

Intra-family Time Allocation to Housework and Childcare

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship among couple's housework, child caring, and working hours within Japanese households, based on the "collective" model in which husbands and wives are characterized by their preferences and are free to choose their working hours. We estimate the function of household production time using micro-data from the Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities at four different time points (1991, 1996, 2001, 2006), and examine the changes in and structure of the allocation of couple's housework and child care hours. Our results show that, in dual-income households, wives' and husbands' wage rates have statistically significant effects on their own and partners' housework hours. The result is consistent with the theoretical prediction and suggests that an increase in the average wage of wives may contribute to equalization in the allocation of couple's housework hours. Contrary to the prediction, however, couple's working hours have statistically significant effect on their housework and child care hours after controlling for their wage rates, household income and a distribution factor. This result suggests that an individual has in reality little power to choose his or her working hours freely and working hours themselves have become restrictions for a couple to choose optimal housework and child caring hours.

Keywords: Collective model; Intra-family time allocation; Household production; Time use survey

JEL classification: D13; J22; R20