FACTORS RELATED TO PHYSICAL SEPARATION BETWEEN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AND THEIR MOTHERS: A JAPANESE STUDY

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The aim of this study was to elucidate the developmental changes in the relationships of Japanese preschool children with their mothers from the perspective of their physical separation.

A diary-based study was conducted to clarify how often mothers and their kindergarten-aged children spent time in different places, and to identify factors related to this issue. Four hundred four mothers recorded their experiences concerning 3 types of separation from their children for 5 consecutive days: (1) the mother left her child at home when she went out, (2) the mother left her child some place other than home while she went somewhere else, and (3) the child went somewhere without their mother.

Type 2 events were most frequent (1.66 times per 5 days), followed by types 1 and 3 (1.38 and 0.93 times, respectively). Regarding type 1 separations, second- or later-born children were frequently left at home with only their older siblings. In type 2 separations, mothers frequently went somewhere to do something, while their children took some kind of lesson. Furthermore, mothers with second- or later-born children left their children with only their older siblings or friends at various places. Also for type 3 separations, they frequently went to nearby familiar places with only their older siblings.

The findings reveal that Japanese preschool children tend to become independent, when they have their older siblings. Effects that the presence of the other persons has on children’s independent activities are also discussed in relation to the social contexts.