

CONTENT OF FATHER AND MOTHER STEREOTYPES IN JAPAN, COMPARED TO OVERALL GENDER STEREOTYPES

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Abstract

Suzuki (2017) reviewed the studies on gender inequality and concluded that gender stereotypes contribute to the persistence of gender discrimination in the workplace and at home. It has also been verified that the content of father (Troilo, 2013) and mother stereotypes (Ganong & Coleman, 1995) differed from overall gender stereotypes in American society. This study investigated whether the content of father and mother stereotypes was dissimilar to that of overall gender stereotypes in Japan. That is, does the content of father (versus men) and mother (versus women) stereotypes differ from the typically held gender stereotypes? A survey was conducted among undergraduates ($N = 266$; *Men* = 106, *Women* = 160), with a mean age of 19.05 years ($SD = 1.02$ years). The results indicated that the content of father stereotype was different from that of men and that of mother stereotype was different from that of women. This implies that the idea that ‘fathers (rather than men) should work outside the home and mothers (rather than women) should keep the house’, is held in Japanese society. In the future, it would be helpful to examine not only explicit stereotypes but also implicit stereotypes about fathers and mothers. Further, it would be useful to study stereotypes held by older and/or less educated adults.

Keywords: Stereotype, father, mother, gender.

1. Introduction

Gender stereotype is identified as one of the factors contributing to gender inequality in offices and families (Suzuki, 2017, for review). Troilo (2013) demonstrated that in the U.S.A., the content of the father stereotype was dissimilar to that for men (e.g., American fathers were thought to be *Hardworking* and *Busy*, when compared with American men). Similarly, Ganong and Coleman (1995) substantiated that the content of the mother stereotype differed from that for women (e.g., American mothers were believed to *Act for the good of family* and *Favor her own children*, when compared with American women). In Japan too, are parent stereotypes different from overall gender stereotypes? This study tries to verify whether in Japan, the content of father stereotype differs from that for men and whether the content of mother stereotype differs from that for women.

2. Methods

This study conducted a survey among 266 undergraduates. They were 18-22 years old, of both genders, unmarried, born and raised in Japan, and their native language was Japanese. They randomly received one of four self-report questionnaires on either fathers, mothers, men, or women, followed by the 85 descriptors (Table 1). These descriptors were generated from two pilot studies in a similar way to previous studies (Ganong & Coleman, 1995; Troilo, 2013).

They were asked to list a percentage for each descriptor on a 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 100% (e.g., ‘What percentage of Japanese fathers do you think have each of the following descriptors? For example, if you think that all Japanese fathers have the characteristic, you would choose 100%. If you think that 20% of Japanese fathers have the characteristic, you would choose 20%. Do not think of the fathers you know, but of fathers in general’). The 85 descriptors were randomly sorted to reduce order effects.

3. Results

3.1. Respondents

Table 1. The Results of Analysis of Variance.

Category	Descriptors	Fathers	Mothers	Men	Women		parent	sex	interaction
Men > Fathers	Strong	63.24	49.86	68.28	31.45	$F(3,258) = 49.62$	***	**	***
	Powerful	64.14	52.39	65.34	36.45	$F(3,257) = 32.26$	***	**	***
	Lazy	54.29	47.89	62.20	50.00	$F(3,257) = 8.01$	***	*	***
	Selfish	50.14	40.14	55.00	47.90	$F(3,256) = 7.52$	***	**	***
Men = Fathers	Physically strong	61.86	48.03	68.47	36.07	$F(3,257) = 34.25$	***		***
	Strong constitution	62.06	50.70	64.92	40.48	$F(3,256) = 19.90$	***		***
	Work than children	52.54	33.19	56.27	38.23	$F(3,257) = 22.17$	***	†	***
Men < Fathers	Work	85.51	64.20	79.65	58.39	$F(3,253) = 35.25$	***	**	***
	Hardworking	76.96	65.29	70.18	60.97	$F(3,252) = 10.00$	***	*	***
	Breadwinner	68.57	49.43	60.18	28.23	$F(3,255) = 40.57$	***	***	***
	Big	62.86	44.71	62.54	32.10	$F(3,255) = 40.31$	***	**	**
	Masculine	62.43	45.74	56.55	33.87	$F(3,254) = 24.74$	***	**	***
	Looking down on	57.25	55.44	56.72	42.62	$F(3,252) = 7.70$	***	**	*
	Well built	56.86	45.00	55.42	32.26	$F(3,257) = 25.65$	***	**	***
Fathers = Mothers	Busy	74.43	75.44	66.03	63.55	$F(3,254) = 5.87$	**	***	
	Very busy	68.86	74.71	64.04	62.90	$F(3,253) = 5.25$	**	***	
	Reliable	66.00	72.21	55.61	54.52	$F(3,253) = 14.01$	***	***	
	Dependable	65.86	70.14	56.21	50.97	$F(3,256) = 13.91$	***	***	*
	Reassuring	64.86	68.57	54.92	53.33	$F(3,255) = 10.05$	***	***	
	Trustworthy	63.14	68.12	56.78	50.83	$F(3,254) = 10.55$	***	***	*
	Sociable	60.56	66.38	57.93	56.13	$F(3,257) = 4.91$	**	**	†
	Robust	60.00	65.94	55.09	50.81	$F(3,255) = 6.90$	***	***	*
	Tough	63.10	64.20	60.70	50.32	$F(3,255) = 5.81$	**	**	†
	Brave	60.42	63.19	50.00	46.94	$F(3,256) = 10.38$	***	***	*
	Cool	50.74	57.50	47.54	37.54	$F(3,250) = 10.64$	***	***	**
	Courageous	58.75	59.71	51.69	44.26	$F(3,257) = 8.98$	***	***	†
	Polite	63.24	63.57	54.07	61.11	$F(3,259) = 3.60$	*	*	*
Fathers < Mothers	Sincere	60.71	60.88	52.54	53.23	$F(3,255) = 4.20$	**	***	
	Strict	55.56	59.58	49.30	52.79	$F(3,257) = 3.71$	*	**	†
	Caring	62.54	73.68	47.72	62.13	$F(3,253) = 20.10$	***	***	***
	Mature	69.72	72.86	45.76	61.45	$F(3,259) = 24.87$	***	***	**
	Thoughtful	61.74	71.74	56.03	60.49	$F(3,253) = 9.79$	***	***	*
	Amazing	59.58	71.18	47.72	56.77	$F(3,254) = 13.76$	***	***	***
	Kind	64.37	70.29	59.48	62.42	$F(3,256) = 4.24$	**	**	*
	Watch over	64.79	68.55	50.17	58.52	$F(3,256) = 11.37$	***	***	*
	Understanding	58.47	68.55	45.00	55.97	$F(3,257) = 16.60$	***	***	***
	Fine	62.82	69.30	52.03	55.16	$F(3,259) = 10.69$	***	***	*
Mothers > Women	Generous	56.03	64.93	49.48	51.61	$F(3,251) = 9.03$	***	***	*
	Childrearing	40.70	79.57	36.32	71.94	$F(3,255) = 87.15$	***	*	***
	Love family	66.23	77.71	59.83	69.03	$F(3,256) = 11.66$	***	**	***
	Love children	63.57	77.71	57.07	65.48	$F(3,256) = 13.93$	***	***	***
	Take children's sides	60.87	77.50	57.97	67.42	$F(3,254) = 12.21$	***	**	***
	Cherish family	65.86	76.06	56.10	66.45	$F(3,258) = 12.51$	***	***	***
	Family oriented	51.29	75.36	47.93	63.06	$F(3,255) = 27.75$	***	**	***
	Warm	59.72	72.90	52.76	62.26	$F(3,256) = 15.27$	***	***	***
	Capacious	54.71	71.86	53.79	58.52	$F(3,255) = 13.04$	***	**	***
	Like children	60.28	70.58	49.32	63.39	$F(3,257) = 16.38$	***	***	***
	Friendly	54.29	68.55	48.10	56.45	$F(3,255) = 14.61$	***	***	***
	Interfering	45.14	68.29	31.86	52.42	$F(3,257) = 47.19$	***	***	***
	Dedicated	54.51	66.14	50.34	60.82	$F(3,256) = 9.76$	***	*	***
	Worrier	52.36	65.88	47.89	58.23	$F(3,255) = 11.25$	***	**	***
	Stabilize family	60.00	63.86	52.07	62.90	$F(3,255) = 5.50$	**	*	**
Mothers = Women	Do housework	38.87	76.62	36.21	70.16	$F(3,255) = 69.43$	***	†	***
	Busy with childrearing	27.46	73.82	27.76	70.00	$F(3,255) = 107.46$	***		***
	Cooperative	54.64	64.93	54.83	62.26	$F(3,254) = 6.18$	***		***
	Emotional	49.71	64.43	47.54	62.74	$F(3,253) = 12.68$	***		***
	Cheerful	53.52	61.88	56.44	61.29	$F(3,257) = 4.61$	**		**
	Precious	34.20	58.12	35.09	54.84	$F(3,253) = 23.59$	***		***
	Pure	41.55	52.43	36.21	51.13	$F(3,257) = 10.06$	***		***
	Soft	37.36	61.88	37.37	66.72	$F(3,255) = 44.16$	***		***
	Gracious	50.14	57.50	47.02	63.06	$F(3,254) = 10.57$	***		***
	Calculating	44.57	53.48	42.76	58.23	$F(3,255) = 9.78$	***		***
	Pretty	32.82	54.00	35.52	57.54	$F(3,256) = 30.25$	***		***
	Sweet	31.86	52.54	33.22	56.89	$F(3,257) = 26.12$	***		***
	Refined	35.07	50.74	32.54	55.97	$F(3,254) = 25.44$	***		***
	Tidy	30.42	53.19	36.90	55.57	$F(3,256) = 24.56$	***	†	***
	Elegant	26.09	48.29	27.59	54.52	$F(3,255) = 35.19$	***		***
Modest	33.86	46.87	28.95	52.26	$F(3,252) = 20.58$	***		*	
Mothers < Women	Feminine	26.48	53.94	35.25	67.21	$F(3,258) = 54.22$	***	***	***
	Pretty hair	30.14	49.00	35.93	63.55	$F(3,258) = 37.80$	***	***	***
	Feel lonely	48.33	51.74	50.69	62.58	$F(3,257) = 6.67$	***	**	†
	Blackhearted	32.11	43.77	42.98	61.29	$F(3,255) = 23.62$	***	***	***
	Cute	27.00	48.94	33.86	59.19	$F(3,251) = 32.79$	***	**	***
	Brilliant	26.34	46.97	32.41	57.90	$F(3,253) = 40.05$	***	***	***
Women > Men	Beautiful	23.53	49.13	30.68	56.39	$F(3,253) = 46.74$	***	**	***
	Fresh	37.68	52.90	46.90	52.90	$F(3,254) = 12.05$	***	*	***
	Coward	32.32	46.67	47.07	59.02	$F(3,253) = 22.91$	***	***	***
Others	Mentally weak	36.29	42.75	49.31	53.44	$F(3,254) = 9.51$	***	***	*
	Active	50.74	58.70	57.89	55.32	$F(3,252) = 2.85$	*		*
	Moody	46.44	49.85	53.73	53.55	$F(3,257) = 2.13$	†	*	
	Quiet	48.00	40.59	42.46	46.13	$F(3,253) = 2.44$	†		*
	Immovable	55.92	55.22	49.82	52.26	$F(3,255) = 1.65$	*		*
	Calm	47.50	42.75	42.37	46.13	$F(3,258) = 1.54$			*
	Audacious	50.71	55.57	53.39	48.69	$F(3,256) = 1.58$			*
	Stubborn	55.63	55.57	54.48	51.13	$F(3,257) = 0.81$			

The mean age of respondents was 19.05 ($SD = 1.02$) years old. The respondents comprised 106 men (39.85%) and 160 women (60.15%). 73 (33 men and 40 women) answered the questionnaires on fathers, 71 (25 men and 46 women) answered those on mothers, 59 (20 men and 39 women) answered those on men and 63 (28 men and 35 women) answered those on women.

3.2. Analysis of variance

The data were analysed using a two-way analysis of variance. The analysis design used two independent variables: whether the target was parents or not (a between factor), and men or women (a between factor), and the dependent variable was each descriptor. Table 1 shows the results of analysis of variance.

First, it was found that the content of stereotypes of fathers, mothers, men, and women differed from each other. The respondents believed that fathers rather than men, mothers, and women have the seven characteristics *Work, Hardworking, Breadwinner, Big, Masculine, Looking down on, and Well built*.

They thought that mothers rather than women, fathers and men have the 14 characteristics: *Childrearing, Love family, Love children, Take children's sides, Cherish family, Family oriented, Warm, Capacious, Like children, Friendly, Interfering, Dedicated, Worrier, and Stabilise family* and that mothers rather than fathers, women and men have the 9 characteristics *Caring, Mature, Thoughtful, Amazing, Kind, Watch over, Understanding, Fine, and Generous*.

They believed that men rather than fathers, women, and mothers have the four characteristics *Strong, Powerful, Lazy and Selfish*. They thought that women rather than mothers, men, and fathers have the eight characteristics *Feminine, Pretty hair, Feel lonely, Black hearted, Cute, Brilliant, Beautiful, and Fresh* and that women rather than men, mothers and fathers have the two characteristics *Coward and Mentally weak*.

Next, it was also indicated that the content of parent stereotypes was different from that of overall gender stereotypes. The respondents believed that fathers and mothers rather than men and women have the following 15 characteristics: *Busy, Very busy, Reliable, Dependable, Reassuring, Trustworthy, Sociable, Robust, Tough, Brave, Cool, Courageous, Polite, Sincere, and Strict*.

On the other hand, the respondents thought that men and fathers rather than women and mothers have the 3 characteristics *Physically strong, Strong constitution, and Work than children* and mothers and women rather than fathers and men have the following 16 characteristics *Do housework, Busy with childrearing, Cooperative, Emotional, Cheerful, Precious, Pure, Soft, Gracious, Calculating, Pretty, Sweet, Refined, Tidy, Elegant, and Modest*. This means that the content of parent stereotypes overlaps with that of overall gender stereotypes.

4. Discussion

These results showed that the content of father and mother stereotypes differed from that of overall gender stereotypes and suggest that Japanese have the idea that 'fathers (rather than men) should work outside the home, and mothers (rather than women) should keep the house'. However, it should be noted that the content that repeated in parent stereotypes and overall gender stereotypes implies that 'both men and fathers should work outside the home, and both mothers and women should keep the house' and this point needs further verification.

Furthermore, Park, Smith, and Correll (2010) investigated not explicit but implicit stereotypes and found that fathers were strongly associated with professional images and mothers were more strongly associated with childcare images. Therefore, it will deepen our understanding to compare implicit parent stereotypes to implicit overall gender stereotypes. In addition, although this study targeted only undergraduates, future research should target older and/or less educated adults in order to generalise the findings.

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