

For Expanded Use of Family Care Leave System
– Report on “the Study of the Utilization of Family Care Leave System
and Related Matters” –

Summary

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Objectives of Study

Japan has progressively become an aged society. Along with this change, people's resignations from jobs for the reason of elderly care have emerged as a major problem in Japan's society. To deal with this problem, legislation on the family care leave system was adopted in 1995, which imposes the obligation on companies to implement the family care leave system with effect from 1999. The family care leave system inspired high expectations when the law was legislated. However, it is said that till now there are a small number of workers who actually have utilized the system. Utilization of the system has never been looked into, and therefore it is not clear to anybody how many workers who have problems in continuing a job during elderly care have made use of the system.

The objectives of this study are to clarify the utilization of the family care leave system and to identify the problems to be solved in order to establish a more useful system for workers. Although the focal point of the study is the family care leave system, it is noted that the problem of balance between work and long-term care can only be solved by a variety of supports, including support systems provided by companies, sharing of care among family members and relatives, care services provided under the long-term care insurance system, support by care volunteers or neighbors, etc. There are a variety of cases of determining the main caregiver, depending on the relations with the family members and relatives. There are also greater variations in the burdens

and contents of care and the length of the care period, depending on the condition of the care receiver. Based on the characteristics of long-term care mentioned above, this study sets the focus on the following points:

- ① How is the elderly care arranged and shared by the family members, and who undertakes the main burden of the care?
- ② What impact is made by the initial arrangement for elderly care on the workers who undertake the care?
- ③ How does the caregiver balance work and elderly care after he/she has tidied over the initial period of care and the provision of care has stabilized?
- ④ Based on the observations in the points ①, ② and ③ above, what should the effective family care leave system for workers be?

We have carried out the hearing investigation and a questionnaire survey on the above-mentioned four points in order to grasp the entire picture of the problems of the balance between work and elderly care, including the family care leave system, annual paid leave, absence from work, and other support systems in workplaces, and utilization of the community services for home care such as care services under the long-term care insurance system, and support by care volunteers and neighbors.

Following are our comments on the main points of the use of the family care leave system and the issues related to such system suggested by the analysis of the above-mentioned surveys:

Summary of Study Results

1. Summary of the analysis

Analysis of the results of the hearing investigation and the questionnaire survey concerning the subject matters of this study mentioned above can be summarized as follows:

- ① Although the persons who undertake the main burden of the elderly care living together with them vary by gender, age and their employment status, the main burden of the elderly care is allocated in the following order: at first a woman of the parent generation (i.e. a mother), secondly a woman of the children's generation (i.e. either a daughter or a wife) and lastly a man (i.e. either a father, a son or a husband). A woman undertakes the long-term care for the elderly parents, regardless of whether they are her parents or her husband's parents. Even though she is not living with the family who needs the care, she still shares some sort of care. When a man undertakes the care, in most cases he takes care of his parents.
- ② The persons who were involved in the initial setup of the elderly care tend to quit

their jobs. Most workers do not take family care leave. They take annual paid leave, are absent from work, come to the office later or leave early to provide the care. Even though the necessity arises to take days off successively, they do not take family care leave for reasons of non-existence of the care leave system in the working place, various inconveniences in the use of the family care leave system or decrease of income due to the use of the care leave system.

- ③ One in every four employed workers took one of the measures including shortening of working hours provided under the law, and thus adjusted their working hours when the provision of the elderly care came to be stabilized. However, these adjustments are in most cases not regulated by the companies, and are made on an informal basis or on a case-by-case basis. Even though employees really wish to take family care leave, they do not actually take it, but instead take annual paid leave or other holidays, are absent from the office, come to the office later or leave earlier to cope with the needs of care. Caregivers undertake a heavier burden of care if they provide the care before they go to the office or after they come back home. Especially, shortage of sleep due to the provision of care in the middle of night causes them serious problems. They are prepared to resign from their jobs if the condition of the care receiver becomes worse.
- ④ In order to expand use of the family care leave system, it is important that the system should be improved in response to the actual needs of the people who take care of their elder families. For example, the period of the leave and the number of times to be taken should be made flexible, and financial security should be enhanced during the leave. It is equally important for such improvement of the system that the environment of the working place be changed so that the persons who really wish to take family care leave can feel at ease to take it. The caregiver interviewed through the hearing investigation who actually took family care leave informed us that the companies for which they worked provided not only a long-term family care leave system but also other systems to respond in a flexible manner to the demand of people who are involved in family care, such as the short-term holidays or short-term family care leave, and a flexible working hours system applicable to all employees. As for financial security during family care leave, companies assure approximately half of their normal salary including care leave benefits. One of the interviewees applied flexible working hours and took paid leave to carry out elderly care at the beginning when the care needs came about. After that, she took family care leave for three months as it was still difficult to undertake both the job and the care. The advice of a senior person outside the department in which she is working

was useful, and therefore she felt that it might be important that the company provide a mentor who stays off-line.

2. Summary of each Chapter

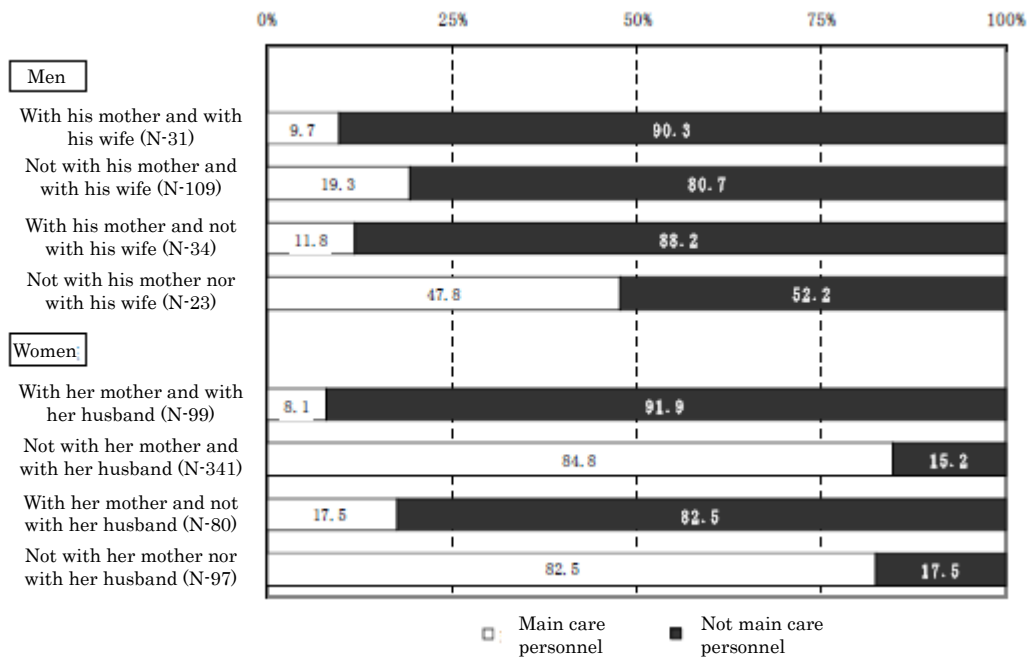
In the report, we have analyzed the data collected through the questionnaire survey and have tried to clarify the reality of the utilization of the family care leave system and the compatibility between jobs and care. Summaries of each Chapter of the Report are as follows:

Chapter 1: Undertaking of elderly care and its burden

– The reality of the family members living with the care receiver

① Factors determining who undertakes the main burden of the elderly care among the family members include the gender and age of the caregiver, the family members living together and the employment status of the caregiver (see Figure 1 below). Among others, gender is the deciding factor. A woman tends to be the main caregiver. However, if the woman lives together with her mother, the latter tends to be the main caregiver. A man undertakes the main burden of care if neither his mother nor his wife lives with the care receiver. Among the women who undertake the main burden of the care, women who do not have any jobs at the start of the care tend to be appointed as the main caregiver rather than women who are in employment.

Figure 1: Person who undertakes the elderly care
By family members living together (by gender)



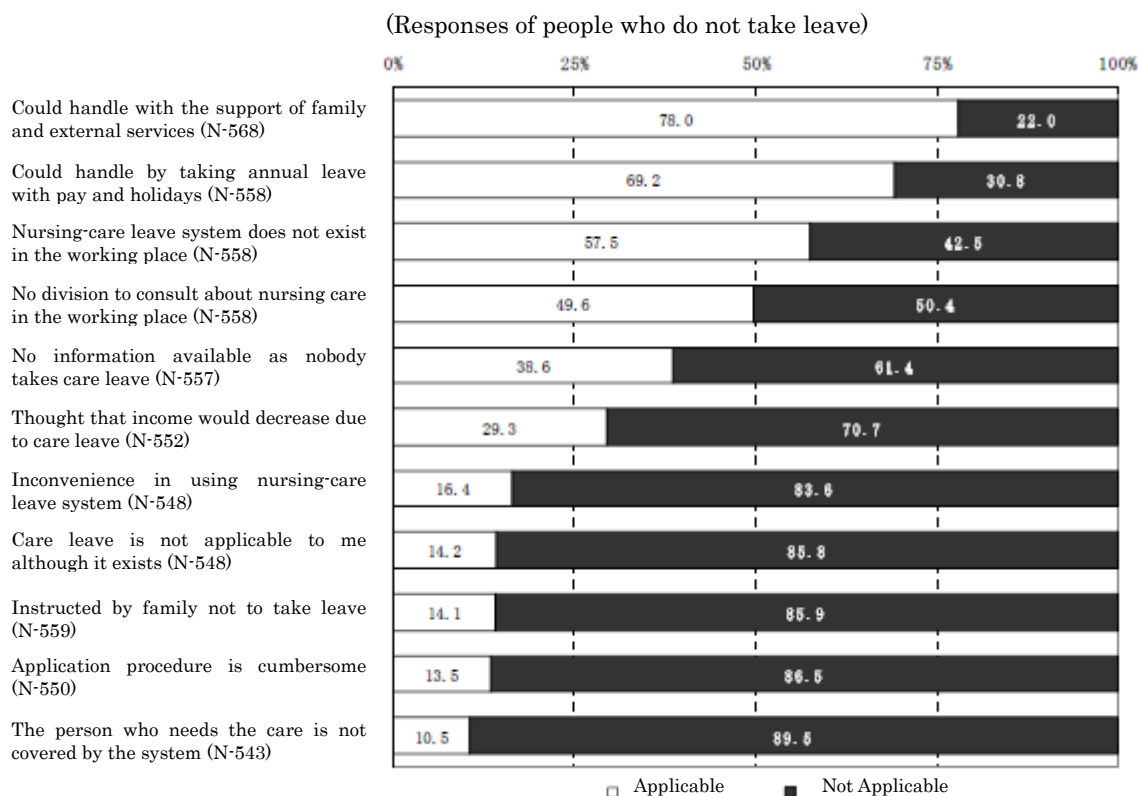
Among the women who are in employment, women who are in non-regular employment or self-employed tend to be appointed as the main caregiver rather than women who are the regular employees.

- ② The main caregiver undertakes a heavier burden of care than other family members living together who undertake a part of the care in terms of the caring tasks and the time spent for the care, thus the main caregiver undertake heavier responsibility for the care physically as well as mentally. They suffer from physical and mental fatigue much more than other family members and have the problem of balance between their work and elderly care.

Chapter 2: Quitting of job for the elderly care and the use of family care leave system

- ① Some 20% of workers quit their jobs they had at the start of the elderly care. Among them, 7% of the persons who left their jobs remain unemployed and 15.2% of such persons have found other jobs and are employed when they responded to the questionnaire. The persons who were involved in the initial setup of the elderly care and the persons who need to take successive leave for the elderly care tend to leave their jobs or to change their jobs. In the working place, people take annual paid leave, are absent, come to the office later or leave early to provide the care in order to maintain their jobs while they provide the care. When the need of care becomes so great that it requires them to be absent from the office more frequently, they tend to resign their jobs.
- ② Only 1.5% of the employees surveyed took family care leave. Most of the employees did not have any necessity to take successive leave for elderly care. The reasons of employees who did not take family care leave mentioned as to why they did not need to take successive leave are that “they could deal with the care with the support of their family or external service providers” and that “they used their companies’ annual leave system or other holiday systems to cope with the necessity of care” (see Figure 2 below). However, there are not a small number of employees who cited the reasons that “the company does not have any family care leave system” or “there are some inconveniences in using the family care leave system.” 30% of employees who did not take family care leave cite economic reasons that “they thought that their income would lower if they took Family Care Leave.”

Figure 2: Reasons why the caregivers do not take family care leave



*Samples are limited to those who were employees at the start of the care.

Chapter 3: The problems of balancing work and elderly care for current employees

- ① The people who undertake the main burden of the elderly care, regardless of their employment status, actually took more annual paid leave than normal people.
- ② One in every four company employees made some adjustments of working hours or used other related measures available in the company, such as shortening of working hours, coming to the office later or leaving earlier, using the flexible working hour system, taking financial support for the care, etc. However, such adjustments of working hours are not usually regulated by the companies, but are in most cases implemented informally or on a case-by-case basis. This is more the case for the main caregivers who are employed as non-regular workers.
- ③ The workers who made any adjustments of working hours are the main caregiver among family members, those who are required to carry out the elderly care between the late afternoon and night (between 17:00 and 22:00) every day, those who are non-regular employees, and those who are engaged in sales and marketing, security services, specialists and engineers, and clerical works. Many regular employees wish to adjust their working hours in the near future.

Chapter 4: Future of employed workers providing the elderly care

– Focusing on their wishes to take family care leave

- ① Many of the employees who are “regular employees and the main caregivers among family members” wish to take family care leave in the near future. The workers who are working for companies in which the family care leave system is available or who are actually consulting with their colleagues, superiors or the departments in charge of the family care leave system also wish to take family care leave.
- ② However, when they think about taking family care leave, they have concern that it may cause some inconvenience to their colleagues or that it may reduce their income. These concerns work as obstacles to prevent them from actually taking family care leave. Therefore, as practical alternatives they intend to take annual paid leave, be absent from the office, come to the office later or leave earlier.
- ③ In order to spare time for the nursing care, regular employees tend to take annual paid leave, and the irregular workers tend to be absent from the office. Many of the people who are not “regular employees and the persons who undertake a part of the care” tend to come to the office later or leave earlier.

Chapter 5: Balancing work and elderly care with home care support by community

– Focusing on services under the long-term care insurance system

- ① In order to apply for care services under the long-term care insurance system, more employees took leave from the office, were absent, came to the office later or left earlier than the employees who did not use the services under the long-term care insurance system. The company employees who did not apply for the services by themselves but asked somebody to do so are not required to be absent from work, come to the office later nor leave earlier. The employees who were assisted by the care volunteers or their neighbors or friends tend to be absent, come to the office later or leave earlier.
- ② When home care support provided under the long-term care insurance system is utilized, there is a decrease in the number of people who carry out elderly care in the daytime every day. However, the main caregivers are still required to carry out the care every day in the early morning, late afternoon, night and even in mid-night. Even though the main caregivers take the external care support, they make an adjustment to their working hours, such as shorter working hours in a day, a reduction of working days in the week, a late start time or an early closing time, flexible working hour's system, etc.
- ③ Main caregivers who carry out the elderly care in early morning, in late afternoon, in

the night and in the middle of the night have more needs for the care facilities.

Chapter 6: Family care and financial concerns

- ① About 30% of the respondents to the questionnaire have financial concerns that they “may suffer from a shortage of household budget due to the long-term care”. The lower the age of the respondents are the bigger financial concerns they have.
- ② Concerning the income in the household budget which finances the elderly care costs, the lower the income for the family is, the bigger financial concerns they have. This is also the case when the care receivers pay lesser an amount of the care costs.
- ③ Concerning financial burden due to the use of care services under the care insurance system, people whose family members that need nursing care reside in care facilities have more major financial concerns.

Chapter 7: Reconciliation between work and elderly care

– **To reduce the conflict between work and elderly care and to realize satisfactory family care with lesser stress**

- ① The main caregivers who are involved more in the elderly care in quantity and in quality at home have higher stress of care and a bigger conflict between work and care. Women tend to suffer from more stress and conflict than men. The stress of care and conflict between work and care become higher when the needs of care for the care receivers become higher. This is the case especially when the care receiver suffers from a high level of dementia.
- ② The persons who make use of various elderly care-supporting systems or who are consulting about elderly care with their colleagues or superiors or the departments in charge of the family care leave system have higher stress and conflict. It is observed that, with the heavy burden of care, these people are forced into the situation where the use of supporting systems and consultations are unavoidable. On the other hand, many respondents to the questionnaire somehow manage their elderly care responsibilities without making use of any supporting systems. However, behind these responses, there seems to be a certain organizational atmosphere that makes people feel uneasy about applying for elderly care leave. In order to reduce the caregivers’ stress and conflict, it seems effective to improve this kind of organizational atmosphere so that the supporting systems can be used more easily.

Final Chapter: Summary and policy implications

Based on the results of the analysis made in each Chapter, the policy implications

concerning the family care leave system are summarized as follows:

- ① In order to promote the use of family care leave system, it is important that the system should be made more flexible in terms of the period of leave and the number of times to take the leave in accordance with the actual requirements of the elderly care. The system should also be improved in terms of financial security during the period of the leave. In the present situation, the family care leave system is not used well as people tend to take annual paid leave, be absent, come to the office later or leave earlier when the necessity arises to be away from the office for the purpose of long-term care.
- ② It is important to enhance the measures including shortening of working hours provided by the companies under the law in order to promote compatibility between work and long-term care especially when the provision of care enters into a stable phase. At such point of time, balancing work and care is actually promoted by the shortening of working hours, late starting time or early closing time, or flexible working hours. However, these adjustments are in most cases not regulated in working places, but are taken informally or on a case-by-case basis.
- ③ While it is important to improve the family care leave system so that more people can use it, it is equally important that the system should be known to workers as widely as possible and that the culture of the working place is to be matured so that people feel comfortable to take family care leave. Companies have difficulties in identifying their employees who need the family care leave system since employees' involvement in family care are different from one to another. On the other hand, there are many employees who have needs for family care leave, yet do not know whether their companies have the family care leave system or not. There are also many employees who hesitate to take family care leave due to their concerns about inconvenience to their colleagues which may be caused by their leave.

The current family care leave systems are not necessarily in accordance with the actual requirements of the workers who carry out elderly care. It is required to establish family care systems that respond to the actual needs of the workers undertaking elderly care and to improve the culture of the working places so that employees can feel at ease to take family care leave. Thus, it should be made possible for the workers who undertake the burden of elderly care to stay in their jobs and to harmonize their duties of work with the care.

3. Summary of “Survey on the Job and the Care”

- (1) Main items covered by the survey

- ① Status of care (status of the person who needs the care, period of care, extent of involvement of the respondents in the care, etc.)
 - ② Status of employment (taking of Family Care Leave, adjustments of working hours, resignation from or change of job during the care period, etc.)
 - ③ Family environment (allocation of care works among the family members and relatives, etc.)
 - ④ Community environment (use of care services under the care insurance system, use of support of care volunteers or neighbors, etc.)
 - ⑤ Future perspective and the needs for support to maintain jobs and care
 - ⑥ Thoughts about the compatibility of jobs and care
- (2) Objects of survey
Men and women between 30 and 59 years of age whose family member living together with them needs nursing care
- (3) Method of survey
- ① All people who fall within the category mentioned above are extracted from the people's list provided by the research company which nominates the people selected exclusively for the purpose of conducting the survey
 - ② Method of survey: Posting the questionnaire
- (4) Period of survey
Between February 15, 2006 and March 5, 2006
- (5) Conducting the survey
Commissioned a research company (Intage Inc.)
- (6) Collection of questionnaire responses
Number of samples extracted: 1,468
Responses: 1,381 (including 357 responses which cannot be analyzed)
Number of samples excluding the respondents whose responses are not included in the analysis): 1,111
Responses excluding those excluded from the analysis: 1,024
Response rate: 92.2% (=1,024/1,111x100)

4. Summary of "Hearing Investigation on Jobs and Care"

(1) Purpose

For the purpose of clarifying the present status of the people who maintain a job and care concurrently and the issues they have, we have conducted interviews with the people who undertake the burden of nursing care about compatibility supports used by them, such as the care leave system, allocation of care works among family

members and relatives, care services under the care insurance system, supports by care volunteers and neighbors, etc. and their needs for compatibility supports.

(2) Main items covered by the investigation

- ① Status of care (status of the person who needs the care, period of care, extent of involvement of the interviewees in the care, etc.)
- ② Status of employment (taking of Family Care Leave, adjustments of working hours, resignation from or change of the job during the care period, etc.)
- ③ Family environment (allocation of care works among the family members and relatives, etc.)
- ④ Local environment (use of care services under the care insurance system, use of support of care volunteers or neighbors, etc.)
- ⑤ Needs for support to maintain jobs and care

(3) Objects of investigation

Nine people in total (including men and women) between 30 and 59 years of age who experienced nursing care for an aged family member and who were employed workers when they provided the care. Additional interview was made with one person who is a company employee and who took Family Care Leave for the care of an aged family member. The company for which such person works was also interviewed.

(4) Method of investigation

An offer to participate in the investigation was made on the homepage of JILPT in order to collect subjects of investigation. They were also introduced by relevant institutions.

Interviews were made individually and in a semi-structured manner.

(5) Period of investigation

Between May 18 and 29, 2005. Additional interview was made on July 7, 2005.