

Resignation and Reemployment
During the Period of Marriage, Childbirth and Child Rearing
– Women's Career Development and Issues –
Summary

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Positioning of Research

This research entitled “Research on Reemployment after Child Rearing” is one of the subprojects of “Study on Development of Social Systems and Employment Environment to Realize Work-Life Balance”.

Research Period

April 2007 – March 2009

1. Issues and Objectives

With the population of Japan decreasing, the promotion of the participation of women in the working world and the utilization of their vocational capabilities is becoming an important social issue. Not a few women have a career pattern of leaving their jobs temporarily during such periods as marriage and childbirth and returning to work later. This research has been conducted with the aim of understanding what actions have been taken by women for reemployment and what actions have been effective for their reemployment after leaving their work during the period of marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing. This research also aims, in order to seek better support for women's reemployment with a view to their work-life balance, to understand how women balance their housework, community activities and work and to understand how they feel about the outcomes of such efforts.

2. Method of Research

The research period was two years from FY 2007 to FY 2008. A questionnaire survey and an interview survey were conducted and information about case examples were collected from enterprises.

The questionnaire survey was conducted targeting among female workers working at a total of 10,000 randomly selected business establishments with five or more regular employees.

The interview survey targeted 22 female workers who have a junior college or higher degree. Their workplaces were located in 11 prefectures including Tokyo and Hokkaido which were selected from each region of Japan. The two surveys basically asked the same questions. Overall societal trends were analyzed based on the results of the questionnaire survey. Subsequently, based on the results of the interview survey, an analysis was conducted considering diversity and other factors that were attributed to the respondents' individual situations.

Examples of corporate efforts were collected from two small and medium-sized companies and one large company. The examples were used as reference for the analysis.

3. Summary of Surveys

[Questionnaire Survey]:

The questionnaire survey was conducted from September 1, 2007, to October 31, 2007. The number of valid responses was 3,971. The ages of the respondents are widely

distributed between 18 and 75. Their educational background was as follows:

	Junior high school	High school	Vocational school and other school in miscellane	Technical college	Junior college	College/University	Graduate school	Other	Total
The number of respondents	108	1,836	566	131	781	481	15	3	3,921
%	2.8	46.8	14.4	3.3	19.9	12.3	0.4	0.1	100

Note: High school and higher degrees include the number of dropouts. NA = 50

The number of respondents who have a child/children accounted for 66.9% (2,655 females) of all respondents and those who had a spouse at the time of the survey accounted for 62.7%. 2,112 respondents once left their jobs during the period of marriage, pregnancy, childbirth or child rearing to concentrate on housework or child rearing and returned to work later.

[Interview Survey]:

The interview survey was conducted from mid-February 2008 to late June 2008. The respondents were female workers who once left their jobs during the period of marriage, pregnancy, childbirth or child rearing and returned to work later. Of the 22 respondents, 19 had a spouse at the time of the survey and one had no children. The ages of the respondents and their youngest child are as follows:

	Respondents' age									Total
	25-	30-	35-	40-	45-	50-	55-	60 or over		
	29	34	39	44	49	54	59			
Age/school age of the youngest child										
2 or under		1	2	1						4
3 – before school age				1						1
First – third grade at elementary school					1					1
Fourth – six grade at elementary school					1	2				3
Junior high school				1	3	1				5
High school					1	1				2
High school graduate							4		1	5
(Student)							(1)			(1)
(Worker)							(3)		(1)	(4)
No children						1				1
Total		1	2	3	6	5	4	—	1	22

4. Points and Analysis of Survey Results

(1) Why did they leave their jobs? – Reasons for resignation

In the questionnaire survey, “marriage” (45.8%) was the most frequently answered direct reason for leaving a job during the period between marriage and child rearing, followed by “childbirth” (30.4%). In the younger respondent group at age 34 or under, however, the percentage of “marriage” was somewhat less and “pregnancy,” “childbirth” and “child rearing” were more often answered.

In the interview survey, 10 out of the 22 respondents left their jobs for “marriage.” They left their jobs either (i) as a natural course of marriage (six respondents) or (ii) based on their life career policy (four respondents).

A total of 11 respondents left their jobs due to “pregnancy,” “childbirth” or “child rearing.” They left their jobs (i) based on their view on child rearing or awareness of the parental role (six respondents), (ii) because they could not gain cooperation/support for childbirth and child-care (five respondents), or (iii) due to their child’s development/growth problem (two respondents). However, one of the respondents in (iii) is also included in (ii) because the problem shifted from child-care to therapeutic education.

Strong concerns about their relationships with their families and society and a sense of responsibility as apparent prompted all the respondents to leave their jobs.

(2) When did they return to work? – Time when willing to return to work and preparations for reemployment

The questionnaire survey found that both the time when the respondents became willing to return to work and the time when they were actually reemployed were diverse, from within six months to over 15 years after resignation. The largest number of respondents answered “within three years,” particularly “within two years,” or “over seven years” after resignation. Regarding the time when respondents became willing to return to work, 11.6% respondents became willing to return to work within six months after resignation, 11.1% became willing sometime between six months and one year after resignation, and 12.3% became willing sometime between one and two years after resignation. Thus, the respondents who became willing to return to work within three years accounted for 45.4%. However, the percentage of respondents who became willing to work again sometime between two and seven years after resignation declines to approximately 6%, while the percentage of respondents who became willing to return to work seven or more years after resignation accounted for over 10%. Similar tendencies

were observed regarding the time when the respondents actually returned to work. Respondents who have no children became willing to work earlier than those who have a child. As much as 78.3% respondents who have no children became willing to work again within two years after resignation and most of them got a job successfully as they hoped.

The interview survey suggests a tendency that the time of reemployment varies depending on the reason for resignation. Respondents who left their jobs as a natural course of things upon marriage or other such event and respondents who decided to leave their jobs based on their policy of raising a child by themselves had a tendency to take a longer time before reemployment. Many of them began to work again when their youngest child entered an elementary school or at a later time. The time when they became willing to work again, the time when they planned to work again, and the time when they were actually reemployed are relatively close. The respondents of the interview survey preferred reemployment either when their youngest child was younger than three or when the child entered an elementary school, showing similar tendency to the results of the questionnaire survey. The respondents selected the time for reemployment basically they thought because their children became old enough for their mother to work again (they thought that their children's growth had reached an appropriate level). In addition, some of them took their own age into consideration and selected the time for reemployment before they are in too disadvantageous a position in the labor market. The respondents thought about their ages not only in relation to the labor market but also in close relation to other conditions that include: the time when they received education or gained preparatory experience to participate in social activities including employment and voluntary activities and the time when the results of their education, etc. were obtained.

With regard to preparations for reemployment, a particularly large number of respondents of the questionnaire survey cited the understanding/acceptance of their families, securing a facility to provide care for their children and arrangement of child-care services. Approximately 80% of respondents made these preparations. Also, 70–85% respondents collected information on the labor market and enterprises.

Some respondents of the interview survey made a conscious effort to prepare for reemployment but others did not. In some cases respondents had some favorable results in reemployment as a result of pursuing hobbies and cultural activities, or satisfying their intellectual interests. With regard to the understanding/acceptance of their families, a larger number of respondents selected employment patterns or flexible

working styles that allow them to decide the time to stay at home and to come home so that it would fit with the daily schedules of their children and families rather than seeking understanding through discussions. In other words, the respondents considered take priority to child-care and learning environments for their children in selecting their jobs or occupations from among job offers. They set not disturbing the daily rhythm of their children as a just prerequisite for reemployment, selected and applied for jobs based on the prerequisite of maintaining their career after reemployment, and conveyed their intention to recruiting employers clearly. They rejected reemployment unless the prerequisite was met even if other conditions such as wage and employment stability were advantageous, or they negotiated with the employer so that the employer would accept their conditions (work conditions including an employment style and work hours which do not disturb the daily schedule of their children).

(3) Why did they return to work? – Motives and reasons for the first reemployment

The interview survey analyzed the reasons for seeking reemployment from the two perspectives of (i) relationship between the respondents and their mothers and (ii) purposes/intentions to work. From the first perspective, motives/reasons were classified into the five groups shown below (A – E). The first perspective has significance in that it shows that mothers are role models and that it indicates role models for a married women's relationship with society.

- A. The respondent's mother was working or assisting the respondent's self-employed father in business. Therefore, the respondent has taken working while raising a child for granted since childhood.
- B. The respondent's mother was working or assisting the respondent's self-employed father in business but the mother hoped to leave her job and become a full-time housewife.
- C. The respondent's mother was not working but the respondent's father or family member(s) expected the respondent to work after marriage or presented an affirmative lifestyle example for women to work.
- D. The respondent's mother was not working. The respondent began to hope work again after marriage and childbirth based on her work experience earlier on in life.
- E. The respondent's mother was not working. The respondent incorporated a job into her life again as a result of restructuring her life and career.

The classification, however, does not apply to women who were forced to work again as the top priority due to a change in their livelihood such as divorce.

In relation to the second perspective, motives/reasons were classified into six groups (A – F). These motives/reasons are significant in that they tend to link to direct triggers for reemployment.

- A. The respondent took working while raising a child for granted and hoped to satisfy the desire for reemployment.
- B. The respondent makes consideration to the education of her child and working husband.
- C. The respondent hoped to maintain financial independence or hoped to support part of her household.
- D. The respondent hoped to maintain a relationship with friends or a sense of participation in society.
- E. The respondent hoped to utilize her energy after child rearing or sought motivation in life.
- F. The respondent faced a change in her basis of livelihood.

The most frequently answered direct reason for reemployment in the questionnaire survey was “financial needs” (39.7%), followed by “had planned the time of reemployment” (15.0%). Other reasons which were cited by a relatively large number of respondents were “became willing to work when I found a job which I wanted to do or which I could do well” (9.7%) and “invited by the office where I had worked previously” (8.0%).

As a result of the interview survey, some respondents cited the relationship with the relevant persons at the office where they had worked previously which triggered their reemployment as a direct reason while others found work after seeking a job which they wanted to do through various channels in their daily life such as hobbies and learning activities. There were also some respondents who were left behind and felt lonely when most of their friends in the community started to work again. Although only a few respondents cited “financial needs,” some women said that they wanted to earn money which they could spend at will or that they wanted to become economically independent. If these reasons are also included in “financial needs,” then it can be said that many women cited financial reasons.

(4) How did they achieve initial reemployment? – Job-hunting channels

Many respondents of the questionnaire survey cited help-wanted ads and leaflets (30.4%) and public employment security offices (27.7%). Other channels cited by over 10% of respondents were “information from a neighbor” (15.2%) and “invited by the company where I had worked previously” (14.0%).

Use of reemployment channels, namely, public employment security offices and help-wanted ads/leaflets, was compared between respondents who began to work again for “financial reasons” and other respondents. Of the respondents who began to work again for non-financial reasons, 5.7% used both channels, 15.1% used only employment security offices, and 21.8% used only ads and leaflets. On the other hand, the situation is different with regard to the respondents who began to work again for financial reasons. Of the respondents with financial reasons, 11.1% used both channels and 27.1% used only employment security offices, both larger than the respondents with non-financial reasons. However, the percentage of respondents who used only ads and leaflets was 23.9%. There was a statistically significant difference in the ratio use of both channels and the use of only employment security offices between respondents with financial reasons and respondents with non-financial reasons. However, there was no statistically significant difference in the use of only help-wanted ads/leaflets between the two groups. This indicates that respondents who were forced to work again as soon as possible and respondents to whom work was vital depended on employment security offices.

The interview survey inquired about reemployment channels not only for the first reemployment but also later reemployment if they changed their jobs. As a result, the survey found that in the case of part-time or temporary jobs before starting to work on a full-time basis many women collect job information directly from business establishments, such as a “shop in the neighborhood,” where the respondents can commute to on foot from home. These respondents gained the opportunity to work when they were requested to work as shop assistants at shops where they often visit or when they applied to help-wanted posters at shops. Some respondents gained work through mediation carried out by their parents or acquaintances. Respondents could find work through employment security offices or business connections after they increased work hours gradually as their children grew up. It is noteworthy that there were some respondents who were reemployed or started their own businesses after collecting information through learning activities at colleges/universities or other institutes probably because of their relatively high educational backgrounds.

(5) Who helped them? – Problems they faced in initial reemployment and people who helped them resolve the problems

Of all the respondents 73.5% had somebody to help them resolve problems they were concerned about in the initial reemployment while 26.5% did not. Of the people who helped the respondents, husbands occupied the largest portion (56.7%), followed by respondents' parents (35.5%) and husbands' parents (24.7%). After being reemployed, 59.5% of respondents had somebody to help them resolve problems while 40.5% did not. Of the people who helped the respondents resolve the problem to which they paid the largest attention, husbands (56.9%) and respondents' parents (35.6%) occupied the larger portions.

Meanwhile, approximately 70% of respondents had somebody who encouraged, consoled or listened to the respondents although they did not help the respondents in actual reemployment. These people provided psychological support to the respondents and performed supporting roles as a result. After being actually reemployed, approximately 59.5% of respondents had somebody who provided psychological support when they faced a problem.

The interview survey revealed that although some respondents received support from their husbands or parents, there were several respondents who suffered from objections from their husbands or other persons. A multiple number of respondents were forced to give up or stop job-hunting activities because child-care services were unavailable, which constituted a major obstacle for their reemployment. Even though child-care service systems did not match job-hunting activities, some respondents could gain work thanks to business owners who understood the respondents' urgent situations and took flexible measures in employment management to help the respondents and thanks to support provided by communities in the form of "supportive measures before finding a new job."

(6) Reemployment situation – Work conditions chosen and actual work

As a result of the questionnaire survey, the percentage of the respondents who gained a part-time job as their initial reemployment pattern (57.8%) was more than twice as much as the those who gained a full-time job (23.7%). However, 28.5% of the respondents who started to work again as part-time workers became full-time workers later on. In other words, one out of three to four part-time workers became full-time workers. Meanwhile, 9.8% respondents who gained full-time work as their initial reemployment position became part-time workers later in life. Approximately one out of

ten respondents who were initially reemployed as full-time workers became non-full-time workers if part-time work and other types of non-regular employment are included in the calculation.

The questionnaire survey also asked the question whether the initial reemployment provided comprehensive satisfaction to the respondents. As much as 61.3% of respondents were satisfied while 12.7% were dissatisfied. However, 26.0% (more than one out of four respondents) answered that they were “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” The survey simply compared satisfaction in engagement in their work and career until the date of the survey between (1) respondents who were reemployed after leaving their jobs due to marriage or other reasons to devote themselves to housework and child rearing and (2) other respondents. As a result, the former group expressed a significantly larger degree of satisfaction than the latter group.

Of the 22 respondents of the interview survey, 15 respondents gained, as their initial reemployment status, a part-time job or a job where they stayed at their workplaces for seven or fewer hours including lunch and other breaks. These respondents sometimes or often came to work overtime as they got accustomed to work. However, they did not necessarily hope to shift their work conditions with longer work hours. The reasons include that they hope to maintain flexibility in their lives and work, that they hope to be responsible for their work, and that they do not hope to place a burden on their families as a result of their working and having less time to do housework or fulfill their private responsibilities.

At the same time, there were respondents who changed their jobs to work as full-time employees, who were promoted to managerial positions after becoming full-time workers, who started businesses, and who became part-time managers.

All respondents were basically satisfied with their career or thought that they will be satisfied in the future.

5. Conclusion and future issues

Work activities of individuals are inseparable from community and family lives. Therefore, in order to improve necessary services, support for reemployment must be reviewed not only in the relationship between enterprises and individuals but also from the perspective of how to provide a variety of services from social resources which are available to community residents. The availability of child-care services was a major problem for women who devoted themselves to housework and child rearing when they tried to start job-hunting activities or when they almost gained work while carrying out

such activities.

A society which allows for a range of diverse lifestyles cannot be realized unless conditions are provided where individual women can select their own working styles such as continuing to work, reemployment after retirement, and life as a full-time homemaker after retirement, based on their individual situations. Availability of a diverse range of working styles based on their individual situations will lead to more satisfactory working styles in the future. At the same time, however, enterprises try to select and utilize good human resources. In job-hunting activities, the most essential point is to clarify the desired work style and work conditions and convey them to employers clearly.