

Abstracts

Explaining Trends in Dual-Earner Couples in Japan, 1985-2016

Akiko Sato Oishi (Chiba University)

Past decades have seen a steady increase in the number of dual-earner couples in Japan. Although an increase in the employment rate of married women is a commonly observed phenomenon among industrialized countries, it was not until the late 1990s that the number of employed husbands with working wives exceeded their counterparts with fulltime homemakers in Japan. This study examines economic and institutional factors that have affected the increase in the number of dual-earner couples, especially paying attention to differences in trends between female part-time and fulltime workers. A historical perspective shows that the prevalence of part-time employment among married women has accounted for much of the increase in dual-earner couples since the late 1980s. Tax and social insurance schemes that favor part-time employment of salaried workers' wives also contributed to this trend. An analysis using official statistics suggests a growing income disparity among households with wives between ages 25–34, mainly due to the higher employment rate of wives whose husbands have higher-than-average earnings.

The Division of Housework and Child Care between Dual-Earner Couples

Keiko Kubo (Chiba University)

This study examines the division of housework and child care between dual-earner couples, focusing on the degree of husbands' participation in those activities. A questionnaire administered to 726 couples with children in day care in Chiba Prefecture identified the following points. Husbands whose wives were regularly employed and who have a positive attitude to gender equality were more likely participate in housework and child care. On the other hand, husbands' long working hours negatively affected their participation. The frequency of husbands' participation in some tasks easily substitutable such as washing dishes, cleaning up after meals, and care of the bathing of the children, is negatively correlated to the wives' frequency. However, in terms of activities related to playing and talking with children, there is no correlation between the frequency of husbands' and wives' participation. Husbands' long working hours are negatively related to the husbands' participation in time-consuming and less postponable tasks; such as child care, preparation of meals and cooking. It is necessary for working parents not only to secure enough time for being at home, but also to consider when they will be at home for participation in housework and child care.

Family Budget Management of Dual-Earner Couples in the Tokyo Area

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This study focuses on the family budget in a dual-earner household and allocation of resources in the family budget, and analyzes the share of expenses and family budget management from the perspective of wives' recognition. As a result, the following were obtained: (1) where the wife is a full-time employee, the couple shares the living expenses according to their income on an equal footing. On the other hand, when the household pays for the living expenses and the wife is a part-time worker, the degree of dependence on the husband's income is higher. Thus, the wife's income is basically used for supplementing the living expenses. In case of a high-income bracket, the share of expenses tends to be left to her discretion. (2) When comparing the way of sharing expenses from the viewpoint of the child status, money management tends to be conspicuously independent between the husband and wife in the case of DINKS. When the couple has a child and the wife is a full-time worker, it is difficult to clearly draw a line between expenses for herself and her family. Therefore, the husband and wife recognize the wife's money as something for the family to balance the burden between them.

Human Resources Management and Sogo-shoku Employees Shifting to Employees Working under Limited Conditions

Koichiro Imano (Gakushuin University)

Traditional human resources management (HRM) in Japanese companies can be characterized by people portfolio management where employees (Sogo-shoku) assigned core jobs will be ones who can work flexibly by changing their working time, working place and job content in response to the changing needs of management. But many Sogo-shoku have already found it difficult to work flexibly due to the work life balance. Therefore, traditional HRM should be reformed to a new one in which Sogo-shoku will be utilizable as core employees even if they don't work flexibly. What is the new HRM? It is the purpose of this article to explore this question. The article firstly analyzes to what extent and why Sogo-shoku have found it difficult to work flexibly, and how companies and Sogo-shoku think about what companies should do to overcome the difficulties. Secondly, challenges are studied which some companies have faced to reform traditional HRM, and it is made clear that several types of new HRM exist. Lastly, I explore what policies new HRM should or can take in management fields like recruitment, assignment, remuneration and so on.

Increase of Dual-Earner Couples and Social Security

Sayaka Dake (Tohoku University)

Some social security benefits are aimed at meeting the needs of those who make certain personal choices, such as choice of being a housewife. Concerning these benefits, we have to reconcile the necessity to satisfy their needs with respect for the right to self-determination. As a reasonable way to reconcile these two demands, this paper suggests that the systems of the third-party insurance and of the survivor's pension are limited to those who have obstacles preventing them from working.

In making work and childcare compatible, the childcare leave benefit is considered instrumental in reversing the birthrate decline. As this benefit is intended to excise a non-neutral influence on the life-style choices of the individual, the state should be conscious of respect to a diversity of lifestyles.