

Maternal Confidence in Childrearing and Related Factors: A Comparative Study of Mothers of Five-Year-Olds and Three-Year-Olds

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Abstract

This study seeks to clarify the factors related to confidence in childrearing among mothers with five-year-old children while also comparing these factors to those impacting the confidence of mothers of three-year-old children. We distributed surveys to 700 parents with children at home and analyzed data from the 290 valid responses. The present study targeted 290 married mothers of five-year-old children, 33.8% of whom felt confident in their childrearing abilities. This data was compared with data gathered from 400 married mothers of three-year-olds. The results revealed that there was no increase in childrearing confidence among mothers of five-year-olds despite a significant decrease in reported levels of “emotional and physical fatigue” and “signs of chronic fatigue”. Similar to the results for mothers of three-year-old children, our study found that “the joy of childrearing” increased and “anxiety in childrearing” decreased among factors that influenced confidence in childrearing. Furthermore, the ability to consult with one’s husband and cooperation from one’s husband were related to maternal confidence among mothers raising five-year-old children.

Keywords: Five-Year-Olds; Mothers; Maternal Confidence in Childrearing; Related Factors

Introduction

It is often assumed that mothers feel increasingly confident in raising their children as their children grow older. However, Shimizu has found that the proportion of mothers who felt confident in raising their children decreased as their children grew older in both cross-sectional studies [1-3] and a longitudinal study [4] targeting mothers with children ages zero to three. Confidence in child rearing impacts the psychological health of parents, and it is an important factor for understanding ideal parenting behavior. Miyamoto [5] has explored how mothers with infants who give birth later in life can gain confidence in their childrearing abilities. Meanwhile, Uehara [6] has investigated how mothers can gain confidence through breastfeeding. However, both studies examined the confidence of mothers with infant children, and no studies have been conducted on the childrearing confidence of mothers with five-year-old children. For mothers with four-month-old children, it has been hypothesized that they gain childrearing confidence through restructuring their lives, balancing housework and childcare, learning childrearing techniques through trial and error, and developing a sense of motherhood while observing the child grow. As a mother’s experience increases, her confidence as a mother is also anticipated to increase [7].

We believe that overcoming postpartum problems, which can constitute a crisis for couples, and helping couples parent effectively during the family rebuilding period are important for providing childrearing support. In particular, a wife’s relationship with her husband affects her childrearing abilities in various ways. In a longitudinal analysis of mothers of three-month-old, 16-month-old, and three-

year-old children, Shimizu [4] found that the factors related to a mother's confidence in parenting included "joy in parenting", "anxiety about parenting", "consulting one's husband" and more. When children reach the age of five, they require less hands-on attention from their parents. They also become more active and conversant and grow taller and more robust. Their muscles become stronger, and the nerves used for balance develop further, resulting in children engaging in increased activity and displaying improved motor development. Children are able to do more things on their own, and their range of activities expands. Before entering elementary school, children develop a clearer sense of individuality, and mothers become more interested in how they treat their children that is, they take an interest in their growth as parents and their role in raising their children.

In this study, we focus on mothers of five-year-olds whose children showed further growth from the age of three and examined these mothers' confidence in child rearing, as well as other related factors. These related factors included psychological factors, such as childcare happiness and childcare stress. These psychological factors naturally include the relationship between the husband and wife. This study seeks to clarify how wives' relationships with their husbands affect their confidence in childrearing as their children grow older. It also seeks to identify similarities and differences between mothers of five-year-old children and mothers of three-year-old children [3].

Research Methods

Study subjects: Survey forms were distributed to 700 mothers with five-year-old children and 482 mothers with three-year-old children living in City A and City B in Prefecture C.

Method and survey period: This survey was conducted by sending letters requesting cooperation in a survey along with a questionnaire to parents between October 2010 and September 2012. These letters were regarding health checkups for their three-month-old children scheduled to be conducted at Health Center A in Prefecture C. These health checkups were conducted four times for each child at three months, one year and six months, three years, and five years. This study used data from three- and five-year-old children. Study participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and bring it with them on the day of their child's medical checkup. We also requested that respondents complete the same questionnaire for their child's subsequent checkups. However, this request, which was made at the time of a respondent's medical checkup, included subjects who had recently moved to the area, and therefore, we enclosed a letter explaining the reason for the questionnaire request. That is, we enclosed an explanation letter and a questionnaire requesting that recipients cooperate in the survey in the information leaflets mailed out regarding health checkups for three- and five-year-old children at a health center located in City A within Prefecture C from July 2013 to June 2015 and from July 2015 to June 2017. The act of filling out the questionnaire form was taken as an expression of participants' consent to cooperate in the survey.

Survey content: The survey was a self-administered questionnaire that asked respondents to answer yes or no to the following question: "Now Do you feel more confident in raising your children?" Mothers were also asked to provide open-ended responses (multiple responses were possible) regarding the specific ways in which they felt that their confidence had increased. This was intended to better understand mothers' personal feelings about their childrearing situations. In addition, to examine how demographic characteristics impact confidence in child rearing, we asked mothers to describe their attributes, such as age, number of children, number of births (first birth = one birth; second or more births = two or more births), the ages of all children in the survey, and household structure. Household structure included the nuclear family household, which refers to a household consisting of a couple and unmarried children, and three-generation households. The survey also asked about the physical and mental health of mothers of five-year-old children using the following: (1) nuclear family household: household consisting of only a couple and unmarried children; (2) three-generation household: household consisting of at least three generations of immediate family with the head of the household as the central figure; (3) three-generation household: all persons living together in the household were listed in the survey. In addition, to gather background information on childrearing, the mothers were asked yes or no questions about whether they felt they could consult their husbands about childrearing, whether they could consult people other than their husbands or mothers, and whether they had someone to help them with financial concerns and childrearing.

Scale used in the survey

Abridged version of the childcare happiness scale

The childcare happiness scale consists of the following five factors: “the joy of childrearing” (5 items), “bonding with children” (4 items), “gratitude for husband” (4 items), and “happiness in childrearing” (5 items). For this study, a shortened 13-item version of the scale consisting of three factors was used [8,9]. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale from “agree” to “disagree,” and the alpha coefficients for the internal consistency of each of the three subscales ranged from 0.77 to 0.86, which was sufficient. This scale provides information on the degree of childcare happiness, with a higher score indicating a greater sense of childcare happiness.

Abridged version of the childcare stress scale

This scale consists of six items for the category “physical and mental fatigue” and six items for “childrearing anxiety”. These categories were extracted by classifying the content of 33 items obtained from respondents’ open-ended explanations of situations where they experienced negative feelings during childrearing. An abridged 16-item version of the scale was used for this study [10,11]; it consisted of three categories: “physical and mental fatigue” (6 items), “childcare anxiety” (6 items), and “lack of support from husband” (4 items). Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging. The alpha coefficients for the internal consistency of each item of the three categories ranged from 0.82 to 0.86, which was sufficient. This scale provides information on the degree of childcare stress, with higher scores indicating more stressful childcare.

Accumulative fatigue symptom index

The accumulative fatigue symptom index was developed by Koshikawa, *et al.* [12] to measure cumulative fatigue in work environments. More specifically, it assesses “anxiety symptoms” (10 items), “depression” (10 items), “general fatigue” (11 items), “irritability” (8 items), “decreased motivation to work” (11 items), “decreased energy” (11 items), “chronic fatigue” (6 items), and “physical discomfort” (9 items), resulting in a total of 76 items. For this study, the subscale “decreased motivation to work” was omitted because it was not applicable; instead, the word “work” was replaced with “childrearing” because this study focuses on conditions caused by childrearing. The final scale consisted of 65 items and seven factors. Changes to the scale were made with the consent of the scale’s creator. The alpha coefficients for the internal consistency of the items for each of the seven factors ranged from 0.87 to 0.89, which was adequate. This index provides insight into the cumulative fatigue experienced by mothers while raising their children, with higher scores indicating increased cumulative fatigue.

Method of analysis

Questionnaires with incomplete responses and those filled out by mothers without husbands were removed from the analysis. Open-ended responses were read, and expressions of confidence in childrearing were extracted as raw data. Similar descriptions of confidence were grouped together and assigned subcategory names. For content that was similar to that found in an earlier study by Shimizu [3], the same categories and subcategories were used in order to facilitate comparisons between this study and Shimizu [3].

The five-point scales for childcare stress and childcare happiness were summed for each subscale, with 1 to 5 points given for each item, true to false. The accumulative fatigue index is a two-point scale, with one point given for “applicable”. The scores for the items included in each subscale were summed to obtain the subscale score. The maximum scores for each scale were 65 for parenting happiness, 80 for parenting stress, and 65 for cumulative fatigue. Confidence in Parenting were used as the dependent variables, and a binomial logistic regression analysis with increasing variables and likelihood ratios was conducted. First, crosstabulations and χ^2 tests were conducted to examine the relationship of confidence in childrearing with childrearing attributes and background. Next, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the relationship between physical and mental health (quantitative variables and non-normality) and confidence in childrearing. Next, a correlation analysis targeting the variables of physical and mental health was conducted to confirm that there was no strong correlation (multicollinearity). Based on the results of this test, the same analysis was conducted for mothers of three-year-olds and mothers of five-year-olds while using “economic insecurity due to difficulties in living,” “confiding in husband” (binary qualitative variables), and physical and mental health (12 items excluding “physical problems”) as independent variables, both variables with a probability of significance of less than 5%. The significance level for the analysis was set at less than 5%, and IBM SPSS Statistics Ver. 24.0 was used for statistical analysis.

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Ethical considerations

The requests asking for participation in the survey clearly stated that cooperation was voluntary and that identifying information would be collected in order to facilitate follow-up longitudinal analysis. The letter also clearly stated that recipients would not suffer any disadvantages if they decided not to cooperate with the survey or to withdraw during the survey. In addition, although the questionnaire asked respondents to provide their names and addresses to facilitate follow-up research, it was clearly stated that their names and addresses would be used only for this survey. It also stated that after collection, participants would be numbered and processed without the use of identifying names and that the data would be destroyed after the survey and analysis were completed. An ethical review was conducted by the Ethics Committee of N University, to which the researcher belongs, and approval (#28) was obtained in 2010.

Results

Participant demographics

Among the 700 mothers of five-year-old children contacted to take the survey, 400 responded to the survey request, resulting in a response rate of 57.1%. The sample size was deemed sufficient after the removal of samples with missing values, and only data derived from questionnaires with complete responses to all questions was counted as valid. In total, 290 mothers were included in the analysis, excluding mothers without husbands and incomplete responses. For mothers of three-year-old children, we used data collected from mothers surveyed in the same district between July 2015 and January 2017 using the same method. For the 482 mothers who cooperated in this survey (76.8% response rate), missing value responses and mothers without husbands were removed to ensure data consistency with the current study, resulting in a total of 400 valid responses for data analysis.

Childrearing circumstances related to confidence in childrearing

Among the 290 mothers analyzed, 98 (33.8%) did not feel confident in their childrearing abilities. Among the mothers who reported feeling confident in childrearing, 93 (94.9%) described the childrearing scenarios in which they felt confident. Categories are indicated by 【 】, subcategories by [], and free descriptions by “ ”. The analysis revealed 97 raw data points. The categories, in order of the associated amount of raw data, consisted of 【presence and response of the child】 , 【the mother’s awareness of her own changes】 , and 【feeling supported by those around them】 . The categories are introduced below alongside their subcategories and raw data (Table 1).

Table 1: Childcare situations in which mothers with 5-year-old children feel confident about raising their children

n =93 (138)				
Category	Subcategory	Number of cases	n	Total Number of cases
Presence and response of the child	He is growing up to be a good child	23 (25)	21 (27)	61 (78)
	He is growing up to be a good child	20 (19)	19 (20)	
	The way the older child is growing up	9 (19)	9 (20)	
	The child needs me	9 (9)	9 (9)	
	* <Communication with the child has been established>	6	6	
the Mother's awareness of her own changes	Feeling more relaxed in child rearing	9 (23)	9 (23)	29 (65)
	I am doing well in raising my child	6 (11)	6 (11)	
	I feel that I have done well	5 (9)	5 (9)	
	I enjoy raising my child	5 (5)	5 (5)	
	I have experience in child rearing	2 (13)	2 (2)	
	Can give advice to others	2 (2)	2 (2)	
	* <I feel we are all the same>	2	2	
Feeling supported by those around them	Accepted by people around me	6 (10)	6 (10)	7 (21)
	Feel supported by those around me	1 (11)	1 (11)	
		Total 97件 (164件)		

* Categories marked with “*” are those found among mothers with 3-year-old children.

The numbers in parentheses next to the numbers indicate the number of cases among mothers of 3-year-olds.

Presence and response of the child

The “presence and response of the child” category consisted of four subcategories. From the respondent’s description “They listened carefully to what I said and was able to do it by himself”. “The child is growing up”. such as, “I heard words of encouragement from the child’s mouth when they were treating others with kindness”. She felt confident in her childrearing because “they are growing up to be good children. I am less anxious now that my eldest daughter is eight years old, and I have a better understanding of her growth process”. They also felt confident in their childrearing abilities because of the growth of their older children. They also felt confident in their parenting because they were “needed by their children”. For example, one respondent stated, “My children tell me that they love their mother even though my parenting is inadequate and messy”.

Mothers’ awareness of their own changes

Confidence in childrearing based on the mother’s awareness of her own changes consisted of six subcategories. The most common subcategory among respondents was “I feel that I have less time for my children and more time for myself”. The most common response for this subcategory was, “I feel I have more time to raise my children”. For example, consider the following response: “I am raising my third child. I finally realized that I can spend my time without getting upset if I listen to others and acknowledge what my children have done. I think this is the result of my persistence in dealing with my children, even though they are older now. While I have been spending as much time as possible with my child despite my worries, he still talks a lot about school and other things without any strong rebellion when he was an adolescent in junior high school. I was worried about many things and lost confidence in my parenting abilities. But, I feel that offering daily morning greetings, treating my children as equals (I don’t know if it was good or not), saying thank you, and apologizing when I was wrong were all good things”. She also stated that having “things that I feel I have done well” has given her confidence in her childrearing abilities. In addition, she stated, “I am irritated at times, but the enjoyment outweighs the frustration several times over. I enjoy raising my child”. She continued, “I don’t get upset anymore, even when my child catches a cold. I have experience in childrearing”. She also said, “I am able to encourage other mothers and be kind to them. This helped them to become aware of their ability to give advice to those around them, and it gave them confidence”.

Feeling supported by those around them

The category “feeling supported by those around them” was composed of two subcategories. The respondents felt “recognized by the people around me,” such as in the following response: “I feel confident when my neighbors say, ‘you are doing a good job,’ even when I don’t think I am doing well”. “I feel supported by the people around me”. “It’s not easy, but I’m managing to raise three boys with the help of those around me”. Respondents also felt that they were “recognized by the people around them” and gained confidence. For example, one respondent said, “I’m having a hard time, but I’m managing to raise three boys with the help of the people around me”.

Comparison of mothers’ mental and physical health

On the scale measuring physical and mental health, the mothers of five-year-old children had the highest response for “joy in raising children” (4.74), followed by “bonding with children” and “gratitude for their husband. followed by “bonding with my child” and “gratitude for my husband”. The highest value for parenting stress was “physical and mental fatigue” at 2.30, followed by “lack of support from husband” and “childcare anxiety”. Regarding cumulative fatigue, “state of irritability” had the highest value at 0.25, followed by “general fatigue,” “signs of chronic fatigue,” “depression,” “decreased energy,” “signs of anxiety,” and “physical discomfort”. Compared to mothers of three-year-olds, mothers of five-year-olds reported significantly lower levels of “mental and physical fatigue” (parenting stress) and fewer “chronic fatigue symptoms” (cumulative tiredness). Although not significantly different, mothers with five-year-old children tended to report lower parenting happiness and “gratitude to husband” and higher parenting stress and “lack of support from husband” than mothers with three-year-old children (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of physical and mental health of mothers of 3-year-olds and mothers of 5-year-olds

Scale	Subscale	Age of child	n	Subscale Mean	Item Mean	sd	uApproval
Childcare Happiness	Accumulative fatigue	3 years old	400	23.60	4.72	2.39	0.45
		5 years old	290	23.69	4.74	2.35	
	Bonding with child	3 years old	400	17.81	4.45	2.62	0.61
		5 years old	290	17.80	4.45	2.76	
	Gratitude for husband	3 years old	400	17.66	4.42	2.72	0.22
		5 years old	290	17.32	4.33	3.06	
Childcare Happiness	Mental and physical fatigue	9 years old	400	15.17	2.53	5.83	0.00 **
		5 years old	290	13.81	2.30	5.47	
	Anxiety about raising children	3 years old	400	10.84	1.81	4.56	0.93
		5 years old	290	10.92	1.82	4.82	
	Lack of support from husband	3 years old	400	8.62	2.16	3.99	0.22
		5 years old	290	9.07	2.26	4.24	
Accumulative fatigue	Signs of Anxiety	3 years old	400	1.66	0.17	2.10	0.31
		5 years old	290	1.47	0.15	1.88	
	Depression	3 years old	400	1.58	0.16	1.90	0.08
		5 years old	290	1.76	0.18	1.88	
	General fatigue	3 years old	400	2.27	0.21	2.10	0.45
		5 years old	290	2.43	0.22	2.19	
State of irritability	3 years old	400	1.93	0.24	1.84	0.86	
	5 years old	290	1.97	0.25	1.88		
Decreased	3 years old	400	1.77	0.16	2.49	1.00	
	5 years old	290	1.77	0.16	2.39		
Signs of Chronic fatigue	3 years old	400	1.63	0.27	1.78	0.01 **	
	5 years old	290	1.23	0.21	1.48		
Physical discomfort	3 years old	400	1.08	0.12	1.46	0.22	
	5 years old	290	1.18	0.13	1.44		

Mann-Whitney U 検定 **p<.01

Relationship of mothers’ confidence in their childrearing abilities with their attributes, childrearing circumstances, and mental and physical health

Analyses by age, number of births, household structure, employment status, and childrearing background show that among mothers with 5-year-old children, significantly more mothers were able to confide in and discuss childrearing with their husbands compared to mothers who lacked confidence in childrearing. There were no significant differences in the other items. However, among mothers of 3-year-old children, significantly more mothers who lacked confidence in their childrearing abilities also had difficulties in their lives and were worried about their financial situation (Table 3). Furthermore, with respect to the relationship between physical and mental health and confidence in child rearing, there were significant differences for all items except “physical discomfort” for mothers of 3-year-old children. Meanwhile, among mothers of 5-year-old children, there were no significant differences in 5 of the 12 items that were significant at age 3, and mothers with confidence in child rearing were in contrast, there were no significant differences among mothers of 5-year-olds in five of the 12 items that were significantly different among mothers of 3-year-olds. “Anxiety symptoms,” “state of irritability,” and “loss of energy” were significantly lower (Table 3).

Factors related to confidence in parenting

Confidence in parenting tended to be lower among mothers of 5-year-olds than among mothers of 3-year-olds. Logistic regression analysis revealed that mothers of 5-year-olds selected “joy of childrearing,” “anxiety about childrearing,” “lack of support from husband,”

Table 3: Association between mothers' perceived confidence in parenting and their attributes and parenting background

Item	Categories.	Mothers of 3-Year-Olds (n=400)				Mothers of 5-Year-Olds (n=290)			
		Confidence in childrearing		x ²	Confidence in childrearing		x ²		
		Yes	No		Yes	No			
Age of mothers	In their 20s	22 29.7%	47 71.3%		8 44.4%	10 55.6%			
	In their 30s	101 38.5%	161 61.5%		69 35.0%	128 65.0%			
	In their 40s	30 43.5%	39 56.5%		21 28.0%	54 72.0%			
Number of births	1childbirth	29 33.0%	59 67.0%		12 35.3%	22 64.7%			
	2 or more	124 39.7%	188 60.3%		86 33.6%	170 66.4%			
Mother's employment status	Housewife	79 29.6%	138 70.4%		36 34.0%	70 66.0%			
	Working	74 40.4%	109 59.6%		62 33.7%	122 66.3%			
Household structure	Nuclear family	115 39.4%	177 60.6%		69 32.5%	143 67.5%			
	3 generation household	38 35.2%	70 64.8%		29 37.1%	49 62.9%			
Confided in and discussed with husband	Able to	132 39.4%	203 60.6%		84 36.8%	144 63.2%			
	Cannot	21 32.3%	44 67.7%		14 22.6%	48 77.4%			
Confided in and discussed with Mother	Able to	118 40.7%	172 59.3%		73 34.1%	141 65.9%			
	Cannot	35 31.8%	75 68.2%		25 33.0%	51 67.0%			
People other than husband and biological mother to consult	Yes	140 39.5%	214 60.5%		92 35.2%	169 64.8%			
	No, I don't	13 28.3%	33 71.7%		6 20.7%	23 79.3%			
Childcare help available	Yes	145 39.2%	225 60.8%		93 34.7%	175 65.3%			
	No, I don't	8 26.7%	22 73.3%		5 22.7%	17 77.3%			
Difficulty in living and economic insecurity	No, I don't	106 41.9%	147 58.1%		65 37.6%	108 62.4%			
	Yes, I can.	47 32.0%	100 68.0%		33 28.2%	84 71.8%			

x² Approval *p<.05

and “being able to talk to husband” as factors related to confidence in childrearing. Meanwhile, “joy of childrearing” and “lack of support from husband” were found to be related to “feeling confident in childrearing,” while “anxiety about childrearing” and “being able to consult one’s husband” were related to “feeling confident in childrearing”. Additionally, “being able to ask for help” was related to “not feeling confident in childrearing” (Table 4). That is, the analysis reveals that mothers who have no support from their husbands, with an increase in childrearing joy and lack of support from their husbands, are more confident in childrearing (Table 5). In addition, mothers who can talk to their husbands about increasing childcare anxiety were shown to be less confident in their childrearing (Table 3).

Table 4: Confidence in Parenting and Mental and Physical Health as Perceived by Mothers of 3-Year-Olds and Mothers of 5-Year-Olds

Scale	(Subscale)	Mothers of 3-Year-Olds				Mothers of 5-Year-Olds			
		Confidence in childrearing		Confidence in childrearing		Confidence in childrearing		Confidence in childrearing	
		Yes (n=153)	No (n=247)	Yes (n=98)	No (n=192)				
Childcare Happiness	Childcare joy	24.1 1.6	23.3 2.7 *	24.3 1.4	23.4 2.7 *				
	Bonding with child	2.3	17.6 2.8 *	18.1 2.5	17.7 2.9				
Childcare Stress	Gratitude for husband	18.3 2.3	17.3 2.9 *	18.0 2.9	17.0 3.1 *				
	Mental and physical fatigue	14.4 5.9	15.6 5.8 *	12.8 5.2	14.3 5.6 *				
Anxiety about raising children		9.2 3.8	11.8 4.7 *	8.5 3.4	12.2 5.0 *				
	Lack of support from husband	8.0 4.0	9.0 3.9 *	8.8 4.1	9.2 4.3				
Accumulativefatigue	Anxiety signs	1.4 2.0	1.8 2.1 *	1.0 1.4	1.7 2.1 *				
	Depression	0.2 1.6	1.8 2.0 *	1.4 1.3	1.9 2.1				
General fatigue		2.0 2.0	2.4 2.1 *	2.2 1.9	2.6 2.3				
	State of irritability	1.5 1.7	2.2 1.9 *	1.4 1.6	2.3 2.0 *				
Chronic fatigue signs	Decreased	1.3 2.1	2.1 2.7 *	1.3 1.9	2.0 2.6 *				
	Physical discomfort	0.9 1.4	1.2 1.5	1.1 1.3	1.2 1.5				

Mann-WhitneyU Approval *p<.05

Table 5: Factors related to confidence in parenting as perceived by mothers of 3-year-olds and mothers of 5-year-olds (logistic regression analysis)

Independent variable	Mothers of 3-Year-Olds			EXP (B) 95% Mothers of 5-Year-Olds		Mothers of 5-Year-Olds			EXP (B) 95% Mothers of 5-Year-Olds	
	Partial regression coefficient	Odds ratio	p	Lower limit	Upper limit	Partial regression coefficient	Odds ratio	p	Lower limit	Upper limit
Childcare joy	0.132	1.141	0.021	1.020	1.276	0.171	1.186	0.027	1.020	1.380
Anxiety about raising children	-0.134	0.874	0.000	0.828	0.923	-0.237	0.789	0.000	0.727	0.855
Lack of support from husband						0.117	1.124	0.004	1.037	1.218
Can talk to husband						-0.934	0.393	0.030	0.169	0.913
Constant	-2.211	0.110	0.119			-3.238	0.039	0.098		
Coefficient of determination	0.126					0.258				
Model goodness of fit	p=0.000					P=0.000				
n	400					290				

Meanwhile, “joy in child rearing” and “anxiety in child rearing” were selected by mothers of three-year-olds. The variable with the strongest influence on confidence in childrearing was “joy in childrearing,” which was related to “feeling confident in childrearing”. Meanwhile, “anxiety in childrearing” was related to “not feeling confident in childrearing”. This demonstrates that mothers with higher levels of childrearing joy feel more confident in childrearing and that mothers with high childrearing anxiety feel less confident in childrearing.

Considerations

The physical and mental health of mothers of 5-year-old children

Compared to mothers of 3-year-old children, mothers of 5-year-old children showed significantly lower levels of “mental and physical fatigue” in terms of childcare stress and fewer “chronic fatigue symptoms” in terms of accumulated fatigue, indicating that the physical and mental fatigue of mothers subside as their children grow older. Mothers of 5-year-old children exhibited less appreciation for their husbands in terms of childcare happiness compared to mothers of 3-year-old children; they also showed reduced stress in terms of childcare stress compared to mothers with 3-year-old children. Stress due to “lack of support from husbands” tended to be higher among mothers with 5-year-old children than among mothers with 3-year-old children. It can be inferred that while physical fatigue decreases as children grow, support from husbands also decreases, resulting in a reduced sense of gratitude. Moreover, it can be concluded that the presence of husbands in childrearing diminished as children grew older.

The childrearing confidence of mothers with 5-year-old children

In total, 33.8% of mothers with five-year-old children felt more confident in their childrearing abilities compared to when their children were three months (49.4%), one year and six months (39.6%), and three years (38.3%) old [1-3]. The difficulties and worries faced by mothers changed with the ages of their children. The types of problems and worries also increased [13]. Moreover, mothers found it difficult to have confidence in their childrearing abilities, particularly when their children were around the age of five; at this point, they struggled with their relationship with their children. Regarding the childrearing circumstances in which they felt confident in their childrearing abilities, the majority of the mothers indicated 【 presence and response of the child】 and 【mothers’ own awareness of change】. As captured by the category 【 feeling supported by those around them】 , several mothers felt that they were recognized and supported by those around them. The childrearing circumstances related to self-confidence in childrearing are similar to positive

emotions, such as gratitude generated by childrearing, which is associated with childcare happiness. That is, confidence in childrearing is accompanied by emotions similar to the childcare happiness felt by mothers, and previous research [14] has shown that these emotions are caused by relationships with children. It has also been suggested that positive emotions motivate people to direct their attention to people other than themselves, which enhances wellbeing [15]. This suggests that the confidence in parenting skills that can be gained from the child as the object of parenting can elicit positive emotions in mothers and is considered a meaningful perspective for supporting mothers. The mothers of the 3-year-olds did not have the subcategories of 'I was able to communicate with my child' and 'I feel that everyone is the same'. The mothers of the 5-year-olds perceived the changes in their children's development as more multifaceted in that they were able to reflect on themselves and objectively compare themselves and their interactions with the mothers around them. This may have been because they were able to reflect on themselves, compare themselves with other mothers around them, and assess their interactions objectively. In the other subcategories, childrearing circumstances among mothers of five-year-old children that were similar to those of mothers of 3-year-olds [3] led to feelings of confidence in childrearing, which is considered a universal childrearing circumstance in which mothers of three- to five-year-olds feel confidence in childrearing.

Factors related to confidence in childrearing and support for childrearing

No differences were found in the rate of confidence in childrearing according to the individual attributes of mothers. According to a study by Oikawa, *et al.* [16], life satisfaction among mothers with infant children was higher for mothers with one child than for mothers with multiple children. Particularly in the context of the parenting factor, mothers with one child reported higher satisfaction with "being a parent" and "life as a parent" than mothers with multiple children. Although it is assumed that satisfaction with oneself and satisfaction with parenting are related to the experience of parenting, the present results indicate that other parenting background factors are not affected by the attribute factor in terms of the confidence of mothers of 5-year-olds in their parenting.

In relation to the parenting confidence of mothers with 5-year-old children, mothers with low confidence in parenting reported a high ratio of "being able to talk to their husbands about parenting". Logistic regression analysis showed that the higher the "joy of childrearing" and the "lack of support from husband"-that is, the less support a mother gets from her husband-the more confident the mothers were in their childrearing. In contrast, mothers who had high "childrearing anxiety" and "could consult their husbands" had less confidence in childrearing. 3-year-olds were affected only by 'joy in childrearing,' and 'anxiety about childrearing,' and the difference between three- and five-year-olds is related to 'husbands.

Mothers must rear their children without the cooperation of their husbands, and it is thought that they gain confidence by taking care of their children without support. Moreover, because mothers who lack confidence in childrearing consult their husbands more often than mothers who lack confidence in childrearing, it can be deduced that mothers who lack confidence in child rearing consult their husbands while raising their children. Mothers who do not consult their husbands are thought to have gained confidence in childrearing without consulting their husbands. Being able to confide in and consult with one's husband was associated with confidence among mothers in raising their children aged one year and six months [2,4]; however, mothers were confident in raising their children up until they reached the age of five even without the support and consultation of their husbands. Cooperation from husbands until the child reached the approximate age of three was considered significant. Mothers of 5-year-old children had lower levels of physical and mental fatigue and displayed fewer signs of chronic fatigue. Moreover, depression and general fatigue were associated with confidence in childrearing among mothers of 3-year-olds. Chronic fatigue was not significantly associated. That is, even though fatigue decreased, this did not affect the rate at which mothers of five-year-olds or 3-year-olds with husbands felt confident in raising their children. This indicates that they gain confidence in child rearing in an environment where they do not have the support of their husbands and do not consult their husbands. While the support of husbands and appreciation for husbands tends to decrease as children grow older, by the time the parents have a 5-year-old child, they gain confidence in childrearing based on "the joy of childrearing," which has the highest odds ratio. In other words, by the time the child is five years old, they are likely to have gained confidence in their relationship with their child. This suggests that

promoting support that reduces childrearing anxiety that arises as the child grows and to increase the joy of childrearing will lead to increased confidence in childrearing.

It has been shown that mothers' childrearing anxiety is highest when their children are three or four years old and lowest when their children are not year one year old; however, there are considerable individual differences [17]. Being able to consult with people other than one's husband or mother at a time when childcare anxiety is acute, as well as the support of one's husband, leads to a more stable and confident approach by the mother toward her child. This effect is more pronounced when the child is older. In addition, in a comparison between mothers of children with atopic dermatitis (AD) aged three to five years old and mothers of children without AD, the sense among mothers that they were raising their children together with their husbands reduced the perceived anxiety (state anxiety) at a certain point or scene [18] regardless of whether the child had AD. It has been suggested that a good relationship with others is necessary for mothers of 5-year-old children to be able to talk to their husbands when they do not feel confident about childrearing. This, in turn, is key for mothers with 5-year-old children to gain confidence. Therefore, it is important for professionals to support mothers in gaining joy in childrearing by confirming whether they can consult with their husbands and by discussing social support options for childrearing with mothers. Limitations of this study include the low percentage of valid responses due to many missing responses and the fact that the lack of support from husbands regarding childcare anxiety is a perception of wives and does not indicate the actual state of support.

Conclusion

Mothers of 5-year-olds felt less confident in their childrearing abilities than mothers of 3-year-olds. In addition, they recognized that they were valued by their children and others and felt a change in themselves that led to greater parenting confidence. In addition, mothers of 5-year-olds reported lower "physical and mental fatigue" and fewer "signs of chronic fatigue" compared to mothers of 3-year-olds, indicating that the physical stress of childrearing had eased. Mothers who did not have the support of their husbands were more confident in their parenting. Mothers with 5-year-old children considered support an important factor in decreasing "parenting anxiety" and increasing "parenting joy". Mothers who lacked confidence in their childrearing abilities were able to consult their husbands, suggesting that husbands continue to have a role to play in childrearing.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest related to this research.

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