Introduction to Leave Policies in Japan: Legislation, take-up, and their connection with fertility trends

Hideki Nakazato
Konan University
Kobe, Japan

Japan Basics


47 Prefectures
More than 1700 cities, towns, and villages.

Tokyo
Yokohama
Metroplitan Area
35 million

Shinjuku, Tokyo

Fertility Trends in Japan

Hanshin-kan (Between Osaka and Kobe)
Total Fertility Rates

- Decrease until 2005 (1.26)
- Recovery afterward (1.39 in 2011)

Trends of Age Specific Fertility Rate

- Increase for 30-34 resumed around 2005
- Decline for 25-29 stopped around 2005

Implementation and amendments of Parental Leave scheme and related policy change

Background public concerns
- gender inequality
- declining fertility
- (mental) health problem (from long working hours etc.)

1992 (a grace period until 1995 for companies with 30 or less regular employees)
- Statutory parental leave
  - Length of the leave was 1 year
  - No leave benefit

1995
- Leave benefits
  - 25% of the wage of a worker before he/she starts the leave

2001
- Benefit rate raised from 25% to 40%

Still declining fertility
2003
Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children
Private companies as well as national and local governments are obliged to establish action plans. (2005-2009 and 2010-2014).

Recommended topics for the action plan (1)
Implementation of paternity leave (“leave for childbearing of spouse”)

Recommended topics for the action plan (2)
Encouraging fathers to take parental leave

Recommended topics for the action plan (3)
Establishing work environment to enable workers to harmonise work and life.

Recommended topics for the action plan (4)
Target setting (eg. Leave take-up rates by gender)

“Kurumin “ Certification
Certificate that the plan and achievement of a company meets certain conditions.

Conditions for “Kurumin “ Certification
- At least one male employee who took parental leave.
- Take-up rate for female employee >= 70%

Number of certified Companies
920 companies (Jun 2010) → 1121 companies (July 2011)

Example of usage of the certification mark

CSR report on a company website
**2007**

Making the leave to be an individual entitlement

-> Fathers can take leave and get the benefit even when their partner is on leave or not in labour force.

---

**2007 (cont.)**

Leave benefit rates increase

-> 50% of wage before leave

All paid during the leave

---

**Summary**

Improved support system including paid parental leave encourages full-time female worker to give birth.

Still large proportion of women who quit job in relation to birth.

For fathers -- still much to improve, but increasing concern about father's involvement in childrearing and slight increase in the leave take-up.

---

Mothers' labour force participation by year of the birth of a first child

(*The National Fertility Survey*)

Still many women quit job when pregnant or after the birth of a child, but we need to note the meaning of steady increase of leave mother remain employed with parental leave.

Female workers who want to continue career can be getting less hesitant to have children.