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Effects of inclusiveness of parental leave scheme on work-life balance: Self-employed fathers in Japan in comparative perspective

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Goal of this project

JSPS KAKENHI Grant Project (2024-2027)

Comparative sociological study on the significance of inclusive parental leave systems and measures to realise them

Aims of this Presentation

- Place the situation in Japan in an international context and summarise the challenges of the inclusiveness of the parental leave system, particularly the employment status.
- Attention will be paid to coordination with the childcare system.
- Present details of the experience of a freelance man with small children and examine the work-life challenges he and his family face in relation to Japan's current childcare leave system and childcare system.

Aims of this Presentation

I would like to get feedback from members in countries where inclusion in terms of work status is more advanced than in Japan.

International research trends and Japan's position on Leave inclusiveness

Different treatment of the self-employed in Parental Leave scheme in different countries

Dobrotić and Blum's index in 21 European Countries (Dobrotić and Blum 2019)

Self-employed

Excluded: 0 (Belgium only)

Have access to separate scheme and can be subject to stricter eligibility criteria:

1 (Czech Republic and Denmark)

Fully included in the same scheme as employed:

2 (Others)

Different treatment of the self-employed in Parental Leave scheme in different countries

Australia and Japan (Whitehouse and Nakazato 2021: 288-299)

Excluded(0): Japan

Fully included(2): Australia

Self-employed and parental leave uptake

Difficulties for self-employed people in taking parental leave and gender disparities, and measures to overcome such challenges are still an ongoing research issue.

Sweden (Duvander and Löfgren 2022: 483-491; Hagqvist et al. 2019: 680-696; Anxo and Ericson 2015: 751-770)

Norway (Munkejord 2017: 624-639)

Germany (Geisler and Kreyenfeld 2019: 273-291)

Japan's parental leave system and childcare system (in comparison with Sweden)

	Sweden	Japan
Duration of paid parental leave	18 months (until 12 years old, 13 months well paid, 5 months low-paid, overlap only 1 months)	max 24 months per parent (until 2 years old, first 6 months well-paid 67%, later months 50%), overlap whole period)
Self-employed/freelance	○	×
Starting age for public ECEC	12 months	2 months (varies among facilities)
Availability	All children	Competitive in urban and suburban areas, especially for one year old

Research on self-employed people/ freelancers and balancing work and childcare

Study Group on Working and Parenting without
Employment Relationships, An Urgent Questionnaire
Survey (Freelancers Association).

Survey period: 19-31 December 2017

Number of valid responses: 353

Respondents: Women who are currently freelancers
or corporate managers, etc. aged between 20 and
50, who are unable to take maternity or parental
leave because they are not in an employment
relationship, and who have experienced pregnancy,
childbirth or childcare while working.

Timing of return to work for those continuing
to work after pregnancy and childbirth

59.0% within two months after childbirth

44.8% within one month after childbirth

Dependence on childcare services other than day-care centres

Dependence on childcare services
other than day-care centres is high.
Temporary (respite) childcare 44.2%

Babysitters 26.9%

Family support 23.5%

Self-employed/freelance men and childcare

Research not found in Japan







Prior to conducting interviews:

Case study based on the book (Asada 2019: 283p) which documents the experiences of a freelance man himself.

Mr. A

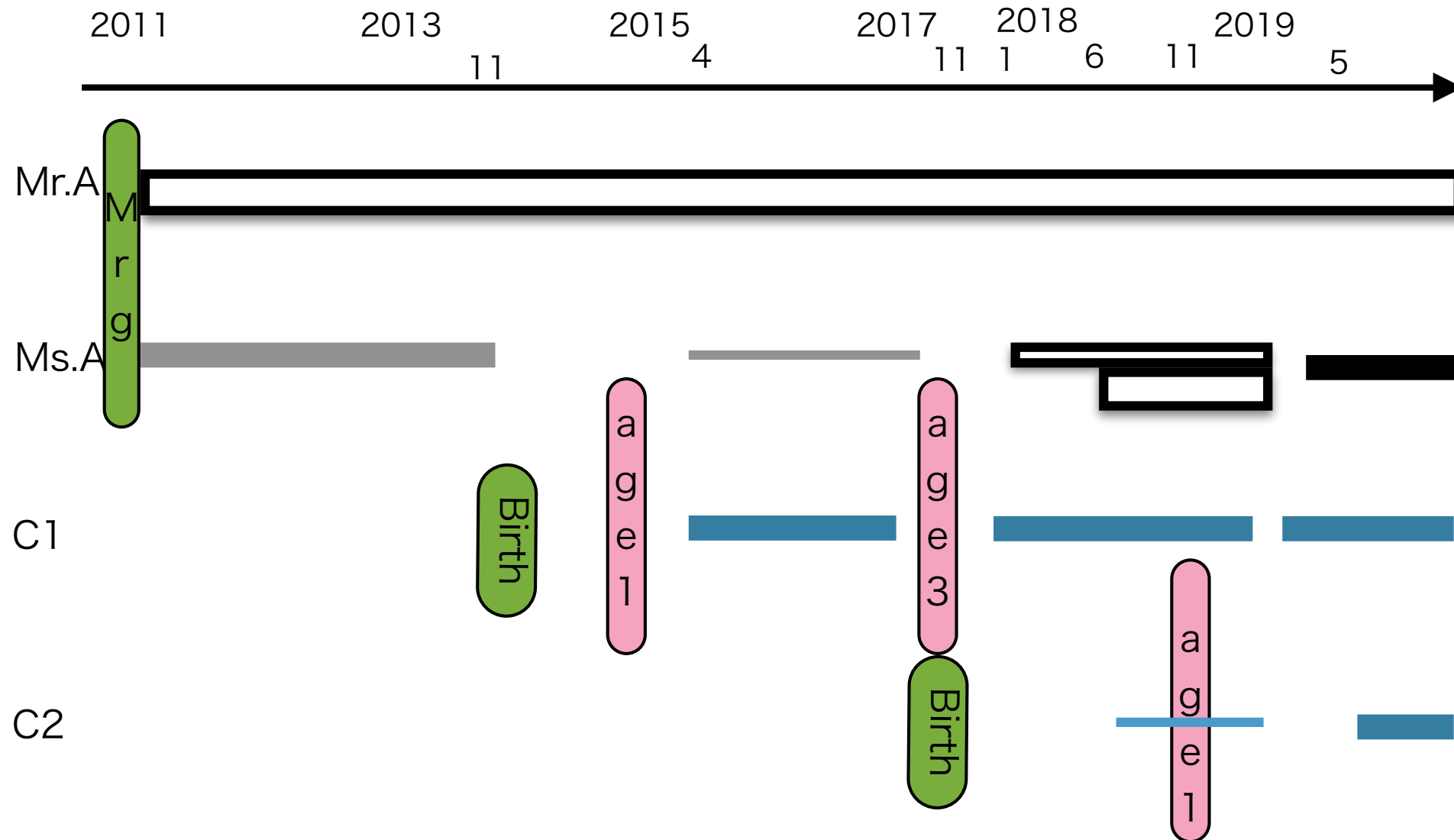
A freelance creator who organises and directs art events across the country on the theme of 'art and social activism'. He also writes for books and various media.

Challenge of the family of a freelance father

Full-time permanent  Full-time fixed term  Self-employed 
 Part-time permanent  Part-time fixed term  Partner of Self-employed 

Approved ECEC 

Non-approved ECEC 



Residence
(Family)

Osaka

Ostu (Periphery of the
Osaka Metropolitan
Area)

Niigata

Tokyo Suburb

Niigata
(Chubu
region)

Tokyo

Mr.A

Mr A's complaints

K City's childcare entry criteria index.

Points for admission to unapproved kindergartens +5







Points for currently taking parental leave or maternity leave +10

Higher points not applicable to self-employed persons.

Mr A's complaints

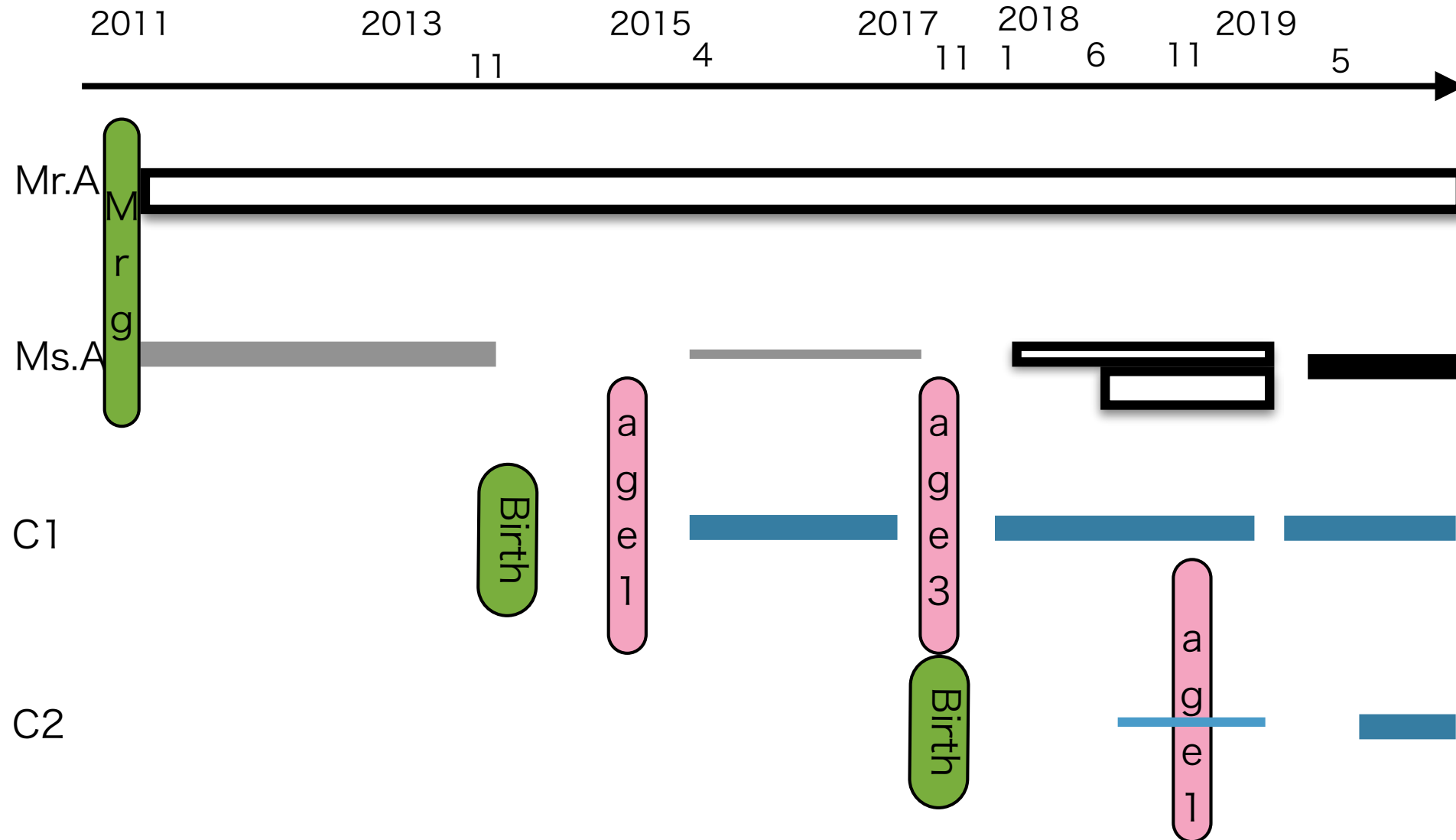
In the first place, freelancers are in a situation where if they take a break, they may not get any work, so even if they were told that even if they were self-employed, they could take parental leave, I don't think that would be realistic at all.'

Challenge of the family of a freelance father

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Mr.A

Research needed in the next step

What kind of parental leave and childcare system should be in place that does not create inequalities by employment status, especially by conducting interviews and comparing with other countries with more inclusiveness.

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