

Women's Reemployment after the Period of their Child Rearing

— Issues and Solutions

Summary

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This research is one of the subprojects of the five-year research project of “Study on Development of Social Systems and Employment Environment to Realize Work-Life Balance,” which will be conducted between 2007 and 2011. An entire program based on this subproject is planned to be carried out over a two-year period between April 2007 and March 2009. The main report summarizes the first-year results of this research.

Study Period

Between April 2007 and March 2008

1. Objectives of Research

This research was conducted as one of the subprojects of the research project of “Study on Development of Social Systems and Employment Environment to Realize Work-Life Balance.” The purpose of this subproject is to understand what actions are taken by women who left their employment during the period of life events such as marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing and who wish to return to work, and what actions are effective for their reemployment.

2. Method of Research

Questionnaire survey was conducted. A total of 10,000 business establishments throughout the country that employ five or more regular employees were randomly selected. Each office was sent five copies of the questionnaire and was asked to deliver it to female workers in their business establishments. Respondents were requested to return their questionnaire directly to us in the enclosed return envelope.

3. Summary of Questionnaire Survey

[Period of survey]: Between September 1 and October 31, 2007

[Valid responses]: 3,971

[Overview of respondents]: The ages of respondents are widely distributed between 18 and 75. Among them, 18.4% (723 women) have been working for the same company since they graduated from school when the survey was conducted, and 81.6% (3,209 women) have experienced resignation, job change and reemployment (NA: 39 women).

Of all respondents 66.9% (2,655 women) have children, 21.2% (843 women) replied that they have no children and 11.9% (473 women) did not give any answer.

When the survey was conducted, 62.7% were married. Among those who have children, 6.9% (233 women) have never left their jobs.

[Result of survey and discussion]

Current Types of Employment

With regard to the employment types of women who replied to the questionnaire, more than half of them (58.9%) are working as regular employees. 25.9% are part-time workers. There are few other types of employees, of which, 5.8% are limited-term contracting workers, 2.0% are temporary workers by short-term contract workers, 1.5% are casual workers, 1.9% are dispatched workers, 1.8% are company executives, 1.6% are family workers, 0.6% are self-employed workers and 0.3% are others (the total number of respondents is 3,903 in this case).

Among these, if we select the women who had temporarily left their jobs during the period of their marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing and returned to their jobs, 42.3% are currently working as regular employees and 41.2% are working as part-time workers. Others are as follows: 6.7% as limited-term contracting workers, 2.4% as temporary workers, 1.7% as casual workers, 1.9% as dispatched workers, 1.6% as company executives, 1.6% as family workers and 0.6% as others.

With regard to the size of the company they are currently working for and the types of their employment, far more than half of those who are employed as regular workers and part-time workers (61.2%) are working for companies with less than 50 employees. About 90% of the total are working for the companies with less than 300 employees. Thus, it is considered that a fair percentage of women who were able to reply to the questionnaire that aims at collecting information on their reemployment after the period of their child rearing are working for companies of small size.

Concerning the types of job they are currently engaging in, about half of them are doing clerical work, followed by specialized or technical work (16.9%), and the third is service work. Specialized or technical jobs mainly include those of nursery staff, clinical nurses, dental hygienists and their assistants, teachers (including kindergarteners), care workers, care attendants, etc.

With regard to the income they are currently earning, the most common answer (56.7%) is within the range of income between 100,000 and 200,000 yen (56.7%), which is followed by the range between 50,000 and 100,000 (18.6%). Only 4% earn more than 300,000 yen.

Child Rearing and Resignation

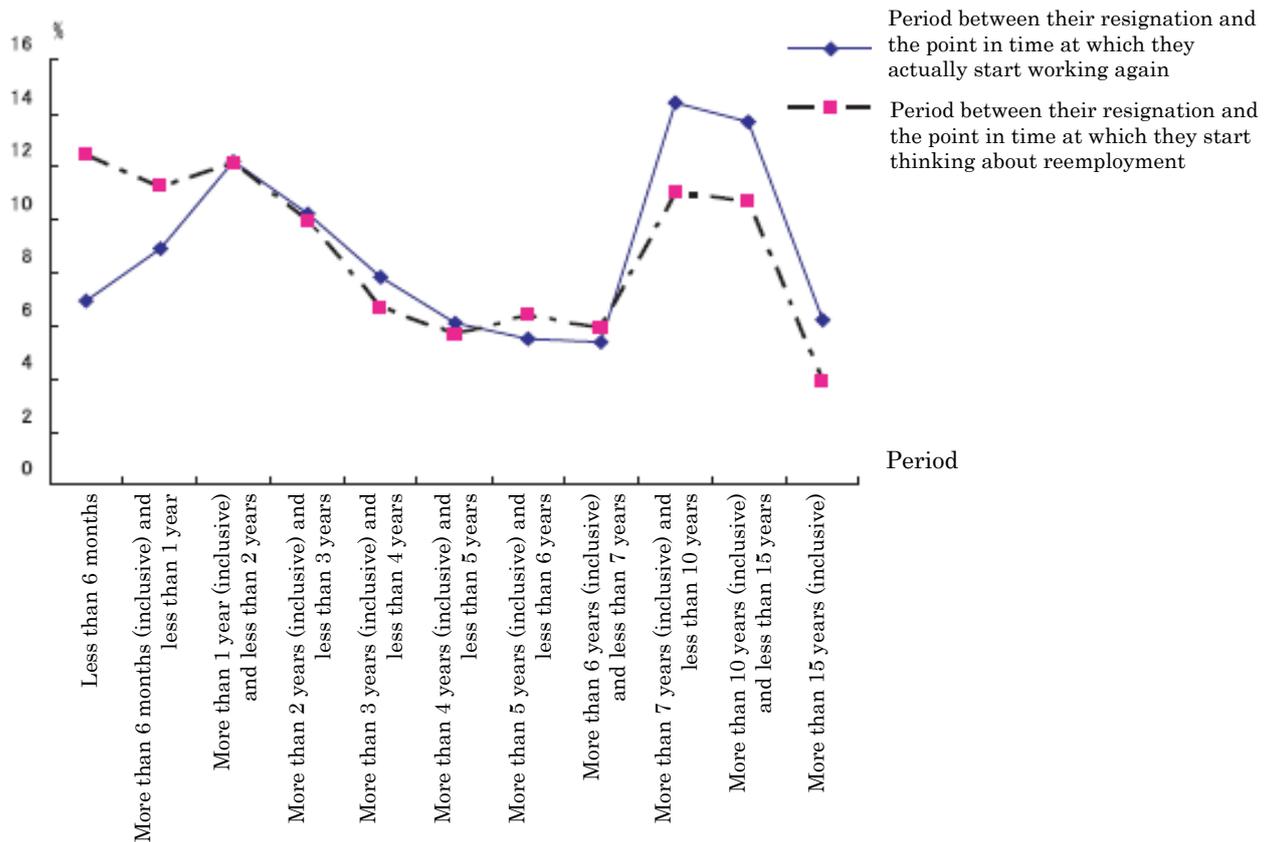
Most of the women left their jobs for the reason of “marriage” (45.8%), followed by “childbirth” (30.4%). The reasons for which most of them resigned vary widely by age. For example, younger women under the age of 34 resigned most for the reasons of pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing, and the reason of ‘marriage’ shows a slight decline.

Reemployment after Child Rearing

A little less than half of women (47.6%) start thinking about reemployment less than three years after their resignation. On the other hand, there are also many women who start thinking about reemployment more than seven years after their resignation. The point in time at which they actually start working again is mostly less than three years after their resignation (in particular less than two years), and more than seven years

(see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Period between their resignation and the point in time at which they start thinking about reemployment / period between their resignation and the point in time at which they actually start working again



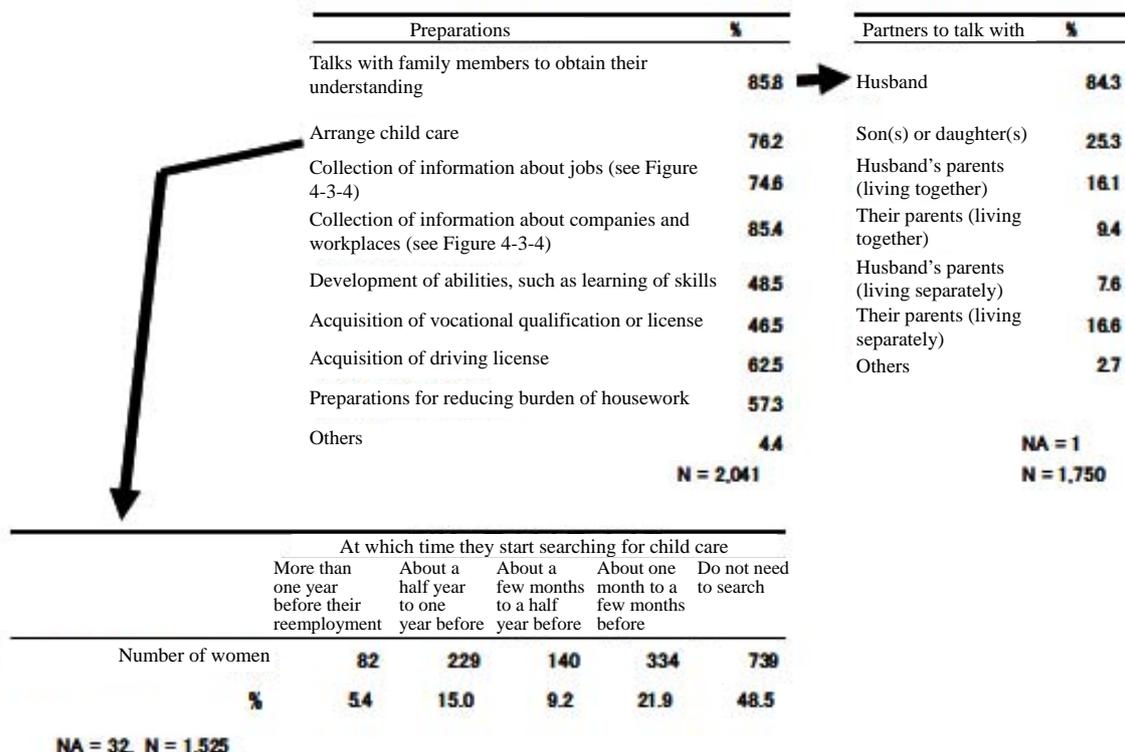
Women who start thinking about reemployment earlier actually start working earlier. The length of period between their resignation and the point in time at which they start thinking about reemployment and the length of period between their resignation and the point in time at which they actually start working again are related significantly (correlation is $r=.89^{**}$, in simple linear regression analysis $\beta=.89$, adjusted determination coefficient = .80).

Preparations for reemployment

Figure 2 shows the preparations that women made before their reemployment. The preparations made by most women are to obtain understanding or acceptance of their family and to arrange facilities providing care for children or child-care services. Also,

many women actually collect information about jobs. Information sources vary by the types of information they seek. Many women rely on specialized media or employment agencies if they want real job information, such as job offers, and many of them also collect information from their neighbors or people who they have contact with in their daily life.

Figure 2: Preparations for reemployment



Job-seeking activities

Through what methods or channels do women find a job for the first time after the period of their child rearing? Most women find their job by responding to job advertisements (30.4%), and the second most common way to find a job is through contact with the office of the Public Employment Security Office “Hello Work” (27.7%). This means that the most direct and suitable way to find a job is utilized by most women. Few women utilize the Internet, as job contents advertised on the Internet do not match with them. The relationship with the People in the company they used to work for and with their neighbors play an important role in their job search. 14% of women are “invited by people of their former company to rejoin” and 15.2% are “introduced to their new job by their neighbors.”

With regard to a direct reason why they decided to reenter employment, most of them replied to the questionnaire that they decided to work again “for economical reasons” (39.7%). The second most common answer was “they had decided to return to work as well as the time when they would do so” (15.0%).

Women who answered the questionnaire that “they had decided to return to work as well as the time when they would do so,” meaning that they had the intention to be reemployed at a certain time, searched for their jobs through the office of Hello Work (40.1%) or by job advertisements or advertisement leaflets (34.5%). On the other hand, although women who had not decided on their reemployment utilized an employment agency or job advertisement more than other methods of job search, the percentage of utilization of these facilities is 25.2% and 29.8%, respectively. There is a significant difference in the utilization of an employment agency as a job-search facility between the group of people who had already decided on their reemployment as well as the time of reemployment and the group of people who had not decided on their reemployment ($df=1$, $\chi^2=27.48$, $p<.01$). However, we could not find a significant difference in the utilization of job advertisements and advertisement leaflets ($df=1$, $\chi^2=2.81$, $p<.05$).

Issues before and after their reemployment and their supporters

With regard to the issues that many women are concerned about just before they start working again, they replied to the questionnaire that they should not neglect care for their children (20.3%), that they should make sure of child-care services and that they should adjust their schedule for school events etc., and thus they emphasize the importance of care for their children and other family members. On the other hand, after they start working again, the most difficult issue for them is that “they have to take leave or come in late in urgent need” (25.2%).

In order to solve the issues that they are concerned about before they start working again, 73.5% of them have supporters who assist them in solving the issues, but 26.5% of them do not have any supporters. In the case where they have supporters, their husband (56.7%) is at the top, followed by their parents (35.5%) and the parents of their husband (24.7%).

In solving the issues that they have after they actually start working, 59.5% of them have supporters and 40.5% of them do not have any supporters. Thus, the percentage of women who have supporters after they start working decreases if compared to their situation before they start working.

Concerning the question of whether they have any persons who mentally support them by encouraging them or providing companionship when they encounter difficulty,

68.2% of women replied that they had such supporters before they started working again, and 31.8% of them replied that they did not. Meanwhile, after they actually start working again, 59.5% of them have such supporters, and 40.5% of them replied that they do not.

Way of Working when women return to work

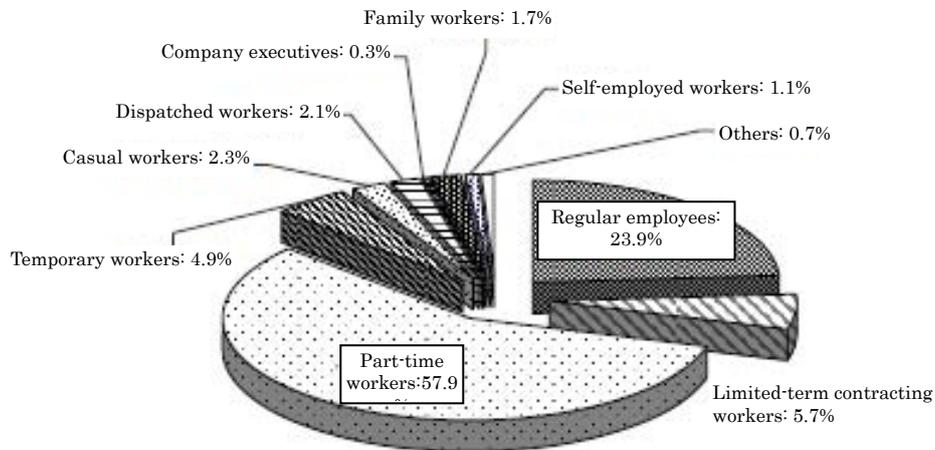
A remarkably high number of women who reenter employment after the period of their child rearing work as part-time workers (57.9%). The second highest number of women are those who are employed as regular employees, which accounts for 24% (see Figure 3). The percentage of part-time workers at the time when they start working again is very high if compared to their current employment status. In terms of types of job, most of them are doing clerical work, the second most common job they are doing is specialized or technical work and the third one is service work.

The average number of working days at the time when they start working again is five days a week or more than six days a week, accounting for about 80%. With regard to the average of weekly working hours including overtime work, at the top is 40 hours (11.5%), followed by 30 hours (9.5%), 48 hours (9.2%) and 8 hours (5.8%).

Accumulating the number of women with respect to their weekly working hours, 21.7% of the total number of women are working 8 hours or less, 31.3% of them are working 16 hours or less and 50.8% are working 25 hours or less. In contrast, 17.3% of women are working more than 40 hours a week.

With regard to their commuting time to work, 43.0% of them spend less than 10 minutes to commute. 74.9% of them fall within the range of less than 20 minutes and 88.2% of them fall within the range of less than 30 minutes.

Figure 3: Types of employment when women return to work for the first time



Self-evaluation of their first reemployment after the period of their child rearing

Among all women who left their job during the period of their marriage, pregnancy, childbirth or child rearing, concentrated on housework and child rearing and reentered employment after the period of their child rearing, more than 60% of women evaluate that the timing of their reemployment was appropriate. 20.4% of women evaluate that they reentered employment earlier than appropriate and should have delayed their reemployment (4.4% evaluate that their reemployment was too early and 16.0% evaluate that it should have been a little later). On the other hand, 12.5% evaluate that their reemployment was later than appropriate and should have been earlier (1.8% evaluate that it was too late and 10.7% evaluate that it should have been a little earlier).

We categorize the surveyed women into three groups, a group of women who think that their reemployment was too early, a group of women who think that it was too late, and a group totaling the number of women who think that it “was done at an appropriate time” or who think that it “can be done any time,” and examine the correlation between the women’s evaluation of the moment of their reemployment and the age of their youngest child. We find that there is a significant difference between the groups and the difference within each group is also significant (analysis of variance: $F(2)=90.12$, $p<.01$, Bonferroni, $p<.05$). Therefore, the women’s evaluation of the timing of their reemployment is statistically proven to correlate with the age of their youngest child.

We also examine whether there is any difference in the length of the period between

their resignation and reemployment among the above-mentioned three groups. We find a significant difference among the groups, and find a significant difference also within each group (analysis of variance: $F(2)=53.32$, $p<.01$, multiple comparison: Bonferroni, $p<.05$).

With regard to the question of whether women are satisfied not only with the timing of their reemployment but also with their reemployment in general, 61.3% of them replied to the questionnaire that they are satisfied, 12.7% of them replied not satisfied and 26.0% replied yes and no.

We do not find any significant correlation between their general evaluation of reemployment, the age of their youngest child at the time when they reenter employment and the length of period between their resignation and reemployment. But, we find a significant difference in their general evaluation of reemployment between the women who have supporters immediately before they start working again and the women who do not have any supporters. Women who have supporters are more satisfied with their reemployment than those who do not have any supporters ($t(1059.92)=4.16$, $p<.01$).

4. Support for women's reemployment after their child rearing

There are two peaks of timing when women, who left a job during the period of their marriage, pregnancy, childbirth or child rearing in which they concentrated on housework and child rearing, wish to reenter employment. One is at an early stage when their youngest child is less than one year old, and the other is, more than 7 years old. In other words, In terms of length of period between their resignation and the time of their reemployment, the peaks are the time when there are less than six months or more than 7 years after their resignation. The support they need in the respective timing differs since, for example, the contents of the child care their children require varies depending on their age. Therefore, it is necessary to provide them with the support that they really need.

When women actually start working again, assistance and mental support provided by their families and other people help them in continuing their employment. In addition, the labor-management relationship and the human relationship in their workplace relevant to their daily work have much more impact on their motivation for working and for continuation of employment. Women's actions for reemployment are taken in close relation with the situations of their families, local communities and workplaces. In particular, their actions for reemployment have a characteristic of paying careful attention to the relations with their husband, children and other family

members. Therefore, at the beginning of their reemployment they tend to choose a workplace to which they can commute within thirty minutes and to start working as a part-time workers. After that, particularly with the change in conditions at home or in family circumstances, more women will work in other types of employment than working part-time. It is expected that, taking these points into consideration, small and medium-sized companies in local areas and local business establishments of large corporations will create and develop qualitative employment opportunities for women who have completed their child-rearing roles.