

Chapter 4

Child-rearing Problems

1. Child Japanese Ability

1. Child Japanese ability and parent Japanese fluency (Fig4-1)

The data dealing with child ability in Japanese are for children over 2 years old. 60.7% of the parents replied that their child had an “excellent” understanding of the Japanese language, while 26.3% were “fair”, 6.0% “poor” and 1.0% “very poor”. 38.3% of the parents rated themselves as having an “excellent” understanding of Japanese, and 38.9% thought they had a “fair” understanding. From the parents’ point of view, 60% of the children had an “excellent” command of the Japanese language. Although in the “excellent” category there was the nuance that their ability was good for their age, it seems that a high percentage of the children have a high ability in Japanese.

2. Child Japanese ability by age (Fig. 4-2)

When we look at the Japanese ability of the children by age, we see that the percentage of the children in the “excellent” category increased as their age increased; 48.9% for 2 year olds, 60.2% for 3 year olds, 66.1% for 4 year olds, 72.7% for 5 year olds and 76.8% for 6 year olds. The percentage of children in the “poor” and “very poor” categories was low for every age group.

However, comments such as “their speaking ability is low for their age” reveal that many parents are concerned about their child’s Japanese ability.

3. Relationship between Child and Parent Japanese Fluency (Fig 4-3)

55.6% of the parents with children who had an “excellent” Japanese ability said their Japanese ability was also “excellent.” However, 9.1% of the parents said their level was “poor” or “very poor.” From this, we see that the children are acquiring Japanese at a faster speed than their parents.

When the child level was “very poor,” almost 60% of the parents either rated themselves as “poor” or “very poor” in Japanese. Here, we found that when the children did not have a high command of Japanese, neither did the parents.

“Although my husband and I may improve our Japanese fluency, our child’s Japanese ability will always be better. Therefore, we may grow further apart” (a Vietnamese parent)

As we can see from this comment, new concerns arise between parents who are not good at Japanese while their children Japanese ability increases.

4. Japanese language use at Home and child Japanese Ability (Fig 4-4)

We examined children who spoke Japanese at home and those who didn’t. 56.0% of the children spoke Japanese either as their main or second language, but 44.0% did not speak it. 78.4% of the children who spoke Japanese at home were evaluated as having an “excellent” command of Japanese, which is a high percentage.

As mentioned on Chapter 1 “Frequency of using Japanese at home,” it seems that the above was the result of families using more Japanese as the years they have lived in Japan increased.

There were 2 kinds of families that used Japanese at home: those who used Japanese only and those who used Japanese along with the parent native language. As we can see from the question “Will my child have any problems learning two different languages at the same

time?” (day-care center 4 yrs boy / Mother 44 yrs / China / 1 yr), there are parents who are concerned that their child may become confused, being brought up using more than one language. Since a language is deeply connected to the identity of a person, there are many families that consciously use their native language at home. We will come back to this later in the chapter describing child-rearing concerns, but we can see that each family has various ways to deal with this.

When we look at the Japanese ability of children who do not use Japanese at home, we see that 47.0% were considered to be “excellent” and 40.3% were “fair,” which is a fairly high percentage. This is probably because many of the children in this research went to either a day-care center or kindergarten

5. Child length of attending preschool and their Japanese ability (Fig 4-5)

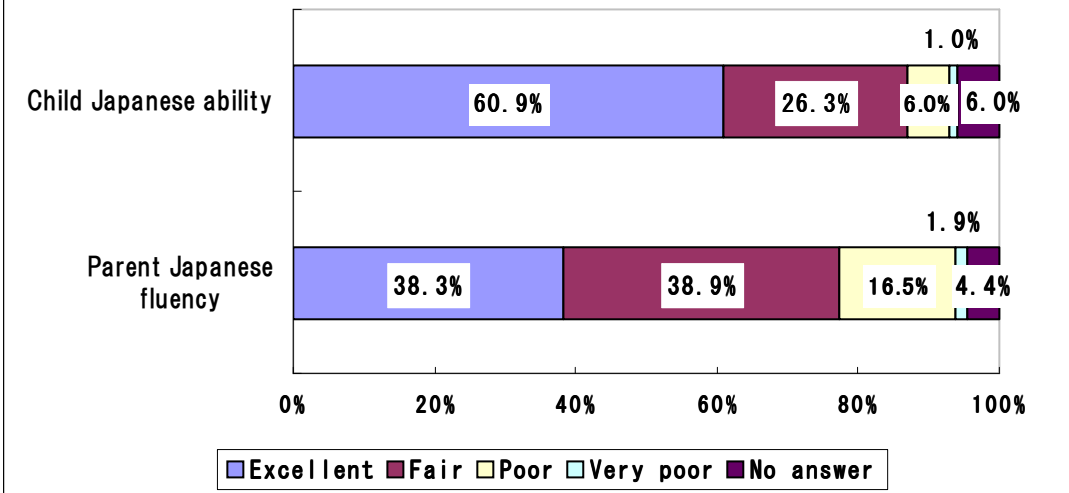
We found out that the longer the children went to a day care center or kindergarten, the higher the percentage was of them having an “excellent” ability in Japanese. 38.5% of the children who attended less than 3 months, 44.2% for those who attended 7 to 11 months, and 79.6% of the children who attended over 2 years had an “excellent” level. For 60% of the children, it took about one year of attendance to feel they had achieved an “excellent” level of Japanese.

6. The Japanese ability of children with less than 3 months of attending preschool based on their length of residency in Japan (Fig 4-6)

71.8% of the children who had attended preschool for less than 3 months were said to have an “excellent” or “fair” ability of Japanese, which is a high percentage. Therefore, we examined the length of residency in Japan of the children who had attended preschool for less than 3 months. Of the 19.3% who had lived less than a year, 6.9% had an “excellent” ability. Although the other children had attended less than 3 months, they had lived in Japan for over a year. The longer they were in Japan, the better their ability was. There was no child who had lived in Japan for more than 2 years that had a “poor” ability in Japanese.

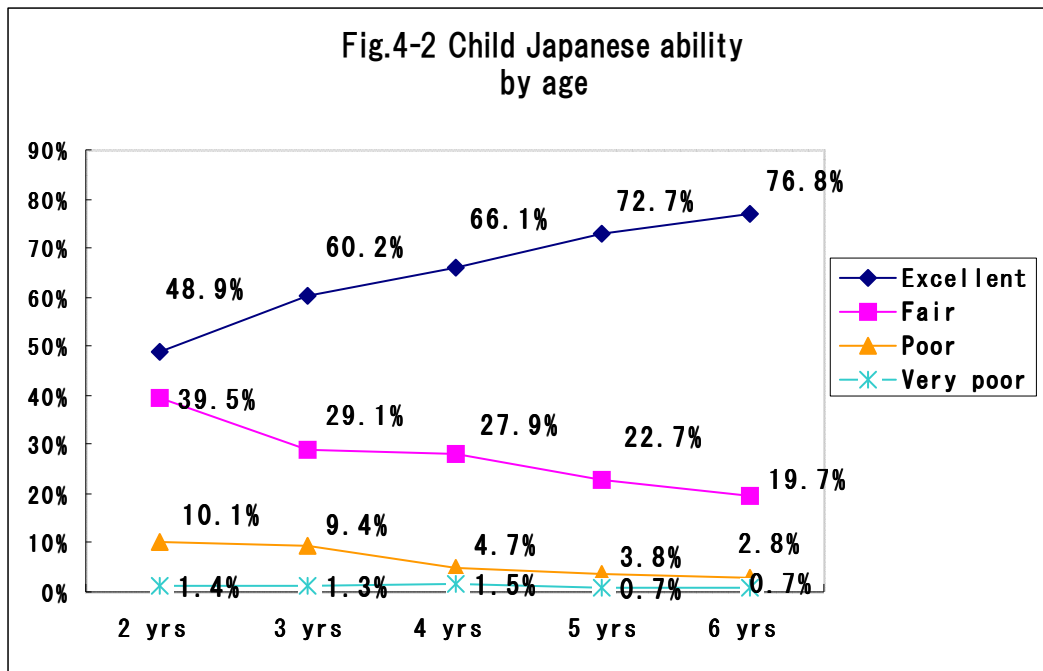
We found that the longer the children had lived in Japan, the higher the percentage of those with an “excellent” ability in Japanese.

Fig.4-1 Child Japanese ability and parent Japanese fluency



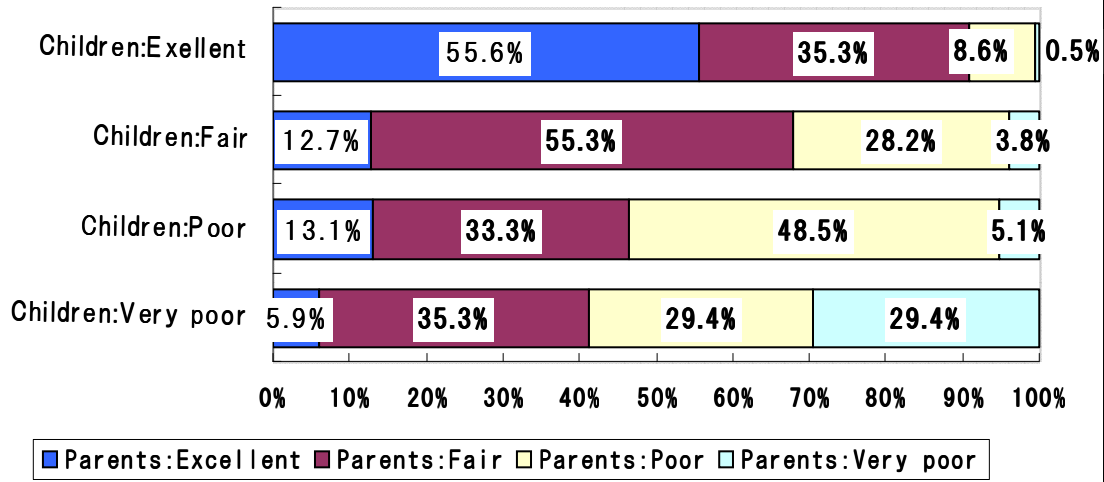
N=1644

Fig.4-2 Child Japanese ability by age



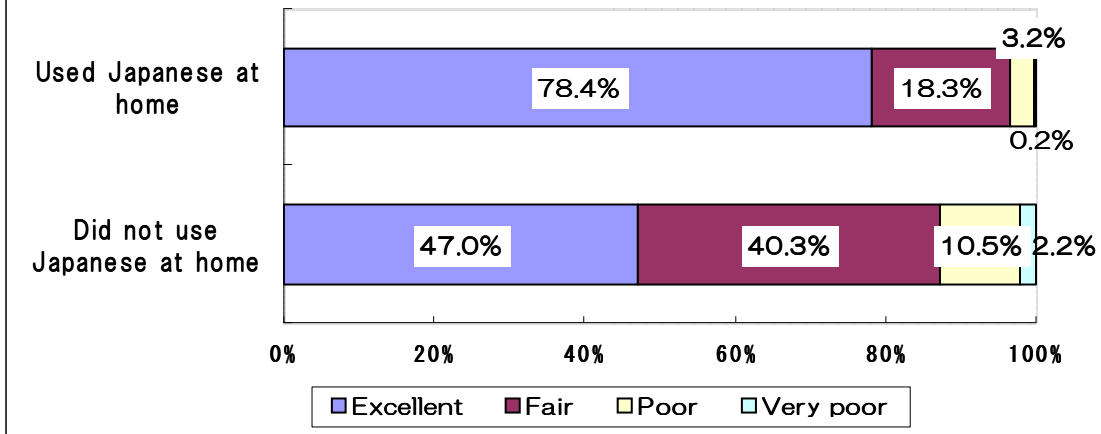
N=1644

Fig.4-3 Relationship between child Japanese ability and parent Japanese fluency



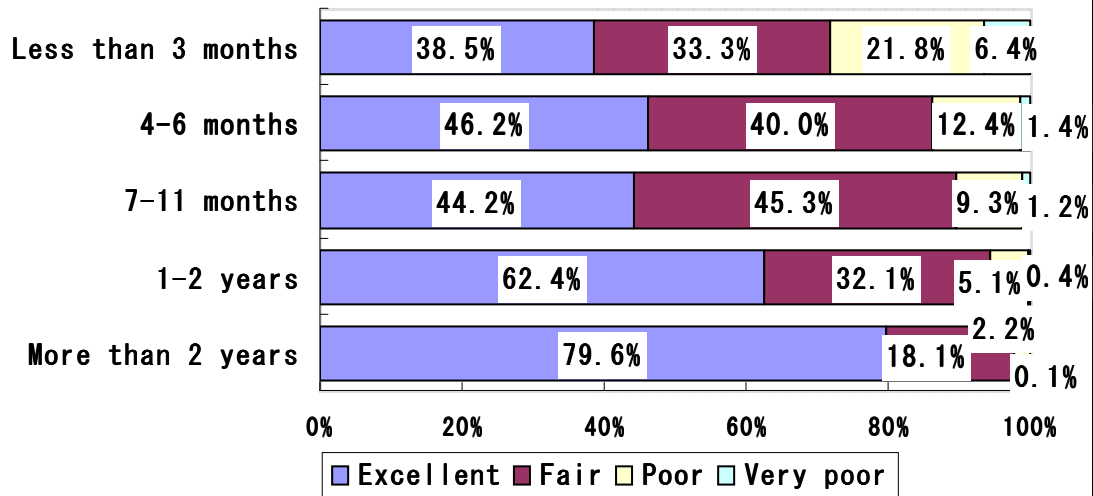
N=1588

Fig.4-4 Japanese use at home and child Japanese ability



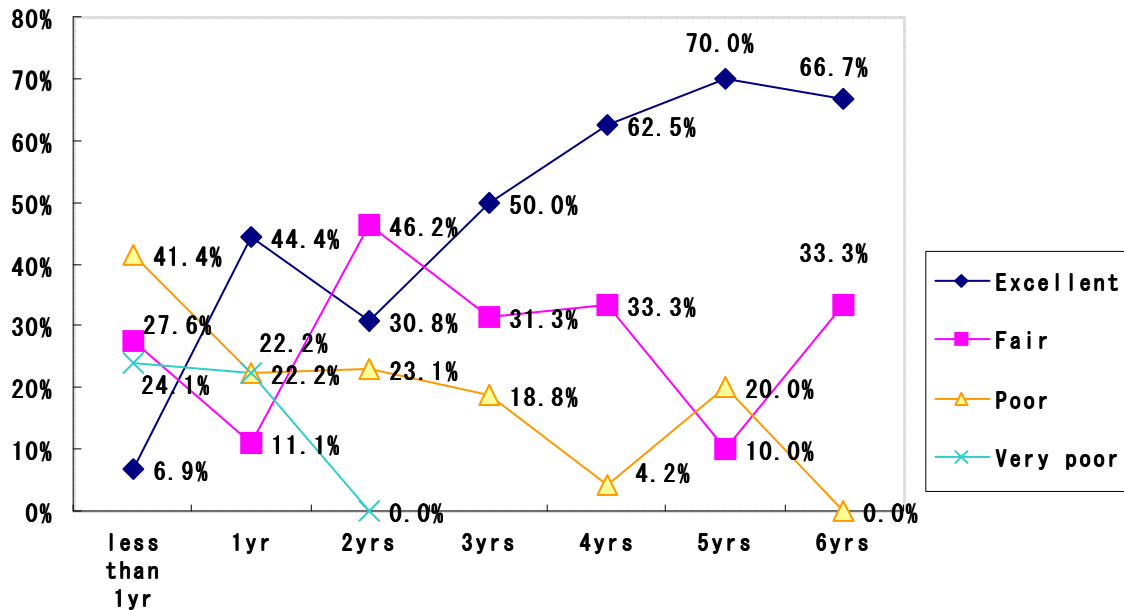
N=1644

Fig.4-5 Child length of attending preschool and their Japanese ability



N=1585

Fig.4-6 The Japanese ability of children with less than 3 months of attending preschool based on their length of their residency in Japan



N=146

2. Socialization of the Children

1. Playmates (Fig 4-7)

In order to find out how much the children played with friends, we asked parents if their children (over 2 years of age) played with Japanese children in their neighborhood and if they played with children from the same native country. As for whether children were playing with other Japanese children, 31.1% of them were said to be “playing frequently,” 22.3% were “playing a little,” 21.6% were “not playing much,” and 18.8% were “not playing at all.” 21.2% were said to be playing with other children from the same native country, 26.0% were “playing a little”, 22.5% were “not playing much”, and 21.3% were “not playing at all”. We must keep in mind that although children wanted to play with others, there may not have been many children around them. This can be seen from comments such as “there are not many friends around when my child comes home from kindergarten” (kindergarten / mother / 6 yrs) or “we do not see many children in our neighborhood” (day-care center 4th year, girl / mother, 35 yrs / China / 5 yrs)

2. Playing with Japanese children by age (Fig 4-8)

When we break down the factor “my child plays with other Japanese children” by age, we see that “plays frequently” increases from 29.2% for 4 year olds to 39.2% for 5 year olds. However, the 6-year-old group did not increase much, and stayed at 47.9%. Although “does not play at all” gradually decreases as age increases, it was still about 30% in the 6 year olds group when the percentage of “does not play much” was added.

3. Duration of the residency of the children and playmates (Fig. 4-9)

We compared the results of “playing with Japanese children in the neighborhood” with the duration of residence of the children and found that the longer they had lived in Japan, the more they played with Japanese children; 8.3% for less than 1 year, 32.4% for 3 years and 57.3% for 6 years. On the other hand, the ratio of the children who didn’t play with other Japanese children gradually decreased (43.1% for less than 1 year, 20.6% for 3 years, and 5.1% for 6 years.)

From these results, we see that the longer the children live in Japan, the more fluent they are in Japanese.

Comparing the duration of residence for “playing with other children from the same native country” showed no differences.

4. The relationship between Japanese ability and Playmates (Fig 4-10)

Regarding the Japanese ability of the children and whether they played with other Japanese children in their neighborhood, the rate of the children playing with other Japanese children increased as the level of their Japanese ability increased. On the other hand, the lower their Japanese level, the less they played with other Japanese children.

“Since my child was slow at learning Japanese, he could not communicate well with other children. Although he would be with other children at first, he would always be by himself later since he could not understand what the others were saying.”

(day-care center 4th year, boy / mother, 37 yrs old / South Korea / 7 yrs). As we can see from this, when the children had a “poor” or “very poor” ability in Japanese, the percentage of them not playing with other Japanese children was high, with 75.0% (poor) and 83.3% (very poor). As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is necessary for the preschool teachers and others to have more consideration for children who have a low ability in Japanese.

5. Problems concerning playmates (Fig 4-11)

We looked at the relationships between “playing with other Japanese children” and on worries of the parents such as, “bullying at preschools” and “getting along with other children.” Of the parents who replied that their child frequently plays with other Japanese children, 20.8% worried that their child may be bullied and 20.3% worried if they were getting along with other children. Among the parents who replied that their child did not play at all with other children, 42.1% were worried about whether or not their child was bullied, and 34.0% were concerned whether their child was getting along with other children.

“My son likes to play with his friends, but there are many times when he is bullied or when he gets in a fight” (day-care center 5th year, boy / mother, 31 yrs old / Peru / 9 yrs)

“I am worried that due to my child’s foreign nationality, she cannot have a friendly relationship with other children” (day-care center 1st year, girl / mother, 38 yrs old, China / 6 yrs)

“I am worried since my son was bullied by a few friends and was not allowed back into the group” (kindergarten boy / mother, 40 yrs old/ Peru / 0 yrs).

Although their children may be playing with other Japanese children, due to reports of bullying, parents are worried about whether or not their children are being bullied or whether they are playing together well. Moreover, if their children are not playing with others, the parents become more worried about their children’s ability to socialize with other children.

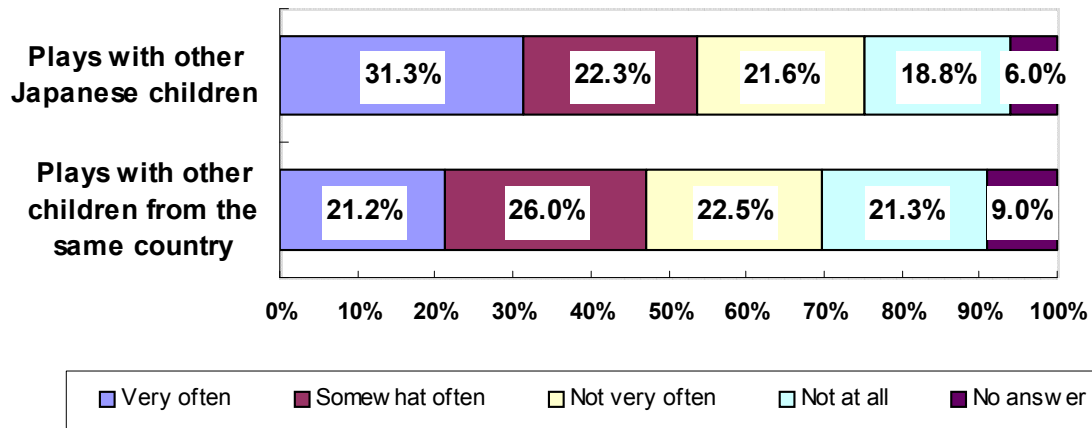
Please see Chapter 5, Parental impression of child-rearing life.

6. Parents socializing with others (Fig 4-12)

We looked at the relationship between the level of “being able to participate with ease in other parents’ conversation” and “Playing with other Japanese children” The easier it is for the parents to join the group, the higher the rate for children who play with other Japanese children(47.1%). Also, when the parents could not join the group at all, the rate for children not playing with other Japanese children was also high (34.8%).

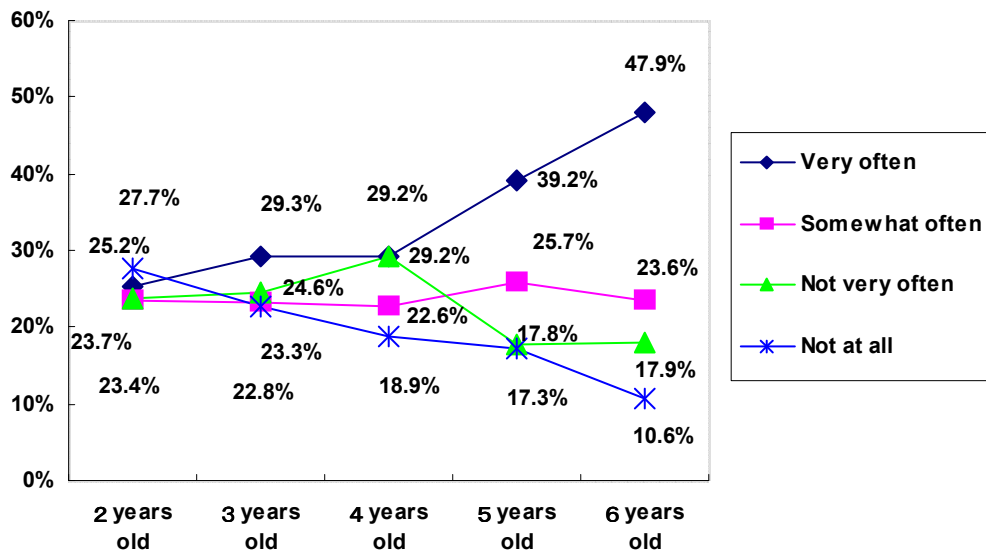
We could not see any connection between children playing with other children from the same country and the parents’ socialization.

Fig.4-7 Playmates (over 2years)



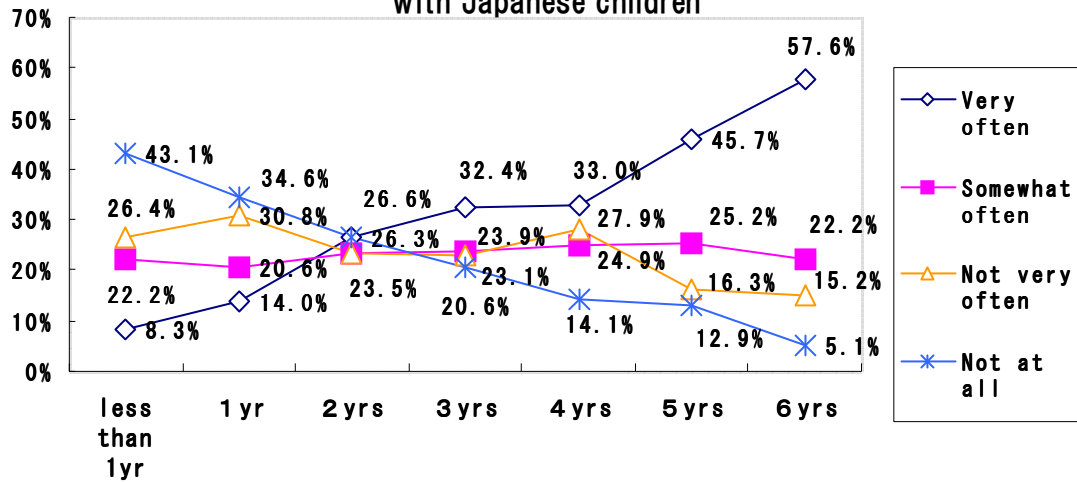
N=1749

Fig.4-8 Playing with other Japanese children by age



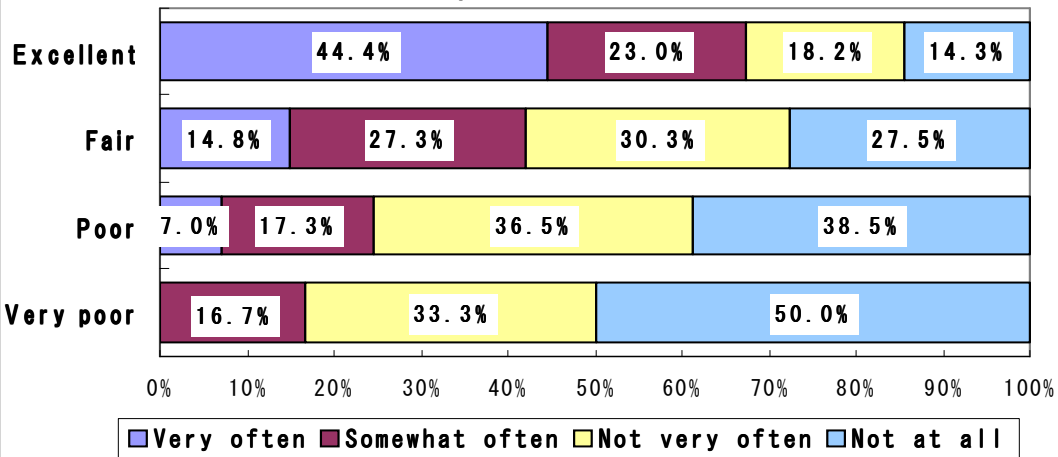
N=1644

Fig.4-9 Duration of the residency of the children and playing with Japanese children



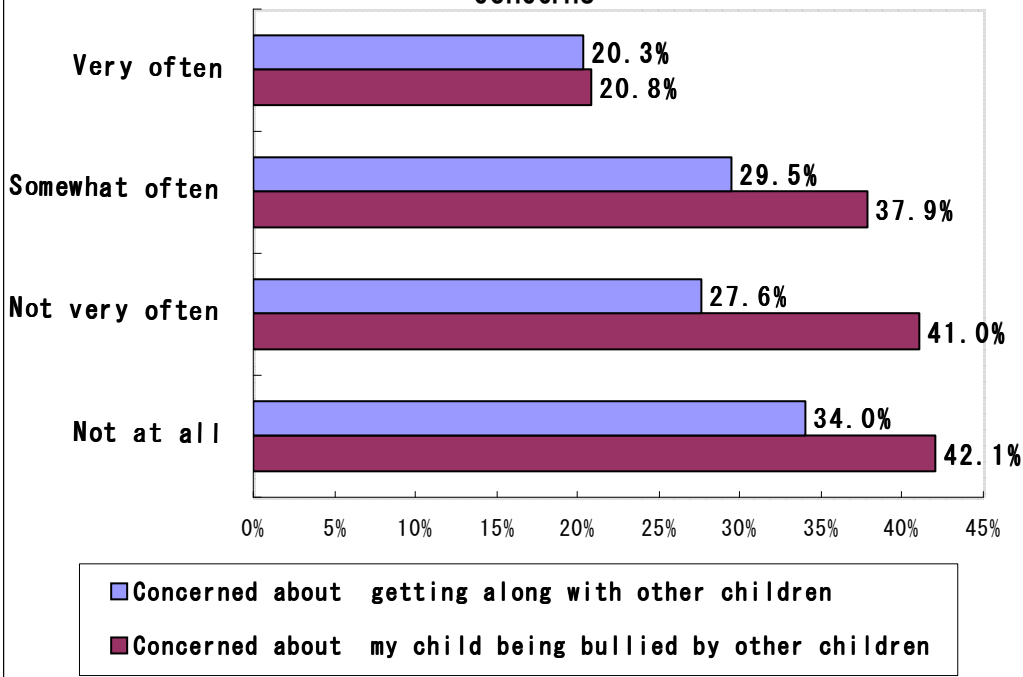
N=1594

Fig.4-10 Child Japanese ability and playing with Japanese children



N=1633

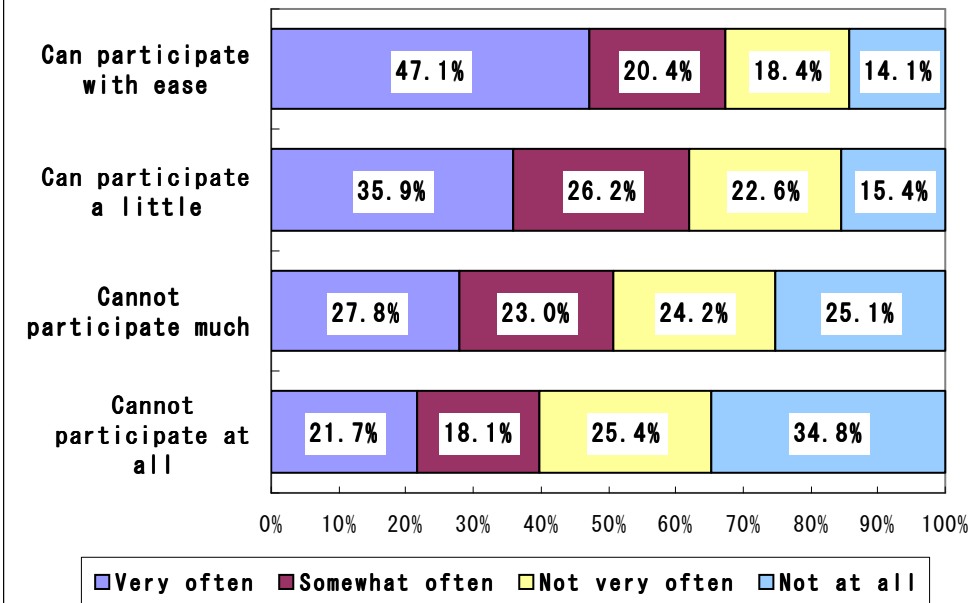
Fig.4-11 Playing with Japanese children and parent concerns



Worry about getting along with other children; N=1620

Worry about my child being bullied by other children; N=1644

Fig. 4-12 Being able to participate with ease in other parents' conversation and their child playing with Japanese children



N=1492

3. Sick Child Care

1. Taking care of sick children (Fig 4-13)

A child getting sick is inevitable, and every parent is troubled by this problem. We asked the parents who takes care of their children if the children get sick.

53.2% replied that “one of the parents takes a paid day off to look after their children”, 29.9% that “one of us are forced to take a day off”, 22.9% that “the non-working parent takes care of sick children”, 11.1% that “we cannot take days off of work and we have no one to ask”, 4.5% that “we ask our friends”, 2.9% “cannot take days off so we take our children to preschool”, 1.9% that “a sibling takes care of the sick child”(in order of most reply) and 10.7% replied “Others”

We compared the percentage of parents with children in day-care centers with those with children in kindergarten. 55.6% of the parents in day-care centers and 33.1% of the parents in kindergarten replied, “one of us takes a day off to take care of our children”, and 31.4% in day-care center and 18.5% in kindergarten replied that “one of us are forced to take a day off.” From this, we see that the percentage was higher for the parents of day-care center. However, 21.5% of the parents in day-care center and 32.5% in kindergarten replied “the non working parent looks after our sick children.”

There was not much difference in care for sick children regarding duration of residence, therefore it seems this is a common problem for all parents. However, only 2.8% of the parents who have been in Japan less than 3 years ask friends, and this gradually increases as the years of residency increase.

2. “Free Comments” on “Others”

There were many different kinds of comments in the “others” section. We could see that many parents are having difficulties from comments such as “since I am a single parent, my child getting sick is a problem”, “how to deal with my work when my child gets sick is a difficult problem”, “I do not know anyone who can help me”, “My child often gets sick”, and “it would help if the preschools could take care of our children when even when they are sick.”

One comment was “if the sickness is not so serious, we ask our parents or friends to take care of them, but if serious, we take some days off,” which shows that parents deal with their children’s sickness according to how serious it is. Regarding sickness, we will come back to this later in this chapter 4, Parental child-rearing concerns.

Below are some comments written from the “others” section.

Who takes care of your child when he/she gets sick?

“My stepmother or I.” (day-care center 3rd year, girl / mother, 38 yrs / The Philippines / 13 yrs)

“A nanny or baby sitter. However, we cannot find someone every time our child gets sick, so one of us takes a day off”(day-care center 3rd year, girl / mother, 33yrs old / Canada/ 2 yrs)

Care according to how sick the child is

“If the sickness is not too serious, we ask our parents, but if it is serious, I take a day off to take care of my child.(day-care center 3rd year, boy / mother, 28 yrs old / Japan / 1 yr)

There is no one I can ask

“Since I am a single mother, I do not have anyone who can look after my child.”(day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother / the Philippines / 8 yrs)

“I have a very young child but no relatives. When my child gets sick, I need to take a day off work, and if I take too many days off, I may get fired, so I worry a lot about it.”(day-care center 0 girl / Laos)

I get worried when my child gets sick

“I worry about sickness. My child often catches a cold. She has not had her Polio shots yet, but I do not know where to get them.” (day-care center 5th year girl / mother, 28 yrs old / Brazil / 10 yrs)

I do not understand the Japanese vaccination system

“Since I do not understand the Japanese vaccination system, I would like someone to explain it to me” (day-care center 2nd year, boy / mother, 24 yrs old / Brazil / 7yrs)

“My son had his polio shots in South Korea before he was 2 years old, but I am troubled by the fact that the vaccination system for polio differs in Japan” (day-care center 5th year, boy / mother, 34 yrs old / South Korea / 5 yrs)

I do not understand what the doctors are saying

“I was nervous since I did not know the date of the vaccination. When my child gets sick, I have difficulties explaining to the doctors the symptoms since I do not speak Japanese. I feel as if I am treated coldly” (day-care center 4th year, girl / mother, 41 yrs old, Brazil / 8 yrs)

“Medical vocabulary, especially technical terms are difficult. When my child gets sick or gets hurt, I must take him to the hospital but do not fully understand what the doctor is saying. I get very nervous when I have to take my child to the hospital at night” (day-care center 5th year, boy / mother. 41 yrs old / China / 12 yrs)

Connection with parents' work

“Since I cannot take too many days off, I sometimes take my sick child with me to work”(day-care center 5th year, boy / mother, 35 yrs old / 7 yrs)

“This is not only a problem for foreigners, but also for everyone in Japan. Since we cannot take days off when our child gets sick, we cannot work.”(day-care center 3rd year, girl / mother, 39 yrs old / Peru / 11 yrs)

“When my child gets sick, I need to take a day off, but it is very difficult to take a day off during a busy time.” (day-care center 3rd year boy / mother, 35 yrs / Taiwan / 12 yrs)

“Generally, the mother takes a day off to take care of the sick child. That is why I feel that women in Japan cannot concentrate 100% on their work.” (day-care center 3rd year, boy / mother, 35 yrs / China / 8 yrs)

Medical Expenses / Economical Issues

“When I take my child to the hospital I have a hard time since we do not have health insurance.”(day-care center 2nd year, boy / mother, 32 yrs old /South Korea / 7 yrs)

“When my child gets into an accident or gets sick, I must take a day off of work and my child cannot go to preschool. Since everything is expensive in Japan, I worry when I cannot go to work since it will lower my income” (graduate of day-care center, boy / mother, 37yrs old / Thailand/ 9 yrs)

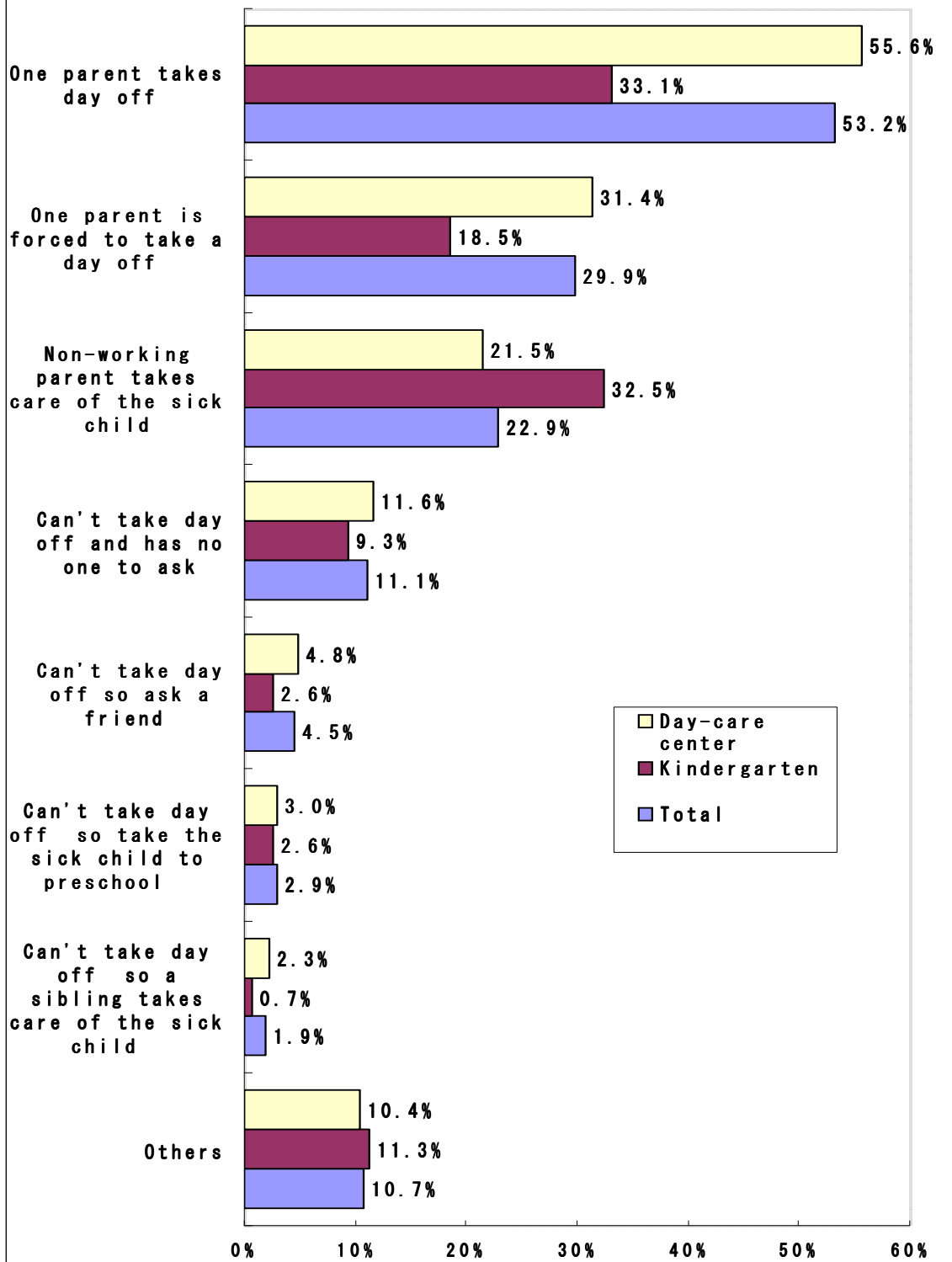
Requests for Preschools to look after sick children

“I worry if when my child is sick when I cannot take any days off. There is no one I can ask to look after my child and nowhere I can take him (day-care center 5th year, boy / mother, 39yrs old, South Korea / 10 yrs)

“If there is somewhere I can take my child when she is sick, I would like them to take care if my child gets sick” (day-care center 5th year, girl / father, 37yrs old, China 7 yrs)

Preschool or Kindergarten, class level, gender, relationship of the person answering, age, nationality, residential duration are shown in parenthesis

Fig.4-13 Taking care of sick children



N=2001