



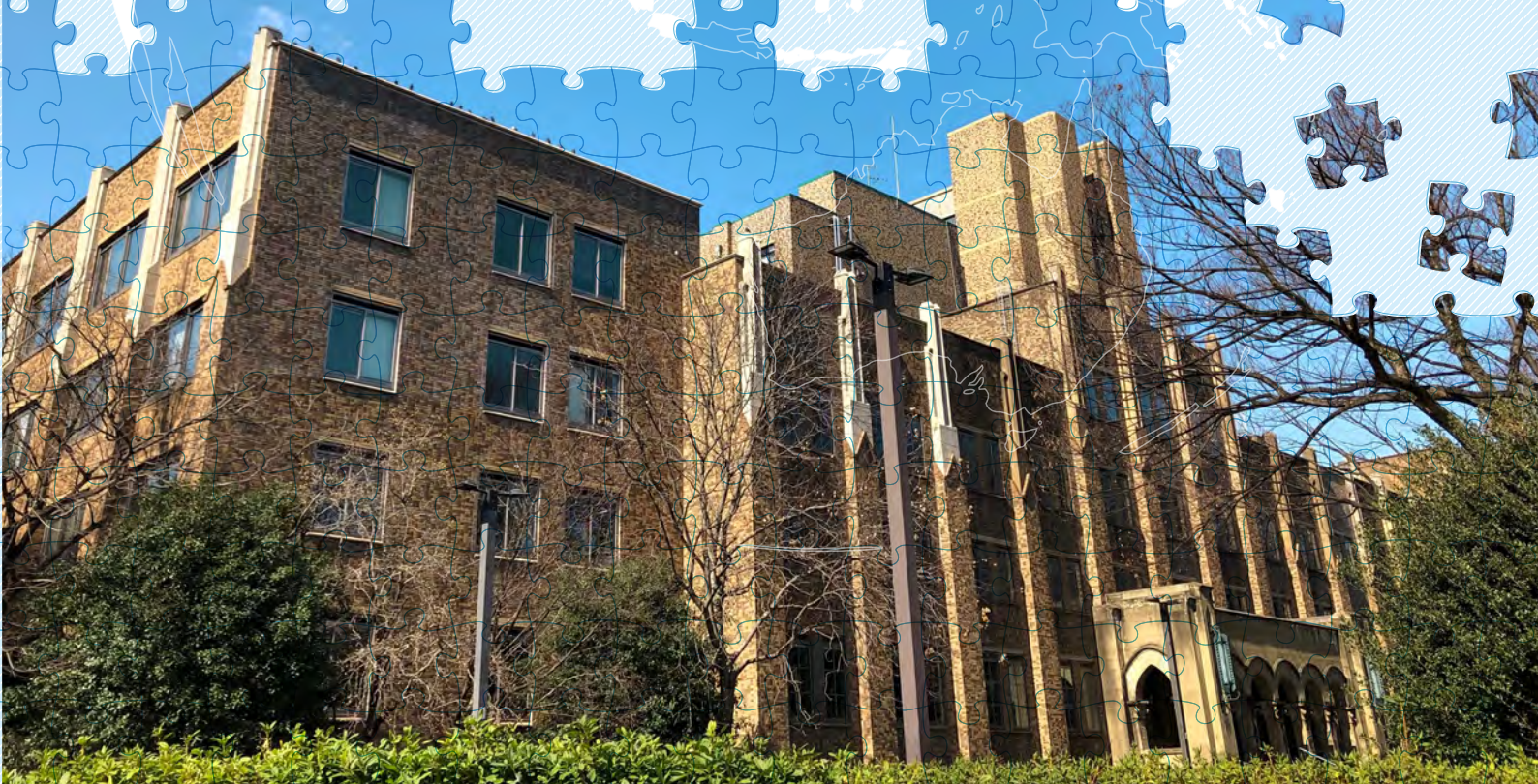
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Gendered Patterns of Parental Involvement in Japan: Exploring Mother–Father Role Sharing



No. 130	Date December. 2025	SDGs
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Abstract

This study examines how Japanese mothers and fathers share responsibilities for educational involvement during their child's junior high school years. Drawing on original web-based survey data from 1,600 parents, we first identified three dimensions of parental involvement, namely communicative, instructional, and directive, by analyzing responses regarding both mothers' and fathers' involvement. Based on these dimensions, we conducted a latent profile analysis and identified five distinct patterns of involvement. The results reveal considerable variation in responsibility sharing, with profiles ranging from mother-led or low-involvement to balanced or high involvement by both parents. Socioeconomic factors, particularly maternal education and the mother's income relative to the father's, were associated with profile membership, providing partial support for the relative resource hypothesis. The child's gender also influenced involvement styles, as families with sons were more likely to adopt directive forms of involvement. These findings highlight how structural resources and gender norms interact to shape the negotiation of educational responsibilities within Japanese households. By shedding light on the diversity of role-sharing arrangements, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gendered family practices in contemporary Japan.

Keywords: Parental involvement, gendered division of labor, relative resources, latent profile analysis, web survey

Funding

This research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP23K02179.

1. Introduction

The division of housework and childcare has been extensively studied as a key site of gender inequality and family role negotiation (Coltrane, 2000; Sullivan, 2021). Traditionally, domestic and caregiving tasks were regarded as women's responsibilities. However, societal changes, including increased female labor force participation and evolving gender norms, have led to growing expectations for men's participation and gradual shifts in patterns of unpaid labor. While research on the division of housework and childcare has expanded considerably, relatively little attention has been paid to how parents divide responsibilities related to their children's education during the school years. Mothers have long been considered the primary actors in managing children's learning and school-related tasks, but in recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward the role of fathers in educational settings (Jeynes, 2015; Kim & Hill, 2015). Studies have also noted that both who gets involved and how they engage matter for children's outcomes (Pomerantz et al., 2007), highlighting the need to examine educational responsibilities from a gendered perspective.

Parental involvement shares certain features with housework and caregiving, such as the management of everyday family routines. However, caregiving itself differs from housework in important ways, being generally perceived as more enjoyable and emotionally rewarding (Sullivan, 2021). Parental involvement similarly carries elements of enjoyment, as parents often find satisfaction in supporting their children's learning and growth. Further, it is distinguished by its emphasis on fostering children's cognitive development, nurturing educational aspirations, and engaging with schools and teachers. Unlike routine domestic tasks, parental involvement often requires not only time but also educational resources and cultural capital (Lareau, 2011). While a substantial body of research has examined the gendered division of housework and childcare, these studies may not fully capture the unique demands of parental involvement. Given its well-established links to children's academic achievement, motivation, and socio-emotional development (Boonk et al., 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001), there is a clear need for research that specifically investigates how parental involvement responsibilities are shared between mothers and fathers.

Several theoretical perspectives inform research on the division of family responsibilities. The resource bargaining perspective suggests that spouses with greater

socioeconomic resources, such as higher education or income, may have greater negotiating power in allocating domestic tasks (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Brines, 1994). The time availability perspective emphasizes that individuals with fewer work-related time demands may take on more household or childcare duties (Bianchi et al., 2000; Hook, 2010). In addition to these structural factors, cultural norms regarding gender roles remain influential, often positioning mothers as the primary agents of children's educational support (Dotti Sani & Treas, 2016; Sayer, 2005; Sayer et al., 2004). These frameworks, which primarily emerged from studies on housework and childcare, offer useful but partial insights when applied to educational involvement. These insights indicate the importance of considering multiple dimensions when studying the division of parental involvement.

Japan provides a valuable case for investigating the division of parental involvement, given its distinctive cultural and institutional context. Although women's labor force participation has increased in recent decades (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 2020), and gender role attitudes have gradually become more egalitarian (Choe et al., 2014; Piotrowski et al., 2019), Japanese families still tend to exhibit a strong gendered division of labor in everyday parenting and domestic tasks (Brinton & Oh, 2019; Tsutsui, 2016). In Japan, men's time spent on unpaid labor is markedly lower than in any other OECD country, with women performing approximately 5.5 times more unpaid work than men (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 2020). Even among married couples with children under six, fathers are relatively more involved in childcare but contribute minimally to housework. Given these persistent disparities in the division of domestic responsibilities, it is particularly important to investigate whether similar patterns are observed in parental involvement during the school years.

Moreover, similar dynamics have been observed in other East Asian societies such as South Korea, China, and Taiwan, where Confucian traditions have historically emphasized hierarchical family roles and maternal responsibility (Chen & Li, 2014; Raymo et al., 2015). At the same time, expectations surrounding fathers' roles in childrearing and educational support are also undergoing change in these contexts (Ho et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2022; Li, 2020). Therefore, findings from Japan may offer broader insights into the gendered organization of parental involvement in East Asian contexts.

Given the lack of publicly available data that capture both mothers' and fathers'

educational involvement in detail, this study employed an original web-based survey using a non-probability sample. While not suitable for population-level generalization, this design allows for exploratory identification of latent patterns in gendered parental involvement.

Theoretical Framework

Research on the division of unpaid labor within families has been guided primarily by two theoretical perspectives. The resource bargaining perspective posits that domestic and caregiving tasks are allocated through negotiation. Individuals who possess greater socioeconomic resources, such as higher education or income, are generally in a better position to avoid less desirable tasks (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Brines, 1994). In contrast, the time availability perspective emphasizes that work-related time constraints shape individuals' ability to participate in unpaid labor. Those with fewer work hours or more flexible schedules are generally more involved in household and caregiving activities (Craig, 2006; Sayer, 2005).

Empirical studies have supported both perspectives. Findings indicate that having a higher socioeconomic status relative to one's spouse and working longer hours are associated with lower participation in routine domestic labor (Davis & Greenstein, 2004; Hallberg & Klevmarken, 2003; Hook, 2010; Kamo, 1988; Sayer et al., 2004). Research focusing on socioeconomic asymmetries in particular has often drawn on the relative resource hypothesis, which suggests that the division of domestic labor is shaped by the relative balance of resources between partners rather than by their absolute levels. According to this hypothesis, individuals with fewer relative resources within the household are more likely to perform a greater share of unpaid work.

However, such structural factors alone do not fully explain persistent gender disparities. Domestic labor is not simply allocated based on rational decision-making or time constraints. It also functions as a key arena for performing and reinforcing gender identities (Coltrane, 2000; Sullivan, 2021). Building on these insights, West and Zimmerman's theory of doing gender (1987) and Risman's concept of gender as a social structure (2004) emphasize that gender is not merely a personal attribute but is produced and reproduced through social interactions and institutional arrangements. From this perspective, parental involvement, particularly in children's education, is an important

site for the enactment of gender norms. In Japan and other East Asian contexts, cultural expectations often place mothers in the role of educational support providers. As a result, involvement in children's education is not only a practical responsibility but also a symbolic expression of good motherhood shaped by broader societal norms. Cross-national evidence also shows that men's domestic involvement reflects not only relative resources but also cultural expectations about masculinity, with support for gender deviance neutralization in contexts where breadwinning is highly valued (Thébaud, 2010).

In short, these perspectives suggest that parents' educational involvement is shaped not only by their time and resources but also by social expectations regarding what mothers and fathers are expected to do. Understanding these layered influences is essential to promoting more balanced and inclusive forms of engagement. While the present study focuses primarily on structural determinants, such as parental education and income, it also acknowledges the role of cultural and institutional norms in shaping how parents divide educational responsibilities. Therefore, understanding parental involvement requires attention to both socioeconomic conditions and the broader gendered context in which parenting takes place.

Gendered Patterns of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been widely recognized as a critical factor promoting children's academic achievement, motivation, and socio-emotional development (Boonk et al., 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001). Traditionally, research on parental involvement has largely concentrated on mothers, reflecting broader assumptions about maternal responsibility for children's education. However, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to the role of fathers in recent years. Meta-analyses by Kim and Hill (2015) and Jeynes (2015) have confirmed that father involvement independently contributes to students' academic outcomes, underscoring the distinct significance of paternal educational engagement alongside maternal efforts.

In parallel, research has increasingly highlighted the role of social class in shaping parental involvement styles. Lareau (2011) demonstrated that in the United States, middle-class parents tend to practice concerted cultivation, characterized by the active management of children's educational and extracurricular activities, whereas working-class parents more often adopt a natural growth approach. Parallel patterns have been

identified in Japan (Matsuoka, 2019; Nukaga & Fujita, 2021). Further, Holloway et al. (2008) showed that higher-SES parents in Japanese early schooling are more likely to actively engage with schools and educational processes. Similarly, Yamamoto (2015) found that parents' educational beliefs about children's learning and socialization differ systematically by social class, shaping distinct parental involvement practices.

Despite these advances, most Japanese studies have continued to focus primarily on mothers, with relatively little exploration of how responsibilities for educational involvement are divided between mothers and fathers. Although Otani (2019) examined both paternal and maternal involvement in relation to adolescents' academic achievement and aspirations, the primary focus remained on the effects of parental involvement rather than on the intrafamilial division of educational roles. This gap underscores the need for further research into how educational responsibilities are negotiated within Japanese families, particularly in light of evolving gender norms and shifting family dynamics.

Japanese Context

The gendered organization of family life in Japan has profoundly shaped parental involvement patterns. Mothers have traditionally been regarded as the primary agents of children's education, with strong cultural expectations assigning them central responsibility for managing children's learning and school-related activities (Hirao, 2001; Holloway, 2010). This maternal emphasis was deeply rooted in a broader gendered division of labor that positioned men as primary breadwinners and women as primary caregivers within the household. During the postwar decades, such gender-specific role expectations were not only institutionalized through labor market and welfare policies but also widely internalized by individuals, contributing to a stable and enduring family organization (Brinton, 1993). Consequently, educational involvement became culturally assigned to mothers as a natural extension of their caregiving duties.

Although Japanese women's labor force participation declined during the postwar decades and reached its lowest point in the mid-1970s, this trend reflected the predominance of full-time homemakers at the time. Since then, their participation has gradually increased (OECD, 2020). While many women continue to leave the workforce at childbirth, a growing proportion return to employment as their children grow older, often through non-regular positions that allow greater flexibility for balancing work and

family responsibilities (Raymo & Lim, 2011). Parallel to these shifts, traditional gender role attitudes have gradually weakened, particularly among younger generations (Choe et al., 2014; Piotrowski et al., 2019).

Despite these changes, the fundamental structure of domestic labor division has remained largely intact. As a result, many women have been burdened with a “second shift,” combining paid employment with primary responsibility for household and caregiving tasks (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). The persistence of such dual burdens has been cited as a contributing factor to Japan’s declining fertility rates. In response to growing concerns about gender inequality and family well-being, policy initiatives and public discourse have increasingly emphasized the importance of promoting greater male participation in domestic labor. This trend has extended beyond housework and childcare to include rising interest in paternal involvement in children’s education, although the motivations behind this shift are complex and multifaceted (Taga, 2010; Tendo & Takahashi, 2011).

2. The Present Study

Building on the preceding discussion, this study investigates how educational responsibilities are divided between mothers and fathers of junior high school students in Japan. Specifically, it seeks to clarify how the division of parental involvement varies according to parents’ socioeconomic resources and the gender of the child.

First, drawing on the resource bargaining perspective, the study examines whether the parent with higher educational attainment or economic standing tends to be less involved in everyday educational support activities. Second, considering the potential influence of child gender on parental behaviors (Raley & Bianchi, 2006), the study explores whether patterns of educational responsibility differ between families with sons and those with daughters.

Although the time constraint hypothesis is not directly tested due to data limitations, maternal employment status is included as a control variable. This is because time availability is likely to be associated with both socioeconomic resources and gender-related dynamics, and thus must be accounted for when examining their effects on parental role-sharing.

By addressing these questions, the study aims to advance a more nuanced

understanding of how structural conditions and cultural expectations interact to shape the gendered organization of parental involvement within Japanese households.

3. Method

3.1 Data

This study utilizes original survey data collected in October 2024 from 1,600 parents of junior high school students in Japan. The survey is part of a longitudinal study designed to collect information about the same child from Grade 7 or 8 through Grade 9, with multiple waves planned. The present analysis focuses on data from the first wave, which captures baseline information on parenting practices and educational beliefs.

Several existing nationally representative surveys in Japan collect data from parents, but in most cases, the respondent is the mother, and these surveys do not include information on the spouse's involvement. As a result, it is difficult to examine paternal involvement or the division of educational responsibilities between parents. Although some other datasets include couple-paired data, the number of cases involving school-aged children is typically small, and questions about the division of labor tend to focus on housework and childcare, with limited attention to educational involvement. Given these limitations, this study employed an original survey designed to capture detailed information on the educational roles of both fathers and mothers.

The survey was administered online using an opt-in panel. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the longitudinal design involving up to three waves of data collection, and the types of questions included (e.g., parenting practices, educational beliefs, and household characteristics). They were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could discontinue the survey at any point without penalty. Only those who gave their informed consent proceeded to answer the questionnaire.

While the use of a non-probability online panel sample limits the generalizability of the results, it enabled us to recruit a sufficiently large and demographically diverse group of both fathers and mothers of junior high school students. Prior research has also suggested that, in the Japanese context, estimates of relationships between variables obtained from non-probability web surveys may not differ substantially from those based on probability samples (Todoroki & Kaeriyama, 2014). This design is therefore

particularly suited to the study's aim of exploring patterns and variations in gendered parental involvement, which are difficult to examine using existing nationally representative surveys.

To identify eligible participants, a preliminary screening survey asked respondents about the number of children they had at each grade level. Based on this information, the main survey instructed respondents to answer questions about a specific child following a standardized rule: respondents with a child in Grade 8 were asked about that child; if no Grade 8 child was present but a Grade 7 child was, they answered about the Grade 7 child. In cases where both grades were represented, one child was randomly selected. Respondents with multiple children in the same grade (e.g., twins) were excluded to minimize confusion in longitudinal tracking. A total of 1,600 valid responses were collected. The sampling design ensured a balanced distribution across parental roles and child grade levels: 400 fathers and 400 mothers of Grade 7 students, and 400 fathers and 400 mothers of Grade 8 students.

3.2 Variables

Dependent Variables

Parental Involvement Measures. Parental involvement was assessed using ten items that asked respondents to evaluate both their own behaviors and those of their spouse. The items covered a range of school-related activities: (1) urging the child to study, (2) scolding the child for low test scores, (3) helping with homework, (4) encouraging interest in studying, (5) providing academic instruction, (6) conveying the importance of studying, (7) offering advice when the child struggled with studies, (8) discussing episodes at school, (9) discussing studies and grades, and (10) discussing future plans and career paths.

Each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale: "strongly applicable," "somewhat applicable," "not very applicable," and "not applicable at all." For spouse-reported involvement, an additional "don't know" option was provided. Such responses were rare (the highest incidence was 3.9% for "encouraging interest in studying") and were treated as missing values.

Scale Construction. The four response categories were numerically coded from 4 ("strongly applicable") to 1 ("not applicable at all") and treated as continuous variables.

Responses were recoded based on the respondent's gender, enabling the construction of two parallel sets of variables representing fathers' and mothers' parental involvement.

As shown in Table 1, an exploratory factor analysis (maximum likelihood method with promax rotation) identified three dimensions of parental involvement: communicative involvement (Factor 1), instructional support (Factor 2), and directive involvement (Factor 3). Communicative involvement was measured as the average of items (6) through (10), instructional support as the average of items (3) through (5), and directive involvement as the average of items (1) and (2). Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable to good internal consistency: .866 (communicative), .752 (instructional), and .875 (directive) for fathers; and .843, .666, and .801, respectively, for mothers. Although the alpha coefficient for instructional support among mothers (.666) was somewhat lower, it was considered acceptable for exploratory research.

[Table 1 around here]

Independent Variables

Socioeconomic Resources. Educational attainment was recoded into a binary indicator distinguishing university graduates from non-graduates. Based on this classification, parental educational combinations were categorized into four groups: (1) both parents are university graduates, (2) only the father is a graduate, (3) only the mother is a graduate, and (4) neither parent is a graduate.

Household economic resources were measured using two variables. The first was combined annual household income, measured in units of one million yen. The second was the income difference between the father and mother (father's income minus mother's income), capturing the relative economic standing between spouses. Negative values indicated that the mother's income exceeded the father's. Responses of "don't know" for either own or spouse's income were treated as missing values.

Employment Status. Mothers' employment status was classified into three categories: (1) full-time employment (including company executives, corporate officers, permanent full-time employees, and self-employed individuals); (2) part-time or flexible employment (including part-time, temporary, contract, home-based piecework, and family workers); and (3) not employed (e.g., homemakers). Employment status was

considered only for mothers, as nearly all fathers were in full-time employment, rendering it analytically impractical to include paternal categories. Maternal employment status served as a proxy for time constraints, given the absence of direct measures of working hours.

Child Gender. To examine potential differences in parental involvement depending on the child's gender, a dummy variable indicating whether the child is female was included.

Respondent Gender. Because parental involvement was reported either by the parent themselves or by their spouse, a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent was female was included to account for potential reporting bias.

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

[Table 2 around here]

3.3 Analytical strategy

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, the differences in the mean scores of the three types of parental involvement were descriptively examined by respondent gender to identify any systematic reporting biases that might influence subsequent analyses. Second, a latent profile analysis was conducted using fathers' and mothers' scores for communicative, instructional, and directive involvement as continuous indicators to classify households into distinct profiles. Finally, latent class multinomial logistic regression models were estimated to examine how parental socioeconomic resources and child gender predicted profile membership. Multiple imputation was applied with 20 imputations to address missing data in the estimation of the regression models.

This study employed latent profile analysis to identify patterns of parental involvement at the household level. Latent profile analysis is a person-centered method that enables the identification of unobserved subgroups (latent classes) based on patterns across multiple observed variables (Collins & Lanza, 2013). In this analysis, six indicators were used: communicative, instructional, and directive involvement, as reported for both the respondent and their spouse (i.e., the mother and the father in the household).

The analysis was conducted at the couple level, treating each household as a unit of observation. This approach captures how educational responsibilities are shared or

divided between mothers and fathers within the same family. Rather than analyzing each parent's involvement in isolation, this strategy allows for the identification of distinct role-sharing patterns that emerge from the joint involvement profiles of both parents, as perceived by one respondent.

Model selection was based on a combination of statistical fit indices (including BIC and sample-size adjusted BIC) and theoretical interpretability. After identifying the latent classes, a multinomial logistic regression was conducted to examine how family characteristics predict class membership. These covariates were included as auxiliary variables, which allows for the prediction of latent class membership without influencing the identification of latent classes. To address missing data in the regression models, multiple imputation was applied with 20 imputations.

4. Results

Figure 1 shows the differences in the mean scores for three types of parental involvement—communicative, instructional, and directive—for fathers and mothers, as reported by male and female respondents. Male respondents tended to report higher levels of involvement by fathers (themselves). Female respondents, in contrast, reported higher levels of communicative involvement by mothers, but this pattern reversed for instructional support, where male respondents also rated paternal involvement higher. No significant gender difference was observed in the mean score of mothers' directive involvement. In sum, respondents of both genders tended to overestimate their own parental involvement compared to how it was perceived by their spouse, with this tendency being particularly pronounced among male respondents.

From another perspective, Figure 1 shows that male respondents perceive fathers (themselves) and mothers (their partners) as being equally involved in communicative and instructional support. In contrast, female respondents perceive communicative involvement as being more strongly concentrated on the mother (themselves), indicating a noticeable discrepancy in perceptions between male and female respondents.

While it is not possible to determine which perception more accurately reflects actual involvement based on the current data, the potential for reporting bias should be taken into account when interpreting the results of the following analysis.

[Figure 1 around here]

To examine how the division of parental involvement relates to relative resources and gender, a latent profile analysis was conducted. As a first step, the number of latent classes was evaluated. To determine the optimal number of latent classes, models with three to five classes were estimated and compared using standard fit indices, including AIC, BIC, adjusted BIC, entropy, and the Lo-Mendell-Rubin adjusted likelihood ratio test (LMR-LRT). Among these, the five-class model showed the lowest values for AIC, BIC, and sample-size adjusted BIC, indicating the best overall fit. Although the improvement in the LMR-LRT was only marginal ($p = .058$), the five-class solution also demonstrated acceptable entropy (.701) and offered conceptually distinct and substantively meaningful patterns of parental involvement. Based on both statistical and interpretive considerations, the five-class model was selected for further analysis.

The five latent classes identified in the analysis represent distinct patterns of parental academic involvement (see Table 2 for the mean values of each involvement type by class). Class 1 (14.1%) is characterized by low to moderate involvement from fathers and relatively high involvement from mothers, suggesting a division of labor in which mothers play the leading role across all types of involvement. Class 2 (11.6%) reflects low involvement from both parents, especially in fathers' instructional support and mothers' directive involvement, indicating minimal academic engagement in this group. Class 3 (26.8%) is distinguished by high levels of communicative and instructional involvement from both parents, while their directive involvement remains moderate, suggesting a more collaborative and supportive style. In contrast, Class 4 (28.6%) shows particularly high levels of directive involvement from both mothers and fathers, pointing to a more controlling or managerial pattern of support. Finally, Class 5 (18.8%) displays the highest levels of parental involvement across all three types, with both parents actively and comprehensively engaged in their child's education.

[Table 3 around here]

The estimation results of the latent class multinomial logistic regression analysis are shown in Table 3. Couples in which only the father is a university graduate are more

likely to belong to Class 1 compared to those in which both parents hold university degrees. Similarly, couples in which neither parent is a university graduate are also more likely to be classified into Class 1. These findings suggest that lower maternal educational attainment is associated with reduced academic involvement by both parents. In contrast, couples in which neither parent is a university graduate are also more likely to be assigned to Class 4, indicating that some low-education couples exhibit relatively active directive involvement. There is also a marginally significant tendency for couples in which only the father is a university graduate to belong to Class 4 ($p < .10$), suggesting that directive involvement may be more common in families where the mother has lower educational attainment. No significant associations were found for couples in which only the mother is a university graduate, possibly due to the small sample size in this category.

The results show that a greater income difference in favor of the father is significantly associated with a lower likelihood of belonging to Class 1 and Class 4, and marginally associated with a lower likelihood of Class 2 membership ($p < .10$), compared to Class 3. This suggests that when the father has a relatively higher income than the mother, the couple is less likely to exhibit patterns characterized by low, mother-led, or directive involvement. Instead, such income dynamics may be more conducive to more balanced or father-inclusive involvement patterns, as represented by Class 3. In contrast, the total income of both parents was marginally associated with a higher likelihood of belonging to Class 5 ($p < .10$), which was characterized by high overall involvement, with particularly high levels of directive involvement. This implies that absolute income may relate differently to parental involvement patterns than relative income distribution within the household, highlighting the complex interplay between economic resources and role allocation.

Further, the analysis revealed significant gender-related patterns of parental involvement. Families with daughters were significantly less likely to be classified into Class 4 and Class 5 compared to Class 3. Class 4 was characterized by relatively high directive involvement, while Class 5 involved high levels of involvement across all forms, including directive involvement. Additionally, households where the respondent was the mother were significantly more likely to belong to Class 2, and marginally less likely to belong to Class 4 and Class 5 ($p < .10$). Class 2 was characterized by generally low involvement and minimal differences between mothers and fathers. These results suggest

associations between both the child's gender and the respondent's gender and the structure of parental involvement.

[Table 4 around here]

5. Discussion

This study examined how Japanese mothers and fathers of junior high school students share responsibilities for their child's academic involvement. Using latent profile analysis, we identified five distinct patterns of role-sharing based on three types of parental involvement (i.e., communicative, instructional, and directive) by each parent. A key strength of this study lies in its household-level approach to parental involvement. Unlike prior research that has typically analyzed maternal and paternal behaviors separately, the use of latent profile analysis enables the identification of role-sharing patterns that emerge at the family level. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how educational responsibilities are distributed, negotiated, and enacted within the family unit.

The results provide partial support for the relative resources hypothesis. Specifically, couples in which only the father was a university graduate were more likely to be classified into Class 1, which was characterized by low paternal and moderate maternal involvement. Similarly, couples in which neither parent was a university graduate also showed a higher likelihood of Class 1 membership. While this may initially appear to support the idea that the partner with fewer resources tends to take on more domestic responsibilities, the overall pattern suggests that maternal educational attainment itself plays a particularly central role, rather than the relative difference between partners. In families where the mother does not have higher education, both parents may engage less in their child's education. This indicates that maternal education can function as a key driver of overall involvement levels.

In contrast, couples in which neither parent was a university graduate were also more likely to belong to Class 4, characterized by particularly high levels of directive involvement. This pattern suggests that when parents have limited educational capital, they may adopt strategies that emphasize discipline and oversight, especially when other forms of involvement, such as instructional or communicative support, are less feasible. Lareau (2011) notes that working-class and poor families often adopt parenting

approaches centered on authority and control. These practices reflect structural constraints and limited access to institutional resources, rather than a lack of interest or concern. Rather than pathologizing such strategies, they should be recognized as legitimate and responsive efforts to support children within constrained circumstances. Accordingly, future research and institutional approaches should focus on expanding the range of culturally and materially feasible support strategies available to families with fewer resources.

Economic resources also shaped parental involvement patterns. The income difference between spouses was more predictive of class membership than total household income. A greater income gap in favor of the father was associated with a lower likelihood of belonging to Class 1, 2, or 4, and a higher likelihood of being in Class 3, which reflects more balanced and active involvement by both parents. At first glance, this may appear to contradict the relative resources hypothesis, which would predict disengagement from the higher-earning partner. However, educational involvement may differ from routine domestic tasks in that it is often perceived as more meaningful or personally rewarding. Building on Sullivan's (2021) insight that some forms of childcare can be emotionally satisfying, it is possible that socioeconomically advantaged fathers see educational involvement as a valued opportunity to contribute. Rather than opting out, they may feel entitled or motivated to participate, especially in ways that align with their expertise or ideals. The lack of association between total household income and class membership further underscores the salience of within-couple dynamics over absolute wealth.

The analysis also revealed the influence of gender norms. Families with daughters were less likely to belong to directive-oriented or high-involvement classes (Class 4 and 5), suggesting that parents may adjust their involvement strategies based on the child's gender. While Class 3 and Class 5 both involved high levels of communicative and instructional support, Class 5 was distinguished by particularly high levels of directive involvement. The underrepresentation of daughters in Class 5 suggests that directive strategies may be perceived as more necessary or appropriate for boys. These results align with research showing that controlling or disciplinary parenting is more common with sons, especially in cultural contexts with strong gender role norms (Endendijk et al., 2016). Although no clear same-gender parent effect (e.g., mothers of daughters) was found, the

child's gender appeared to influence the style, rather than the amount, of parental engagement.

Parental gender also shaped role-sharing patterns. Households in which the respondent was the mother were more likely to be classified into Class 2, characterized by relatively low and balanced involvement between parents. They were also marginally less likely to belong to Classes 4 and 5, both of which involved greater use of directive strategies. This may reflect differences in how mothers and fathers perceive or report their involvement. For example, mothers may be more aware of or critical toward their own use of directive practices. Alternatively, some mothers may downplay their involvement if they feel it falls short of ideal standards. These possibilities highlight the importance of considering not only actual behaviors but also self-perception and reporting tendencies when analyzing family involvement.

More broadly, the diversity of parental involvement styles identified in this study invites a reconsideration of normative assumptions about what constitutes ideal parental engagement. Rather than promoting uniform models, it may be more productive to acknowledge the multiple, context-dependent ways in which parents contribute to their children's development. These findings also suggest that class-based variation in engagement styles may reflect uneven adaptation to evolving institutional expectations and cultural norms. Recent research has shown that fathers' involvement has become increasingly supportive in many East Asian societies, including Japan, China, South Korea, and Taiwan (Ho et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2022; Li, 2020). In Japan, such shifts appear more common among highly educated families, whereas less-educated households may face more barriers to adopting emerging norms of "active" parenting. Recognizing this diversity can help ensure that policy and institutional efforts to promote parental engagement are inclusive, responsive, and attuned to the varying constraints and opportunities that families face.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. First, the measures of parental involvement rely on respondents' self-reports regarding both their own and their spouse's behaviors. This raises concerns about the accuracy of reported spouse involvement due to the lack of dyadic data. Moreover, prior research has shown that perceptions of parental involvement

can vary significantly between parents and children, suggesting that parental reports may be subject to social desirability bias (Thomas et al., 2020). If so, even dyadic data cannot fully eliminate such bias and should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, incorporating multiple informants in future research would provide a more nuanced and balanced understanding of parental involvement dynamics.

Second, this study examined a limited set of indicators focused primarily on school-related activities. Other important dimensions of parental involvement, such as engagement with schools and teachers, participation in extracurricular activities, or emotional support provided outside the academic context, were not included and should be addressed in future research. In the Japanese context, media discourse, particularly in parenting magazines targeting business professionals, has increasingly emphasized fathers' involvement in tutoring and managing early educational preparation, particularly in relation to entrance examinations for private junior high schools (Taga, 2010; Tendo & Takahashi, 2011). Considering such forms of involvement may reveal different patterns in how fathers participate in their children's education, offering a more nuanced understanding of their roles.

Third, another limitation concerns the lack of information on parents' educational beliefs, expectations for their children, and gender role attitudes. Although such subjective orientations may shape parental involvement patterns, the survey design did not allow us to collect comparable data from both fathers and mothers. This constraint limits our ability to examine how parents' beliefs and orientations jointly influence the observed profiles. Future research would benefit from couple-based survey designs that capture both parents' beliefs and orientations, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how parental orientations interact to shape involvement patterns.

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Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Parental Involvement

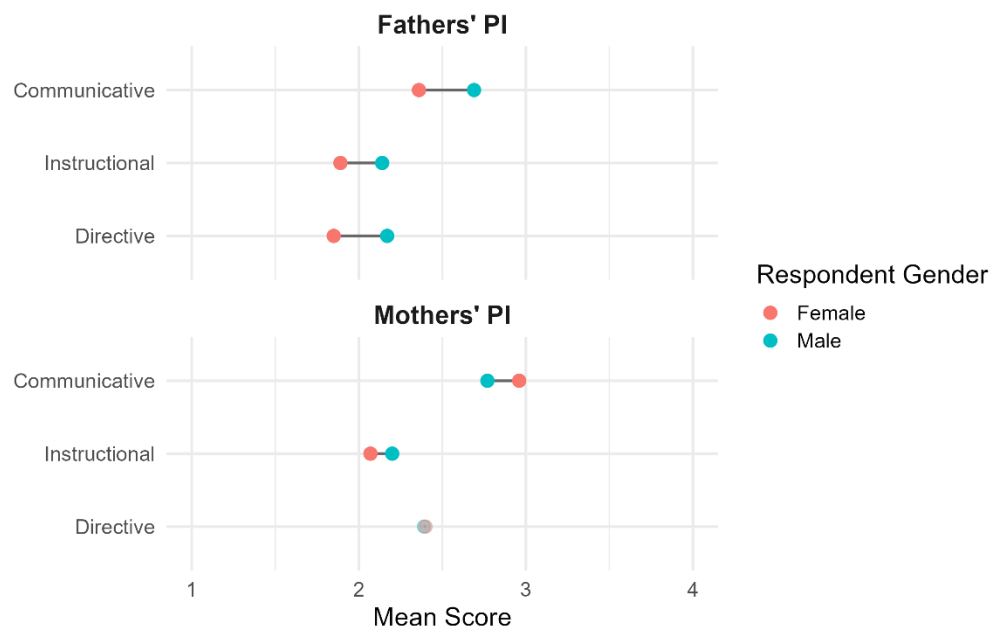
	Father's involvement			Mather's involvement		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Urging the child to study	0.049	0.032	0.802	0.054	0.028	0.834
Scolding the child for low test scores	0.000	-0.035	0.847	-0.003	-0.034	0.775
Helping with homework	-0.097	0.675	0.073	-0.147	0.659	0.129
Encouraging interest in studying	0.295	0.564	-0.045	0.158	0.655	-0.086
Providing academic instruction	-0.017	0.871	-0.002	-0.084	0.889	0.007
Conveying the importance of studying	0.508	0.226	0.167	0.440	0.299	0.118
Offering advice when the child struggled with studies	0.527	0.365	-0.109	0.493	0.358	-0.131
Discussing episodes at school	0.740	-0.035	-0.090	0.726	-0.090	-0.038
Discussing studies and grades	0.792	-0.002	0.111	0.767	-0.046	0.147
Discussing future plans and career paths	0.852	-0.057	0.020	0.843	-0.069	-0.017
Rotated Eigenvalues	3.810	3.306	2.118	2.928	2.638	1.675

Note. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the maximum likelihood method with promax rotation. Factor loadings greater than 0.4 are shaded.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean or %	S.D.
Fathers' involvement			
Communicative involvement	1,488	2.537	0.721
Instructional support	1,499	2.022	0.745
Directive involvement	1,500	2.019	0.866
Mothers' involvement			
Communicative involvement	1,505	2.873	0.614
Instructional support	1,509	2.132	0.709
Directive involvement	1,537	2.396	0.880
Parental education			
Both parents university graduates	1,473	32.5%	
Only father university graduate	1,473	28.2%	
Only mother university graduate	1,473	7.4%	
Neither university graduate	1,473	32.0%	
Mother's employment status			
Full-time employment (ref.)	1,562	36.2%	
Part-time employment	1,562	44.8%	
Not employed	1,562	19.0%	
Father–mother income difference	1,247	4.841	3.734
Parental total income	1,247	8.676	3.632
Child's gender (female = 1)	1,600	49.6%	
Respondent's gender (female = 1)	1,600	50.0%	

Figure 1. Female–Male Differences in Parental Involvement (PI) Scores



Note: Points with non-significant differences at the 5% level are displayed with greater transparency.

Table 3. Means of Communicative, Instructional, and Directive Involvement by Latent Class

	Fathers' involvement			Mothers' involvement		
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)
Class 1	1.384	1.167	1.307	2.935	2.126	2.598
Class 2	1.903	1.351	1.254	2.232	1.378	1.467
Class 3	2.968	2.351	1.508	3.163	2.340	1.982
Class 4	2.543	1.996	2.424	2.668	2.004	2.590
Class 5	3.084	2.619	3.109	3.220	2.602	3.226

Note: (a) communicative involvement; (b) instructional support; (c) directive involvement.

Table 4. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Latent Class Membership

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 4	Class 5
Parental education				
Both university graduates (ref.)	—	—	—	—
Only father university graduate	0.640 *	-0.303	0.521 +	0.057
Only mother university graduate	0.074	0.492	0.619	-0.435
Neither university graduate	0.910 **	0.095	0.801 **	0.072
Maternal employment				
Full-time employment (ref.)	—	—	—	—
Part-time employment	-0.133	0.035	0.073	0.036
Not employed	0.586	0.350	0.336	0.604
Total income	-0.030	-0.018	-0.020	0.064 +
Income difference	-0.102 *	-0.108 +	-0.098 *	-0.068
Girl (Child's gender)	-0.052	-0.141	-0.884 **	-0.916 **
Female (Respondent's gender)	0.215	2.642 **	-0.477 +	-0.381 +

Note: Class 3 (balanced involvement) is the reference category.

Income difference is calculated as father's income minus mother's income.

Model fit from latent profile estimation: AIC = 19805.3; BIC = 20020.4; sample-size adjusted BIC = 19893.4; Deviance = 19725.3.

N = 1,600; multiple imputation with 20 datasets applied.

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$.