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# TOM TOM ENGLISH



**Parents attending job seminars on behalf of their children**

## VOCABULARY

### **Prospective =**

Expected to be or to happen in the future

### **Relentlessly =**

Steadily, persistent and never stopping

### **Proliferating =**

Spreading

### **Candidate =**

A person who seeks an honour, position or job.

### **Faltering =**

Unsteady or uncertain

## Discussion questions

1. Do you think the current generation of young adults is less mature than past generations?
2. When you got your first job, were your parents involved in your decision? In what way?
3. Did you get involved in your childrens' job hunting? How?
4. Do you agree that "black companies" are proliferating? If so, why do you think this is?
5. Have you ever worked for a black company? Why was it black company? What did you do?

## VOCABULARY

### **Exhilarating =**

Very exciting or thrilling

### **Shell out =**

To pay for something, usually something expensive

### **Bewildering =**

Very confusing

### **Stranglehold =**

A very tight grip; a force or action that restricts freedom

At a job fair in Aichi Prefecture in September, 700 attendees were expected but 1,000 showed up. Organizers hastily improvised. A second venue was set up for the overflow crowd, video monitors were installed, and everyone got to participate.

What's the point of this story? The numbers? The prompt and effective response? Neither. What interests Shukan Shincho (Nov 6) is who the event was arranged for – not, as you would expect, for students entering the job market but for their parents.

Why them? What have parents got to do with it? Shouldn't parents at this stage of their children's lives be easing themselves into the background? Neither they nor the universities seem to think so. Nor do **prospective** employers.

“Universities have been organizing parent-oriented job seminars for the past five years,” consultant Yohei Tsunemi tells Shukan Shincho. So engaged, he says, are parents in the job-hunting process that “even parents of first- and second-year students attend” – of students, that is, who should be years away from employment worries. More predictably, parents of fourth-year students are active participants, but their role is sometimes peculiar. Some of their offspring are lucky enough to have already secured job offers. Success itself, it seems, breeds suspicion. “The parents come to ask, ‘Is the company that is about to hire my son/ daughter a black company?’”

The suspicion, to do it justice, is not unfounded. “Black companies,” those that **relentlessly** overwork and underpay their employees, have been much in the news lately, and are reportedly **proliferating**.

“Actually,” observes journalist Ryoji Ishiwata, “companies go to a great deal of trouble to impress the parents (of **prospective** employees). They understand that when it comes down to the final choice, parents have more to say about it than the **candidate**.”

Those of us who look back on our first **faltering** steps into adulthood as a time of **exhilarating**, sometimes wrenching independence from the support-cum-**stranglehold** of our parents may find this a bit **bewildering**. To the extent that it's thinkable at all, young adults, we feel, should be ashamed of clinging so publicly to their parents' apron-strings (or neckties, as the case may be). Evidently they are not. “Some companies are even known to have received phone calls from parents: ‘Kindly excuse my son/ daughter for refusing your job offer; please permit him/ her to accept a job offer from another company.’”

If it sounds rather like a communication to an elementary school teacher explaining a child's absence from class, it's because the spirit, says Ishiwata, is essentially the same.

“More and more children nowadays feel no embarrassment at all at this sort of thing,” he says. “I've had university people tell me they get calls from students' mothers: ‘Please excuse my daughter/ son for not showing up for your seminar today...’”

“Once upon a time, young people shook off this kind of dependence at puberty,” Shukan Shincho declares.

Adapted from [www.japantoday.com](http://www.japantoday.com)