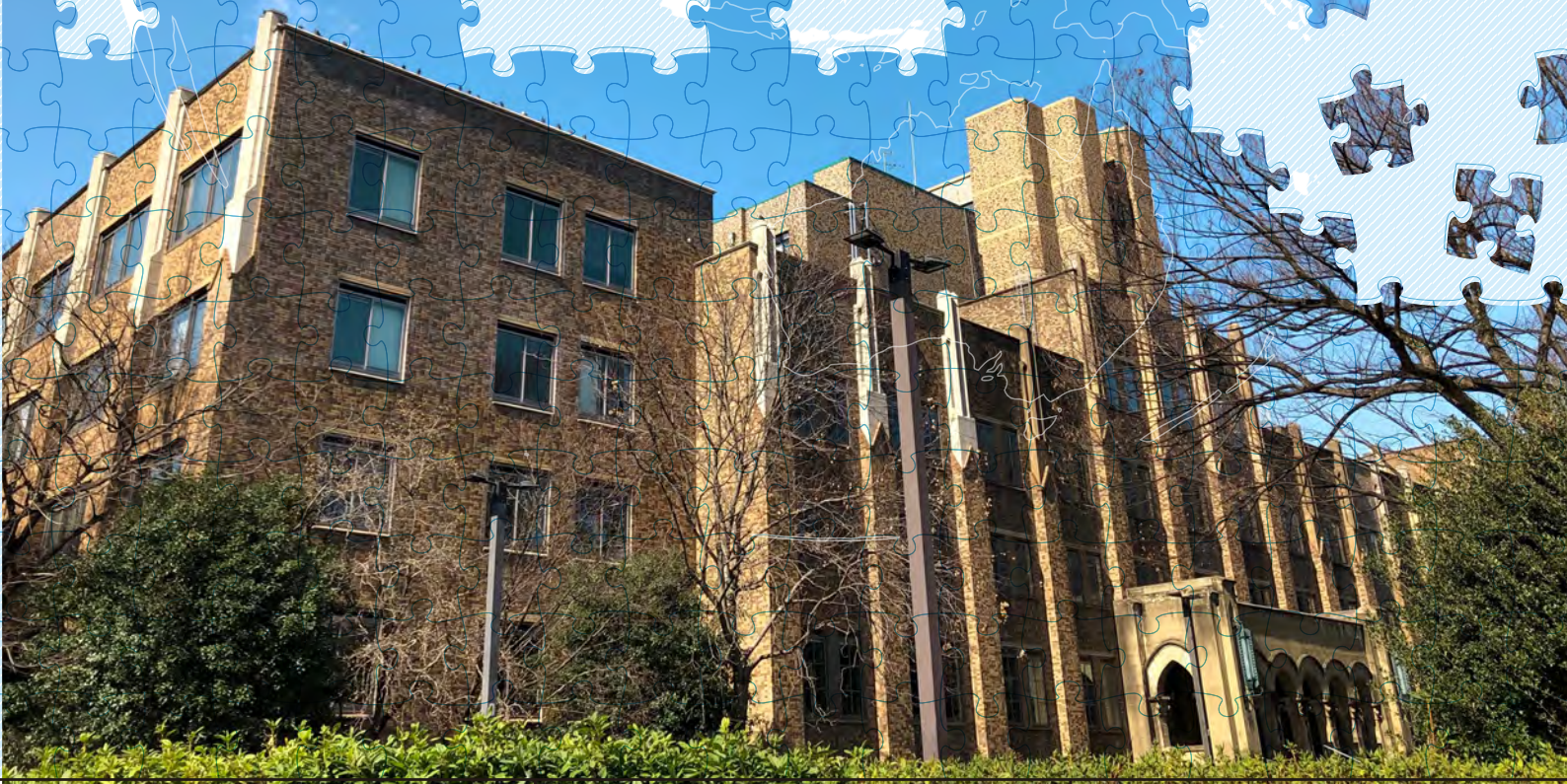
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Who Uses Both School and Out-of-School Learning Settings? Evidence from a Survey of Parents of Children Experiencing Futōkō



No. 142

Date November. 2026

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Name Takayoshi Beppu, Madoka Nakano, Natsu Sasaki

Who Uses Both School and Out-of-School Learning Settings?

Evidence from a Survey of Parents of Children Experiencing *Futōkō*

Takayoshi Beppu[1)], Madoka Nakano[2)], and Natsu Sasaki[3)]

1) Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo

2) Center for Coproduction of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity [IncluDE], The University of Tokyo

3) Department of Mental Health, Graduate School of Medicine, The University of Tokyo

Corresponding author: Takayoshi Beppu

Email: tbeppu@p.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Abstract

This study examines patterns in the use of school and out-of-school learning settings among children experiencing *futōkō*, a principal administrative subcategory used in Japan to classify students experiencing prolonged school absence. It first describes patterns of use at the child and family levels and then explores the associations between the observed use of both settings and family circumstances and children's conditions. Although learning and support settings available to children experiencing *futōkō* have expanded beyond their schools to include out-of-school settings such as public educational support centers and private alternative learning settings commonly known as "free schools" in Japan, little is known about how individual children use school and out-of-school settings in combination. Using data from an online survey of 1,286 parents of elementary and junior high school students experiencing *futōkō*, this study classified the children's use of learning settings into four patterns: school only, out-of-school settings only, both settings, and neither setting. Binary logistic regression analyses were then conducted to explore the family and child conditions associated with the observed use of both settings. The analyses were performed separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples. Overall, 31.0% of the children used school only, 9.9% used out-of-school settings only, 32.2% used both settings, and 27.0% used neither setting. Having a diagnosed condition was positively associated with the use of both settings in both respondent-specific models. Variables corresponding to fathers' full-time employment were negatively associated with the use of both settings, whereas those corresponding to mothers' full-time employment had positive coefficients. In the mother-respondent model, having a university degree or higher was also positively associated with the use of both settings. These findings suggest that the

observed use of both school and out-of-school learning settings is associated with multiple family and child conditions rather than simply reflecting differences in the resources available to families.

Keywords:

school attendance problems; *futōkō*; school and out-of-school learning settings; patterns of use; parent survey

1. Introduction

School absence is widely recognized as an important educational issue across countries. The OECD employs School Attendance Problems (SAPs) as an umbrella term for various forms of non-attendance among students formally enrolled in primary and secondary education (OECD, 2026). However, education systems differ in how they classify school absence and in the criteria they use to identify it.

In Japanese administrative statistics, students absent from school for 30 days or more during an academic year are classified under the category of long-term absence (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2026). *Futōkō* is one of the subcategories of long-term absence and is a principal administrative category used in Japanese official statistics to classify students experiencing prolonged school absence for reasons other than illness or financial circumstances (MEXT, 2026). In the 2024 academic year, approximately 350,000 elementary and junior high school students were classified as experiencing *futōkō*, accounting for 3.9% of all students at these levels (MEXT, 2026). The Japanese government began conducting surveys of school absence shortly after World War II, indicating that responses to children experiencing school absence have long been discussed as an issue of educational administration in Japan (Yamada, 2010; Kato, 2012). More recently, increases in both the number and proportion of students experiencing *futōkō* have generated heightened policy and public interest in how these children should be supported (MEXT, 2026).

Alongside approaches centered on a return to regular school attendance, the use of diverse learning settings both within and outside school has increasingly been recognized in policy as a form of support for children experiencing *futōkō* (Sakai, 2023). In 2016, the Act on Securing Educational Opportunities was enacted, providing a renewed legal framework for supporting children experiencing *futōkō*; the Act came into force in 2017 (Takayama, 2024). A notification issued by MEXT in 2023 further identified a range of support options, including in-school educational support centers, public educational support centers located outside school, special schools for students experiencing *futōkō* (later renamed Schools for Diverse Learning), private alternative learning settings commonly known as “free schools,” and support provided by nonprofit organizations (MEXT, 2023).

However, despite the expansion of available support settings, only limited evidence exists regarding which children and families use which settings. For example, among students classified as experiencing long-term absence in the 2024 academic year, 21.8% of elementary school

students (N = 50,330) and 25.7% of junior high school students (N = 71,045) were reported to have received professional consultation or guidance outside school. The corresponding proportions receiving professional consultation or guidance through school-based organizations or services were 27.2% among elementary school students (N = 62,740) and 33.3% among junior high school students (N = 92,054) (MEXT, 2026). These aggregate statistics do not reveal which family circumstances and child conditions are associated with the use of support within and outside school. Although these administrative measures differ from the indicators of learning-setting use examined in the present study, they illustrate the limitations of statistics reported separately for school-based and out-of-school provision.

Furthermore, patterns of use at the child and family levels, including whether individual children use school and out-of-school learning settings separately, in combination, or not at all, remain insufficiently understood. Surveys related to *futōkō* have tended to report the extent to which particular school-based and out-of-school settings are used, without identifying patterns of use among individual children and families (e.g., MEXT, 2026; Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, 2024; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2023). Consequently, little is known not only about how individual children use these settings but also about how different patterns of use are associated with family circumstances and children's conditions. Describing these patterns and their associations is an important first step toward examining whether the expansion of support options may be accompanied by disparities in their use.

This study therefore focuses specifically on the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings. The use of both settings refers to an observed pattern in which a child used both the school in which they were enrolled and an in-person out-of-school learning setting during the survey reference period. As the range of learning and support options available to children experiencing *futōkō* has expanded in Japan, the use of both settings warrants particular attention because it indicates that school and out-of-school settings do not necessarily function as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Two possible interpretations of the use of both settings can be considered. On the one hand, access to multiple settings may be enabled by family resources, including parents' educational backgrounds and employment circumstances. On the other hand, it may reflect a process in which children and families try multiple settings in response to needs that may not be addressed within a single setting. This study does not seek to determine which interpretation applies or to evaluate the use of both settings normatively. Rather, it descriptively examines the family circumstances and

children's conditions associated with this observed pattern of use.

RQ1: What is the distribution of the four patterns of learning-setting use, namely school only, out-of-school settings only, both settings, and neither setting, among children experiencing *futōkō*?

RQ2: What family circumstances and child conditions are associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings among children experiencing *futōkō*?

To address these questions, this study draws on data from an online survey of parents of elementary and junior high school students experiencing *futōkō*. It first describes the distribution of the four patterns of use and then conducts binary logistic regression analyses using the observed use of both the child's school and an in-person out-of-school learning setting as the dependent variable. The family circumstances examined are the respondent's educational attainment and employment status, household income, the presence or absence of a spouse, and the spouse's educational attainment and employment status. The analysis also includes whether the child has a diagnosed condition. The analyses are conducted separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples because variables referring to the "respondent" and the "spouse" represent different family members depending on whether the respondent is the child's mother or father. This stratification maintains consistency in the substantive meaning of the variables within each model.

2. Data and Methods

2.1 Data

This study uses data from an original survey conducted by the authors among parents of elementary and junior high school students experiencing *futōkō*. The online survey was conducted in July 2025 and obtained responses from 1,286 parents aged 25–59. The respondents comprised 550 mothers (42.8%) and 736 fathers (57.2%).

The survey included questions about children's use of school and out-of-school learning settings, parents' employment status, household characteristics, and children's conditions. The data therefore enable an examination of the associations between family circumstances and patterns in children's use of learning settings.

However, because the survey was conducted online, the sample is not representative of the overall population of parents of children experiencing *futōkō*. The findings should therefore be interpreted as associations observed within the survey sample.

2.2 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was constructed from information on the child's use of school and out-of-school learning settings during the preceding two weeks. Specifically, the item encompassed public educational support centers, including facilities formerly referred to as adaptation assistance classrooms, as well as free schools and other similar settings. The survey asked, "On average, how often did your child attend or use each of the following settings during the past two weeks?" The analysis used responses to two items: "the school in which the child is currently enrolled" and "in-person learning settings outside school, such as free schools, adaptation assistance classrooms, and public educational support centers."

First, to describe overall patterns of use, the responses were classified into four categories: school only, out-of-school settings only, both school and out-of-school settings, and neither setting.

The main analysis focuses on the use of both school and out-of-school settings. A dummy variable for the use of both settings was coded 1 when the child had used both the school in which they were currently enrolled and an in-person out-of-school learning setting at least once per week on average during the preceding two weeks, and 0 otherwise. This variable was used as the dependent variable in the binary logistic regression analyses.

Two points should be noted regarding this variable. First, as discussed in Section 1, this study does not assume that the use of both settings necessarily represents a desirable outcome for the child. Second, the survey measured in-person out-of-school learning settings using a single item encompassing public educational support centers, free schools, and other similar settings. These settings, however, have different institutional characteristics. Public educational support centers, formerly known as adaptation assistance classrooms, are established and administered by local governments. By contrast, free schools are primarily operated by private organizations and tend to be concentrated in urban areas (Fujine 2022). Because these settings differ in terms of cost, operating body, and geographical distribution, distinguishing among different types of out-of-school settings remains a task for future research.

2.3 Independent Variables

The independent variables were broadly divided into those concerning family circumstances and those concerning the child's condition.

First, the variables concerning family circumstances included the respondent's educational attainment, household income, the respondent's employment status, the presence or absence of a spouse, the spouse's educational attainment, and the spouse's employment status. For the respondent's educational attainment, a dummy variable was coded 1 if the respondent had completed university or higher education and 0 if the respondent had less than a university education. Household income was represented by the midpoint of each income category and converted into units of one million yen to facilitate the interpretation of the coefficients. For the respondent's employment status, a dummy variable was coded 1 if the respondent was employed full-time after the child began experiencing *futōkō* and 0 otherwise.

The spouse-related variables separately captured the presence of a spouse, the spouse's educational attainment, and the spouse's employment status. Three dummy variables were constructed. The first, spouse present, was coded 1 if the respondent had a spouse and 0 otherwise. The second, spouse with a university degree or higher, was coded 1 if the respondent had a spouse who had completed university or higher education and 0 if the respondent had no spouse or if the spouse had less than a university education. The third, spouse employed full-time, was coded 1 if the respondent had a spouse who was employed full-time and 0 if the respondent had no spouse or if the spouse was not employed full-time. Thus, for respondents without a spouse, both spouse-related educational attainment and employment status were coded 0.

Under this coding scheme, the coefficient for spouse present represents the difference between respondents with a spouse who had less than a university education and was not employed full-time and respondents without a spouse, because the variables for the spouse's educational attainment and full-time employment were included simultaneously. Among respondents with a spouse, the coefficient for spouse with a university degree or higher indicates the association between the spouse's educational attainment and the use of both settings, adjusting for the spouse's employment status. Similarly, the coefficient for spouse employed full-time indicates the association between the spouse's employment status and the use of both settings, adjusting for the spouse's educational attainment.

Second, the presence of any diagnosed condition was included as a variable concerning the child's condition. A dummy variable was coded 1 if the child had received a medical diagnosis of at least one of the following: a neurodevelopmental disorder, an anxiety disorder, orthostatic dysregulation, or another medical condition. It was coded 0 if none of these conditions applied. This variable was included as an indicator of a diagnosed condition that may be related to the child's support needs and use of school and out-of-school learning settings.

2.4 Control Variables

The models included control variables relating to the respondent's condition, area of residence, the child's characteristics, and the child's experience of *futōkō*.

The respondent's condition was measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). A dummy variable for depressive symptoms was coded 1 if the respondent had a PHQ-9 score of 15 or higher and 0 otherwise. A score of 15 or higher indicates moderately severe or severe depressive symptoms (Kroenke et al., 2001). The validity of the Japanese version of the PHQ-9 has been established in previous research (Muramatsu et al., 2018). To account for regional differences, three dummy variables were included for residence in the Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka metropolitan areas, respectively. Areas outside these three metropolitan areas constituted the reference category.

The models also included variables for the child's gender, grade level, and whether the child was enrolled in a public school. For grade level, the early elementary grades served as the reference category, and dummy variables were constructed for the middle elementary grades, upper elementary grades, and junior high school. The duration of *futōkō* was represented by a dummy variable coded 1 if the child had been experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer and 0 otherwise.

2.5 Analytical Strategy

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, descriptive statistics were examined for the full sample and separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples. These analyses describe patterns in the use of school and out-of-school learning settings and the distributions of the key variables. They also indicate the prevalence of each pattern of use, including the use of both settings, and identify distributional differences between the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples.

Second, binary logistic regression analyses were conducted with the observed use of both the

child's school and an in-person out-of-school learning setting as the dependent variable. The models were estimated separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples. The principal reason for this stratification was that variables referring to the "respondent" and the "spouse" have substantively different meanings depending on whether the respondent was the child's mother or father. For example, full-time employment of the respondent refers to the mother's employment status in the mother-respondent sample but to the father's employment status in the father-respondent sample. Estimating separate models therefore maintains consistency in the substantive meaning of these variables within each model. In addition, the descriptive statistics revealed differences between the two respondent-specific samples in patterns of learning-setting use, household composition, educational attainment, and employment status. Mothers and fathers may also differ in their caregiving roles and involvement in arranging or facilitating the use of learning and support settings. Taken together, these considerations informed the decision to estimate separate models for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples.

As a supplementary analysis, models including interaction terms involving employment status were also estimated. The interaction terms were not statistically significant, and their inclusion did not substantially alter the main results. For clarity of interpretation, the results presented in this paper therefore focus on the models without interaction terms.

3. Descriptive Statistics

This section presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for the full sample and separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples.

Regarding the use of school and out-of-school learning settings, 32.2% of the full sample used both settings, 31.0% used school only, 27.0% used neither setting, and 9.9% used out-of-school settings only. Thus, nearly one-third of the children in the sample used both school and out-of-school settings. The use of both settings was therefore not a rare or exceptional pattern in this sample and warrants analytical attention.

The distributions of the four patterns differed between the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples. In the mother-respondent sample, 34.7% of the children used school only, 30.2% used neither setting, 26.4% used both settings, and 8.7% used out-of-school settings only. In the father-respondent sample, by contrast, 36.6% used both settings, 28.1% used school only, 24.6% used neither setting, and 10.7% used out-of-school settings only. The proportion using both

settings was therefore higher in the father-respondent sample, whereas the proportions using school only and neither setting were higher in the mother-respondent sample.

Differences between the two respondent-specific samples were also observed in the variables relating to family circumstances. The proportion of respondents with a university degree or higher was 45.1% in the mother-respondent sample and 68.9% in the father-respondent sample. Similarly, 44.9% of mother respondents and 82.2% of father respondents were employed full-time. The proportion of respondents with a spouse was 84.2% in the mother-respondent sample and 95.9% in the father-respondent sample, indicating that respondents without a spouse constituted a larger proportion of the mother-respondent sample.

Regarding the variables relating to the child's condition and circumstances, 53.5% of the children in the mother-respondent sample and 51.9% of those in the father-respondent sample had at least one diagnosed condition, indicating little difference between the two samples. By contrast, the proportion of children who had been experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer was 55.5% in the mother-respondent sample and 45.5% in the father-respondent sample. The proportion of children enrolled in public schools was also somewhat higher in the mother-respondent sample than in the father-respondent sample, at 88.0% and 80.8%, respectively.

In summary, approximately one-third of the children in the full sample used both school and out-of-school learning settings. The mother-respondent and father-respondent samples also differed in the distributions of learning-setting use, respondents' educational attainment and employment status, the presence of a spouse, and the duration of *futōkō*. In light of these distributional differences, as well as the differences in the substantive meaning of the respondent- and spouse-related variables described in Section 2.5, the following section examines the associations between the use of both settings and the explanatory variables separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the binary logistic regression analyses in which the observed use of both school and out-of-school learning settings was the dependent variable. The models were estimated separately for the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples. Table 2 presents the results for the mother-respondent sample, and Table 3 presents those for the father-respondent sample.

4.1 Mother-Respondent Model

Table 2 presents the results of the binary logistic regression analysis for the mother-respondent sample. The model was statistically significant overall, with a model chi-square of 89.209 with 17 degrees of freedom ($p < .001$) and a Nagelkerke R^2 of .219.

Among the variables relating to family circumstances, having a university degree or higher was positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings (B = 1.053, OR = 2.867, $p < .001$). The coefficient for the respondent's full-time employment was positive but did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level (B = 0.406, OR = 1.501, $p < .10$).

Regarding the spouse-related variables, the presence of a spouse was positively associated with the use of both settings (B = 1.023, OR = 2.780, $p < .05$). By contrast, having a spouse with a university degree or higher was negatively associated with the use of both settings (B = -0.660, OR = 0.517, $p < .05$), as was having a spouse employed full-time (B = -0.600, OR = 0.549, $p < .05$). These associations should be interpreted with caution, however, because the model simultaneously included variables indicating the presence of a spouse, the spouse's educational attainment, and the spouse's employment status.

Household income showed a positive association with the use of both settings, although it did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level (B = 0.045, OR = 1.046, $p < .10$). Depressive symptoms and residence in the Tokyo, Nagoya, or Osaka metropolitan areas were not significantly associated with the use of both settings.

Among the variables relating to the child's condition, having at least one diagnosed condition was positively associated with the use of both settings (B = 0.540, OR = 1.716, $p < .05$). Regarding the child's characteristics, being a junior high school student was negatively associated with the use of both settings (B = -1.123, OR = 0.325, $p < .001$). Being in the upper elementary grades also showed a negative association, although it did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level (B = -0.638, OR = 0.528, $p < .10$). The child being female showed a positive association, but this association likewise did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level (B = 0.376, OR = 1.457, $p < .10$). Neither enrollment in a public school nor experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer was significantly associated with the use of both settings.

In summary, in the mother-respondent model, the respondent having a university degree or higher, the presence of a spouse, and the child having at least one diagnosed condition were positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings. By contrast,

having a spouse with a university degree or higher, having a spouse employed full-time, and the child being a junior high school student were negatively associated with the use of both settings.

4.2 Father-Respondent Model

Table 3 presents the results of the binary logistic regression analysis for the father-respondent sample. The model was statistically significant overall (model $\chi^2(17) = 97.204$, $p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .169$).

Regarding the variables relating to family circumstances, the respondent's full-time employment was negatively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings (B = -0.492, OR = 0.611, $p < .05$). Because the respondent in the father-respondent model was the child's father, this coefficient indicates a negative association between the father's full-time employment and the use of both settings. By contrast, the spouse's full-time employment was positively associated with the use of both settings (B = 0.568, OR = 1.765, $p < .01$). Because the spouse in the father-respondent model was the child's mother, this coefficient indicates a positive association between the mother's full-time employment and the use of both settings. The respondent having a university degree or higher, the presence of a spouse, the spouse having a university degree or higher, and household income were not significantly associated with the use of both settings.

Regarding the variables relating to the respondent's condition and area of residence, depressive symptoms were positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings (B = 0.387, OR = 1.472, $p < .05$). By contrast, none of the dummy variables for residence in the Tokyo, Nagoya, or Osaka metropolitan areas was significantly associated with the use of both settings.

Among the variables relating to the child's condition, having at least one diagnosed condition was positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings (B = 0.698, OR = 2.010, $p < .001$). Regarding the child's characteristics, enrollment in a public school was negatively associated with the use of both settings (B = -0.791, OR = 0.454, $p < .001$). Compared with children in the early elementary grades, the coefficient for junior high school students was negative but did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level (B = -0.521, OR = 0.594, $p < .10$). The child being female, being in the middle or upper elementary grades, and experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer were not significantly associated with the use of both settings.

In summary, in the father-respondent model, the spouse's full-time employment, the child having at least one diagnosed condition, and the respondent's depressive symptoms were positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings. By contrast, the respondent's full-time employment and the child's enrollment in a public school were negatively associated with the use of both settings.

4.3 Summary of Key Findings

The analyses revealed several patterns across the mother-respondent and father-respondent models. First, the child having at least one diagnosed condition was positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings in both models. Second, the variables corresponding to the father's full-time employment had negative coefficients in both models. Third, the variables corresponding to the mother's full-time employment had positive coefficients in both models, although the association reached statistical significance only in the father-respondent model. Fourth, in the mother-respondent model, the respondent having a university degree or higher was positively associated with the use of both settings. No statistically significant association was observed for the respondent's educational attainment in the father-respondent model. Other associations were specific to the respective respondent-based samples: being a junior high school student was negatively associated with the use of both settings in the mother-respondent model, while enrollment in a public school was negatively associated and the respondent's depressive symptoms were positively associated with the use of both settings in the father-respondent model. These differences in statistical significance should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of differences in coefficients between the two models.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion and Discussion

This study examined the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings in the context of support for children experiencing *futōkō* in Japan, focusing on its associations with family circumstances and children's conditions. The descriptive results showed that 32.2% of the children in the sample used both settings. This finding highlights the importance of examining not only which settings children use but also their patterns of use across school and out-of-school settings when seeking to understand how children experiencing *futōkō* engage with available learning and support options in Japan.

However, the use of both settings does not in itself indicate a desirable outcome. Although this

pattern may indicate that a child is connected to multiple sources of support, it may also reflect a process of trying different settings because a single setting does not adequately meet the child's needs. Accordingly, this study did not evaluate the use of both settings normatively but instead conducted a descriptive and exploratory examination of the conditions associated with this observed pattern of use.

First, the child having at least one diagnosed condition was positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings in both the mother-respondent and father-respondent models. This finding suggests that the observed use of both settings is associated not only with families' socioeconomic resources but also with children's conditions and possible support needs. However, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow us to determine whether a diagnosed condition precedes and facilitates the use of both settings or whether support needs become more clearly identified in the course of children's engagement with multiple settings.

Second, a different pattern was observed in the coefficients for mothers' and fathers' full-time employment. The variables corresponding to mothers' full-time employment had positive coefficients in both models, although the association reached statistical significance only in the father-respondent model. By contrast, the variables corresponding to fathers' full-time employment had negative coefficients in both models. These patterns may suggest that mothers' and fathers' employment circumstances are differently related to the use of both settings; however, differences between the coefficients across the two models were not directly tested.

These patterns suggest a possible relationship between the division of responsibilities within the household for supporting the child and the ways in which learning and support settings are used. Two potentially competing relationships can be considered between parents' employment circumstances and the use of both settings. On the one hand, using multiple settings may require parents to gather information, coordinate schedules, provide transportation, and communicate with schools and support providers. Full-time employment may therefore make the use of both settings more difficult by limiting the time available for these activities. On the other hand, parents employed full-time may have less time available to support their children at home and may therefore have a greater need to identify settings that their children can attend.

The different coefficient patterns observed for variables corresponding to mothers' and fathers' full-time employment may reflect gendered differences in how families coordinate children's use of learning and support settings and how such coordination is related to parents' employment

circumstances. However, the present study did not directly measure the division of caregiving and coordination responsibilities within households, nor did it test differences between the coefficients across the two respondent-specific models. This interpretation should therefore be regarded as a hypothesis for future research rather than as a conclusion established by the present analysis.

Third, in the mother-respondent model, the respondent having a university degree or higher was positively associated with the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings. Using multiple settings may require resources that facilitate understanding relevant institutions, seeking information about out-of-school learning settings, and coordinating their use alongside the child's school. The association with the respondent's educational attainment in the mother-respondent sample may therefore suggest that the use of both settings is related to parents' educational resources. However, neither mothers' nor fathers' educational attainment was significantly associated with the use of both settings in the father-respondent model. The result observed in the mother-respondent model should therefore be interpreted as an association within that sample rather than as evidence of a general relationship between mothers' educational attainment and the use of both settings.

When considered alongside the different coefficient patterns observed for mothers' and fathers' full-time employment, the positive association with educational attainment in the mother-respondent model points to the possible importance of examining how educational resources, employment circumstances, and the division of responsibilities within households jointly shape patterns of support use. The present analysis, however, does not establish that highly educated mothers in full-time employment take the lead in gathering information or coordinating the use of multiple settings. Nor does it demonstrate an interaction between educational attainment and employment status.

Drawing on research in the sociology of education and the sociology of the family concerning the relationships between families' economic and cultural capital and children's educational attainment (Tendo and Taga, 2016; Nakazawa and Yoda, 2014), future research should examine how these forms of capital are related to the use of learning and support settings. It should further investigate how the division of responsibilities between mothers and fathers shapes the ways in which family resources are mobilized in accessing and coordinating support.

Overall, the findings suggest that the use of both school and out-of-school learning settings cannot be understood solely in terms of differences in family resources. Rather, this observed pattern was associated with multiple family and child conditions, including children's diagnosed

conditions, parents' employment circumstances, and respondents' educational attainment in the mother-respondent sample. The different coefficient patterns observed for mothers' and fathers' employment further point to the importance of examining how employment circumstances and household divisions of responsibility jointly shape patterns of support use.

5.2 Limitations

This study has several limitations.

First, the data used in this study were collected through an online survey and are not representative of the overall population of parents of children experiencing *futōkō*. The findings should therefore be interpreted as associations observed within the survey sample.

Second, because the analysis was based on cross-sectional data, neither causal relationships nor the direction of the observed associations can be established. Moreover, the study could not determine whether the use of both settings represented a continuing pattern, a transitional or exploratory process, or a temporary pattern observed during the survey reference period. The use of both settings should therefore not be interpreted as necessarily desirable for the child or as the result of an intentional choice by the child or family.

Third, the reference group in the binary logistic regression analyses combined three substantively different patterns: school only, out-of-school settings only, and neither setting. The analyses therefore cannot determine whether the observed associations were specific to the use of both settings, reflected characteristics associated with the use of out-of-school settings more generally, or were related to the use of any learning setting. In addition, in-person out-of-school learning settings were measured as a single category, without distinguishing among institutionally different settings such as public educational support centers and free schools. Future research should distinguish among different types and patterns of use and analyze them as separate outcome categories.

Fourth, the separate analyses of the mother-respondent and father-respondent samples do not permit conclusions about general differences between mothers and fathers or differences in coefficients across the two models. The survey also did not directly identify which family members were responsible for gathering information, providing transportation, or communicating and coordinating with schools and support providers. Furthermore, full-time employment status does not directly measure actual working hours, time constraints, or flexibility in working arrangements. Future research should examine the processes leading to the

use of school and out-of-school learning settings by incorporating more detailed measures of employment conditions and the division of responsibilities within households.

Acknowledgements

This study was directly supported by a 2024 research grant from the Japan Center for Economic Research, awarded to Madoka Nakano. Additional indirect support was provided by the First Sakakibara Child Science Encouragement Award from the Japanese Society of Child Science, awarded to Takayoshi Beppu.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Full, Mother-Respondent, and Father-Respondent Samples

Variable	Full sample N	Min	Max	M	SD	Mother respondents N	M	SD	Father respondents N	M	SD
School only	1,286	0	1	0.310	0.462	550	0.347	0.477	736	0.281	0.45
Out-of-school settings only	1,286	0	1	0.099	0.298	550	0.087	0.282	736	0.107	0.31
Both school and out-of-school settings	1,286	0	1	0.322	0.467	550	0.264	0.441	736	0.366	0.482
Neither setting	1,286	0	1	0.270	0.444	550	0.302	0.459	736	0.246	0.431
Respondent with a university degree or higher	1,286	0	1	0.587	0.493	550	0.451	0.498	736	0.689	0.463
Respondent employed full-time	1,286	0	1	0.663	0.473	550	0.449	0.498	736	0.822	0.383
Spouse present	1,286	0	1	0.909	0.288	550	0.842	0.365	736	0.959	0.198

Spouse with a university degree or higher	1,286	0	1	0.488	0.500	550	0.458	0.499	736	0.511	0.5
Spouse employed full-time	1,286	0	1	0.607	0.489	550	0.624	0.485	736	0.595	0.491
Household income (millions of yen)	1,286	1	17	9.002	4.415	550	8.146	4.817	736	9.641	3.973
Depressive symptoms	1,286	0	1	0.233	0.423	550	0.216	0.412	736	0.246	0.431
Tokyo metropolitan area	1,286	0	1	0.357	0.479	550	0.344	0.475	736	0.367	0.482
Nagoya metropolitan area	1,286	0	1	0.093	0.29	550	0.087	0.282	736	0.097	0.295
Osaka metropolitan area	1,286	0	1	0.159	0.365	550	0.171	0.377	736	0.150	0.357
Other areas	1,286	0	1	0.392	0.488	550	0.398	0.49	736	0.387	0.487
Child: Female	1,286	0	1	0.457	0.498	550	0.542	0.499	736	0.393	0.489

Early elementary grades	1,286	0	1	0.119	0.324	550	0.118	0.323	736	0.12	0.325
Middle elementary grades	1,286	0	1	0.196	0.397	550	0.195	0.396	736	0.197	0.398
Upper elementary grades	1,286	0	1	0.242	0.428	550	0.215	0.411	736	0.262	0.44
Junior high school	1,286	0	1	0.443	0.497	550	0.473	0.5	736	0.421	0.494
Enrolled in a public school	1,286	0	1	0.839	0.368	550	0.88	0.325	736	0.808	0.394
At least one diagnosed condition	1,286	0	1	0.526	0.500	550	0.535	0.499	736	0.519	0.5
Experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer	1,286	0	1	0.498	0.500	550	0.555	0.497	736	0.455	0.498

Note. For dummy variables, the mean represents the proportion of respondents or children in the corresponding category. SD indicates the standard deviation. Out-of-school learning settings refer to in-person settings such as public educational support centers and free schools. For the variables measuring the respondent's and spouse's full-time employment, the non-full-time category includes part-time employment (including contract, temporary agency, and casual employment), self-employment, business ownership, freelance work, and non-employment. Household income was assigned the midpoint of each income category and is expressed in millions of yen. "Spouse with a university degree or higher" was coded 1 when the respondent had

a spouse and that spouse had completed university or higher education, and 0 otherwise. “Spouse employed full-time” was coded 1 when the respondent had a spouse and that spouse was employed full-time, and 0 otherwise. Depressive symptoms were coded 1 for respondents with a PHQ-9 score of 15 or higher. The Tokyo metropolitan area comprises Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa; the Nagoya metropolitan area comprises Aichi, Gifu, and Mie; and the Osaka metropolitan area comprises Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, and Nara. “Child: Female” was coded 1 for female children and 0 for male children. Grade levels were grouped as follows: early elementary grades comprised Grades 1 and 2 (approximately ages 6–8), middle elementary grades comprised Grades 3 and 4 (approximately ages 8–10), upper elementary grades comprised Grades 5 and 6 (approximately ages 10–12), and junior high school comprised Grades 7–9 (approximately ages 12–15). “Experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer” was coded 1 when the child had begun experiencing *futōkō* in or before July 2024 and 0 when the child had begun experiencing it after July 2024, using the survey date of July 2025 as the reference point.

Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Results for the Use of Both School and Out-of-School Learning Settings: Mother-Respondent Model

Variable	B	OR	SE	Sig.
Respondent with a university degree or higher	1.053	2.867	0.284	***
Respondent employed full-time	0.406	1.501	0.239	†
Spouse present	1.023	2.780	0.422	*
Spouse with a university degree or higher	-0.660	0.517	0.309	*
Spouse employed full-time	-0.60	0.549	0.268	*
Household income (millions of yen)	0.045	1.046	0.027	†
Depressive symptoms	0.013	1.014	0.257	
Area of residence				
Tokyo metropolitan area	0.127	1.136	0.257	
Nagoya metropolitan area	-0.261	0.771	0.433	
Osaka metropolitan area	0.230	1.258	0.308	
Child: Female	0.376	1.457	0.216	†
Grade level				
Middle elementary grades	-0.041	0.96	0.346	
Upper elementary grades	-0.638	0.528	0.359	†
Junior high school	-1.123	0.325	0.331	***
Enrolled in a public school	-0.332	0.718	0.316	
At least one diagnosed condition	0.540	1.716	0.221	*
Experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer	-0.05	0.952	0.224	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.219			
Model $\chi^2(17)$	89.209			***

N	550

Note. OR indicates the odds ratio. Household income was entered into the model in units of one million yen. The reference categories are areas outside the three major metropolitan areas for area of residence and the early elementary grades for grade level. The intercept is omitted from the table. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Binary Logistic Regression Results for the Use of Both School and Out-of-School Learning Settings: Father-Respondent Model

Variable	B	OR	SE	Sig.
Respondent with a university degree or higher	0.134	1.144	0.212	
Respondent employed full-time	-0.492	0.611	0.228	*
Spouse present	-0.104	0.901	0.459	
Spouse with a university degree or higher	0.039	1.039	0.204	
Spouse employed full-time	0.568	1.765	0.187	**
Household income (millions of yen)	0.015	1.015	0.023	
Depressive symptoms	0.387	1.472	0.188	*
Area of residence				
Tokyo metropolitan area	-0.211	0.81	0.200	
Nagoya metropolitan area	0.284	1.329	0.292	
Osaka metropolitan area	0.208	1.232	0.252	
Child: Female	-0.149	0.861	0.173	
Grade level				
Middle elementary grades	0.194	1.214	0.297	
Upper elementary grades	0.213	1.238	0.285	
Junior high school	-0.521	0.594	0.279	†
Enrolled in a public school	-0.791	0.454	0.209	***
At least one diagnosed condition	0.698	2.010	0.172	***
Experiencing *futōkō* for one year or longer	-0.103	0.902	0.176	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.169			
Model $\chi^2(17)$	97.204			***

N	736

Note. OR indicates the odds ratio. Household income was entered into the model in units of one million yen. The reference categories are areas outside the three major metropolitan areas for area of residence and the early elementary grades for grade level. The intercept is omitted from the table. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.