

Japanese Early Childhood Teachers' Views of Changes in Young Children's Lifestyles and Relationships with Parents¹⁾

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to enhance early childhood teachers³⁾ knowledge in Japan about the lives of young children and parenting, and to consider the problem of early childhood education and care. Using a qualitative descriptive investigation, Study 1 defines the changed behaviors and parenting styles that are recognized by teachers. In Study 2, we used questionnaire items based on the results of Study 1 to investigate the teachers' viewpoints about the changes that have taken place in the children's lives and their views on parent-child relationships. From these studies, it is clear that teachers feel that lifestyles of children are undesirable and are caught up in the life rhythm of parents. This creates a dilemma for teachers because this situation is a paradox based on the love of parents for the children. Although teachers must appeal to parents to improve the lifestyles of children, they must also create life rhythm in the school while considering this situation.

Keywords: Japanese early childhood teachers, Japanese kindergartens and day nurseries, lifestyles of young children, parent-child relationships

1) This study reexamined findings from the Japan Society of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education (2009). *Young children's life and care and education after World War II* (pp.139-182). Tokyo: Aikawa Shobou.

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3) In this paper, we transcribe both caretakers of day nurseries and teachers of kindergarten into "teachers". However strictly speaking, the qualifications of both are different.

Introduction

Background

After the Second World War, the Japanese economy developed rapidly, and modernization advanced during a period of economic growth. For example, changes were seen in family structure, evidenced by a declining birthrate and a trend toward the nuclear family. In addition, quality of life underwent changes, manifested by an increase in the number of working hours and the expansion of the consumer society. Finally, the quality of living space transformed, also known as the urbanization phenomenon. These tendencies are collectively referred to as “East Asian-oriented education” (Sato, 2002) and are characteristics common to areas such as China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore (e.g., CRN, 2009; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). These changes in today’s Japan affect family life, with the result that the lifestyles of young Japanese children are on the verge of crisis, contrary to the forward development of society and the economy (Ogawa, 2009).

Many previous studies have identified the changes occurring in children’s lifestyles and the related crisis. For example, changes have been observed in young children’s eating habits and in parents’ awareness of their children’s meals (e.g., Kato & Toyose, 2004). Further, problems have been noted in the sleeping habits of young children (e.g., Ota, Oki, & Saito, 2009), in addition to a decrease in outdoor play and a decline in athletic capability (e.g., Ikeda & Aoyanagi, 2009). In other words, as Japan shifts from a period of modernization to one of post-modernization, changes are also witnessed in the functions of the home and kindergartens or day nurseries and the relations within them.

Although these studies point out the changes occurring in the lifestyles of Japanese children, the influence of these changes on their school lives has yet to be examined. For the most part, these studies point out the changes in the awareness of parents, but have not yet looked for similar changes in awareness in early childhood teachers.

Purpose of the Study

In light of the above mentioned trend, how do early childhood teachers recognize

the changes occurring in the lifestyles of young children and in parent-child relationships? The purpose of this study is to clarify early childhood teachers' views in Japan about the lives of young children and parenting in Japan. Therefore, we establish some of the needs that teachers have for parent involvement, in the context of the problems in Japanese early childhood education and care.

In this study, we do not clarify aspects of the children's lives but the teachers' understanding of the children's lifestyles. Similarly, we do not clarify the notion of parenting but the teachers' views of it. In particular, we examine the role of parents before school in the morning and after school in the afternoon, since these are periods when school life connects with family life. Finally, our investigation involves both qualitative research (Study 1) and quantitative research (Study 2). With regard to Study 2 in particular, we approach the teachers' views by considering the following four points: (1) teachers' estimates about the current ratios of children or parents; (2) teachers' evaluations of the children or parents; (3) teachers' reasons for their evaluations; and (4) teachers' reactions toward the children or parents. By examining these characteristics, we investigate how teachers can support the changes affecting both the children's lives and styles of parenting and examine these changes from the professional perspective of the teachers.

The paper is organized as follows. First, Study 1 defines the changes in behavior and parenting style recognized by teachers through a qualitative descriptive investigation. As a result, we identify the kinds of behavior that manifest this change in the schools. Second, Study 2 uses questionnaire items based on the results of Study 1 to quantitatively investigate the teachers' viewpoints about the changes that have taken place in the children's lives and parent-child relationships.

The reasons why this study clarifies teachers' viewpoints are as follows. First, we can understand the change in the relationship between home and school through this study. Second, we can think about ways to modify the teachers' role by examining today's problems in Japan. Third, because Japanese parents tend to depend on experts rather than educate their children by themselves (Azuma, Kashiwagi, & Hess, 1981), teachers' viewpoints seem to have some influence on parents.

Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Japan

A comparison of the three systems of early childhood education and care (ECEC) used in Japan is given in Table 1. Although the lifestyles in each three systems differ as shown in the table, in this paper we examine the common problems that relate to school life and family life.

Table 1. *Three Systems of ECEC in Japan (Akita & Suzuki, 2007)*

	Kindergarten	Day Nursery	Center for ECEC
Governing Body	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (NEXT)	Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW)	Jointly governed by MEXT and MHLW
Target Age	3-6 years old	0-6 years old	0-6 years old
Hours	4 hours	8 hours	4 hours / 8 hours
Target Children	any child	Children with needs for care	any child
Legal Foundation	School Education Law	Child Welfare Law	Law for the Center for ECEC
Standards	National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens	Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries	Following both Standards for Kindergarten and Guidelines for Day Nurseries
Number of Facilities	14,000(2007) Public 5,500/Private 8,500	23,000(2007) Public 12,500/Private 11,500	105(2007)
Number of Children	1,705,000(2007) Public 338,000/Private 1,368,000	2,015,000(2007) Public 945,000/Private 1,071,000	not available

Study 1: Qualitative Descriptive Research

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the behaviors of children and parents that worry early childhood teachers.

Methods

The participants in this study comprised 60 early childhood teachers working in kindergartens (29), day nurseries (30), and at the center for ECEC (1). The study was carried out in January and February 2007 and involved the analysis of free description data collected in the form of a survey, which was mailed to the participants. The

question items in the survey were as follows: To examine the changes in the lifestyles of the children, please describe freely the behaviors of the children and parents who usually worry you in relation to the following items: (a) the behaviors of parents and children when arriving at school in the morning; (b) the daily rhythm of the young children in the school; (c) the behaviors of parents and children when leaving school in the afternoon or evening. The procedures of this study were as follows: First, we established some categories based on the free descriptions of the teachers, using the KJ (Kawakita Jiro) method (Kawakita, 1967), and coded them. Second, we confirmed the validity and the meaning saturation of these categories through discussion among all four researchers involved in the study.

Results: (a) the Parents and Children's Behavior When Arriving at School in the Morning.

The following describe the behaviors of children about whom teachers tend to worry: (1) children who arrive late; (2) children who cry during school; (3) children who have not formed an attachment to their mothers; (4) children who doze off on the bus in the morning; (5) children who yawn; (6) children who do not eat breakfast; (7) children who do not wash their faces; and (8) children who come to school around noon because of their parents.

The following describe the behaviors of parents about whom teachers tend to worry: (1) parents who do not talk enough with their children on the way to school because they come by bicycle or car; (2) parents who do not greet the principals and teachers; (3) parents who chew gum; (4) parents who cannot leave their children; (5) parents who carry their child's bag; (6) parents who rush their children; (7) parents who direct or get angry with their children aloud; and (8) parents who use their mobile phones in the school.

The following describe combined behaviors of children and parents that tend to worry teachers: (1) parents who waver when their child is fretful in the morning; and (2) parents and their children who do not greet the principal and early childhood teacher.

Results: (b) the Daily Rhythm of the Young Children in the School.

The following describes lifestyle characteristics of young children who tend to worry their teachers: (1) children who lack spirit in the morning; (2) children who do not eat breakfast; (3) children who prefer supervised activities to free play activities (i.e., children who express themselves better in supervised activities); (4) children whose daily rhythm is bad on Monday in particular; (5) children who talk about television programs that air after 10 p.m.; (6) children who come to school around noon and therefore cannot participate in free play activities; (7) children who cannot enter the play of friends; (8) children who sleep in; (9) children who stay in the day nurseries from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and (10) children who stay in the day nurseries from Monday to Saturday.

Results: (c) the Behaviors of Parents and Children When Leaving School in the Afternoon or Evening.

The following describes the after-school behaviors of children who worry their teachers: (1) children who do not walk home despite living near the school; (2) children who are not pleased when their parents come to pick them up; (3) children who do not answer when the teachers say “good-bye”; (4) children who fall into a bad mood as soon as their parents meet them; (5) children who try to get their own way; and (6) children who are hard on their parents.

The following describe the after-school behaviors of parents who worry the teachers: (1) parents who talk with other parents for a long time when picking up their children; (2) parents who neglect their children because they are talking with other parents; (3) parents who do not talk with other parents; (4) parents who tie their children’s shoes even though the children can do it by themselves; (5) parents who unbutton their children’s shirts even though the children can do it by themselves; (6) parents who do not listen to teachers when they speak; (7) parents who want to talk with the teachers; (8) parents who give their children gaming consoles when picking them up; and (9) parents who let their children play in the school after coming to pick them up.

The following describe combined behaviors of children and parents who worry

teachers: (1) children who immediately hand their bag to their parents and parents who take their children's bag; (2) parents who come to pick up their children with tired expressions on their faces and children who are anxious about their parents' fatigue; and (3) parents and children who hurry home for lessons.

Discussion

The following findings can be drawn from the results of this study. First, the teachers worry about the behavior not only of the children but also of the parents (mothers in particular). Second, the behaviors manifested by children that cause the teachers worry seem to be connected to the daily rhythm of the children's lives. Third, the following problems are thought to be related to the worrisome behaviors exhibited by the children: lifestyle changes affecting the children's daily rhythm, closeness to parents as a result of the declining birthrate, and changes in the role and responsibilities of parents. That is, teachers tend to worry about children whose behavior reflects the values of today's parents.

Given the findings of this study, in the future, teachers must communicate to parents any problems brought about by changes in the children's daily rhythm and in the relationship between the parents and their children. Specifically, it is important for teachers to promote parents' understanding of their children's behavior in school and to encourage parents to reconsider their relationships with their children and the family's lifestyle rhythm.

Study 2: Quantitative Research

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to clarify the judgments of early childhood teachers about the life rhythm of children and their parents and their relationships. The results of Study 1 showed that teachers were concerned about the behaviors of the children and of their parents. Because these behaviors are related with the changes in their lifestyle rhythms and in the parent-child relationships, it is important that we examine the teachers' viewpoints about the influence that these changes are having on school

life.

Methods

This study was carried out in July 2007. It involved the analysis of free descriptive data collected in the form of a questionnaire survey mailed to teachers. The questionnaires were mailed to 1,086 early childhood teachers who belonged to the Japan Society of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education. The total number of respondents was 390 (218 kindergarten teachers, 156 day nursery teachers, 1 teacher at the ECEC, 27 others), with a response rate of 35.9%. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions. For each of the questionnaire items (a) through (d), the teachers could choose one of (1) through (4) as a possible answer:

- (a) On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded;
 - (b) Children are yawning;
 - (c) When arriving at school in the morning, parents carry their children's bag;
 - (d) When arriving at school in the morning, parents stay with their children when they cry;
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- (1) (Estimates by the early childhood teachers): What is the current ratio of such children or parents in your school? (0%, 1%–5%, 5%–20%, 20%–50%, 50%–80%, greater than 80%);
 - (2) (Evaluations by the early childhood teachers): How do you evaluate such children or parents? (Should be improved very much, Should be improved, Neutral, Desirable, Very desirable);
 - (3) (Reasons for early childhood teachers' evaluations): For what reason did you evaluate (2) as such?
 - (4) (Reactions of the early childhood teachers): How do you think you deal with such children or parents?

In addition, for each reason mentioned in (3) (Reasons for early childhood teachers' evaluations), we considered both positive and negative evaluations and

chose two items from each. These items were decided upon by discussion among all four researchers. Similarly, the contents of (4) (Reactions of the early childhood teachers) were decided upon after group discussion.

Results: (a) On Monday Morning, Children are Irritable and Absent-minded.

Table 2 gives the results of the teachers' estimations. Regarding the behavior of such children, 69.5% of teachers evaluated it "should be improved very much" or "should be improved," while 3.3% of teachers thought it was "very desirable" or "desirable." The percentage of teachers who evaluated it as "neutral" was 24.6% (No description in Table). Table 3 shows the evaluations and reasons for the evaluations, and Table 4 shows the reasons and the reactions of the teachers.

Most teachers estimate there are such children in their school. In fact, the situation described by "On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded" is a common problem in the schools of present-day Japan. Moreover, the teachers feel the children's life rhythm over the weekend is based on the pace of the parents' lives and poses problems for the daily rhythm of children at school. The image of "children who are cheerful in the morning" is changing.

Table 2. *Number of Respondents for the Estimates by the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Kindergarten	Day Nursery	Others	Total(%)
0%	7	2	3	12(3.1)
1~5%	99	42	5	146(37.4)
5~20%	89	73	9	171(43.8)
20~50%	14	22	8	44(11.3)
50~80%	5	5	1	11(2.8)
More than 80%	0	0	0	0(0.0)
Invalid answer	4	1	1	6(1.5)
Total	218	145	27	390(100)

(a) On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded.

Table 3. *Number of Respondents for “the Evaluations” and “the Reasons for the Evaluation” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Should be improved very much	Should be improved	Neutral	Desirable	Very desirable	Invalid answer	Total(%)
Because it is thought that the children spent the weekend happily	1	13	19	7	1	0	41(0.5)
Because the children cannot voluntarily be active in their school	24	133	3	1	1	0	162(41.5)
Because such feelings are possible in anyone	1	1	48	0	0	1	51(13.1)
Because there may be problems in the education and care of the group or class	3	11	1	0	0	0	15(3.8)
Others	20	57	19	3	0	2	101(25.9)
Invalid answer	0	7	6	0	0	7	20(5.1)
Total	49	222	96	11	2	10	390(100)

(a) On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded.

Table 4. *Number of Respondents for “the Reasons for the Evaluation” and “the Reactions” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Because it is thought that the children spent the weekend happily	Because the children cannot voluntarily be active in their school	Because such feelings are possible in anyone	Because there may be problems in the education and care of the group or class	Others	Invalid answer	Total (%)
It is not particularly necessary to contact the parents	8	1	5	0	1	0	15(3.8)
Tell parents about the importance of a daily rhythm	9	60	3	7	35	4	118(30.3)
Investigate some causes of the mood with parents	6	40	10	4	21	4	85(21.8)
Review contents of the activities on Monday	2	10	3	0	2	1	18(4.6)

Items	Because it is thought that the children spent the weekend happily	Because the children cannot voluntarily be active in their school	Because such feelings are possible in anyone	Because there may be problems in the education and care of the group or class	Others	Invalid answer	Total (%)
Provide time and space for children to relax in the school	6	23	19	2	17	2	69(17.7)
Inform parents of the children's behavior in the school	5	17	3	0	7	1	33(8.5)
Intervene in children's play	3	2	3	1	0	0	9(2.3)
Others	0	8	4	0	6	0	18(4.6)
Invalid answer	2	1	1	1	12	8	25(6.4)
Total	41	162	51	15	101	20	390(100)

(a) On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded.

Results: (b) Children are Yawning.

Table 5 gives the results of the teachers' estimations. For this item, 64.7% of teachers evaluated that the behavior "should be improved very much" or "should be improved," compared to 2.0% who evaluated the behavior as "very desirable" or "desirable." The "neutral" teachers were 27.4% (No description in Table). Table 6 shows the teachers' evaluations and corresponding reasons, while Table 7 shows the teachers' reasons and reactions.

These results are considered as follows. First, the teachers feel the lives of children extend too late into the night. The teachers described the behaviors of children who yawn as follows: (1) children yawn during passive activities (such as birthday parties) or uninteresting activities; (2) children yawn because of tension as well as sleep shortages; and (3) children's yawns are thought to cause injury. Given that improvements in children's daily rhythm require action both in school and in the home, teachers have to consult and work with parents to resolve this problem.

Table 5. *Number of Respondents for the Estimates by the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Kindergarten	Day Nursery	Others	Total(%)
0%	7	1	3	9(2.3)
1 ~ 5%	144	65	5	189(48.5)
5 ~ 20%	68	59	9	138(35.4)
20 ~ 50%	16	13	8	32(8.2)
50 ~ 80%	5	1	1	6(1.5)
More than 80%	1	1	0	2(0.5)
Invalid answer	7	5	2	14(1.5)
Total	218	145	27	390(100)

(b) Children are yawning.

Table 6. *Number of Respondents for “the Evaluations” and “the Reasons for the Evaluation” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Should be improved very much	Should be improved	Neutral	Desirable	Very desirable	Invalid answer	Total(%)
Because a yawn signals a lack of sleep and fatigue	31	170	34	0	1	3	239(61.3)
Because it is proof that children freely show their emotion	0	3	12	1	0	1	17(4.4)
Because chronic yawning is unhealthy	2	31	10	1	0	2	46(11.8)
Because adults are given to yawning naturally	0	0	24	3	0	3	30(7.7)
Others	0	9	21	1	1	3	35(9.0)
Invalid answer	2	4	6	0	0	11	23(5.9)
Total	35	217	107	6	2	23	390(100)

(b) Children are yawning.

Table 7. Number of Respondents for “the Reasons for the Evaluation” and “the Reactions” of the Early Childhood Teachers

Items	Because a yawn signals a lack of sleep and fatigue	Because it is the proof that children freely show their emotion	Because chronic yawning is unhealthy	Because adults are given to yawning naturally	Others	Invalid answer	Total (%)
It is not particularly necessary to contact the parents	4	6	0	18	5	1	34(8.7)
Tell parents about the importance of a daily rhythm	115	2	17	3	1	4	142(36.4)
Investigate some causes of the yawning with parents	45	1	12	5	5	2	70(17.9)
Review contents of the activities in the schools	7	2	3	1	4	0	17(4.4)
Inform parents of the children's behavior in the school	39	3	13	2	4	1	62(15.9)
Prompt parents to reconsider how they spend time at home	11	1	0	1	2	0	15(3.8)
Others	10	2	0	0	12	2	26(6.7)
Invalid answer	8	0	1	0	2	13	24(6.2)
Total	239	17	46	30	35	23	390(100)

(b) Children are yawning.

Results: (c) When Arriving at School in the Morning, Parents Carry Their Children's Bag.

Table 8 gives the results of the teachers' estimates. For this behavior of the parents, 81.3% of teachers thought it “should be improved very much” or “should be improved,” while 1.8% thought it was “very desirable” or “desirable.” The percentage of teachers who evaluated the behavior as “neutral” was 12.8% (No description in Table). Table 9 shows the evaluations and their corresponding reasons, and Table 10 shows the teachers' reasons and reactions.

These results are considered as follows. First, the teachers value the creation of an independent spirit in children, in particular those 3 years old or older. In other words, the behavior of parents who dote on their children conflicts with the teachers'

intentions. However, the parents are not conscious of this problem, and it is difficult for the teachers to immediately communicate with the parents when it occurs. That is to say, although there are some conflicts between the behavior of the parents and the intentions of the teachers, the teachers cannot raise this issue with the parents because this problem belongs within the domain of the home.

Table 8. *Number of Respondents for the Estimates by the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Kindergarten	Day Nursery	Others	Total(%)
0%	8	2	0	10(2.6)
1 ~ 5%	48	18	3	69(17.7)
5 ~ 20%	68	55	10	133(34.1)
20 ~ 50%	58	41	4	103(26.4)
50 ~ 80%	24	17	6	47(12.1)
More than 80%	5	4	2	11(2.8)
Invalid answer	7	8	2	17(4.4)
Total	218	145	27	390(100)

(C) When arriving at school in the morning, parents carry their children's bag.

Table 9. *Number of Respondents for "the Evaluations" and "the Reasons for the Evaluation" of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Should be improved very much	Should be improved	Neutral	Desirable	Very desirable	Invalid answer	Total(%)
Because the parents' love is extended to their children	0	1	1	1	0	0	3(0.8)
Because the children lack an independent spirit	76	202	7	2	0	2	289(74.1)
Because when the parents carry the bag, the children can come into the school quickly	0	1	3	0	0	1	5(1.3)
Because the children lack physical strength	1	3	1	0	0	1	6(1.5)
Others	11	19	32	3	0	0	65(16.7)
Invalid answer	1	2	6	1	0	12	22(5.6)
Total	89	228	50	7	0	16	390(100)

(C) When arriving at school in the morning, parents carry their children's bag.

Table 10. *Number of Respondents for “the Reasons for the Evaluation” and “the Reactions” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Because the parents' love is extended to their children	Because the children lack an independent spirit	Because when the parents carry the bag, children can come into the school quickly	Because the children lack physical strength	Others	Invalid answer	Total (%)
It is not particularly necessary to contact the parents	2	3	1	0	7	2	15(3.8)
Encourage parents	0	4	0	0	1	1	6(1.5)
Tell parents about the importance of children's independence	0	106	0	2	8	2	118(30.2)
Tell the children to carry their bag themselves	1	124	2	2	15	2	146(37.4)
Tell the children their parents can have their bag	0	36	2	2	15	2	57(14.6)
Others	0	8	0	0	15	0	23(5.9)
Invalid answer	0	8	0	0	4	13	25(6.4)
Total	3	289	5	6	65	22	390(100)

(C) When arriving at school in the morning, parents carry their children's bag.

Results: (d) When Arriving at School in the Morning, Parents Stay with Their Children When They Cry.

Table 11 gives the results of the teachers' estimates. For this behavior, 46.7% of teachers thought it “should be improved very much” or “should be improved,” while 3.9% thought it was a “very desirable” or “desirable” behavior. The percentage of teachers that evaluated the behavior as “neutral” was 41.5% (No description in Table). Table 12 shows the evaluations and reasons, and Table 13 shows the teachers' reasons and reactions.

The results are considered as follows. First, regarding the teachers' evaluations, statistical significance was seen in the ratios of the kindergartens and the day nurseries ($\chi^2(4) = 15.886, p < .01$). The items of “should be improved very much” or

“should be improved” were chosen by more teachers at kindergartens than at day nurseries ($p < .05$). The item of “neutral” was chosen by more teachers at day nurseries than at kindergartens ($p < .01$). The evaluations by the teachers differed for the parents at the kindergartens and the day nurseries. However, we understand that the parents desire a close relationship with their children.

Table 11. *Number of Respondents for the Estimates by the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Kindergarten	Day Nursery	Others	Total(%)
0%	27	12	4	43(11.0)
1 ~ 5%	101	82	11	194(49.7)
5 ~ 20%	52	35	9	96(24.6)
20 ~ 50%	17	11	2	30(7.7)
50 ~ 80%	8	1	0	9(2.3)
More than 80%	3	0	0	3(0.8)
Invalid answer	10	4	1	15(3.8)
Total	218	145	27	390(100)

(d) When arriving at school in the morning, parents stay with their children when the cry.

Table 12. *Number of Respondents for “the Evaluations” and “the Reasons for the Evaluation” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Should be improved very much	Should be improved	Neutral	Desirable	Very desirable	Invalid answer	Total(%)
Because it hinders education and care	4	16	0	0	0	0	20(5.1)
Because children seek their parents	0	10	37	3	1	1	52(13.3)
Because parents are worried and cannot be separated from their children	11	96	35	0	0	4	146(37.4)
Because it is natural for parents to worry about their children	1	5	38	2	0	1	47(12.1)
Others	6	29	46	5	3	4	93(23.8)
Invalid answer	1	2	6	0	1	21	32(8.2)
Total	23	159	162	10	5	31	390(100)

(d) When arriving at school in the morning, parents stay with their children when the cry.

Table 13. *Number of Respondents for “the Reasons for the Evaluation” and “the Reactions” of the Early Childhood Teachers*

Items	Because it hinders education and care	Because children seek their parents	Because parents are worried and cannot be separated from their children	Because it is natural for parents to worry about their children	Others	Invalid answer	Total (%)
It is not particularly necessary to contact the parents	0	0	0	1	4	0	5(1.3)
Tell parents to be near their children	0	3	2	0	1	0	6(1.5)
Tell parents to leave their children	8	5	28	7	9	0	57(14.6)
Receive the children as a substitute for their parents	2	13	38	11	21	4	89(22.8)
Change correspondence according to the time or season	7	15	31	13	23	1	90(23.1)
When parents come to pick up their children, be cheerful after stopping the crying	1	11	42	10	10	3	77(19.7)
Others	1	4	2	3	18	2	30(7.9)
Invalid answer	1	1	3	2	7	22	36(9.2)
Total	20	52	146	47	93	32	390(100)

(d) When arriving at school in the morning, parents stay with their children when the cry.

Conclusion

Does the Service of Parents to Their Children Disturb the Lifestyles of Young Children?

From the results of both Study 1 and Study 2, it is clear that teachers believe the lifestyles of some children are undesirable as a result of their family life. The children may have become caught up in their parents' life rhythm, which may have caused disturbances in the children's lifestyles. Teachers want the home lives of children to be filled up with help from the parents. However, the reporting of phenomena such as, “On Monday morning, children are irritable and absent-minded,” or “The children

are yawning,” is increased by parents serving their children. The zealous love of parents for their children disturbs the children’s lifestyles and becomes a hindrance to early childhood education and care because parents do not understand their children’s behavior in school.

In Japan, the emotional bond between parents and children is valued (Azuma, Kashiwagi, & Hess, 1981). In other words, the strong parent-child bond is understood as a good model for parents. These cultural characteristics are believed to have some influence on the relationships between the school and the child’s family.

The Dilemma for Early Childhood Teachers

When we consider these points, the role of teachers in today’s Japan is to increase parents’ consciousness of their children’s behavior both at home and at school. Parents are generally unaware of their children’s behavior at school; for example, they lack specifics of the children’s interactions with teachers and friends. However, this situation cannot be understood only in terms of the parents’ responsibility because parents place their children in teachers’ hands by enrolling them in school. Therefore, the problem results from the roles that teachers and parents assign to one another. In other words, Japanese teachers confront a variety of problems that present a difficult dilemma. Although, on the one hand, Japanese teachers must appeal to parents to improve the lifestyles of their children, on the other hand, teachers must also understand the feelings and situations of parents. Japanese teachers must create an exemplary rhythm in the school while considering the children’s family life.

In this paper, we have discussed Japanese early childhood teachers’ views of the changes in young children’s lifestyles and parent-child relationships, and considered the dilemma caused by these changes for teachers. This paper showed the necessity for communication between teachers and parents because the parents need to understand the behaviors of their children in school. We wonder if other Pacific and Asian countries are experiencing a similar situation and would like our findings to be developed into an argument for future work to compare the trends occurring in other countries.

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