

Labor Supply and Child Care following the First Childbirth in Beijing, Seoul and Japan

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The paper compares the labor supply and housework and caring activities of mothers following childbirth in Beijing, Seoul and Japan. The data used are the panel surveys conducted from 2004 to 2007 by Ochanomizu University, to the age group of 25 to 54 in central eight districts of Beijing with the sample size of 2550, and to the age group of 25 to 44 in Seoul with the sample size of 1709 in the first year. The results will be compared with *National Fertility Survey of Japan* collected in 2002 and other national data in Japan.

Mother's employment behavior was similar between Seoul and Japan, where approximately 70 percent of mothers were found to be out of labor force when their first child was at age one. The percentage stayed about the same even for the younger cohorts. Husbands were the main income earners and wives' income comprised only about 20 percent of men's income on average after the first childbirth. On the contrary, the Beijing data showed a differing trend. The younger cohorts under economic reform were more likely to experience job loss, especially the less educated with more vulnerable jobs. Nevertheless, our study found that most women in Beijing quickly returned to work, and wives' income after childbirth, on average, still comprised about 50 percent of husbands' income in the surveyed years. Husbands and wives in Beijing spent nearly equal hours in housework and childcare on week days, whereas in Seoul and Japan, gender gap was much larger. Among the three countries, Japanese mothers spend the longest hours for housework and childcare when the age of the youngest child and mother's work status are controlled for. The percentages of not marrieds and childlessness are also the highest for the Japanese women. In Tokyo prefecture, as much as one third of women were estimated to stay childless at the age of 35 by Kaplan Meier method while the comparable figures were less than 10 percent in other two countries.

Using probit analysis, we found women's higher wages, and in the case of Japan, husbands' lower income promoted work continuation, while controlling for extended family living arrangements, husbands' education, gender norms and cohorts. Our analysis also showed the younger cohorts were more likely to quit work upon childbirth in Japan despite the recent enhancement of child care leave law. Only when the sample is limited to those women who had regular employments at pregnancy, did the younger cohort show higher probability of work continuation. This implies that the increase in unstable non-standard employment, whose entitlement for leave is limited, is strongly pushing young Japanese females out of the labor force.