



Impact of Men's Perceptions of Gender Roles and Jointness/Operationality on Couple Parenting: Joint Participation in the Finalized Couple Parenting Promotion Program

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Abstract:

This study aimed to elucidate the relationship between factors associated with improved couple parenting by modeling them using a path diagram, thereby revealing an integrated understanding of the overall structure. It intended to identify changes in couple parenting, new perceptions of male roles, and impacts on operability/collaboration following the joint participation of couples in a four-week Couple Parenting Promotion Program that utilizes a Recognition and Implementation Evaluation Sheet. From June to September 2025, the survey was conducted on husbands or wives with preschool-aged children from all prefectures across Japan. Cooperation in the finalized Couples Parenting Promotion Program was sought from 473 couples. They undertook and completed assessments of new male roles, communion–Agency, and perceptions of couple parenting. Analysis was conducted on 247 valid respondents and their spouses for a total of 494 individuals. After formulating hypotheses regarding changes in perceptions of couple parenting and their relationship with new male roles and the communion-Agency scale, path analysis was performed to refine and improve the model. The modified model demonstrated excellent fit (GFI = .998, AGFI = .970, RMSEA = .019, $\chi^2 = 35.42$, $df = 30$, $p = .228$). Improvements in couple parenting were influenced by the synergistic effect of the couple parenting perception subscale and the promoting effects of positive togetherness and positive operativity, which resulted in significant increases in scores for the four subscales of the Short-Form Couple Parenting Perception Scale. Notably, the effect size for “Shared Responsibility and Difficulties” was large (0.5), which can be attributed to the negative effect of “Positive Jointness” on “Negative Functioning,” which, in turn, negatively suppressed “Shared Responsibility and Difficulties” via “Negative Functioning,” ultimately yielding a positive overall effect. Meanwhile, the perceived subscales of Couple Parenting influenced new masculine roles, which did not influence or was not correlated with couple parenting. Approaches that target negative operability thinking and couple communication that focus on agreement and negotiation regarding childrearing provided strong evidence of improvement in couple parenting. Promoting improved couple parenting was strongly supported by approaches that target negative operability thinking and couple communication centered on agreement and negotiation regarding child-rearing.

Keyword: Couple parenting, promotion program, Agency, communality, male role perception, age group.

INTRODUCTION

Regarding home education, Article 10 of Japan's Fundamental Law on Education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2006) stipulates the following: “Parents and

other guardians shall bear primary responsibility for the education of their children. They shall endeavor to instill in them the habits necessary for daily life, foster their independence, and promote their harmonious physical and mental development.” It highlights the importance of parental responsibility for the education of children. Simply put, child-rearing is not solely the responsibility of mothers; this task needs to be undertaken jointly by both parents. This collaborative approach fosters a harmonious relationship and exerts a profoundly positive impact on children’s development. However, husbands tend to become less involved as children grow older (Kato, Kurosawa, Kamiya, 2014; Kato, 1999; Benesse Next Generation Research Institute, 2011). Previous studies also demonstrated that marital intimacy diminishes (Benesse Educational Research Institute, 2012), and mothers with strong beliefs associated with gender roles tend to have husbands who are less involved in childcare (McBride et al., 2005). Intervention models aimed to enable couples to employ collaborative approaches to parenting are anticipated. In Japan, research on couple parenting is gradually expanding and targeting couples during the pregnancy and childcare periods (Takeishi et al., 2019; Yasuno et al., 2023; Oshima et al., 2023; Benesse Educational Research Institute, 2011). Moreover, evidence of the effectiveness of programs in enhancing couple parenting for parents raising children remains lacking despite surveys conducted in domestic and international research.

In prior research on couple parenting (Shimizu, 2020a), mothers who exhibit favorable psychological states engaged in discussions on childcare and reached mutual agreement. This finding indicates that reaching mutual agreement through discussion could be a crucial element for promoting couple parenting. Given that engaging in discussions as a couple is considered a key point, if participants are unable to engage in self-reflection and make adjustments during the discussion process, then participation in a couple parenting promotion program may not yield the anticipated effects, especially in situations in which joint effort as a couple is proved difficult. Even when participating in so-called couple parenting promotion programs, a group with low effectiveness existed. Furthermore, although initiatives to enhance recognition of the role of fathers are being strengthened, expectations for change in this area remain limited. These findings indicate that deeply held gender role beliefs and rigid cognitive tendencies may hinder expected changes even when couples work together. While a common belief is that strong maternal role perceptions can hinder fathers’ involvement in childcare, research indicates that the notion of husbands working outside the home, and wives safeguarding the household has diversified in recent years. Instead, focus is shifting toward perceptions of *new male roles* and *gendered tendencies* associated with femininity and masculinity—specifically, femininity as communion and masculinity as agency. Moreover, the roles expected of men and women have become less rigid, and male roles have diversified; thus, the current study focuses on *new perceptions of male roles* purported by Watanabe (2017ab), which considers the evolution of male roles. Currently, multiple new male roles, such as participation in the home and gentleness, are expected of men. The current study is developing a scale to examine the psychology of men and women regarding male roles and conflicts that men encounter due to these roles.

Furthermore, we note that in sexual orientation, *co-activity* refers to characteristics related to cooperation and intimacy with others, while *operativity* pertains to characteristics associated with self-growth and achievement as individuals. The previous literature proposed that individuals with high gender schemas exhibit communion and agency. Specifically, men with high gender schemas tend to have increased masculinity (agency) but decreased femininity (communion), while women with high gender schemas tend to exhibit increased femininity but decreased masculinity (operativeness; Doi, 2008, 2004). However, *femininity/masculinity* has become a fixed

construct imposed by society on specific genders. In psychology, *communion* has been regarded as the core characteristic of *femininity* and *agency* has been associated with *masculinity*. However, these traits should not be considered equivalent to gender. From a contemporary perspective, when considering an individual's personality, viewing all people as possessing communion and agency without being constrained by gender stereotypes is crucial. Communion emphasizes working together toward a shared goal, while agency denotes proactive engagement and action-taking, representing a disposition that values harmony with others. Focusing on these two concepts, this study aims to elucidate the effects of and changes induced by intervention using the finalized Couple Parenting Promotion Program. This research contributes to future approaches that target couples with low levels of joint parenting, thus addressing limitations observed in conventional methods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey Methodology

A web survey was conducted via Internet research via Freeasy—an academic research organization.

Participants

The study recruited fathers and mothers with pre-school children across prefectures in Japan. The survey was conducted on husbands or wives with preschool-aged children from all prefectures across Japan. Cooperation in the finalized Couples Parenting Promotion Program was sought from 473 couples.

Survey Overview

Survey Period:

June 6 2025, to September 5, 2025.

Objective:

To elucidate the relationship and impact of changes in new male roles and femininity (communion) -masculinity (agency)—which have emerged from the diversification of expected gender roles for men—on promoting couple parenting through the joint participation of couples in the Couple Parenting Promotion Program.

Couple Parenting Promotion Plan and the Couple Parenting Awareness and Practice Sheet:

The couple parenting promotion plan comprises four phases (I–IV) based on the Couple Parenting Awareness Scale, thus forming a program in which couples can collaborate from four perspectives. Table 1 provides specific objectives and contents.

Table 1 Couple Parenting Support Program : Aims and Execution Point

Recognition of Couple Parenting: 15 Items	Aims	Execution Point
I .Emotional Support for each other	Compassion and Gratitude	
1 Worrying about	Paying attention to daily routines and changes	Greet others with a smile every day
2 Knowing what they want	Being able to listen and speak calmly	Communicate and listen to requests and wishes
	Understanding desires	
3 Compassion	Reflecting	Reflect on daily actions and words
4 Listening	Understanding and comprehending feelings	Listen to the end of conversations
II .Concrete Support for each other	The desire to help one another	
5 Help with housework and childcare naturally	Doing things together	Take the lead in household chores and childcare
6 Help and be considerate so as not to irritate them	Enjoying household chores and childcare Fatigue and dissatisfaction	Rethink how household chores are divided
7 Always think of better ways to do things with motivation	Efficiency in household chores and childcare Considering the burden	Try doing the same amount of housework as my wife
8 Cooperate with everything without complaining	Offering encouragement Understanding the hardships and expressing gratitude	Husbands will help with anything Try doing it alone
III .Agreement and Negotiation on child-	Communication	
9 Watch out for each other and talk about it on the spot.	Communicate Often	Talk about even the smallest things
10 Communicate your feelings and opinions to the other person.	Don't Bottle Up Resentment Resolve Issues Peacefully If You Don't Say It, They Won't Know	Express gratitude Don't hold back complaints
11 3.Even if you are given a task, listen to the other person's opinions and report back.	Prepare for Smooth Handling	Share information
IV .Difficulty in sharing responsibility	Factors hindering cooperation	
12 Husband and wife have little time together	Communication	Make time for each other, even if it's brief
13 My husband strongly believes in the idea that "men work, women stay home."	Harmonious Married Life Broadening Perspectives	Don't be bound by preconceived notions
14 I want us to discuss and share things as a couple, but my husband doesn't feel that way.	Viewing Matters Objectively Trust and Reduced Emotional Burden	Consult
15 Feeling the difference in values between husband and wife	Calmness and Problem Solving We don't have to be the same—let's respect each other.	Offer advice Don't criticize each other's values.

The Couple Parenting Awareness and Practice Sheet is a tool (Figure 1) (Shimizu, 2025b) designed to enhance couple parenting. It encourages couples to reflect on their childcare life using items from the Couple Parenting Awareness Scale, which underscores intentional engagement with actions that align with the objectives of the program in an effort to improve couple parenting.

Couples self-assessed 15 items on their perceptions of parenting rated using a 5-point scale. The scale was divided into 14-item periods across two 2-week phases, for a total of 4 weeks.

Figure 1 Couple Parenting Support Program -Recognition and Evaluation Sheet-

Procedure ※Please avoid emotional attitudes or tones.

1. Reflect on your usual actions and words (3) and listen to the story to the end (4). The father should replace "husband" with "I" and the mother should replace "wife" with "I" when reading the questions. Then self-assess and mark the corresponding option with a "O".

Does not apply at all 1 Somewhat does not apply 2 Neither applies nor does not apply 3 Somewhat applies 4 Applies very much 5

2. If the wife's rating is 3 or lower, please tell your husband about the feelings you don't feel "actively."
The husband listens to the end without interrupting.

3. Review the action items.
To enhance couple parenting, please complete all items together.

4. Reflect on the day through conversation
Share positive points and areas for improvement

※Communicate both strengths and areas for improvement regarding each other's actions and outcomes, fostering motivation throughout the process.

(Understanding each other's feelings / A relationship where anything can be discussed)

Couple Parenting Perception 15 Items		Low ← Evaluation → High				
		1	2	3	4	5
I. Mutual Emotional Support						
1	The husband cares about his wife.	Husband				
		Wife				
2	The husband makes an effort to understand what his wife desires	Husband				
		Wife				
3	The husband is considerate of his wife.	Husband				
		Wife				
4	The husband makes an effort to listen to his wife	Husband				
		Wife				
II. Specific Mutual Support						
5	My husband naturally helps with both housework and childcare	Husband				
		Wife				
6	My husband helps and shows consideration so his wife doesn't get irritated	Husband				
		Wife				
7	My husband is motivated and always thinking of better ways to do things	Husband				
		Wife				
8	My husband cooperates with everything without saying a word or complaining	Husband				
		Wife				
III. Parenting agreements and negotiation						
9	We keep each other informed and discuss things as they come up	Husband				
		Wife				
10	Expressing feelings and opinions verbally to each other	Husband				
		Wife				
11	Even when entrusted with tasks, the wife makes an effort to listen to her husband's opinions	Husband				
		Wife				
IV. Sharing responsibilities and challenges						
12	Husbands spend little time with their wives	Husband				
		Wife				
13	Husbands strongly hold the belief that "men work, women manage the home"	Husband				
		Wife				
14	I wish we could discuss and share things as a couple, but my husband doesn't think that way	Husband				
		Wife				
15	I feel a difference in values between my husband and me.	Husband				
		Wife				

This approach will be implemented in two phases.

1st time Please continue implementing the following actions for approximately two cycles. If conversation is possible: ✓

Action Taken	Objective	Day1	Day2	Day3	Day4	Day5	Day6	Day7
In greetings								
Greet each other with a smile every day. 1	Pay attention to her daily condition and changes							
Express gratitude. 10	If you don't say it, it won't get through							
In communication								
Make time for the two of you, even if it's brief. 9	Communicate more often							
Talk about even the smallest things. 9	Knowing her desires							
Communicate and listen to requests and hopes. 2	Don't let dissatisfaction build up							
Consulting and offering advice. 14	Deepening the relationship of trust							
Sharing information (schedules, childcare, etc.)	Preparing for smooth responses							
Second time								
After completing the above, continue the following actions for about two weeks								
While at home, have Dad take the lead on household chores and childcare.								
However, act according to the situation. Adjust your approach as needed.								
Action Taken								
Objective								
Household Chores & Childcare								
Taking the lead in household chores and childcare	Doing them together / Enjoying household chores and childcare							
Rethinking the division of household chores 6	Are there any signs of fatigue or dissatisfaction?							
Husband does the same amount of housework as wife 7	Efficiency and burden of housework and childcare							
Both partners cooperate on everything 8	Expressing appreciation							
Husband tries doing household chores and childcare alone	Understanding the hardships and expressing gratitude							
To reduce barriers to cooperation								
Avoiding Fixed Ideas 13	Viewing things broadly and objectively							
Do not criticize values 15	Respect values without needing to share them							

※ The values in the implementation section indicate the numbers of the 15 items in the Couple Parenting Recognition survey

After implementation, couples will self-assess the 15 items of couple parenting awareness again
Aim for a score of 4 or higher on items where both partners feel it applies (for IV, aim for 2 or lower on reverse items).
Communicate more often and occasionally take action based on what you remember!

Good job!

Scales

Short-Form Couple Parenting Awareness Scale:

The Couple Parenting Perception Scale comprises 29 items intended to measure couples' perceptions of collaborative parenting. It consists of four subscales, namely, *Consideration and Gratitude Toward the Partner*, *Desire and Actions to Support Each Other*, *Couple Communication*, and *Factors Hindering Couple Parenting* (Shimizu and Suganuma, 2023a). Subsequently, a survey using the Couple Parenting Perception Scale was conducted. Confirmatory factor analysis yielded the following factor names and number of items (Cronbach's alpha coefficients): *Mutual Emotional Support* with 4 items (.84), *Mutual Concrete Support* with 4 items (0.82), *Parenting Agreement and Negotiation* with 3 items (.73), and *Difficulties in Sharing Responsibility* with 4 items (.77), thus comprising a total of 15 items across four factors (Shimizu, 2023b). Each item is rated using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *Does not apply* to 5. *Applies*. This scale enables the assessment of couples' perception of the state of their marital parenting. High scores indicate high levels of shared parental awareness regarding childcare.

New Male Role Scale:

To determine men's perceptions of gender roles, which are considered to influence couple parenting, the study employed the New Male Role Scale developed by Watanabe (2017a). It comprises 16 items: four items each on consideration for women, participation in household tasks,

consideration for others, and liberation from strength. Respondents rated statements that describe their perception of the ideal male role using a seven-point scale (1 = *Not at all applicable*, 2 = *Hardly applicable*, 3 = *Not very applicable*, 4 = *Neither applicable nor inapplicable*, 5 = *Somewhat applicable*, 6 = *Fairly applicable*, 7 = *Very applicable*). This scale provides insight into the nature of new male roles. The criterion-related validity and reliability (internal consistency and temporal stability) of the scale have been verified in previous studies (Watanabe ; 2017b) .

Communion-Agency Scale:

The study employed the Communion-Agency Scale developed by Doi and Hirokawa (2004). It focuses on characteristics related to cooperation (e.g., coordination and intimacy with others) and characteristics related to action (e.g., self-growth and achievement) that one should aim for as an individual (Bakan, 1966; Doi, Hirokawa, Mizusawa, 2008). Cooperativeness emphasizes working together toward shared goals, while activeness denotes proactive engagement and initiative, valuing harmony with others. The participants self-assessed changes in the degrees of positive and negative traits before and after the program. The scale comprises 24 items: 6 items each for positive communion, positive agency, negative communion, and negative agency. Items were rated using a four-point Likert-type scale (4 = *Strongly agree*, 3 = *Somewhat agree*, 2 = *Somewhat disagree*, 1 = *Strongly disagree*). High scores indicate strong traits. The reliability coefficients of the scale ranged from .693 to .817.

Analytical Methods

In cases where the scale contained missing responses or clearly insincere responses where the respondent had not thought about the question, were excluded from analysis. After confirming scale reliability, the study performed nonparametric tests using SPSS Version 28. Reversed items under the Shared Responsibility and Difficulties subscale of the Short-Form Couple Parenting Perception Scale underwent reversal processing.

Path and mediation analyses were conducted using AMOS Version 26.

Ethical Considerations

The survey request letter explicitly stated that participation was voluntary, and the identity of the participants would remain anonymous. The questionnaire included a checkbox to confirm consent. The study was reviewed and approved by the Nagoya University of Arts and Sciences Ethics Committee (Approval No. 621, Approval Date: October 28, 2022).

Confirmation of Descriptive Statistics

The reliability α coefficients (values: pre-intervention and post-intervention) for the four subscales of the Couple Parenting Perception Scale were as follows: Mutual Emotional Support (pre: .859, post: .883), Mutual Concrete Support (pre: .798, post: .787), Parenting Agreement and Negotiation (pre: .694, post: .748), and Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (pre: .762, post: .766). The four subscales of the New Male Roles Scale produced the following coefficients: consideration for women (pre: .872, post: .856), participation in household tasks (pre: .896, post: .831), consideration for others (pre: .876, post: .834), and liberation from strength (pre: .877, post: .885). For the four subscales of the Communion-Agency Scale: positive Communion (pre: .802, post: .830), positive Agency (pre: .824, post: .811), negative Communion (pre: .827, post: .837), negative Agency (pre: .864, post: .892). The α coefficients for the three scales exceeded 0.8, which indicates high reliability.

Given that the diversification of gender roles in child-rearing changes with the times, Classifying the generation born between 1975 and 1999 into three equal parts,. We measured changes before and after the program implementation using the Couple Parenting Perception Scale, New Male Role Scale, and Communion-Agency Scale among three age groups, namely, 34 years old and under, 35–38 years old, and 39 years old and above. We compared between wives and husbands and correlations to confirm the direction and strength of the relationships beforehand. At the model specification stage, we represented only relationships between directly observed data (variables)—not latent variables—using a path diagram. This step was done to evaluate the strength of direct relationships between the observed variables. Multiple fit indices, including RMSEA, CFI, and GFI, were combined to achieve a comprehensive judgment. Model fit with the observed data was considered satisfactory when GFI and AGFI values reached ≥ 0.95 , and RMSEA was ≤ 0.05 , and the χ^2 value met the acceptance criterion of $p > 0.05$. Model modifications were then implemented on the basis of these indices.

RESULTS

Subject Attributes

Valid responses were obtained from 247 pairs of spouses or 494 participants. The mean age was 35.7 ± 4.1 years for men and 34.6 ± 3.8 years for women (age-stratified means: 31.4 ± 2.2 years for those aged 34 and under, 36.5 ± 1.1 years for those aged 35–38 years, and 40.6 ± 2.7 years for those aged 39 and above). Men's occupations were full-time employees ($n = 231, 93.5\%$), self-employed or freelance ($n = 8, 3.2\%$), stay-at-home husband ($n = 5, 2.0\%$), and others ($n = 3, 1.2\%$). Wives were full-time employees, including contract/temporary ($n = 133, 54.0\%$), full-time homemakers ($n = 63, 25.5\%$), part-time/casual workers ($n = 43, 17.4\%$), self-employed/freelancers ($n = 4, 1.6\%$), and unemployed ($n = 4, 1.6\%$). Marital duration was 8.1 ± 3.0 years, while the average number of children reached 1.7 ± 0.7 .

Statistical Measures of Assessment Items

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for subscale scores before and after intervention, by age group, and spouse. The study found significant differences between spouses after the intervention: for those aged 34 and under, men scored significantly higher than did women on Mutual Concrete Support; for those aged 39 and above, men scored significantly higher than did women on participation in household tasks and significantly lower on negative communion.

Significant comparisons across age groups after the intervention were observed for those aged 39 and above: significantly higher scores for Mutual Emotional Support, Mutual Concrete Support, and Shared Responsibility and Difficulties; significantly lower scores for participation in household tasks, negative Communion, and negative agency (Table 3).

Table 2: Statistical Measures of Program low-scales Before and After Implementation by Age Group

	Wife							Husband							Comparing Couples														
	Before			After			p	Before			After			p ₁	p ₂														
	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD		MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD			p													
a. Age 34 and under N=111															a. Age 34 and under N=92														
Couple Parenting Recognition Scale																													
Emotional Support	3.25	3.47	0.86	3.50	3.50	0.95	.341	3.50	3.46	0.78	3.75	3.63	0.88	.093	.693	.304													
Concrete Support	3.25	3.36	0.83	3.25	3.31	0.89	.588	3.25	3.36	0.75	3.50	3.64	0.77	.001 **	.924	.009 **													
Agreement and Negotiation	3.33	3.44	0.82	3.67	3.50	0.82	.374	3.33	3.38	0.72	3.67	3.56	0.81	.040	.539	.562													
Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.03	0.85	3.00	3.06	0.90	.000 **	3.00	2.83	0.67	3.00	2.99	0.88	.000 **	.136	.679													
New male roles scale																													
Attentiveness to Women	15.00	14.28	6.29	15.00	14.39	5.72	.974	16.00	15.34	6.24	16.00	15.91	5.46	.177	.329	.058													
Commitment to Household Resp	15.00	14.32	5.26	16.00	15.01	5.05	.083	16.00	14.86	5.06	16.00	16.14	4.34	.059	.331	.171													
Consideration for Others	18.00	17.41	5.12	18.00	17.79	4.75	.376	17.00	16.98	5.11	17.00	17.77	4.28	.306	.424	.539													
Emancipation from Emotional Re	20.00	19.60	5.30	20.00	19.66	5.22	.910	19.00	18.80	4.78	18.00	18.65	4.60	.973	.219	.090													
Communion-Agency Scale																													
Positive Communion	18.00	18.13	3.33	18.00	18.25	3.37	.700	17.00	17.70	3.20	18.00	17.80	3.33	.685	.257	.361													
Positive Agency	17.00	16.77	3.38	18.00	17.49	3.47	.027 *	16.50	16.55	3.22	17.00	17.22	3.18	.073	.397	.592													
Negative Communion	16.00	15.80	3.74	17.00	16.18	3.50	.260	15.00	15.90	3.39	16.00	16.07	3.60	.372	.969	.522													
Negative Agency	14.00	14.03	4.44	15.00	14.32	4.55	.254	14.00	14.46	3.51	15.00	14.72	4.43	.622	.435	.684													
b. Aged 35 to 38 N=102															b. Aged 35 to 38 N=100														
Emotional Support	3.63	3.61	0.83	3.88	3.70	0.86	.121	4.00	3.72	0.83	4.00	3.85	0.82	.095	.241	.167													
Concrete Support	3.50	3.57	0.78	3.50	3.56	0.76	.816	3.50	3.62	0.82	3.50	3.60	0.79	.870	.704	.593													
Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.57	0.74	3.67	3.57	0.74	.863	3.67	3.56	0.79	3.67	3.58	0.79	.754	.910	.743													
Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.05	0.82	3.00	3.04	0.87	.000 **	3.00	3.08	0.93	3.00	3.12	0.89	.000 **	.575	.369													
Attentiveness to Women	15.00	14.06	5.58	15.00	14.64	5.61	.285	15.00	14.51	5.90	16.00	15.54	5.34	.188	.596	.280													
Commitment to Household Resp	15.00	13.76	5.57	16.00	14.61	5.25	.150	15.00	14.58	5.57	16.00	16.01	4.92	.013 *	.393	.082													
Consideration for Others	17.50	17.51	5.38	17.50	17.72	4.76	.979	18.00	17.27	5.74	18.00	17.86	5.20	.353	.938	.573													
Emancipation from Emotional Re	20.00	20.88	5.02	20.00	20.20	5.01	.223	20.00	19.96	5.13	20.00	20.26	5.21	.673	.260	.694													
Positive Communion	18.00	18.23	2.93	18.00	18.38	2.58	.381	18.00	18.38	3.00	18.00	18.21	3.45	.621	.487	.874													
Positive Agency	16.00	16.17	3.55	17.00	17.00	3.32	.010 *	17.00	17.02	3.56	17.00	16.91	3.26	.907	.071	.890													
Negative Communion	16.00	15.84	3.58	17.00	16.73	3.62	.065	16.00	16.10	3.85	16.00	15.98	4.05	.793	.568	.245													
Negative Agency	13.00	13.24	4.11	14.00	14.35	4.37	.012 *	13.00	13.56	4.21	13.00	13.48	4.46	.896	.597	.144													
c. Age 39 and above N=34															c. Age 39 and above N=55														
Emotional Support	3.75	3.83	0.77	3.63	3.68	0.84	.233	3.75	3.70	0.86	4.00	3.95	0.85	.021 *	.616	.136													
Concrete Support	3.25	3.44	0.75	3.50	3.59	0.85	.166	3.75	3.58	0.89	3.75	3.81	0.81	.012 *	.472	.172													
Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.60	0.79	3.67	3.65	0.88	.701	3.67	3.56	0.78	3.67	3.76	0.76	.041 *	.746	.598													
Sharing and Challenges	3.13	3.25	0.93	3.25	3.36	0.91	.010 *	3.25	3.21	0.99	3.50	3.42	0.91	.001 **	.983	.744													
Attentiveness to Women	17.00	16.97	4.99	14.00	13.21	4.38	.000 **	14.00	14.69	5.57	16.00	15.05	5.06	.680	.050	.050													
Commitment to Household Resp	16.00	14.94	3.84	13.50	12.85	4.22	.012	15.00	13.55	4.34	16.00	15.11	3.47	.008 **	.105	.010 *													
Consideration for Others	19.00	18.82	4.29	17.00	17.29	4.50	.127	19.00	18.35	5.88	19.00	19.11	4.03	.511	.980	.033													
Emancipation from Emotional Re	19.50	19.91	3.74	19.00	20.32	5.38	.702	19.00	20.09	5.19	18.00	20.07	5.26	.665	.865	.825													
Positive Communion	17.50	18.15	2.89	17.00	17.74	3.00	.384	17.00	17.80	3.14	18.00	18.67	3.33	.026 *	.654	.171													
Positive Agency	16.00	17.21	3.57	15.00	16.35	3.86	.105	17.00	17.20	3.97	18.00	18.04	3.70	.062	.789	.041													
Negative Communion	16.00	15.12	4.17	16.00	15.44	4.05	.769	14.00	13.45	4.38	13.00	13.09	3.87	.258	.044 *	.002 **													
Negative Agency	13.00	12.50	3.68	13.00	11.88	3.82	.347	12.00	12.73	3.97	13.00	12.64	3.57	.427	.869	.377													

p Wilcoxon signed-rank test

p₁ Mann-Whitney U test

* p<.05 ** p<.01

Table3 Comparison of Lower Scale Scores by Age Group after the Initiative

	a. Age 34 and under N=203						b. Aged 35 to 38 N=202						c. Age 39 and above N=89						p	多重比較
	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	Percentiles			MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	Percentiles			MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	Percentiles				
				25	50	75				25	50	75				25	50	75		
Emotional Support	3.75	3.56	0.92	3.00	3.75	4.25	4.00	3.78	0.84	3.25	4.00	4.25	4.00	3.85	0.85	3.25	4.00	4.50	.019 *	a<c
Concrete Support	3.50	3.46	0.85	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.58	0.77	3.19	3.50	4.25	3.75	3.73	0.83	3.00	3.75	4.38	.041 *	a<c
Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.53	0.82	3.00	3.67	4.00	3.67	3.57	0.76	3.00	3.67	4.00	3.67	3.72	0.81	3.00	3.67	4.33	.223	
Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.02	0.89	2.50	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.08	0.88	2.50	3.00	3.75	3.25	3.40	0.91	2.75	3.25	4.00	.004	a<c,b<c
Attentiveness to Women	15.00	15.08	5.64	12.00	15.00	19.00	15.50	15.08	5.48	11.00	15.50	19.00	15.00	14.35	4.87	12.00	15.00	18.00	.514	
Commitment to Household Responsibility	16.00	15.52	4.76	13.00	16.00	18.00	16.00	15.30	5.13	12.00	16.00	19.00	15.00	14.25	3.91	12.00	15.00	17.00	.044 *	c<a
Consideration for Others	17.00	17.78	4.53	15.00	17.00	21.00	18.00	17.79	4.97	15.00	18.00	21.00	18.00	18.42	4.28	16.00	18.00	22.00	.512	
Emancipation from Emotional Restriction and Toughness	19.00	19.20	4.96	16.00	19.00	23.00	20.00	20.23	5.10	17.00	20.00	24.00	19.00	20.17	5.27	16.00	19.00	25.00	.065	
Positive Communion	18.00	18.05	3.35	16.00	18.00	20.00	18.00	18.30	3.04	16.00	18.00	20.00	18.00	18.31	3.22	16.00	18.00	21.00	.735	
Positive Agency	18.00	17.36	3.33	15.00	18.00	20.00	17.00	16.96	3.28	15.00	17.00	19.00	17.00	17.39	3.83	14.50	17.00	20.00	.534	
Negative Communion	17.00	16.13	3.54	14.00	17.00	19.00	17.00	16.36	3.85	14.00	17.00	19.00	14.00	13.99	4.08	12.00	14.00	17.00	.000 **	c<a,c<b
Negative Agency	15.00	14.50	4.49	12.00	15.00	17.00	14.00	13.92	4.42	11.00	14.00	17.00	13.00	12.35	3.67	9.50	13.00	15.00	.000 **	c<b,c<a

p Kruskal-Wallis Test Multiple comparison Test : Bonferroni * p<.05 ** p<.01

Changes in Couple Parenting after the Couple Parenting Promotion Program

Subscale scores were based on mean values due to differences in the number of items. Evaluating the overall change in scores across the four subscales of the *Short-Form Couple Parenting*

Awareness Scale after the program, the study found significant increases in all four subscales. Effect sizes indicated a large effect (0.5) for Shared Responsibility and Difficulties, while Mutual Emotional Support, Mutual Concrete Support, and Parenting Agreement and Negotiation exhibited small but significant effects (0.1). The men demonstrated significant improvement across the four scales, whereas wives produced a large effect (0.4) only for Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (Table 4).

Table4 Changes in Parenting Awareness Scale Scores and Effects of the Couple Parenting Support Program

Lower scale	Initiatives						Z	p ₁	bias-corrected95%CI		p ₂	r	
	Before			After					lower	Upper			
	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD	MEDIAN	MEAM	SD							
All N=494	Emotional Support	3.75	3.60	0.83	4.00	3.70	0.88	-2.99	.003 **	0.00	0.00	.001 **	0.1
	Concrete Support	3.50	3.49	0.81	3.50	3.56	0.82	-2.34	.019 *	0.01	0.01	.011 **	0.1
	Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.50	0.77	3.67	3.58	0.80	-2.40	.016 *	0.01	0.01	.008 *	0.1
	Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.04	0.86	3.00	3.12	0.90	-10.23	.000 **	0.00	0.00	.000 **	0.5
Wife N=247	Emotional Support	3.50	3.58	0.84	3.75	3.61	0.90	-1.16	.245	0.12	0.13	.125	0.1
	Concrete Support	3.50	3.46	0.80	3.50	3.45	0.84	-0.23	.822	0.41	0.43	.416	0.0
	Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.52	0.78	3.67	3.55	0.80	-0.91	.363	0.18	0.19	.184	0.1
	Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.07	0.84	3.00	3.09	0.89	-6.79	.000 **	0.00	0.00	.000 **	0.4
Husband N=247	Emotional Support	3.75	3.62	0.82	4.00	3.79	0.85	-3.09	.002 **	0.00	0.00	.001 **	0.2
	Concrete Support	3.50	3.51	0.82	3.75	3.66	0.79	-3.04	.002 **	0.00	0.00	.001 **	0.2
	Agreement and Negotiation	3.67	3.49	0.76	3.67	3.61	0.79	-2.48	.013 *	0.01	0.01	.008 **	0.2
	Sharing and Challenges	3.00	3.02	0.87	3.00	3.14	0.90	-7.69	.000 **	0.00	0.00	.000 **	0.5

* p<.05 ** p<.01 p₁ Wilcoxon signed-rank test p₂ Monte Carlo one-sided p-value
r: effect size 0.1small 0.3 medium 0.5 large

Changes in New Male Roles and Cooperative Functioning Through the Initiatives of the Couple Parenting Promotion Program

The only significant difference observed between men and women before the intervention was for “Negative communion,” in which women aged 39 and above scored significantly higher than the men.

Significant changes in the subscales of the New Male Role Scale after the intervention were observed for consideration for women in which scores were significantly lower among women aged 39 and above. For participation in household tasks, men in the 35–38 and 39 and above age groups displayed significant improvements in scores. Regarding changes in scores in the subscales Cooperation and activeness, positive agency exhibited a significant improvement among women in the 34 and under and 35–38 age groups. Positive communion displayed a significant improvement among men aged 39 and above. A comparison between men and women after intervention indicates that men aged 39 years and above produced significantly higher scores than did women on participation in household tasks, while women aged 39 and above exhibited significantly higher scores than did men on negative communion (Table 2).

Effects of the Couple Parenting Promotion Program on Communion- Agency in Couple Parenting and the Influence of New Male Roles and Age of Couples: Examining Related Factors

Model creation via path analysis involved the confirmation of model fit by indicating arrow relationships between the observed variables and refining the model using modified fit indices. The model fit with data from the observed variables yielded GFI = .998, AGFI = .970 (both exceeding 0.9). RMSEA = .019 was less than 0.05, while chi-square value = 35.42, df = 30, p = .228 met the acceptance criterion of p > .05, which indicates model fit (Figure 2).

In Figure 2, the indirect effects were examined by naming the paths (→) in AMOS and incorporating paths assumed to be influenced by the couple parenting subscales into all equations.

Syntax was verified, and, after selecting estimated values, the bootstrap method with 2,000 iterations was applied. A confidence interval of 95% was set to determine whether the indirect effects were statistically significant. The same procedure was applied to age groups. Table 5 presents the results for indirect effects.

The directionality indicated by the path coefficients reflects promoting/enhancing (positive) and controlling/weakening (negative) effects. Mediation denotes the relationship, where $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$ denotes M as the mediator, influencing Y through this pathway. The indirect effects associated with paths that influence overall scores in the couple parenting subscales in Figure 2 were observed via *negative operant conditioning* or *child-rearing agreement and negotiation*. The mediating paths for the indirect effect of *negative operability* were as follows: positive cooperation \rightarrow negative operability \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (path coefficient: 0.009, $p < .01$), positive cooperation \rightarrow negative operability \rightarrow child-rearing agreement and negotiation (path coefficient: 0.008, $p < .01$), positive togetherness \rightarrow negative operability \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (path coefficient: 0.043, $p < .01$), positive operability \rightarrow negative operability \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (path coefficient: -0.007, $p < .01$), positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation regarding child-rearing (path coefficient: -0.006, $p < .01$), and positive operability \rightarrow negative operability \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (path coefficient: -0.031, $p < .01$). The path mediated by agreement and negotiation on child-rearing was negative operability \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing \rightarrow positive operability (path coefficient: -0.010, $p < .01$). These relationships were statistically significant. Indirect effects by age group indicated that for participants aged 34 and under, the pathways were identical to the overall model. The pathways were positive cooperation \rightarrow Negative Functioning \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (path coefficient: 0.013), positive communion \rightarrow Negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing (0.011), positive communion \rightarrow Negative agency \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (0.048), positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (-0.011), positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on childcare (-0.009), positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (-0.041), and negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation in child-rearing \rightarrow positive agency (-0.099). All were significant ($p < 0.01$). The indirect effects for participants aged 35–38 years mediated by negative agency were as follows: positive communion \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (path coefficient: 0.009), positive communion \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing (0.008), positive shared control \rightarrow negative operant conditioning \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (0.048), positive operant conditioning \rightarrow negative operant conditioning \rightarrow Mutual Emotional Support (-0.010), positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing (-0.009), and positive agency \rightarrow negative agency \rightarrow Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (-0.049). These relationships were significant ($p < 0.05$). For participants aged 39 and above, significant indirect effects were observed for the following path: positive cooperation \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing \rightarrow positive agency, mediated by agreement and negotiation on Child-rearing (path coefficient: 0.256, $p < .01$; Table 5). These results provided strong evidence that negative agency influences the effects on Mutual Emotional Support, Mutual Concrete Support, and Shared Responsibility and Difficulties. The study also demonstrated the effect of agreement and negotiation on child-rearing on the pathway of positive communion \rightarrow agreement and negotiation on child-rearing \rightarrow positive agency.

Based on Figure 2, improvements were made using correction indices derived from the data of each age group. Figures 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3 display the path analysis diagrams for the relevant factors

in each age group. A common mediator across age groups was agreement and negotiation on child-rearing.

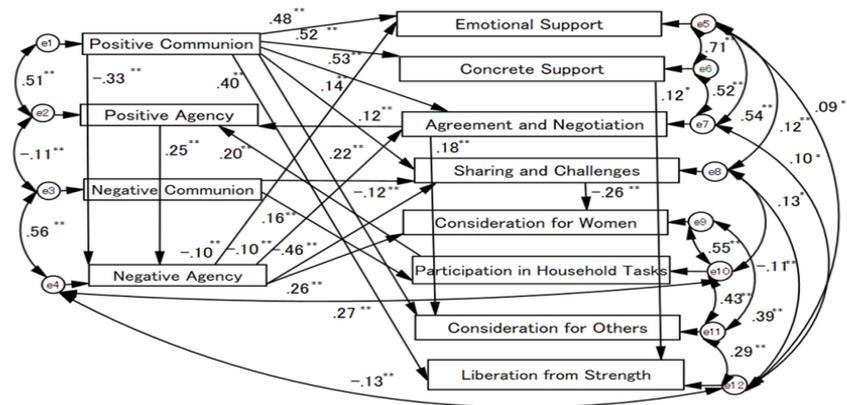


Figure 2 Path Analysis All CFI=.998 AGFI=.970 GFI=.988 X2=35.420(p=.228) RMSEA=.019 *p<.05,**p<.01

Table5 Indirect Effects by age groups

Age groups		Products of coefficients					Bootstrapping	
		B	SE	b	z	p	bias-corrected	95%CI
All	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	.009	.003	.033	11.000	.001 **	0.004	0.016
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	.008	.003	.033	11.000	.000 **	0.003	0.015
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	.043	.008	.152	18.975	.001 **	0.029	0.060
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	-.007	.002	-.025	-12.500	.001 **	-0.013	-0.003
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	-.006	.003	-.025	-8.333	.000 **	-0.012	-0.002
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	-.031	.008	-.115	-14.375	.001 **	-0.048	-0.018
Age 34 and under	Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency	-.010	.006	-.012	-2.000	.003 **	-0.025	-0.002
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	.013	.006	.046	7.700	.001 **	0.003	0.027
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	.011	.006	.042	7.000	.000 **	0.000	0.024
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	.048	.014	.181	12.900	.001 **	0.027	0.080
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	-.011	.006	-.039	-6.417	.001 **	-0.024	-0.003
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	-.009	.006	-.035	-5.833	.000 **	-0.023	0.000
Aged 35 to 38	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	-.041	.013	-.151	-11.577	.001 **	-0.072	-0.019
	Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency	-.009	.009	-.012	-1.333	.003 **	-0.038	0.001
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	.009	.005	.003	.682	.003 **	0.003	0.023
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	.008	.005	.034	6.820	.017 *	0.001	0.022
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	.048	.014	.161	11.514	.001 **	0.024	0.079
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	-.010	.005	-.039	-7.700	.004 **	-0.025	-0.003
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	-.009	.006	-.039	-6.417	.019 *	-0.024	-0.001
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	-.049	.016	-.182	-11.375	.001 **	-0.085	-0.022
	Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Concrete Support	.015	.010	.077	7.680	.088	-0.002	0.036
	Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Emotional Support	.016	.010	.072	7.200	.089	-0.003	0.039
Age 39 and above	Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Agreement and Negotiation	.015	.009	.075	8.356	.089	-0.003	0.033
	Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Sharing and Challenges	.002	.004	.006	1.600	.363	-0.003	0.014
	Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency	-.005	.008	-.007	-.825	.311	-0.030	0.005
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	.002	.026	.006	.231	.492	0.065	-0.022
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	.001	.019	.004	.211	.900	0.032	-0.023
	Positive Communion→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	.017	.065	.062	.954	.584	0.154	-0.120
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Emotional Support	.001	.016	.004	.225	.710	0.053	-0.010
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation	.000	.011	.002	.218	.349	...	-0.005
	Positive Agency→Negative Agency→Sharing and Challenges	.009	.036	.037	1.033	.535	0.130	-0.037
	Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency→Negative Agency	-.163	.524	-.036	-.069	.661	0.735	-1.463
Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Emotional Support	-.068	.097	-.333	-3.431	.435	0.189	-0.224	
Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Concrete Support	-.071	.107	-.354	-3.305	.485	0.185	-0.264	
Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Agreement and Negotiation	-.074	.117	-.374	-3.200	.429	0.168	-0.323	
Negative Communion→Positive Communion→Sharing and Challenges	-.038	.062	-.172	-2.768	.391	0.082	-0.183	
Negative Agency→Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency	-.005	.033	-.006	-.182	.807	0.060	-0.081	
Positive Communion→Agreement and Negotiation→Positive Agency	0.256	0.106	0.216	2.04	.005 **	0.077	0.486	

Note:Bootstrap sample size=2,000 ; SE=Standard Error,CI=Confidence Interval

... :Zero(or Extremely small), ** p<.01 * p<.05

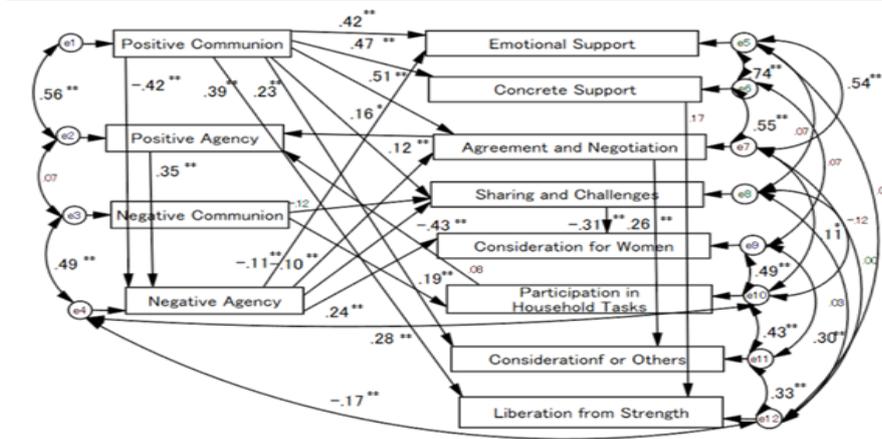


Figure 3-1 Path Analysis Age 34 and under CFI=.993 AGFI=.922 GFI=.972 X2=35.043(p=.169) RMSEA=.035 * p<.05,**p<.01

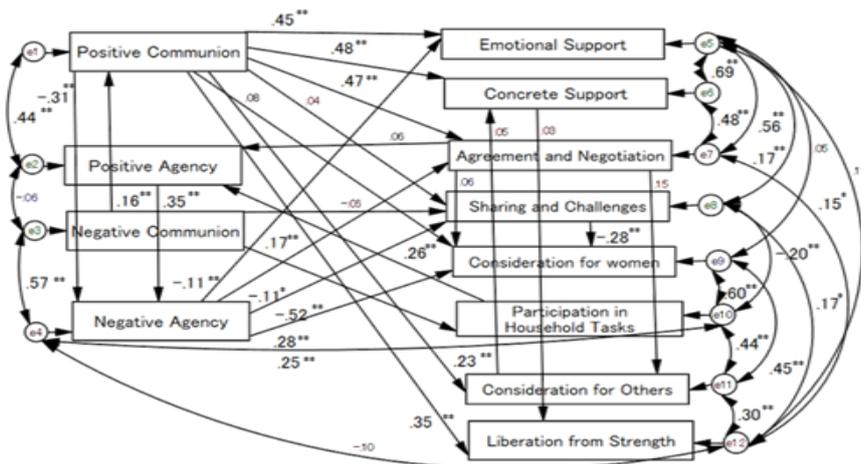


Figure 3-2 Path Analysis Aged 35 to 38 CFI=.998 AGFI=.930 GFI=.978 X2=26.960(p=.358) RMSEA=.020 * p<.05,**p<.01

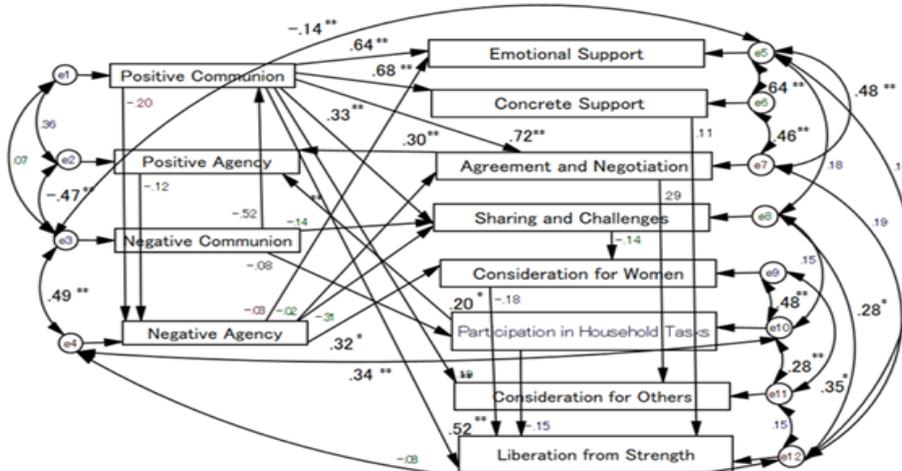


Figure 3-3 Path Analysis Age 39 and above CFI=1.000 AGFI=.874 GFI=.960 X2=23.526(p=.547) RMSEA=.000 * p<.05,**p<.01

DISCUSSION

Influence of Couple Co-parenting and New Masculine Roles/co-activity and Parental Age

The results revealed that the influence of the couple parenting subscales stemmed from positive communion or positive agency, mediated by negative agency, which, in turn, affects Mutual

Emotional Support, Mutual Concrete Support, and Shared Responsibility and Difficulties. The mediating role of negative agency indicates a mechanism through which negative thoughts and actions generate discomfort that emerge from contradictions in one's cognition and behavior. As a negative aspect of positive communion, the tendency to prioritize others at the expense of oneself may lead to dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. The negative aspect of positive agency—the pursuit of excessive operativeness or an obsession with success—may conversely lead to stress and dissatisfaction. The path coefficients for the sequence initiated by the indirect effect of positive operativity in this instance were negative. This finding indicated that it functions in a direction that controls Mutual Emotional Support, Mutual Concrete Support, and Shared Responsibility and Difficulties.

High levels of positive communion foster trust in which partners cooperate to achieve goals and support each other during difficult times. High levels of positive agency indicate a strong tendency to view issues from a positive perspective and act proactively, thus demonstrating positive psychological traits that enable one to overcome difficult situations, along with a high tendency to display the adaptive behaviors that accompany these traits. High levels of negative communion indicate a strong tendency to prioritize others at one's expense, which frequently leads to self-denial in relationships. High levels of negative operability suggest a tendency to impose one's views while disregarding others' opinions or feelings, thus reflecting self-centeredness and lack of respect for the perspectives of others. Specifically, it manifests as various negative agency such as interrupting others before they finish speaking to express one's opinion first and engaging in behavior that disregards the emotion or position of the other person.

Furthermore, the indirect effect observed among those aged 39 and above indicated positive facilitation. Positive communion fosters trust-based relationships that enable collaboration between partners to achieve goals and support each other during difficult times. Through agreement and negotiation regarding child-rearing, positive agency promotes a tendency to view matters favorably and to act proactively, enabling individuals to overcome challenging situations. This finding demonstrates the facilitative effect of such traits on adaptive behavior—representing an ideal enhancement effect. However, even after the initiative, women aged 39 and above exhibited higher levels of negative communion than did men. This result indicates a stronger tendency to prioritize men and children at the women's expense, along with an increased propensity toward self-denial in relationships. Furthermore, the initiative Shared Responsibility and Difficulties, which yielded significant results this time, pointed to statistically significant improvements in men and women across all age groups. The study proposes that this finding stems from the fact that high levels of positive interdependence foster a trust-based relationship in which couples cooperate to achieve goals and support each other during challenging situations. This relationship restrained tendencies to impose one's views on the other without considering the other's opinions or feelings, thereby mitigating self-centered behavior and lack of respect for the partner's perspective. Regarding the tendencies to speak before fully listening to others and to act without considering their feelings or position, the key action point of the program—fostering a relationship in which both partners understand each other's feelings and are open to discuss anything—proved effective. This aspect was achieved by implementing the practice of “listening to the other person without interrupting until they have finished speaking.”

Given that the study observed differences in negative communion and negative agency by age group, stereotypical notions such as “men work, women manage the home” were found to be less

entrenched among younger individuals. Instead, the study noted a tendency to prioritize role division based on individual capability and awareness.

Scholars have proposed that the strong positive impact of positive solidarity on couple parenting is causally linked to deepening marital trust. This notion indicates the Couple Parenting Promotion Program led to this change, thus indicating that the program content was effective. The significant increase in scores for Shared Responsibility and Difficulties also demonstrated the substantial effectiveness of the program.

The 15-item questionnaire of the program for couples to understand each other's feelings, and the Parenting Agreement and Negotiation subscale, showed no differences based on attributes, suggesting communication and discussion were generally effective. Furthermore, while the study did not observe changes in perceptions of couple parenting between men and women within the same age group, differences were observed across age groups. This finding clearly indicates that the diversification of gender roles in childcare is changing with the times (Cabinet Office 2025).

Furthermore, in the preceding study (Shimizu 2020), multiple regression analysis was conducted between the 29-item Couple Parenting Perception Scale and attributes during the scale development process. The attributes influencing the Couple Parenting Perception Scale were wife/husband, number of children, employment status, and family structure. Wife/husband significantly increased consideration and gratitude toward the partner, while family structure significantly increased factors that hindered spousal cooperation. Number of children significantly decreased spousal communication, while employment status significantly decreased consideration and gratitude toward the partner and spousal communication. In the analysis on the short form of the scale and its attributes, the study found that the factor that mostly influenced couple parenting through program engagement was negative agency. There was no relationship with the number of children, which averaged less than two. Furthermore, no significant effect was found for employment status in the cross-tabulation analyses. While agreement and negotiation on child-rearing displayed a positive effect on positive functioning for those aged 39 years and above, no other effects were significant. For individuals aged 34 years and under, affirmative operability tended to suppress or weaken positive functioning. The influence of attributes yielded different results when combined with detailed age-based analysis in the context of participation in this program.

Implications for Interventions Through the Couple Parenting Promotion Program

Scholars previously reported that women with a feminine dominance orientation or men with a masculine dominance orientation tended to strongly believe that gender differences were innate and definitive (e.g., *women must be like this, or men must act tough*). The current study elucidated that these are *expected characteristics* demanded by a male-centered social structure and gender role division to maintain social life—"how one ought to be, how one is desired to be"—and are not innate (<https://www.center-mie.or.jp/frente/data/zemi/detail/475>).

The *psychological androgynous* gender identity presumably encourages the possession of communalism and agency. In essence, humans should acquire these characteristics regardless of sex; they are necessary for living authentically and achieving self-realization. Individuals with high levels of gender identity are those who possess communalism *and* agency. The literature proposed that cognition starts from an *undifferentiated type* followed by the formation of gender schemas such as "men should be manly and women should be womanly," thus leading them to

become people who conform to these schemas. Women and men are considered to become *femininity-* and *masculinity-dominant types*, . However, as gender identity forms, individuals begin to understand that femininity and masculinity are necessary to be true to oneself, and fixating on distinctions between them is unnecessary. This tendency leads to the attainment of psychological androgyny (Doi 1995), which is supported by the notion that the integration of operativity and communality is the fundamental task of human development, as demonstrated in developmental models (Bakan 1966, Block 1973, Loeviger 1966).

Participation in the Couples Parenting Promotion Program, which aims to enhance communication between partners, underscores the potential of developing a gender-free, flexible mindset as human maturity progresses, which can be achieved through mutual understanding and respect. Morishita (2006) proposes that changes associated with becoming a father are prompted by an interest in childcare. In turn, this interest is encouraged by accepting parental roles, holding egalitarian views of gender roles, being satisfied with the marital relationship, and holding a positive perception of the relationship with the child.

Alternatively, the operant nature of feelings such as "I don't want to" or "It's a bother" can hinder action or prompt a choice to maintain the status quo. This scenario can be considered a passive form of operant behavior or an expression of emotion, which is distinct from active operant behavior. While controlling emotions and acting impulsively—judging and acting on spur-of-the-moment events—can be viewed as a form of operant behavior, it can also directly connect to feelings of "I don't want to" or "It's a bother," which potentially limits action. Furthermore, whether one approaches a situation from the masculine perspective, seeks to break through it, or perceives it as *troublesome*, thus, avoiding action, is deemed related to individual personality and ability to adapt to a situation. In other words, expressions, such as "I don't want to" or "It's troublesome" are not directly related to masculinity; instead, they can be viewed as inaction by choice, which contrasts with the masculine aspect of the *drive to act*.

Discussions that reveal each other's true feelings during the Couple Parenting Promotion Program are deemed to initiate cooperation activation. While these discussions may initially seem detrimental to the couple, they also reveal thoughts that remain unspoken and unnoticed. Post-initiative feedback indicated that understanding each other's feelings was beneficial. Perceptions, whether positive or negative, were viewed as repeatedly influenced by one's inherent nature. While the effect of the couple's joint efforts is significant, partner's attitude toward engagement is crucial. Given that the influence of communion–agency extends even to the motivation to engage, the key to promoting effectiveness lies in the couple being able to work together smoothly and openly. Furthermore, whether the partner feels loved, comfortable, or happy is dependent solely on the recipient's feelings, which only they can control. In other words, while one can do what they think will please the other, its perception varies across individuals. This aspect must be considered, because it affects the effectiveness of the program.

CONCLUSION

Engaging in the full version of the Couple Parenting Promotion Program across four weeks resulted in significant increases in scores for the four subscales of the Short-Form Couple Parenting Awareness Scale. The improvement was particularly substantial for Shared Responsibility and Difficulties (0.5.) Regarding the scores for the subscales of the New Male Role Scale, men produced significantly higher score for participation in household tasks. Changes in the *Communion-Agency Scale* demonstrated that women scored significantly higher for positive

and negative agency, while men scored significantly higher on positive communion. The factor that promoted couple parenting was positive communality, which suggested that it fostered smooth interpersonal relationships and influenced qualities such as attentiveness, devotion, charm, sensitivity, and compliance necessary for living intimately with others. While the Couple Parenting Promotion Program was deemed effective, characteristics related to personal growth and achievement as an individual also directly influenced outcomes.

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Limitations and Challenges

This intervention was conducted online and mainly involved cooperation between couples. Thus, the researchers entrusted the assessment of participation in the program and adherence to instructions and activities in the program to the partner. This aspect was evaluated through responses to the Couple Parenting Perception and Practice Evaluation Sheet and the questionnaire. Furthermore, as this couple survey is web-based, concerns exist regarding the possibility of one of the spouses answering the other spouse's section without authorization, which is a limitation in the web survey company's management of respondent reliability. Therefore, given that a large number of responses were collected, the researchers exercised careful judgment in determining the reliability of the responses.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest in the conduct of this research.

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