A Comparative Study of the Determinants of Strength of Kinship Tie among China, Japan, and Korea

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to find some features of family and compare meanings of family in China, Japan and Korea. In history, these three nations continuously interacted and affected each other. Therefore we can find many similarities in many aspects such as Confucian ideas, patriotism to their nation, attach importance to relationship filial duties to their parents or elders, strong family ties. However, though these three nations are close to each other in the distance and have a lot of similarities, still have amounts of different features in many aspects. Each of these countries has developed in different contexts of society and industrial progress courses.

Although there are several points to be considered, China, Japan and Korea were controlled by kinship principles (Lee Kwang-Kyu, 1990). A variety of factors, of course, are important to understand each society. However, kinship structure and relationship are really important to understand particular social aspect properly (Kim, Woen-Skik, 2003; Jang, Kyoung-Sub, 2009). Confucian ideas were shared important foundations of everyday life in traditional China, Japan and Korea. Simultaneously, Confucian ideas emphasized manners in family, relationship in kinship structure, and the customary formalities of family Lee Kwang-Kyu, 1990). Therefore, examining and understanding about family and kinship structure is really important in social research and study.

Nevertheless, in the course of time, many social values changed in each of these countries. Traditional family values, structures and kinship ties are weakening in many societies. Role of family members are differentiated in transition of 'Nuclear Family' (Parsons and Bale, 1956). In these contexts, China, Japan and Korea passed different industrializing and modernizing paths. Thus, we

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can predict some differences are existing in family value and kinship tie in current three countries in Eastern Asia. But we don't have sufficient studies and researches about family value and kinship tie differences among China, Japan and Korea. Can we say these countries have common in family value and kinship tie? If differences are exist, what are significant determinants or reasonable descriptions? In this paper, I try to examine about some issues about family value and kinship tie differences among China, Japan and Korea.

2. Previous studies about Family and Kinship tie in China, Japan and Korea.

China, Japan and Korea shared Confucian traditional culture and historically had close mutual relation. These countries had traditional patriarchal familism and extended family structure principles, agrarian family structure. Therefore, many sorts of family structure and value system had various similar features among three countries (Choi, Jai-Suk, 1976)

Korean's familism is rooted on family, but Japanese's familism is rooted on social group. In traditional Korea and Japan, house(家) is basic primary unit of society. House(家) means not only ' current household' but also concepts of 'time continuum' which contain past ancestors and future decedents. Therefore, succeeding the rights of a patriarch did hugely important function in family (Byun, Hwa-Soon and Kim, Hyun-Joo, 1992). In Korea, Kinship with blood relatedness was the most important. Therefore, only the eldest blood related son had right to succeed the right of a patriarch. Kinship in paternal line was the most important element to be accepted in family and 異姓不養 principle (If one have different family name – it was succeeded by paternal line – the one would never be nurtured in family) was strongly kept in daily life(Kim, Eung-Ryul, 1989). This strong principle of kinship could be applied in adoption. In traditional Korea, if one have no descendent to continue family line, the one would find and adopt a child of relative in paternal line who does not belonged to the same surname and same family origin(Cho, Jung-Moon and Chang, Sang-Hee, 2009). It is to say, Korean traditional family thoroughly exclude from their family clan who were not related in blood kinship. Japan had relatively weak family and kinship principles. In Japan traditional family, although the eldest son was the priority selection to succeed the right of a patriarch, valued more in the talent of

successor. So, the second eldest son or adopted child, son-in-low could be the successor of the right of a patriarch Moon, Ok-Pyo, 1986). This tendency could be applied in adoption, too. If someone one had enough capacity or possessed qualified standard, the one could be adopted in family member and succeed the family line. In China, the kinship principle which emphasize on paternal line was similar to Korea. Nevertheless, the principles that who don't have different family name or related in blood was important were relatively weaker than Korea. In Chinese traditional family, If one didn't have descendants to continue family line, the one adopted a child in paternal line preferentially. However, if that attempt was hard to achieve, the one accepted a child who was not related in blood relationship. In accordance with these features of traditional family in three countries, Korea had the most closed and exclusive family principles of constructing family among China, Japan and Korea (Lee Kwang-Kyu, 1990).

There are many common senses about family, Korean traditional family emphasized on filial duty of Confucian principles and applied to the loyalty to the nation. Therefore, filial duty about their family and elder person were the most important principle in integration of whole society (Park, Young-Sin, 1985). However, in Japan traditional society, 'loyalty' was proper than 'filial duty' for applying to the feudalism. So, Japan's loyalty centered Confucian ideology could dilute the familial value, filial duties and family system than Korea's Confucian system (hyun, Hwa-Soon and Kim, Hyun-Joo, 1992). In Chinese traditional family and society had similar features of Korean's one.

3. Method and Variables for analysis.

I selected the AsiaBarometer data of 2006. Samples sizes for analysis is like below <Table 1>

<Table 1 > Samples sizes of selected data (Year=2006)

Country	China	Japan	Korea
Selected Cases for analysis	N=2000	N=1000	N=1023

To compare differences of family value and kinship-tie in China, Japan and Korea, I selected some variables related to family life. By using descriptive statistics results, I compared relative differences between those three countries. At first, I made some mean score comparison about satisfaction of family life and marriage. And the next, I conducted a multiple variable regression analysis to predict mean score by some independent variables. I entered some demographic variables (Age, Education level, Annual household income) to examine the coefficients and effect on satisfaction score. Except 'Age' variable, I did some measure to each variable of different country because the variables contained different categories according to context of three countries. About 'Education level' ,the first interval included 'elementary school and middle school (junior high school)' because the first category in Japan included middle school. The second was high school in three countries and the third was 'above university' level. About 'Annual household income', as the first category of China rated about 50% of all respondents. So, I conducted a dummy variable which is under 50% of frequency to '0', and which is over 50% of frequency to '1'. And I enter 'religion' to analyze the differences by religion. By consideration of frequency in each country, I divided the religion to 'No religion', 'Catholic and Protestant (Christian)' , 'Buddhist' and 'Other religions'. 'No religion' was the reference group because this category had the most frequency compared to other categories.

And then, I selected some other variables to compare issues related with family value and kinship-tie among China, Japan and Korea. I compared in descriptive statistics level and the basic unit of analysis was mostly country.

4. Results and Analysis

<Table 2> Mean scores of satisfaction in family life and marriage by Country

Country	Satisfaction – Family Life	Satisfaction – Marriage (If married)
China	3.61 (0.921)	4.08 (0.892)
Japan	3.93 (0.741)	4.06 (0.742)
Korea	3.63 (0.783)	3.69 (0.813)

* Score in the bracket is standard deviation

At first, the mean score of satisfaction in family and marriage were like above. In the satisfaction of family life, Japan's mean score was the highest and China's was the lowest one. In the satisfaction of marriage (if married), China's mean score was the highest and Korean's was the lowest one. Thought China showed the lowest family life satisfaction score, they seemed to be relatively satisfied in marriage among three countries. Japan showed relatively high mean score of satisfaction in family life and marriage, however, Korea showed relatively low mean score of satisfaction.

To predict who have higher satisfaction score in family life and marriage, I conducted multiple regression analysis. The results are like below.

<Table 3> Multiple regression coefficients to satisfaction score of family life

	China	Japan	Korea
Constant	3.233***(.100)	3.714***(.165)	3.173***(.177)
Buddhist	.28(.061)	.67(.060)	.18(.066)
Catholic+Christian	.128(.105)	-.114(.201)	.11(.058)
Other religion	-.073(.126)	.018(.142)	.159(.193)
Age	.001(.002)	.175(.002)	.000(.002)

Gender	.006(.041)	.954(.055)	.001(.051)
Education Level	.120***(.028)	.86*(.046)	.135***(.046)
Annual Household Income	.197***(.044)	.187***(.056)	.292***(.053)

1) * p < .1 , ** p< .01 , *** p< .001

2) Score in the bracket is standard deviation

In three countries, except Education level and Annual household income, all of the entered variables are insignificant. In this case, the model what I conducted was not fit to analyze about satisfaction of family life. However, in all of three countries, Education level and Annual household income had significant influence to satisfaction of family life (at least in p<.1 level). Therefore, with other variables are controlled, the more educated person would show higher satisfaction score of family life. And also, with other variables are controlled, those who have more annual household income would show higher satisfaction score of family life. These results are easy to understand in a common sense. Those who have higher education level could have more opportunity to acquire higher position and status, social capital in society (Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, 1967; Nan-Lin, 2001). And the more educated person and earned person could keep their family from poverty. Because poverty has bad correlation with family trouble, higher income level could exert positive influence to satisfaction level of family life (Yoon, Young-Za, Kim, Jung-Ok, Hyun, En-Min, Jun, Young-Za, Yu, Kye-Sook, Kim,En-Kyoung, 2009).

<Table 4> Multiple regression coefficients to satisfaction score of marriage

	China	Japan	Korea
Constant	3.997***(.115)	4.280***(.196)	3.038***(.224)
Buddhist	.087(.061)	.140**(.069)	.079(.076)
Catholic+Christian	-.122(.118)	.099(.239)	.159**(.069)
Other religion	.166(.152)	-.010(.158)	.118(.217)
Age	-.001(.002)	-.010***(.003)	.001(.003)
Gender	.100**(.045)	.085(.063)	.223***(.063)

Education Level	.079***(.031)	.049(.046)	.156**(.053)
Annual Household Income	.008(.049)	.044(.056)	.213***(.062)

1) * p < .1 , ** p< .01 , *** p< .001

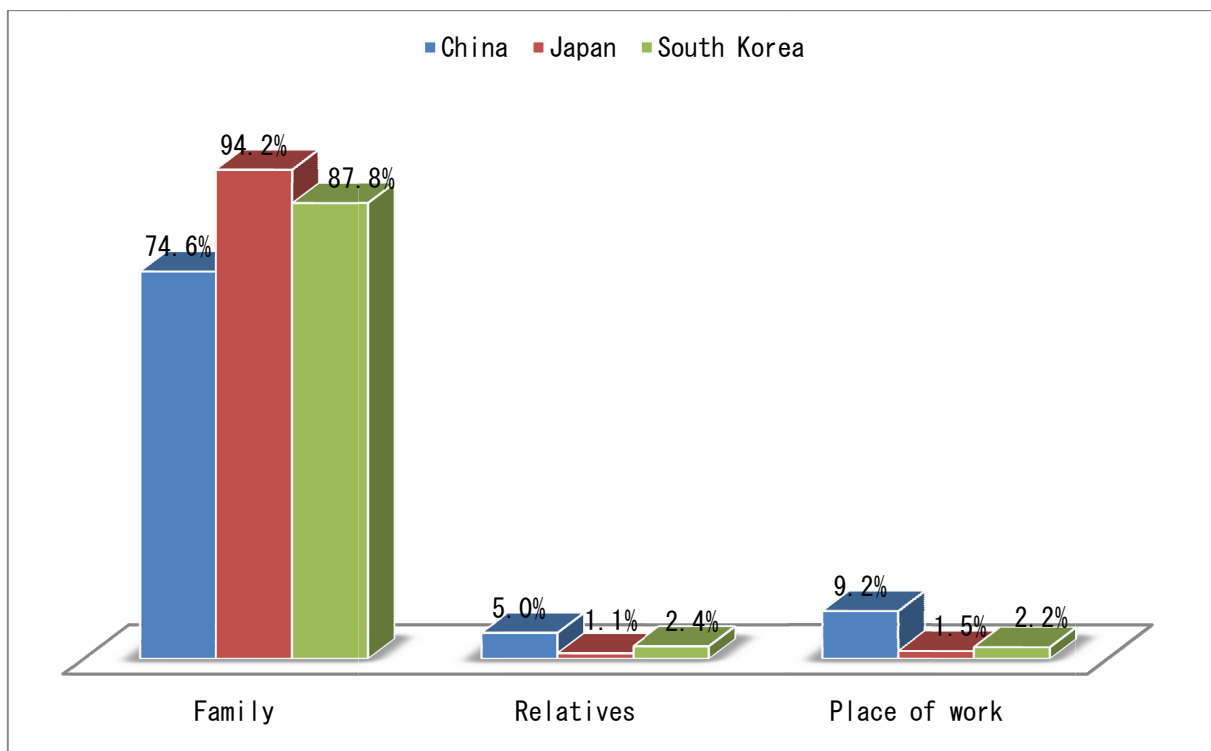2) Score in the bracket is standard deviation

In china, I can't insist that religion and age would influence on satisfaction score in marriage because regression coefficients are not significant. So I can analyze that a believer in Buddhist, Catholic and Protestant or other religions doesn't show significant difference between who don't have religion. Additionally, I can't insist that age would have significant influence on satisfaction score. However, gender (p<.01) and educational level(p<.001) had significant regression coefficients. So I can analyze and predict from that result – when other variables are controlled – those who is man, he would show .100 higher satisfaction score in marriage. Like the preceding, when other variables are controlled, if the education level is got higher in one unit, the satisfaction score in marriage would show .079 higher score in marriage. I can analyze that those who have higher education level would show higher satisfaction score in marriage, if other variables are controlled. And men would show higher satisfaction score in marriage, if other variables are controlled.

In Japan, education level and annual household income, gender didn't have significant effect on satisfaction score in marriage. So I can't insist that the higher or lower education level, annual household income or gender would make significant change on the satisfaction score in marriage. However, religion (p<.05) and age (p<.001) variables had significant regression coefficients. Therefore, I can insist that if other variables are controlled, a believer in Buddhist would show .140 higher satisfaction score in marriage than those who don't have religion. And also, when other variables are controlled, if one year added to the respondent's age, the satisfaction score in marriage would be lower in -.010. So, I can predict statistically that Buddhist would have higher satisfaction in marriage, and old respondents have lower satisfaction score in comparison to young married person.

In Korea, age variable doesn't show significant regression coefficients. So, I can't insist that age variable would make significant influence on satisfaction score in marriage. But religion (p<.05), gender (p<.001), education level (p<.05), annual household income (p<.001) variables showed significant regression coefficients. Therefore, I can predict statistically when other variables are

controlled in Korean case 1. Those who is a believer in Catholic or Protestant would show .11 higher satisfaction score in marriage 2. Those whose gender is male would show .233 higher satisfaction score in marriage 3. If the education level get higher in one unit, the satisfaction score in marriage would get higher about .156 4. Those who have higher income would show .213 higher satisfaction score in marriage.
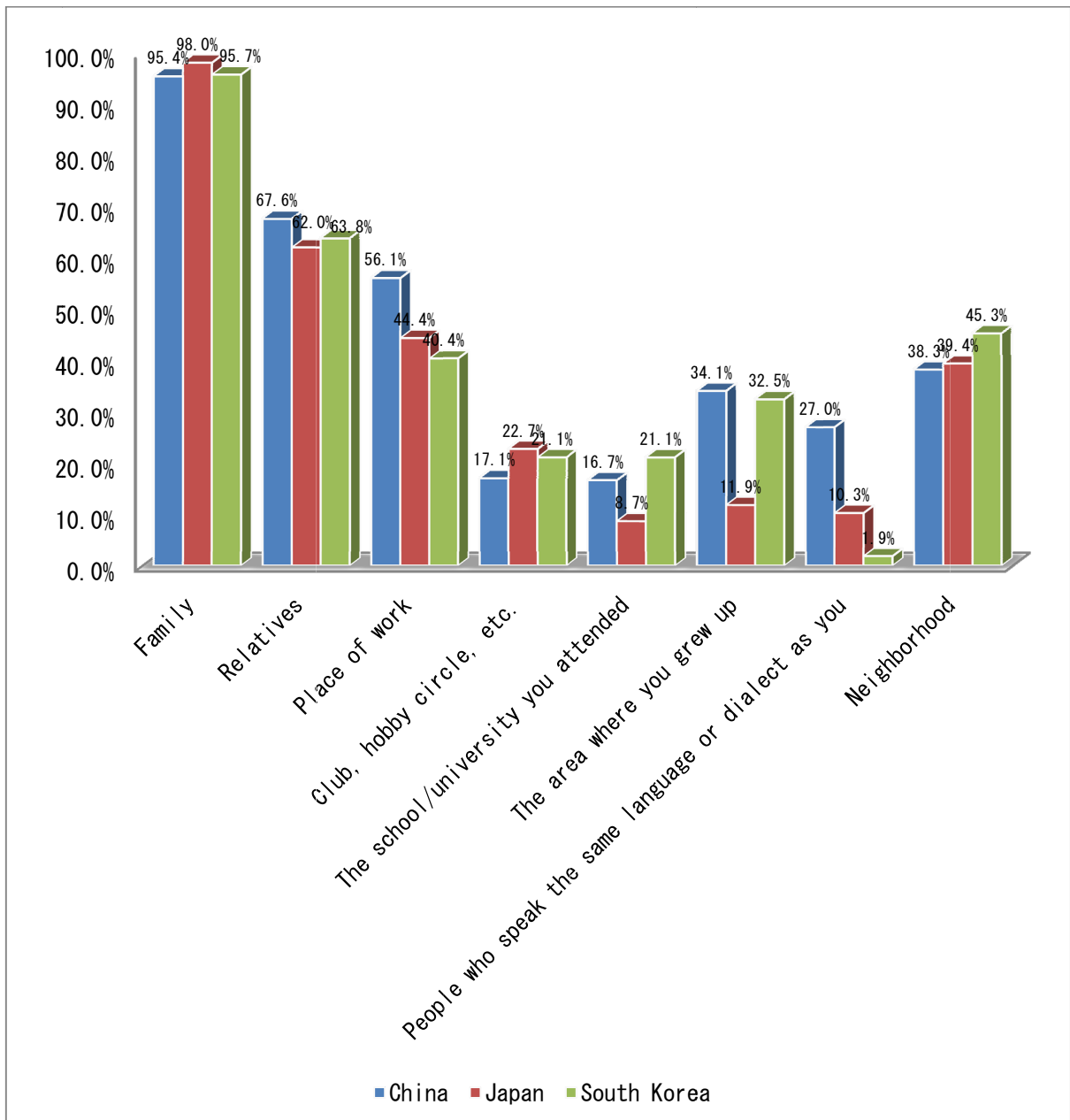
<Figure 1> The most important social circle in your life (Top 3)

As we can see in the figure above, respondents of three countries think family is the most important social circle in their life. China showed relatively lower rate in family compared with other two countries. That's because respondents of other two countries' answer are flowed into family, respondents of China was distributed to other answers 'Relatives, Place of work'. This tendency is clearer in the figure below.

<Figure 2> Important social circle in your life

*. Multiple answer questionnaires

In multiple answers, the most respondents of three countries answered that family is the most important social circle in their life. As same as many previous studies, family and relatives are very important social circle. In china, 'The area where you grew up' and 'people who speak the same language or dialect as you', 'Place of work' are relatively more important than that of Japan, Korea. Korea respondents think 'The school/university you attended' and 'Neighborhood' more important compared to other two countries. In Japan, respondents think family is important a little bit more

than other two countries. However, 'The school/university you attended' and 'The area where you grew up' were not important to Japan respondents compared to other two countries.

<Table 5> Two wishes for your children

country	China		Japan		South Korea	
Gender of children	son	daughter	son	daughter	son	Daughter
Become a great scholar	21.2%	12.9%	2.0%	.4%	17.5%	5.0%
Become a powerful political leader	9.6%	3.3%	1.3%	.0%	7.8%	1.9%
Become very wealthy	27.0%	19.9%	4.4%	1.2%	15.7%	9.7%
Become a loving and charitable person	30.7%	39.8%	37.7%	58.3%	23.2%	38.6%
Become a person respected by the general public	29.2%	14.2%	28.4%	8.9%	47.1%	24.4%
Become more proficient in profession than I am	29.7%	15.1%	6.7%	.9%	15.3%	7.4%
Follow in my footsteps	2.0%	2.2%	.4%	.9%	2.1%	1.1%
Become a person who cares about family	16.6%	21.0%	54.8%	55.6%	30.3%	37.6%
Find a good marriage partner	17.4%	53.6%	7.8%	24.3%	18.9%	53.2%
Become fulfilled spiritually	11.7%	10.0%	39.4%	31.2%	20.7%	19.2%
None of the above	.4%	.4%	1.8%	1.6%	.4%	.5%
Don't know	.9%	1.8%	1.6%	2.1%	.0%	.0%

*. Multiple answer questionnaires (2 choices)

This table shows what the respondents of China, Japan and Korea look to their children for being in the future. This result can show what the respondents emphasis on the children's future.

In China, 'Become a loving and charitable person' was the most frequent desire about their son and 'Become a more proficient professional than I am', 'Become a person respected by the general public' was the next. In comparison with expectation about their son, 'Find a good marriage partner' was the most frequent desire about their daughter and 'Become a loving and charitable person', 'Become a person who cares about their family' were the next.

In Japan, 'Become a person who cares about their family' was the most frequent desire about their son and 'Become fulfilled spiritually', 'Become a loving and charitable person' were the next. In comparison with expectation about their son, 'Become a loving and charitable person' was the most frequent desire about their daughter and 'Become a person who cares about their family', 'Become fulfilled spiritually' were the next.

In Korea, 'Become a person respected by the general public' was the most frequent desire about their son and 'Become a person who cares about their family', 'Become a loving and charitable person' were the next. In comparison with expectation about their son, , 'Find a good marriage partner' was the most frequent desire about their daughter and 'Become a loving and charitable person', 'Become a person who cares about their family' were the next.

<Table 6 > Countermeasures when breadwinner dies or suffers from disease.

	China	Japan	South Korea
Another adult member of the family would become the main breadwinner	65.9%	66.0%	70.9%
Would send one or more of the children out to work	27.7%	9.2%	5.6%
Would get support from relatives	25.7%	7.2%	11.8%
Would get support from neighbors	4.5%	.3%	2.6%
Would get support from members of my	1.5%	.2%	2.9%

religious group			
Would get social welfare payments	17.1%	30.6%	19.4%
Depend on retirement allowance	9.9%	7.7%	12.9%
Have an insurance policy to cover such a situation	12.0%	38.6%	39.6%
Other	21.9%	5.7%	4.2%
Don't know	.3%	3.1%	3.4%

.. Multiple answer questionnaires (2 choices)

In case the breadwinner of a family would die or couldn't work for family support, respondents of three countries tend to depend on other adult member of family (65.9% in China, 66.0% in Japan, 70.9% in Korea). It may somewhat a natural result which unless their country would help totally their family. However, there were differences in several aspects. In China, relatively many respondents answered 'Would send one or more of the children out to work' as compared with Japan and Korea. There countries have similar minimum standard for children's labor. The minimum age for labor is 15 which count a person's age in full. In Korea, the minimum wage for part time job is 4000 won in Seoul, formaly (2009)[2] and Japan's minimum wage for part time job is 860 yen in 2009, Tokyo. It is hard to make a simple comparison; Japan's minimum wage for part time job is about three times larger than Korea's one. So I can guess Korea's low rate of children's work is related to treatment of youngster's labor.

In the table, Chinese respondents answered 'Would get support from relatives' more frequently than Japan and Korea. However, Chinese respondents showed relatively low answer rate percentage to 'Would get social welfare payments' and 'Have an insurance policy to cover such a situation' than Japan and Korea. In caparison with China and Korea, Japan showed stronger tendency to depend on social welfare payments (China 17.1%, Japan 30.6%, Korea 19.4%).

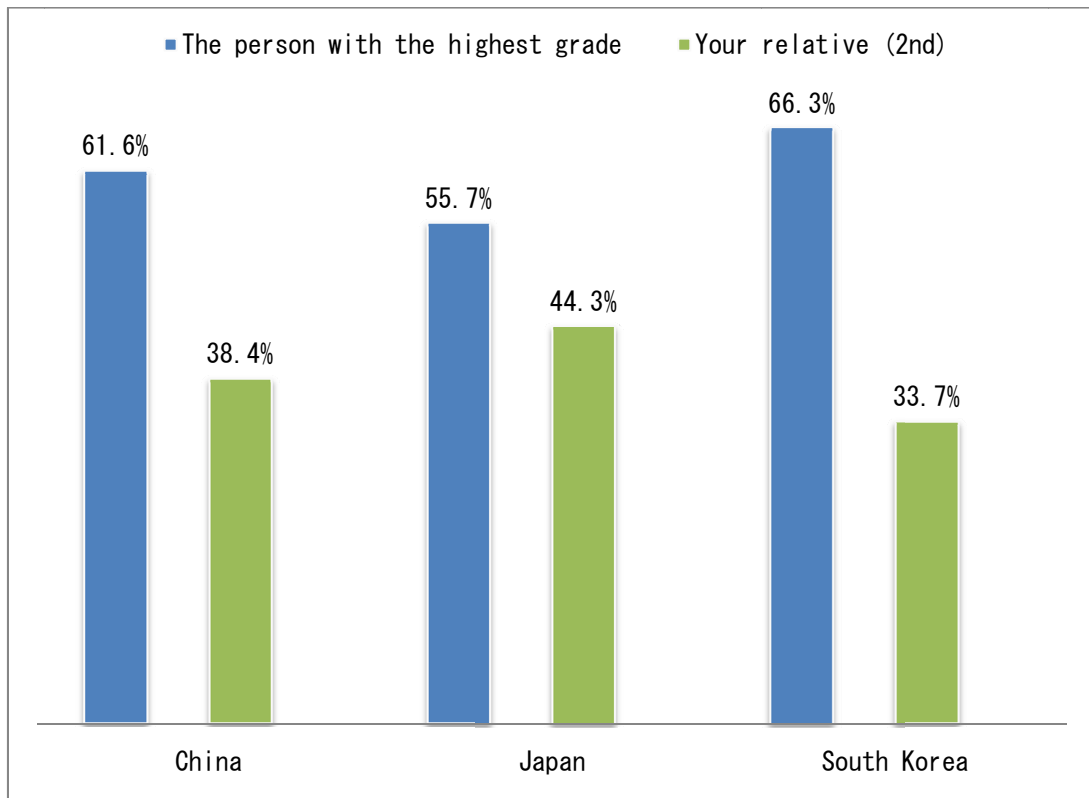[2] http://blog.naver.com/dewdew1022?Redirect=Log&logNo=130085360223

<Figure 3> Statement to adoption to continue family line unless the child is not related in blood
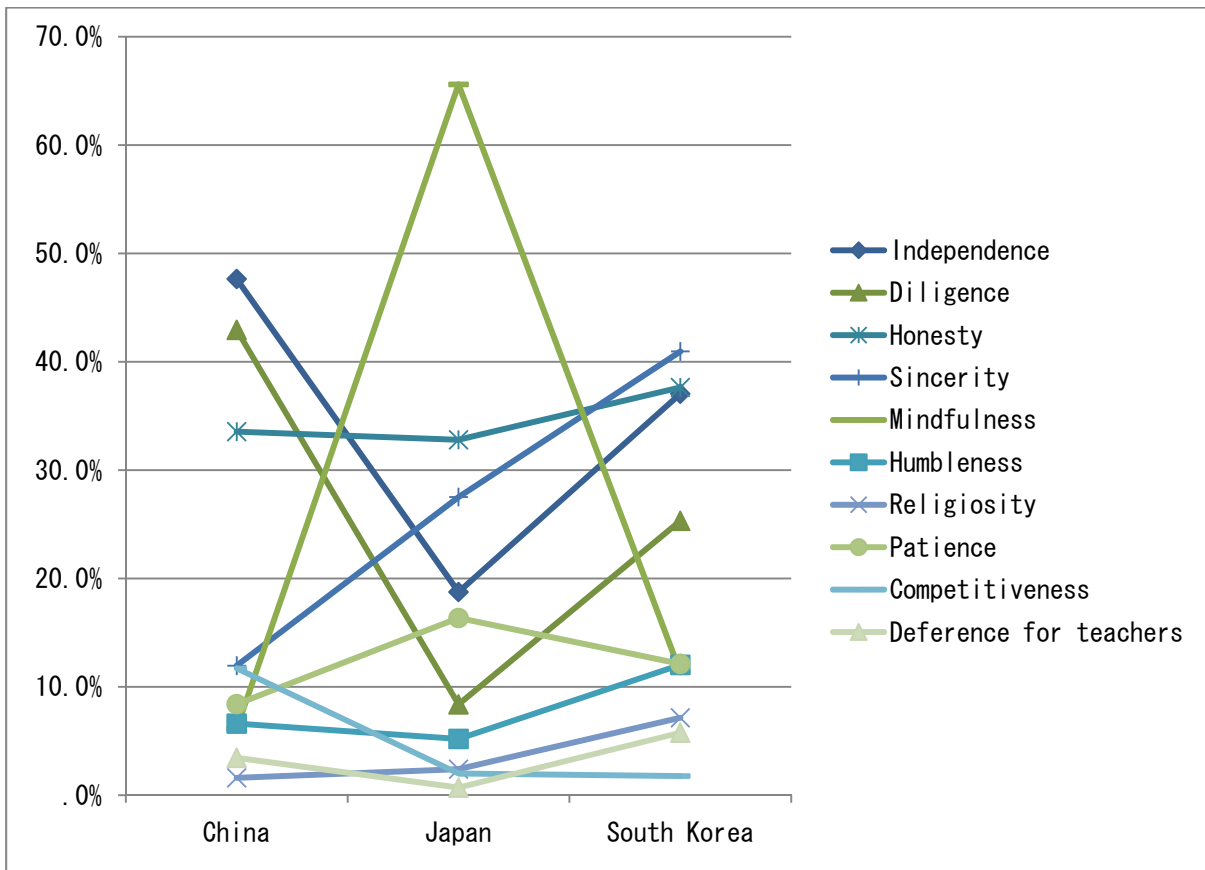

This questionnaire is related to value of kinship strength and value about continuing family line. Chinese people showed relative higher tendency to adopt child unless he (or she) is not related in blood, and Japan was the lowest. In contrast, Korean people show relative higher tendency to think that adoption who is not related in blood to continue family line is useless, and China was the lowest. In Korea, continuing family line is very important but kinship (blood-relatedness) is still very important. However, in Japan, those who are not related in blood can continue family without adoption such as son-in-low or child of other relative. China have hard kinship principles but it is not strong as Korea.

<Figure 4> Nepotism

Nepotism is giving unfair advantages to one's own family if one is in a position of power, especially by giving jobs. Nepotism tendency is related to 'amoral familism'. About this matter, Japan showed the highest tendency to recruit relative than the person who have best grade, and Korea show the lowest one. By this result, Korea relatively has the lowest nepotism among three countries.

<Figure 5> Important values in home education to their children

*. Multiple answer questionnaires (Two choices)

In the issue of important value in home education, three countries had different aspect like 2 wishes about respondents' children. In China, independence, diligence and honesty were very important but other values were relatively not important to their home education. In Japan, mindfulness was higher than any other values and difference between second, third value was relative bigger than other two countries. In comparison to China, Japanese family emphasis on sincerity but doesn't think diligence is important value in home education to their children. In Korea, difference between first, second, third value by frequency was not as big as other two countries. But sincerity is similar meaning to honesty, because sincerity is close meaning to 'inside and outside together'. Therefore, Korean family do emphasis on honesty in their home education to their children.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

As time goes on, the meaning of family changes from traditional values. Economic progress and shortening familial functions bring about weak kinship-tie and family values (Parsons and Bale, 1956 ; A.V. Margavio and S.A. Mann, 1989). But in East Asian three countries (China, Japan, Korea), family is the most important value in life. Most of respondents of three countries answered family is the most valuable social circle in their life and satisfaction of family life and marriage was related many aspects of real life.

There are, there are many differences among China, Japan and Korea. Thought these three countries have common foundation of family principles – Confucian Ideas – each country passed unlike paths of industrialization and has different context of culture and historical factors. Those implements may influence some differences in family value and structure, formal principles of family. In this study, I tried to find some differences among these three countries. However, finding determinant factors was not easy task because the basic research unit was a 'Country'. I could find somewhat dissimilar parts of family by using AsisBarometer Data, but I couldn't answer the question 'Why?' This will be my next research subject.

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