

Maternal Employment and Childcare Support from Grandparents: A Comparison of Within-Subject and Between-Subject Effects

Shohei YODA and Yuriko SHINTANI

The aim of this study is to explore how a mother's employment transitions are associated with childcare support provided by grandparents. Previous research has shown that employed mothers receive more childcare support from extended family members, such as grandparents, while this informal support is less prevalent for housewives. However, because these studies rely on cross-sectional data, they provide limited insight into whether employment transitions are indeed associated with increase or decrease in informal childcare support.

Using data from the 15th National Fertility Survey, we applied the "Hybrid Model" (Allison 2009), which allows "within-subject" and "between-subject" effects to be estimated simultaneously. Empirical findings are as follows: (1) in line with past findings, childcare support from grandparents was more prevalent among families where the mother was employed; (2) transition to regular employment is associated with increased informal childcare support; and (3) comparing the between-subject and within-subject association of mother's employment and informal care, between-subject differences were found to be substantially larger than within-subject changes. Results suggest that although a mother's employment transitions may affect the extent of informal care provided by grandparents, the effect is small compared with pre-existing differences between mothers who are in different employment status. The study also discusses the role of grandparents in childcare arrangements and the importance of formal care.