

## Symposium Proceedings

# Correlation between desire for permanent employment and frequency of participation in training lectures on nursery school education in non-permanent Japanese nursery school teachers

**Misako Kawamata and Tetsuo Harada\***

Faculty of Education, Kochi University, Japan

### Abstract

This study aims to clarify the relationship between desire for a permanent position in the near future and frequency (or opportunity) to participate in several lectures on nursery school education among non-permanent nursery school teachers. A questionnaire study was administered to 10 nursery school teachers (eight working for private nursery schools, two for a public nursery school) in Fukuoka prefecture from September to November 2014. This questionnaire included questions on basic information about the nursery school where they work and some information about the participants such as age, family, and academic career. There was significant correlation between desire to pursue a permanent position and frequency of participation in training lectures ( $p = 0.048$ ). No correlation was seen between age and index of frequency to participate in training lectures related to nursery school education. Although we could not do statistical analysis because of limited number of data, two non-permanent teachers with a nine-year-long career exhibited a low desire to participate in such lectures. In conclusion, non-permanent teachers at nursery schools with a strong desire for a permanent position in the near future was very active for learning on the nursery school education. The Japanese government could increase the number of permanent nursery school (or kindergarten) teacher positions in Japan as one way to increase the number of high quality nursery school teachers.

Key words: Non-permanent nursery school teachers, frequency of participation in training lectures, quality of teachers

## INTRODUCTION

As the global average, only 32.8% of children attended preschool in 1999, whereas 53.7% attended there in 2013 (Jozsa 2018). Developing countries prepared nursery schools or kindergarten as preschool education for only 27.2% of all children in 1999, whereas it was increased into 49.6% in 2013. In the developed countries, it was already 74.6% in 1999, while it was increased into 84.4% in 2013 (Jozsa 2018). Therefore, preschool education is currently common practice throughout the world. What is the situation like in Japan? Kukimoto (2016) reported that, in a Japan-wide epidemiological study ( $n = 8205$ ), 55.1% of nursery schools could accept children aged less than 6 months, whereas 27.8% starting accepting children at 6 months of age and 14.7% only accepted

children who were at least one year old. Moreover, only 42-83% of nursery schools were able to keep children after 6 p.m. (in most cases until 7 p.m.). After giving birth, many women in Japan are forced to choose between staying home to watch their child and continuing to work (Takahashi, 2014). Most mothers in Kochi continue working as working mothers, partly for financial reasons. Therefore, special services such as extended childcare until 7 p.m. is critical, and women in Japan will not be able to continue working after giving birth unless nursery schools accept younger babies. Nakazono (2014) reported that children aged 0-5 in a nursery school in Kushiro, a city in Hokkaido prefecture in Japan, stayed at nursery school for 7 to > 11 hours (7-8 hours: 1 child, 8-9: 7, 9-10: 12, 10-11: 41, > 11: 10, children who stayed until 7 p.m.: 14). Part-time teachers are critical for providing care for young

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\* E-mail: haratets@kochi-u.ac.jp

children for longer than 8 hours at Japanese nursery schools. In Japan, there is a high demand for non-permanent nursery school teachers in addition to permanently employed teachers because of the work structure at nursery schools. Ueno (2014) reported that 75 among 159 (47.5%) students majoring in a nursery school teacher training course at a women's junior college wanted to be homemakers after marriage and then work as non-permanent nursery school teachers after their children grow up. Meanwhile, 31 of 79 students (39.2%) who majored in other fields at the same college wanted to be homemakers after marriage and work in a non-permanent position later on. Currently, the majority of young nursery school teachers in Japan do not want permanent employment after getting married. Non-permanent positions occupy 60-70% of all employment at nursery schools and kindergartens in Japan (Kakiuchi and Obi, 2015).

How does the working condition differ for permanent and non-permanent nursery school teachers? The difference is most clear in salary in Japan (Obi, 2009). For example, in 2003, the annual salary for teachers at a public nursery school was 4.334 million yen (career started in 1992) or 6.883 million yen (1975) for those in permanent employment, but only 1.74 to 1.962 million yen for those in non-permanent positions, irrespective of length of career. What about the actual work? In most cases, the work day is eight hours. The type of work for non-permanent teachers can be divided into two patterns. One is very similar to permanent teachers and is that of the primary teacher who is responsible for a single class, and the other is an all-around assistant who offers help to any classes in need. On average, Obi (2009) and Sakai and Yamamoto (2015) determined that conditions for non-permanent Japanese nursery school teachers are harsher than permanent teachers in terms of both quality and quantity of job per salary. For example, there is no bonus for non-permanent teachers, which can discourage them even though the job content is often very similar to teachers in permanent positions.

Meanwhile, Kamiya (2013) showed that permanently-employed nursery school teachers can suffer psychological stress during communication with other workers and also mothers because in some cases communication with mothers can be very hard due to "special characters" shown by mothers (so called "monster parents" in Japanese-English words). Permanent employees can be suffered from higher social pressure because of higher responsibility in accordance with higher salary.

Permanently-employed nursery school teachers may feel more responsible for the education of the children at the nursery schools and have more experience and up-to-date-knowledge that is required for ongoing improvement of the children's education. If this is the case, improving preschool education in Japan requires increasing the ratio of permanently

employed nursery school teachers in near future. To help achieve this, we aimed to determine the relationship between desire to work in a permanent position and frequency of participation in training lectures on nursery school education, a question that has yet to be examined in past studies.

## PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS

A questionnaire study was administered to 10 nursery school teachers at two private and one public nursery schools (eight working for private nursery schools, two for a public nursery school) located in Fukuoka prefecture in Japan from September to November 2014. The teachers were or had been in non-permanent positions. Nine of 10 participants completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions on basic information about the nursery school where they work, information about the participants such as age, family, and academic career as a nursery school teacher. The questionnaire also contained information on the employment structure at the nursery school (e.g. number of permanent and non-permanent staff and opportunities to participate in lectures related to nursery school education). Questionnaires took one to two hours.

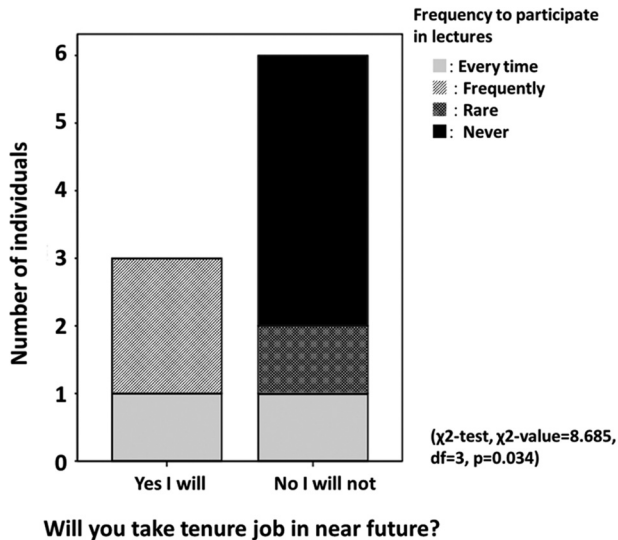
Statistical analysis on the results of this study was performed with SPSS version 12 statistical software (12.0 J for Windows; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Fisher's probability test was used for categorized variables x categorized variables (2 X 2). The guidelines established by the *Chronobiology International Journal* were followed for the conduct of research on human subjects (Portaluppi et al., 2010). Before administering the questionnaires, each participant was given a written explanation detailing the concepts and purpose of the study and stated that their answers would be used only for academic purposes. After the above explanation, all participants agreed completely with the proposal.

## RESULTS

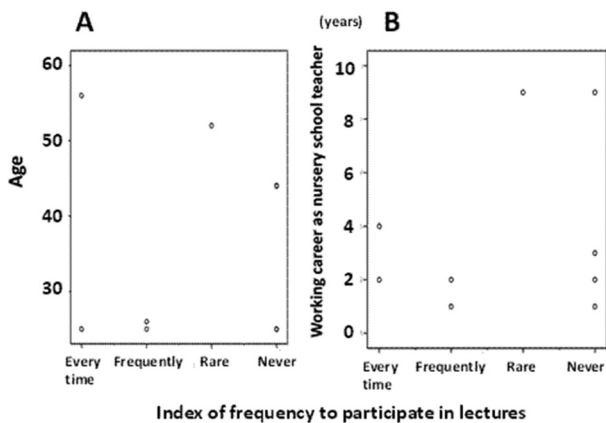
All participants were women. All non-permanent teachers answered that they were given the same opportunities by Fukuoka City (and Prefecture) Education Government Committee to take training lectures in the same manner as permanent teachers. Their age ranged from 25 to 56 years old. They worked between one and nine years as non-permanent staff at nursery schools. Five participants were married, three were never married, and two were divorced. Four participants wanted to continue non-permanent work, five wanted permanent work as nursery school teachers, and one was retired from the non-permanent position and currently had no job.

Participants who wanted permanent positions in the near

future participated in training lectures related to nursery school education more frequently than those who wanted to continue their current non-permanent position (Fig. 1). No correlation was seen between age and index of frequency to participate in training lectures related to nursery school education (Fig. 2a). Although we could not do statistical analysis because of limited number of data, two non-permanent teachers with a nine-year-long career exhibited a low desire to participate in such lectures (Fig. 2b).



**Fig. 1.** Relationship between frequency to participate in lectures related to nursery school education and whether they want to shift their jobs from non-permanent to permanent. (Fisher’s exact probability test:  $p = 0.048$ ).



**Fig. 2.** Correlative presentation between index of frequency to participate in lectures related to nursery school education and age (A) or length of career as a nursery school teacher in years (B).

## DISCUSSION

In Japan, there are not enough nursery schools to cover the number of children aged 0-5 years old requiring childcare, because the number of working mothers is increasing. Many young children are on nursery school waiting lists because their mothers have to continue working in order to receive salary increases and promotions. They are referred to as “*Taiki-jidoo*” in Japanese, which literally means ‘waiting children’ and number 23,553 in all of Japan (with 2.46 million children in nursery schools in 2016; Maeda, 2017). Ueno (2014) reported that 75 among 159 (47.5%) students majoring in a nursery school teacher training course at a women’s junior college wanted to be homemakers after marriage and then work as non permanent nursery school teachers after their children grow up.

In this situation, re-education for nursery school teachers returning to the educational scene after being a homemaker for some years is critical to maintain high quality of education at preschools. The study showed that there is a positive correlation among non-permanent nursery school teachers between high frequency to participate in training lectures related to nursery school education and desire for a permanent position as a nursery school teacher. To ensure high quality of pre-school education, it is necessary for the Japanese government to increase the number of opportunities for non-permanent nursery school teachers to participate in training to attain permanent positions in the near future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the participants at the three nursery schools in Fukuoka prefecture in Japan for answering the questionnaire. Thanks are also due to Ms Laura Sato (Professional English Editor) for English editorial work on this study.

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