Determinants of The Quality of Psychological Relationship between Parents and Children in Japan

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当論文では、日本における親子関係の質の決定要因について論じる。「家族についての全国調査（NFR98）」における、「１番上のお子さんとの関係はいかがですか」に対する親の回答を分析する。82％は「良好」と答えているが、子どもが 13 才以上になると平均値が下がり、思春期と中学校への転換の影響を伺わせる。

夕食を共にする回数と宿題の手伝いも親子関係に良い影響を与えている。総収入も良い影響を与えているが、教育程度は影響がない。健康状態、憂鬱感、結婚満足感なども親子関係の質に影響を与えている。

家族に関する心配事や子どもとの会話の頻度も重要だが、親子関係の質の決定要因かどうかは、疑問が残る。会話の頻度をコントロールしても、子どもの年齢の効果は変わらず、会話の頻度よりも内容が大事であることを示唆している。当論文は、親子関係の質は構造的、個人的要因の双方によって決定される、ということを示している。

キーワード：親子関係、コミュニケーション、思春期

This paper deals with the determinants of the parent-child relationship quality in Japan.

Parent's responses from 1998 National Family Survey of Japan were analyzed, with the dependent variable being the response to "What do you think of the relationship with this child?"

Most (82%) report good relationships with their children.

Relationships involving children of 13 and older show notably lower quality, indicating transition to puberty and middle school is critical in Japan.

Frequency of having dinner together and help in school work also enhanced the relationship quality. While the family income mattered, education did not. Such life quality variables as health, depression, and marital satisfaction were factors also.

Parent's concern with family and frequency of talk with children are related to the relationship quality, though we don't claim any causal order. When the amount of conversation is controlled for, the relationship quality involving 13-18 years old children is still low, suggesting the content, not the amount of communication is critical.

The results indicate that the parent-child relationship quality is affected by both structural and individual factors.

Key Words:Parent-child relationship, communication, puberty

Introduction

Since the notorious murder case in Kobe in which a 14-year old boy killed and beheaded a 12-year old boy, Japan seems to have had many hideous crimes by juveniles. The number of crimes by juveniles in Japan has in fact decreased for a while, but we get an impression that hideous crimes which are picked up by the media are in an increasing trend.

In recent years, however, we pay attention to the assailant's family, particularly the relationship between the parents and the assailant, whenever we have an eye-catching case involving a juvenile. We ask if the mother and the child (usually a boy) were adequately separated psychologically. We ask if the father was present both physically and psychologically. We ask if the child was adequately exposed to "paternal authority." We ask if the relationship between the father and the mother was good. We also ask if the relationship between the child and his grandparents was good.

We, however, don't need extreme cases to figure out that the interpersonal relationships, particularly parent-children relationships, are important for the emotional development of children. Nevertheless, there are not many articles which examine how external factors (both social and environmental ones) affect the psychological relationship between parents and children.

Based upon the assumption that a good relationship between parents and children is one of the most important factors leading to adequate psychological and social developments of children, this article focuses upon the quality of psychological relationship between parents and children. Specifically, I will identify external factors which affect the quality of the psychological relationship between parents and children.

Psychological Relationship between Parents and Children

For a healthy development of children in their physical and/or emotional aspects, the quality of their psychological relationship with parents is critical. Research has shown that the quality of parent-child relationship affects children's socioeconomic status, social integration, psychological well-being, and ability to establish intimate ties (Amato and Booth 1997). In addition, to acquire the psychological independence, children may have to go through the stages of rebellion against their parents, and thus, their relationships with parents are often tense.

Nevertheless, except the inevitable developmental periods which every child has to go through, it is believed that positive and affirmative relationships with parents are better for the development of children themselves. For parents, in a similar vain, a good psychological relationship is better for their own emotional and/or psychological health and the way they deal with their children in the future.

Amato and Booth (1997), for example, discuss the consequences of parent-child interaction on the development of children in later life. While they focus is upon the nature of the interaction with the two dimension of support/hostility and control/permissiveness, which is a little different from the present study, the assumed mechanism is the same. According to Amato and Booth, "...broad family factors (such as economic hardship

and parents' marital quality) affect children largely through their impact on parent-child interaction" (1997, p. 16). This is called a "mediation model."

Similarly, Harris, Furstenberg, and Marmer (1998) find that the parental involvement affects children's educational attainment, delinquency, and psychological distress in the future. The stable and smooth relationship with the parents and the sense of trust with them are expected to lead to positive consequences for the children in the future through the parental involvement.

The present study does not directly deal with the consequences of the quality of parent-child relationship on children's later life. Rather, it deals with the first half of this "mediation model," or the effects of "broad family factors" upon the quality of parent-child relationship perceived by the parents.

Parental Factors Affecting the Quality of Parent-Child Relationship

As critical factors determining the quality of psychological relationship between parents and children, we have to consider characteristics of the child and the family in question. These factors include the birth order, the number of siblings, age, sex, the combination of sex with the parent (male-male, male-female, etc.), single-parenthood, and whether any extended family members reside in the household.

In addition, we have to consider external factors involving both parents and children. We have to consider two primary parental factors: resources available and spent for parent-child relationship and spill-over effects from other aspects of the parent's life. In the following paragraphs, these two factors will be discussed.

Resources available and spent for parent-child relationship have several components. The first one is time. Some parents make a lot of time available for children. While the amount of interaction does not guarantee a good relationship, building a good psychological relationship without much interaction is difficult to imagine. In other words, spending much time together is a necessary condition.

Time, however, is not something automatically becoming available for some parents. Parents often have to make it consciously available for children. Given some free time from work, some parents may spend it with their colleagues while others spend it with children. In her analysis on contemporary fatherhood, Gerson (1997) classified fathers to three categories partly due to their success at their jobs. Breadwinning fathers are successful ones devoting their life to the jobs, without much commitment to domestic life including child care. This fits the image of "corporate soldiers (kigyo senshi)" who are still often observed in Japan. Autonomous fathers, on the other hand, are those disillusioned with their career. Lack of stable economic provision makes them to limit their parental commitments. Finally, involved fathers are those who question the breadwinning role of the father, and actively involve in child care.

If you examine simple measures of time spent on jobs and commuting, there may not be much difference between autonomous and involved fathers. Rather, the difference in their conscious effort to make free time available for children is critical. Thus, we should measure how much time is spent for children to examine the effect of time on the parent-child relationship.

If the time spent with children is a critical variable, we should expect that mother-child relationship is on the

average better than father-child relationship, simply because mothers spend more time at home than fathers in general. This is just one of the main reasons why the sex of parent is a relevant variable to be considered here.

Parent's involvement with children is quite important for the quality of the relationship between them. As Harris, Furstenberg, and Marmer (1998) state, "Fathers' involvement represents a package of physical availability, emotional investment, and behavioral interaction, and these dimensions cannot be separated" (p. 202). Needless to say, the same factors are important for mothers' involvement with their children.

Thus, particularly crucial is the amount of involvement or interaction fathers have with children. More specifically, whether they have dinner with children, play games or sports with children, and help their children with their study is a critical factor to determine the parent-child relationship. This is particularly crucial in Japan, where many fathers work into late at night, and have little time to spend with children. As a result of fathers working too long hours, some scholars described Japanese families as "fatherless" (Wagatsuma 1978, but see Ishii-Kuntz 1993). Lack of fatherhood is often discussed for American families also. While divorce and single-motherhood are the sources of "fatherlessness" in the United States, long working hours is the source of fatherlessness in Japan. While the father is legally missing for the former and is not for the latter, its effect on children is similar to each other.

Working hours and commuting hours may be critical factors in Japan, particularly in large cities. With such long working hours and commuting time, fathers may not be able to make much time available for their children. Only recently, some fathers are consciously cutting down their work hours to have more time with their children. Ministry of Health of Japan ran a campaign in 1999 in which they advocate more involvement of fathers in child care. That campaign was motivated by decreasing fertility in Japan. "We don't call you fathers unless you take care of your children" is the phrase they came up with, and this drew much attention, both in- and outside Japan.

The second component of the resource is a monetary one. A large income is found to enhance socialization and child care responsibility of African American fathers (Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine 1992). In turn, these involvements may enable parents to have a relationship of better quality with their children. More fun activities and more vacation may be possible with extra money. While these activities do not always lead to a better parent-child relationship, they are expected to enhance its quality with other things being equal.

The other component of the resource is an educational one. Parents with more educational attainment may be better equipped with childrearing techniques. Taking social science courses in college may have broadened their view, and they may be more likely to read books, magazines, and/or newspaper articles related to parent-child relationships. Among fathers, education may facilitate more involvement with their children (Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine 1992). More involvement of fathers is more conducive to a good relationship with their children.

Spill-over effects refer to such factors as job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and physical/mental health, which may indirectly affect the parent's relationship with their children. When the marital quality is high, the father may be more drawn to the family activity and his involvement with children is larger (Harris, Furstenberg, and Marmer 1998). This relationship, however, is not found among mothers in the same study.

Also, when parents are satisfied with aspects of life other than their relationship with children, that positive

feeling may enhance the quality of interaction with their children and thus, the quality of parent-child relationship. On the other hand, low satisfaction with job and/or life in general and poor health, both physically and mentally, may negatively affect the quality of parent-child relationship.

Children's Factors Affecting the Quality of Parent-Child Relationship

Upon determining the psychological relationship between parents and children, the latterÊ0s age is absolutely critical. As children grow, a quest for independence often gets in the way of parental control. In Japan, scholars have coined the term "hankoki" (rebellious phase). During these periods, children may follow their parentsÊ0 order to a much lesser extent than when they are before or after these periods. The first period typically is when children are 3 or 4 years old, and the second period is when children are 13 or 14 years old.

While the first "rebellious phase" should not affect the parent-child relationship simply because the child is too young to have any effect at the age of 3 or 4. The second "rebellious phase," however, is expected to affect the parent-child relationship quite a lot. By the age of 13 or 14, a child has his or her own mind and s/he often disagrees with the parents as two grown-up people sometimes disagree with each other.

Children are faced with tasks of developing into functioning adults. There are some hurdles to cross in that path, both developmental and environmental. These hurdles exist so that children learn such developmental tasks as independence and autonomy. Most of these tasks are common across societies. No matter which society you live, children have to struggle with their own physiological changes and psychological/cognitive development. Jean PiagetÊ0s theory (Piaget, 1952) deals with cognitive development while Mead (1934) discusses development of self concept.

There seems, however, to be an environmental or social mechanism to set the course of development for children somewhat differently in each society. While childrenÊ0s dealing with parents prepares them for adult life through psychological processes, they also have to deal with other developmental tasks through sociological processes. Many "primitive" societies have rites of passage. Children of certain age have to live in a hut by themselves or are initiated to adult life. In some countries, military duty fulfills the same purpose. Upon certain age, men serve in military. This not only functions as developing military for the country, but also helps those service men develop into adults. Thus, it seems that societies offer two mechanisms, psychological and sociological, to help children develop into functioning adult members.

Japan does not have either rite of passage or military duty. Instead, education seems to function as socially imposed developmental hurdle. More specifically, entrance examinations to high schools and colleges serve that purpose. At the age of 15, virtually every student in Japan has to take entrance examination to high school (unless they are in some elite schools combining middle and high school curricula). At the age of 18, almost a half of the students in Japan take college entrance examination and many try for the second or third year. These experiences are taxing for children and have become source of stress among youth in Japan. It is a well known fact that bullying becomes more frequent in middle schools in Japan. Most experts believe that this phenomenon is triggered by the stress of entrance examination and academic competition because of that.

It should be noted that children in Japan go to kindergarten at the age of 3 or 4 years old, and they later go to middle school at the age of 12. Children usually start feeling the stress related to high school entrance examination when they are in 8th grade (13-14 years old). This timing coincides with the "second rebellious phase." In other words, two "rebellious phases" which usually are considered results of internal or psychological developmental process may be results of external factors in Japan.

These childrenÊ0s parents, particularly fathers, are in late 30s to mid 40s, and workers in this age group in Japan are expected to be in the prime of their career. They are often required to work for long hours into late at night. Many of these "corporate soldiers (kigyo senshi)" do not have much time to interact with children. As was stated earlier, the lack of time to interact with children hurts the parent-child relationship, and this fact may worsen the relationship between the parents and children of the "second rebellious phase."

This lack of interaction with children may be interpreted by the children as neglect since they are in one of the most vulnerable stages in their life. While they may appear not to be attached to their parents, "It does not make sense to assume that shortly after a period of intense socialization and dependence a child would be eager to reject most of what has been learned at home. Young adolescents are still very attached to their parents" (Newman and Newman 1984, p. 299).

Another external factor involving children, relationships with their peers, is critical for the parent-child relationship. If young children get along well with their peers, that positive characteristics may spill over to their relationships with parents. For teenagers, however, the association between peer relationship and parental relationship may be more complicated. While they try to develop into independent adults through the peer relationship, they still continue to be sons and daughters. They may have to face split loyalty between parental/conventional way of living and teenager/non-conventional way of living. While the discrepancy between the adult and youth values may not be as large as we are led to believe by popular media (Damon 1983, Chapter 7), the association between peer relationship and parental relationship may not be strong among teenagers.

Given the emphasis on educational attainment in Japan, the quality of and the stress related to school life for children should affect the parent-children relationship. Needless to say, a good and less stressful school life is expected to enhance the parent-child relationship.

In summary, determinants of parent-child relationship include factors of both the parent and the child. In the following analyses, I would like to explore which specific factors contribute to the parent-child relationship, and how we can improve that aspect by studying the result of the analysis.

Methods

Data

I use data from 1998 National Family Survey of Japan. This data set is a result of the first collective effort in that country to make high-quality quantitative data available for family researchers. More than 50 family researchers who had expressed their interests were involved in the project. They designed the survey instrument,

drew a sample, hired a survey agency to collect data, and analyzed them.

A representative sample of 10,500 people between 28 and 77 years old was drawn by the two-stage stratified sampling method from 535 sample points in Japan. Data were collected by a data collection agency in January 1999. The agency hand-delivered the questionnaires, let the respondents fill them in, and collected them later. A total of 6,985 responses were returned, representing the response rate of 66.52%.

Further selected for the present study are those parents who live with at least one non-married child 25 years or younger. I restrict the parent-child relationship to that involving a single child who typically resides with the parents for his/her age. That restriction reduced the number of relevant cases (parent-child pair) to 3,041.

Measures

The present study deals with parent-child relationships. More specifically, the relationship between parents and unmarried children who reside with them. While we can select more than one child from each household, doing so will introduce a common source of errors in regression analyses conducted in this study. Thus, we chose one parent-child pair from each family (respondent), specifically the oldest unmarried child living in the household. A preliminary analysis indicated that the quality of parent-child relationship does not depend upon the birth order of each child.

The dependent variable is a response to the question, "What do you think of the relationship with this child?" There are four choices available: 1. Good, 2. Somewhat Good, 3. Somewhat Bad, and 4. Bad. Responses were reverse-coded so that high scores indicate good relationships. I have to admit that this measure is relatively crude. Four responses are bare minimum to treat the variable as the dependent variable of multiple regression analysis. As is shown in the analysis section, however, this seemingly simplistic measure is related to predictor variables quite well, indicating a somewhat good construct validity.

As measures of the time available for and spent with children, we use several variables. The first one is the total work hours and commuting hours combined. Since this variable is available for employed parents only, I checked if this variable is related to the parent-child relationship. Since preliminary analyses indicated that it is not, I dropped this variable from subsequent equations to preserve as many cases as possible.

There are four questions which ask how often the parent shares the time with the children in the following activities; having dinner together, engaging in hobby, sports, or games, going out together, and teaching knowledge or skills (academic subjects or cooking). For each of the four activities, parents respond with 1. Almost every day, 2. Four or five times a week, 3. Two or three times a week, 4. Once a week, 5. Several times a year, or 6. Never. The responses were reverse-coded so that larger scores indicate more frequent sharing of activities.

As a measure of monetary resource, family income is used. Nine response categories were given; 1. No income, 2. Less than 1 mil. yen, 3. 1-1.99 mil., 4. 2-3.99 mil., 5. 4-5.99 mil., 6. 6-7.99 mil., 7. 8-9.99 mil., 8. 10-11.99 mil., and 9. 12 mil. or more.

As a measure of educational resource, the last school attended was used. Five choices were given to

respondents; 1. Middle school, 2. High school, 3. Specialty school (after high school), 4. Junior college or vocational school, and 5. Four-year college.

Parents' life quality variables include health rating, depression rating, and marital satisfaction. Health rating is based on the self-reported health condition; 1. Very good, 2. Somewhat good, 3. Neither good nor bad, 4. A little bad, and 5. Very bad. It was reverse-coded so that high scores indicate a better health. Depression rating is the average of 6 items representing depression such as "feeling depressed." These six items were obtained through factor analysis. The higher the score, the more depressed the respondent is.

Marital satisfaction score is the average of 5 items for each aspect of marriage; your spouse's involvement in housework, your spouse's involvement in child care, family budget, sex life, and marriage life in general. Four response categories were 1. Very satisfied, 2. Somewhat satisfied, 3. Somewhat dissatisfied, and 4. Very dissatisfied. They were reverse-coded to indicate that higher scores indicate high satisfaction.

The target child's age is measured by numerical numbers from 0 to 25. To examine a detailed effect of age, I first use Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with other predictors as covariates. This analysis produces the net effect of each age after controlling for the effects of other predictor variables. For the major regression analysis, however, this variable is collapsed to 7 categories (0-3, 4-6, 7-12=reference category, 13-15, 16-18, 19-22, and 23-25) to preserve degrees of freedom.

The child's gender should be controlled. More interestingly, a certain combination of parent's and child's sexes may affect the parent-child relationship. While father-son relationships may appear to involve more strain, some researchers found that the conflicts between girls and their mothers were the most frequent and the most intense (Montemayor 1982). This fact may reflect upon Japanese families in particular, since many fathers are not physically present and most parent-child interaction involve mothers, rather than fathers. While more time spent together may enhance the quality of the parent-child relationship as previously stated, it should depend upon the nature of these interactions. If mother-child relationships involve more instrumental aspects of children's life such as finishing homework and controlling behavior at home, the quality of mother-child relationships may be worse than father-child relationships.

For the sex of the parent and the child, four combinations are obtained (father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, and mother-daughter). Father-son combination is treated as the reference category. If mother-child relationships are worse than father-child relationships, both mother-son (FEM-MAL) and mother-daughter (FEM-FEM) relationship qualities should be lower than the reference category, or father-son relationship.

There are other seemingly relevant variables in the data set. One is a variable which may be called "family concern." The questions pertain to worrying about various aspects of family life; 1. children, 2. spouse, 3. parents or parents-in-law, 4. felt like I am not well understood by my family, and 5. felt like my burden in the family is too heavy. Four response categories were 1. Very often, 2. Sometimes, 3. Rarely, and 4. Never, but they were reverse-coded so that high scores indicate more concerns. The other question asks how often the respondent talks with the target child in the past year. Response categories are; 1. Almost every day, 2. Four or five times a week, 3. Two or three times a week, 4. Once a week, 5. Several times a year, and 6. Never. The response was reverse-coded.

These two variables, family concern and talking with the child, however, are somewhat different from other predictors. Unlike other predictors, these two variables could result from the quality of parent-child relationship. When the latter is low, the parent may be concerned about it and stop talking with him/her altogether. Thus, I will enter these two variables after estimating the regression coefficients without them first. For the regression procedure, these two variables are entered to the equation in the last step. No causal relationship is examined involving these two variables.

Findings

Means and standard deviations are found in Table 1. Notable is a very high mean of the parent-child relationship. Out of possible 4.0 points, the average is 3.80 and standard deviation is .46. More specifically, 81.6% of parents responded with the category, "Good," followed by 16.4% "Somewhat good," 1.7% "Somewhat bad," and .4% "Bad." Thus, it is questionable to use OLS regression treating the dependent variable as continuous. One may be tempted to recode the variable to "Good" and "Others," and run a logistic regression. A decision was made, however, to proceed with OLS regression for the following three reasons. First, the assumption violated by this skewed distribution is the normality of error terms. This violation, however, does not affect the parameter estimate (Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, and Wasserman 1996), and with a large sample size, this assumption may not be necessary to test the significance of parameter estimates (asymptotic normality). Second, a preliminary analysis indicated that the list of significant predictors is nearly identical whether we estimated OLS regression or logistic regression. Finally, for the first part of the analysis, I will show the net effects of each age. For this purpose, preserving the metric (and thus using OLS regression) is more helpful for the readers.

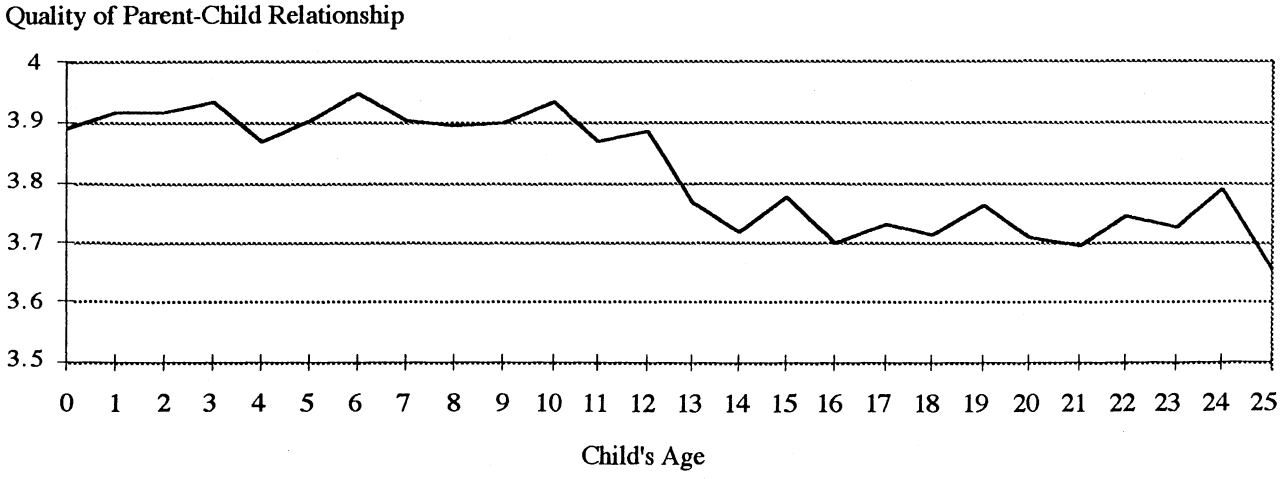
In the first part of analysis, the effect of child's age on the quality of parent-child relationship is examined. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with or without controlling for various covariates, except family concern and talking variables for the reason stated above. Since the effect of age does not depend much on whether other covariates are controlled for or not, I will present the finding without controlling for the effect of other predictors.

Figure 1 represents the relationship between the child's age and the quality of parent-child relationship. It is obvious from the figure that the quality of parent-child relationship deteriorates when the child becomes 13 years old. This corresponds to the time when children go to middle school. The parent-child relationship is strained quite a lot at this time, due to a huge difference between elementary and middle schools in Japan in the pressure to excel academically.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables Included in the Analysis (N=2,453)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
QUALITY	3.80	.46
DINNER	5.18	1.15
GAME	2.99	1.61
OUT	3.05	1.28
STUDY	3.00	1.54
INCOME	6.32	1.59
EDUC	2.91	1.36
HEATLTH	3.75	.84
DEPRES	1.56	.52
MARSAT	2.96	.62
AGE	14.43	7.03
CHFEMALE	.49	.50
FEMALE	.51	.50
FAMCON	1.97	.75
TALK	5.49	1.02

Figure 1. The Relationship between Child's Age and Quality of Parent-Child Relationship



If the decline in the parent-child relationship is a mere reflection of educational pressure, however, it should increase after the pressure of high school and college entrance examinations disappears. This obviously doesn't

happen. Once the quality of parent-child relationship declines at the age of 13, it doesn't come back up. This may indicate that once the parent-child relationship suffers either from the developmental or external pressure for the child, it may be difficult to recover.

Next, OLS regressions were conducted to estimate the relationship between various predictors and the dependent variable, the quality of parent-child relationship. Table 2 shows the result of the OLS regression analysis.

Table 2. OLS Regression Estimates of the Quality of Parent-Child Relationship (N=2453)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	b	beta	b	beta
DINNER	.046	.114***	.006	.016
GAME	.005	.017	-.002	-.007
OUT	.009	.025	.010	.028
STUDY	.023	.076**	.019	.063*
INCOME	.012	.042*	.013	.045*
EDUC	-.005	-.015	.000	.001
HEATLTH	.039	.071**	.026	.047*
DEPRES	-.060	-.068**	-.017	-.019
MARSAT	.084	.113***	.055	.074**
AGE0-3	-.001	-.001	-.009	-.006
AGE4-6	-.001	-.001	-.004	-.002
AGE13-15	-.112	-.083***	-.088	-.065**
AGE16-18	-.138	-.106***	-.095	-.073**
AGE19-22	-.101	-.084**	-.054	-.046#
AGE23-25	-.092	-.071*	-.052	-.040
MAL-FEM	-.000	-.000	-.016	-.015
FEM-MAL	.000	.000	-.016	-.015
FEM-FEM	.006	.006	-.027	-.025
FAMCON			-.064	-.104***
TALK			.139	.309***
Constant	3.153		2.785	
R^2	.095		.174	

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, # p < .10

First of all, about 10% of the error variance was explained by introducing various predictor variables except the parent's concern with family matters and how often s/he talks with the child. Once the latter two variables are entered to the equation, the explained variance increased to about 17%. Given there are only four response categories in the dependent variable, the explained variance appears relatively large. This indicates the construct validity of the dependent variable, the quality of parent-child relationship.

Overall results seem to indicate that parental resources, parental spill-over, and children's characteristics each affect the quality of parent-child relationship. Before controlling for the parental concern with the family matters and how often s/he talks with the child (Model 1), the high quality of parent-child relationship was related to how often the parent has dinner with children, to how often s/he helps children with their study, and the family income (resources). Parental involvement in the family is critical for the quality of parent-child relationship, and a large income enhances this relationship. Monetary and time resources are both related to the relationship quality.

Notable here is that the frequency of playing games or sports together, frequency of going out together, or the parent's educational attainment is not related to the quality of parent-child relationship.

The parental circumstances are also related to the quality of parent-child relationship. The latter is high when the parent has a better physical health, fewer symptoms of depression, and/or higher marital satisfaction (spill-over effect). The child's age shows a relationship with the quality of parent-child relationship consistent to Figure 1. With the age of 7-12 as the reference category, all of the four older age groups indicate the relationship of lower quality with the parent. Two younger age categories show no difference from the 7-12 years old, again consistent to Figure 1. None of the child's sex, parent's sex, or the combination of them shows any relationship with the quality of parent-child relationship.

Once the concern with family and the frequency of talk with the child are included in the equation, the latter variable seems to dominate the relationship. Its standardized coefficient is by far the largest (.309), indicating those parents who talk with their children more often tend to have better relationships with them. Again, I entered this variable only in the second step since there is a possibility that the high quality of parent-child relationship may lead to more frequent talk between them. Likewise, while the parent's concern with family issues is negatively related with the quality of parent-child relationship, the latter may have caused the former.

The relationship of other predictors with the dependent variable changed a little. The effect of the frequency of dinner variable became non-significant, because this variable is highly related to the frequency of talk variable (r=.428). The effect of depression on the quality of parent-child relationship disappeared once I controlled for the concern with family matters and the frequency of conversation between the parent and the child. This may be interpreted that the negative effect of depression is mediated through the lack of conversation.

The difference between 7-12 years old and 19 years and older became non-significant, once I controlled for how often the parent and the child talked. This may be interpreted that while older children's negative relationship with the parental relationship may be accounted for by the frequency of talk between the parent and child, the effect of those between 13 and 18 is not accounted for. In other words, the relatively poor relationship with children 13-18 years olds is not a result of lack of conversation. It is rather assumed that the content of conversation drastically changes for the parents and children of these ages. Whether or not it is related to academic stress, the

content of conversation between the parents and teenagers deteriorated, rather than its amount declines.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present paper tries to explain how the quality of parent-child relationship is determined in Japan. The result indicates that there are many relevant factors. Seemingly the most important factor is the active parental involvement. Having dinner together with children over a pleasant conversation seems to enhance the parent's relationship with the children. Satisfactory marriages and large incomes help, too. It may be a good idea to help children with their homework and study for a good quality of parent-child relationship.

While none of the above findings is surprising, these findings should confirm that for parents, particularly fathers, in Japan, spending much time with children is a key to good relationships with them and subsequently healthy emotional developments. Though it's inevitable for the quality to drop when the child starts going to middle schools, this drop should be prevented, to some extent, by parents' actively engaging in the child's life.

Structural factors in Japan, such as long working hours, long commuting hours, drinking habits among coworkers after work, and playing golf with business partners during the weekend obviously hamper the healthy interaction between the parents and children. Conscious efforts to make time available for children are often necessary to maintain a good relationship with them.

The present study should be qualified in several aspects. Probably the most critical is the measurement quality of the dependent variable. Ideally, the parent-child relationship should be measured in several components, not a single question. The same relationship may be evaluated from a different viewpoint when the children's responses are considered, instead of the parents'.

Despite these qualifications, the present study offers a contemporary picture of the parent-child relationship in Japan and its determinant. As such, this study should be a useful addition to the study of parent-child relationships in Japan.

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Footnotes:

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This term, ·0rebellious phase (hankoki),0 is commonly used in Japan. People mention ·0first rebellious phase (3-4 years old),0 and ·0second rebellious phase (13-14 years old),0 (daiichi and daini hankoki) all the time as if they are well-established psychological terms outside Japan. In fact, they are not. There is no equivalent term to "hankoki" in scholarly articles or book written in English. This fact that ·0rebellious phase,0 is commonly used in Japan indicates that they are more distinguishable phases in that country.

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