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Analysis of the Effects of Employment and Life Stage on the Life Satisfaction and Happiness of Married Women

Ting Wang

This study aims to empirically evaluate the effects of employment and life stage on the life satisfaction and happiness of married women in Japan. The role expansion hypothesis emphasizes the rewards of multiple roles, suggesting that assuming various roles in society can positively affect one's mental health and overall satisfaction. In contrast, the role stress hypothesis claims that holding multiple roles is harmful to psychological well-being, predicting that women who are simultaneously subject to demands from employment and home will experience more psychological distress than those with only one of these roles. However, past empirical studies have not supported either hypothesis for Japan. Using data from "Survey on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic from the Perspective of Gender Equality, 2020," I found that both regular and non-regular employment led to significant work strain, particularly among regularly employed women who experienced the highest levels of work-related pressure. However, after controlling for all control and mediating variables, only non-regularly employed married women exhibit the lowest level of life satisfaction compared to regularly employed women and homemakers. Regular employment significantly boosts life satisfaction under similar levels of work-related pressure. The presence of children itself does not decrease life satisfaction; instead, having children aged 3 to 6 years significantly contributes to greater life satisfaction for women. Husband's involvement in household chores and childcare does not show a significant influence on life satisfaction. On the one hand, these findings partially support the role expansion hypothesis and suggest that married women with toddlers who have regular work roles may experience potential benefits. On the other hand, these findings also partially support the role stress hypothesis and suggest that homemakers experience high levels of life satisfaction. Overall, married women with children who have non-regular work roles experience the lowest levels of life satisfaction.

Key words: life stage, employment status, life satisfaction, regular employment, non-regular employment, sharing of household and childcare

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