Childcare Strategies of Double-income Families Living in Central Tokyo

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Background of Study

- Urban structure in Japan; long commutes
- “Constraints” for working mothers; responsibilities of work and home
- Since the 1990s, increased supply of condominiums for young families in central Tokyo
- “Family gentrifiers” / dual income families living in central Tokyo
- Elimination of working mothers’ “Constraints”?
Purpose of This Study

(1) The childcare strategies of dual-income families in central Tokyo

(2) Problems posed by the deregulation of childcare services
Increased need for nursery centers

Bubble economy burst

Japan’s recession and employment uncertainty

The implementation of the equal employment law
- Shortage of public/authorized nursery centers
- 26,275 children on entry waiting lists (2010)
- metropolitan areas and their suburbs

Tokyo’s 23 wards
- **Deregulation of childcare services**
- **Public nurseries**: main part of Japan’s childcare system

-> Entry regulations for management of public nursery centers were relaxed in 2000

- The number of private nurseries has increased
Population growth and the supply of condominiums in central Tokyo
Tokyo’s 23 wards

Property values in central Tokyo dropped

bubble economy burst

population

1996

condominiums

Central 15 wards
Central 5 wards
Central 3 wards

“3 bedrooms (3LDK)” condominiums
-> Water-front area
1999: 3,128 households
6,904 population
↓
2009: 9,076 households
20,324 population
Shortage of public nurseries
- more than 90 children waiting to enter the authorized nursery centers

- Many “3 bedrooms(3LDK)” condominiums
- Wide, flat sidewalks
Questionnaire survey for double-income families: Nov. 2010

Distributed in 7 nursery centers in the Toyosu area

Total 659, valid response 203 (30.8%)

170 answers living in the Toyosu area were analyzed


12 families living in Toyosu

1-2 hours for one interview
Basic attributes of Respondents

- nuclear families with one or two children: 91.7%
- High income levels
  20% : 7-10 million yen/a year, 68%: 10- million yen/a year
  Cf. Japan’s average: 7,320,000 yen
- Large company, white collar, fulltime job
  54.7% of wives: over 500 employees
Childcare strategies of dual income families in central Tokyo
What is “Childcare Strategy”?

- Strategy to keep working fulltime while taking responsibility for child rearing and housework
- Their goal is to use public nursery centers
- Working style: short commutes
- Workplaces are close to their homes
- Emigrating from suburban areas: “convenience of commuting”

60 minutes to commute, crowded train before moving into Toyosu

Workplace of husbands and wives
Red: wives, blue: husbands
• Companies’ support

- Wives use **shorter work system** and go home early: 70% of wives get home before 8:00pm

- 20% women can use, and 3/12 women used **workplace nurseries**
• Little Support by family/parents
  - Little childcare support from their parents: 40-50% of respondents’ parents live outside Tokyo metropolitan area
  - Most husbands cannot help <- long work hours
  -> Taking children to nursery/ picking them up: mainly wives
    - wives: 114(67.1%),
    - wives or husbands: 49(28.8%)
Shortage of public nurseries and frequent use of private nurseries

- 60% of total families had waited or were waiting to have their children enter the nursery center of their choice
- 80% of answerers used or use private nursery centers

- Less grandparents’ support
- Another reason

Parents: 6%
Wives: 11%
Others: 3%
Private nurseries (subsidized by local governments): 41%
Private nursery centers without subsidies: 39%
Priority of entrance to public nursery centers

- Parents’ disability or illness
- Receiving public assistance, single-parent families
- Families using private nursery centers for fee...etc. (In Koto ward)

Those who use private nursery centers have an advantage

Using private nurseries while waiting = important strategy to ensure they get a spot in a public nursery center
• Class disparity of childcare opportunities in Toyosu

Use of private nursery
- **Middle income**: 35.7%
- Upper income: 52.9
- Upper high income: 47.1

Waiting period: 18 months or more
- 19% of middle income families
- 5% of upper and upper high income families

Families who cannot afford to pay for private nurseries tend to wait longer
Conclusion 1

Working style
- Short commutes <- living in Toyosu
- Shorter work days

Childcare strategy
- Shorter work system
- Workplace nursery
- Companies’ support
- Support by family (parents) - Very little

Childcare services
- Shortage -> competitive to enter the public nursery
- Getting priority by using private nursery

Companies’ support

Support by family (parents) - Very little
Conclusion 2

Gentrification in Tokyo -> attractive for young families

Suburb area
- Long commutes
- Shortage of childcare services
- Fewer private services
- Fewer job opportunities

Central area
- Condominiums supply
- Short commutes
- Many private services
- Many job opportunities

Balance work and home

Class disparity of childcare opportunities
- Shortage of childcare services
- Deregulation of childcare services