

文部科学省 共同利用・共同研究拠点事業

社会調査・データアーカイブ共同利用・共同研究拠点

**Determining Factors of Views Regarding Influence of  
Women's Employment on Household Life**

Shuai Wang

東京大学社会科学研究所

附属社会調査・データアーカイブ研究センター

2019年6月

# Determining Factors of Views Regarding Influence of Women’s Employment on Household Life<sup>1</sup>

Shuai Wang

Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo

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## Abstract

With women’s employment increasing Japan, there is a need for a shift that includes social institutions and attitudes regarding employment. This study, focusing on attitudes’ determining factors, examines how the influence of women’s employment on household life is perceived, and empirically examines the determining factors of such perceptions. This study found that women understand the influence of employment on domestic life positively, negatively, or in terms of family independence, and that understandings differ depending on their form of employment. Analyzing the determining factors of these three tendencies, this study confirmed that the support mobilization hypothesis holds for the positive tendency and the family independence tendency. On the other hand, in the analysis of the negative tendency, it was not confirmed that it holds. The stronger older attitudes regarding gendered division of labor, the more the influence of women’s employment is seen negatively. This study suggests that the husband sharing housework and support from family is indispensable for women’s societal participation.

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<sup>1</sup> This study is a part of the result of “Secondary Data Analysis Workshop 2017” hosted by Center for Social Research and Data Archives, Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo. The revised Japanese version of this paper is included in the *Annual report on secondary data analysis workshop 2017-Secondary Analysis of Household, Work and Child-rearing Using Couple Data*:241-252. The data for this secondary analysis, “Survey of the Present-day Nuclear Family 2008 (Gendai kakukazoku chōsa 2008)” (The Institute for Research on Household Economics) , was provided by the Social Science Japan Data Archive, Center for Social Research and Data Archives, Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

## **1. Introduction**

The number of women working in Japan is increasing. The M-shaped curve that has characterized women's labor force participation rate (temporarily dropping around marriage and childbirth and rising again after child-rearing has become established) has become less pronounced (Naikakufu 2017). According to the Cabinet Office's survey of the public's attitudes regarding gender equality in society (Naikakufu 2016), the labor force participation rate is higher the younger the generation, and the perception of women replying that it is best to continue working even after having children rose from 38.0% in 2002 to 55.3% in 2016. In this way, women's attitudes towards having a profession are changing as well.

However, according to the 2017 white paper on gender equality (Naikakufu 2017), a situation continues to exist in which approximately fifty percent of women stop working upon having their first child. Even when looked at separately by women's forms of employment, around marriage and birth regular employment decreases and irregular employment increase. Tsutsui (2014) points out that while the overall women's employment rate is on the rise, men and women's ways of working have not become equal and the creation of a society in which women fully participate is still a ways off. One of major reasons for this is views regarding the gendered division of labor: that men should work and women should tend to the household. It has been shown that the women's employment rate can change not only due to economic factors but also cultural factors such as norms (Ojima 2000). Some findings suggest that, accompanying the entrenchment of such societal norms and unofficial institutions/systems, an unbalanced allotment of household and child-rearing work does not necessarily lead to feelings of inequality regarding the allotment of housework (Fuwa & Tsutsui 2010, Tsutsui 2014).

With government's policies to create a "society in which women can shine" and the promotion of women's advancement therein, they are now expected to take up many activities in society, and there is a need for a shift that includes societal norms and attitudes. Against this background, considering changes in attitudes regarding women's employment that are in response to changes in societal structures, namely, how women understand the influence of employment on household life, has emerged as an important task.

This study will therefore focus on factors determining these attitudes to grasp how women perceive the influence of women's employment on household life. Aiming to empirically investigate factors determining these perceptions, this study will examine ones that promote and hinder women's entry into society.

## **2. Literature Review**

The combination of professional and household life has been an important theme in research on stress

(Nishimura 2009). Existing research on women's employment has examined the role overload hypothesis and the role expansion hypothesis. The role overload hypothesis research considers if, with an individual having limited time and energy, stress emerges when the number of roles increases and if employment places on a psychological burden on women (Goode 1960, Hasegawa 2010, Ōta 2001, Nishimura 2009). Such research approaches the influence of women's employment in terms of its negative aspects and examines the "support mobilization hypothesis" (reducing role strain by getting the husband or parents' support), as well as the "personal coping hypothesis" (adjusting one's work itself to handle one's own family situation) (Nishimura 2009). The role expansion hypothesis sees an individual's energy as expandable and examines if resources are supplemented and stress can be alleviated by having many roles, considering whether and employment has psychological merits for women (Hasegawa 2010, Sieber 1974). Women's employment is seen as having a positive effect. No clear conclusion has been arrived at regarding which of these opposing hypotheses applies. While there is research that shows that women working full time have more strain in their family lives than women in other forms of employment (Nishimura 2001, Dohi 1990, Hasegawa 2010), there is also research showing that neither apply (Nishimura 2001), as well as research showing that involvement in roles is related to an increase in psychological well-being (Ōta 2001). Also, while there is much research considering the role overload hypothesis measuring negative indicators that bring together role strain in composite indexes, as well as measuring the sense of burden in families as an aspect of role overload in family life (Nishimura 2001, Inaba 1995, Matsuoka 1999), often research which considers the role expansion hypothesis has turned to "sense of satisfaction in daily life" as a positive indicator of psychological wellbeing (Ōta 2001). However, due to employment having both a positive and negative influence on the household and mind, it appears that there is a need for a perspective which comprehensively understands this influence itself.

The strength of the gendered division of labor structure is often pointed to as something that hinders women's employment in Japan (Ishihara 1999, Nishimura 2001). In this system, men are the primary breadwinners and women are responsible for the household (Tsutsui 2014). Even in analyses regarding women's choice to work and types of employment chosen that use attitude variables as explanatory variables, it is said that women who are regular or part-time employees are more likely to wish to continue working than those not employed (Nagase 1994, Takahashi 2007, Nagamachi 2002), and it has been shown that there is a need for there to be a shift towards the view that both wives and husbands should similarly share child-rearing responsibilities (Yamaya 2011, Matsuda & Suzuki 2002). However, attitude variables like "men should work and women tend to the household" are the most frequently used indicators of attitudes regarding gendered division of labor, and an overall picture of attitudes that see the gendered division of roles positively cannot be grasped just with this kind of variable (Yamato 1995, Ishihara 1999, Takashi 2007).

Therefore, this study will analyze both the positive and negative ideas regarding the influence of women's employment on domestic life. Factors determining such ways of thinking are probably not only attributes such as the husband's income, presence of children, and educational background, but also the support from the husband and family and attitudes towards gendered division of labor (views regarding family). This study not only will enable us to grasp ways of thinking regarding the influence of employment on household life. It is also meaningful on a policy level in that by making the reasons for ways of thinking clear, then measures can be carried out to remove (or promote) these reasons.

### 3. Data and Variables Used

This study analyzed responses to the "Contemporary Nuclear Family Survey" (*Gendai kakukazoku chōsa*; 2008), which included both those from husbands and wives. The forms of employment of women covered in this survey and the number of respondents in them are as follows: unemployed - 330, freelance/self-employed (below, freelance) - 110, part-time 319, full time - 122.

Variables are shown in Table 1. To analyze factors shaping views regarding the influence of women's employment on household life, wife's responses to items that show an influence on household life due to employment (or finding employment) were used as dependent variables.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistical Values (Wife's Responses)**

			Min value	Max value	Avg value	Standard deviation
Basic attributes	Husband's income	1=none, ~9=over 10 million	1	9	7.2	1.3
	No. of children	1=no children, ~4=4 children	1	4	1.6	1.0
	Age of youngest child	1= no children, 2=0-2 years old, 3=3-5 years old, 4=6-11 years old, 5=12+ years old	1	5	2.9	1.8
	Wife's form of employment	1=Full-time housewife, 2=freelance, 3=part-time, 4=full-time	1	4	2.3	1.1
	Wife's educational background	1=Less than high school, 2=high school graduate, 3=junior college graduate, 4=university graduate, 5=graduate school graduate	1	5	2.8	0.9
Support inside and outside household	Husband's frequency of housework	Sum of cooking, cleaning up after meals, cleaning, and laundry frequency (4=infrequent, 24=very frequent)	4	24	7.8	3.9
	Husband's child-rearing frequency	Frequency of taking care of children (1=never, ~7=basically daily)	1	7	3.7	2.1
	Distance from wife's parents	Distance required to get to residence of wife's parents: less than 30 min=1, 30 min or more=0	0	1	0.2	0.4
	No. of close family members	Number of family members (including parents, children, siblings) that they are close to, relying on regularly	0	16	4.1	3.0
	Number of close people in the neighborhood	Number of people in the neighbor that they are close to, relying on regularly	0	20	2.7	2.7
Gendered division of work views	When a child is small, the mother should not have a job and focus on child-rearing	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	2.9	0.8
	Parents should raise children together	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	3.6	0.6
	The husband should be responsible for making money	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	3.5	0.6
	The wife should be responsible for housework and child-rearing	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	3.2	0.7
	One should have one's own time even if one is busy	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	3.4	0.6
	Husbands and wives should have their own time even if they are busy	1=disagree, 4=agree	1	4	3.3	0.6

Independent variables can be divided into three types: form of employment, support from the husbands and parents, and attitudes towards the gendered division of labor. Forms of employment was analyzed using wives' forms of employment. Support from the husband and parents was examined

in terms of the husband’s frequency of housework and the effectiveness of support from parents and family. Attitudes towards gendered division of labor was analyzed using many items regarding family and child-rearing.

Besides the above variables, husband’s income, number of children, youngest child’s age, and wife’s educational background were used as control variables.

After carrying out a multiple regression analysis and controlling for individual attributes, this study considered the effect of the husband and parent support variables and the gendered division of labor views variables. When examining the support mobilization hypothesis, existing research has highlighted the interaction between form of employment with the husband’s frequency of housework as well as the parents’ living situation (Nishimura 2009). This study will also include form of employment and support variable interaction terms and highlight whether husband’s frequency of housework and parental support effects views regarding the influence of employment on household life.

#### 4. Analysis Results

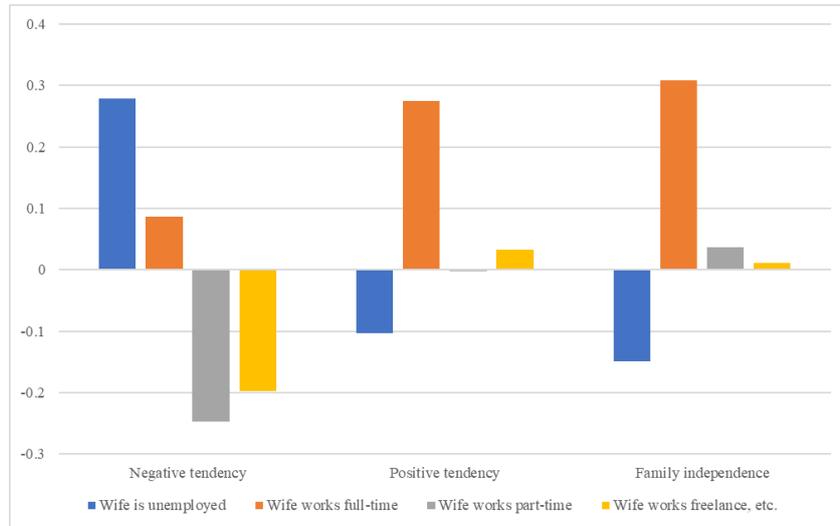
##### 4-1 Influence of Women's Employment on Household Life

Using the ten items on wives’ survey slips that ask about their views regarding the kind of influence employment has on household life, this study attempted to understand how women see the influence of women’s employment on household life. Respondents answered using a four-point scale from “applies” (1 point) to “does not apply” (4 points). For the purposes of this study’s analysis, responses were scored so that more points mean a greater agreement: “does not apply” was assigned 1 point and “applies” 4 points. Three factors were extracted from a factor analysis of these items (Table 2).

**Table 2. Factor Analysis of Influence of Women's Employment on Household Life**

	(Factor 1) Negative tendency	(Factor 2) Positive tendency	(Factor 3) Family independence
Disciplining/bringing up of children is inadequate	0.731	-0.033	0.153
Wife gets irritated with work and housework	0.688	-0.024	-0.033
Cannot adequately keep up relationships with neighbors and friends	0.612	0.151	0.176
Wife neglects housework	0.525	0.053	0.001
Able to be connected with society	0.002	0.752	0.135
Can use skills and knowledge	-0.03	0.671	0.21
More family budget leeway	0.111	0.364	0.206
Husband is independent	-0.011	0.195	0.816
Children are independent	0.148	0.232	0.527
Wife is independent	0.122	0.459	0.526

Factor extraction method: maximum likelihood estimation  
Rotation method: varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization



**Figure 1. Influence of Employment on Household Life by Employment Type (Wife’s Responses)**

Factor 1 is comprised of negative influences on housework and child-rearing, and therefore called it “negative tendency.” Factor 2 is comprised of positive influence items (more leeway in household budget, putting to use abilities, etc.), and therefore called it “positive tendency.” Factor 3 is comprised of items regarding the independence/self-reliance of husband and children, and therefore named it “family independence.”

Looking at the average of the three factors’ scores by wife’s form of employment (Figure 1), we find that unemployed women have a positive value for the negative tendency factor, tending to see the influence of employment negatively. Women in full-time employment have a higher average value for the family independence factor and positive tendency factor than the negative tendency factor, not seeing the influence of employment negatively. Women who are part-time or freelance have a negative value for the negative tendency factor. While the positive values for the positive tendency and family independence tendency are small, we can see that they do not necessarily see the influence of employment negatively.

In this way, understandings of the influence of employment on household life differ depending on the women’s form of employment, with unemployed women seeing employment negatively while women employed full-time tending to see employment positively. In the case of women employed part-time or working freelance, while there is not that strong of a tendency to see the influence of women’s employment positively, we can see that it is not seen negatively.

#### **4-2 An Analysis of Determining Factors Regarding the Influence of Women’s Employment on Household Life**

The results are shown in Table 3. I input into the model the three patterns of employment's influence on family life (positive tendency, family independence, negative tendency) as dependent variables analyzed each of their determining factors.

Let us first look at the results when the positive tendency variables were input into the model as dependent variables. Statistically significant results were found for the following variables: wife's last school attended (+), wife's form of employment (+), the support variable of family members one is close with (+), "wife's form of employment  $\times$  number of family members one is close with" interaction term (-), and the gendered division of labor views variables of "moms should not have a job and focus on child-rearing when the child is small" (-) and "one should have time for oneself even when one is busy" (+). Here we find a tendency that the wife sees the influence of women's employment on household life in a more positive light the more it is the case that the wife is educated, is close with many family members, does not necessarily agree with the view of family that mothers should not have a job and focus on child-rearing when the child is small, and wants to have their own time. Neither the interaction term of "the wife's form of employment  $\times$  husband's frequency of housework," nor the interaction term of "the wife's form of employment  $\times$  wife's parents living within thirty minutes (dummy)," showed statistical significance.

**Table 3. Analysis of Determining Factors of the Three Patterns of the Influence of Employment on Household Life**

	Positive tendency B	Family independence B	Negative tendency B
Husband's income	0.017	-0.089 **	-0.006
No. of children	-0.058	-0.017	0.166 ***
Age of youngest child	0.011	0.072 **	0.001
Most recent schooling	0.192 ***	0.043	0.031
Wife's form of employment	0.265 **	-0.027	-0.103
Husband's frequency of housework	0.035	-0.050 *	-0.018
No. of close relatives	0.084 ***	0.026	0.018
Wife's parents live within thirty minutes (dummy)	0.033	0.277	0.132
Wife's form of employment $\times$ Husband's housework frequency	-0.012	0.022 **	0.004
Wife's form of employment $\times$ No. of close family members	-0.025 **	-0.009	-0.014
Wife's form of employment $\times$ Wife's parents living within thirty minutes (dummy)	-0.009	-0.069	-0.021
When children are small the mother should not work and focus on child-rearing	-0.149 **	0.003	0.177 ***
Parents should raise children together	0.091	-0.069	0.064
Husband should be responsible for making money	-0.012	-0.125 *	0.115 +
Wife should be responsible for housework and child-rearing	0.057	0.058	-0.178 **
One should have one's own time even if one is busy	0.134 *	0.094	-0.025
Husbands and wives should have their own time even if they are busy	0.036	0.021	0.029
F value	5.843 ***	3.369 ***	5.206 ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.112	0.058	0.098
N	656	656	656

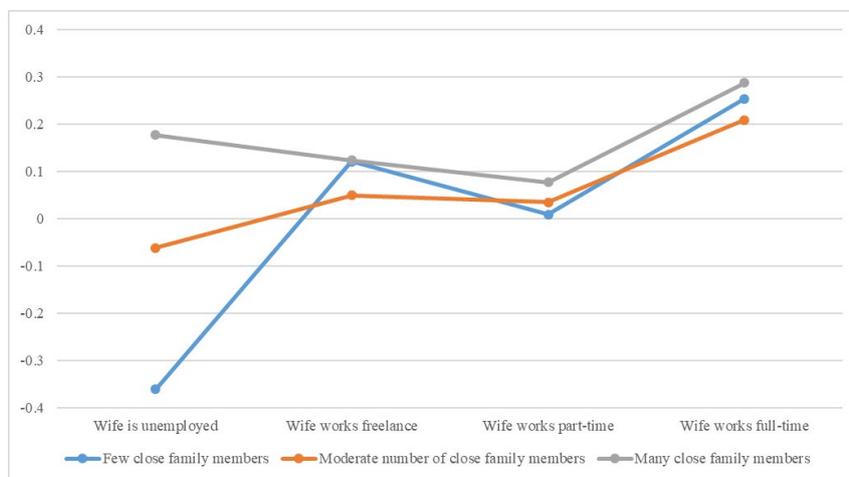
+ P<.10, \* P<.05, \*\* P<.01, \*\*\* P<.00

Next let us consider a model into which family independence variables were input as dependent variables. Statistically significant results were found for the following: husband's income (-), age of youngest child (+), the support variable of frequency of husband's housework (-), wife's form of employment and husband's form of housework (+), and the gendered division of labor views variable of the husband should be responsible for making money (-). The more it is the case that the wife's husband has little income, the youngest child is older, the husband does housework less frequently, and the wife does not necessarily agree with the idea that the husband is responsible for making money, the wife sees the influence of women's employment on household life as promoting family independence. Neither the interaction term of "wife's form of employment  $\times$  number of family members to which one is close," nor the interaction term of "wife's form of employment  $\times$  wife's parents living within thirty minutes (dummy)," were statistically significant.

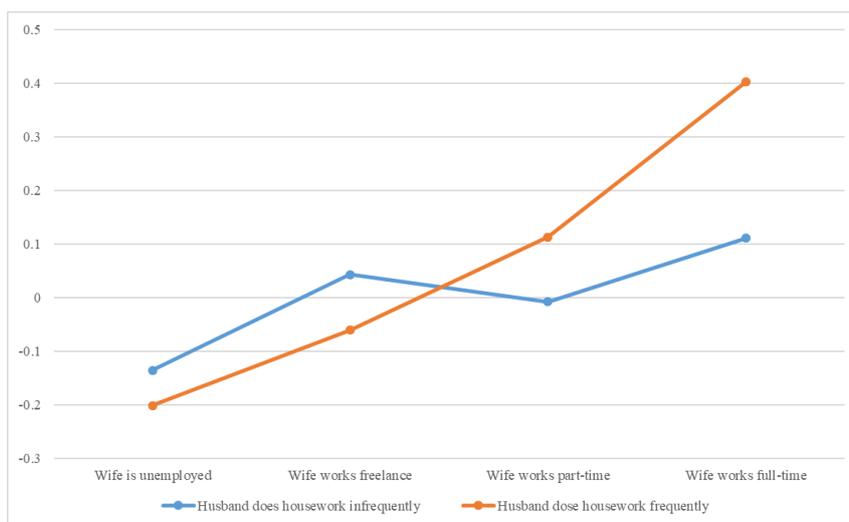
In closing, looking at the results of negative tendency determining factor analysis, the following variables were statistically significant: number of children (+), and the gendered division of labor views variables of women should not work and focus on child rearing when the child is small (+), the husband should be responsible for making money (+), and the wife should be responsible for housework and child rearing (-). The more it is the case that the woman has many children, and, while not agreeing that wives are responsible for housework and child-rearing yet agreeing that women should focus on housework and not have a job when children are young as well as that husbands are responsible for making money, the greater the tendency for them to view the influence of women's employment on household life negatively. Wife's form of employment and support variable interaction terms were not statistically significant.

When considering role overload in household life resulting from employment activities, existing research has concluded that in Japan one does not find a mechanism by which the husband and parent's support reduces role strain, and that the support mobilization hypothesis does not hold (Nishimura 2009). However, this study, having approached the issue of the effect of women's employment on household life not with regard to role overload but, rather, with regard to factors determining wives' assessment of this influence, found that support from family members promotes positive assessments of the influence of employment on household life, and that support from husbands easily leads to wives seeing this influence in terms of family independence. However, this study was unable to find that support from parents or other family members effects negative assessments of the influence of women's employment on household life. Rather, the results of this study's analysis match the results of existing research that focuses on "role overload." In other words, a tendency was not found in which the husband or family members' support reduces the negative effect of women's employment on household life.

Examining attitudes regarding the gendered division of labor, this study confirmed that the stronger the views supporting gendered division of labor (women should focus on child-rearing, the husbands are responsible for making money, etc.) the more likely the tendency for women to see the influence of women’s employment on household life negatively. On the other hand, a strong tendency for women to positively see the influence of employment on household life, or see it in terms of family independence, the more it is the case that they are not necessarily bound by older views of gender division of labor and not necessarily expecting mothers to focus on child-rearing or husbands to be responsible for making money.



**Figure 2. Interaction Between Wife’s Form of Employment and Number of Close Family Members (Positive Tendency)**



**Figure 3 Interaction Between Wife’s Form of Employment and Husband’s Frequency of Housework (Family Independence Tendency)**

Also, examining the interaction items for which significant results were acquired, Figure 2 shows values of the interaction between wife's form of employment and number of close family members during "positive tendency", and Figure 3 shows values of the interaction between wife's form of employment and husband's frequency of housework during "family independence tendency". In Figure 2 we can see that when the wife is working freelance, part-time, or full-time, regardless of the number of family members with which they are close, there is no difference in the positive tendency assessment regarding the influence of employment on household life. However, in the case that the wife is unemployed, we find a great difference with regard to the positive assessment of the influence of employment on household life depending on the number of close relatives. While the greater the number of close family members, the more positively the assessment of employment's influence, the fewer close family members, the lower the positive assessment of employment's effect on the household. In other words, while only when the wife is not employed does the support from family members influence the positive assessment of employment's effect on household life, one does not find a tendency towards seeing employment as positive when there is lots of support from family members. Turning to Figure 3, we can see that in the case that the wife is not employed, or works freelance or part-time, there is no great difference in the family independence assessment of employment's effects on household life, regardless of how often the husband does housework. However, in the case that the wife works full-time, we find differences in the family independence assessment depending upon the husband's frequency of housework. We can detect a strong tendency for full-time working wives with husbands that do more housework to see the effect of employment in terms of family independence.

## **5. Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to empirically examine the factors determining views regarding the influence of women's employment on household life. This study investigated the kind of effects that the wife's form of employment, support from the husband and parents, and views regarding gendered division of labor have on understandings of employment's effects on household life.

Using wives' response sheets, it was found that the influence of women's employment on household life is understood positively, negatively, and in terms of family independence, and that understandings differ depending on women's form of employment. While a tendency towards positively assessing the influence of employment was found in the case of full-time work, a negative one was found for unemployed wives. Determining factors for these three tendencies suggested that the support mobilization theory holds for the positive tendency and family independence tendency. The more it is the case that the woman has support from the husband and family and is not entrenched

in older views regarding the gendered division of labor, the more positive her assessment of the influence of work. On the other hand, in negative tendency analysis, I did not find that the support mobilization hypothesis holds. The stronger older attitudes regarding gendered division of labor, the more the influence of women's employment is seen negatively.

Also, considering support from the husband and family by women's form of employment, it was found that in the case of unemployed women, the greater the support from family, the more positive they tended to see the influence of employment. In the case of women who work full-time, the greater the frequency of the husband's housework, the more they saw the influence of women's employment as promoting family independence.

In a survey of 33 countries in the world, the proportion of housework done by men in Japan is the lowest. This study suggests that husbands carrying out housework and family support are indispensable for women advancing into society. It appears that this support makes it easier for women to see employment itself positively and can lead to a heightened desire for employment. Also, this study suggests that gendered division of labor views are both strongly rooted and, depending on women's form of employment, in the process of changing. The stronger older views regarding gendered division of labor, the more they see women's advancement into society negatively, which may detract from their desire to be employed. Today, with women's advancement into society being promoted, a shift in societal norms including attitudes is required.

This paper is only one attempt to understand views regarding the influence of employment on household life. There is a need to reconstruct our analytical framework while referring to sociology and psychology analytical methods. Also, since this paper only focused on a single point in time, it did not grasp how perceptions change along with the times. It is needed for comparative research that adds information from data of the same survey when it was carried out in 1999. Also, while this study used wives' response sheets, when a similar analysis with those of the husbands and acquired results that were like those from the wives' response sheet analysis was also carried out. However, interaction terms were not statistically significant. In the future it is possible to examine the differences between the results of my analysis of wives' response sheets and that of the husbands' response sheets.

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