

Fathers' Attitudes toward Cooking and Family Life Education in Japan

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<ABSTRACT>

To increase the fathers' involvement in household work is an important issue for their work-life balance and family welfare. We analyzed the data from 715 fathers in their 30s. They had child/children under 6 years old and their wives were full time workers. We focused on cooking and FLE at schools because they are the keys for increasing fathers' household work. The results show the strong relationships in cooking behavior and in FLE, although relationship between two groups isn't observed. It suggests the need for FLE programs in community and workplaces, and effective FLE programs at schools.

KEYWORDS: fatherhood, cooking, family life education

INTRODUCTION

1. Background and purposes

Japanese fathers' time spent on household work has been significantly lower than those in other countries; it was only 28 minutes per day (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2012) in spite of the continuous increasing of the number of dual-income households since 1980. Recent survey conducted in 2016

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revealed the same trend and 34 minutes per day spent on household work by Japanese fathers. (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2016).

Among various kinds of household work, it is cooking that takes the longest period of time (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2012). As a matter of fact, we cannot live without eating meals. According to a survey by Takahashi, Kurokawa, and Kuramoto, the respondents considered that cooking was an important household work, but most of the fathers didn't prepare meals. Comparing to other kinds of household work, they did cooking less frequently (Takahashi, Kurokawa, & Kuramoto, 2013a; Takahashi, Kurokawa, & Kuramoto, 2014). If fathers do cooking, that would reduce the household work time spent by their wives and promote their WLB.

Meanwhile, coeducational family life education (FLE) at school has started in 1994 in Japan. It has provided the knowledge and skills on everyday life which is necessary regardless of gender. Fathers in their 30s must have taken FLE at school. Has FLE learning opportunity at school contributed to the knowledge and skills of cooking?

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of cooking behavior of Japanese fathers and FLE at school, and to investigate important factors to promote fathers' involvement in cooking.

2. Literature review and theory

Using various approaches, family researchers in the world have made efforts to specify the factors regarding the involvement in household work. For example, based on middle range theory, studies were conducted from the viewpoints of "relative resource" (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz 1992; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane 1992; Shelton & Daphne 1993), "time availability" (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Ishii-Kuntz, Makino, Kato, & Tsuchiya, 2004), and "gender ideology" (Ferree, 1991; Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992).

Recently, we have applied "the theory of reasoned action" to the analyses

of father's intention to do household work (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2003). We found that the intention was a strong key factor to increase participation in household work (Takahashi, Kurokawa, & Kuramoto, 2013b). Further, we revealed that the effectiveness of FLE showed a significant effect to the fathers' intention to do household work (Kurokawa, Takahashi, & Kuramoto, 2014).

In this study, we utilize the main concept in the theory of reasoned action, "intention." We focus on two intentions: "cooking intention" and "intention to participate in FLE."

METHOD

1. Data Collection

Data was collected through the internet survey, targeting fathers in their 30s with a child or children under 6 years old in March, 2014 (2,056 participants). A questionnaire included 20 questions on household work, their wives' work, FLE, and gender consciousness. For this study, we only used the data of fathers whose wives worked full-time ($n = 715$) because fathers' involvement in household work would be more seriously important to full-time worker couples than to others.

The major characteristics of the sample were as follows; the average age was 34.6 ($SD = 2.91$), 43% worked as engineer, 30% worked as office worker, and 27% worked in other fields, about 70% graduated a 4-years college or more, 55% lived in Tokyo or near Tokyo areas, and 73% didn't live with their parents.

2. Measures

Cooking ability. "Cooking ability" was estimated from the answers on cooking. The respondents rated their ability to do cooking subjectively by 5 statements. An example is, "I can cook a variety of recipes by myself." ($\text{Alpha} = .759$).

Cooking intention. "Cooking intention" asked how frequently respondents would

like to do 3 kinds of cooking relating activities: grocery shopping, cooking, and washing dishes. (Alpha = .680).

Cooking. “Cooking” asked how frequently respondents do 3 kinds of cooking activity: grocery shopping, cooking, washing dishes. (Alpha = .672)

FLE effectiveness. “FLE effectiveness” indicates the level change of their thinking about individual, family and other related matters by the FLE. An example is “Through FLE, I understand the meanings of household work more than before.” This scale consists of 8 items. (Alpha = .953).

Household work effect. “Household work effect” means beneficial outcome for the family if the respondents do household work, and it is measured by 9 statements including “I can have more time to spend with my child/children by doing household work.” (Alpha = .934).

Need for FLE. “Need for FLE” means how much respondents consider necessary to provide FLE in 4 kinds of settings: in community, university extension, seminar at workplace/government/NPO, and lecture in PTA meeting. (Alpha = .893).

Intention to participate in FLE. “Intention to participate in FLE” asked how frequently respondents would like to participate in FLE program in the 4 kinds of settings mentioned above. (Alpha = .921).

These measures employed a self-report, 4-point Likert scale, and the higher sum indicates the higher level of the concept respectively.

Nutrition/cooking knowledge. “Nutrition/cooking knowledge” was estimated from the answers of 8 questions on nutrition/cooking including “Fat includes the highest calorie.” The number of correct answers made the score.

FLE learning opportunity. “FLE leaning opportunity” was measured by the answers of 3 questions whether or not respondents learned FLE at elementary, junior high, and high school.

3. Analyses

First, descriptive statistics and correlations of key variables were calculated, and secondly, path model analyses were conducted with AMOS.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of the variables and the correlations are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. Figure 1 shows the results of path analyses; every index of this model fits the observed data well (GFI = .987, AGFI = .978, RMSEA = .029). Variables regarding cooking have the strait path from “nutrition/cooking knowledge” to “cooking,” and variables regarding FLE also have the strait path from “FLE learning opportunity” to “intention to participate in FLE.” Both paths show significantly positive relationships. “Household work effect” shows the significant relationships with “cooking ability” and “cooking intention,” although it isn’t related to FLE effectiveness. “FLE learning opportunity” doesn’t indicate a clear relationship with nutrition/cooking knowledge either.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	Ranges
Nutrition/cooking knowledge	715	13.04	1.414	9-16
Cooking ability	715	13.18	3.629	5-20
Cooking intention	715	11.07	3.635	3-21
Cooking	715	8.50	3.118	3-18
Household work effect	715	27.05	5.929	4-36
FLE learning opportunity	715	4.63	.795	3-6
FLE effectiveness	715	16.69	5.465	8-32
Need for FLE	715	8.62	2.725	4-16
Intention to participate in FLE	715	7.35	2.958	4-16

Table 2. Correlations among the Variables (n=715)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Nutrition/cooking knowledge	–								
2 Cooking ability	.147**	–							
3 Cooking intention	.056	.442**	–						
4 Cooking	.043	.438**	.866**	–					
5 Household work effect	.034	.274*	.279**	.252**	–				
6 FLE learning opportunity	-.053	.025	.030	.049	.018	–			
7 FLE effectiveness	-.021	.040	-.052	-.037	.023	.219**	–		
8 Need for FLE	-.023	-.005	.009	.035	.034	.028	.314**	–	
9 Intention to participate in FLE	-.033	.027	.034	.052	.071	.065	.291**	.673**	–

**p<.01, *p<.05 (two tailed).

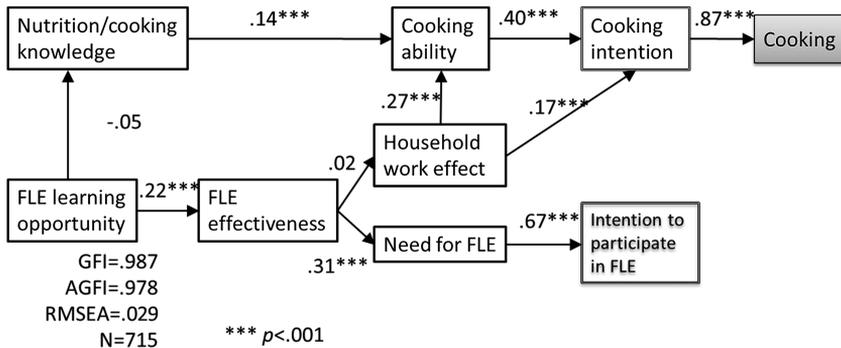


Figure 1. Cooking Activity of Fathers and the Need for FLE in Japan

IMPLICATIONS

Cooking classes for fathers may provide the good opportunity to learn nutrition and cooking knowledge, develop their cooking ability, intention, and cooking. Effective cooking class programs should be developed and implemented. Likewise, FLE learning opportunities have positive effect of prompting fathers to participate in FLE. The results suggest the significant need of FLE in different settings such as community and workplaces.

Unexpectedly the results did not show the relationship between nutrition/cooking knowledge and FLE learning opportunity at school. As nutrition/cooking knowledge is one of the goals of home economics education at school, we have to investigate the reason of the lack of the relationship in further study and develop better programs.

In addition, we need to analyze the cooking/household work intention and FLE of other types of couples.

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