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Survey suggests weak parent-child relations in Japan

JIJI

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A survey by a Japanese government-affiliated organization indicates that parent-child relations in Japan are weaker than those in the United States, China and South Korea.

According to the survey, conducted among high school students in the four countries by the National Institution for Youth Education last autumn, 37.1 percent of Japanese students said they “respect” their parents very much, up 16 percentage points from 2008, when this question was last asked.

The figure was lower than the 70.9 percent in the United States in the latest survey, 59.7 percent in China and 44.6 percent in South Korea.

In Japan, 29.5 percent said they “feel pressure” to meet their parents’ expectations, about 22 to 34 points lower than in the three other countries.

The proportion of Japanese students who said they want to take care of their parents “no matter what” when they get old and need care stood at 37.9 percent, far lower than the 87.7 percent in China, 57.2 percent in South Korea and 51.9 percent in the United States.

Meanwhile, 21.3 percent of Japanese students said they will support their parents “financially” but “want others to take care of them,” higher than in the other three countries.

The institution said relations between parents and children in Japan may be weakening partly because of changes in social structures and ways of thinking.

The survey, which covered about 1,500 to 2,000 high school students in each country, also found low self-confidence among Japanese students, with 72.5 percent in Japan saying, “Sometimes I feel like a failure,” higher than the 35.2 percent in South Korea, 45.1 percent in the United States and 56.4 percent in China.

The proportion of those who think their dreams will “come true someday” topped 80 percent in the United States, China and South Korea, but stood lower in Japan, at 67.8 percent.

Yoichi Akashi, head of the institution’s Research Center for Youth Education, pointed to a lack of activities to help boost self-confidence and a willingness to take on challenges among young people in Japan.

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