple sources including companies, families and communities. Companies promoted the childcare leave system and utilization of that leave as the primary support system for balancing work and childcare. Preceding studies also point out that effects are made by the childcare leave system on job continuity for women at the stage of childbirth/childcare. Nevertheless, the birthrate continues to drop and many women quit their job at the stage of childbirth/childcare. Companies are required to improve their diversified support systems for balancing work and childcare in addition to the childcare leave system under the measures against declining birthrate. To provide effective supports, it is important to organize supports that supplement the childcare leave system, by identifying elements of the childcare leave system which enabled women to continue their job and other elements which failed to enable them to do so.

With the analysis of finding out whether or not improvements were made for job continuity at the stage of childbirth/childcare with the progress of the childcare leave system, we attempt to identify factors that determine job continuity and consequently identify effects of the childcare leave system and issues related to support systems for balancing work and childcare. For the purpose of analysis, examination in this paper is limited only to those who are under employment and excludes those who are self-employed and family employees.

## **II. Declining Birthrate and Companies' Support Systems for Balancing Work and Childcare**

### **1. Declining Birthrate and Childcare Leave System**

Initially, declining birthrate and managing both work and childcare were two separate issues. But the support systems for balancing work and childcare were expanded since the 1990s as an important part of the measures against the declining birthrate, based on the concept that women avoided marriage and childbirth due to difficulty of managing both work and childcare.<sup>1</sup>

Within the measures against declining birthrate, the “Supporting to manage both work and childcare” had two objectives, “Reorganization of employment environment for achieving both work and childcare,” and “Fulfillment of diversified childcare services,”<sup>2</sup> while the primary support systems for “Reorganization of employment environment” was closely related to provisions of the Childcare Leave Law (Law Concerning the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children, Including Child Care Leave) (enacted in 1991, executed in 1992, currently called the Child-care and Family-care Leave Law).<sup>3</sup> For this reason, companies expanded their support systems for balancing work and childcare, mainly the childcare leave system. The Childcare Leave Law guaranteed the right of workers to take childcare leaves.<sup>4</sup> Since this law was put into effect, an increasing number of companies established their childcare leave system. Although not steadily, the rate of utilization of the childcare leaves also increased.<sup>5</sup> It is important to promote the childcare leave further in relation

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<sup>1</sup> The background information on the measures against declining birthrate is provided by the Cabinet Office (2004, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> For details, see “Angel Plan” (“Basic Approach for Supporting Childcare in Future” approved by the four Ministers including the Ministers of Education, Health and Welfare, Labour, and Construction, established in 1994) published by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (1996).

<sup>3</sup> For social movements in and out of Japan for establishment of the Childcare Leave Law, see Fujii (1992), Yokoyama (2002) and the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2006b).

<sup>4</sup> With the introduction of the Childcare Leave Law, men also became eligible for the childcare leave system. Since the focus is put on women in this paper, the issue of utilization of childcare leaves by men will be separately discussed in future.

<sup>5</sup> According to the “Basic Survey on Employment Management for Women” (the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), the number of companies (30 employees or more) that provided the childcare leave system increased from 50.8% in 1993, soon after the Childcare Leave Law was established, to 81.1% in 2002 in ten years. This survey shows that the utilization of leaves of women working for companies

to the measures against declining birthrate currently under way.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that these support systems for balancing work and childcare are expanded, the birthrate continues to drop. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2001) meanwhile, 67.4% of women who had job a year before their childbirth did not maintain their job six months after the childbirth. Even today, there is a persistent problem for women who have to make a choice of either continuing job without having children or quitting job to have children.

It has to be noted that preceding studies point out that women continue to work at the stage of childbirth when the childcare leave system is available at their workplace.

Higuchi (1994) pointed out that positive effects were found with the childcare leave system on the job continuity of women, based on the Employment Status Survey (Management and Coordination Agency, 1987), conducted before the Childcare Leave Law was established. Later, Higuchi, Abe and Waldfogel (1997), Morita and Kaneko (1998), Nagase (2003) and others verified that more women continued to work at the stage of childbirth when they had the childcare leave system in their company. Regarding utilization of the leaves in relation to the availability of the childcare leave system in the company, Wakisaka (2002) pointed out that the utilization of the leaves was definitely higher when the company provided the childcare leave system. According to these studies, progress of the childcare leave system should increase the number of people who utilize the leaves and the number of women who continue to work at the stage of childbirth/childcare.

On the other hand, Imada (1996) proved that there was no change in the trend for women quitting their job at the stage of childbirth/childcare, based on the data provided by *Shokugyo to Katei Seikatsu ni kansuru Zenkoku Chosa* [Survey on work and family life] (the Japan Institute of Labour, 1991,

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with 30 employees or more also increased from 48.1% in 1993 to 71.2% in 2002.

<sup>6</sup> For specific plans of today's measures against declining birthrate, see "the Measures against Declining Birthrate Plus One" (established by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2002) and "Child and Childcare Support Plan" ("About Specific Action Plans for Primary Measures based on the Outline of the Measures against Declining Birthrate Society" established by the Committee for the Measures against Declining Birthrate Society in 2004). "Measures against Declining Birthrate Plus One" is described by the Cabinet Office (2004) and "Child and Childcare Support Plan" by the Cabinet Office (2005).

hereinafter “1991 Survey”).<sup>7</sup> In Japan many women quit their job for marriage, childbirth and childcare, creating two peaks on the curve of women's workforce rate by age, one in the young generation and the other in the middle-to-higher-age generation, and making a sharp drop of the workforce rate for marriage, childbirth and childcare. This forms the well known “M-shape” curve. Although the bottom of the M-shape curve lifted up with time, this rise was only a result of increase of unmarried women, increase of women who continued to work at marriage and increase or earlier realization of women to participate in work again after childbirth when cohorts are compared, taking into consideration of life events. The job continuity did not increase, however, at the stage of childbirth/childcare.

This observation is based on the analysis conducted on those who were born between 1922 and 1966 who were at age between 25 and 69 in 1991. The Childcare Leave Law was put in force in 1992 and therefore those who had experience of childbirth in this period had their first baby before the childcare leave system was spread. Most probably, however, the youngest group at age between 25 and 29 (born between 1962 and 1966) had their subsequent childbirth. Consequently, to verify the effect of the progress of the childcare leave system, it is necessary to analyze the trend in the period starting from 1991. The analysis is therefore conducted to see whether or not the job continuity increased at the stage of childbirth/childcare, including the data of the cohort that is younger than those who were surveyed then.

*Shigoto to Seikatsu Chosa* [Survey on work and life] (the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2005) is used for this analysis.<sup>8</sup> When the survey

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<sup>7</sup> The “Survey on Work and Family Life” (the Japan Institute of Labour, 1991) was the third series of the “Survey on Occupational Mobility and Career” conducted by the previous organization, the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research. The analysis of *Shigoto to Seikatsu Chosa* [Survey on work and life] included in this paper forms the fourth series of the career survey, in which many questions, for example the questions on career and marriage, were common to the third series. The first survey on women was conducted in 1975, the second survey in 1983, and until the fourth survey it was conducted at the interval of about ten years. For the first and second surveys, see the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research (1988), and for the third survey, see the Japan Institute of Labour (1995).

<sup>8</sup> 4,000 men and women at age between 30 and 54 were sampled with their spouses from throughout the country for the survey, conducted in the two-stage stratified random sampling method. The samples were interviewed and the placement method

subjects are divided into five cohorts of those born in 1950-55 (age 50-54 at the time of survey), born in 1956-60 (age 45-49), born in 1961-65 (age 40-44), born in 1966-70 (age 35-39) and born in 1971-75 (age 30-34), the cohort born in 1961-65 roughly corresponds to the youngest group of people who were born between 1962-66 surveyed in the 1991 Survey.<sup>9</sup> Imada (1996) called the cohort of 1962-66 the "Equal Opportunity Law Generation," and the cohort of 1961-65 has the following characteristics. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (established in 1985 and put in effect in 1986, hereinafter called "Equal Opportunity Law") was put in effect when the majority of people from this cohort entered into the labor market at young age, and support systems for balancing work and childcare was expanded for this cohort during the period of their childbirth/childcare with the measures against the declining birthrate such as the Childcare Leave Law and the Angel Plan(the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2006b, 40-41).<sup>10</sup> The following analysis examines whether

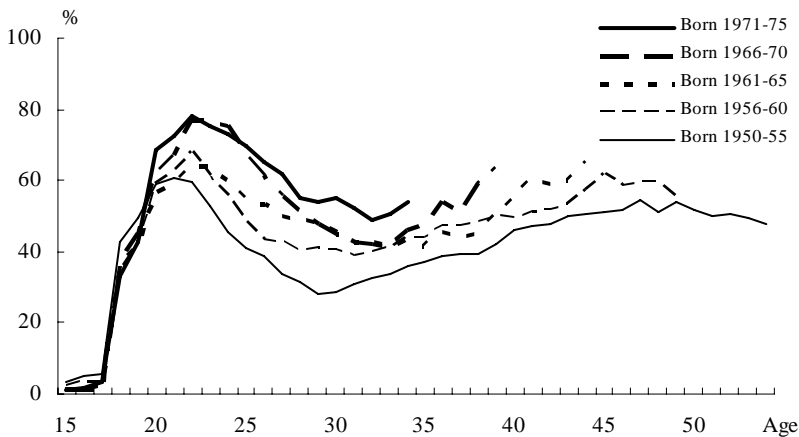
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was used for their spouses. The survey was conducted in the period from June 17 to July 18, 2005 by a survey company (Shin Joho Center, Inc.). Responses were returned from 2,448 samples and 1,425 spouses, resulting in the collection rate of 57.9% from the samples (including 230 backup samples). This was the primary survey for the research project "Research on Establishment of Social System That Brings Harmony between Work and Life" conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training in the period from 2003 to 2006. The survey was designed to identify issues presented in establishing social systems that bring harmony between work and life, investigating actual conditions of employment management by companies, community services and family supports, at various life stages, including marriage, childbirth, childcare, independence of children, elderly care, retirement and others. The questionnaire was constructed primarily to ask about career, marriage, childcare, etc. For childcare in particular, detailed questions were prepared for care of each child they had, asking employment conditions during the stage of childcare (availability of the support systems for balancing work and childcare, use of the childcare leaves, etc.), assistance provided by family and relatives for childcare (division of household duties and childcare between husband and wife, helps of relatives for childcare), use of community services (childcare center, preschool childcare center, school children care center, nursery center, helps from neighbors, volunteer support, etc.). For details, see the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2006b).

<sup>9</sup> The survey was conducted in June and depending on the birth month the age may be staggered. As a result, people at the oldest age of 54 were divided into the birth years of 1950 and 1951. For the analysis, the age is used for approximate reference and the birth year is used as the proper reference.

<sup>10</sup> Of those who were born in 1961-65, divided by the date of first job taken, 31.4% of them started their first job after the Equal Opportunity Law was established, while of those who finished the university or postgraduate school 71.9% started their first job after this law. Thus, the Equal Opportunity Law was put into effect at the period in

**Figure 1. Employment rate and age of cohorts\***



\* Employment rate at different age of all women for each cohort.

Source: The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, Shigoto to Seikatsu Chosa [Survey on work and life] (2005).

or not the expansion of support systems for balancing work and childcare made job continuity to expand among the cohorts after that of 1961-65, by comparing different cohorts.

## 2. The M-shape Employment Structure and Job Continuity at Stage of Childbirth/Childcare

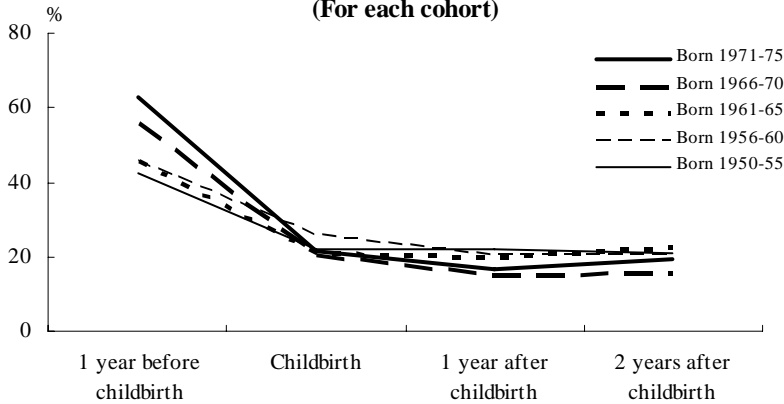
Firstly, we observe the employment rate at different ages for each cohort (Employment rate and age), see Figure 1. Each cohort forms the M-shape curve. When comparing cohorts, however, the bottom of the M-shape is higher with younger cohorts. The point here is to identify whether or not the bottom was raised due to the expansion of job continuity at the stage of childbirth/childcare.

Figure 2 shows the trend of employment rate during the period before and after the first childbirth with life events taken into consideration. The figure shows the employment rate one year before the first childbirth, at the time of

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which university graduates and postgraduate school graduates started their first job. This analysis focuses on women who had experience of childbirth in 1991 or later, and 42.8% of those who had childbirth had their first child after the Childcare Leave Law was put into effect.

**Figure 2. Employment rate before/after first childbirth\***  
(For each cohort)



\* Employment rate of all women who had childbirth.  
Source: Same as Figure 1.

first childbirth, one year after the first childbirth and two years after the first childbirth<sup>11</sup>. This figure leads to the following observation.

The employment rate is higher with younger cohorts one year before the first childbirth. The employment rate for three younger cohorts drops sharply during the period of one year before the childbirth. As a result, the employment rate almost matches that of the cohort of the oldest generation at the time of childbirth. The employment rate remains at the almost same level one year after and two years after the first childbirth for all cohorts.

This means that women changed the time to quit their job before the childbirth, but there was no increase in the number of women continuing their job until childbirth. Women are basically pregnant for the period of one year before the childbirth. Younger cohorts also quit their job in this period.

Preceding studies, as it is described above, claim that availability of the childcare leave system promoted job continuity of women at the stage of childbirth and more companies introduced the childcare leave system. In addition, the measures against declining birthrate promoted expansion of childcare centers and improved support systems for balancing work and childcare in various areas. Nevertheless, the job continuity did not increase at the stage of childbirth/childcare.

<sup>11</sup> The time period was calculated based on the year and month of the first childbirth.

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### **III. Job Continuity Group at Stage of Childbirth/Childcare**

#### **1. Factors Determining Job Continuity of Younger Cohorts**

Despite the propagation of the childcare leave system, the employment rate of younger cohorts rapidly drops in the period of one year immediately before the childbirth, the period of pregnancy. Why do they quit their job in this period?

To find out the reasons, we need to look at not only the factors that made job continuity easier with the progress of the childcare leave system, but also other factors that made it difficult for cohorts after 1961-65 to continue their job. We examined the following three possible factors as reasons making it difficult for younger cohorts to continue their job.

The first possible factor is that there was a change in support systems that were effective for job continuity. In Japan, women traditionally relied on parents and other family members who lived in the same house to ease the burden of achieving both work and household duties/childcare. On the other hand, the measures against declining birthrate promoted social assistance, mainly using support systems for balancing work and childcare provided by companies and childcare services provided by communities. As the primary support systems changed from family supports to social ones, it may be possible that those who continued their job even without the childcare leave system now have to quit their job.

The second possible factor is that the revision of the Labour Standards Law with introduction of the Equal Opportunity Law substantially deregulated the provision of women's protection that was effective before, causing women to leave their job. The revision significantly supported women in expanding the job range, while it is possible that it made it difficult for women to continue the job when they were engaged in long-hour work, night work, dangerous work, or similar work at the stage of childbirth/childcare.

The third possible factor is the fact that the childcare leave system was not applied to many of the non-regular employees, possibly making them to leave their job. Fixed-term contract is used for many non-regular employees, including part-timers, contract workers and dispatched workers. These fixed-term employees did not have guarantee of utilization of the childcare leaves until the Revised Child-care and Family-care Leave Law was put in effect in April 2005. It is possible that fixed-term employees left their job before their childbirth.



In short, it is possible that factors determining job continuity are changing for younger cohorts in comparison to older cohorts. Consequently, it is possible that the number of those who continued their job did not increase while the childcare leave system progress due to other groups of people who quit their job for these other factors.

The above points are summarized into the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis: Factors determining job continuity are changing.

This hypothesis has the following subordinate hypotheses.

- (1) There is a change in the support systems for balancing work and childcare that are effective for job continuity.
- (2) Some of the job categories are difficult for women to continue.
- (3) Non-regular employees quit their jobs.

The above hypotheses are verified by dividing cohorts as indicated below. For this verification, the two cohorts, born 1950-55 and 1956-60, are integrated into one group of 1950-60 and it is called the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation." The three cohorts, born 1961-65, 1966-70 and 1971-75, are integrated into one group of 1961-75 and it is called the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation."

## **2. Factors Determining Job Continuity before the First Childbirth**

Figure 3 shows the distribution of three groups of women taken from Figure 2 (the group that quit their job one year or more before their childbirth, the group that quit their job during the period of one year immediately before the childbirth, the group continued to work until the childbirth) by type of employment immediately before the first childbirth.<sup>12</sup> This figure leads to the following observation.

- (1) The time to quit job differs between the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation" and "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation." A large

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the questionnaire, "department managers and above" and "general regular employees" are defined as "regular employees," and "part-timers, temporary workers and contract employees" and "dispatched workers" are defined as "non-regular employees."

**Figure 3. Time to leave job for first childbirth and job continuation until childbirth (type of employment\*, for each cohort)**



\* Type of employment before the first childbirth.

Source: Same as Figure 1.

percentage of the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” quit their job one year or more before their childbirth, while a large percentage of the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” quit their job during the period of one year before their childbirth.

- (2) Within the same cohort, the time to quit differs by type of employment. A large percent of the “regular employees” quit their job one year or more before the childbirth, while a large percentage of the “non-regular employees” quit their job in the period of one year before their childbirth.

The employment rate of the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” sharply drops in the period of one year before the childbirth, one of the general characteristics of this cohort, and it is also due to the fact that a large number of non-regular employees quit their job in this period. As far as this figure is concerned, it can be said that the hypothesis “(3) Non-regular employees quit their jobs” is appropriate.

To identify the specific group of women within the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” who quit their job in this period, multivariate analysis is

conducted to estimate whether or not they continue to work during the period of one year before their first childbirth and to identify factors determining the decision to either continue or quit their job at childbirth.<sup>13</sup>

Logistic regression analysis is used for this analysis. Logistic regression analysis is used to forecast the probability of a specific event that occurs and it is expressed in the equation similar to the following:

$$\log (P / 1 - P) = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + \dots + b_n X_n \quad (1)$$

the P indicates the probability of a specific event that occurs. In this context, it is the probability of employment at the time of first childbirth. Logistic regression analysis forecasts the rate of P (employment) over the probability of non-employment (1-P), in other words it forecasts the prospect (P/1-P), using explanatory variables such as  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n$ . The equation (1) is a formulation of this prospect in the logarithmic form.

Table 1 shows a result of logistic regression analysis that estimates factors determining employment and non-employment at the time of first childbirth for women who have experience of employment during the period of one year prior to their first childbirth. In addition to the general breakdown (total), this analysis also includes separate breakdown for the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation" (born in 1950-60) and "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation" (born in 1961-75) to compare factors determining job continuity between different cohorts.

In addition to cohorts, educational attainment (years of education) and first childbirth age, explanatory variables also include type of employment immediately before the first childbirth, job category immediately before the childbirth, availability of the childcare leave system at the workplace immediately before the childbirth, availability of childcare help from family or relatives for childbirth/childcare (family support), and use/non-use of childcare center, all of which are related to the subordinate hypotheses listed above.

Variables of educational attainment (years of education) and first childbirth age are continuous variables. Cohorts are divided into five category variables,

<sup>13</sup> Also in the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation," "regular employees" does not quite show a low rate of quitting the job one year before the childbirth, but their quitting of the job one year or more before the childbirth is related to other life events, such as marriage, etc. This point shall be separately analyzed further in future.

**Table 1. Factors determining job continuation in the period of one year prior to the first childbirth**

Explained variable	Employment/Non-employment at childbirth (employed = 1, Not employed = 0)					
	Total		Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation (Born 1950-60)		Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation (Born 1961-75)	
Subjects of analysis	Effect	Exp (effect)	Effect	Exp (effect)	Effect	Exp (effect)
Cohort (reference: born in 1950-55)						
Born in 1956-60	.286	1.331				
Born in 1961-65	-.400	.671				
Born in 1966-70	-1.054 **	.348				
Born in 1971-75	-.770 *	.463				
Years of education	-.197 **	.821	-.231	.794	-.160	.852
Age of first childbirth	.023	1.023	.052	1.053	.004	1.004
Type of employment (regular = 1, non-regular = 0)	.119	1.127	.249	1.283	.094	1.098
Job category (reference: clerical work)						
Professional/technical (medicine, education, social insurance, social welfare)	1.119 **	3.060	1.416 **	4.121	.902 *	2.464
Professional/technical (others)	.575	1.777	1.015	2.760	.205	1.228
Sales	-.198	.820	-.479	.619	-.056	.945
Services	.023	1.023	-.067	.935	.306	1.358
Skilled workers and laborers	.621	1.861	.488	1.629	.580	1.786
Support systems for balancing work and childcare (reference: none available)						
Childcare leave system only	1.092	2.980	.741	2.097	1.447	4.251
Family support only	1.181 *	3.256	1.134	3.109	1.410	4.097
Use of childcare center only	1.401 *	4.057	2.061 *	7.855	-18.655	.000
Childcare leave system and family support	1.720 **	5.586	1.729 *	5.633	1.834	6.258
Childcare leave system and use of childcare center	2.521 **	12.442	1.792	6.002	2.662 *	14.324
Family support and use of childcare center	1.775 **	5.902	1.743 **	5.716	1.951	7.039
Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center	3.302 **	27.158	2.781 **	16.136	3.522 **	33.854
Constant	.015	1.015	-.241	.786	-.815	.443
chi-square	108.686 **		41.836 **		57.486 **	
df	20		16		16	
N	468		201		267	

Note: \*\* p<.01; \* p<.05

Source: Same as Figure 1.

with the oldest generation (born in 1950-55) set as the reference group. For jobs, clerical work is set as the reference group, since it is the largest of all.<sup>14</sup> "Professional and technical" jobs are divided to two categories: "Medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare" that mainly consists of nurses, teachers, and childcare nurses, and another category for other jobs.

Here, support systems for balancing work and childcare includes the childcare leave system, family support, and use of childcare center, which are the primary functions used by companies, families and communities, respectively. The childcare leave system and childcare center is the primary support systems expanded in companies and communities as part of primary support systems in the measures against declining birthrate. Family support includes traditional help of parents for childcare and participation of husband in household duties and childcare, which is one of the recent issues of the measures against declining birthrate.

Consequently, we attempt to determine whether job continuity is maintained when the childcare leave system is not available but if other assistance is available, or job continuity is not maintained when other assistance is not available even if the childcare leave system is available. For this purpose, the childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center are not processed as individual variables, but they are organized into eight combination category variables for the following cases:<sup>15</sup> "Childcare leave system only,"

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<sup>14</sup> No appropriate samples were available for "Workers in agriculture, forestry or fishery," "Managers and officials" and "Protective service work." A few samples were found for "Transportation" and "Communication," but the number of samples was not large enough for the analysis and they were excluded.

<sup>15</sup> For setting up the combinations, availability of each support systems was determined as follows. For the "Childcare leave system," the answer "Do not know" was sorted as "Not available" since it was virtually "Not available" for that person. For the "Family support," it was sorted as "Available" when there was help of "Own parent" or "Parent of spouse" or when "Division of household duties and childcare between husband and wife" was given any of the following answers: "About 70% by wife and 30% by husband," "Divided evenly between husband and wife" or "Mainly by husband instead of wife." It was sorted as "Not available" when the answer did not include "Own parent" and "Parent of spouse" but when it included "Husband participated in household duties and childcare," "Mainly by wife," and "90% by wife and 10% by husband." Chapter 6 of the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2006b) indicates that job continuity is higher when it is "About 70% by wife and 30% by husband" than when it is "Mainly by wife." The "Use of childcare center" was deemed "Used" when the answer was either "Using/Used" and "Not used" when the answer was "Not used/No plan to use." "Used" for the childcare

“Family support only” and “Use of childcare center only” when one of the support systems is available but not other two ; “Childcare leave system and family support,” “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center” and “Family support and use of childcare center” when two of them are available but not the other one; “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center” when all of them are available; and “None available” when none of them is available. Using “None available” as the reference group, we estimate effects of each category to estimate whether job continuity increases when any of the childcare leave system, family support or childcare center is available even if other types of assistance is not available, or job continuity increases only when multiple sources of assistance are combined.<sup>16</sup>

See Table 1 for the general result of analysis.

First of all, significant differences are found among cohorts. Compared with the reference cohort (born in 1950-55), more women in the cohort of “1966-70” and “1971-75” quit their job during the period of one year prior to their first childbirth. The cohort of “1961-65” also indicates negative effect though it is not significant. The number of women who continue to work until their childbirth does not increase, implying that there is an increase in the number of women in the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” who quit their job during the period of pregnancy. The reason why younger cohorts quit their job more often than older cohorts is examined later by reviewing factors

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center also includes those who did not have a job at the time of childbirth but reentered the labor market later.

<sup>16</sup> In the paper published by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2006a), Imada and Ikeda analyzed effects of the combination of the “Childcare leave system,” “Family support (participation of husband in childcare, living with parent in the same house)” and “Use of childcare services” on job continuity at the stage of first childbirth/childcare, based on information obtained from the “Research Survey on Women's Job and Family Life” (the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2003). The conclusion was that significant effect was not found when the “Childcare leave system was the only available support” without family support or use of childcare service, but that significantly positive effect was found when the childcare leave system was combined with family support or childcare service, and that the most significant effect was obtained when all of three were available: Childcare leave system, family support and childcare service. Their survey was conducted in Sugunami-Ku and Edogawa-Ku in Tokyo Prefecture and Toyama-City and Takaoka-City in Toyama Prefecture, while this current research was conducted based on the national survey data, using similar combinations as explanatory variables for the analysis. For the “Research Survey on Women's Job and Home Life,” see the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2003).

determining job continuity in the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation" and "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation".

Also, the general result for the total shows that in the category of education, the job continuity is higher with those who have less number of years, and in the category of job, the job continuity is higher with those who are in "Professional/technical in medicine, education and social welfare" compared with those in "Clerical work." In the category of education, significant effect is only shown for the general result of the total, however, since the oldest cohort (born in 1950-55) has shorter educational attainment than other cohorts, it is possible that they are included in the younger cohorts who quit job in Figures 2 and 3. In the job category, which is reviewed later, the degree of effect largely differs between the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation" and "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation."

As far as effect of the support systems for balancing work and childcare is concerned, "Childcare leave system only" does not show significant effect compared with "None available." All other combinations show positive effect. The analysis result shows that compared with "None available," job continuity is higher when there is availability of "Family support only," "Use of childcare center only," "Childcare leave system and Family support," "Childcare leave system and use of childcare center," "Family support and use of childcare center," and "Childcare leave system, Family support and use of childcare center." The childcare leave system shows significant effect when it is combined with family support or use of childcare center. The analysis result does not show significant effect for "Childcare leave system only" also when the survey subjects are divided into the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation" and "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation," which is reviewed in detail later.

Care is needed when concluding that effect is not significant for "Childcare leave system only," since preceding studies indicate that availability of the childcare leave system increases job continuity. The current analysis result, however, shows that in reality there is correlation between the childcare leave system and help of family members and relatives for childcare or use of childcare center, and what was considered as the sole effect of the childcare leave system in the past can be considered as the mutual effect of these.

Therefore, the effect of the childcare leave system that was discussed in the past is statistically considered as a "pseud effect." The fact that the childcare leave system does not provide independent effect does not mean that it does

not provide any effect at all. The analysis result indicates job continuity is higher when the childcare leave system is combined with family support or use of childcare center than when the childcare leave system is not used.

The odds ratio (EXP (effect)) of “Childcare leave system and family support” is higher than that of “Family support only” when these two are compared. Also, the odds ratio of “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center” is higher than that of “Use of childcare center only” when these two are compared. And importantly, the highest effect is achieved by “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center” which are supported by all domains, including companies, families and communities. Combining these three, Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center, it makes support more effective in a synergetic manner. Therefore, this analysis result still indicates that the childcare leave system is necessary.

Next, let us see the analysis result of the survey subjects divided into the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” (born in 1950-60) and “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” (born in 1961-75). When comparing these two, significant effects are found with different determining factors.

First of all, there is effect of the job category. For both cohorts, job continuity is consistently higher for those who are in “Professional/technical in medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare” than those who are in “Clerical work.” Comparison of the odds ratio, however, shows that the effect is lower with the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.” In the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation,” the difference is reduced between “Professional/technical in medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare” and “Clerical work.” This implies that there is difficulty in continuing the job.<sup>17</sup> It also implies that regular employees are also quitting their job to avoid the burden of long working hours or night work.

Still larger differences are observed with the effect of the support systems for balancing work and childcare.

Let us see the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” first. Compared with “None available,” more significant effect is observed with “Use of childcare center only,” “Childcare leave system and family support,” “Family support

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<sup>17</sup> In the traditionally sustainable job category of clinical nurses, teachers and childcare nurses, there are an increasing number of other professionals of diversified job descriptions. A separate research shall be conducted to analyze this issue in detail.



and use of childcare center” and “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center.” It should be noted that significant effect is found when family support is combined. In the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation,” on the other hand, with exception of “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center” that has all three support systems, no significant effect is found with “Childcare leave system and family support” and “Family support and use of childcare center” though these have family support. In place of these, significant effect is found with “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center.” This implies that there is a shift of effective primary support systems for job continuity from family support to social ones. There is another shift of effective support systems that are combined with the childcare leave system, which is a shift from “Childcare leave system and family support” to “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center.”

More importantly as for the effect of the childcare leave system, none of the combinations is effective without the childcare leave system in the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.” Significant effect is found only with two combinations: “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center” and “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center.” In other words, the combination of “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center” is required to improve job continuity, and the odds ratio shows further improvement of job continuity when family support is added to the combination. It implies that the requirement of the childcare leave system is still higher in the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.”

Based on the above result of analysis, let us now examine subordinate hypotheses under the hypothesis “Factors determining job continuity are changing.”

The hypothesis “(1) There is a change in the support systems for balancing work and childcare that is effective for job continuity” is appropriate, since support systems with significant effect differ between the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” and “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.”

The hypothesis “(2) Some of the job categories are difficult for women to continue” is appropriate, since effect of “Professional/technical in medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare” is less with the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” than the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.”

The hypothesis “(3) Non-regular employees quit their jobs” is supported in

Figure 3 of the analysis result, but type of employment does not directly show significant effect when other factors are considered. This is due to the fact that effect of type of employment is absorbed by both job category and support systems for balancing work and childcare. Non-regular employees show the tendency of quitting their job due to the changes made in the effect of the support systems for balancing work and childcare as follows. For the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” job continuity is promoted when “Use of childcare center only” and “Family support and use of childcare center” are available regardless of type of employment, while for the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” such significant effect has disappeared and job continuity can be enhanced only when the childcare leave system is combined, such as “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center” or “Childcare leave system, family support and use of childcare center.” Consequently, the result of analysis suggests that, even after the Childcare Leave Law was established, fixed-term employees quit their job because the childcare leave system has not been applied to this group until recently. From this point of view, the hypothesis “(3) Non-regular employees quit their jobs” is appropriate.

Therefore, the hypothesis “Factors determining job continuity are changing” can be summarized as follows. There has been a loss of effectiveness of family support, which was effective for job continuity for the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation,” and of “Use of childcare center only,” which was also available to non-regular employees. Instead of these, more effect is shown with “Childcare leave system and use of childcare center.” In the job category, “Professional/technical in medicine, education, social insurance and social welfare” is losing its effect for people in the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation.” From this point of view, the hypothesis “Factors determining job continuity are changing” is appropriate.

On top of the group of women in the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” who has continued to work, the number of women who continue to work should increase, if more women are enabled to continue to work with expansion of the childcare leave system and childcare center under the measures against declining birthrate. In reality, however, women in the “Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation” are quitting their job for reasons for which women in the “Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation” would not have quit. This is the possible reason why the job continuity does not expand.

#### **IV. Conclusion and Future Issues**

Cohorts have been compared in the analysis to see whether more women are continuing to work with the progress of the childcare leave system and whether there is a change of factors that determine the job continuity. The following findings have been obtained from the analysis.

- (1) The "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation" often quit job during the period of one year prior to the childbirth. The number of women who continue to work to the stage of childbirth has not increased more than that of the "Pre Equal Opportunity Law Generation."
- (2) The childcare leave system alone is not effective for job continuity but it is when combined with family support or use of childcare center. For the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation," it is important to combine the childcare leave system and childcare center.
- (3) Job continuity has become difficult for the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation," due to reduced effect of family support for job continuity, increase of non-regular type of employment, and expansion of job categories.

First of all, many women in the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation" quit their job during the period of pregnancy. Introduction of the Equal Opportunity Law and Childcare Leave Law has reorganized the system to support job continuity. Among all, the childcare leave system has been actively expanded under the measures against declining birthrate. Nevertheless, more younger women quit their job during the period of pregnancy. To stop this trend, support systems need to be enhanced further.

This, however, is not meant to deny the effect of the childcare leave system. To make it effective, the childcare leave system also requires family support or childcare center to be available. For the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation," in particular, it is important to have childcare center available in addition to the childcare leave system. It is possible that active expansion of these two types of social support under the measures against declining birthrate contributed to job continuity for the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation."

There are, however, new factors that make it difficult for the "Post Equal Opportunity Law Generation" to continue the job. Firstly, there is increasing difficulty in continuing to work through family support. The practical form of

family support seems to be changing from traditional ways, typically provided by parents living in the same house. To supplement the reduced effect of family support for job continuity, participation of husband in household duties and childcare as well as social support needs to be expanded further.

Secondly, with increasing importance of social support for job continuity on one hand, fixed-term employees have had difficulty continuing to work, since the childcare leave system was not applied to this group. Starting from April 2005, however, fixed-term employees are also eligible for utilization of childcare leaves as long as they meet specific conditions. Although the effect of this support is still to be seen, the job continuity is expected to expand to non-regular employees once the application of the childcare leave system is enlarged.

Thirdly, there is difficulty of job continuity due to expansion of job categories for women. The result of analysis indicates that the number of regular employees who quit their job is increasing due to long working hours and night work. The Labour Standards Law and the Child-care and Family-care Leave Law provide for limitation of overtime and night work during the period of pregnancy/childbirth and childcare. The Equal Opportunity Law defines obligations to establish provisions for health management during the period of pregnancy and after childbirth. Nevertheless, women are quitting their job before their childbirth and supports needs to be further intensified.

In summary, job continuity has become so difficult to offset effect obtained by the combination of childcare leave system and childcare center. For women to go back to work after quitting their job once during the period of pregnancy, it is important to enhance support systems for job continuity during the period of pregnancy in addition to the childcare support. With introduction of the “the Promotion of Supporting the Development of the Next Generation Law,” more companies and local governments are expected to actively improve support systems. To enhance effect of support systems, it is important to systematically enhance support systems so as to achieve synergetic support of companies, families and local communities.

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