

Research on Issues for Mothers in Single-Mother Households to Become Independent

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Abstract

This research aims to review the literature relating to the issues for single-mother households to become independent based. Relevant articles were identified by searching the CiNii Research databases of articles published between 2000 and 2022 examining support for the independence of single-mother households. We organized the viewpoints of "economy," "employment and childcare balance," "social support," "support system," and "independence required of single-mother households," which are the background of single-mother households. Predicted that mothers in single-mother households, who are in a state of economic poverty, will face multiple problems, such as unemployment, child-rearing, and "making ends meet" to survive on a low income. And mothers may have to reduce the time spent on recharging their personal resources (leisure and sleep) and use that for work and child-rearing. Therefore, their health will suffer. Since 2002, the government has four measures are being promoted: child-raising and livelihood support, employment support, securing child support expenses, and economic support. However, if comprehensive support for employment and self-reliance is to support self-help efforts without relying on others, it is a severe support measure for mothers of single-mother households who are already continuing self-help efforts. The current situation of single mothers has revealed that the issues faced by single-mother households are "economic poverty," "lack of self-investment by mothers," "lack of social support," "reluctance to receive social support," "inconsistency in support systems," and "self-help efforts required by society." It was suggested that there are the above problems.

Keywords

single-mother; independent; social support; economic problems; social support



I. Introduction

The number of single-mother households in Japan was 1,231,600, according to the "Welfare 's 2016 Nationwide Survey of Single-parent Households". This number increased from 790,000 in 1993 to 1,225,000 in 2003, it was 1,151,000 and 1,230,000 in 2006 and 2011 respectively. Since 2011, there has been no upward trend, however, the number of such households continue to be high.

Since 2003, divorce has become the most common reason for single-mother households, accounting for approximately 80% of such households. The average age of

mothers when they started handling single-mother households is 33.4 years. The average age of children is 4.3 years (the youngest), and the average number of children being raised in such households is 1.52. Children are the mandate of God given to parents. For this mandate, Allah obliges every parent to care for, nurture and educate children to become good, smart, noble children and to avoid things that are not good (Hendra, 2019). Family communication always provides the necessary recognition and support from parents to their children (Thariq, 2018). Additionally, 38.7% of single -mother households had cohabitants other than children. In other words, about 60% of single mothers in such households started a new life with one or more children, including preschool children, who needed a lot of care after divorce.

In recent years, several social issues have affected single-mother households. The most noteworthy is economic poverty, which affects the growth and development of the children being raised. It is predicted that the cycle of poverty will continue in the next generation.

II Review of Literature

Although employment support is provided for single-mother households, independence support for mothers raising infants has been ineffective. Saito (2020), who investigated the impact of work on the health level of single mothers using microdata from the Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions, found that regular employment of single mothers reduced the stress caused by economic factors. While the stress significantly decreased to 8.5%, time-related stress (less free time) increased significantly to 2.2%. In addition, regarding health behavior, the rate of drinking five or more days a week increased by 5.0%. It is presumed that such drinking habits impair the mother's health.

Umeda (2022) points out that wives of dual-income couples, who are raising children with high level support from their relatives, are “most troubled in their current lives”. They reported that they did not feel well because of fatigue and stress.

Mothers in independent single-mother households, with no other adults living with the mother and child, alone bear the burden of raising their children and maintaining economic functioning. Subsequently, getting out of shape in that single mothers find it difficult to hold the regular act together.

Mothers in single-mother households are the only caregivers of their children; if the mother's health is compromised, their children's survival can be at stake. The Child Rearing Allowance Act stipulates the “stabilization of families where children are raised” and the “promotion of independence” from such issues.

In this study, we will clarify what kind of problems mothers in single-mother households face in order to become independent.

III. Research Method

Relevant articles were identified by searching the CiNii Research databases of articles published between 2000 and 2022 examining support for the independence of single-mother households. The primary search was performed using the keywords “single-mother” and “independent” and “social support”. The keywords search initially identified a total of 21 citations. References from all relevant literature were hand searched and used to identify additional relevant studies. (Search dates for articles, August 2022)

We analyzed eight of the available publications.

IV. Discussion

We organized the viewpoints of "economy," "employment and childcare balance," "social support," "support system," and "independence required of single-mother households," which are the background of single-mother households.

4.1 Economic Problem

The average income of single mothers in single-mother households in 2015 was 2.43 million yen (2.23 million yen in 2010), whereas the average income of households with children was 7.078 million yen (6.581 million yen in 2010). In single-mother households, 70.3% of mothers were employed by birth (of which, 31.9% were regular employees). Although 8.4% had a side job, the average annual income from such jobs was 470,000 yen. Additionally, 49.4% of mothers changed jobs because their families transitioned to single-mother households. The most common reason for this was the intent "to increase income" at 38 %, followed by "work hours not being suitable" 12.4 %.

Moreover, 70% of divorced single mother are working. To increase their income even by a margin, they change jobs and work overtime, however, their average employment income is 2 million yen the regular employment rate is low at 31.9%. Raising children with one-third the income of regular households with children is challenging.

Yuzawa et al. (2012) conducted a study of income and occupational changes over a five-year period (2003-2007) among those eligible for child support allowance. The results showed that 39.4% of the total respondents were employed in any of the five years. In other words, even if mothers in single-mother households had a high employment rate at one point in time, it was clear that they may have continued to work while repeatedly leaving, changing jobs, and finding employment. As mentioned earlier, the reasons for mothers in mother-child households to change jobs are "to increase income" and "working hours are not appropriate. Mothers in single-mother households, each time they change jobs, have to adapt to a new workplace, which is thought to be very stressful.

In low-income households, women are responsible for managing household finances. Consequently, they tend to play a buffering role against poverty by balancing it with debt, which many impair their physical and mental health. In other words, it is predicted that mothers in single-mother households, who are in a state of economic poverty, will face multiple problems, such as unemployment, child-rearing, and "making ends meet" to survive on a low income. Therefore, their health will suffer.

4.2 Issues Related to Balancing Work and Childcare

Working mothers get home between 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm on average (43.3%), followed by 34.7% who get home before 6:00 pm. However, among regular employees, 54.4% come home late, between 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm 19.9% come home before 6:00 pm.

Tamiya (2021) conducted a study using the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications' 2016 Basic Survey on Social Lifestyles, according to which childcare hours in single-mother households were significantly shorter than those of working mothers in households with both parents (single mothers: 87 minutes; working mothers in households with both parents: 169 minutes). To secure childcare within a limited time, it is necessary to reduce work hours. However, reduced working hours lead to less income. This phenomenon suggests that economic and temporal poverty have a trade-off relationship. Furthermore, several mothers say, "I give priority to caring for my child above all else," and consequently, cut back on their sleep time (Uchino 2012).

To balance the trade-off relationship between economic and temporal poverty, mothers may have to reduce the time spent on recharging their personal resources (leisure and sleep)

and use that for work and child-rearing. It is predicted that their health will be damaged by trying to balance work and childcare even as they are being exhausted.

4.3 Social Support Issues

2012 Survey on Life and Mutual Support in the comparison of receiving support for single-mother households and mothers of single-mother households, all items (child care, consultation on childcare, work consultation, sharing joys and sorrows, financial assistance, etc.). A high percentage of respondents answered they “had no one to rely on” a significant percentage responded that they “did not rely on others for that matter” (Yamano2017). Jiang (2021) conducted research on the social isolation of single-parent households using the 2017 Hokkaido Single-Parent Household Survey (among the valid responses, 1,558 single-mother households). Of these 413 households, (44.3%) stated that they had no one to rely on.

Additionally, Yoshitake (2019) used the “Survey on Parents and Children's Lifestyle Awareness” conducted by the Cabinet Office to examine the status of receiving public assistance in single-mother households. Its determinants clarified that in addition to high school graduates and those who were employed, there was a strong tendency for internal control. In other words, people, who thought that their own efforts and actions caused outcomes, tended to place value on “independence and self-help” and were resistant to receiving support from others.

4.4 Single Parent Support System

A low regular employment rate is considered one of the reasons working mothers in single-mother households remain in poverty; the main support for single-parent households is employment support. As a policy, we are provided support to improve skills by acquiring qualifications and transitioning to regular employment. However, according to Uchino's (2012) research on the lives and care of mothers in single-mother households, such individuals change their working styles according to their children's situation and distribute their care according to their working styles. Furthermore, it has been reported that when the content of "care" changes, the process of changing the way of working is repeated. Subsequently, the regular employment rate for divorced single mothers in single-mother households is 31.9%. However, as the youngest child gets older, the regular employment rate increases and exceeds 40% when the child is 9 to 11 years old. Based on these facts, the needs of mothers in single-mother households differ depending on the age of the child they are raising, and it is thought that same employment support measures will not make single mothers independent.

Single-mother households were eligible for relief under the Child Rearing Allowance Law (1961) and Mother and Child Welfare Law (1964). However, the maternal and child welfare reform was implemented in 2002, prompting changes in the system, such as the partial suspension of the child-rearing allowance depending on the period of receipt. The Child Support Allowance introduced a measure to partially suspend the payment of the allowance after the fifth year. The measure assumes that if employment support is provided to mothers in single-mother households, the working lives of mothers in single-mother households will stabilize and their employment income will increase in about five years from the start of child support allowance payments.

However, the level of increase is fixed, and it is extremely difficult for many households to cover all living expenses with the mother's income from work (Yuzawa et al. 2012).

Since 2002, the government has strengthened its measures to provide “comprehensive support for employment and independence.” Currently, four measures are being promoted: child-raising and livelihood support, employment support, securing child support expenses,

and economic support. Specific contents include consultation support by independence supporters, formulation of independence support programs, promotion of employment and independence support center projects for single-mother families (including the promotion of child support consultation), and promoting self-help efforts of single parents.

State-guaranteed assistance is stipulated by law, which entails the following obligations along with the right to receive assistance: Child-Rearing Allowance Act stipulates “stabilization of the family where the child is raised” and “promotion of independence”, and Article 2-2 states that “The mother who received child rearing allowance voluntarily tried to become independent, and they must try to stabilize and improve their family life”.

Additionally, Article 14 states that if a mother, who is eligible to receive child-rearing allowance seeks a job or otherwise engages in self-reliance activities without justifiable reason, they may not receive Child Welfare Allowance. Furthermore, Article 4 of the Law on the Welfare of Mothers and Children and Widows stipulates that mothers and widows in single-mother households must voluntarily strive for independence and should stabilize and improve their family and professional lives.

If the law requires mothers of single-mother households to stabilize the homes in which their children are being raised, it is necessary to support them.

Considering the current state of support for single-mother households, society seems to demanding that single mothers should not rely on external help, even if their own resources are depleted, to stabilize their households.

“When we are exhausted by the very struggle of making ends meet, when we have no one to help us, and when we are overwhelmed by the uncontrollable feeling of poverty, it is difficult to tap already depleted personal resources” (Lister 2 017).

4.5 Independence Support for Single-Mother Households

In 2002, the maternal and child welfare reform was implemented, and the policy was strengthened to “comprehensive support for employment and independence,” However, “independence” remains undefined.

There are four types of self-support for single-mother households: child-rearing and livelihood support, employment support, securing child-care expenses, and financial support. However, the main support for self-support in the four areas is employment support. Mothers in single-mother households are expected to make efforts for the economic independence of their households.

Regarding the concept of "independence" in modern society, Manabe (2020) states that "independence as the language of today's policy instruments has the following six characteristics;

- (1) deny interdependence and subordination,
- (2) impose an ideology of individual independence,
- (3) economic independence is self-help,
- (4) self-responsibility for independence,
- (5) demand independence,
- (6) Autonomy that forces heteronomy.

If comprehensive support for employment and self-reliance is to support self-help efforts without relying on others, it is a severe support measure for mothers of single-mother households who are already continuing self-help efforts.

According to Kudo (2012), the background of independence is dependence or interdependence. Furthermore, “Self-help independence is rarely achieved in the life course, and any person has no choice but to live depending on others and systems, and the state of dependence on others and systems” (Kudo2012). Independence should be considered as long as the right of self-choice and self-determination is ensured as much as possible. In the case

of this dependent independence, I think that support for the independence of single-mother households is to support mothers who are making self-help efforts to realize their own limitations and to borrow the power of others.

V. Conclusion

The previous literature will organize the issues regarding for the independence of single-mother households.

The issues that afflict by single-mother households include economic concerns, balancing work and childcare, and resistance to social support. Support for single-mother households aims to achieve economic independence through employment. Single mothers aim to balance work and child-rearing, and try to "make ends meet" to reduce the trade-off relationship between work income and child-rearing hours. This is covered by my mother's personal resources (sleep, rest time and energy).

These mental and physical depletions may harm mother's health. Single mothers tend to value "independence and self-help." "Self-help" and "self-responsibility," which encapsulate independence in modern society, support the tendency of mothers in single-mother households. However, there is a limit to self-help, and for single mothers trying to make ends meet, independence support is not self-help or self-responsibility, but "dependent independence" that allows them to decide whether they want to depend on something.

Impairment of single mothers' physical and mental health consequently leads to their children not receiving adequate care from their mothers. Furthermore, it becomes impossible to meet the needs of mothers who want to prioritize the care of their children. The most pressing problem is how the health of mothers and children in single-mother households is hindered.

It is imperative to support mothers' "dependent independence." In the future, we will consider providing specific support for mothers in single-mother households to allow them to become independent without impairing their health.

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