

**FERTILITY RATE DECLINE IN JAPAN FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL  
PROBLEMS OF MODERN JAPANESE FAMILY**

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**Social Work**

**Master Thesis**

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ABSTRACT

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Fertility rate in Japan has been on the downward trend after reaching below 2.00 in 1975 and fertility rate decline related demographic concerns have raised questions toward existing structure of labor system for working women and policy effectiveness for families with children. The objectives of this research are to analyze the phenomenon and background factors of declining fertility rate in Japan from the perspectives of gender inequality and social problems of modern Japanese family.

My research question is why policies for family with children have not actually raised the fertility rate in Japan for several years and my hypothesis is that the policy ineffectiveness is resulted from policy target, which focuses too much on the phenomenon of declining fertility rate. In order to plan policies that provide functional support for family with children and increase the fertility rate, policy makers should focus more on family situation in Japan, analyzing background factors of declining fertility rate.

In the process of analyzing possible reasons of policy ineffectiveness and background factors of declining fertility rate, I followed a theoretical approach based on secondary sources and theoretical literature concerning family related policy in Japan. My research is based on gender related theory and welfare and economy related theory. This research aims to answer the research question from several perspectives that describe Japanese welfare and gender issues as well as family related issues.

Keywords: Declining fertility late, Gender equality, Modernization, Social policy, Welfare and family concept

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In many western European countries, the role of family and children in the society has gained a position of importance and priority in the process of constructing welfare state. Investing to children as future working citizens is regarded as one of the main method to invest on the society for its quality improvement and sustainable productivity within the context of politics, economy and culture (Lewis 2006, 13). This trend was indeed given birth by an influence of demographic concerns spread among the industrialized countries. In this paper, demographic concerns indicate concerns for aging society and declining fertility rate in modern society.

I became interested in researching fertility rate decline of Japan and its background factors when I studied child policy in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. According to the child policy studies in Finland, the concept and the role of children in the Finnish society seemed to be very different from that of Japan and I became interested in also family related policy. Needless to say, Finland and Japan has differences in their culture, languages, education and politic. I had first tried to do the comparative research between Finnish welfare and Japanese welfare system, however, I could not find adequate research resources and I decided to concentrate on analyzing Japanese system and trend concerning family related policies and fertility rate declines.

Japan, which is known as a developed and industrialized country with high accessibility for technology and higher education, is not an exception of countries which hold demographic concerns resulted from remarkable fertility decline. The demographic concerns have been rather very serious in Japan, holding low fertility rate and high percentages of the elderly people. Fertility rate in Japan has been on the downward trend after reaching below 2.00 in 1975 and it rose in 2006 for the first time in six years. In 2007

the fertility rate actually continued to go up to 1.34, however, this issue still needs careful focus since the estimation of the population structure in 2050 seems very critical to the Japanese society showing the serious shortage of working-age population (15-64 years) (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2008). Since 1990 in which fertility rate in Japan dipped below 1.6, demographic concerns have indeed raised discussions for the needs of structural reformation in many aspects of the society. However, policies that are targeted for supporting family and child rearing had not been making progress in increasing the fertility rate until 2006. Even after a rise of fertility rate in 2006 and 2007, the fertility rate in Japan is still very low comparing with other countries that are named as “welfare state” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2008).

There are different methods and perspectives to analyze declining fertility rate in industrialized countries. Changes of family concept, the influence of modernization, economical influences, and analysis of social problems related to family, gender issues have been main themes in discussing demographic concerns in western countries. Needless to mention, there are differences between Japan and western countries in developing social science research method and perspectives; however, a number of comparative researches of demographic concerns and welfare regime of Japan have been published and these researches have enabled to analyze fertility rate decline in Japan based on the research method developed in western society.

The concept of modernization is also one of the concepts that show different perspectives between Japan and western countries. Göran Therborn (1995, 273) explains the theoretical backgrounds of modernization in his book and he stated that “the value patterns of European modernity are first of all those of Christian religion and its secularization, of nation-state, and its citizenship, and of inherent in the European road

though modernity”. In Japan’s history, there are researches related to modernization, which is often referred to social and political changes of a certain period (Beckmann 1965, Preface). Thus modernization related issue had been discussed in more limited context than that of Western countries. For example, social work researches that include analysis of the influence of modernization would be rarely found in Japan. Toward modernization itself, most Japanese looked the state as a progressive agent of changes during and after modernization period regardless of their political values (Sheldon 1994, 346-366).

Gender equality has been also one of the most important topics in discussing sustainable welfare state. Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Finland are known as developed welfare states or welfare society and also as a country in which gender equality is highly valued and realized compared with other industrialized countries in South Europe or Asia. One of the methods to evaluate and compare gender equality with other countries might be to analyze the situation of women employment, the quality of women’s working environment, the number of female politicians and so on. Gender issue is related with many aspects of citizen’s lives and it has great influences on family life. In order to analyze and answer the research question concerning the ineffectiveness of policies for declining fertility rate, analysis on background factors of the phenomenon will indicate the close relationship between gender issue and social activities within family life. In addition, difficulties of realizing gender equality in Japan can be recognized by analyzing the historical document related with welfare policy. It can be said that the absence of gender equality in many aspects of social activities is one of the main reason for declining fertility rate in Japan; however, this research will explain more details of other concepts and historical issues that deeply influenced on recent social structure, that have been causing serious decline of fertility rate.

## 1.1 The research overview and state of the art of research on this topic

Demographic concerns have become more and more common social concern among industrialized countries. In Western European countries and elsewhere industrialized countries, the notable features of fertility behavior have been “a steady decline in completed fertility rate (the total number of children born to a woman)” (Cigno 1994, 64) and “fluctuations in the tempo of fertility (the distribution of those births over the mother’s fecund period)” (Cigno 1994, 64) since the end of the Second World War. For example in Italy, “completed fertility has fallen from 2.11 for the cohort of women born in 1949-50. The proportion of that fertility realized before the mother reached age 30 has, however, risen from 68 per cent in the 1939-40 cohort to 74 per cent in the 1944-5 cohort, only to fall to 72 per cent in that of 1949-50”. A similar picture to the example of Italy emerges for the rest of Western Europe (Cigno 1994, 64).

In 1963, in accordance with the fertility rate decline, “Ansley Coale began to assemble a group of researchers at the Office of Population Research at Princeton University to reconstruct the course of fertility decline in nineteenth-century Europe” (Alter 1992, 20). It took more than 20 years until the Princeton European Fertility Project provide a clear picture of “the onset and diffusion of fertility control at the aggregate level in all the countries of Europe”. This has been one of the largest undertakings in historical demographic studies based on an output of “at least eight books, numerous articles, and a very valuable data base” (Alter 1992, 20). In this research, economic modernization in transition theory has given the significant role as it indicated the inference that fertility rate decline would occur earlier in urban/industrial areas than rural /agricultural areas. According to the cross-sectional data from the twentieth century, fertility rate has been notably lower in cities than in country side and this inference was regarded to be in the right direction (Alter 1992, 20).

In Japan, fertility level has declined dramatically after a short post war baby boom (1947-9). Between 1947 and 1957 the total fertility rate “fell more than 50 per cent and by 1988, it had fallen to 1.66 (Ogawa and Hodge 1994, 105). Tsuya and Bumpass have stated that there is a similar phenomenon also in South Korea mentioning that “marriage and fertility rates have plunged, first in Japan and then South Korea” (Tsuya and Bumpass, 2004, Preface). In accordance with the remarkable decline of fertility rate, researches of family life related issues such as marriage and woman employment has become urgent needs in Japan and some researches has been published also by the national organization such as National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2003). This organization has published the booklet entitled as “Child Related Policy in Japan”, which was “the fruits of two-year collaborative work by project members of Studies on the Effects of Child Allowance, Taxation and Childcare Services on Familial Households, which received grants from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare from 2001 to 2003” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, Preface). In 2004 comparative research concerning marriage, work and family life among Japan, South Korea and the United States had been published (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004). The author team of this research was originated from National Survey of Work and Family Life, which was directed by Tsuya in Japan in 1994 (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, Preface) so the work was built on a long collaboration among authors, universities and organizations.

The transition of family life and woman employment has close relation with the modernization, for modernization theory gives comprehensive explanations for the transition period. In Japan, modernization theory had emerged in the scientific researches around 1960s. George M. Beckmann has published comparative research of Japanese and Chinese modernization entitled as “The Modernization of China and Japan” (1965). Beckmann stated that in Japan, the process of modernization began in the middle of

nineteenth century in which Japanese feudal society was receptive to innovations and reformations of western ideas and institutions. He also stated that this trend had played significant role in building a base structure for the reforms of the American occupation after World War II (Beckmann 1965, Preface).

In 1994, Sheldon Garon has published an article entitled as “Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese history A Focus on State: Society Relations” for the Journal of Asian Studies and modernization in Japan, which had become one of the inevitable topics in social science researches of Japanese society. Since 2000, comparative research of social welfare system has become more common and valued, and researches of Japanese modernity and modernization have been found more often in comparative researches published by a collaboration of several countries. Matsuko Takahashi published an article for comparative research of social welfare system entitled as “Care for Children and Older people in Japan: Modernizing the Traditional” (Takahashi 2003). The article was edited in the book called “The Young, The Old and the State: Social Care Systems in Five industrial Nations” and this book focuses on the developmental process of social care systems among industrial countries. Recently, Ritu Vij has published a book called “Japanese Modernity and Welfare: State, Civil Society, and Self in Contemporary Japan” (2007), which explains Japanese welfare system and social policy from different perspectives. According to this literature, Japan’s welfare exceptionalism has conventionally drawn area specialists’ attention to “Japan’s family- and firm- based system of welfare activity” (Vij 2007, 2).

In the context of these transformations of family life in Japan, this research explores the background factors of declining fertility rate and important concepts in implementing welfare policy in Japan. The comparative perspective taken in this research describes significant relations between welfare policy implementation and rapid industrial development in Japan. In order to focus details of relations of welfare policy and

economical development, I referred historical documents and analysis written Susumu Takashima (1995) entitled as “Shakai fukushi no rekishi [History of social welfare]”. He first discusses the beginning of the welfare concept referring the concept of charity, meaning of Christianity in building welfare society and so on. He also introduces different welfare society in England, Sweden, and the United States and states their influences toward welfare policy making process in Japan. Hiroko Fujisaki (2000) published an article about family related welfare policy entitled as “Kazoku to fukushi seisaku [Family and welfare policy]” in which she gives critical perspectives toward the position and concept of family in policy making. These researches help to understand how recent demographic concerns in Japan can be analyzed and how important it is to see the issue from comparative perspectives.

## 1.2 Theoretical approach

Population structure pyramid projection of Japan in the next 50 years, which was published by Statistical Research and Training Institute in 2007, had indicated that Japan is now facing serious demographic problems such as shortage of youth population while senior population has been increasing remarkably. According to Peng Ito, one of the reasons of the rapid increase of aging population is improved health care system (2007, 14). Declining fertility rate has also long-term interaction with aging of Japanese society and the decline of fertility rate “highlighted the macro social and demographic impacts of women’s life choices” (Ito 2007, 14). My theoretical assumption is that implementing policies and measures for the declining fertility rate should be based on the comprehensive methods based on gender and welfare policy related theories and researches, that enable to analyze and clarify the needs of modern Japanese family.

My research is based on gender, modernization and social policy related theories. Concerning gender related theory of Japanese researches, I often referred the article written by Ito, Peng (2007) entitled as “Gender and Generation: Japanese Child Care and the Demographic Crisis”. He has mentioned in his article that “Studies showed that the lack of gender equality within both the home and the labor market had left Japanese women with little option but to defer or forgo marriage and/or childbearing, thus contributing the decline in the fertility rate and accelerating the aging problems”(Ito 2007, 32). In order to explain Ito Peng’s thesis from the perspectives of societal changes, I also referred Ritu Vij’s (2007) book about Japanese Modernity and Welfare and Sheldon Garon’s (1994) book about modernization in Japan. Ronal Inglehart’s (1997) “Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies” stated also modernization in East and Southeast Asian countries and describes the position of Japan among these countries from the perspectives of modernization.

The significances of relation between gender issue and welfare regimes are able to be analyzed based on Jane Lewis’s (1992) article entitled as “Gender and the development of welfare regimes”. In this article, Jane Lewis explains that “the position of women within different welfare regimes revolves around two related issues, the valuing of unpaid work and the sharing of it” (Lewis 1992, 170). In many researches of related issues, these two issues are not directly addressed. Jane Lewis has also mentioned that Sweden can be regarded as one of the countries that have gone “a long way towards solving the first issue” (Lewis 1992, 170). While moving from the male-breadwinner to a dual-breadwinner model, Sweden has made a progress in organizing the system in which women are able to “get compensated at market rates for caring work” (Lewis 1992, 170).

In order to specify influences of gender issues on family, I referred gender theory in the relation with family size and the cost of children. John R. Gillis (1992) has stated that there

has been an argumentation that fertility rate decline began when children began to cost more. Such understanding had been continued to explain the trend of fertility rate, however, it has been noticed that this economical perspective has not taken into account the changing meaning of parenthood. Gillis (1992) stated that “earlier, increased time and material costs of children had been shifted to other families, related or unrelated. The significant change was not therefore the changing cost of children but the regendering process that made the old strategy of sharing costs unthinkable among the respectable classes.” (Gillis 1992, 44)

More recent survey has also shown that people stop having children when the gender symmetry is achieved. Needless to mention, to be a good mother and to be a good worker is very demanding. Gillis (1992) explains that the reason of fertility rate decline in contemporary society is that people has not yet been able to find a solution to this particular contradiction. “High productivity and high reproductivity remain irreconcilable in both a cultural and practical sense” (44) and existing gender definitions do not allow introducing different alternatives for responsibility sharing. From the perspective of family size, the only solution for women is to keep families small in order to maintain their job and family reconcilable.

It should be noted that the state policy and programmes are also influencing gender and family change. In many European countries where there has been a success in increasing the fertility rate, state welfare and family policies strongly influence the roles of women including their economic status. Mason and Jensen (1995) insist that “even these policies do not fundamentally determine the occurrence of gender or family change; over time they can affect its direction and intensity” (Mason and Jenson 1995, 2). As an example of policy intervention, in Sweden, separate taxation was introduced to promote women’s market work in 1971. With high marginal tax rates, this has meant that “it has been generally favorable for family income if a woman goes out to work rather than the man adding extra overtime

hours” (Lewis 1992, 169).

To explain the welfare and gender trend in Japan, I referred welfare related theory stated by Japanese researcher, Kikue Uda. Her literature is named as “Shakai fukushi no rekishi [The history of social welfare] (2001) and she had explained in detail the relations between the changes of welfare policy and economical situation in Japan. Analyses and discussions on the influences of economical situation toward policy making would be one of the important key issues of this research.

In order to prove my hypothesis, which is that the policy ineffectiveness resulted from its target as phenomenon of declining fertility rate, I had analyzed literatures of related concepts, historical documents and recent articles related family policy and welfare system. I also used statistical data collected by National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2003) and by Statistical Research and Training Institute, MIC (2007) to clarify demographic changes in Japan and also numerical research results concerning with family life. Some articles of news paper, which are based on the survey by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, had been attached to indicate the recent trend or concerns of child bearing and child rearing (*Mainichi Newspaper*. 2008).

### 1.3 Methodological approach

This research based on the qualitative analysis of the social science researches, historical documents and statistical data published by national organization as well as various research groups. The analyses based on these documents are limited to literature analysis including existing quantitative data. The challenges of conceptual and question-focusing research involved reducing the data more than collecting data. After collecting existing data and literatures, I had to choose the scientifically appropriate data

and texts to find answers for my research questions. I also kept asking myself what the research question related significant issue and phenomenon in Japan would be. As Michael Q, Patton (1990) stated, “There are no formulas for determining significances” (372) and thus it took much time to decide what data the research should include. This is not a comparative research in which researcher is comparing two or more countries to produce the findings; however, applying the comparative perspectives is one of the most important aspects of this research. Demographic concern has become a concern of many industrialized countries, which encouraged me to apply comparative perspectives that I had acquired in study years in Finnish university.

Concerning the process of my research, first I started with descriptive analysis to answer basic questions such the motivation for research, research questions, and research goals. Patton (1990) stated in his book entitled as “Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods” that the “description must be carefully separated from interpretation” (Patton 1990, 375). He pointed out that the interpretation involves explaining the findings based on the statement of significant results and analytical work. Usually data collection begins after the descriptive analysis, however, in my research; descriptive analysis and data collection do not have precise distinction or orders. Descriptive analysis had been started first but I started data collection and data’s analysis before completing the descriptive analyses. One of the reasons for choosing such process is the lack of knowledge for available information for the research question. In the university study years, I had studied social work based on the resources written Finnish and English, which provide social work related information of Scandinavian and European countries. Within these years I had gained the knowledge concerning social work of these countries and also comparative perspectives to analyze social work in different countries, however, I had little knowledge about Japanese social work and welfare system. It was difficult to estimate how much resource I can acquire

from the Finnish library or online book shop. Therefore, it can be said that finding, choosing, and organizing data had been the most challenging process in this research.

In addition to the descriptive analysis and data collecting, Inductive analysis is also a crucial part of this research. According to Patton (1990), inductive analysis means “that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton 1990, 390). In order to answer research questions and analyze background factors for demographic concerns in Japan, I applied some concepts such as modernization, social policy and consumerism. In the analysis process, these concepts are developed to describe the inductively generated issues.

I decided to restrict my attention to the existing sources that may indicate normative and cultural forces, which are affecting patterns of welfare policy making process and resulting recent demographic, social and economic transformations. In this research, empirical approach has not been included and mainly quantitative secondary sources were used. Comparative approaches were also applied in this research in order to give general ideas of gender and modernization theory in other countries. Concerning fertility rate, analytical statement of Sweden had been mentioned as an example of society in which social policies were able to give positive influences on increasing fertility rate. Comparative approach also enables to indicate significances of modernization and industrialization of Japan, which has given strong emphasis on consumerism in Japanese people’s everyday lives.

#### 1.4 Modernization of Japan

In this paper I would like to discuss demographic concerns from perspectives of

modernization and gender inequality, which have significant influences toward different aspects of family life. Here modernization does not mean only the economical development of people's lives or improvement in technology but it is also considered as an issue which gives new kinds of challenges to people, which compel to go through psychological adjustment for newly emerging phenomena and issues (Therborn 1995, 19).

According to Göran Therborn (1995, 19), "Europe was the chief organizer of modernity, giving the latter its characteristic forms of vast seaborne empires, politically organized overseas settlement, intercontinental trade and investment, and deliberate diffusion of religious beliefs and techniques of rule". Its concept and definition produced in Europe and they were also linked to "a system of increasingly national and secularized states at the centre, from which originated new technologies for the world and curious bodies of science and learning developing physics, astronomy and political economy, as well as Enlightenment, nationalism and orientalism".

From the micro perspectives of modernization, which is often referred in discussing the field of social work, the concept of modernity and modernization is concerned with "what distinguishes modern from traditional societies" and it is "shaped by a progressive-evolutionary logic". It is also an "historical transition towards more complex and developed societies which is seen to be carrying all traditional societies towards some variant of the modern form". Modern societies are thus defined by processes of institutional changes that were realized under the principle of political democratization, which brought the remarkable technological changes to the society, followed by industrialization (Pierson 1991, 21).

East Asian and Southeast Asian societies are also achieving high economic growth and are "at the cutting edge of Modernization" and as it can be seen from the economic situations of these countries, "Japan has become the world leader in various aspects of modernity, from consumer electronics to human life expectancy" (Inglehart 1997, 25). High human life

expectancy in Japan has gathered much attention in the world and the interests toward Japanese diet culture have been increasing, accelerating even the penetration of Japanese culture to the western countries.

In Japan, the process of modernization began in the middle of nineteenth century because “Japanese feudal society was receptive to innovations based on western ideas and institutions”. During this period Japan had undergone remarkable transformations that developed the country as a strong and new industrial nation under the revolutionary changes in its power structure. Even though society preserved the feudal heritage as an important force, impact of industrialization led Japan to a direction of an “Open society”. This trend had built a base structure and concept for the reforms of the American occupation after World War II (Beckmann 1965, Preface).

Entering modern era in 1860s, Japan had experienced great urbanization, developed communications and a large reservoir of administrative skills. These capabilities were refined and enabled its participation in the world market during the transformation period. Although there was also a period in which economy became rigid, disabling new enterprises to start their business under the strict restrictions and evaluations, new business leaders and government had succeeded in proving Japan as “dynamic, pragmatic, and adaptable to the economic challenges of the postwar era” (Black 1975, 283).

Focusing on economic development, modernization are often referred to a syndrome of changes that includes industrialization, urbanization, and furthermore, mass education, occupational specialization, bureaucratization, and communications development, that can be linked broader cultural, social and political changes (Inglehart 1997, 8). Modernization is usually understood as a positive issue for a society in Japan, rooting a myth of progress in which “new” is virtually synonymous with “good” (Inglehart 1997, 25); however, some social work researches mentions (Webb, 2005) that modernization may bring different kinds

of risks, which may possibly cause new kinds of social problems and there would be needs for society to take care of those problems.

Modernization theory explains well the transition period concerning industrialization, urbanization, economy and politics and the theory also clarifies changes in family life and women employment as the consequences of modernization period. In order to analyze demographic concerns and its background factors in Japan, modernization theory would play a crucial role in defining relations between societal changes and demographic changes that are causing concerns for Japanese citizens and government.

## 1.5 Social policy in Japan

Mason, Teh, Ogawa and Fukui (2003) stated that “the role of the state in the provision of old-age support is pervasive in most aging societies, and no analysis of intergenerational inequality can be complete without a discussion of the impact of ageing on social insurance schemes and other government programme” (159). Today, the government of Japan actively provides services and funds to the elderly based on the analysis on their needs, and “the combined tax-and-transfer system effects a significant redistribution of income across generations” (Mason, Teh, Ogawa and Fukui 2003, 159). The issue of aging society and fertility rate decline is one of the most important themes in recent social policy schemes and changes in the Japanese family refer directly the needs of changes in social policy.

In the latter part of this research, especially in the chapter 7 and 8, there are analyses on social policies that are implemented by the Japanese government aiming to solve the concerns for child-rearing and to increase the fertility rate. The discourse around social policy has been very much influenced by the construction of welfare state. Joschen Clasen (2004, 91-92) stated that “In academic discourse, the term tends to be publicly provided, or

regulated, core programmes such as income maintenance (or social security), housing, health and social services”. Beyond these general definitions, there is a range of other public policies that are aimed at securing or enhancing individual’s well-being and the life chances. There are, for example, tax allowances, tax credits or exemptions, and furthermore, social policy includes encouragement and services for education, active labor market policies, occupational health and health and safety issues.

The central role of social policy is to focus upon trajectory and implementation of policies under the aim of influencing the social circumstances and well-being of individuals. National welfare regime in fact prepared the base for global system of interacting national economies that are consisted of mass production and mass consumption. “This model of institutionalized, bureaucratic provision and social rights was perceived as the inevitable outcome of a ‘modern’ or developed society” (Kennett 2004, 1).

Japan has developed its own indigenous version of economic and social security that offers social protections comparable to the advanced welfare states of Europe. In practice, Japan has developed a basic social safety net consisting of pensions and health insurance; however, it should be noted that workers’ compensation, unemployment, insurance and family allowance are very limited compared with other welfare state countries. Moreover, Japan’s social expenditure is “one of the lowest among OECD countries” (Mishra 2004, 74). The trend of social policy in Japan and how much it focuses on welfare concept has been very much depended on its economical and political situation. Productiveness in economy should be protected in Japan and the importance of individual well-being seemed to be often left behind in the process of making social policy. However, recent demographic concern has been forcing Japanese society and policy makers to improve the social environments of family life.

In this research, social policy including welfare policy for family and children are

referred as one of the key approaches to solve demographic concerns in Japan. Implemented family related policies explain the governmental approach toward demographic concerns and these policies also indicate the historical transitions of family related policy. Since the main discussion of this research lies on the analyses of policy ineffectiveness, general concept of social policy should be noted from different perspectives.

## 1.6 Objectives of research

As it is partly mentioned above, the objectives of this research is to analyze the phenomena and background factors of declining fertility rate in Japan. Analysis on the demographic changes requires large perspective toward societal changes that are deeply interrelated with social policy implementation. Gender and modernization theory may help to understand the possible reasons of demographic concerns. Giving careful attention to the effectiveness of implemented policy would be an important method to understand changing needs of the society. By analyzing the background factors of demographic concerns, I would like to find out the possible reason of ineffectiveness of recent family related policy, which is targeted to solve declining fertility rate.

Figure 1 is the diagram that shows interrelation among important concepts and social phenomena that might have influences on declining fertility rate in Japan. Remarkable decline of fertility rate may possibly cause serious problems such as the shortage of working population and tax payers in the near future. The government has been implementing social policies to solve these concerns; however, fertility rate has remained low even after implementing policies for improving the environments of child rearing more than 15 years (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 14). As it is shown in Figure 1, the phenomenon of fertility rate decline can be understood as one of the

consequences of the changes in decision-making of modern Japanese family. Family's decision-making is affected very much by the position of family in the society, which is deeply interrelated with society's attitudes toward the issues such as gender, modernization and economy. Japan has actually become the world leader in various aspects of modernity, which can be observed from issues such as consumer electronics and human life expectancy (Inglehart 1997, 25).

Recently there have been concerns for policy effectiveness toward declining fertility rate and one of the reasons can be that the newly emerged policies do not take enough consideration for background factors of the phenomenon of declining fertility rate. As the Figure 1 shows, if the government has made policies only to increase the fertility rate without taking consideration for the background factors such as gender, modernization and economy influences, there might be difficulties in assuring its sustainability because of the lack of scientific researches that can indicate and evaluate policy relevancy.

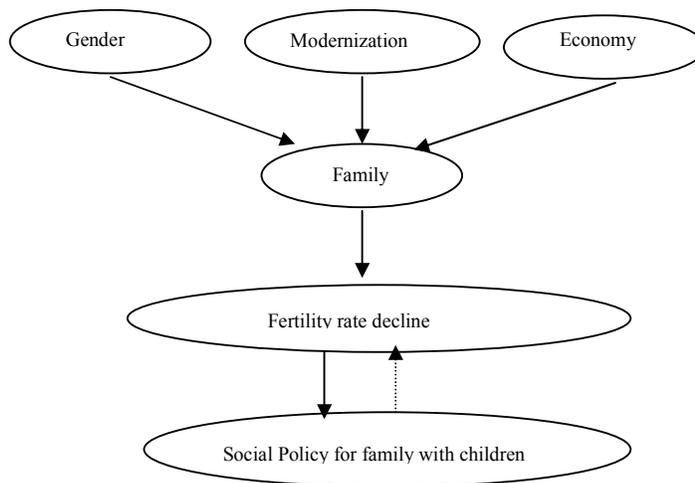


Figure1. Interrelation among policies for family with children and social phenomena in Japan

To explain the structure of this paper, first I would like to state the historical backgrounds and significances of Japan's welfare policy. Some of the turning points of welfare policy development will be also discussed to introduce historical milestones of Japanese welfare system. The development of child allowance system in Japan will be mentioned to understand more details of government's attitudes for maintaining welfare provision in policy making historically, for example, how support for family has been limited because of different kinds of political and economical reasons. Secondly, I introduce some of the issues and facts related with the demographic changes in Japanese society and concerns resulted from these changes. Analyzing the issue of declining fertility rate and social environments in rearing child, significant issue comes up as a possible main reason for declining fertility rate, which is, vulnerable position of women in the labour market.

Thirdly, I analyze family concept in Japan in order to review how and by what influence it has been changed. Family concept can be directly interpreted as gender concept and its historical analysis gives clear views of what kind of position has been given to family in policy making. After the chapter regarding family concept, I move on to the discussions of possible reasons of declining fertility rate from gender perspectives.

In the next two chapters, influences of demographic concerns toward working environments and child care services will be discussed. Since 1990s, within a short period, there had been relatively many reformations and amendments for the policy of family with children such as the increase of childcare facilities, extension of parental leave and so on. However, effectiveness of these changes is in question and it indicates the complexity of policy making. In the last part of this research, I stated some of the significant concerns toward children's environment and also toward welfare state. Psychological and economical pressure for parents and children caused by Japanese education system and trend may influence on parent's decision-making for having more children or not. In this chapter I also

attached some discussion toward welfare state among Japanese researchers and opinion leaders specialized in the field of welfare system. I did the translation of reference resources that are written in Japanese because there are few English resources of discussions toward modern welfare state among Japanese researchers and opinion leaders.

According to the gender, modernization, social policy related theory, it can be said that one of the main causes of the declining fertility rate would be the gender inequality that has deeply rooted in Japanese culture, economy, politics, working environments and also in different aspects of family life. In order to improve the environment for family with children, reformations that lead people to realize gender inequality on a theoretical level would be also necessary. After educating people to realize the recent situation of gender inequality in Japan and importance of individual well-being, there will be the possibility to establish supportive and well-functioned measures for family with children that may enable to have sustainable increase the fertility rate in Japan.

In addition to gender inequality, there are concepts and historical issues that slow down the comprehensive development of Japanese welfare system. These concepts and historical issues should be also analyzed and discussed carefully to understand the changes in society and to make policies that meet society's and citizen's demands.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS OF JAPAN'S WELFARE POLICY

To better establish the context of the relation between Japan's welfare policy and economy explored in this research, I briefly review relevant aspects of historical and cultural backgrounds related welfare system in Japan. In this chapter, the development of Japan's welfare policy will be discussed in order to analyze the basic trend of welfare and family related policy. As it is mentioned, this research aims to explain the reasons of the ineffectiveness of family related policy that is targeted to fertility rate decline in Japan. Reviewing the development of welfare and family related policy may give ideas of difficulties and challenges of the Japanese society in constructing sustainable and functional policy for supporting family.

This chapter also brings the discussion concerning the concept of individual wellbeing and family wellbeing of Japan from the historical perspectives. By analyzing the economic influences toward welfare policy including child allowance system, and also to the concept of welfare policy, the base of policy making and its relation to economic situation will be revealed.

### 2.1 Dilemma between economic growth and individual well-being

Walker and Wong stated that "Japan is the only non-Western society that is often referred to as a welfare state. It is one of the most successful capitalist economies and also has a democratic policy" (2004, 123). As it is mentioned in the chapter 1.1 Modernization, the economical development followed by modernization in Japan was remarkable. Japan's export has grown rapidly and its share of world commerce has also increased. There were

noticeable changes also in the product quality entering international trade. Before the Second World War, “Made in Japan” was a definition of poor quality; however, recently it means excellence in design, quality with competitive price (Cyril 1975, 300). Japan has become one of the major industrial producers of the world and modernization also enables the society to focus on individual well-being.

In the book called “Japanese Modernity and Welfare” (Vij 2007, 2), it is stated that “Within both comparative studies of social policy and Japan area studies, the status of Japan’s welfare system remains anomalous. Among area specialists, culture and state-based accounts of Japan’s welfare exceptionalism have conventionally drawn attention to Japan’s family- and firm- based system of welfare activity fostered by a “developmental state”, in the single-minded pursuit of economic growth” (Vij 2007, 2). It is a well-known fact that Japan had experienced dramatically rapid economic growth after the Second World War and since then collective industriousness has been regarded as one of the main positive characters of Japanese people and society also from international perspectives. Each country has their own path for constructing welfare state because theoretical backgrounds for welfare state are influenced by many different aspects of society such as politics, culture and economy.

Well-being of individuals, which is a primary concept for the welfare state, also differs depending on each country’s historical and cultural backgrounds. It would not be an unusual tendency even if Japanese government and citizens took a direction in which they put more emphasis on the pursuit of economic growth in the process of constructing welfare state compared to other developed countries. In accordance with the rapid economical development in Japan, citizens had also experienced dramatic changes in their daily lives and these changes, that are also called modernization, caused changes in a family structure and the life of each family member.

During that period, the type of households had changed and it also changed the way of spending time within a family. Nations had experienced such relieves that they were finally able to leave the poor and miserable lives as a defeated nation of the war. How economical situation has been influencing to the welfare service provision can be analyzed by looking at historical review of certain welfare services. In the following chapter, I would like to discuss about the child allowance system to analyze historical documents of government's decision toward the provision of child allowance.

## 2.2 Analyses on historical review of child allowance system

Family allowance does not have a long history in social security system. The first family allowance was born in New Zealand in 1926. In 1930 Belgium started family allowance and in 1932 France followed to Belgium. In 1937 Chile and Italy established the family allowance and in 1938 the United States established social security policy and implemented it in the following year. Since then, family allowance acquired a position as one of the main elements of social security system. After World War II, according to diffusion and development of social security, family allowance became one of the main elements of social security policy such as social insurance, public assistance and social welfare (Uda 2001, 349-352).

In Japan, the first family allowance as a part of social security policy was named child allowance and its law had been established in 1971 in regular diet session. In executing the policy, tentative measure was used in order to divide the expenditure. The first step was to target under 5 year-old children as an allowance recipients and the policy implemented in January 1972. The first provision began from March in the same year. The second step was to target 10 year-old children as allowance recipients and the policy implemented in April

1973. The last step was to target children who were under mandatory education and the policy was implemented in April 1974. It means that it took about three years to put the policy into practice (Uda 2001, 349-352).

The inauguration of child allowance led Japanese social security to a world level in which social security consists of social insurance, family allowance, public assistance and social welfare. Family allowance is to support family incomes in increasing child rearing expenditure. Family allowance can be regarded as the most active policy among social security policy since it actively assists to stabilize standard of living (Uda 2001, 349-352).

In Japan, family allowance had not been taken as an important issue in many cases of governmental decision making. There might be four main reasons for this. The first reason was that there was already family (alimentary) allowance in salary system. The second reason was that the seniority payment system had been firmly maintained for many years. The third reason would be a misunderstanding that the family allowance would increase child birth rate and would cause population growth, which was regarded as unnecessary for society in that period. The fourth reason was that the consumer price had been relatively stable. However, in the late 1960s, these phenomena and background, which had caused such attitude toward family allowance, had changed largely. Several changes such as changes in salary structure, work force resource and the rise of consumer price had happened and the importance of family allowance came to be reconsidered in the society (Uda 2001, 349-352).

The main change among changes in salary structure, work force resource and the rise of consumer price is the first one, salary structure change. Concretely, change means that the difference of salary by age brackets had become smaller. The reason of this phenomenon was 1) rise of young people's salary standard resulted from the deficiency of young people employee, 2) rise of intermediate recruitment resulted from labor force

deficiency, 3) postponement of retirement and density increase of middle aged and older employer in company, 4) rise of women labor importance, 5) job wage system adoption, 6) labor union's action for closing the gap, 7) middle-aged or older employer force obsolescence according to technological development and 8) growth deceleration of companies. The confluence of these factors caused salary difference by age brackets to become smaller (Uda 2001, 349-352).

The process of miniaturization of salary difference by age brackets actually happened quickly. In seniority salary system, 25-29 year-old age group can be regarded as a group who receives proper amount of salary to support his or her family. Under an assumption that the household expenditure reaches its peak when people are in 40-49 year-old age group, the male worker salary proportion of 20-29 year-old age group to 40-49 year-old age group was 100 to 163 in 1958. In 1970, the difference became smaller and the proportion was 100 to 146. Then the discussion regarding the need for child allowance became more active. Child allowance was declared to become effective in 1970 and the proportion then was 100 to 139. When child allowance was translated into operation in 1971, the proportion was 100 to 138. It should be reminded that seniority salary system had been adopted only in large companies. In minor business, salary peak was for 40-49 year-old group in 1970 and in 1975 the peak transferred to 35-39 year-old group, which means the salary peak was reached by a group which is 5 years younger (Uda 2001, 349-352).

The changes in supplier of labor force resource should be also mentioned. Before high economic growth period, labor force resource was supplied from non capitalistic field which means farming house. After the growth period, labor force resource supplier transferred to capitalistic field which means working people. Japan became such country that acquired labor force from capitalistic field. Reproduction cost of labor power came to

be managed internally for the first time in Japan (Uda 2001, 349-352).

The third reason for establishing child allowance, which is a consumer price, was relatively stable with high standing in 1968 during the second high economic growth period. However, consumer price rose 5,6 % over the previous year 1968 and child allowance needs had generated a controversy. In 1970 consumer price rose 7,6% over the previous year and in addition to this phenomenon, living expenditure also demanded child allowance. Expenditure for living and child's education tended to rise especially when workers were in middle-aged and older age group. The reason for the rise of educational expenditure was the rise of education continuance rate and prolonged education system (Uda 2001, 349-352).

Prolonged education means also prolonged aliment period and the expenditure of middle-aged and older group had increased steadily. In Japan, educational expenditure becomes higher and higher as the school level goes higher. For example, junior high school costs more than elementary schools and high school costs more than junior high school. University may cost the most and if parents need to pay for child's rent, the expenditure becomes very high and demanding. Because of the middle-aged and older workers salary slump and the rise of expenditure for education and child rearing, the child allowance implementation in municipal level was encouraged and the system was finally established based on the political decisions. Then Japan became 56<sup>th</sup> capitalistic country, which holds child allowance system (Uda 2001, 349-352).

In recent Japanese society, the child allowance is introduced as a means-tested in-cash transfer to households. It is "an income supplement cash benefit for low and middle-income households with children aged six years old and less" (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 44). Age limit of child allowance had been changed several times and also the establishment of child allowance had gone through

many changes and amendments depending mostly on the economical situation of the country.

From the above, child allowance establishment in Japan had involved many aspects and influences of economic situation. The establishment process had been largely affected by economic structural changes such as changes of salary, consumer price and labor force and there seemed to have had no spaces and resources for the discussion of family wellbeing and sustainability of the system. Concerning fertility rate declines, the recent and future trend of child allowance system plays a crucial role and its reformations should be taken attention carefully. Age limit and allowance amount of child allowance system can directly influence family's decision making concerning bearing child and the government should be aware of the importance of this system in raising fertility rate and planning active solutions for demographic concerns. Applying the comparative perspectives into the development of child allowance system may enable to understand the comprehensive idea of this system.

### 2.3 Economical influences on welfare expansion

Emphasis of economical growth on the welfare development in Japan can be recognized looking at the history of welfare related policies. In the beginning of welfare development process, significant welfare revisions in Japan had occurred because of the economic crisis. In addition, economic difficulties occurred in western welfare states prompted Japan to turn away from its earlier intention of “developing a comprehensive welfare state along Western lines” (Mishra 2004, 74). In practice, in the early 1970s, there was a brief of welfare extension and it was reversed due to economic crisis by the 1980s. Japanese welfare state had shifted its policies to the new policy discourse named as the Japanese-style welfare

society discourse. The purpose of changing the discourse was to maintain state welfare programs as before the expansion in 1970s and to reduce welfare expenditures and let families take back the welfare burden (Ito 2007, 31). The aim for constructing sustainable welfare system such as the welfare system in northern European countries had been always primary purpose in Japan; however, government decided to do the significant cutbacks in state welfare programs.

The critics of welfare cut also targeted individuated need. Government insisted that the “rights of citizens to state-provisioned welfare did not (and could not) extend to the provision of individuated need” (Vij 2007, 139). Practically speaking, government gave the responsibility of meeting consumption needs to individuals, not the state. However, regardless of the budget problems or concerns, anti-welfare ideology had not been introduced to Japan even during the period of financial crisis. Japanese “dominant conservative Liberal Democratic Party put in place the structures of welfare statism, but has not taken a significant anti-welfare stance in periods of financial or political crisis” (Vij 2007, 23).

On the other hand, Japanese-style welfare developed as “an integral part of the distinctive nature of country’s post-WWII economy, a developing economy dedicated to rapid industrialization via export-oriented growth”. Strategic integration into global market has been successfully operated and Japan had become second largest economy in the world (Mishra 2004, 76-77).

From the above it can be observed that economical crisis had deeply influenced welfare expansion, changing even the discourse of welfare society. Policy discourse named as the Japanese-style welfare society was declared in order to maintain the same system as before the expansion and it practically helped to justify the reduction of welfare expenditure, which had been once decided to increase. In accordance with the introduction of Japanese-style

welfare society, the discussion concerning responsibility for meeting individual consumption need had been concluded with the decision that the state would not take the responsibility.

## 2.4 Intervention of Japanese political party and emphasis on consumerism

“Facing growing pressure for welfare expansion in the early 70s, LDP governments could champion measures as company welfare schemes, protective economic policies and familialism- measures that were politically more convenient and suitable for the LDP political domination” (Miyamoto 2003). Liberal Democratic Party is centre-right, conservative, political party and the largest party in Japan and it also supported to generalize the idea of welfare schemes after economic crisis.

Japan’s welfare state emphasizes on health care and pensions over and beyond unemployment benefits, housing, hunger alleviation, and so on. In order to expand the state’s commitment to welfare provision, the first step the government took was to entail universalizing healthcare. “From being a benefit largely reserved for the military and bureaucratic elite and industrial labor that served Japan’s crucial war-time needs, health care reform in the early 1950s extended provision to those employed in the sectors of construction, education, medical, and social welfare, but excluded those working in the agricultural, forestry, fishery, and service sectors” (Vij 2007, 129).

Welfare state in Japan has been always consistent with the normative structure of civil society, family, and the state and Liberal Democratic Party attempted to give all the care-related burdens and responsibilities to the family. Moreover, because of this attempt, “that the periods of economic slowdown, as in the mid-1970s and early 1990s, have failed to solicit any appreciable “backlash” against the welfare state comparable to what has occurred

in Western advanced industrialized societies”. State provision has been limited to the provision of social need and thus, attempts to discuss issues such as consideration for individuated need and controversy toward welfare state reform or cutback did not arise in Japan during times of slow economic growth (Vij 2007, 145).

In the end of twentieth century under the control of mature or over mature capitalism, Japanese society had been called as “consuming society”, “regimented society”, “information society”, “material society” and so on (Yoshida and Okada 2000, 286–291). Social welfare policy and service development is actively planned, realized and amended, however, social nature and theory of social welfare system seems to have been undeveloped. One of the reasons of this phenomenon can be Japanese nation’s attitude of indifference toward the social effect of the services. It can be said that ethical backgrounds or religion, which may support the theoretical backgrounds of the welfare system, is lacking. The development of welfare system from the World War II to post-war period was discontinuous. Now Japan has to decide its direction whether to lead country to aim strong economic power or to build sustainable welfare state. In recent years, only welfare policy and welfare service has been focused and social problems existing behind the needs of policy making had been left behind. Japanese nations as well as their policy makers might be seriously lack of social thinking and ability to conceptual ideas for welfare society. (Yoshida and Okada 2000, 286-291).

To illustrate concrete claim concerning to the identity of Japanese society, I briefly introduce one aspect of Japanese national identity which might have influenced to a constitution of welfare state. As a distinctive feature of Japan’s welfare state, general understanding toward “temporal or developmental relations between production and consumptions” in constituting people’s identity would be significant in Japan compared to other countries. As one of the factors that led Japan to economically developed country,

producing globally qualified products should be mentioned. As a consequence of emphasizing production and consumption developments in constituting people's identity, Japanese society has been given such critical description as "the absence of moral absolutes and the construction of multiple selves which characterize Japanese culture predispose it to the adoption of consumer mentality" (Vij 2007, 104).

Historically, Japan's welfare related policies has been largely influenced by its economic situation. During the time of economic crisis in 1970s, the government reduced welfare expenditure and tried to let the family take the welfare burden. Japan has been often referred to as a welfare state; however, allocation for welfare expenditure had not been stable and values on consumerism, economical success and stability have been relatively strong in Japan.

Giving too much focus on economical success and productivity, the discourse of welfare policy seems to have been changing in accordance with economic situation. It is clear that the welfare policies have been often given such a role as an economic compensation for the society. Such changes and flexibility of the welfare policy discourse may give the society and citizens a big question of "what's the base of welfare concept in Japan". Needless to mention, welfare policies are to enhance the individual's well-being and society's prosperity. It is also important that citizens are able to believe their functions and ability for their future life. Placing welfare policy in the stable position in terms of provision share would be one of the important steps for sustainable welfare system.

### 3. DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERNS AND CHANGES OF LIFE COURSES

As aging society rapidly grows, the burdens on the younger generation, either through public provision of social security or through familial support, will increase especially if the elderly are to be an economically disadvantaged class. Even without the concern of fertility rate decline, the rapid growth in the number of elderly population over the next few decades may itself lead to deterioration in their relative economic well-being (Mason, Teh, Ogawa and Fukui 2003, 158)

According to the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Health and Labor and Welfare, “the population pyramid of 1950 shows that Japan had a standard-shaped pyramid with a broad base”. However, as the decrease of birthrate and death rate, the shape of the pyramid has changed remarkably (Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2007). Population pyramid changes are the main reason of demographic concerns of Japan and one of the solutions for demographic concern is to increase the fertility rate. By analyzing the demographical significances in Japan, the reason of government’s attempts for increasing the fertility rate will be explained. This chapter indicates the origin of the research theme, why government should develop the system and implement policies for declining fertility rate.

#### 3.1 Aging society and declining fertility rate

Looking at the population structure pyramid (Figure 1), it is apparent that the family life with children should be encouraged and supported in order to increase younger generation population. When country has smaller number of children, it means that the

country has smaller number of tax payers.

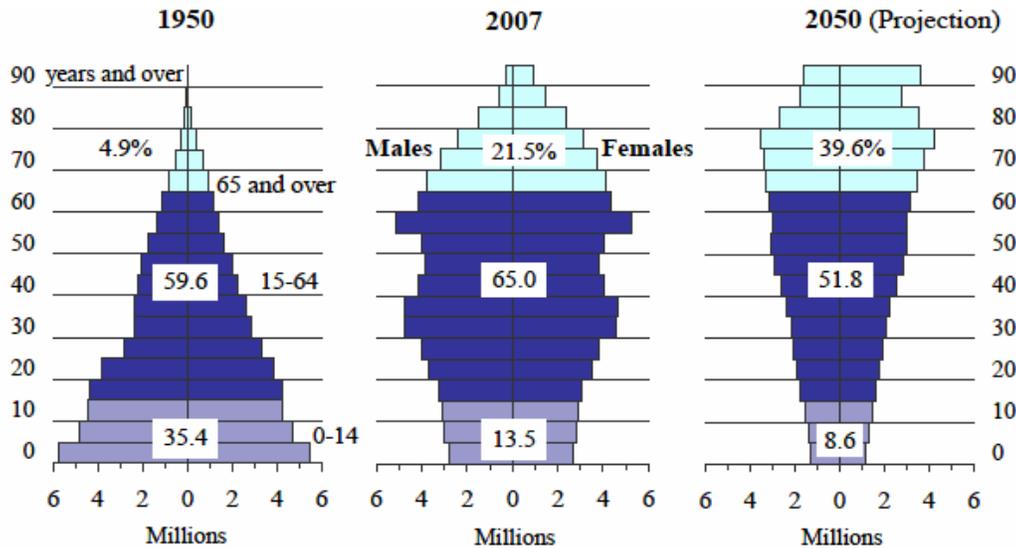


Figure 2 Changes in the Population Pyramid (Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2007)

As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, Japan is now facing serious demographic problems. In 1980s, there was a sharp rise in the elderly population. Between 1980 and 1990, “the proportion of people over 65 rose from 9.1 to 12.1 percent. At the same time, the proportion of three generation households continues to decline, while elderly-only households rose from 15.0 to 28.6 percent” (Ito 2007, 43).

Japan’s rapidly aging population resulted from radically improved health care system has been placed on the top of the state’s welfare concern. Aging society with high percentages of the elderly people is not the only concern for the modern society but also declining fertility rate, and the state’s main concern about the declining fertility rate has long-term interaction with aging of Japanese society. The fall of fertility rate below 1.57 brought sharp focus into the relation of aging and low fertility and this phenomenon also “highlighted the macro

social and demographic impacts of women's life choices" (Ito 2007, 14). Such demographic shifts have been giving society many challenges since Japanese government and citizens is not yet so familiar with this phenomenon. As aging society grows, there will be needs for constructive researches concerning to the capacity of the family to take care of the elderly people.

### 3.2 Significant issues toward marriage and childbearing in Japan

The concept and cultural backgrounds of family life differs from country to country. Similarities and differences across countries with such different cultural and historical backgrounds may provide essential clues in any kind of policy making. There are similar types of problems regarding birthrate in industrialized countries and some of them actually succeeded in increasing the birthrate after some changes in attitudes of government toward family.

Needless to mention, fertility rate decline is a world-wide concern or phenomenon which has been appeared in industrialized and developed countries. Most westerns societies have undergone profound changes in family life affecting marriage, childbearing and female employment. In many industrialized countries more women are pursuing higher education and entering workforce. As a result, the percentage of women in their twenties and early thirties who are without children and unmarried is steadily rising. Japan is also following this trend and the average age of the first marriage had been rising since 1971. In 1971, average age of first marriage for men was 26.8 and for women 24.2. In 2005, the percentage rose for man to 29.8 and for women 28.0 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 5).

Especially in Japan and some other Asian countries, childbearing is closely linked with

marriage and the rise of average age of the first marriage straightly affect childbirth decline. Births usually take place among married couples in Japan and the percentage of non-marital births was remarkably low. The significance of low rate of non-marital births can be observed from statistical data done in 2000. According to the result, 55 percent of births in Sweden are non-marital births and “the share is 43 percent in France and 40 percent in the United Kingdom. Spain and Italy have relatively low percentages but still the share is 18 percent in Spain and 10 percent for Italy”. In the same year, the proportion of non-marital births in Japan was only 1.6 percent (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 8).

Average marriage age is becoming higher and there is an increasing trend of the share of married couple with one child in Japan. “In 1977, the share of married couples with one child was 11 percent for those with marriage duration of 10-14 years”. The share of married couple with one child show an increasing trend in recent years with the rate being 12 percent in 1997, and 16 percent in 2002 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 8).

Furthermore, according to the survey reports from the Japanese institute of Population Problems in the early 1990s, it is mentioned that “a noticeable proportion of young people were claiming that they did not intend to ever marry. Moreover, among those who want to marry, the desired age at marriage was about two years higher for all age groups compared to their cohorts in the early 1980s” (Ito 2007, 45). Such attitudes of young people toward the marriage and family life should be focused and discussed from different perspectives and its analysis should be taken into consideration in the process of making policy for family and children.

It should be also questioned carefully if the government has been listening the opinions concerning to each family’s needs to implement functional support for their family lives. It is

not so long time until these young women reaches to an age in which they have to make a decision of whether they get married or not and whether they will have children or not. Their decisions, needless to say, will influence straightly to the demographic structure of Japan in the future and the demographic structure changes will also indicates the effectiveness of policy measures for family with children.

Since the average age of the first marriage is rising, Japan will straightly get influence from this phenomenon and declining birthrate will be accelerated. Since the poverty of single mother are not treated enough, women will not desire to have children alone and people have to be married with someone if hoping to have a child. There is also a societal and cultural pressure on Japanese women or couples that they should be married when bearing children and such pressure should be also considered in making social policy for declining fertility rate.

### 3.3 Reactive measures of the government toward declining fertility rate

Government has been reacting to this phenomenon and establishing child related policy especially since “1.57 shock” in 1990, when the birthrate got down till 1.57 (Figure 2). “Increasing awareness of the effect of declining fertility on population structure and socioeconomic institutions finally prompted the government to investigate the cases of fertility decline and to formulate policy measures to cope with population declining society.” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 13) Since 1990s, a number of committees have been established and dozens of reports and researches have been submitted to discuss policy measures. As Figure 3 shows, the government started to plan measures and policies for declining fertility rate in 1990 by establishing an inter-ministry committee named as the “Creating a Sound Environment for Bearing and

Rearing Children”. These policies are aimed to improve child care system and work and family reconciliation. In practice, policy changes include shortening the working hours required by Japanese companies, strict enforcement of the Child-Care Leave Act and provision of more and higher-quality nursery schools with long hours (Tsuya, Mason and Oppenheim 1995, 164).

Within these years of 1990-2003, there had been remarkable changes in the direction of policy making. For example, before 1997, the policy had been targeted at supporting working mothers to reconcile work and childcare without much notion to the existing employment system. After 1997 government has “shifted its views to restructure Japanese employment and family systems to a more individual –based, gender-role free society” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 15). In 2003 with the amendments of Child Welfare Law, the target of Child Welfare Law has become more universal. Before its law has targeted only children with the lack of care providers but after the amendments, the target began to include children with also care providers who are bearing heavy childcare responsibilities because of a lack of societal supports (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 17). According to Lynn Hollen Lees (1992), also in Western European countries, “an awareness of declining birth rates led politicians and social reformers to consider subsidizing reproduction as well as children’s health. Through increased provision of medical care, as well as other resources for mothers and infants, children were to be protected and families were to be encouraged to reproduce”(317).

Regardless of these policies and policy amendments occurred between 1990 and 2003, the policy seems to have been significantly unsuccessful in supporting and convincing people to have more children. The birthrate got down till 1.27 in 2006, which is remarkably low compared to other developed countries. Fertility rate in Japan finally rose

in 2006 for the first time in six years and it was 1.34 in 2007 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 14). It showed slight increase after implementing policies and reactive measures for many years; however, the serious shortage of working-age population in future is apparent. Welfare policies for declining fertility may not be functioned only by adding childcare service, child care leave and so on.

As it is discussed in the Chapter 5, welfare regimes have been extensively analyzed in gendered terms in recent society. It is well recognized that the policy toward declining fertility rate should be considered and discussed based on the analysis of different factors influencing family decision making. There are some analysts who see modern welfare system as “patriarchal,” or unfavorable to women, because of the economic vulnerability of women-maintained households. In addition, the benefits targeted on women’s need, such as child care or maternity leave, seemed to receive less favorable treatment than do needs related to the labor market, such as retirement (Orloff 2003, 219). Gender differentiation and its links to women’s inequality seems to be influencing many aspects of family decision making and even the immediate policy responses toward declining fertility rate has not yet changed the direction of family decision making.

TFR	Year	Action
1.54	1990	An inter-ministry committee “Creating a Sound Environment for Bearing and Rearing Children” established
1.53	1991	Childcare Leave Act enacted
1.50	1994	The Angel Plan or the “Basic Direction for Future Child Rearing Support Measures” (1995-1999) formulated. The “Five-Year Emergency Measures for Childcare Services” planned.
1.42	1995	Childcare and Family Care Leave Act enacted
1.38	1998	The amendment to the Child Welfare Law enforced
1.34	1999	New Angel Plan (2000-2004) formulated
1.36	2000	Child Abuse Prevention Law enacted
1.33	2001	The amendment to the Employment Insurance Law enforced
1.32	2002	The “Measures to Cope with a Fewer Number of Children Plus One” reported to the Prime Minister
n.a.	2003	The Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next-Generation, the amendment to the Child Welfare Law, and the Law for Basic Measures to Cope with Declining Fertility Society enacted

Source: MHLW Annual Report

n.a. =not available

Figure 3 Major Actions Taken by the Government toward Declining Fertility Rate  
(National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 14)

## 4. THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY IN POLICY MAKING

Family related policy making is deeply interrelated with the family concept. Without understanding family concept, it is difficult to understand and discuss the process of family related policy making. In order to analyze the significances of family related policy in Japan, this chapter explores the family concept and its transitions in the period of economic crisis. The government intentions toward family concept that is related with the politics will be also analyzed to learn the original ideas of implemented policy.

### 4.1 Historical analyses of family concept in Japan

Concepts like family, marriage and child are not at all constant across time or societies. Sometimes those concepts are naturally generated as a result of mixture of a number of factors but sometimes society or government set the concept for a certain purposes because concepts also set the attitudes and behaviors of the citizens. If the concept had been too much depending on nation's economical situation or other hectic political purposes, it might cause difficulties for citizens to trust concepts or policies given by the government.

In general discussion of modernization and family concept changes in European countries, it was argued that the style of modern family “does not conflict with the requirements of an industrial economy as it is small enough to be highly mobile”. Previous family functions such as education and productive activities for children are reallocated to the state and employing organizations and recently its major functions are interestingly the socialization of children and personality stabilization or ‘tension management’ (Crompton 2006, 31).

Reviewing the discussion regarding post war social welfare, “family” had been always

given a crucial position in welfare system. The most significant recognition of Japanese modern family, is “the separation between inside house area and public area”, which was conveniently connected to the idea “respect for privacy”, bringing such common sense in which social policy should not interfere individual private life. In addition to this, Japanese people came to understand family as basic social security unit that based on the idea “self-help within family”. It means that family has the responsibility to take care family member, if he or she is having some problems. Under such understandings, as the responsibility of individual life security, family and nation are regarded as being in relation of “trade -off”. Based on a belief that the mutual assistance in family or local society is stronger and more reliable in Japan compared to other western developed countries, traditional base population was emphasized to be capable to respond parts of needs of individual life

However, on the other hand, such key words as “family support” “support for family with children” have been often heard in discussion regarding senior care and child care policy. Even though that the welfare policy center targets are seniors and babies, a kind of transformation can be discovered in policy concept in which the family of those seniors and babies are also regarded as welfare policy target (Fujisaki 2000, 111 – 137).

## 4.2 The emergence of family related protection law and its political backgrounds

Within the basic principles of governmental affairs, policy for strengthening the function of family and local society became one of the most important topics in “economic society development plan”, which was posted on in 1967. However, within the welfare policy field, family concept had been already a very important issue as a condition for

giving service before 1967. The significance of family concept in welfare policy was not publicly declared, but family concept has deeply influenced in defining individuals as welfare target.

Since the restoration of imperial power in 1968, Japan was compelled to be in hurry to establish modern state against great western powers. The most important national task was “wealth and military strength” and “encouragement of new industry”. In those years, charity activities had restricted characteristics based on the concept called “damin-kan”, in which poorness is regarded as a consequence of personal matters that does not have any relation with society responsibility (Fujisaki 2000, 111—137).

The first helping policy was established in 1874 and in its preface it is mentioned that the targets of the policy are poor people who do not have family or relatives. In the policy, it is also emphasized that helping the weak is primarily the responsibility of family, relative or local community in which people belong. During Meiji period (1868-1912) charity and relief activities were based on the recognition, in which these two attempts, helping the weak and financial accumulation are incompatible. This confrontation of these two issues had continued for a while, establishing a baseline for modern public welfare services (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137).

Protection law for mother and child was established in 1937 during Sino-Japanese war. The support for mother and child has been actively claimed by citizens and there had been some movements and committees that aimed to realize this law. This law was almost the first law in which the concept of “protection” was used; however, it was not so different from helping policy. For example, if the husband is unemployed without income but he has ability to work, this protection law does not support his wife and child. In addition, the law established during the war and the priority of this law was given to family that has lost their father in the war. If father of the family was not in military service, they have got very

few supports which were almost the same level as helping policy (Kikuchi, Murota et al. 2003, 132-133).

Because living problems and living needs had become more diverse being added different qualities, and such residual helping work could no longer manage to correspond to these problems. Such strong restrictionism based on understanding that a person in a family would not need help, had gradually become unsuitable and family had partially become to be supported and protected by society. According to researches, the increase of hierarchical disparity brought an expansion of poverty group especially in the urban area and poverty situation became to be comprehended based on family. Then the targets of relief work are extended to low salary workers (Fujisaki 2000, 111–137).

From the historical point of view, in the first half of social welfare history, care and help for the weak that includes children and the elderly was aimed to be completely managed by mutual assistance of family and relatives. Government will support when there is an exceptional case in which people are unable to have any mutual assistance because of an absence of family and relatives. In the last half of the social welfare history in which social service establishment and development were realized, the restrictionism had been still present, however, the support target is transferred from “home” to “household” and policy was made to control household to be more preferable for the nation (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137).

#### 4.3 Turning points of family concept affected by “Welfare Revision”

After the World War II, Japanese people are battered by the calamity of war. The government tried to reconstruct the country based on the democratic principles under the GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Forces) and social welfare was regarded as one

of the most important policy. Welfare policies were urgently needed after the war and in 1946, living protection law was established. In 1947, child welfare policy was established and in 1949 the policy for handicapped people was established. In the beginning of 1960s, pension system was enacted and the policy for mental retardation was enacted in 1960. Policy for the elderly is appeared in 1963 and policy for mother and child was established in 1964. Policy for mother and child was mainly for those mothers who lost her husband in the war.

Until the early 1960s, welfare policy had been established taking steady steps and Japanese social welfare once seemed to have reached the same level as other western countries with advanced social welfare systems. However, their welfare system was forced to experience major shift after oil shock in 1973. The government announced the need of “Welfare Revision” and during 1980s, individual self-help efforts and mutual assistance among family and relatives were again emphasized strongly. In addition, “contribution and benefit” principle was adopted in using welfare services, which means that the self responsibility principle is inevitable in providing the services. Restrictionism had spread again among welfare policy making process.

However, expectation for self-help was almost impossible to maintain and the turning points of family concept in welfare policy appeared again around 1990s. Before then, welfare law defined the target of welfare service to be someone who needs support, protection and reclamation. Since the beginning of 1990s, the target has been defined as someone who needs welfare service and its target became more generalized and universalized. From late 1980s to early 1990s several plans for the elderly and child-rearing were formulated and the basic concept shifted from “restriction” to “support”. However, we have to remember the “morality of support”, which considers service user’s family as welfare targets, also stabilized senior care and child care to be under family’s

responsibility (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137).

During the period of “Welfare revision” in 1980s, the responsibility of each family’s and individual’s needs assessment had been handed from the state to individuals, encouraging self help efforts and mutual assistance among the family and relatives. It is apparent that the family concept in Japanese welfare policy has been far from coherency, containing many changeable and uncertain elements. Such characteristics of Japan’s family concept and family related policy would be possibly causing ineffectiveness of recent policy making in raising the fertility rate.

#### 4.4 Contemporary recognition toward family and individual as service recipients

There are several different opinions toward concepts of “family” and “individual” and their ideal position in the society. According to Mr. Nonoyama (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137), researchers of family welfare policy, there would be a danger that family group will be separated because of being given different welfare services such as child welfare, welfare for the disabled and welfare for the elderly. He mentions that the society needs such welfare service, which regards family as living subjects or group, not as a system. He also defined that the aim of family welfare is to help each family member to facilitate diverse forms of self-actualization without any sacrifices (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137).

Ida (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137), labor economist, criticizes the social system and social policy that based on assumption, which defines family as a unit. He insists that such assumption possibly discriminates people who do not belong to standard type family and also there is a concern that the independence of women and gender equality might be inhibited. Moreover, “family as a unit” thinking in welfare policy might lead people to

think that elderly care and child rearing should be taken care by family, which practically means that women should take all the responsibilities concerning caring family members. It might even disturb individuals' self-determination right by considering one as an object to be protected.

Mr. Ida (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137) also gives his idea what would be the ideal welfare system for family. "Family egoism should be controlled properly. In order to build a new kind of connection between production and reproduction, we need to publicly socialize reproductive work. Even if family member (especially women) takes care of the elderly, children and the disabled, clients acquire the service or allowance themselves and clients can employ the family member as "registered helper" or "family helper" to fulfill client's needs. When such system is realized, client's self-determination can be finally guaranteed and at the same time, care giver's work will be fairly valued. Moreover sexual division of labor will be diminished and prevention care, housework and child-rearing should be socialized completely. Individualization is very important keyword (Fujisaki 2000, 111-137).

Mrs. Fujisaki (2000, 111-137), who had specialized in sociology and is also a professor of Japanese university, insists that care capacity of family or family intention for care should not be postulated. The services should be offered based on the elderly "individual" and objective needs and also his/her subjective intention.

As you can see from the above, there are pros and cons regarding the question whether family should be assigned as a welfare policy object or not. These are reviews of some discussion among Japanese researchers and opinion leaders in the 90s. However, these discussions indicate that the development process of social service for family brings out conflictive aspects, for example, conflicting opinions toward individual identity and respects for individuals, harmony inside of the family and so on. It can be said that in the

base of conflictive discussions of social services for family, there is a conflictive perspectives toward gender in Japanese society.

## 5. DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERNS FROM GENDER PERSPECTIVES

In analyzing the demographic concerns and fertility rate declines, gender-related issue emerges as the significant characteristics of Japanese society, which might be causing the fertility rate declines. The policies for fertility rate declines should be take consideration of family related issues such as woman labor environment after bearing the child. Decision making within the family is largely influenced by gender perspectives of working environment and this chapter explains the importance of structure analyses from gender perspectives in planning functional policy for declining fertility rate.

### 5.1 Critics toward gender split in recent Japan

According to the researches and studies (Ito 2007, 32), aging trend is directly connected to existing gender relations. “Studies showed that the lack of gender equality within both the home and the labor market had left Japanese women with little option but to defer or forgo marriage and/or childbearing, thus contributing the decline in the fertility rate and accelerating the aging problems”(Ito 2007, 32). The state and government have decided to encourage childbearing and childrearing and it was also a beginning of “family-friendly/women friendly” welfare expansion. As a consequence of women’s increased economic independence, both women and men began to “de- emphasize the division of labour as the potential source of satisfaction in marriage, instead of emphasizing sexual satisfaction, the quality of emotional companionship, or total income” (Mason and Jensen 1995, 6).

As it is often argued, Japan is criticized for the existence of highly gender split in many

aspects of culture, history, politics, family life, and so on. The complexity of gender relations is difficult to define in a systematic and comparative way, however, law offers “a handle on the sets of values, norms, and practices” (Therborn 1995, 105). As an example, Japan is criticized for the highly gendered split between regular and irregular employees (Vij 2007, 184). “The wages of women in Japan, as in other advanced economies, are considerably less than those received by male workers, and in fact the wages of women in Japan are notoriously low” (Ogawa and Hodge, 106). The difference in wages might be resulted from sex differential in work experience and employment type. The statement concerning low wages of Japanese women is based on the survey of sixteen countries by the International Labour Organization in 1986 and the survey shown that Japan was the only one among the countries surveyed where the difference between the salaries of men and women had widened between 1975 and 1984 (Ogawa and Hodge, 106). It should also be noted that until recently, female labour participation was relatively low in Japan. It has been typical that women withdrew from the labour-force upon marriage or the birth of their first child. It is only in recent years that an impressive growth in female participation have been witnessed, however, “women generally have less experience than their male counterparts, work shorter hours, have slightly lower educational attainment and are lower-paying occupations”(Mason, Teh, Ogawa, and Fukui 2003, 168). Interestingly, the available evidence has indicated that “wage differentials are greater than can be accounted for by productivity-related factors alone” (Mason, Teh, Ogawa, and Fukui 2003, 168). Increase of female labour-force participation and the unchanging earnings differentiation between the sexes may have contributed to Japan’s fertility rate decline over the past few decades.

According to the basic law Pertaining to the Low Birth Rate (Shoushika Shakai Taisaku Kihon Ho), introduced in 1999, it was identified that “the existing corporate-centered welfare system as the main cause of the weakening of the family and community and,

ultimately, of the decline in fertility in Japan” (Ito 2007, 48). In 1999 Ministry of Health and Welfare stated in their white paper:

The Japanese-style employment system’s control over male workers who form the main labor power has not only denied men the time and psychological space to participate in the family and community activities, but also, as a result, forced women to take on an undue burden of child care and childrearing, which furthermore, has led to the decline of community activities.... Moreover, because of the Japanese employment system assumes that men will fully devote themselves to their work and will be free of any family and child care responsibilities, and because the system has been supported by the gender division of labor, it has made the harmonization of work and family responsibilities extremely burdensome and difficult for women.

Finally, because Japanese employment is customarily a male-centered system, it has made women’s long-term employment difficult. Once a woman leaves her job for child care reasons, the reentry into the labor market is difficult, and even if she returns, working conditions are worse than before. Given that marriage and childbirth often lead to decline in income, not only because of forced retirement but also because of a decline in working conditions and pay after the return, it is reasonable to think that this has been a factor behind the decrease in the marriage rate (Ito 2007, 48-49).

Gender analysis in Japan has recently shown progresses; however, actual policy responses have been slow. Ito Peng (2007, 49), an associate professor of social policy at the School of Policy Studies in Japan, pointed out that the policies focus mainly on providing

care service for children and the elderly and opportunities to take care leaves for parents to reduce women's double burdens but not the promotion of gender equality. It can be said that the promotion of gender equality is almost untouched regardless of the researches that show gender inequality in working environments lessen women's choice for their life courses.

The government's attempts to expand public child care to support working mothers to reconcile work and family responsibilities have been very significant; however, there were not so much attention made to the problems such as women's unequal and vulnerable positions within the labor market. Furthermore, lack of women's representation can be seen in almost every sector of the society besides voluntary activities (Ito 2007, 49).

Historically, one of the significant progresses of governmental decision toward gender-equal society is the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986. Japanese government is encouraged to support to spread the gender equity and equal pay for equal work legislation and it is also expected that women's wages will continue to improve more rapidly than men's in the years to come (Ogawa and Hodge, 127). However, it should be noted that this equal opportunity in labour force may not necessarily improve the fertility rate. As Gillis (1992) stated, in industrialized countries, people stop having children also when the "gender symmetry is achieved" (44). Working environment with gender equality and reasonable salary may encourage female workers to reconcile family and work; however, high tendency to limit the family size among families will not be changed only by improving the gender-equal working environment. As Jane Lewis discussed (1992), the modern welfare states have treated women in various ways such as care givers and paid workers. This way of treating women have been complicated and within welfare regime, "no one policy logic can be said to have the undisputed advantage" (Lewis 1992, 169).

## 5.2 Women's positions in labor and family

Needless to mention, the position of women had been historically low in Japan for many hundred years. Modernization was indeed one of the turning points in increasing women participation in social and political activities in Japan. Women, whether samurai or commoners, had rarely participated in public life before Meiji Restoration in 1860s, but “growing body of upper- and middle-class women took on the task of Westernizing popular customs and morality following the Meiji Restoration”. The role of women as modernizers was in fact “at the core of the campaigns to improve daily life during 1920s and 1930s” and furthermore, “Japanese bureaucrats prompted the modernization of women's roles with an eye toward strengthening the nation” (Sheldon 1994).

In relation to family policies, throughout the post war era, women were given such role by the state as a point of adjustment “to negotiate varying social, economic, and political imperatives. This attempt is probably most clearly reflected family and child care policies (Ito 2007, 31). In 1947, Child Welfare Law was introduced to Japan to provide public child care. The target of this Welfare Law was “children lacking in care” and there were implications to respond to the demands and pressures of different sectors. They are, for example, market demands for women's labour, political demands to strengthen the family's welfare obligations, and public pressures for more social care”(Ito 2007, 31).

In the early 1990s, social and demographic shifts in Japan led government and society to focus on the situation of women and family in the society and rethink the policy strategies targeted to them. The main issue and concern was, indeed, aging society and decline in the fertility rate. Analysis and researches shows that the aging society and declining fertility rate bring society soon serious social and economic problems that might lead Japan to undermine its political and economic position in the world (Ito 2007, 31).

The development of Japanese welfare state, within the context of postwar gender policies, is unique. Japanese welfare state developed dualistic family and child care policies. Formal policies stated the primacy of women's housewifery and family care roles while in practice, public child care continued to develop their systems to meet the demand of increasing working mothers (Ito 2007, 33). There would be much to discuss possible reasons of why Japanese society tries to maintain the idea of ideal mother or wife as housewife or main caregiver.

An analysis of the gender balance in political fields of Japan should be mentioned in considering women's position and roles in society in general. According to Jane Lewis (1992), "all Nordic Parliament with the exception of Iceland have reached a critical mass (30-40%) of women members and it is in part this that has led to Scandinavian women's optimism about the role of the state". The percentage of women in Japanese parliament is approximately 12% and it is clearly less than the average percent of Nordic countries ("Women in National Parliaments").

To increase the number of female representatives in Japanese politics would be one of the effective ways to monitor and control the gender inequality in society. If there will be more female representatives in Japanese government, parliament or other political fields, it would be easier to increase the female representative in different sectors, and these representatives may possibly support to decrease gender inequality in different sectors and working environments. Gender balance in political fields may directly influence on the gender balance in important positions of each sector.

### 5.3 Policy making for gender-equal society

In 1996, the Japanese prime minister's office established an advisory committee on

gender issues to initiate policymaking for a gender-equal society. However, the status of committee has been limited to an advisory one and the committee did not get much public attention. The most problematic issue related with this committee might be that the very few corrective measures have actually filtered into public policy. For example, employment legislation such as discrimination and sexual harassment laws has not yet introduced regardless of its serious need. “The Japanese government only publicly began to recognize the sexual harassment in the workplace as of 1999, but many of measures introduced to deal with it have been limited to public education and setting up rudimentary mechanisms such as counseling and support services for women to report and discuss infringements” (Ito 2007, 49).

There are actually no specific measures to stop the sexual harassment or discrimination in the working environments to improve the women’s positions in labour market. Ito Peng gives interesting perspectives in his articles toward gender inequality in Japan. He mentioned that the Japanese state’s perception of the gender inequality problem is that “it affects low fertility and thus the aging of society –not that gender inequality is a problem in itself”. He also argued that the extension and expansion of social care is aimed at “addressing the inordinate burden of family and childcare placed on women under the existing system of gender relations, not necessarily at changing its basic structure” (Ito 2007, 50).

As far as the gender structure will remain the same, it would be difficult to make the policies or measures to support working women because of the absence of the theories and basic ideas related with the adaptation of gender equality in Japanese society. There would be still much to discuss how government and state can change the existing gender structure and to make the functional policy to improve the women’s working environments internally.

## 5.4 Work and family balance from comparative perspectives

It is not only Japan that are facing new kinds of challenges resulted from the increase of working women. Most Western European countries are facing a shift from the so-called “breadwinner-model family” to and “adult worker model”. “Adult worker model” (Klammer 2006, 238) means that all adults are expected to do paid work and this new concept is to support and generalize women’s participation in labour market. Needless to say, this new concept brings new challenges for family to reconcile work life and family life. In modern society and welfare state, family is no longer a natural structure, but a certain kind of project which should be “produced” again and again (Klammer 2006, 238).

German context of combining work and children had been considered to be difficult for women. School hours are unfavorable for full-time work, and husbands have so far shown little inclination to contribute a major, or even equal, share of housework and child care (Huinink and Mayer 1995, 194). Young women in Germany are confronted with hard choices between commitment to work and commitment to children. Before the German reunification in 1990, in East Germany, the question of women’s role at work and in the family was of critical importance for ideological and economic competition with Capitalist West Germany (Rudd 2003, 182). By the 1970s, most East German women were working full time and women’s qualification and education levels were high. Since combining the women’s role in work and family was difficult, the birthrate dropped rapidly (Rudd 2003, 183). The example of East Germany indicates that the policy for encouraging women’s participation in labour force can also be resulted from political attempts for ideological and economic competition.

Also in Spain and Italy, where fertility levels are extremely low, the pursuit of new economic opportunities for women who must simultaneously care for children is supposed

to be extremely difficult because school hours are minimal. “On the other hand, in Sweden, where fertility has risen to the long-term replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, the State helps to minimize the costs of working and simultaneously rearing children through generous educational, maternity leave, and welfare policies and programmes” (Mason and Jensen 1995, 9).

While both father and mother contribute to paid work, the risks of child’s neglect will be increased because of absence of parents. Ute Klammer, a professor of Social Policy in Germany, gives a concrete idea of what should be done to adopt family model shift to the modern society as follows;

“What is needed is a paradigm shift in companies, creating a situation in which each employee is automatically also seen as a caregiver, whether they care for their own children or relatives or are involved in other socially relevant activities”.

She also argues that the family-friendliness should mean that companies take into account that

“all employees potentially bear responsibility in the other sphere of societal activity and no longer base their planning concepts on a norm of an employee –particularly the qualified employee- who is freed from the full range of household duties” (Klammer 2006, 238).

From gender perspectives, the idea of seeing children as future worker citizens and investment target, which is strongly coming to the Western European countries, might be very interesting to follow (Lewis 2006, 13). In Western European countries, there is also a

trend in which children are seen as “an independent subject” whose opinion should be heard and respected. If the promotion of gender equality is considered seriously as an aim for the society, the concept and theory of gender equality may have to be taught already in education process since the gender is also a very fundamental issue. When children are grown up, whether they will become employer or employee, they should have the idea of gender equality and how gender equality should be realized in actual situations.

From above, the development of gender related concepts and policy in Japan requires multidimensional approaches based on analyses of women employment and its environmental factors, which cause difficulties for women to work after getting married or bearing the child. It has been stated that difficult working environment for women has been causing to forgo their marriage or child-rearing and thus government has been aiming to plan family- or women- friendly welfare expansion (Ito 2007, 32). Traditional male-centered employment structure has not changed even after the modernization period in which women employment had increased very much. The reality of woman’s working condition is that once woman leaves her job for child-bearing, reentry is difficult, and moreover, the aim to prioritize company productiveness supports the concept of traditional male-centered employment system. However, in accordance with fertility rate declines, government and society recognized that they should reorganize traditional employment structure and such attempts may require educational approach for labor market related people including policy makers.

## 6. REFORMATIONS OF POLICIES FOR WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF FAMILY WITH CHILDREN

Naturally, the insecurity of temporary work causes disruption of relations between men and women; it delayed marriage, rendered courtships unstable, and separated married couples. As Huinink and Mayer (1995) suggested, “the delay of marriage does not imply its disappearance, but it does increase the likelihood that a higher proportion of women and men will never marry for lack of suitable partners (exhaustion of the marriage pool). Delays in marriage also increase the likelihood that a higher proportion will never become parents for biological reasons”. According to the progress of women entering labour force, highly qualified and professionally employed women appear to try to establish their independence before marriage and having their first child (Huinink and Mayer 1995, 194)

In an analysis that focuses on the recent decline of Japanese fertility to very low levels, Tsuya and Mason ascertain that the marriage postponement completely explains the recent fertility decline. They argue that the most likely explanation for the tendency to marry at more advanced ages by historical standards is the new educational and economic opportunities for young Japanese women (Mason and Jensen 1995, 10).

Remarkable declines of fertility rate in Japan have raised the discussion toward the needs of developing the policy and method for supporting family. The issues related family’s decision making on bearing and rearing child have been analyzed from different perspectives to plan functional policy for family with children. Environment and condition of labour system in Japan is a crucial part of family life which directly affects the decision making of family. Policy responses for declining fertility rate and policy effectiveness within the context of working life will be discussed in this chapter.

## 6.1 Relation between working conditions and family's decision making on bearing child

According to Martine Segaleno's (1992) research concerning fertility decline in France, "decisions regarding the size of family must be examined first from the point of view of the families themselves and that these decisions can never be dissociated from the social and economic contexts in which they are embedded. The complexity of fertility attitudes requires the simultaneous close scrutiny of both family and society" (247). It has been mentioned in the previous chapters that increased social and economic opportunity for women, which is understood as one of the most significant social changes in modern society, is influencing the family size and causing possible changes in demographic structure. Also in Japan, demographic changes has raised concerns for policy makers and scholars and recently family size related surveys and researches have been published with the support of various organization including Japanese national organizations.

Child related Policy published by Japanese national organization stated that "the factors that influence fertility can be broadly divided into two groups. The first group consists of demographic and biological factors that directly influence fertility. These include marital status, age at marriage, fecundity and use of contraceptives. The other group consists of larger socioeconomic factors that indirectly affect fertility behavior of women and couples. Factors that belong to the latter group include women's educational attainment, women's labor force participation, availability of childcare service, and macroeconomic factors such as economic growth" (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 5). In this chapter, the main discussions is concerning with socioeconomic factors, categorized in the latter group.

According to "Longitudinal Survey of Adults in 21st Century" published by Ministry of

Health, Labour and Welfare (2008), the percentage of having the second child depends greatly on the amount of fathers' household work. Within the families whose second child was born, the percentage of families whose father's housework hours in holidays is more than eight hours in a day was five times more than the percent of families whose father does housework zero hour. The research had started in 2002 and this year 17990 people who are 20-34 years old had answered the questionnaires. Since the first research in 2002, 29.4 percent of the families have got the second child. Within these families whose second child was born, 40.1 percent of research participants answered that father does the housework including child nursing more than 8 hours. 25.6 percent of people answered that the father's housework hours are 2-4 hours and 17.4 percent of people answered that father's housework hours were less than 2 hours (Mainichi news paper, April 4.2008).

There is only 7.1 percent who answered that father's housework hours are zero. The same research shows that the child care leave system in wife's working environment also influence very much to the desire of having the second child even more than having the first child. 45.5 percent of women whose workplace has child-care system got the second child and only 28 percent of women whose workplace does not have such system in their opinion got the second child. In the relation of employment system, 57.6 percent of women with regular employment have had the second child while only 33.8 percent of women with irregular employment have had the second child (Mainichi news paper, April 4.2008).

The desire and actual attempt for having child seemed to depend on very much on the amount of husband's housework hours, women's employment system and child-care leave availability. Such dependency is less for the desire and attempt to have the first child. It can be said that environment does not affect so much when women are having the first child, however, the decision for having the second child depend on how supportive their husband and workplace are (Mainichi news paper, April 4.2008).

## 6.2 Social policies for working environment of family with children

“Currently, the search for a proper balance between social care and family care usually ends in controversy and uncertainty in contemporary Japan. Contrary to the idealized image of the traditional family, family care can not always be realized in a harmonious manner and without causing trouble and conflict among those involved” (Takahashi 1995, 83). Rapid modernization and urbanization has greatly changed people’s life after post-1945 era and people had recognized that the ideal care giving functions of the Japanese family could not be realized. It had well recognized in public that the family cannot take all the responsibilities to take care of older people and children within the family. However, at the same time, “social care has not entirely been freed from stigma and social welfare tends to be associated in the minds of many citizens with means-tested benefits for the poor” (Takahashi 1995, 83).

Child related policy has been developing the policy for family with children to encourage and support child rearing. However, it is noticeable that “before 1997, the policy was targeted at supporting working mothers to reconcile work and childcare, but it did not refer to any measures to change the traditional employment system still prevalent in the Japanese society or gender-role values in the Japanese family”(National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 15). This issue can be easily observed in policy that holds several kinds of restrictions and limitations for social service toward family with children in Japan, which make it difficult for Japanese families to have more children. In this chapter, such limitation and restrictions will be focused in order to discuss significant characteristics that may increase difficulties and challenges for Japanese modern family during child rearing period.

Lately, policy for family with children includes a broad set of policies for supporting

fathers and mothers in labor market. The main subjects of these policies in Japan are;

- Work environment and rights of workers with family responsibilities such as parental leave.
- Support measures for different services such as childcare
- Financial support for family such as family allowance

OECD has published research called “Babies and Bosses - Highlights Japan- Policies towards reconciling work and family life in November 2007. The research has pointed out some significant issues and needs for balancing family and working life. First, parents in Japan find it hard to combine work and family commitments. As a result, female employment is very low and also the fertility rate is very low in Japan. Secondly, social policies for family with children such as leave arrangements and childcare are relatively well-developed. However, the gender wage gap is twice the OECD average and women are often discriminated in the labor market. Thirdly, Japanese labor system should ensure that women have access to regular employment and there should not be inequality between men and women when they are following the career track systems. Labor market definitely allow mothers to return regular employment if they wish (OECD, 2007).

The research mentioned also about long working hours in Japan. According to the statistics, 80 percent of men work more than 40 hours and 64 percent of women works more than 40 hours (Figure 3). If the working hours are too long, it is apparent that men are not capable in supporting family life and mother should take major responsibilities in rearing children (OECD, 2007).

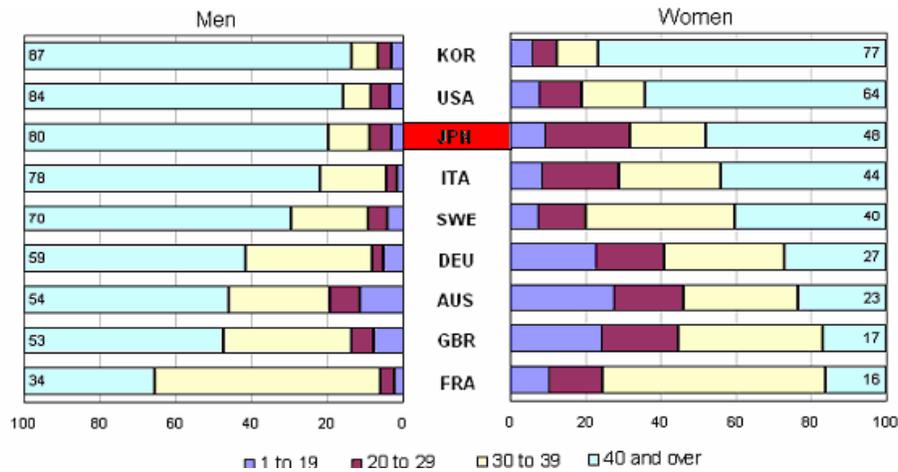


Figure 5 Japanese, American and Korean employees have longer working hours than their European counterparts (OECD, 2007)

### 6.3 Reformations of employment laws for working mothers

“Initially, the childcare leave in Japan was very limited in its coverage. The law was first made into legislation in 1975 for women working as teachers, nurses and child minders. While objectives of childcare leave or parental leave in other developed countries are fundamentally on child rearing, Japanese policy has focused more on creating incentive to secure job and return to work” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 19). In the beginning, the main focus of the Childcare Law was to secure women a job so that schools, hospitals and welfare facilities would be smoothly operated. There was also other law referring parental leave, the Equal Employment opportunity Law. However, the law “merely stipulated that firms should make efforts to introduce the leave” and there are not any concrete measures to be followed regarding parental leave. In addition, there were no any criteria for measure to evaluate whether the firms had made effort for it or not.

Because of the declining birthrate, government’s concern has changed and government

had started to set measures for more flexible work environments. In 1991 comprehensive Childcare leave Law was enacted. It stated that “workers have a right to take a childcare leave until the day before the child turn 1 year old regardless of employee’s sex.” This law was very welcomed among citizens; however, there were some limitations. “For example, the leave is available only to those in regular employment. In addition, workers in firms with less than 30 employees were exempted from the law until March, 1997” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 19).

In 1995, Childcare law was renewed as the Childcare and Family Care Leave law. In this law, workers were given right to take leave for childcare as well as care for other family members. However, certain limitation still continues to be present.

This law did not allow taking the childcare leave for those who are;

1. Non-regular employee including part-time workers or contract workers with specified length of employment
2. Workers who are employed for less than a year
3. Workers who have a family member to look after the children regularly.

For those who belong to 2 and 3, are eligible to take the leave up to eight weeks after the child was born.

As one may imagine, after all the serious limitations toward the parental leave were introduced, wages are basically not paid during the parental leave. In April 1995, the Employment Insurance started and the amendments were made regarding the wages during parental leave. The content of amendments is noted below;

In 2001, “Basic Direction for Policies Supporting Work and Childcare Compatible” was formulated, which was put much larger emphasis on the role of firms to provide more

flexible working environment for family with children to make work and childcare responsibilities well balanced. In the policy, there are five objectives:

- 1) support and encourage firms to introduce more flexible employment practices so as to make it easier for workers with family responsibilities to reconcile work and childcare,
- 2) implement the so-called “the Campaign for Zero Waiting List”,
- 3) provide high quality and flexible childcare service,
- 4) provide out-of- school hours care centers, and
- 5) incorporate local communities in supporting families with children(Child Related Policy in Japan, 15-16)

One year later, some other objectives are added such as change the prevalent work patterns for both men and women and strengthen community support, promotion of independence and social skills of children as a responsible people for next generation. In 2003, there are again some additions and amendments for child welfare law, which emphasized the important role of children for next generational society (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 16).

What about the wages during parental leave? Following to this new policy for improving working environments for family with children, “the benefit paid during the parental leave is further increased to 40 percent of the pre-birth wages from 2001. In detail, 30 percent of the pre-birth wage is paid monthly during the leave, and another 10 percent is paid 6 months after returning to work, with an objective to encourage worker’s return. In case, if wages are paid during the leave, the total amount of wage and benefits from employment insurance is not to exceed 80 percent of the pre-birth wage, then the benefits from employment insurance are not paid”. The system is designed to provide strong incentives for workers to return to

the job after certain childcare period.

It also has to be noted the majority of women in Japan are working as part-time workers or contract workers with specified length of employment so that majority of women are not eligible to have any parental leave. This kind of consequent discrimination toward the women in labor market should be researched and discussed already in the stage of job application. Equality in labor environment gives women adequate advantages for parenthood and it also increases sustainable trust for working environment after having a child (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 20).

According to Christopher Pierson, high percentage of women with part-time employment is a world wide phenomenon. He stated that “although there is significant international variation in different countries, part-time work is disproportionately carried out by women” (1991, 78). In OECD countries, the proportion of female workers among part-time employees ranged from 63 percent in Greece to more than 94 percent in the UK. Much of women’s involvement in paid work has been on a part-time basis and also the percentage of part-time worker among female employees is high. In Norway and Netherland, about 50 percent of women were part-time employees and in Finland, Greece, Ireland and Italy, the figure remained below 10 per cent. Part-time work indeed gives various advantages for mothers to reconcile child their domestic responsibilities for caring family with work, however, there are a number of disadvantages of involving in part-time employment such as lower remuneration, lower pay rates, less security of employment, less prospect of promotion, and weaker welfare and employment rights (Pierson 1991, 78).

Even though there are a number of disadvantages for part-time work such as less security of employment and less prospect of promotion and so on (Pierson 1991, 78), women tend to choose such type of job because of the employment structure that does not allow women to have sustainable job no matter she has a child or not. Needless to say, such working

environment consequently disables married couple to reconcile of work and family. The attempts to change such structure have been operated by the Japanese government, implementing and reforming policies for women labor environment. However, concrete changes are happening slowly and there have not been discussed yet to make strategies for actual influence or generalization of the idea of family welfare centered working environment. This trend also indicates the slow penetration of gender-equal labor structure regardless of its urgent needs.

#### 6.4 Measures for work-time flexibility

It is often referred to the Japanese working environment and long working hours when talking about its rapid economical development. As it is mentioned in previous chapter, it is statically proved that Japanese people work long hours compared to most of western European countries. There may be several factors why Japanese workers have long working hours. One of the most influential historical events might be restoration of imperial power in 1968. Japan had to be in hurry to establish modern state against great western powers holding slogan as “wealth and military strength” and “encouragement of new industry”. In those years, poorness and weakness are regarded as “laziness” and this kind of labeling had been encouraging and also forcing people to work longer to fulfill the task. This kind of labeling still strongly grounded in modern working environment. It is true that technological development in general is not separable with the reward of hardworking and preciseness in their working process. For many years, there are discussions how economical development and welfare state establishment can be developed together without disturbing each other. There are the same kind of conflicts in supporting compatibility of work and family responsibilities.

In Japan, it is quite common that women choose part-time employment and other flexible working practices such as flextime after having a child. It is also very common for Japanese workers to work over-time so that the Childcare and Family Care Leave Law includes stipulation regarding over-time work. According to the Childcare and Family Care Law, the worker can be exempted from “working over time more than 24 hours per month, and 150 hours per year”. This is eligible for workers until the child enters elementary school.

Overnight work is also quite common in Japanese company and there is also protection measure for the overnight work. It can be exempted with the same condition and procedures with over-time work exemption. If the workers request, the worker is exempted from overnight from 10 pm to 5 am. However, for both over-time and overnight work exemption, there is also similar kind of limitation with the childcare leave that the stipulation is only for regular workers who have been employed for more than one year (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 20).

In addition, the Childcare and Family Care Leave also states that firms are required to actively prepare a system for work time flexible regardless of worker’s request. For example, firms have to make work time flexible for workers who have 0 to 2 years old and 3 to 6 years old. “Firms are to choose either one of the four work time arrangements for workers with children aged 0-2 years old. These include; (1) arrangements for shortening the working time, (2) introduction of flextime, (3) late start or early leave(start work from later-than-usual working time, or leave office earlier-than-usual time), (4) arrangements for not working overtime than the standard, (5) arrangements for daycare centers, or providing some kind of support related to childcare. Firms are also encouraged to make effort to introduce arrangements for child sickness leave” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 20).

It can be said that the Childcare and Family Leave Law is a big step forward to support

families with children to realize more balanced work and childcare environment. However, in fact, about 70 percent of women withdraw from labor force after having child without utilizing childcare leave. There may be several reasons for this. One of the reasons can be, as it is mentioned before, long working hours simply make it impossible for father to engage in childcare and mother has to take major responsibility in rearing the child. The other reason can be that the part-time job is very popular among the mothers who have children. In addition to these reasons, it should be noted that “many of the stipulation on firm’s work-time arrangements are just encouragement and not obligation” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 20).

Gender-role value differs from firms to firms and in many of the firms, making the leave and time arrangements for childcare might be very difficult and awkward because of the historical and political backgrounds, which put much emphasis on company productivity. “The society has been preoccupied with ‘production’ for economic growth while ‘reproduction’ has been undermined. The issue of the declining tends to be reduced to ‘the women’s question’, or the ‘crisis of motherhood’, and fails to include a comprehensive approach to parenthood which includes fatherhood and the realities of working lives for both men and women” (Takahashi 1995, 84).

Since the Japanese government and society has faced the serious needs of consideration for employee’s working environment to support their family life, the policy implementation and amendments have been operated remarkably and now it may be the time to consider the strategy for generalization of these policies. The concept of labor market and its long-term achievement should be related with society’s long-term achievement and company’s productiveness should be evaluated from many perspectives of societal influences. In order to value such perspectives, family welfare related comparative researches should be analyzed and the findings from those researches may give an idea for the realization of

policy.

## 7 INFLUENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERNS ON CHILD CARE SERVICE

This chapter introduces the existing structure of childcare service and facility and critics towards the system. Analyzing the concerns and critics of childcare system and actual reformation aimed to solve the declining fertility rate, the government's method to solve the child care related concerns can be observed. A strategy entitled as "Angel plan" has also determined by four different ministries to plan a sustainable method to support family with children, however, these reformations' effectiveness is in question. Policy responses for declining fertility rate will be discussed concretely in this chapter in order to reconsider policy effectiveness within the context of child care services.

### 7.1 Child care service related policy development process

Childcare and educational institutions for preschool age in Japan can be divided as follows; licensed daycare centers, non-licensed daycare centers and kindergartens (Figure 5). In general, "daycare centers provide full-day center-based care for pre-school children aged 0-6 years old regardless of licensed institution or not. Difference between licensed and non-licensed daycare centers would be service standards and availability of government subsidy. Both public and private licensed day care centers fulfill minimum standards set by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. According to the statistics, 29 percent of pre-school children are enrolled in licensed daycare centers. "More than half of the licensed daycare centers are under the direct management of local governments (public), while the rest is managed by private organizations, mostly non-profit organizations"(National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 31).

“Kindergartens are run by both by local authorities and by independent educational organization, including some with a religious orientation”. In Japan, religious organization has sometimes involved in educational provision and it is not an unusual issue. For example, even during mid nineteenth century, Buddhist temples played important role in primary education running school. The original aim of kindergartens was to provide children aged between three and five with pre-school education rather than with an alternative to family care and its operating hour was four hours a day, which is notably shorter than day care centers. However, following to the changes including increases of working mother and decline in the number of small children, kindergarten had change its system to be similar with daycare centers especially in the aspect of opening hours.

From administrative point of view, the difference between kindergartens and day-care centers is difference between education and welfare, “corresponding to the division of labour between the two relevant government departments, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Welfare”(Takahashi 1995, 87). In spite of these differences, the function of kindergartens and day-care centers are overlapped considerably ever since kindergartens had to become competitive with day-care centers.

As part of the child related policy development after “1.57 shock” in 1989, the Japanese government published the so-called Angel Plan in the end of 1994 to promote social support for childcare. It proposed to help working mothers by improving day care and the flexibility of its arrangements. For this plan, several committees had been created it was actually determined by 4 ministries, 1) Minister of Education, 2) Minister of Health and Welfare, 3) Minister of Labor and 4) Minister of Construction. The idea or purpose of “Angel plan” was to consider parenting as an issue which should be supported and encouraged by all the society including municipalities, companies and labor environment emphasizing that the responsibility of parenting is no longer for only parents and family (Takahashi 1995, 83).

<b>Daycare centers</b>	Licensed*	Public	12,426	(1,028,931)
		Private	9,887	(1,004,969)
	Non-licensed**	In-house	3,534	( 51,904)
		Other (including “baby hotels”)	6,111	( 169,118)
<b>Kindergartens***</b>	Public	5,869	( 370,085)	
	Private	8,410	(1,399,011)	

Notes: Figures in parentheses show the number of children enrolled.

Surveyed dates: \* March 1, 2003, \*\* Dec. 31, 2001, \*\*\* May 1, 2002.

Source: Nippon Keidanren “*Working toward a Better Childcare Environment*”, July, 2003.

Figure 6 Number of Childcare and Educational Institutions for Pre-school Children by Type  
(National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 31)

It had included several supportive measures for: “(1) Reconciling work and family responsibilities, (2) strengthening child raising function of a family, (3) providing affordable quality housing for families with children, (4) promoting sound development of children, and (5) easing economic burden associated with raising children.” Among those, provision of childcare facilities and diversification of childcare services were particularly emphasized. In order to attain the policy goal of the Angel Plan, “Five-Year Emergency Measures for Childcare Services” was formulated. This measure are targeted on childcare facilities and services from 1995-1999. This measure aimed to increasing the slot for children aged 0-2 year olds and extending opening hours for childcare facilities. Increasing the number of out-of-school hours care service for elementary school students was also part of its targets (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 31).

Daycare center in local communities are usually financed and regulated by the public sector, especially municipalities such as cities, towns and villages. “The public sector plays an important role in ensuring that childcare is of standardized quality and in keeping the

price as low as possible” (Takahashi 1995, 84).

The decisions regarding admission of licensed daycare centers are usually made by municipality’s local welfare office. Municipality’s local welfare office decides who should be admitted to the facility and how much the user should pay. The admission criteria are usually based on “needs for childcare, such as household income, family structure, and mother’s working status” There is also a standard for fee structure of licensed daycare service and the fee differs by “applicant’s household income, age of the child, number of siblings and residing municipality”. Fees are usually lower for older children. If younger siblings are admitted to licensed daycare centers, discounts would be up to 50 percent depending on their parents’ income level. (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 32).

As it can be imagined, the quality of non-licensed daycare centers is quite varied. They are not under the government’s supervision on standards or financial support, it can be said that the majority of non-licensed daycare centers do not fulfill the minimum standard set by the government. According to declining the number of children, there may be some non-licensed daycare centers with high-quality care services, however, there are some non-licensed centers with low quality service. Flexibility of opening hours would be more applied in non-licensed daycare centers and thus some working mothers choose non-licensed daycare centers. Nowadays, government intervention on childcare standards are even for non-licensed daycare centers because of the much publicized child death in non-licensed daycare center in Kanagawa prefecture in 2000. There is also concern for the fee of non-licensed daycare centers. Their user’s fee can be quite expensive because of the absence of government financial support (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 32).

## 7.2 Increases of the number of child care service centers

As the policy debates shifted from the demographic concerns to the focus of declining fertility rate, the awareness of the relation between gender inequality and future demographic concerns has emerged. “Evidence showed that the gender division of labour that had underpinned the postwar Japanese welfare state had been directly responsible for the fertility crisis”. In precise, strict gender role division set by the welfare regime were forcing women to choose either marriage or career (Ito 2007, 46).

According to these new finding, new policies were formulated in order to offer citizens more positive incentives for marriage and childbirth. The government had made researches and decided to take some elements from the Western welfare states such as Sweden and Denmark. White papers and policy statements, that were published in 1992, emphasizing the government’s commitment to “harmonizing work and family life and promoting a healthy environment for childbirth set the tone for the new family and child care policies to follow” (Ito 2007, 46).

In 1994, new policy called Angel Plan was launched and the plan included “an overhaul of the entire child care system and expansion of support services for families and women with small children”. The plan proposed increases of care facilities as follows:

- The number of public child care centers for children under the age of two would be increased from 470,000 to 600,000
- The number of multifunctional day care centers would be increased from 200 to 1,500
- The number of temporary child care programs for mothers who work part-time or need child care on an emergency basis would be increased from 600 to 3,000

- The number of extended-hour services would be increased from 2,530 to 7,000
- The number of local child rearing support centers for full-time stay-at-home mothers with preschool-age children would be increased from 5,220 to 9,000

In 1999, the government introduced the new policy called New Angel Plan to increase the numerical targets further (Ito 2007, 47).

### 7.3 Childcare related concerns

As it is mentioned previous chapters, there are concerns regarding quality and quantity of childcare facilities. Talking about childcare spending by the government shrank sharply during the early 1980s because of the two oil crises. When the total fertility rate of Japan renewed the lowest record in 1989, the government began to allocate more resources for childcare services. Declining birthrate indeed increased budget for licensed daycare centers, however, “the ratio of childcare spending to GDP (0.08 percent), is still below the level of early 1980s”. It was actually only a small portion of total daycare expenditure that national budget had financed (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 37)

Even though the birthrate is declining and the total fertility rate is declining, “urban residents in metropolitan areas of Japan are suffering from a chronic shortage of licensed daycare centers. The number of children on waiting lists had reached to 26,383 in April 2003, however, Cabinet office estimate that there exist 240,000 demanders of licensed daycare services in metropolitan areas including hidden demanders. The government made an action to meet increasing demand for childcare services, launching to increase childcare capacity on the Angel Plans. However, financial deficits limit establishing new daycare

centers and as a result, government tried to cope with the waiting list problem by “deregulating the minimum standards of child-staff ratio for existing licensed daycare centers”. For example, from April 1998, government demanded licensed daycare centers to admit children 10 percent more than the capacity set by the standard, if there would be a waiting list in that area (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 39). It can be easily imagined that the quality of childcare service would become lower according to increase of the children against standard capacity.

There were some local governments with the shortage of childcare facilities, which had established their own licensed daycare center system. In 2003, the number of such local government licensed daycare centers was 164 in Tokyo and 136 in Yokohama. The main characteristics of those local government licensed daycare centers are;

- 1) Although these centers do not reach standards set by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, they are to fulfill minimum standards set by the local government.
- 2) Their services can be purchased by anyone because these centers are not publicly operated. There are no admission criteria or needs for approval from municipality’s local welfare office.
- 3) The users of these centers can be charged freely within the maximum of government’s fee criteria (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 40).

Childcare quality concerns can be divided into two issues. First one is concerns for parents’ convenience such as flexibility of service. The second one is concerns for child development. Regarding the flexibility of service, opening hours are the main topic. In fact, there are many working mothers who cannot utilize the service of licensed daycare center because of the limited opening hours. There are also licensed daycare centers operated by

private non-profit social welfare organization and their service hours are much more flexible. It can be said that there will be more children enrolling the private centers than public centers because of the flexibility of opening hours (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 41).

There are actually no criteria to evaluate the quality for child development in daycare centers besides the ratio of staff and child minders in the centers. For example, there are little less than 5 children per staff for licensed center and little more than 6 children per staff for non-licensed center. Thus licensed daycare center has the higher quality than non-licensed center in terms of the number of staff (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 42).

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has established a committee to discuss evaluation method for the quality of care in social welfare institutions by outside experts. The committee set the categories and standards of items to be evaluated in 2001 and according to the committee, the quality of daycare centers are evaluated from “the following four categories: (1) promotion of child development, (2) support for parents, (3) coordination and cooperation with local residents and related organizations, and (4) management and operation” (Child Related Policy in Japan 42). However, it should be noted that the evaluation of daycare centers is so far carried out “only for a trail basis” and “many local governments are not prepared for introducing the evaluation system” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 42).

Summarizingly, concerns toward child care facility directly influenced fertility rate decline and daycare center’s shortage and uncertainty toward its quality may limit citizen’s willingness to have a child. The quality of childcare should be discussed to aim to establish service with higher quality, not only criticizing the present system. The shortage of child care services should be discussed within the context of citizen’s needs and the

quality of child care service should be discussed among different professionals as well as policy makers of public administration. It is important develop the method to evaluate present system and consider what would help to increase the service quality. Concerning child care service quality, comprehensive approaches would be needed to improve the quality with a cooperation of other related professionals such as psychologist and child psychiatrist, social workers and so on.

#### 7.4 Expansion of the eligibility for child allowance

In addition to increases of the number of child care services, the government made some changes concerning to the eligibility for the child allowance in New Angel Plan as follows:

- Child allowance eligibility age limit is increased from three years to six years
- Income cut-off for this child allowance benefit are raised so that 80 percent of families with small children will qualify

The goal of the New Angel Plan's was to promote "well-functioning, self-supporting, and (re)productive families, as well as an active and deregulated labor market" (Ito 2007, 47).

According to National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, "The amount of the Child Allowance is minimal compared to that of similar benefit in European countries. It is currently 5,000 yen per month for the first two children and 10,000 yen for the third child and subsequent children". Child Allowance is not paid automatically. A parent or guardian must apply with a certain application form at a local municipality office. Based on the application, the municipality evaluates applicant's eligibility for receiving allowance. Applicant's previous year's income after deductions is also compared to the

threshold. In order to continue receiving the allowance, recipients of the Child Allowance must submit a Notice of Current Situation to the municipality every year (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 44).

There is also another child allowance called child-rearing allowance. It is a form of “income support for single parent families and households with handicapped children”. For the single parent families, the maximum age of children is 18 years old and for the households with handicapped children, the maximum age is 19 years old. As with the Child Allowance recipient, applicants have to apply for it at a local municipality office and submit a notice of current situation every year. The amount of Child Rearing Allowance is “42,370 per month for one child and 47,370 per month for two children, and for each additional child, 3,000 yen”. The income threshold for the full amount is 1,300 thousand yen. If the income is between 1,300 yen to 3,650 yen thousand, the amount of the allowance is reduced gradually and if the income is above 3,650 thousand yen, mothers cannot receive the allowance at all (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003, 46-47). In the following chapters, child allowance establishment and the process of its development will be focused on and discussed from different points of view.

Reformations were made not only for the numbers of facilities and child allowance’s eligibility condition but also for administrative processes related to public child care. Before the introduction of the New Angel Plan, the mandatory placement system was used to do the placement of the children for public child care centers and state had the total control for these placements. This system was replaced by an individual contract system in the spring in 1998. This reformation enables parents to choose child care centers and services by themselves and market competition had been introduced as a result of the deregulation of child care centers and services (Ito 2007, 47).

The influence of these reformations toward family life is not easily observed. One of the

measures to evaluate the effectiveness of reformations is to see how the fertility rate decline has stopped or improved. As it is mentioned before, fertility rate had been not increasing for several years and in 2006 and 2007, it finally showed small increase. The fertility rate is 1.34 in 2007 and it is still very low comparing with other countries that are named as “welfare state” (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2008). Child care related policies and system has been developed since 1990, however, it still needs improvements to increase the fertility rate. In discussing the child care service and facility quality, again, the discussion purpose should not target to improve the declining fertility rate but discussion needs more comprehensive approach for sustainable quality development. Child care service quality should be discussed with child welfare related professionals such as professionals specialized in education, child psychology, social work and so on.

## 8 SOCIAL CONCERNS TOWARD FAMILY WITH CHILDREN

In previous chapters, fertility rate decline has been discussed based on gender theory and welfare policy regime. In this chapter, I discuss fertility rate decline related factors from the perspectives of child's position and role in family and society. Alessandro Cigno, (2003) has stated that "parents derive satisfaction not only from consumption, but also from the quantity and quality of children they put into the world" (Cigno 2003, 65). In his article, it is stated that the quality of children refers the parent's perception of the quality of life, which can be measured by, for example, commodity expenditures based on children's will. Needless to mention, there is minimum amount of commodity expenditure to keep the children alive in their childhood. Cigno (2003) stated that even putting it that hired help and parental time will be substitutable for each other, the opportunity-cost of a unit of parental time is never less than the cost of hiring an equivalent unit of external help (65). He concludes his research entitled "Economics in The Timing of Births"(2003) explaining that both in absolute terms and relative to quality, the rise in child-benefit rates makes child quantity cheaper. Assuming that "income-effects are dominated by substitution-effects, parents will then want to substitute quantity for quality, and will set out to achieve that partly by spending less on each child, and partly by spending later. Consequently, parents will have more children later in life" (Cigno 2003, 76-77). In terms of children's life quality, family decision making for its size is dissociatable from public policy concerning child wellbeing and educational environment.

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the possible factors for declining fertility rate from the perspective of child's wellbeing and parent's perception on child's quality of life. In the previous chapters, the trend of women's decision making of life courses, working environment of family with children, child care related services and facility have been

discussed. In addition to these issues, it should be also noted that the concerns of child's environment have also been changing according with the societal changes. Education system is understood as one of the important factors in indentifying life quality of children and this chapter will explain significant issues of educational environment in Japan that may be causing the fertility rate decline.

### 8.1 Increase of educational investment and social problems of children

The expense for child after-school programs is increasing and accelerating the competition among the children to aim higher academic achievement. Parents are compelled to pay more for the children's educational programs outside of the school and mothers are working outside of the house in order to pay for the children's educational program outside of the school. The increase of after-school program necessity may limit the family size because of the financial shortage and decreasing fertility rate increase the competition among the academic programs suppliers in order to acquire more children. Educational values based on competition brings conflictive value concept to the world of children and student. The professor of university of welfare in Japan, Susumu Takashima stated the concern for social problems of children. He stated that the problems of children's life have transferred from physical ones to psychological ones under discriminative and selective education management policy, especially since high economic growth period (1955-1974). Problems of school children such as cutting class, relentless bullying and misbehavior is becoming more serious than ever and there are even such crimes in which children kills his or her mother with a knife in recent years. Democratization of education brings us needs for children's well-being policy. He warned that the concerns and worries regarding child rearing will continuously increase and without solving these concerns, we will not be able

to find the solution for supporting aging society or make some changes in the population structure (Takashima 1995, 227).

Social concerns in educational environments can be also discussed with larger context by analyzing the term “risk”, referring a book called “Social Work in a Risk Society” published by Stephen A. Webb. He stated that the concept of risk is one of the most significant issues in modern times. “Despite unparalleled degrees of social stability and affluence, we are living through a period of acute personal insecurity anxiety, and change. The speed of change, pace of life, choices available and vast flows of information undercut solid foundations in our risk-dominated lives” (2006, 23). He also mentioned that the modernity is not “simple one-track development” because it brings massive changes to the different aspects of social activities such as changes in urban life, industrialization, wealth, democratization, science and technology. If there are massive changes in society, there is always a risk in adopting and accustoming these changes in personal lives. Stephen A. Webb argued that the modernity signaled the “rise in a secular individualistic culture” and the phenomenon increased differentiation between people, causing the “emergence of social class as an indicator of wealth, status, and prestige” (2006, 27).

In September 2007, one company called Benesse cooperation, which provide products and services for education, language study, living and lifestyle and nursing, has done a research concerning mother’s attitude toward the child’s education. The company provided questionnaires and analyzed the data of 6,300 mothers who has more than one child in elementary or junior high school. In Japan, elementary school starts when students are 6-7 years old and junior high school ends when students are 15-16 years old. The average age of mother was 42 years old and the 40 percent of elementary school children’s mother and 30 percent of junior high school children’s mother did not have work outside of the house.

The result indicated that the ratio of mothers, who wish their child to get higher grades

in order to enter better university, had increased from 18 percent in 1998 to 26 percent in 2007. On the contrary, the ratio of mothers, who appreciate license or qualification more than university degrees, had decreased. The ratio of mothers, who wishes their child to enter university, was 56 percent and if the mother had graduated from such university, the ratio reaches to 71 percent.

The research result indicated that the expense for activity outside of the school has also increased. Concerning to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade ( age: 11 or 12 years old) student in elementary school, the expense of other activities than school is 11,698 yen per month for children who are not going to take an entrance examination for junior high school and the expense has not been changed from 1998. However, if the children with the same grade are going to take an entrance examination for the junior high school, which may provide higher level university-entrance centered education, the expense is 46,931 yen and it has increased 4,431 yen compared to the expense in 1998. As a overall research result, it is indicated that the elementary school and junior high school children's mothers desire children to be highly-educated more strongly than before in 1998. Researchers stated that the possible reason of this change might be the increase of the concern for declining academic standards (Mainichi Shimbun 2007).

The belief and trend that parents should invest heavily in after-school programs may be an important factor in the very low fertility in Japan. Delayed childbearing age was also discussed in the previous chapter in the relation of social expenditure. In addition to the general expense for childbearing and childrearing, parents have to think about their additional education costs outside of the school. If educational investment seems to be very big and burdensome, it can be possibly said that parents would delay their childbearing age in order to postpone the costs and obligations of childbearing. In other words, people cannot have children until they have stable job and incomes.

## 8.2 Significances of after-school program enrollment

According to the research of “Percentage of School-Aged Children of Currently Married Women under Age 60 Who Are Enrolled in After-School Programs, by Children’s Educational Level and Residence” that are done in Japan in 1994, the percentage of children aged 6-18 enrolled in a cram school or private tutoring is notably increases from “elementary school (28 percent) to middle school (53%) and drops at high school (17%). When examined by single years of age, the enrollment rate in Japan increases rapidly and steadily from fourth grade, peaking at 59 percent at ninth grade, at about age 15” (Tsuya and Bumpass, 85). This result can be explained by Japanese entrance examination patterns. Entrance examination for high schools is probably the most important exam for many parents and children. Because an admission to one of the nation’s top universities is ultimate goal for most of parents and children, entry to an elite high school is a crucial prerequisite for preparing for high level university entrance examinations.

Other related research done in 1994 shows that the rate of enrollment in after-school programs is considerably higher in cities than in rural areas in Japan. The rate is especially high in large metropolitan cities in Japan, where approximately 70 percent of middle school children are enrolled in after-school programs. The research also stated that the mother’s education has a very large effect on enrollment on after-school programs in Japan. “The adjusted probability of enrollment of children of college-educated mothers is twice that of mothers with only a middle school education.” This result also support that the research result stated by Benesse cooperation in 2007 indicated in the beginning of the chapter 4.3, which tells that the positive relationship between mother’s educational level and mother’s desire for their children’s educational level has not changed since 1994.

The strong pressure and high costs for their children’s education also compel married

women to seek employment outside of the home. Japanese women with a child enrolled in a cram school are about 6 percentage points more likely to be employed than those who do not (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, 91). Following traditional family concept, Japanese wives are often more responsible for maintaining the home, taking most of the responsibilities of housework and child rearing. Employment can add further stress to the balancing of economic and domestic responsibilities and often result in a “double shift” for married women. Such stress may surely influence on both desired and actual fertility.

According to the comparative research on how investments in children’s after-school programs are related to both employment and desired fertility in Japan, Korea and the U.S., there is not the same obsession with children’s academic success in U.S. as in Japan and Korea although parents in U.S. regard education as important for children’s future. “In Japan and Korea, there are strong social and psychological pressures to provide children with a “good” education through admission to “good” schools and it can be very costly” (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, 76). It is quite common for Japanese parents to be employed because they would like to earn money for children’s education.

Another important reason for parents’ emphasis on after-school program might be the mistrust of the compulsory education system (to ninth grade). Many parents think that the compulsory education is somehow failing to provide the training necessary for competitive success. They strongly believe that passing entrance examination not necessarily reflect how much children had learned from the each subject. You may need techniques and skills to solve the questions in time, choosing the most reasonable questions since there will be some very difficult and also tricky questions that are almost impossible to solve in time for most of the students. Some teachers try to guess what kind of questions will be given in the next entrance examination, and they make study program or practice tests based on such forecast. In Japan, compulsory schools are mostly public and “elementary and middle

schools are based on a democratic ideal of egalitarianism and hence lack formal mechanism for differentiating students”. There are usually no special programs for either the gifted or for those failing behind (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, 78).

Academic after-school programs exist not only in Japan, but their prevalence and the pragmatism of their approaches should be noted as a significant issue in educational process. “The primary purpose of these programs is to raise the likelihood of passing entrance examination by giving children both intensive academic training and skills to beat the system”. The competition among the after-school programs can be evaluated by the number of the students who actually had passed the examination, and good programs with skillful instructors can be expensive. (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, 77-78). Under such circumstances, it is understandable that Japanese parents feel a strong obligation to spend money and energy on children’s after-school programs to help their children to be competitive and successful in studies, which leads children to enroll good university and company. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that there will be strong connection between parent’s pressure based on such obligation and declining birthrate.

Compared to western European countries, the educational systems in Japan and Korea are characterized by “high level of tracking, agreement on the hierarchy of universities (and even in high schools), and rigidity in student admissions. Ultimate importance is attached to getting into a university as high as possible up the hierarchy and, toward that goal, to successful entry into and completion of each stage on the educational ladder”. Such success has been receiving criticism because it gives strong belief that educational failures cannot be made up later ages. Under such beliefs, parents often feel compelled to invest heavily in children’s after school programs deigned to prepare their children for entrance examination (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004, 77). Accordingly, the competition among after-school programs also increases being influenced by the declining birthrate and

decreasing the number of children. Children have become main marketing target and higher education possibility and training availability to be competitive in the entrance examination depends mostly on the parents' financial situation. All the children are eligible for compulsory education in Japan; however, at the early ages many children experience the hierarchical structure of educational facilities and its pragmatism concerning the entrance examination preparation. If the child is not getting good scores in examination or small test, they will experience as "not good enough" student and it can be easily connected with "laziness" or "not hard-working" in order to encourage them study more. Concerns are also existed in teacher's skill to cope with children. If they are not enough trained to encourage students in a positive way, children's get only bad evaluation from the teachers and it will cause mistrust and negative understandings for whole Japanese education, in which hierarchical structure is strongly penetrated.

Emphases on education in which academic achievement is highly valued may cause pressures on both students and parents concerning child's education. In order to acquire higher level education program, parents are demanded to pay expensive fees and financial burden for parents increases in accordance with the number of children. Such structure with psychological and financial pressure would have affects on family's decision making on having children and this issue should considered as one of the important factors of declining fertility rate in Japan.

It is notable that the development of child allowance development and childcare facility in Japan had been always limited by financial resources. The share of family related expenditure is relatively small and the shortage of social services for family with children seems to continue for a while, even though the declining birthrate has been serious issue for society in Japan.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The task of this research was to analyze the background factors of declining fertility rate in Japan and to find out the possible reasons of policy ineffectiveness for declining fertility rate. The methods used in this research are descriptive analysis and inductive analysis referring existing quantitative data. Gender, Modernization and social policy related theory has been applied to explain the issue of demographic concerns and their foreseeable consequences. Some articles of news paper have been also used in order to indicate the latest researches of related issues. These articles may not suit for the academic researches, however, the article was based on the research and its research organization, the amount of samples and research period were convincing for using the article as one of the data for introducing family life related data and trend.

According to recent studies regarding demographic concerns and family related policies in Japan, that are referred in this research, gender inequality is understood as one of the main causes of declining fertility rate (Ito 2007, 32). The government is making advisory committee to make policies and measures to improve the working environment for the working women; however, there have not been yet specific measures for existing concerns in working environment, such as discrimination and sexual harassment in labour market. Existing gender structure has been making it difficult to provide functional policies that support working women.

The influence of such attitude of the state and government can be seen, for example, in the low percentages of working women who take advantages of child care leave. Even though the new employment law had been introduced to assist working women, there are few women who actually take the childcare leave because of the fear for job- and financial insecurity. Even there is a law that allows working women to take the child care leave, their

working environment does not allow women to follow the law in actual situations. Seemingly, there have been difficulties to change the actual environment only by the power of policies and governmental decision. There would be needs for re-educating citizens to let them understand the societal meaning of implementing law for working women.

Emphasis on economic success has been very significant in Japan and transferring the emphasis into gender equality and family welfare would be rather a complicated task because these two issues, economic success or productiveness and people's welfare has been understood as conflictive issues for long time, especially within the labor environment. As Tsuya and Mason (1995) ascertain, real change must come from "drastic alteration of conjugal relationships" (164). Unless Japanese men are able and willing to shoulder certain amount of domestic work that are necessary for a household and child rearing, the influence of policy intervention that affects work and non-familial child care are unlikely to bring about real change. As available evidences had shown, it is extremely difficult to change existing gender relationships and structure because they are deeply imbedded in Japanese culture. Tsuya and Mason (1995) also emphasized that "unless more equal relationships between women and men are realized, the postponement of marriage among young Japanese women and hence very low levels of fertility are likely to continue" (164).

Because gender inequality has been deeply rooted to Japanese society and culture and it may not be easy for Japanese citizens to see the issue critically and objectively. With an assistance of researchers and scholars of cross national researches, Japanese government, society, and citizens should seek the way to explain and justify the real situation and influences of gender inequality toward family decision making and fertility decline. On the other hand, gender and family changes may not occur "only in response to 'naturalistic' forces such as massive economic or ideological shifts" (Mason and Jensen 1995, 2). They also occur because of the deliberate actions such as public policy attempting to change the

nature of gender relation. Under the transition period of demographic structure, the significant challenge for recent Japanese society might be to re-educate citizens to promote the idea of gender equality in domestic work and in labour force, for transition is also happening in Japan's labour-force structure. Japan's labour-force is now "undergoing two important demographic shifts: the aging of the labour-force and the feminization of the labour-force" (Mason, Teh, Ogawa and Fukui 2003, 168). Interestingly, the concerns on fertility decline have disclosed multidimensional needs for structural and ideological changes in Japan's modern society.

In addition to the analysis of gender inequality and the strategies to decrease gender inequality, there has been an ongoing discussion on how the responsibility for supporting the costs of raising and caring for children should be divided between society and parents. As more women are working outside of home, there is less time for them to spend time with their children. In Western European countries, that include so-called welfare state countries, children are more and more seen as a shared project and looking after the welfare of children is considered as also one of the important political concerns. Demographic structure seemed to be very influential toward many aspects of society since in Western European countries there is a trend in which the government aims to change the concepts of different age group to increase the production of certain age group.

As figure 1 in the Chapter 1.3 shows, ineffectiveness of family targeted policies might be resulted from the Japanese government's attitudes, which have been too much concentrated on making policies for declining fertility rate with fewer notions to the background reasons of this phenomenon. This research indicates that these policies had not been successful in solving the modern society's concerns and disadvantages of family, especially the vulnerable position of women in labor market. According to the increase of working women, women's position in labor market is to be re-evaluated and the voice of women should be heard more

within not only caring, nursing and educational professions but also in different decision making authorities for labor policy.

According to the historical document concerning welfare state and welfare policies, in addition to gender inequality, there are historical facts and the recent trend that also make it difficult to develop the concept of welfare state and to increase the fertility rate. In order to encourage family life with a functional support, government should implement functional measures that are based on comprehensive idea concerning different needs of family with children.

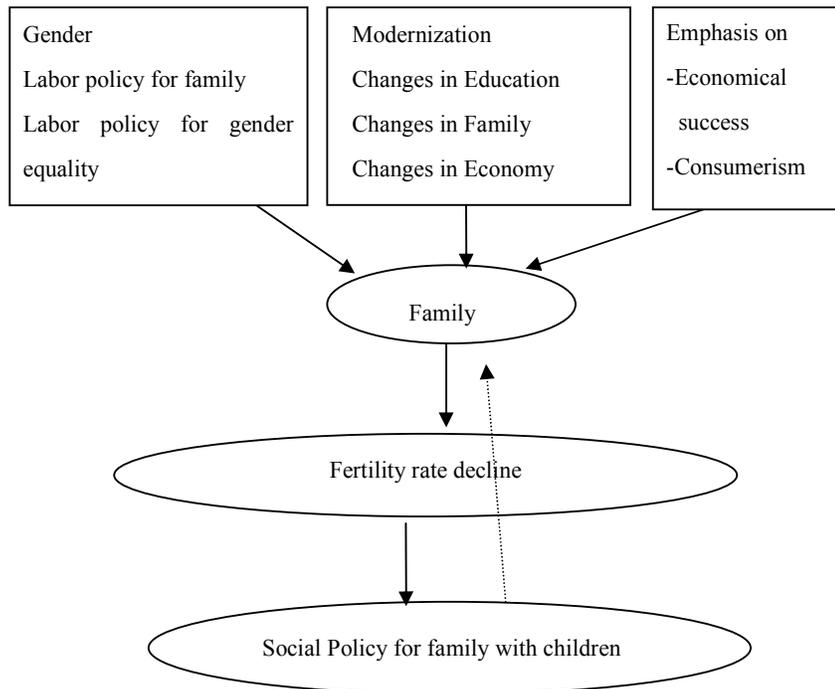


Figure7 Interrelation among policies for family with children and social phenomena in Japan

II

As well as Figure 1, Figure 7 describes the significant themes of this research. Figure 1 is simplified hypothesis of this research and Figure 7 refers the research result. To explain in

detail, Figure 7 indicates how existing policy making process, which is shown in Figure 1, should be intervened. Transferring the direction of arrow from one to another, Figure 7 refers what “Social policy for family with children” should focus. In addition, Figure 7 mentions the examples of each concept’s influences to society and to citizen’s family lives, whereas Figure 1 mentions only the concepts. The change of arrow direction is significant in this research because it indicates the research result, that is based on the analysis of related concepts and historical facts, that the policy responses for declining fertility rate should not be targeted on only this phenomenon itself but they have to target on solving the problems and concerns of family life, which are interrelated with changing context of gender, influences of modernization and economy. To realize policy making indicated in Figure 7, scientific researches and theoretical evidences would be needed to analyze labor system and family policy from gender perspectives and to analyze modernization influences on family issues.

Economical and psychological burden for children’s education is also one of the important issues that should be considered. Education related changes, which are discussed in the chapter 8, can be understood as one of the most significant modernization influences for family life. Emphasis on academic achievement in education process has been causing serious concerns toward child rearing and its financial burden. Japanese society has put much emphasis on child’s academic achievement and given less emphasis on child’s psychological development. Under such circumstances the child’s position and their growing environment can become too much result-centered and result-centered education would cause not only financial pressure but also psychological stresses for both parents and children. Furthermore, there is a high probability that such educational trend actually influences parent’s decision making to have one or more children and finally influences on the decrease of the number of children in the future. In order to improve vulnerable position

of children and to prepare the bases for sustainable welfare policy for family with children, it would be also important to clarify the position of children in society and children's role as future citizens. Implementing measures based on new idea or concept would require structural changes in society such as providing the education for citizens in implementing children related policy; however, these attempts would be inevitable since demographic concerns may possibly cause critical societal problems.

From above, attempts to increase the fertility rate are not only about changing the demographic structure but also to produce and organize functional welfare system for family. As Mason, Teh, Ogawa and Fukui (2003) have warned, in the foreseeable future, a slowdown in the rate growth rate of the Japanese economy would generally "twist the intergenerational distribution of income against younger generation and in favour of older generations" (194).

Welfare policies perform crucial roles in organizing the welfare system and economical resources of the country and thus they have to be analyzed and planned well. Furthermore, these policies should be based on a belief and theory in which individual well-being is a primary concern of the society regardless of individual's status and family environment. Society's emphasis on economical success, academic achievement and consumerism may give conflictive perspectives on the process of re-evaluating the importance of individual well-being in Japan, however, fertility rate may not become sustainably stable unless policies for families and individual well-being would be implemented and realized.

An urgent requirement exists to inform and educate Japanese citizens to understand the needs for changes regarding welfare policies targeted for family and children and prepare for the actual changes. There is also a need to highlight in detail in the ways in which the welfare policy can actually decrease social concerns of the family. Key points to communicate these issues to the government and citizens are to clarify the background factors of declining

fertility rate and possible social problems caused by declining fertility rate. This would involve addressing gender, economic, education related concerns that are also common concerns among industrialized and modernized countries. The needs of welfare policy for gender-equal labor system and family support need to be communicated as family life enhancing measure and as a means to conclusively increase the fertility rate. The challenges for the functional welfare policy implementation, as the research result indicates, would be to increase societal values and financial allocation to the welfare policy for family without having much influences of Japan's economic situation.

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