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1. The Emergence of the Concept of Work-Life Balance

A. Emergence at the Beginning of the 2000s

“I changed job last month.” “Oh? Why?” “The work at my previous company was hard and I felt like I was going to end up damaging my health. There was a lot of overtime and I just couldn’t take any holidays, either. Although I’m in the local soccer club, I was rarely able even to kick a ball around. My wife works too and I’ve got kids, so I changed job for the sake of my work-life balance.” “I see....”

The expression “work-life balance” has come to be widely used in this way in everyday conversation in Japan. Already, more than 50% of Japanese people have heard of this term.¹ However, the history of the term itself in Japan is not as long as one might think.

At the very least, the first time that the government officially used the term “work-life balance” was in the series of moves that led to the formulation of the “Work-Life Balance Charter”.² Incidentally, in Japan, there is a tendency for objections to emerge when the government uses loan

words directly from another language in its policies, so there are times when the equivalent Japanese term “*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa* (“*chouwa*”, meaning “harmony”, does not necessarily correspond directly to “balance”, but this is what was used in Japan, rather than “*kinkou*”, which is the Japanese word for “balance”)” is used (as opposed to the loan word version, which is written in the *katakana* syllabary used for loan words and pronounced as “*waaku raifu baransu*”), and both terms are used in parallel in the aforementioned Work-Life Balance Charter. “*Shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*” had already begun to be used in around 2003, when the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare began to hold its “*Shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa ni kansuru kentoukaigi* (Review Meetings on Work-Life Balance)”. This organization, the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, undertook a project entitled “*Shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa wo kanou ni suru shakai sisutemu no kouchiku ni kansuru kenkyuu* (Study on the Construction of a Social System That Will Facilitate a Work-Life Balance)” as one of the research projects that it carried out during its first target period, from October 2003 to March 2007.

Moves by researchers and others to advocate and introduce the term and concept “*waaku raifu baransu*” in Japan began a few years before the aforementioned moves by the government, for example, in Ham (2000)³ and Park (2002).⁴

Consequently, first of all, the term “*waaku raifu baransu*” and the associated concept was introduced by researchers at the beginning of the 2000s, and then the term “*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*”, which was synonymous with “*waaku raifu baransu*”, began to be used in discussions at seminars and other academic

1 Cabinet Office (2011) “Survey of Work-Life Balance and its Impact on the Recent Economic Climate”. However, the proportion of “people who have heard of the term and understand what it means” is just 20%.

2 The official Japanese name of the Work-Life Balance Charter is “*Shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa (waaku raifu baransu) kenshou*”. See below for further details of the nature of this Charter and the background leading up to its formulation.

forums; one can say that situations in which the loan word could be used directly alongside its Japanese equivalent began to emerge in the latter half of the 2000s.

Incidentally, the terms “*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa* (the harmonization of work life and family life)”, “*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no ryouritsu* (achieving compatibility between work life and family life)”, and “*famirii furendorii* (family-friendly)”, which are similar to “*waaku raifu baransu*” or its equivalent “*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*”, or have some overlap with them in terms of their concepts, existed in Japan long before the emergence of either of the two terms used to refer to “work-life balance”. In addition, the difference between “*seikatsu*” and “*katei seikatsu*” can easily be envisaged, as they make a distinction between “life” (the former) and “family” life (the latter), but it has come to be explained that the newly-emerged term “*waaku raifu baransu*” is quite broad in scope compared with terms that are prefixed by “*katei seikatsu* (family life)” or “*famirii* (family)”. At the very least, in the Work-Life Balance Charter, which was formulated in 2007,⁵ achieving a work-life balance is, of course, deemed to be an issue common to both men and women, and in this concept, “life” - that is to say, the life that should be balanced with work - is not restricted to matters pertaining to family responsibilities, such as child rearing or providing long-term nursing care for family members. In fact, it is not even restricted to family life in its broader sense, beyond the aforementioned responsibilities. Let us now look at the content of this Charter.

B. The Work-Life Balance Charter

In the Work-Life Balance Charter formulated at the beginning of December 2007, a “society that has achieved a good work-life balance” is defined as “a society where each citizen works with a sense of satisfaction, finding his/her job rewarding, executes work-related responsibilities, and at the same time, chooses and lives a variety of lifestyles according to different stages of life, such as the childrearing and midlife periods, within his/her family and community life”. In addition, an “Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance” was formulated at the same time as the Charter in order to realize this “society that has achieved a good work-life balance”, prescribing effective initiatives by companies, workers and the populace as a whole, and the policy on national and local government measures. In this Action Policy, the following are explicitly stated to be the conditions required for a “society that has achieved a good work-life balance”.

The Various Conditions Required for a “Society That Has Achieved a Good Work-Life Balance”

- 1) *A society where economic independence through work is possible*
- *Where young people can make a smooth transition from school to an occupation.*
 - *Where young people and mothers in single-parent households, etc. can achieve economic independence through employment.*

3 Ham, Heasun (2000) “*21 seiki no yuuryou kigyuu Waaku raifu baransu no shiten* (Blue-chip Companies in the 21st Century: The Work-Life Balance Viewpoint)”

4 Park, Joanna Sook Ja (2002) “*Kaisha ningen ga kaisha wo tsubusu waaku raifu baransu no teian* (Workaholics Crush Companies: Proposals on Achieving a Work/Life Balance)”

5 A policy decided upon at the Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-Life Balance, which was held at the Prime Minister's Office on December 18, 2007. It is a document agreeing that the government, workers and management will each fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities, in order to realize a society with a good work-life balance. This Council of Executives was chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and consisted of relevant members of the Cabinet, representatives of the worlds of the economy and labor and of local authorities, and various experts; the members signed the Charter that they had formulated, as proof of their agreement with it, and submitted it to Prime Minister Fukuda along with the “*Shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa suishin no tame no koudou shishin* (Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance)”, which they had decided upon at the same time.

- *Where it is possible to transition from non-regular to regular employment according to one's motivation and abilities.*
 - *Where fair treatment and opportunities for skills development are secured, irrespective of the form of employment.*
- 2) *A society where time can be secured for healthy, rich lives*
- *Where the importance of securing time to make it possible to lead a healthy, rich life is acknowledged by companies and society.*
 - *Where there is compliance with relevant legislation on working hours.*
 - *Where the kind of long working hours that are detrimental to one's health do not exist and initiatives are promoted that enable those workers who so desire to take annual paid leave.*
 - *Where hourly productivity also improves as a result of a well-modulated way of working.*
 - *Where work-life balance is taken into consideration in all situations outside the workplace as well, such as in contracts with business partners and in consumption.*
- 3) *A society where choosing a variety of ways of working and living is possible*
- *Where there are systems that make it possible for parents bringing up children, women with the desire to work, and elderly people to enjoy diverse, flexible ways of working according to different stages of life, such as the childrearing and midlife periods, and where these systems can actually be used.*
 - *Where the social infrastructure has been developed to support child rearing, long-term nursing care, activities in the community, and the formation of vocational abilities, tailored to diverse ways of working.*
 - *Where fair treatment and opportunities for skills development are secured, irrespective of the form of employment (restated).*

From the "Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance"

of young people and problems relating to job-seeking, to the problem of the treatment of what are called non-regular workers, promoting the taking of annual paid leave and issues relating to working hours, including measures to prevent death from overwork, and even the issue of hourly productivity as being included in the concept of "*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*" (=work-life balance). Efforts are also being devoted to the expansion of the possibilities for opting for diverse, flexible ways of working. As labor policy, the concept of "*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*" encompasses a wide range of policies, including not only equal employment policy, but also employment security, labor standards, and skills development.

Of course, this newly emerged concept of "work-life balance" was once expressed using such terms as "*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa* (the harmonization of work life and family life)", and it cannot be denied that this included the problem of balancing work with child rearing and long-term nursing care, issues that are primarily faced by women over the course of their lives. In fact, there are still many Japanese people who associate the term "work-life balance" first and foremost with these problems involving female workers.

So why has the broadening of the concept outlined above taken place? Moreover, various other questions also arise, such as what the background was to the initial emergence of such concepts as "the harmonization of work life and family life" in Japan in the first place, and how the situation at that time has changed as of the present day.

Accordingly, in considering work-life balance, the author would like first of all to examine the developments that led up to the present day, while bearing in mind the breadth of the concept of work-life balance as it is used today. In addition, by way of exploring its origins, the author would like to summarize the background to the emergence of the various terms and concepts that have been used hitherto, which overlap with the concept of work-life balance, while also examining progress in relevant policies.

Looking at this, it contains a truly wide range of content, referring to everything from the independence

2. Progress in National Policy and Changes in the Concept and Terminology

A. “*Shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa* (Harmonization of Work Life and Family Life)” in the 1972 Working Women’s Welfare Law

As stated above, similar concepts had appeared in labor policy on women well before the emergence of the term “*waaku raifu baransu* (work-life balance)”. The term “*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa*” appears in the stipulation of purpose in Article 1 and the stipulation of basic principles in Article 2 of the Working Women’s Welfare Law, which was passed in 1972. This law clearly set forth policy guidance concerning female workers for the first time in Japan and was the first law to stipulate that employers were under an obligation to make efforts to grant of child care leave and other accommodations relating to child rearing.⁶ One of the concepts central to the welfare of working women was deemed to be “*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa* (harmonization of work life and family life)” and this marked the first appearance of legislation with a concept similar to that of work-life balance.

What should be borne in mind is that this was a concept designed solely for working women. It is likely that this was based on the premise of the fixed division of roles between men and women, reflecting the social situation and public awareness at the time the legislation was formulated, such as the fact that “family life” was a concept that included not only child rearing, but also housework, and the positioning

of childbirth and childcare as important roles for women, which were considered⁷ to be equally important as, or even more important than, their economic role.

Why were these provisions set forth in the Working Women’s Welfare Law? Speculating on the intention of the policy at the time it was formulated, one could interpret it as having been meant to promote the utilization of working women, focusing primarily on married women, in order to respond to the growth in labor demand resulting from economic development, with the emphasis being placed on the harmonization of work life and family life as the conditions that needed to be put in place in order to achieve this. This is also obvious from the fact that the “Basic Concept of Legislation Concerning the Welfare of Working Women”, which was the advice provided by the Women’s and Young Workers’ Problems Council (as it was at the time) ahead of the bill’s submission to the Diet, stated at the outset that, “As well as enabling working women to effectively demonstrate their abilities, the legislation should have the objective of formulating the necessary measures to enable married working women in particular to harmonize their working lives with child rearing, housework and other family responsibilities, thereby improving the welfare of working women.”⁸

In addition, as well as the aforementioned obligation to make efforts to grant accommodations for child rearing, such as child care leave, the legislative policy promoting the “harmonization of work life and family life” incorporated into the Working Women’s Welfare Law at that time also included provisions relating to “vocational guidance” and “vocational training”, taking into consideration the re-employment of married women, and these

6 For more detail concerning the background to the enactment of the Working Women’s Welfare Law and its content and significance, see Ministry of Labour Women’s & Minors’ Bureau Women Workers’ Division ed. (1972) “Working Women’s Welfare Law Handbook” Association of Women and Minors, as well as Iki, Noriko “The Evolution of Labor Policy on Women: From the Perspectives of ‘Justice’, ‘Utilization’ and ‘Welfare’” (2011) Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training.

7 Regarding the roles of working women, Article 2 of the Working Women’s Welfare Law firstly lists “an important role in the raising of the next generation” and then states a role that “contributes to the development of the economy and society”

8 Ministry of Labour Women’s & Minors’ Bureau Women Workers’ Division ed. (1972) “Working Women’s Welfare Law Handbook” Association of Women and Minors.

aspects are also included in the “harmonization of work life and family life”, broadly speaking.

B. “*Shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa (Harmonization of Work Life and Family Life)*” in the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Act

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act,⁹ which was passed by the Diet in 1985 and entered into force in 1986 as a means of putting in place the conditions required for Japan to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, emerged as a result of the partial revision of the Working Women’s Welfare Law. Accordingly, as well as prohibiting discrimination against women in education and training, welfare programs, the mandatory retirement age, resignation and dismissal, and imposing the obligation to make efforts to implement equal handling in recruitment, employment, deployment and promotion, the initial Equal Employment Opportunity Act also incorporated the policies on the welfare of working women that had been included in the Working Women’s Welfare Law, namely the obligation to make efforts to provide child care leave and other accommodations for child rearing; it also inherited from the Working Women’s Welfare Law some of the stipulations concerning its purpose and basic principles.

Here, the “harmonization of work life and family life” is described as a means of achieving the objective of the “improvement of the welfare of women workers”.

The difference from the Working Women’s Welfare Law lies in the order of priorities in terms of the relationship with the “guarantee of equal opportunity and treatment between men and women in employment”, with the term “equal” coming first and being emphasized in the stipulations concerning its purpose and basic principles, while the

harmonization of work life and family life is referred to after that. Looking at this order, the importance of the harmonization of work life and family life is subordinate to the equality of men and women. Furthermore, in the provisions regarding the basic principles, in the Working Women’s Welfare Law, working women are described as “having an important role in the raising of the next generation”, but in the new law, an effort was made to eliminate nuances suggesting the fixed division of roles in relation to women, by such means as inserting the phrase “as a member of the family” before such descriptions.

It goes without saying that one of the contributing factors to such differences was the 1979 adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which triggered the birth of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. The Convention was interpreted as meaning that protecting or providing preferential treatment for women constituted discrimination where this had a discriminatory effect, and not permitting such treatment except as a “provisional special measure” with the aim of promoting effective equality between men and women. This meant that special measures aimed at the “harmonization of work life and family life” based on the premise that only women bore family responsibilities could exist on condition that they “promoted effective equality between men and women”. To put it another way, one can say that this clarified the positioning of the “harmonization of work life and family life in relation to working women” as a “means” of enabling men and women to achieve effective equality, which had not been clear at the time of the Working Women’s Welfare Law.

As well as clearly indicating support for the re-employment of working women who had resigned for reasons such as bringing up children, in addition to the provision of accommodations for child rearing, the policy content of the Equal Employment

9 The official name is the the Law Respecting the Improvement of the Welfare of Women Workers, including the Guarantee of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment. For more detail concerning the background to the enactment of the this law and its content and significance, see Akamatsu, Ryoko “The Equal Employment Opportunity Act and the Revised Labor Standards Act” (1985) Japan Institute of Labor, as well as Iki, Noriko “The Evolution of Labor Policy on Women: From the Perspectives of 'Justice', 'Utilization' and 'Welfare'” (2011) Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training.

Opportunity Act, which aimed at the harmonization of work life and family life, prescribed a new obligation to make efforts in relation to “special measures for re-employment”, under which companies were requested to make a commitment in advance to re-employ working women who had resigned temporarily to bring up their children, and to re-employ them on the basis of this.

In addition, in 1981, after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the “Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention” (ILO Convention No.156) was adopted based on the necessity of achieving effective equality in terms of opportunities and treatment between male and female workers with family responsibilities, and between workers with family responsibilities and those without; Japan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and ILO Convention No.156 in 1995.

C. “*Shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no ryouritsu (Achieving Compatibility Between Work Life and Family Life)*” in the 1995 Revised Childcare Leave Act

The Childcare Leave Act¹⁰ that entered into force in 1992 established for the first time the right of both men and women workers to take child care leave, as a general rule, but the initial stipulation of objectives was brief and did not clearly prescribe the relationship between work life and family life. “Achieving compatibility between work life and family life” was only clearly stipulated in the prescription of objectives at the time of the primary enforcement date (October 1995)¹¹ of the revised law, which had been amended with the aim of legislating for family care leave. The prescription of objectives

at that time contains a passage stating that, “...efforts shall be made to promote the continuing employment and re-employment of workers bringing up children or providing long-term nursing care for family members, thereby contributing to achieving compatibility between work life and family life for those people”. Thus, pursuing compatibility between work life and family life, such as child rearing and providing long-term nursing care for family members, first became the objective of a law in 1995 and was aimed at both men and women. This took place at the same time as the ratification of ILO Convention No.156. At this point, in addition to child care leave, which had been made a right for both men and women in 1992, new provisions were added that prescribed not only the obligation to make efforts to provide family care leave (which became a right for both male and female workers in 1999), but also expanded the focus of the obligation prescribed in the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, to make efforts to implement special measures for re-employment and support the re-employment of those who had resigned in order to bring up children, etc., in order to encompass both men and women; accordingly, the name of the act was changed to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act. Consequently, one can see that such support for re-employment and special measures for re-employment were clearly stipulated as measures aimed at “achieving compatibility between work life and family life”.

Moreover, at this point, the term “*ryouritsu* (achieving compatibility)” came to be used instead of “*chouwa* (harmonizing)”. With regard to the difference between “*chouwa*” and “*ryouritsu*”, it was deemed that, while they both had “basically the same meaning”, “*chouwa*” has a meaning that emphasizes overall balance, whereas the meaning of “*ryouritsu*” emphasizes that the aspects have equal status.¹² In

10 The official name is the “Act on Childcare Leave, etc.” For more detail concerning the background leading up to this legislation, see Takahashi, Sakutaro (author & editor) “A Detailed Explanation of the Act on Childcare Leave, etc.” (1991) Institute of Labour Administration, and the aforementioned work by Iki, Noriko.

11 The title of the law after its revision at that point was the “Law Concerning the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care Leave, etc.” For further details concerning the background leading up to the enactment of the amended law that in 1999 ultimately granted both men and women the right to family care leave, as well as its content and significance, see Matsubara, Nobuko “A Detailed Explanation of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act” (1996) Institute of Labour Administration, and the aforementioned work by Iki, Noriko.

other words, while the former has a nuance that also takes into consideration the choice to emphasize one over another for the sake of overall balance, the latter has a nuance that attaches importance to both at the same time. Through the shift away from “*chouwa*”, which has a nuance based on the premise of the division of labor in relation to housework and childcare carried out by women and ways of working that prioritize the family, toward “*ryouritsu*”, which has a nuance that attaches importance to work as well, it is possible to see how the intent of policy has moved toward the equality between men and women workers with family responsibilities indicated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention.

However, even though such matters were stipulated in the aforementioned legislation, in reality, there was no change in the fact that policies such as child care leave were still mainly used by women, while exceedingly few men used them. Moreover, nobody harbored any major doubts about this state of affairs. The reason why both men and women were targeted in legislation was to ensure that it did not encourage an attitude of the fixed division of roles and give rise to discriminatory effects by targeting the legislation solely at women, as well as to ensure that the needs of single-parent male workers or other fathers were ignored. Moreover, at that point, the “family life” that should achieve compatibility with “work life” still focused on such areas as child rearing and long-term nursing care for family members.

D. “*Katei seikatsu ni okeru katsudou to hoka no katsudou no ryouritsu (Achieving Compatibility Between Activities in Family Life and Other Activities)*” in the 1999 Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society

In the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society, which was enacted and entered into force in 1999 as the basic law for promoting gender equality in a wide range of

fields, not restricted to labor, Article 6 prescribes “*katei seikatsu ni okeru katsudou to hoka no katsudou ni okeru ryouritsu* (achieving compatibility between activities in family life and other activities)”. This Article places child rearing, long-term nursing care for family members and other activities in family life at its heart, while work life is one of the “other activities”, in relation to which compatibility with family life should be achieved.

In addition, in the revised Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which entered into force in April 1999, at more or less the same time as the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society, the wording “*shokugyou seikatsu to katei seikatsu no chouwa* (harmonization of work life and family life)” in relation solely to women was deleted. This is strongly related to the fact that this law abolished special measures focused solely on women, apart from matters relating to maternity protection and so-called “positive action”, while simultaneously prohibiting sexual discrimination at all stages, with the necessary aspects being transferred to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act as provisions common to both men and women. This revision of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act is also consistent with the direction of the aforementioned Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society.

E. “*Famirii furendorii (Family-friendly)*” in the 1999 Family-friendly Companies Awards System

Unlike the terms that have been discussed hitherto, “family-friendly” is not a concept included in legislation in Japan. This concept began to be advocated at the end of the 1970s by international organizations in relation to equal employment opportunities for men and women, and it is said that its introduction in US companies also began at that time. It then began to become prevalent in Western companies in the 1980s, and became widely accepted as a management philosophy from the 1990s onwards.¹³

12 Matsubara, Nobuko “A Detailed Explanation of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act” (1996) Institute of Labour Administration

13 “Family-Friendly Company” (tentative name) Research Group “Aiming for 'Family-Friendly' Companies” (1999) Japan Association for The Advancement of Working Women

It was in 1999 that this concept was explicitly incorporated into policy in Japan. At that time, a report by the “Family-Friendly Company” (tentative name) Research Group,¹⁴ which summarized the results of a study that it had been commissioned to conduct by the Ministry of Labour (as it was called at the time), advocated that companies aim to become “family-friendly companies”, based on which, the “Family-friendly Companies Awards system” was established. Moreover, the Research Group presented the following definition of “family-friendly companies”.

1. Having many systems to support achieving compatibility between work and family, such as child care leave and family care leave systems, which are actually frequently used, including by men and those in managerial posts.
2. Having systems that permit flexible ways of working, which take into consideration the balance between work and family, such as flexi-time and home-working systems, which are actually frequently used.
3. Having a corporate culture that makes it easy to achieve compatibility between work and family, such as an atmosphere in which it is easy to use such systems and understanding on the part of both senior management executives and those in other managerial posts.

Thus, in addition to legislation imposing obligations to develop systems, the evolution of companies into “family-friendly companies”, based on the framework of “diverse systems”, “flexible ways of working” and “transforming corporate culture”, was sought in this form as well.

As can be seen from the history of deliberations in this area, the term “family-friendly” was a concept that also encompassed its value as a management strategy, as a means of guiding companies with reference to advanced examples among companies in the UK and the US.

The object of concern was still “family life”, rather than life in general, but as well as targeting both men and women, of course, the scope of the policies promoted “flexible ways of working”, including greater flexibility in employment locations through home-working systems, forms of employment that permitted changes over a long span of time, and the diversification of employment tracks, none of which were included in the menu of recommendations in the existing Child Care and Family Care Leave Act. Moreover, this promoted a rethink regarding the corporate culture of long hours at work and difficulty in taking sufficient annual paid leave, as well as in relation to attitudes to the fixed division of roles.

F. “Koyou kankyou no seibi (Development of the Employment Environment)” to Achieve a “Jujitsu shita shokugyou seikatsu (Fulfilling Work Life)” and “Yutaka na katei seikatsu (Rich Family Life)” in the 2003 Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children and the Basic Act for Measures to Cope with a Declining Birthrate

The Basic Act for Measures to Cope with Society with Declining Birthrate and the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children, which were enacted successively in July 2003, are both laws relating to measures to apply the brakes to the decline in the birthrate.

Although the laws differ in that the former is legislation that was introduced by Diet members, while the latter is a law that was enacted after being submitted by the Cabinet, both laws have the same policy direction in terms of dealing with the declining birthrate. Moreover, in order to strongly encourage specific efforts by employers to promote the development of the employment environment through the formulation and submission of “General Employer Action Plans”, the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children imposes on companies with at least 301 staff (subsequently amended to at least 101 staff from

14 “Family-Friendly Company” (tentative name) Research Group “Aiming for ‘Family-Friendly’ Companies” (1999) Japan Association for The Advancement of Working Women

FY2011) the obligation to submit such Action Plans. According to the Action Plan form prescribed in an Ordinance of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the guidelines for formulating the action plans, not only “the development of the employment environment in order to support achieving compatibility between work life and family life for workers bringing up children, etc.”, but also “putting in place diverse conditions of employment that contribute to rethinking ways of working” is cited as something “thought to be important as a measure to support raising next-generation children” in the development of the employment environment incorporated into these General Employer Action Plans. The term “putting in place diverse conditions of employment that contribute to rethinking ways of working” includes measures aimed at reducing overtime work, promoting the taking of annual paid leave, implementing work-sharing focused on diverse employment, introducing teleworking, and rectifying attitudes that prioritize the workplace and focus on the fixed division of roles by gender.

Thus, the 2003 Basic Act for Measures to Cope with a Declining Birthrate and Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children set forth the terms “*juujitsu shita shokugyou seikatsu* (fulfilling work life)” and “*yutaka na katei seikatsu* (rich family life)”, as well as “*koyou kankyou no seibi* (the development of the employment environment)” in order to achieve these goals; this was the first time that the general “working hours problem” had been taken up in legislative policy in combination with the issue of the declining birthrate, and that “rethinking ways of working” had been sought. One can say that these led to the concept of the Improved Working Time Arrangements Act, referred to below, which was enacted in 2005.

Incidentally, in both the Basic Act for Measures to Cope with a Declining Birthrate and the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children, “rethinking ways of working” was a measure intended as a policy for “changing the trend toward a declining birthrate”. More specifically, there was an awareness of the problem that long working hours on the part of men who are spouses of child-bearing women cause the burden of childcare to

fall solely upon women, leading to a declining birthrate, so the issue of long working hours arose in conjunction with the necessity of promoting the participation of men in bringing up children.

Thus, in 2003, the widespread shortening of general working hours came to be set forth clearly in legislative policy under the term “achieving compatibility between work life and family life”, as a revision of ways of working not restricted to workers raising children or providing long-term nursing care.

G. “*Roudousha no kenkou de juujitsu shita seikatsu no jitsugen* (Achieving a Healthy, Fulfilling Life for Workers)” in the 2005 Law for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements

The Law for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements was a revised version of the Law Concerning Temporary Measures for the Promotion of Shorter Working Hours enacted in 1992. The Law Concerning Temporary Measures for the Promotion of Shorter Working Hours was a temporary statute drawn up at a time when Japan’s long working hours were the cause of international economic friction, which aimed to achieve total actual working hours of 1,800 hours a year. When Japan was getting close to achieving this figure of 1,800 hours annually (average total actual working hours were reduced from 2,111 hours in 1987 to 1,846 hours in 2003) and the significance of the existence of this law began to be questioned, it came under review, including the awareness of the issue of rethinking ways of working as a measure to deal with the declining birthrate, and it was turned into a permanent law entitled the Law for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements.

The Law for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements incorporated the outcomes of discussions by the “Investigative Commission on Work-Life Balance” (Chairman: Yasuo Suwa), which had taken place ahead of this. The Investigative Commission discussed “work-life balance”, without limiting it to family life. Here, the awareness is demonstrated that, “...the situation in which work-life balance is achieved is a situation in which it is possible for workers to allocate a satisfactory amount of time for various activities in certain restricted time

slots”, and that in order for “workers to be able to carry out satisfactory ‘time allocation’, it is necessary to endeavor to diversify the options for working hours, while shortening working hours, so that individual workers can choose various ways of allocating their working hours and living hours.” Moreover, it also pointed out that, “in our lives, a work-life balance is also important from the long-term perspective of enabling people to feel a sense of satisfaction when they look back over their lives, in which they have shifted their focus according to the situation, prioritizing work at some times, their families at others, and themselves at still other times”.¹⁵

In this law, not only those bringing up children or providing long-term nursing care, but also employees working away from their families and those engaging independently in education and training were positioned as “workers requiring particular consideration”, and the concept of reducing working hours to reflect diverse needs over the course of a worker’s occupational lifetime was born from this.

H. “*Waaku raifu baransu* (Work-Life Balance)” in the 2007 Work-Life Balance Charter

The Work-Life Balance Charter, which appeared at the end of 2007, prescribed the balancing of work with life, including matters outside the family. Let us look again at the background leading up to this.

In April 2007, the first report by the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy’s Expert Committee on Labor Market Reform (Chairman: Naohiro Yashiro), which was discussing labor market reform amid population decline at the behest of the Cabinet of then-Prime Minister Abe, stated that, “In order to achieve a good work-life balance, it is necessary to resolutely undertake concrete initiatives, as well as sparking a major popular movement and boldly changing ways of thinking through efforts by the government, workers and management, taking into consideration the experiences of countries such as the UK, which have faced the same kind of situation in the past. Accordingly, the government should

formulate the <Work-Life Balance Charter: Changing Ways of Working, Changing Japan> and promote fully-fledged initiatives aimed at achieving a good work-life balance.”

In addition, an Expert Committee member from the private sector submitted a position paper stating that, “The public and private sectors should join forces to formulate an ‘Action Policy for Changing Ways of Working’, aimed at achieving compatibility between work and life, with the ‘Work-Life Balance Charter’ as the basic approach.” In light of this, the policy on the formulation of the Charter and the Action Policy was clearly set forth in “Economic and Fiscal Reform 2007 (Basic Policies)”, which was decided upon by the Cabinet in June 2007.

The following July saw the establishment of the Council of Executives of Public and Private Sectors to Promote Work-Life Balance (the Japanese name of which was subsequently changed to replace the loanword “*waaku raifu baransu*” with the equivalent Japanese term “*shigoto to seikatsu no chouwa*”. Hereinafter referred to as the “Council of Public and Private Sector Executives”), which was chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary and consisted of members including relevant members of the Cabinet, and representatives of the worlds of the economy and labor, as well as local authority representatives. In August the same year, the working group for formulating the “Action Guidelines for Changing the Way of Working, Changing Japan” (tentative name) was established under the Council of Public and Private Sector Executives and commenced its discussions and deliberations. On December 18, 2007, the Council of Public and Private Sector Executives decided upon the “Work-Life Balance Charter” (the official Japanese title of which incorporated both the loan word and equivalent Japanese word for “work-life balance”) and the Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance (hereinafter referred to as the “Action Policy”), and after it was signed by all members, who included representatives of government, workers and management, it was delivered personally to Prime

15 June 2004 Report of the “Investigative Commission on Work-Life Balance”

Minister Fukuda.

The definition in the Work-Life Balance Charter of a society that has achieved a good work-life balance is, as stated above, “a society where each citizen works with a sense of satisfaction, finding his/her job rewarding, executes work-related responsibilities, and at the same time, chooses and lives a variety of lifestyles according to different stages of life, such as the childrearing and midlife periods, within his/her family and community life”. As well as policy goals relating to child rearing and long-term nursing care, the specific policy goals set forth in the Action Policy include a wide range of policies, such as a reduction in the number of “freeters” (part-time job-hoppers), and halving the proportion of workers who work at least 60 hours a week.

This breadth of scope is likely to be strongly related to the fact that, as well as considering problems surrounding “ways of working” from the viewpoint of workers, the Work-Life Balance Charter emerged from discussions by the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy’s Expert Committee on Labor Market Reform, which had the goal of examining approaches to labor market policy in order to improve the use of personnel and increase economic productivity. In this sense, one can say that the Work-Life Balance Charter constitutes a reform of the labor market.

Of course, it does not follow that the Work-Life Balance Charter and Action Policy lose their nature as measures to deal with the declining birthrate simply because of this. In particular, one of the causes of the emphasis on “work-life balance” was the fact that Japan was plunged into being a society in population decline when it recorded a total fertility rate of 1.26 - an all-time low - in 2005, so it was assailed by the necessity of further promoting the participation in the labor market of a more diverse range of people, in order to maintain the country’s economic society in the future. Moreover, estimates were carried out which suggested that, rather than this low birth rate reflecting the preferences of the populace, the people actually demonstrated a high motivation toward giving birth if certain conditions were put in place.

Consequently, one can comprehend that, in addition to discussion of the topic as a measure to deal with the declining birthrate, the discussions by the aforementioned Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy aimed at labor market reform became a major motive force and became intertwined with the formulation of the Work-Life Balance Charter.

If the developments at this time are reframed from the perspective of a change in the policy viewpoint, one can say that, after policies had progressed based on what could be described as the “child-centered” and “childcare-centered” viewpoints of the Basic Act for Measures to Cope with a Declining Birthrate and the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children, rethinking ways of working from the viewpoint of workers came to be advocated in the process leading up to the formulation of the Work-Life Balance Charter, in conjunction with which, the “utilization” of working women came to be acknowledged. Thus, it can be said that the fact that the Work-Life Balance Charter was formulated from the viewpoint of the worker has great significance in terms of labor policy.

In addition, after the change in government to the Democratic Party of Japan, the Council of Public and Private Sector Executives was restructured with the Prime Minister as the Chairman, and the Work-Life Balance Charter was revised in 2010 after some amendments had been made.

I. Summary

The following is a summary of the changes in policies and concepts that have been examined in sections A-H above.

- (i) From the 1970s to the 1980s, the concept of the “harmonization of work life and family life” focused solely on working women was clearly stipulated in legislative policy, from the viewpoint of the “welfare” and “utilization” of working women, with the viewpoint of “justice” in terms of “putting in place the conditions for achieving effective equality between men and women” also being added; accordingly, the popularization of child care leave for working women was promoted, while support was provided for their re-employment and skills

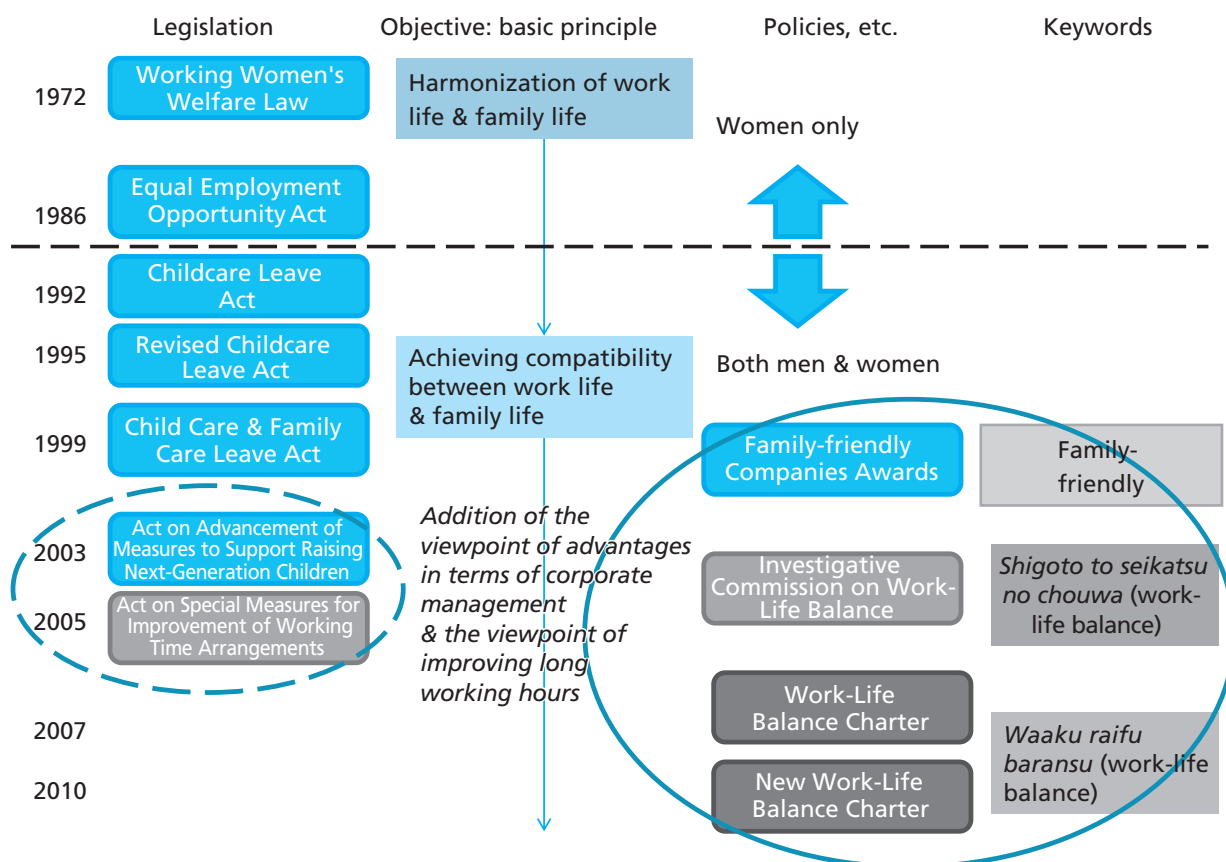
development also took place.

- (ii) In the 1990s, the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (ILO Convention No.156) triggered stronger concerns about the problem of seeking the “harmonization of work life and family life” in relation solely to working women, so the concept of “achieving compatibility between work life and family life” for both men and women, based on the premise of the equality of male and female workers with family responsibilities, was clearly stipulated in the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act. As well as granting both men and women the right to child care leave and family care leave, policies relating to such matters as support for the re-employment of those who had resigned for reasons such as bringing up their children

were put in place in relation to both men and women, but the majority of those who actually used these were women, and there was hardly any momentum encouraging men to make use of these rights.

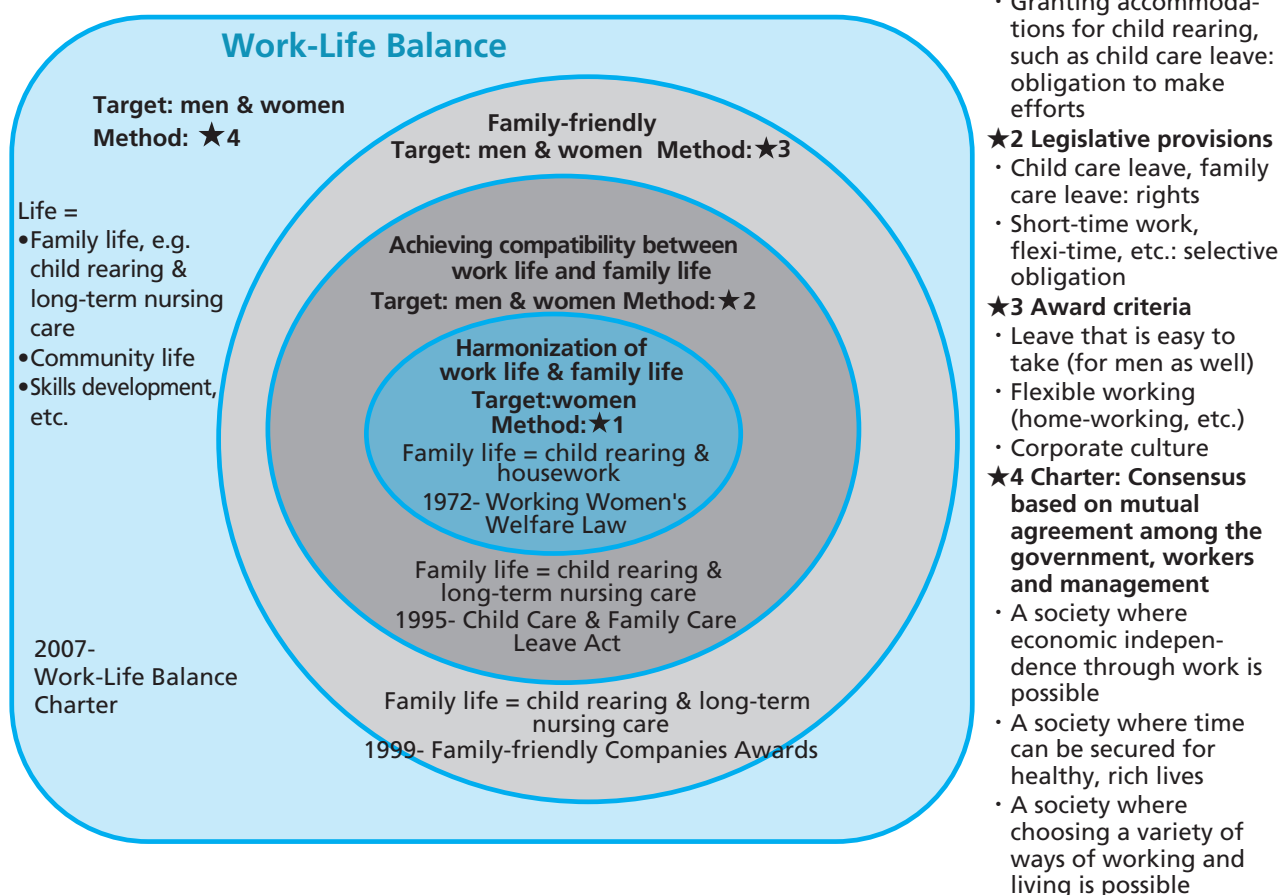
- (iii) At the end of the 1990s, due to the situation in the West, the “family-friendly” concept, which added the viewpoint of corporate management strategy, entered Japan and influenced policy to some degree, including its use in criteria for the system of awards for such companies. Although the focus of concern is still “family life”, in the form of childcare and long-term nursing care responsibilities, issues such as the length of the working hours of workers in general, not only those bringing up children or providing nursing care for family members, came to be questioned among the conditions for being deemed family-friendly, so attention was also directed at the

II-1 Changes in Legislation and Policy Ideals



Source: Compiled by the author

II-2 The Relationship Between and Expansion of Each Policy Concept



Source: Compiled by the author

participation of men in housework and child rearing.

- (iv) At the start of the 2000s, there began to be strong calls for “achieving compatibility between work life and family life” - in the sense of breaking down the barriers inhibiting childbirth and child rearing - due to the acceleration of the declining birthrate, and moves accelerated in relation to “rethinking ways of working”, again taking up such issues as long working hours, which had also been deemed to be a problem in the “family-friendly” concept. This approach was reflected in such legislation as the 2003 Basic Act for Measures to Cope with a Declining Birthrate and Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising

Next-Generation Children, and the 2005 Act on Special Measures for Improvement of Working Time Arrangements.

- (v) Triggered by Japan’s 2005 plunge into the status of a society experiencing population decline, a strong awareness developed of the need to increase the employment rate of women in particular, in order to maintain a sustainable society amid population decline, so not only an increase in the birth rate and measures to support child rearing, but also reforms of ways of working came to be pursued, with the objective of reforming labor markets. Accordingly, the 2007 Charter emphasized a work-life balance that encouraged very wide-ranging participation.

The changes in policy ideals over this period and the expansion of the concepts of the respective policies can be illustrated as shown in II-1 and II-2 below.

3. The Attitudes of Companies

As seen in section 2 above, there has been a long history and various developments have occurred in regard to labor policy on women, leading to the formation of the current concept of work-life balance (hereinafter abbreviated to WLB) in Japan and of government policies containing the term “WLB”. In addition, major changes have occurred over the years in the attitudes of companies and employers’ associations to such policies.

A. The Attitudes of Employers’ Associations

Firstly, in the era when the goal of labor policy on women was the “harmonization of work life and family life”, employers’ associations adopted a stance of distancing themselves from such policies to a considerable degree. More specifically, when some Liberal Democratic Party Diet members recommended the development of a system of child care leave in 1981, employers’ associations were opposed to the uniform introduction of a child care leave system that would impose a burden on companies, and they asserted that the matter should be left up to the autonomy of labor and management. Behind this was the attitude that childcare was an important role in the personal lives of working women and that even if a response was required from a social perspective, the status of the cultivation of skills in the utilization of women in companies varied greatly; there was also the issue of the vocational awareness of women themselves, so it was only natural that responses should differ between

individual companies.¹⁶

Subsequently, during the process of both enacting the Childcare Leave Act (enacted in 1991), which granted both men and women the right to child care leave, and enshrining in law family care leave in 1995, employers’ associations issued statements objecting to these systems.¹⁷ Ultimately, the laws were enacted after the Cabinet submitted the bills, following discussion by the relevant consultative councils, so they cannot be said to have overwhelmingly opposed it, but at any rate, they demonstrated strong opposition at the beginning of discussions.

However, from the latter half of the 1990s, when the decline in the birthrate began to accelerate, employers’ association began to actively recommend measures to counter the declining birthrate. More specifically, the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry published “Proposals Concerning ‘Measures to Counter the Declining Birthrate’: To Achieve a Dynamic Society in the 21st Century” on April 10, 1997; the Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations published “Proposals Regarding the Problem of the Declining Birthrate” on January 19, 1998; and the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations published “In Search of Concrete Initiatives to Tackle the Problem of the Declining Birthrate: Promoting Systemic Reforms Through Collaborative Efforts by the Government, Companies, Communities and Households” on March 19, 1999. While placing the emphasis on government policy, such as the enhancement of childcare services, these also incorporated recommendations concerning the role that companies should play, including the necessity of giving consideration in various employment management systems to the improvement of child care leave systems, more flexible working systems, and the diversification of forms of employment.¹⁸

One can also say that this change in attitude was

16 Takahashi, Sakutaro (author & editor) “A Detailed Explanation of the Act on Childcare Leave, etc.” (1991) Institute of Labour Administration

17 The work previously cited and Matsubara, Nobuko “A Detailed Explanation of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act” (1996) Institute of Labour Administration

18 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Equal Employment, Children and Families Bureau (2002) “New Revised Edition: A Detailed Explanation of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act” Roumugyousei

brought about by the fact that these organizations had become strongly conscious of the impact of the declining birthrate on companies as a real-life problem. It would seem that this was also related to the international acceleration of efforts to pursue CSR. Moreover, among these recommendations can also be seen references to the participation of fathers in childcare, gender equality, and rethinking the fixed division of roles, so one can perceive that these organizations are consciously adopting a reforming attitude in relation to Japanese-style employment practices, which position men as the core workforce in companies and demand that they make an ongoing contribution to their companies, including long working hours. However, at this point, what has been recommended is “achieving compatibility between work and childbirth/childcare” (Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry), “achieving compatibility between work and life based on the premise of men’s participation in housework and child rearing” (Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations), and “achieving compatibility between work and child rearing” (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations), but the recommendations have not been extended to achieving compatibility between work and life in general.

In addition, these changes in the attitudes of employers’ associations are potentially related to the fact that awareness of the advantages to companies of WLB has progressed in the US and the UK,¹⁹ but this is not clear.

Furthermore, in November 1999, in response to a request from Chief Cabinet Secretary Mikio Aoki, the Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations (Nikkeiren, as it was known at the time) and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) put together a joint appeal (“Aiming for a Society in Which it is Easy to Bear and Raise Children”) concerning the problem of the declining birthrate. The content demonstrates the awareness that further efforts to “achieve compatibility between an efficient

work life and a rich personal and family life with latitude that is tailored to the life-cycle” are required, and refers to enhancing and upgrading measures from the perspective of “sharing family responsibilities with men as well”, based on “efforts aimed at personnel utilization and treatment that respects the individual, without regard to gender”. As well as the augmenting of maternity and child care leave that is easy for both men and women to take, and the introduction of flexible forms of work, such as staggered working hours, flexi-time, short-time work and home-working, the measures specified also include reducing working hours, by such means as curbing overtime.²⁰

The 2007 Work-Life Balance Charter was formulated after these developments, so it would perhaps be reasonable to surmise that around the turn of the century, the awareness spread at the level of employers’ associations that “life” is not necessarily restricted to childcare and long-term nursing care.

B. Attitudes of Individual Companies

As described hitherto, the meaning of the term “WLB” itself is broad, as far as one can see from the sense in which it is used by the government at present; the focus is not restricted to women, while the scope of the life that should be balanced with work is not limited to family responsibilities, such as child rearing and long-term nursing care, nor is it confined to life in the household, including housework. It is very hard at present to find data that present the meaning of the term “WLB” in such precise terms and indicate the attitudes of individual companies to WLB.

Accordingly, let us first look at the status of the introduction of various systems to support compatibility. Looking at the situation by the scale of the business establishment, the proportion of companies that have established provisions concerning child care leave systems has reached

19 Takeishi, Emiko (2005) “The Work-Life Balance Viewpoint in the Problem of the Declining Birthrate” Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training “The Current Status of the Declining Birthrate and Policy Challenges: Toward the Expansion and Popularization of the Work-Life Balance” (2005)

20 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Equal Employment, Children and Families Bureau “New Revised Edition: A Detailed Explanation of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act” (2002) Roumugyousei

100% among businesses with at least 500 people (according to the 2010 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management), while these systems are prevalent in most businesses with between 100 and 499 people, at 97.6%, but gaps start to emerge among smaller businesses, with such systems in place at 88.1% of businesses with between 30 and 99 people, and at 63.3% of businesses with between 5 and 29 people, which means that over a third of business establishments in this latter category still have no regulations in this regard (the total for businesses with at least 5 people is 58.3%, while the figure for those with at least 30 people is 90.0%). In the case of short-time work systems, an obligation that the revised Childcare and Family Care Leave Act imposed on companies when it entered into force in 2010, 58.5% of business establishments with at least 5 people had such systems, while 55.6% offered exemptions from overtime work (according to the 2011 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management), so only just over half of business establishments had such systems, although the revised law had entered into force not long before. Nevertheless, whereas the proportion of businesses introducing such systems has been rising sharply in recent years, partly due to the effect of making these two systems obligatory, there has been only sluggish growth in the introduction of flexi-time (which can be used for childcare purposes), which has been introduced at only 15.1% of business establishments (according to the 2011 Basic Survey of Gender Equality in Employment Management); although flexi-time became part of the focus of the obligation to introduce selective measures after the 1992 enactment of the Childcare Leave Act, there were no provisions imposing an obligation to introduce this system alone.

Next, moving away from individual systems, let us look at a survey conducted in 2006, before the formulation of the Work-Life Balance Charter, using

a concept similar to that of WLB, in order to ascertain the attitudes of companies to work-life balance and achieving compatibility between work and childcare/long-term nursing care.

For example, in a survey conducted by the JILPT,²¹ the concept of “achieving compatibility between work and family” was used, rather than WLB, but even at large corporations with at least 300 staff, the most common reason given for working on “measures to support achieving compatibility between work and family” was “because it is required in law” (85.5%), followed by “to fulfill our corporate social responsibility” (72.8%). Thus, the top two answers express a sense of obligation on the part of companies, while the next more common answers - “to increase the retention rate of female employees” (63.3%) and “to increase the morale of female employees” (59.6%) - demonstrate that there is a continuing awareness of these measures as a means of promoting the use of female employees. Consequently, as far as can be seen from this survey, a strong momentum has yet to emerge to position the harmonization of work and (family) life from a management strategy viewpoint and drive acceptance of WLB (or, in this survey, “support for achieving compatibility between work and family”) as a win-win relationship for both companies and workers.

On the other hand, according to a survey conducted in June 2007, immediately before the Work-Life Balance Charter was formulated, targeting the personnel managers of companies with at least 300 staff (restricted to listed companies),²² when the subjects were asked about the meaning of promoting work-life balance (clearly stipulating the term in its loan-word form) at their companies, the statements that more than 50% described as “applicable” were those describing WLB as “part of measures to support child rearing” and “an initiative that leads to staff retention”. The statements that more than 80% of respondents described as either “applicable” or

21 Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2007) “Survey Concerning Support for Achieving Compatibility Between Work and Family”. The survey was conducted in June 2006, with 863 companies providing valid responses.

22 Labour Research Center, Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development (2008) “Comprehensive Investigative Research Report on Approaches to the Promotion of Work-Life Balance, etc.” Valid responses were obtained from 136 companies.

“somewhat applicable” were those describing WLB as “an initiative that leads to staff retention” (91.2%), “an initiative that leads to personnel being secured” (89.7%), “part of measures to support child rearing” (88.2%), “an initiative aimed at improving the motivation of employees” (83.1%), “corporate social responsibility” (82.3%), and “an initiative aimed at preventing mental health issues” (80.1%). There are various differences in elements that affect the results, such as differences in wording in the surveys, differences according to whether or not they are restricted to listed companies, and differences in the number of valid responses, but these surveys provide a glimpse of attitudes that demonstrate that companies now perceive WLB in a more positive light.

However, these are all attitudes among comparatively large companies, so the question remains of attitudes to this issue among small and medium-sized enterprises,²³ at which it is said 60-80% of all workers in Japan²⁴ work. According to a survey conducted by the JILPT,²⁵ in relation to the initiatives undertaken as measures to support WLB at companies with at least 10 employees but fewer than 1,000, companies that evaluated themselves as “proactive” accounted for no more than 3.1% of all survey subjects, while the passive/indifferent group, consisting of companies that evaluated themselves as “somewhat passive”, “passive” or “no response” accounted for as much as 79.9% of all respondents. Narrowing the focus to small companies with fewer than 30 staff, the shares of responses are 1.1% and 90.4% respectively, so one can see that the proportion of passive companies increases overwhelmingly. Furthermore, when the respondents were asked about

the reasons for being passive, the largest share was accounted for by companies replying that “we have established systems within the scope of the law, but it is difficult to do more than that”, at 45.0%, so one can see that there is little elbow room for tackling WLB in a forward-looking, proactive manner as a corporate strategy.

These disparities in responses due to the scale of the company naturally have an impact on the degree of implementation of WLB in regard to the people working there, so it would be no exaggeration to say that the success or failure of WLB as part of Japan’s labor policy depends on how WLB is implemented at small and medium-sized enterprises.

4. Awareness among Workers

Turning our attention to workers now, let us look at what workers think about the work-life balance, including changes in their attitudes.

A. Workers’ Attitudes to Work and Families

Firstly, let us look at the awareness of female employment, which is strongly associated with WLB, based on an opinion poll conducted among the general public.²⁶

Looking at II-3, in regard to “attitudes concerning women having an occupation”, those responding that “women should continue their occupation without interruption even after having children” (the continuing employment model) had overtaken those responding “women should quit their job after having children and then resume their occupation once they grow older” (the re-employment model) as of the time of the survey in July 2002, and a large gap had

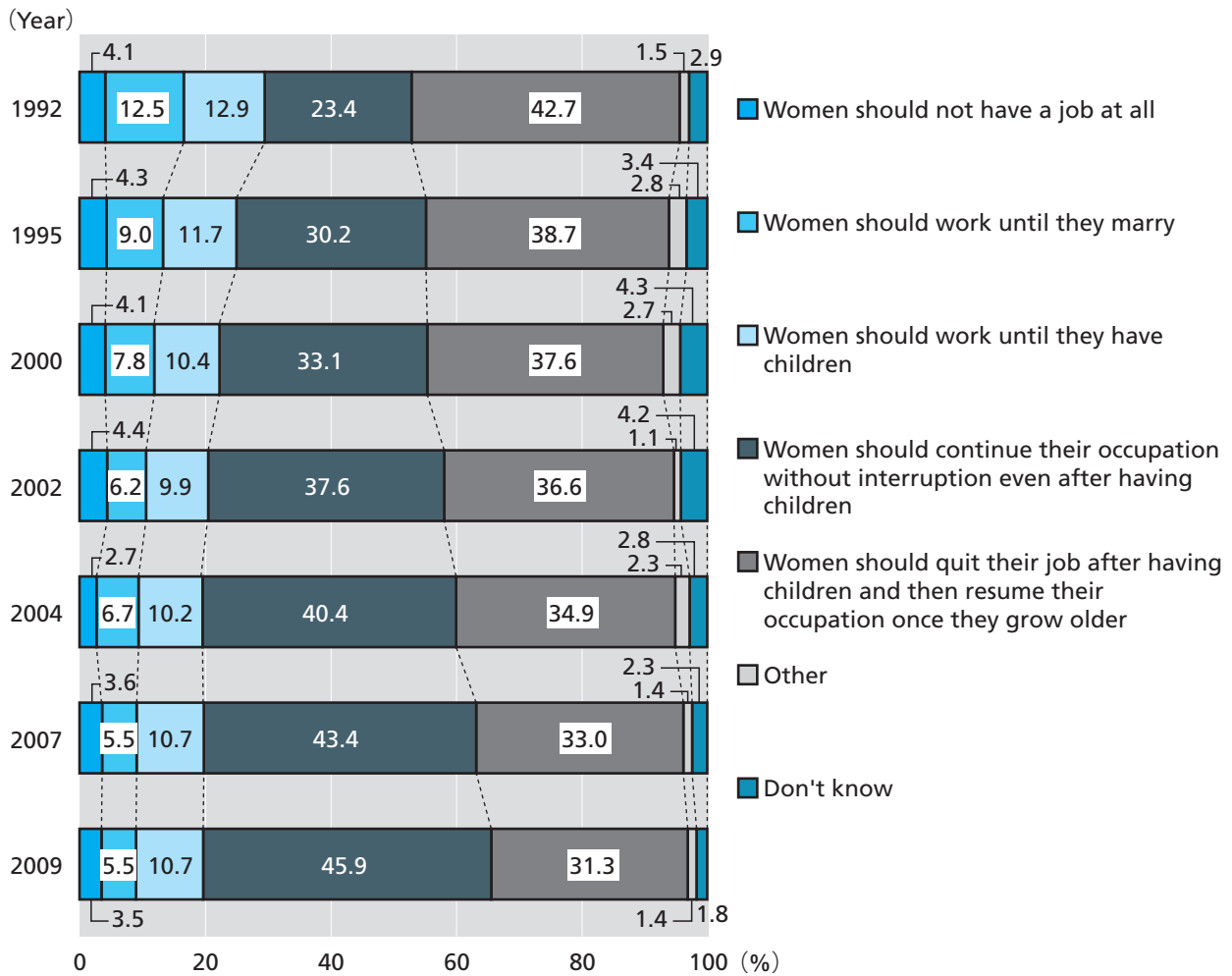
23 According to the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Basic Act, the definition of small and medium-sized enterprises is based on their stated capital and number of employees, but the scale of companies defined as small and medium-sized enterprises differs according to the industry type, so in manufacturing industry, etc. it is fewer than 300 people, in wholesale and the service industry it is fewer than 100 people, and in retail industry it is fewer than 50 people.

24 The proportion of employees of small and medium-sized enterprises among all employees is 62.9%, based on the number in regular employment recorded in the 2009 Economic Census (Basic Census)

25 Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2009) “Results of a Survey Concerning Employment Management and Support for Compatibility at Small and Medium-sized Enterprises” The survey subjects were companies with at least 10 employees but fewer than 1,000. Number of companies that responded: 2,103

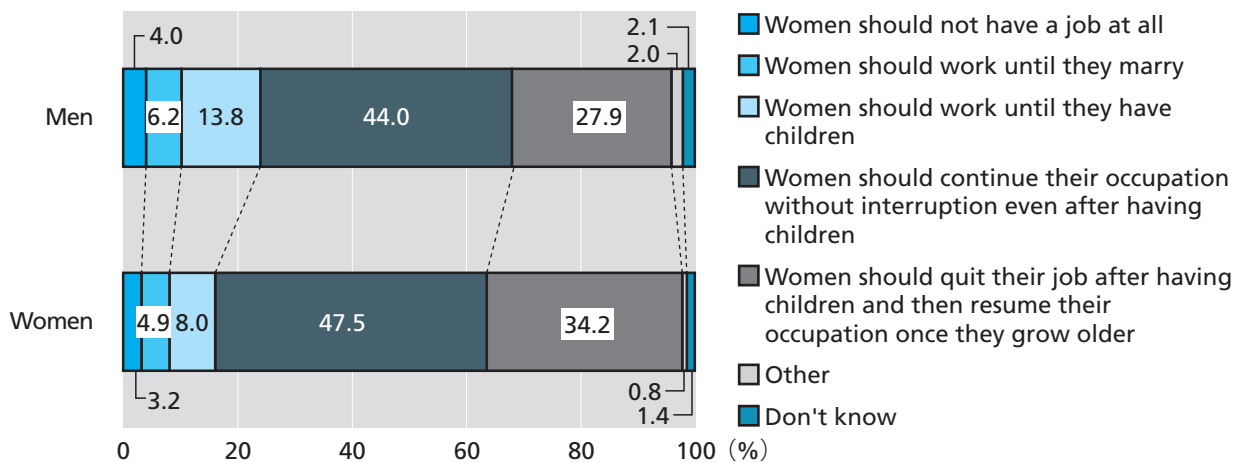
26 Cabinet Office, Public Relations Office of the Minister’s Secretariat (2009) “Opinion Poll on a Gender-equal Society”

II-3 Concerning Women Having an Occupation (Transition in Survey Results)



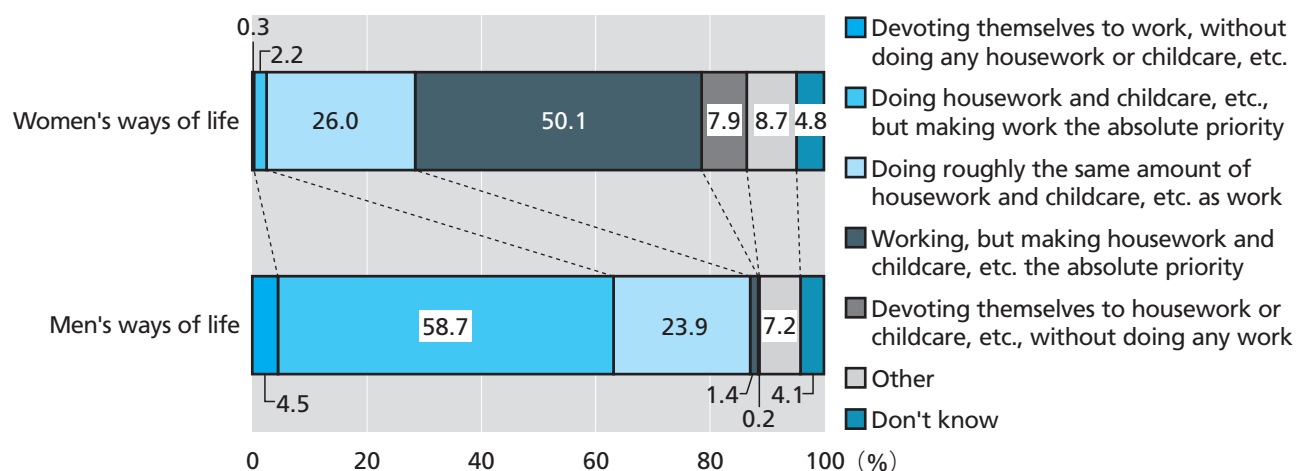
Source: Cabinet Office, Public Relations Office of the Minister's Secretariat (2009) "Opinion Poll on a Gender-equal Society"

II-4 Concerning Women Having an Occupation (by Gender of Respondent)



Source: Cabinet Office, Public Relations Office of the Minister's Secretariat (2009) "Opinion Poll on a Gender-equal Society"

II-5 Desirable Ways of Life for Men and Women in Relation to Housework and Childcare, etc. and Work



Source: Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008) "JILPT Survey Series No.41 Survey Concerning Working Life (2007)" (survey conducted in September-October 2007)

emerged as of the time of the most recent survey, conducted in October 2009, with 45.9% in favor of the continuing employment model and 31.3% in favor of the re-employment model. In particular, it should be acknowledged that even if the focus is restricted to male respondents, those in favor of the continuing employment model (44.0%) account for a much greater share than those in favor of the re-employment model (27.9%), as can be seen from II-4. Even men have come to have a positive opinion concerning women continuing to work when they have children.

At the same time, although support is highest for the continuing employment model, it does not account for a majority among all age groups, and it is necessary to bear in mind that there are considerable variations in opinion in Japan concerning women working, with those endorsing the views that women should work "until they have children" or "until they marry", or that "women should not have a job at all" accounting for a total of around 20% of all responses.

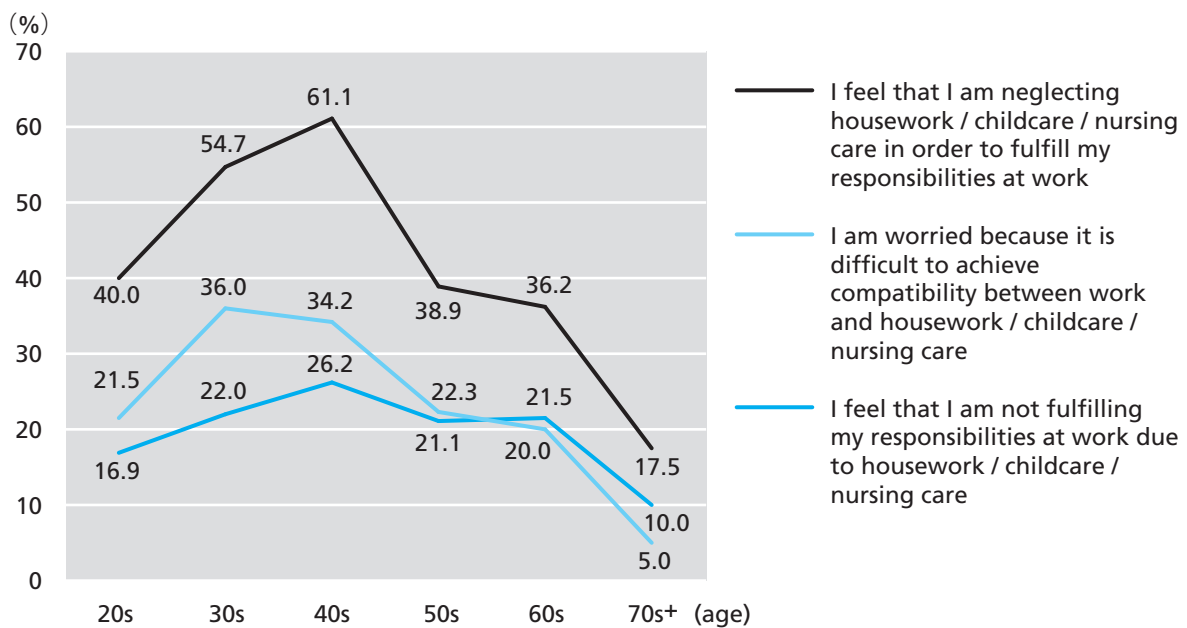
In order to investigate these attitudes a little more closely, let us look at a survey conducted by the

JILPT.²⁷

This survey asked men and women aged 20 and above about the desirable ways of life for men and women in relation to housework and childcare, etc. and work. With regard to men's ways of life, 4.6% responded that "devoting themselves to work, without doing any housework or childcare, etc." was desirable, while 59.3% advocated the desirability of "doing housework and childcare, etc., but making work the absolute priority", and only 22.0% supported a way of life focused on "doing roughly the same amount of housework and childcare, etc. as work"; in contrast, in relation to women's ways of life, 50.8% supported a way of life focused on "working, but making housework and childcare, etc. the absolute priority", while 23.9% supported "doing roughly the same amount of housework and childcare, etc. as work" and 9.1% advocated "devoting themselves to housework or childcare, etc., without doing any work". It should be noted that while the proportions themselves differ slightly, there is no change in the order of priorities even among the younger age brackets, or when looked at by gender of

27 Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2011) "JILPT Survey Series No.89-1 FY2009 General Survey of the Actual Status of the Employment of Japanese People - Part 1 Main Paper" (survey conducted in February-March 2010)

II-6 Balancing Housework, Childcare and Nursing Care with Work (Men)



Source: Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008) "JILPT Survey Series No.41 Survey Concerning Working Life (2007)" (survey conducted in September-October 2007)

the respondent.

Thus, although understanding of women continuing employment is spreading at the individual level, it must be recognized that there still remains an attitude of the division of roles by gender in terms of the weighting of work and family life.

B. The Reality of "Work" , "Family Life" , and "Community/Personal Life"

Moreover, in the aforementioned Cabinet Office (2009) survey, looking at the desires and reality concerning relationships between "work", "family life" and "community/personal life", the overall totals for male and female respondents show that most respondents support a balanced approach or a family-first approach, with 8.5% responding "I want to put work first", 28.7% responding "I want to put my family life first", and 31.2% responding "I want to give priority to both work and family life", but although the figures for the current situation

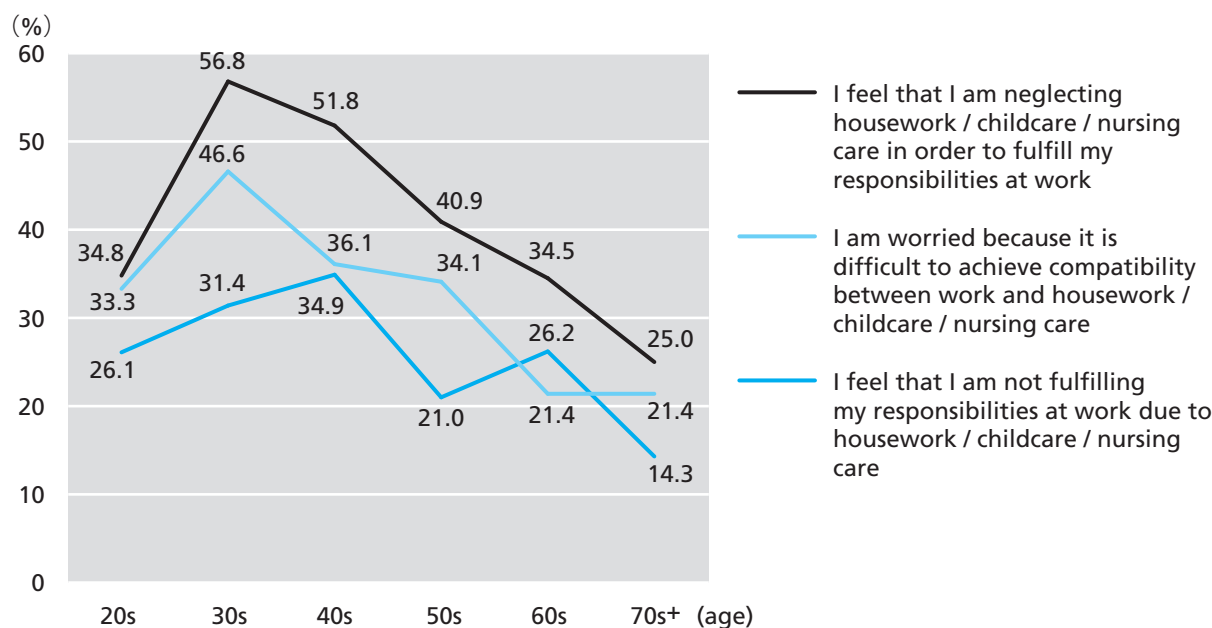
demonstrate increases in regard to the responses "I put my work first" (25.85%) and "I put my family life first" (33.0%), there is a considerable drop in those responding "I give priority to both work and family life" (21.0%), so it is clear that there are those who desire a balanced approach but are not achieving it. Looking at the situation by gender, it is particularly noteworthy that the share of women who actually put family first (44.2%) is higher than the share of those who expressed a desire to prioritize it (34.1%), while in contrast, it is noticeable that the share of men who actually put work first (37.8%) is higher than the share of those who expressed a desire to prioritize it (13.3%).

In order to investigate these attitudes a little more closely, let us look at a different survey conducted by the JILPT.²⁸

This survey clearly shows the responses by gender in relation to whether or not the respondents believe the following three statements are applicable:

28 Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008) "JILPT Survey Series No.41 Survey Concerning Working Life (2007)" (survey conducted in September-October 2007)

II-7 Balancing Housework, Childcare and Nursing Care with Work (Women)



Source: Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2008) "JILPT Survey Series No.41 Survey Concerning Working Life (2007)" (survey conducted in September-October 2007)

(i) I feel that I am neglecting housework / childcare / nursing care in order to fulfill my responsibilities at work; (ii) I feel that I am not fulfilling my responsibilities at work due to housework / childcare / nursing care; and (iii) I am worried because it is difficult to achieve compatibility between work and housework / childcare / nursing care.

To summarize, many men and women feel that work has an impact on their family lives, but there are also quite a few who feel that housework, childcare and/or nursing care have an impact on their work, and one can see that this feeling is more prevalent among women. This means that more women feel a sense of frustration that, although they have a latent will to work, they are unable to adequately demonstrate their abilities due to child rearing or long-term nursing care, etc.

5. The Enlargement and Focusing of the Concept of Work-Life Balance

A. The Enlargement of the Concept of Work-life Balance

As has been seen above, the term and concept of WLB is no longer confined to simply adjusting the time spent on work and that spent on child rearing and/or long-term nursing care, but currently also includes "rethinking ways of working" within a very wide-ranging scope. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to say that corporate personnel management reforms aimed at improving productivity based on rethinking ways of working in this way also fall within this scope. In addition, the "society that has achieved a good work-life balance" set forth in the Work-Life Balance Charter could be said to present a kind of Utopia, so to speak, in which all stakeholders reap the benefits through win-win relationships; in this situation, not only would the work-related needs and desires and the life-related needs and desires of individual workers be satisfied, but also companies would benefit in terms of corporate management, through improved productivity

and workers demonstrating their abilities, while advantages would also accrue in terms of government policy, through an increase in the birthrate and a rise in the female employment rate.

As shown in the various attitude surveys above, for the many workers who desire a balanced approach to life but are currently not achieving this, their level of happiness would grow if they were able to achieve the WLB that they desire, so it is not hard to imagine that the advantages for workers in general would increase. For the government as well, it would be ideal if corporate productivity increased and the level of satisfaction among workers grew as a result of achieving a good WLB, exerting a positive influence on the birthrate. Moreover, as can be seen from the fact that top representatives of employers' associations signed the Work-Life Balance Charter, it seems that companies do, overall, acknowledge the advantages of promoting WLB.

However, looking at the matter from the perspective of individual companies, it is hard to imagine that the concerns they harbor about increasing the WLB of workers having the potential to lead to a rise in costs will dissipate easily. Perhaps with the objective of allaying these fears, in 2008, the Council for Gender Equality's Expert Panel on Work-Life Balance published a document entitled "The Advantages of Pursuing Work-Life Balance". This document summarized the advantages for companies of implementing initiatives focused on encouraging a good work-life balance and methods of promoting such initiatives, providing quantitative data on costs as well, and was intended to "provide concrete information to show that tackling the work-life balance does not only result in costs for a company, but also has advantages for both labor and management".

The main specific advantages cited are (i) retaining employees; (ii) securing high-caliber staff; (iii) securing and retaining highly diverse employees; (iv) increasing the level of satisfaction and motivation to work among employees, along with their loyalty to the company; (v) maintaining and promoting both the mental and physical health of employees; (vi) developing employees' perspectives as people who have lives and increasing their creativity and time management skills; (vii)

improving the abilities of subordinates and colleagues; (viii) reducing costs; (ix) increasing productivity and sales; and (x) improving the image and evaluation of the company.

Moreover, it also provided a summary of methods of promoting a better work-life balance, listing the following: (i) changing ways of thinking among senior management, providing leadership and positioning work-life balance in the management strategy; (ii) promoting changes in attitudes through a body or key executive (CWO: Chief Work-life-balance Officer) appointed for this purpose; (iii) encouraging efficient ways of working; (iv) changing attitudes and improving management ability among those in managerial posts; (v) promoting understanding and improving ability among surrounding employees; (vi) implementing appropriate staffing, time management and fair personnel appraisals; (vii) promoting understanding among clients and business partners, etc.; and (viii) building networks with other companies.

Such initiatives have been developed in order to promote WLB policy, as a result of the government's awareness that it is necessary to clearly point out to companies that implementing these measures has advantages for them as well. It is fair to say that the slogans used in the USA to encourage the popularization of WLB among companies and the slogans used when the Blair administration in the UK embarked on a WLB campaign placed the advantages to companies at the forefront. It is perhaps necessary to bear in mind as well that such advantages have come to be emphasized more strongly as the policy concept has broadened from the "harmonization of work life and family life", which focused primarily on working women, to the concept of WLB presented in the Work-Life Balance Charter, that is to say, as we have reached the point at which it encompasses rethinking ways of working in general and the reform of corporate personnel management.

As the issues to which companies must respond increase, due to the concept of WLB policy having become broader than the concepts of the harmonization of work life and family life or achieving compatibility between them, it seems that the advantages for companies have to be emphasized, in order to

encourage them to respond to so many issues. At the same time, given that this broadening of the concept occurred after employers' associations agreed to the Charter, it is likely that the concept had to be expanded to encompass rethinking ways of working, productivity improvements and personnel management reforms so that this would surely have advantages for companies. Alternatively, perhaps it was thought that the effects would only emerge if, instead of individual piecemeal policies, these measures were implemented through a comprehensive policy linking them together.

However, now that WLB policy has become so extensive, the question is what its focus is and where to begin. To what extent must the various menus of tasks be accomplished in order to bring about the desired policy effects? The Action Policy does list numerical targets in relation to the individual policy menus, but it does not indicate an order of priority between the various menus.

In particular, a number of the menus relate to matters which, although they have been positioned as part of WLB policy, actually require implementation on the basis of other, stronger political imperatives. For example, if the smooth transition of young people from school to work and the economic independence of young people through employment, which are included in the section relating to "a society where economic independence through work is possible" of the Action Policy, are not achieved, young people will be unable to marry or have children with peace of mind, so they are certainly issues of great concern from the perspective of increasing the birthrate, but at the same time, they are also fundamental problems relating to the policy on labor markets, which play a leading role in the development of Japanese economic society, so it is likely that few people think of them as problems solely associated with WLB. Moreover, with regard to compliance with legislation concerning working hours, which is a topic in the section relating to "a society where time can be secured for healthy, rich lives", there are likely to be few people who think this has a stronger relationship to WLB than to an entitlement of basic workers' rights concerning the securing of the minimum level of labor standards. Furthermore, as well as issues relating to the child rearing period and long-term

nursing care, the section relating to "a society where choosing a variety of ways of working and living is possible" includes the problem of the employment of elderly people during the process of retirement from their working lives, but this is a crucial labor market policy involving the age at which pension payments commence, and one could not say that it requires such serious discussion as a WLB policy as the relationship between WLB and child rearing or long-term nursing care does. Moreover, although putting in place the social infrastructure to support childcare, long-term nursing care, and community activities, etc. tailored to diverse ways of working is an indispensable policy in achieving a good WLB, from the standpoint of labor policy studies, it is probably not appropriate to consider this as a central issue.

Thus, although WLB appears at first glance to be quite extensive in scope, the realms that should be prioritized when considering it primarily as a topic in labor policy studies can be spontaneously identified.

B. The Focusing of the Concept of Work-life Balance

As described above, if one looks at matters from the perspective of identifying the actual problems for workers and companies relating to WLB that should be examined in policy terms, it is possible to narrow down the areas in which vital issues exist, in terms of both quality and quantity, without a great deal of difficulty. In accordance with the topics in the Action Policy, the realms in which there are issues thought to be particularly important, in terms of both quality and quantity, are as follows.

Firstly, of the topics relating to "a society where economic independence through work is possible" and "a society where choosing a variety of ways of working and living is possible", one can reframe the issues that are particularly relevant to WLB as follows, and perceive them as problems relating to "labor force participation by women".

- Where people (mainly women), including mothers in single-parent households, who have previously lost their jobs or interrupted their employment due to childcare or long-term nursing care can achieve economic independence through employment

- Where there are systems that make it possible for parents bringing up children and women, etc. with the desire to work to enjoy diverse, flexible ways of working according to different stages of life, such as the childrearing and midlife periods, and where these systems can actually be used
- Where it is possible (for the aforementioned women) to transition from non-regular to regular employment according to one's motivation and abilities
- Where fair treatment and opportunities for skills development are secured (for the aforementioned women), irrespective of the form of employment

These are mainly problems relating to the continuing employment of working women who are bringing up children or providing long-term nursing care, or problems relating to the re-employment of women who have previously resigned due to marriage, childbirth or child rearing, and they involve choices concerning forms of employment and the issue of fair treatment. Moreover, there are also problems relating to the employment management menus of the companies reacting to these issues.

The studies carried out by the JILPT over the past five years that have a strong relevance to these issues of "men's ways of working" are as follows.

- (i) Studies relating to the continuing employment of women during the childbirth and child rearing period: conducted by Shingou Ikeda
 "Fixed-term Contracts and Childcare Leave: The Reality of Continued Employment and Tasks for the Establishment of Childcare Leave" (JILPT Research Report No.99, June 2008)
 "Continued Employment and Childcare Leave During the Childbirth and Child Rearing Period: A Comparison of Large Corporations and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises" (JILPT Research Report No.109, May 2009)
 "Women's Ways of Working and Continued Employment During the Childbirth and Child Rearing Period: Support for the Employment Continuation Process and Tasks for Creating a Workplace That Increases the Motivation to Continue Working" (JILPT Research Report No.122, June 2010)
 "Continued Employment During the Childbirth

and Child Rearing Period: Focusing on Trends Since 2005" (JILPT Research Report No.136, May 2011)

"Childbirth/Child Rearing and Continued Employment: The Increasing Mobility of the Workforce and Responses to the Nocturnal Society" (JILPT Research Report No.150, April 2012)

- (ii) Studies relating to the re-employment of women: conducted by Mari Okutsu
 "Re-employment After Bringing up Children: Issues and Their Resolution" (JILPT Research Report No.96, March 2008)
 "Resignation and Re-employment During the Marriage, Childbirth and Child Rearing Periods: Women's Career Development and Relevant Issues" (JILPT Research Report No.105, March 2009)
- (iii) Studies relating to the employment of mothers in single-parent households: conducted by Zhou Yanfei
 "Study Concerning Employment Support for Mothers in Single-parent Households" (JILPT Research Report No.101, June 2008)
 "The Employment and Economic Independence of Single Mothers" (JILPT Research Report No.140, January 2012)
- (iv) Studies relating to the reality of the child care leave system at small and medium-sized enterprises: conducted by Ryoji Nakamura
 "The Current Status of and Issues Relating to Work-Life Balance at Small and Medium-sized Enterprises" (JILPT Research Report No.135, May 2011)

Next, of the topics relating to "a society where time can be secured for healthy, rich lives", if one deems the issues that are particularly relevant to WLB to be as follows, they can be perceived as problems focused on "men's ways of working".

- Where the importance of securing time to make it possible to lead a healthy, rich life is acknowledged by companies and society
- Where the kind of long working hours that are detrimental to one's health do not exist and initiatives are promoted that enable those

- workers who so desire to take annual paid leave
- Where hourly productivity also improves as a result of a well-modulated way of working
- Where work-life balance is taken into consideration in all situations outside the workplace as well, such as in contracts with business partners and in consumption

These are problems relating to the management of working hours at companies and the many working men who are affected by them, along with their families, particularly their wives.

The studies carried out by the JILPT over the past five years that have a strong relevance to these issues of “men’s ways of working” are as follows.

- (i) The problem of working hours: conducted by Kazuya Ogura (currently at Waseda University), Yutaka Asao, and Shingou Ikeda
 “A Study Concerning Diversity in Work Locations and Hours” (JILPT Research Report No.106, April 2009)
 “Husbands’ Working Hours Seen From the Perspectives of Their Wives: Analysis of the Results of the ‘Questionnaire Concerning Working Hours (Questionnaire for Wives)’” (JILPT Research Report No.127, January 2011)
 “The Working Hours and Holidays of Japanese People: Overtime, Unused Annual Paid Leave and Awareness, and the Workplace Environment” (JILPT Data Series No.108, March 2012)

There would seem to be an argument that perceiving the achievement of compatibility between work and child rearing, etc. as a women’s problem and the issue of long working hours as a men’s problem in this way involves different directions in attitudes to gender equality and the recent revision of the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act (the establishment of the “Papa & Mama Child Care Leave Plus” system to encourage fathers to take child care leave). However, if one looks at the problems occurring in reality, it is a fact that the issue faced by the vast majority of women is the problem of achieving compatibility between child rearing and work, while what most men face is the problem of long working hours. Naturally, one should consider

childcare and long-term nursing care not as women’s problems alone but as issues for both men and women, and the importance of encouraging understanding of this when promoting WLB among individual companies is not denied, but when examining from the perspective of labor policy the problems that are actually occurring, the perception above is close to reality.

In this sense, a major aspect of what WLB aims to achieve, broadly speaking, would seem to be the reallocation of the quantity of labor input incorporating the concept of working hours, by increasing the quantity of labor input from women, which is currently insufficient (due to such factors as the large number of women who quit their jobs during the childbirth and child rearing period, the inability to achieve re-employment in the way they had hoped, and the lack of transition from part-time work to standard ways of working), while simultaneously reducing or curbing to some degree the quantity of labor input from men who are in their most productive years (and who are working too hard due to long working hours stemming from a variety of factors), which is currently fairly large, and distributing the resultant employment opportunities among young people and elderly people, or providing employment opportunities for women.

In addition, when looking at WLB in this way, there is also the question of how to approach the matter of “establishing options for diverse, flexible ways of working”, which was clearly stipulated in the Charter as an independent element. However, thinking about it, are these “diverse options” an ultimate objective that we should aim to achieve independently of the other objectives? Is it not rather the case that these “options for diverse, flexible ways of working” are required as an effective means of increasing women’s labor force participation and addressing men’s overwork?

The reason for thinking this way is because of the increasing trend in Japan toward the use of non-regular workers ? in the form of part-time workers, fixed-term contract workers, and dispatched workers ? and the current situation in relation to this has not been brought about by policy efforts to achieve a good WLB. This trend can be said to be the result of

companies having been compelled to transform their corporate management and personnel management due to various economic factors, such as globalization. Therefore, it is not appropriate to discuss such matters as part-time workers and fixed-term contract workers as a problem relating to the establishment of diverse options from a WLB perspective, without sorting these issues out.

6. The Optimum Balance for the Quantity of Labor Input

As has been seen hitherto, the focus in work-life balance as a labor policy in Japan is on increasing the labor force participation of women and addressing the tendency of men to overwork. Let us use the concept of quantity of labor input touched upon in 5 above to examine the degree to which the ways of working of men and women in Japan actually differ.

A. Differences between Men and Women in Volume of Employment

Before looking at the quantity of labor input, let us look at differences between men and women in the volume of employment in Japan, based on the

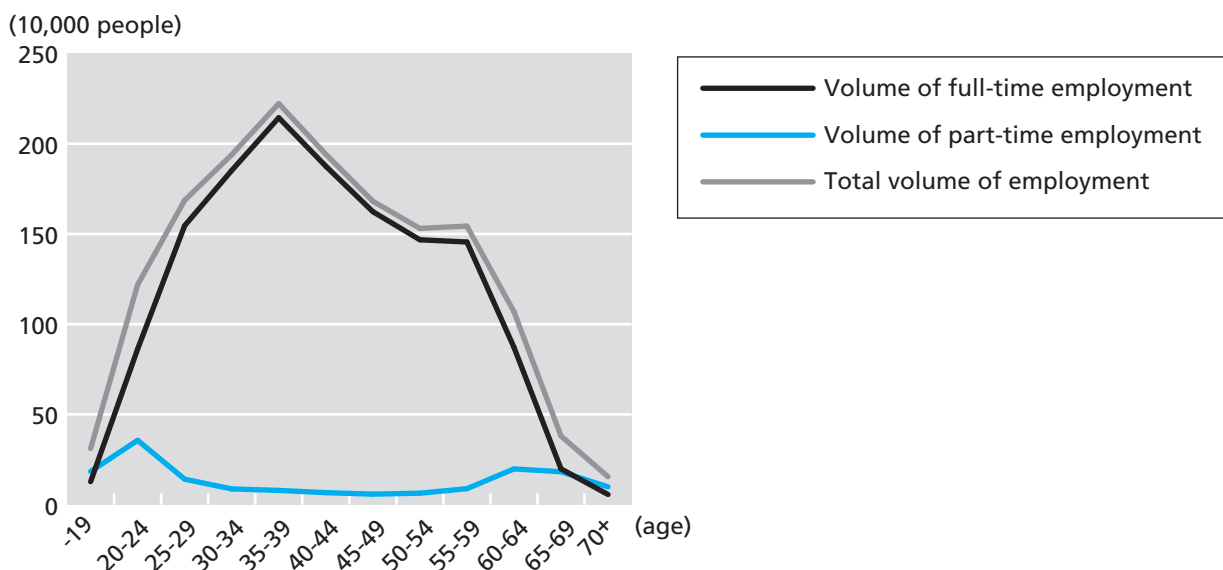
number of employees.

As can be seen from II-8, the volume of full-time employment is overwhelmingly high among men, and it would be reasonable to say that part-time employment is almost non-existent other than in non-regular age brackets, such as arubaito during the younger years and shokutaku employment during retirement.

In contrast to this, the graph depicting the volume of employment for women is shown in II-9.

There will doubtless be many readers who are surprised to find that one can hardly see any trace of the M-shaped curve that is usually seen in the labor force participation rate of women in Japan. The volume of full-time employment declines after peaking in the 25-29 age bracket, while the volume of part-time employment describes a mound-shaped curve, with a gentle plateau from the early 40s to the late 50s. The composite graph for the total volume of employment mostly describes a plateau, apart from a slight dip between the ages of 35 and 39. This is because the population in each age bracket differs. The current generation of those in their late 20s to their 30s is a comparatively populous age bracket that is called the “baby boom junior generation”, as they

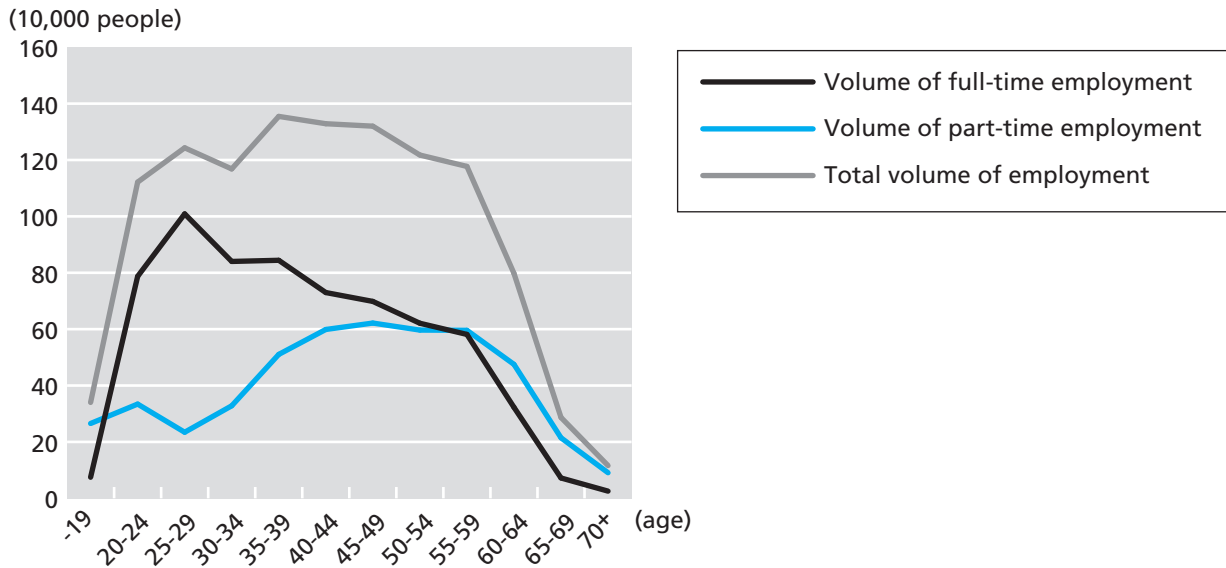
II-8 Volume of Employment among Men by Age Group (Number of Employees)



Source: Compiled by the author from the *Basic Survey on Wage Structure* 2010

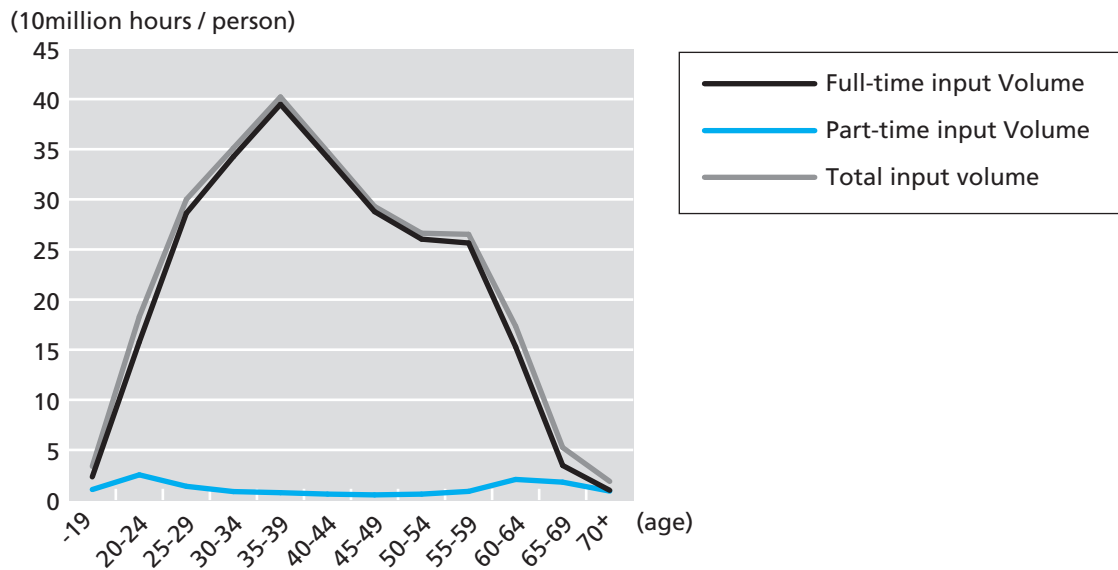
Note: The data in the aforementioned survey relates to employed workers working at business establishments with at least five people.

II-9 Volume of Employment among Women by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the *Basic Survey on Wage Structure* 2010

II-10 Monthly Quantity of Labor Input among Men by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the *Basic Survey on Wage Structure* 2010

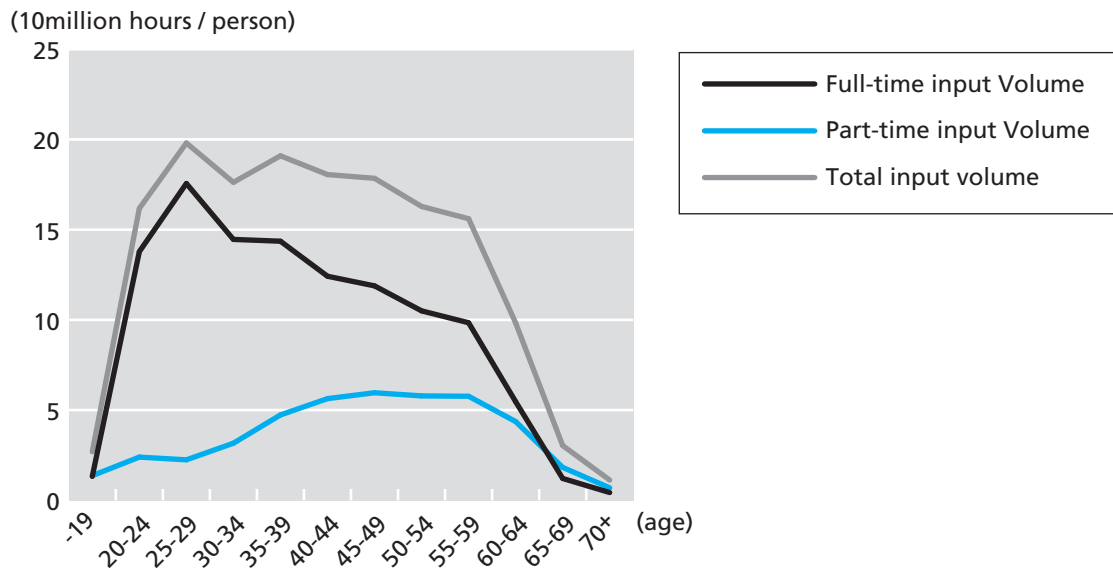
were the second generation of baby boomers after the Second World War.

B. Differences between Men and Women in Quantity of Labor Input

The quantity of labor input usually incorporates the concept of working hours, as well as the volume

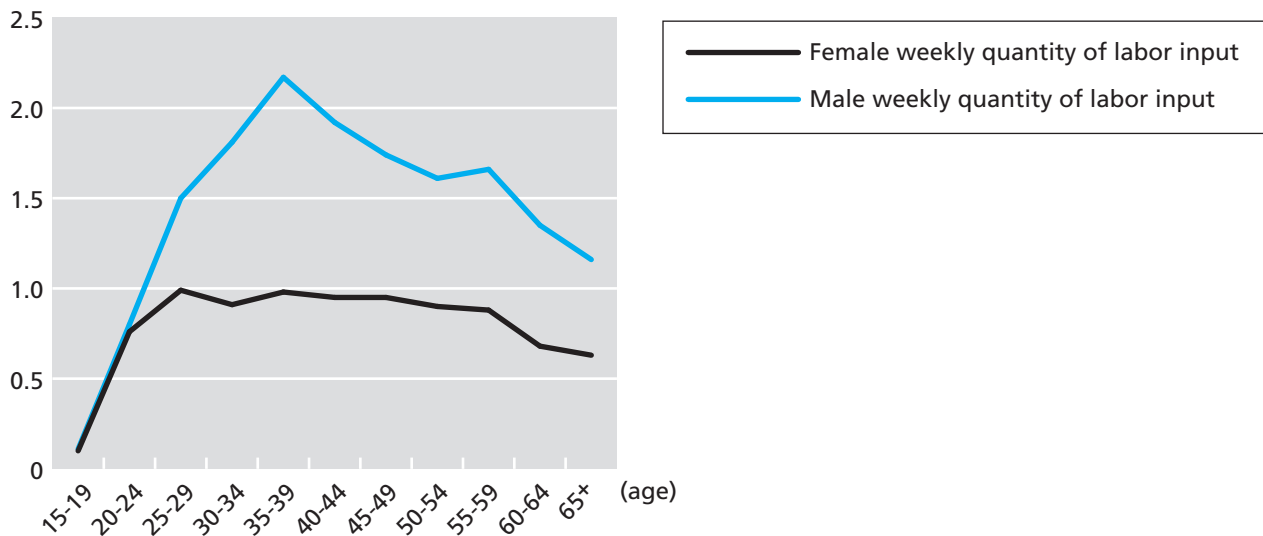
of employment in terms of numbers employed, so here, the number of working hours input at companies with at least 5 staff members has been calculated by age bracket using the Basic Survey on Wage Structure, and has been represented in graphical form. In doing so, although part-time workers have a high volume of employment, their per

II-11 Monthly Quantity of Labor Input among Women by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the *Basic Survey on Wage Structure* 2010

II-12 Weekly Quantity of Labor Input among Men and Women by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the 2010 *Labour Force Survey*
 Note: The unit of the vertical axis is million hours/person

capita working hours are low, so the quantity of labor input is low in comparison with full-time workers.

In this graph showing the situation among men, one can see that there is hardly any difference between the quantity of full-time labor input and the total quantity input, while the contribution made by part-time workers to the quantity of labor input is

very small.

In this graph showing the situation among women, one can see that the degree of contribution made by part-time workers to the quantity of labor input is small, so the graph for the total quantity input for women shows a decline with increasing age.

The graphs examined above were compiled on the

basis of the Basic Survey on Wage Structure, which incorporates monthly data on actual working hours, but data on weekly working hours can be obtained from the Labour Force Survey, so by way of verification, let us also look at this to examine the differences between men and women in the quantity of labor input.

C. Differences between Men and Women in Labor Input Rate

Up to B, the graphs use statistical data that can be used with existing concepts, and from this alone, one can clearly see the fact that women's ways of working and men's ways of working differ greatly. Here, the additional concept of labor input rate has been introduced and a graph compiled. This uses the quantity of labor input (hours) as the numerator, while the denominator is the quantity of labor input in the event that the workers in a certain age bracket were to work the overall average number of working hours for both men and women of the relevant ages. Here, the data has been processed by abstracting differences in the demographic composition in each age bracket, in order to make it easier to compare with the labor force participation rate. Moreover, it was thought that differences in the status of labor

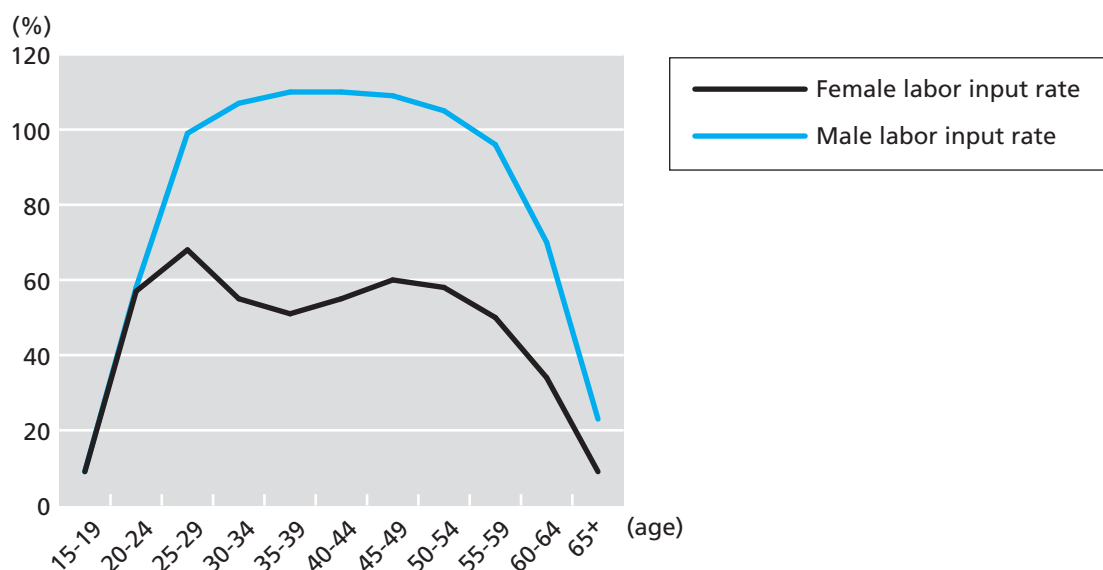
input between men and women would become clearer by using the average working hours for both men and women as a whole, with the quantity of labor input as the denominator.

Looking at this graph alone, there may be many who think that it does not differ from the graph for the labor force participation rate, so the labor force participation rate graph is shown next.

So, what do you think? When the concept of working hours is taken into account in the labor input rate, it seems that the differences between men and women become even greater than in the labor force participation rate. In particular, whereas the graph for men reaches a very high plateau from their 30s to their 40s, exceeding 100% due to the impact of their long working hours, in the case of that for women, although an M-shape does appear, the trough is more pronounced than in the case of the labor force participation rate, while the peak in the latter half is lower than that in the former half, and it remains under 60% overall apart from in the late 20s, so it is clear that women's participation in the labor force is inadequate.

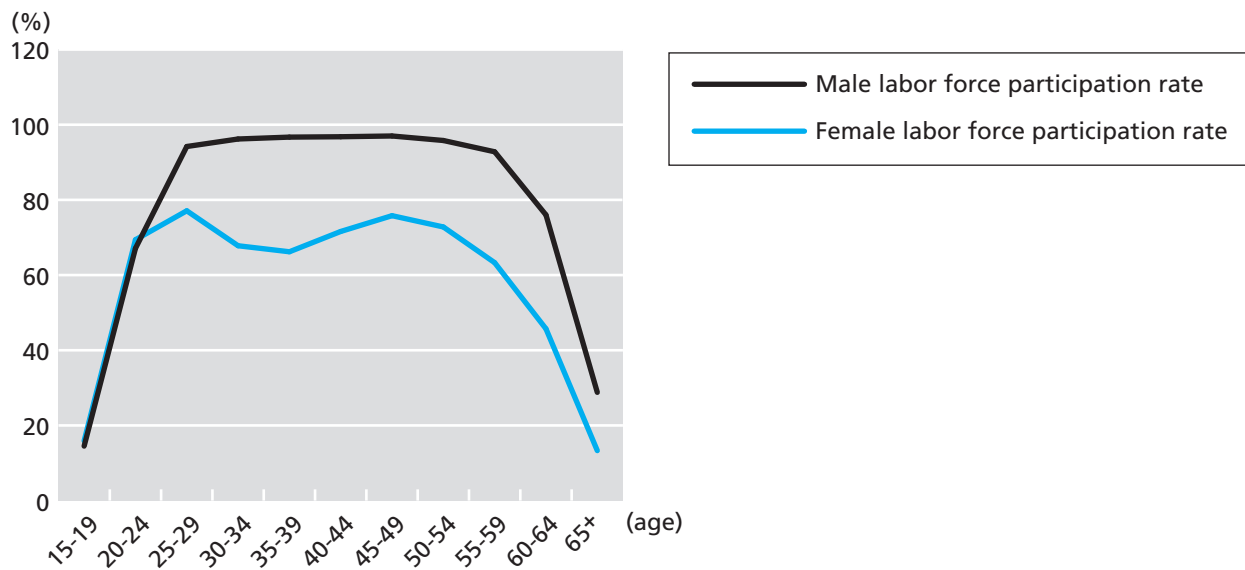
It is necessary to approach a better balance in the ways of working of both men and women, eliminating the excessively big distance between

II-13 Labor Input Rate among Men and Women by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the 2010 *Labour Force Survey*

II-14 Labor Force Participation Rate among Men and Women by Age Group



Source: Compiled by the author from the 2010 *Labour Force Survey*

them by shifting the men's graph downward and the women's graph upward.

7. Conclusion

As has been seen up to this point, the labor force participation of women and efforts to rethink the ways of working of men in Japan are still inadequate, and it would probably be fair to say that there is a host of issues in all directions that must be tackled in order to achieve a better WLB for Japanese workers. However, at the same time, it is a fact that the areas where one can expect that the expansion and improvement of the legal system will increase the degree of achievement of WLB have already diminished considerably. In this sense, the achievement of WLB in Japan in the future, or the increasing of its level, will depend on the degree to which companies and workers understand what the WLB Charter and legislation concerning WLB are aiming for, agree with it, and develop employment management systems or select their own careers accordingly.

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