Employment Promotion Programs for Single Mothers in Japan: 2003-2008

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This paper introduces and evaluates the five employment promotion programs for single mothers enacted from 2003 in Japan. These programs are designed to grant job training to mothers (Programs 1 and 2), to help job-seekers to find a good job match more quickly (Program 3), to meet comprehensive needs (Program 4), or to motivate employers through subsidies (Program 5). Through this research, I found that Program 4 excelled in terms of the coverage rate and number of job placements. Program 1 (grants for highly-skilled job training), however, is the only program that proved to be effective in promoting secure and well-paid jobs. Despite this, the degree of awareness and the utilization rate of the programs are quite low. The estimation results show that the probability of not knowing about the programs is especially high among mothers who work part-time, the less-educated and non-working mothers. The probability of utilizing the programs is relatively low among older mothers, the less-educated, newly single mothers and those with young children.

I. Introduction

The employment rate of single mothers in Japan is one of the highest among the advanced countries. According to the 2006 Nationwide Single Mother Survey (NSMS) by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the employment rate of single mothers in Japan is as high as 84.5%, which is the second highest among the OECD countries and is notably higher than many other advanced countries such as the United States (73.8%) and the United Kingdom (56.3%) (OECD 2007, 16).

In spite of this high employment rate, the economic situation for single mothers in Japan as a whole is very severe, as has been shown by many existing surveys and empirical studies (JIL 2003, Abe and Oishi 2005, etc). For example, according to the 2005 National Livelihood Survey (NLS), the average annual household income of independent single mother families[1] is 2.33 million yen, which is only 30% of the average amount of all households with children (7.15 million yen). This gap did not narrow very much even after allowing for household size. The income per household member capita for single mother families is 0.83 million yen, which is only about half the amount of all households with children (1.62 million yen).

Despite their high rate of employment, because of the economic hardships experienced by single mother households, quite a large number of single mothers in Japan still

[1] 60-70% of the single mother households in Japan are independent ones (not co-habiting with the mother's parents) (JILPT 2008).

depend on some form of welfare assistance. During the 2006 fiscal year,[2] 11.8% of single mother households were receiving public assistance (*seikatsu hogo*).[3] The probability of using public assistance for single mother households is nearly five times higher than that of all households overall. Meanwhile, nearly 70% of single mother households are recipients of the child-rearing allowance (*jido fuyo teate*),[4] a cash payment targeted at low-income single mother households (Zhou 2008).

Due to the increasing number of single mother households, public expenditure on them surged over the last few decades. This has definitely placed huge pressure on the financial sustainability of welfare programs. Specifically, the number of single mother households rose from 954,900 to 1,225,400 during the period from 1998 to 2003. Meanwhile, the public assistance rate for single mother households rose from 10.9% to 14.5%. Since the standard payment of public assistance was almost unchanged, we can easily calculate that the total expenditure of public assistance on single mother household rose more than 60% within just five years. Although expenditure on the child-rearing allowance did not rise as fast as that of public assistance, it did increase nearly 50% between 1995 and 2005.[5]

In addition to the problem of financial sustainability, low income and welfare dependency can also have a negative impact on the well-being of children of single mother families. Shinotsuka (1992) and Kanbara (2006) found that, compared to children of two-parent households, children of single mother households generally have fewer opportunities to get a college degree and to obtain a well-paid job as adults. They also indicate that the relatively strong liquidity constraints on education expenditures faced by single mother households could be one of the most important reasons. In other words, poverty and dependence on welfare is likely to be reproduced from one generation to another.

Mainly because of the above two reasons, a number of new employment promotion programs aimed at single mothers have been established since 2003, following the amendment of "Single Mother and Widow Welfare Act (*Boshikafu Fukushi-ho*)." All of these programs are designated to promote employment opportunities for single mothers, either by providing professional training, by enhancing job matching quality, or by subsidizing firms

[2] In Japan, a fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31. For instance, the 2005 fiscal year ran from April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006.

[3] The amount of public assistance for a typical single mother household is as much as 132,880 to 166,160 yen per month, which covers almost all living expenses.

[4] The amount of child-rearing allowance depends on the household income. Households with annual income of less than 1.3 million yen are eligible for the highest amount, and households with annual income over 3.65 million yen do not qualify for the allowance. 5,000 yen/month is added for the first additional child, and 3,000 yen/month is added for each additional child. In the 2004 budget year, the average monthly amount of child-rearing allowance per household was 50,966 yen. Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR) "Annual Report on Social Security Expenditures."

[5] Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR) "Annual Report on Social Security Expenditures."

Table 1. Features of the Five Major Employment Promotion Programs

Features	Name of the Programs
Improving employability	Program1: Grants for highly-skilled job training (GHT) Program2: Subsidy for basic or medium-level job training (SPT)
Enhancing job matchs	Program3: Intensive assistance for job matching (AJM)
Comprehensive support	Program4: Center for Work Resources and Life Support (CWR)
Motivating employers	Program5: Subsidy to employers for providing full-time jobs (SE)

that are providing full-time jobs for single mothers.

After nearly five years of implementation of these employment promotion programs, much concern has arisen about their performances and about whether these programs should be aborted, continued or expanded. Are any of the programs notably better than others, or are there any programs that are not as useful as they were supposed to be? This paper will firstly provide a brief description of the basic features of the employment promotion programs, and then present an evaluation of their performance either by using recent official statistics or by employing a recent survey on single mothers and interviews with municipality offices and single mothers.

II. Overview of the Major Employment Promotion Programs

Since fiscal year 2003, the following five employment promotion programs targeted at single mothers have been introduced across the nation; they are all either fully or partially financed by the central government (Table 1).

In brief, Programs 1 and 2 are designated to improve the employability of single mothers by supporting them financially in obtaining qualifications or professional training. Program 3, however, is mainly targeted at job-seekers and aims to achieve a better-fitting and faster job match by providing intensive assistance to each user. Program 4 aims to provide all-round support to single-parent households in general, as well as to function as a local center of accessible public resources for single mother households. Finally, Program 5 is a subsidy for enterprises that have switched their single mother employees from a part time contract base to a full time one. Specifically,

(i) Program 1 (GHT) is to support single mothers in obtaining high-level professional skills and qualifications (e.g. nursing). Eligible applicants must be enrolled in a training institution with no less than a two-year curriculum, and must have finished the first two-thirds of the curriculum work. This program provides a grant of 103 thousand Yen per month for the last third of the curriculum period. In the case of a two-year curriculum nursing school, an applicant must be able to pay the first 16 months' tuition and living expenses herself, and will then be eligible for a grant from the 17th month through to the 24th month.

(ii) Program 2 (SPT) provides subsidies for obtaining basic or medium-level professional skills which require a relatively lower investment in time and money. Specifically, eligible single mothers are permitted to freely choose a training course from a wide range, such as cooking, accounting work, or home-helper skills. Under Program 2, the government will refund 20% of the tuition fees (up to 100,000 yen).[6]

(iii) Program 3 (AJM) is a free one-on-one job matching consulting service. A consultant is to interview the user one-on-one and advise her on how to start her job search, what kind of job to apply for and, if necessary, what kind of professional training is available for her in order to realize a better job match. Compared to regular public job match services, the AJM's services are more intensive and tailored for the users. It should be noted that the AJM is the only program that was introduced in April 2006, not in April 2003 with the rest. The AJM is also the only program that was 100% subsidized by the central government.[7]

(iv) Program 4 (CWR) facilitates the building of all-round support bases for single parent households, known as "Centers of Work Resource and Life Support for Single Parent Households (*Boshikatei-nado Shugyo Jiritsu Shien Senta*)." These centers typically provide free services for job consulting and work skill seminars, as well mental health consulting, child care information, child support advice, etc.

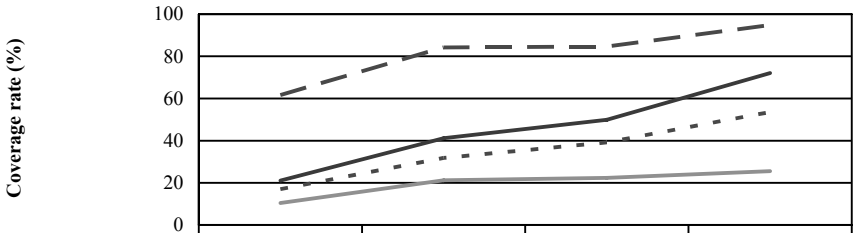
(v) Program 5 (SE) subsidizes enterprises which have switched their single mother employees from a part-time-contract base to a full-time one. To receive the subsidy (300,000 yen per case), the enterprise must submit a training plan to the local government and must give their part-time employees who are single mothers some on-the-job-training (OJT) or off-JT, based on this plan. The subsidy will then be paid to the enterprise when it employs the trainees as full time workers for at least six consecutive months.

III. Performance of the Five Programs (2003-2006)

There are two comparable performance indexes that are released annually for each program by the government. One is the coverage rate of the program (*jisshiritsu*), while the other is the number of job placements (*shushoku kensu*). Coverage rate is defined as the ratio of the number of municipalities that have implemented the programs to the total number of municipalities. Hence, the bigger the coverage rate, the more widely spread the program is. On the other hand, the number of job placements is calculated as the total number of

[6] During the period from April 2003 to October 2007, the cash back rate was 40% (up to 200,000 yen). As employment insurance provides a similar plan, it is those who are not covered by employment insurance that can use Program 2.

[7] Other programs require the local government to contribute half (Program 4) or a quarter of the total expenditure (Programs 1, 2 and 5).



	Y2003	Y2004	Y2005	Y2006
Program 1	16.9	31.8	39.2	53.6
Program 2	21	41.2	49.9	72.1
Program 3				23.8
Program 4	61.6	84.2	84.7	94.9
Program 5	10.4	21.2	22.3	25.5

Source: MHLW (2006), *White Book on Single Mother Households 2006*.

Figure 1. Coverage Rates of the Five Programs (2003-2006)

job turnovers and job placements realized through using the programs either directly or indirectly. These figures, however, must be interpreted with caution because the definition may differ sharply according to region and to programs.[8]

To sum up, among the five programs, Program 4 (Center of Work Resource and Life Support, CWR) showed an excellent performance, not only in the coverage rate but also in the number of job placements. Specifically, the overall coverage of CWR was as high as 94.9% in 2006, with 100% coverage rate within the 47 prefectures and 13 major metropolitan areas (Figure 1). Two of the work skill training programs (Programs 1 and 2) also showed a rise in coverage rates in the last four years. Program 5 (Subsidy to employers for providing a full-time job), on the other hand, has problems expanding its coverage.

Program 4 also showed a good performance in the number of job placements. For example, in year 2005, this program has helped realize 1,682 job placements through work skill seminars and 4,372 job placements through job consulting (Table 2). Although we are rather hesitant to compare this number directly with those of the other programs due to their definition variations, an obvious gap exists in the absolute numbers (Figure 2). Program 5, again, has the worst performance among the five programs (only 28 job placements in 2006).

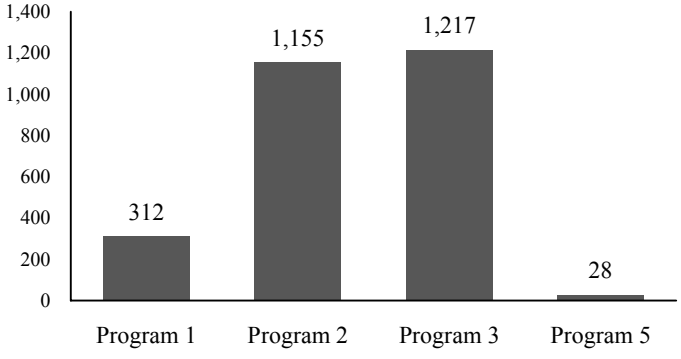
Program 4, however, is not the most effective way to help single mothers to escape poverty. Nearly 60% of the job placements through program 4 are part-time jobs, which generally lack job security and pay salaries that are far from sufficient to cover living costs.

[8] For example, for the program 4 (CWR), some municipalities count a job that finally settled by using other means (e.g. newspaper) as their performance if only the job-seeker once ever used their services. Other municipalities, however, may exclude those indirect job placements from their performance.

Table 2. Number of Job Placements through Program 4 (2003-2006)

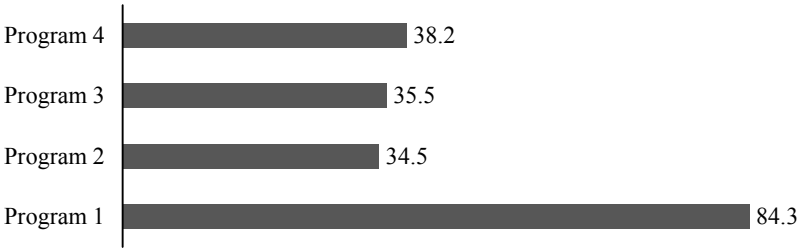
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Job consulting				
Total number of caseloads	14,585	32,385	46,442	46,972
Number of job settlement	1,262	3,251	4,372	3,918
Full-time job ratio (%)	33.3	42.8	37.8	39.4
Work skill seminar				
Total number of participants	15,504	18,396	47,210	38,978
Number of job settlement	757	896	1,682	1,111
Full-time job ratio (%)	28.5	38.2	30.0	38.1
Provision of Job information				
Total number of caseloads	7,256	22,798	29,097	29,627
Number of job settlement	653	2,099	2,757	2,544
Full-time job ratio (%)	31.7	43.6	40.1	37.0
Life support consulting				
Total number of caseloads	2,585	5,068	7,224	7,242
Caseloads of child support consulting	577	872	2,210	1,075
Caseloads of child-rearing/life consulting	263	1,108	1,924	2,364

Source: MHLW (2006), *White Book on Single Mother Households 2006*.
Notes: 1. Statistics for 2006 are limited from April to December. Statistics for other years are from April till March.
2. The number of job placements may be double-counted across the four categories of services.



Source: JILPT (2008).
Note: The number for Program 1 is the average number between 2005 and 2006.

Figure 2. Number of Job Placements through Other Four Programs (2006)



Source: JILPT(2008).

Figure 3. Share of Full-Time Job Placements across the Five Programs (by %, for 2005)

In that sense, Program 1 (grants for high-level skill training) should be considered as the most successful program. As we can easily tell from Figure 3, the share of full-time jobs attained through Program 1 is as high as 84.3%, which is significantly higher than the performances of the other programs—with the exception of Program 5. (Program 5 is, by definition, providing 100% full-time jobs).

IV. Evaluation of the Employment Promotion Programs

In order to evaluate the performance of the programs, in 2007 a research board organized by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) conducted a random survey of 1,311 single mothers, as well as holding intensive interviews with nine mothers and the relevant departments at eight municipalities.[9] The survey and interviews reveal some basic problems hidden beneath the five employment promotion programs that are not apparent from the preceding information on performances.

1. Utilization Rate and Awareness Degree of the Programs

Although all programs, with the exception of Program 3, have been introduced for more than five years, they are far from being widely recognized and utilized among single mothers. The survey results (Table 3) reveals that among every 100 single mothers, only 37 knew Program 1, 50 knew Program 2, 34 knew Program 3 and 63 knew Program 4.[10] Considering the proportion of single mothers who are currently using or have ever used the programs, the numbers are even more disappointing. The share of previous or current users for Program 1 hits the lowest rate at 2.3%, while even the best-known Program 4 has a utilization rate of less than 20%.

[9] See JILPT (2008) for detailed descriptions about the survey and interviews. The 1,311 single mothers in the sample were randomly drawn from 20 districts, either through a users list from CWR or a recipients list for the child-rearing allowance.

[10] Awareness degree and utilization rate of Program 4 might be overestimated because of our sampling method.

Table 3. Utilization Rate and Degree of Program Awareness

(%)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4
Share of previous or current users (a)	2.3	11.8	15.0	19.1
No use due to unawareness (b)	64.7	57.3	78.0	45.8
Degree of program awareness	36.8	49.5	33.7	62.9

Source: JILPT (2008), ch.3.

Notes: 1. (Degree of Program awareness) =1- (1-a)*b.

2. Program 5 is not evaluated by respondents of the JILPT survey because Program 5 is mainly concerned with employers.

The interview results tell a similar story to the survey results. Among the nine interviewees, five mothers have never used any of the programs[11]. Besides the problem of low utilization rate, use of the program services is uneven among some of the well-informed mothers. One well-informed mother, on the other hand, has used three of the five programs and is prepared to use more if needed. Whether mothers are well-informed or not, however, depends largely on their education level. All three of the interviewees who have a junior college degree were aware of the programs and were using some of the programs. The six other interviewees, who have a high school degree or less, have poor awareness of the programs and only one of them has used the employment promotion program. Furthermore, only one high-school graduate was a public assistance recipient, and she used the program on the advice of her caseworker, and not on her own initiative.

2. Who Are More Likely to Use or Know about the Programs?

Due to the low utilization rate and awareness degree of the programs, there is no doubt that there is an urgent need for the programs to be advertised. In order to use ads efficiently, however, it is extremely important to clearly identify who are most likely to be unaware or non-users of these programs. Using the JILPT survey from 2007, therefore, we investigate how personal and household characteristics, including the mother's educational level, are affecting the utilization probability and awareness degree of the programs.

Table 4-1 presents the estimation results for the probability of using the employment promotion programs. First, we find that older mothers are less likely than younger ones to use the two work skill training programs (Programs 1 and 2). This result seems to be natural because younger people, in general, have greater advantages in learning new things and benefit more from the training in the long-run than older people. Second, the mother's educational level does affect the use of programs as we found in the interviews. Compared to single mothers with only high school or middle school education, those who graduated from

[11] Since most of the interviewees are introduced to interviewers through the local government or CWR, it is no surprise to see that they show a higher utilization rate of the programs than the survey results showed.

Table 4-1. Probability of Using the Programs (Logit Model)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Any Program	Mean
Age of mother	-0.1155 **	-0.0575 ***	0.0247	0.0349	0.0210	39.1
	(0.0539)	(0.0194)	(0.0182)	(0.0269)	(0.0251)	
Education- Junior college	1.7453 **	0.0587	-0.2377	-0.3741 ***	-0.2317	36.9%
	(0.7504)	(0.2141)	(0.1731)	(0.1275)	(0.1693)	
Education- College plus	1.1041	-0.3714	-0.0018	-0.0637	0.1433	8.4%
	(0.7593)	(0.3753)	(0.3742)	(0.2757)	(0.2336)	
Work status 2 - Part-time worker	-1.6469 ***	0.1435	0.4264 **	0.0959	0.0681	35.8%
	(0.3556)	(0.3148)	(0.2314)	(0.1583)	(0.1412)	
Work status 3 - Full-time nonregular workers	-1.6257 ***	0.1130	0.3173	0.4735 ****	0.3280 *	23.6%
	(0.6444)	(0.3541)	(0.2835)	(0.1935)	(0.1806)	
Work status 4 - Not working	-0.9852	-0.1119	0.6383 ***	0.2317	0.2638	13.2%
	(0.8777)	(0.4153)	(0.2402)	(0.2935)	(0.3636)	
Career path 2 - Continuous working experience (part-time job counted as experience)	17.6744 ***	0.6220 **	0.2980	-0.0179	0.1691	14.8%
	(1.1912)	(0.2837)	(0.4925)	(0.3978)	(0.4036)	
Career path 3 - Rejoined workforce after a blank	17.2944 ***	0.3309	0.0568	0.3235	0.3134	32.0%
	(1.0890)	(0.3024)	(0.4364)	(0.3250)	(0.3264)	
Career path 4 - Never rejoined after leaving work	16.9861 ***	0.4425	0.1059	0.2587	0.2964	39.7%
	(1.2284)	(0.4477)	(0.4643)	(0.3068)	(0.2856)	
Career path 5- No work experience at all	17.8992 ***	-0.2435	-0.6424	-0.0899	0.1551	7.5%
	(1.3613)	(0.3654)	(0.6527)	(0.2790)	(0.3503)	
Reduced recipient of child-rearing allowance	-0.4920	-0.2365	0.2193	-0.2932	-0.3310	36.3%
	(0.4989)	(0.3002)	(0.2166)	(0.1887)	(0.2061)	
Non-recipient of child-rearing allowance	-0.5517	0.0470	-0.7375 ***	-0.0296	-0.1428	15.2%
	(0.4883)	(0.2643)	(0.2750)	(0.2564)	(0.2362)	
Number of years as a single mother household	0.0219	-0.0294	-0.0894 ***	-0.0668 **	-0.0765 ***	5.4
	(0.0544)	(0.0311)	(0.0231)	(0.0290)	(0.0233)	
Number of children	0.0604	0.0888	-0.0408	-0.3276 ***	-0.2488 ***	1.7
	(0.3383)	(0.1338)	(0.1400)	(0.0734)	(0.0795)	
Age of youngest child	0.2128 ***	0.0664 ***	0.0044	-0.0065	0.0173	9.5
	(0.0732)	(0.0218)	(0.0252)	(0.0396)	(0.0367)	
Co-residence with mother's parent	0.5816 **	-0.1176	-0.2022	-0.0300	-0.0033	23.1%
	(0.2852)	(0.3320)	(0.2099)	(0.0810)	(0.1024)	
Receiving child support from ex-husband	0.1697	-0.1543	-0.1471	0.4297 ***	0.4058 ***	23.3%
	(0.5037)	(0.1774)	(0.1838)	(0.1433)	(0.1336)	
Constant	-18.9896	-0.7497	-2.4363 ***	0.0053	0.4019	
	(0.0000)	(0.5948)	(0.8122)	(1.0405)	(0.9957)	
N	1,097	1,107	1,100	1,150	1,152	1,152

Notes: 1. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.
2. Standard errors (numbers in the parentheses) are corrected using generalized estimating equations (Huber correction), with clustering at the district level.
3. Baseline groups for education, work status, and career path are high school or junior high school graduate, full time regular worker, and continuous working experience as regular worker, respectively.

junior college have a higher probability of receiving grants for high-level skill training (Program 1). However, junior college graduates are less likely to use the Center for Working Resources (Program 4). Third, the mother's work status and career path also have a significant impact on the probability of program using. Full-time regular workers are more likely to use the two skill training programs, while part-time workers and non-workers have higher probabilities of using the job matching consultant service (Program 3). Mothers who had a continuous career path as a regular worker single motherhood status (unfortunately only 6.1% of single mothers have such a solid career) are less likely to use the skill training programs. Fourth, the number of children and age of the youngest child matter, too. Specifically, the probability of using Program 4 decreases as the number of children rises. The probability of using the skill training programs rises as the age of the youngest child rises. Finally,

Table 4-2. Probability of Knowing about the Programs (Logit Model)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Any Program
Age of mother	0.0156	-0.0082	0.0157	0.0428 ***	0.0470 **
	(0.0189)	(0.0141)	(0.0136)	(0.0174)	(0.0223)
Education- Junior college	0.3846 **	0.2564	0.0966	-0.1112	0.0640
	(0.1881)	(0.1589)	(0.1562)	(0.1624)	(0.2037)
Education- College plus	0.2095	0.1477	0.2443	-0.1939	0.5022
	(0.1501)	(0.2598)	(0.2550)	(0.3908)	(0.4776)
Work status 2 - Part-time worker	-0.5277 ***	-0.2294	0.0162	-0.1998	-0.4862 **
	(0.1640)	(0.1677)	(0.1833)	(0.2754)	(0.2364)
Work status 3 - Full-time nonregular workers	-0.1047	0.1515	0.1118	0.2833	-0.0692
	(0.1596)	(0.2167)	(0.1718)	(0.2293)	(0.2133)
Work status 4 - Not working	-0.6671 ***	-0.6558 **	0.0703	-0.4271 *	-0.6713 **
	(0.2370)	(0.2786)	(0.2163)	(0.2636)	(0.3103)
Career path 2 - Continuous working experience	0.4977 *	0.6598 **	0.6495 ***	-0.2602	0.0186
(part-time job counted as experience)	(0.3040)	(0.2704)	(0.2027)	(0.3487)	(0.4104)
Career path 3 - Rejoined workforce after a blank	0.1372	0.1963	-0.1071	-0.0317	-0.0683
	(0.2775)	(0.2814)	(0.2133)	(0.3440)	(0.4748)
Career path 4 - Never rejoined after leaving work	0.1075	0.3315	0.0657	-0.0450	-0.1015
	(0.2343)	(0.2810)	(0.2134)	(0.2883)	(0.3766)
Career path 5- No work experience at all	0.3785	0.2545	0.0353	-0.6604 **	-0.2117
	(0.3834)	(0.3618)	(0.2886)	(0.3132)	(0.5682)
Reduced recipient of child-rearing allowance	0.0492	0.2053	0.3881 **	-0.1818	-0.1333
	(0.1308)	(0.1858)	(0.1695)	(0.2373)	(0.2739)
Non-recipient of child-rearing allowance	-0.1197	0.0870	0.1767	0.0441	-0.1465
	(0.1505)	(0.1622)	(0.2433)	(0.3136)	(0.3339)
Number of years as a single mother household	0.0004	0.0005	-0.0217	-0.0338	-0.0242
	(0.0248)	(0.0183)	(0.0193)	(0.0215)	(0.0179)
Number of children	-0.0737	0.0250	0.0479	-0.2470 ***	-0.1696
	(0.0876)	(0.0706)	(0.0984)	(0.0934)	(0.1347)
Age of youngest child	-0.0237	-0.0354	-0.0160	-0.0457 *	-0.0556 **
	(0.0290)	(0.0243)	(0.0231)	(0.0253)	(0.0242)
Co-residence with mother's parents	0.0351	-0.0097	-0.1509	-0.0684	-0.0834
	(0.1447)	(0.1364)	(0.1594)	(0.1503)	(0.1494)
Receiving child support from ex-husband	0.4011 ***	0.3014 ***	0.1843	0.6178 **	0.8720 ***
	(0.1169)	(0.1127)	(0.1843)	(0.2125)	(0.2141)
Constant	-0.8104	0.2695	-1.3469 ***	1.2873	1.3999
	(0.6135)	(0.4074)	(0.4411)	(0.8068)	(1.2125)
N	1,097	1,107	1,100	1,150	1,152

Notes: 1. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.

2. Standard errors are corrected using generalized estimating equations (Huber correction), with clustering at the district level.
3. Baseline groups for education, work status, and career path are high school or middle school graduate, full time regular worker, and continuous working experience as regular worker, respectively.

co-residence with parents improves the possibility of using Program 1. Additionally, receiving child support from the ex-husband boosts the utilization probability of the Center for Working Resource (Program 4).

Before using the programs, however, mothers must know about the programs. Knowing the existence of the employment promotion programs is an imperative step for use. Table 4-2 summarizes factors responsible for the probability of recognizing the programs. In short, we see that the mother's age, educational attainment, continuous working experience and child support from ex-husband are positively related with the probability of program awareness. On the other hand, mothers with less resources (doing a part-time job, not working or no work experience at all, less educated), mothers with more children are less

likely to know about the programs, as are those whose youngest child is relatively older.

It is interesting to find that some of the personal and household characteristics affect the use and awareness of the programs in opposing directions. For example, older mothers are more likely to know about the programs but less likely to use them; co-residence with parent improves the probability of using the programs but has no effect on program awareness; age of the youngest child is positively related with program use but negatively associated with program recognition, etc. Child-support from the ex-husband, however, is positively related with both utilization and recognition of the programs. Although less than a quarter of single mothers are receiving some child-support, it could be a critical factor in determining the mother's ability to collect program information and to benefit from the programs.

3. Does Usage of the Programs Improve the Employability of Single Mothers?

Although letting more mothers know about and use the programs is an important task for the program developers, it is not the final goal of the policy designers. The final goal is not met until we can say "yes" to at least one of the following questions: Did usage of the programs shorten the job search period for single mothers? Did utilization of the programs result in more secure or better-paid jobs for single mothers?

A simple way to test the above hypotheses is to regress a mother's employability on whether the programs were used or not, holding other conditions constant. The JILPT survey includes three applicable measurements for a mother's employability: (i) length of most recent job search during single mother status, (ii) whether she presently works as a full-time regular worker or not, and (iii) the mother's income earned from work in the last year. To evaluate the programs effect correctly and efficiently, however, some advanced statistical tools must be employed. First, due to the potential endogeneity risk concerning the key variable of "program usage," we avoid using its real values but instead employ its predicted values which we can obtain from the estimations of Table 4-1. Second, since there are a significant number of mothers who are not working, estimation of labor income has to be restricted to the working mothers, and this will definitely lead to a sample selection bias. This problem, however, can be levitated largely by employing a classic two-step Heckman estimation approach.

Table 5 presents estimation results on the length of job search. Only the usage of the Center for Work Resource (Program 4) has significantly shortened the length of the job search period. Although usage of Programs 2 and 3 has shortened the job search period, their effects are not statistically significant. Usage of Program 1, on the other hand, seems to lead to a longer job search period, although the magnitude of its effect is not significant. Additionally, we find that the job search period increases as the mother's age rises. Other personal and household characteristics (education, career path, number of children, etc.) have no significant effect on the job search period.

Table 6, on the other hand, presents the determinants for the probability of full-time

Table 5. Determinants of Job Search Period (In terms of months)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Any Program
Age of mother	0.0735 *	0.0361	0.0841 **	0.0737 **	0.0752 *
	(0.0381)	(0.0485)	(0.0372)	(0.0337)	(0.0427)
No children unhealthy	-0.2965	0.1027	0.0907	-0.2523	-0.3880
	(0.4546)	(0.2937)	(0.3121)	(0.4370)	(0.4399)
Number of children	0.1995	0.3037	0.2497	-0.1388	-0.0320
	(0.3546)	(0.3332)	(0.3329)	(0.3597)	(0.3624)
Age of youngest child	-0.0233	-0.0005	-0.0453	-0.0163	-0.0161
	(0.0835)	(0.0641)	(0.0740)	(0.0745)	(0.0854)
Co-residence with mother's parents	-0.0321	0.1306	0.1278	0.3109	0.3049
	(0.5419)	(0.4020)	(0.4018)	(0.5126)	(0.5120)
Receiving child support from ex-husband	-0.4339	-0.4510	-0.3009	-0.0336	-0.1458
	(0.4527)	(0.4606)	(0.4363)	(0.4443)	(0.4520)
Using Program 1 (predicted values)	**3.9751**				
	(6.4863)				
Using Program 2 (predicted values)		**-7.7725**			
		(6.6558)			
Using Program 3 (predicted values)			**-2.4597**		
			(2.1609)		
Using Program 4 (predicted values)				**-3.9963** **	
				(1.7520)	
Using any of the programs (predicted values)					**-4.0213** **
					(1.8587)
Constant	2.4745	4.0066	2.3292	5.1495 **	5.1274 **
	(1.7905)	(2.4255)	(1.6232)	(2.1619)	(2.2285)
Work status dummies, career path dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education, child-rearing allowance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	600	608	600	627	628

Notes: 1. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.
2. Standard errors are corrected using generalized estimating equations (Huber correction), with clustering at the district level.

regular employment. First of all, utilization of Program 1 (grant for high-level skill training) is positively associated with full-time employment probability. This result confirms our finding in an earlier section that Program 1 is most successful in realizing a full-time regular job for single mothers. Second, the effect of the other three programs on full-time employment, nevertheless, is somewhat unexpected. Contrary to our expectations, the estimation results indicate that these programs significantly lowered the probability of full-time employment. That is, compared to those who are not using the programs, program users are suffering from a lower probability of full-employment. The result, however, should not be directly interpreted as proof of the failure of the programs. Since we could not observe the ability of each person, the mothers who are using these programs may be less skilled or have weaker motivation than the non-users, and hence have a lower probability of fulltime employment from the very beginning. Hence, the impact of the other three programs on full time employment probability is unclear.

Table 6. Determinants of Full-Time Regular Employment (Logit Model)

	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Any Program
Age of mother	0.1813 ***	-0.1878 ***	-0.0021	0.0582 **	0.0029
	(0.0245)	(0.0243)	(0.0210)	(0.0246)	(0.0232)
Education- Junior college	-4.3891 ***	0.1955	-0.4199 ***	-0.8729 ***	-0.3975 **
	(0.8240)	(0.1468)	(0.1562)	(0.1861)	(0.1880)
Education- College plus	-1.6141 ***	-0.6038 *	0.0574	0.2557	0.7056 ***
	(0.4090)	(0.3231)	(0.3343)	(0.2553)	(0.2656)
No unhealthy children	0.3911 *	0.1061	0.2577 **	0.3029 **	0.2603 *
	(0.2210)	(0.1671)	(0.1305)	(0.1514)	(0.1437)
Number of children	-0.3052 ***	0.2142	-0.1162	-0.9227 ***	-0.5411 ***
	(0.0851)	(0.1327)	(0.1033)	(0.0942)	(0.0891)
Age of youngest child	-0.3338 ***	0.1983 ***	0.0098	-0.0483 *	0.0101
	(0.0454)	(0.0294)	(0.0255)	(0.0296)	(0.0268)
Co-residence with mother's parents	-0.6176 ***	-0.0668	-0.4713 ***	-0.0263	0.0056
	(0.1889)	(0.1367)	(0.1289)	(0.1168)	(0.1147)
Receiving child support from ex-husband	-0.1082	-0.5431 ***	-0.1503	1.2779 ***	0.9842 ***
	(0.1640)	(0.1881)	(0.1982)	(0.2209)	(0.2085)
Using Program 1 (predicted values)	**151.8691** ***				
	(27.5184)				
Using Program 2 (predicted values)		**-28.1730** ***			
		(3.4994)			
Using Program 3 (predicted values)			**-16.2937** ***		
			(1.8525)		
Using Program 4 (predicted values)				**-13.2603** ***	
				(0.7452)	
Using any of the programs (predicted values)					-11.4853 ***
					(0.8075)
Constant	-(5.8816) ***	(7.5280) ***	(1.7667) **	(6.9953) ***	(7.2921) ***
	(0.8423)	(0.9714)	(0.7303)	(0.8891)	(0.9057)
N	951	962	953	998	1000

Notes: 1. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.
2. Standard errors are corrected using generalized estimating equations (Huber correction), with clustering at the district level.

The results of Table 7 are quite similar to those of Table 6. Among the four employment promotion programs, only Program 1 is found to be positively associated with mother's wage. Thus, program 1, through providing grants for highly skilled job training, not only boosts the chance of a secured job (full-time regular job) but also significantly led to better-paid jobs. Users of the other three programs, however, are making less money than the non-users. For the same reason as we mentioned above, these results do not necessarily indicate that the programs, other than Program 1, have failed. Programs 2, 3 and 4 may not be effective in improving a mother's earning ability, but at least they should not have a are very likely caused by the initial unobservable ability gap between the treatment group (program users) and the control groups (non-users).

V. Discussion

It is very impressive that Program 1 (grants for high-level skill training) is overwhelmingly more useful in helping single mothers obtaining secured and well-paid jobs

Table 7. Estimates of Mother's Wage Function (Heckit Model)

Dependent var= ln(annual wage)	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3	Program 4	Any Program	Mean
Weekly working hours	0.0181 ***	0.0169 ***	0.0212 ***	0.0205 ***	0.0205 ***	37.0
	(0.0030)	(0.0036)	(0.0037)	(0.0034)	(0.0033)	
Age of mother	0.0148	-0.0338 *	0.0514 *	0.0283	0.0261	39.4
	(0.0276)	(0.0203)	(0.0310)	(0.0227)	(0.0224)	
Age square	-0.0003	-0.0001	-0.0008 **	-0.0005	-0.0005	
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	
Tenure	0.0355 ***	0.0298 ***	0.0385 ***	0.0367 ***	0.0346 ***	2.9
	(0.0039)	(0.0048)	(0.0057)	(0.0054)	(0.0051)	
Education- Junior college	-0.1340 **	-0.0249	-0.0061	-0.0501	-0.0240	38.3%
	(0.0635)	(0.0569)	(0.0485)	(0.0565)	(0.0557)	
Education- College plus	0.1382 **	0.0347	0.2452 ***	0.2443 ***	0.3017 ***	8.3%
	(0.0711)	(0.0910)	(0.0594)	(0.0637)	(0.0692)	
No unhealthy children	-0.0339	-0.0333	0.0190	0.0049	0.0152	78.9%
	(0.0512)	(0.0500)	(0.0594)	(0.0587)	(0.0575)	
Number of children	-0.0021	0.0743 *	0.0227	-0.0427	-0.0254	1.7
	(0.0387)	(0.0408)	(0.0404)	(0.0405)	(0.0402)	
Age of youngest child	0.0126	0.0491 ***	0.0242 ***	0.0195 ***	0.0237 ***	9.6
	(0.0088)	(0.0076)	(0.0067)	(0.0071)	(0.0068)	
Co-residence with mother's parents	-0.0432	-0.0521	-0.0818	-0.0183	-0.0189	22.6%
	(0.0587)	(0.0661)	(0.0647)	(0.0624)	(0.0624)	
Using Program 1 (predicted values)	**1.9468** ***					
	(0.7342)					
Using Program 2 (predicted values)		**-5.5355** ***				
		(0.8481)				
Using Program 3 (predicted values)			**-1.3919** ***			
			(0.5040)			
Using Program 4 (predicted values)				**-1.1056** ***		
				(0.2734)		
Using any of the programs (predicted values)					**-1.3132** ***	
					(0.2568)	
Constant	4.0936 ***	5.8928 ***	3.1153 ***	4.1157 ***	4.3350 ***	
	(0.5717)	(0.3789)	(0.5152)	(0.4078)	(0.3981)	
Career path dummy, size of the employer, profession dummies, industry dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Wald test of indep. eqns. (rho = 0) Chi2 (1) =	120.37 ***	5.42 **	0.22	2.38	5.71 **	
N (N of the first step estimation)	721 (875)	729 (883)	721 (875)	758 (912)	760 (914)	

Notes: 1. *, **, *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.

2. Standard errors are corrected using generalized estimating equations (Huber correction), with clustering at the district level.
3. Estimation results of the first-stage sample selection are abbreviated. Child-support from the ex-husband, which is likely to affect labor participation choice but has little effect on a mother's wage, is used as identification variable.

than the other programs. Unfortunately, Program 1 also has several serious shortcomings: (i) its coverage rate is still low compared to other programs (nearly half municipalities are not covered); (ii) its awareness degree (only 36.8%) is low relative to other programs; (iii) its utilization rate is the worst (only 2.3%). Here we address these shortcomings one by one:

The coverage rate issue is not really a big problem because it has been improving year by year, as we can see from Figure 2. To expand the coverage of Program 1 even faster, the central government could either strengthen administrative guidance to the uncovered municipalities or introduce some new economic incentives (e.g., lessen the expense contribution of local governments). On the other hand, the problems of low awareness degree and

utilization rate can be addressed more efficiently by using our estimation results. For example, promotion of Program 1 should be especially intensive for the less-educated, part-time workers and non-working mothers because these groups are most likely to be unaware of Program 1. To boost the utilization rate of program 1, particular attention should be paid to the groups that are least likely to use the program: older, less-educated, those with younger children, and those not cohabitating with parents. Independent-living single mothers with young children generally find it more difficult to use Program 1 because it is harder for them to find a balance among full-time curriculum studies, work, and child-rearing. Older and less-educated mothers are less likely to be users of Program 1 either because investment in high-level training is less attractive for them (as is a return to education lower for older people) or because they found it harder to enroll or graduate from the assigned two or three years curriculum. Whether we should actively encourage older and less-educated mothers to use Program 1, despite the expected low return of investment, however, remains unclear. What is easier to agree on is that we may help those single mothers with young children, who do not cohabite with their parents, to meet their professional training goal by providing some free or inexpensive practical help with childcare and housework.

To improve the utilization rate and awareness degree for all the programs, Nakazono (2008) argues that local government should first of all construct a one-stop-service system for single-parent households. Under the present system, welfare offices, municipality offices and public job placement agencies are each responsible for part of the five programs and the burden of responsibility differs from region to region. Users may get confused about where to seek services, and it could be difficult to promote the five programs together when each one is managed by a different agent. Among the seven municipalities that we interviewed in 2007, only the city of Kaitsuka has an almost one-stop-service system. As a small city with roughly 900,000 residents, Kaitsuka concentrated four of the five programs (excluding Program 4[12]) at the municipality office, and arranged for two job consultants to be in charge of all single mothers' affairs. Awareness degree of the programs may also be improved by a regular correspondence between the office-in-charge and the mothers. Kaitsuka, for example, mailed each household an annual hand-made brochure, titled "Single Mother News," in which the main content of the programs and how to use them is explained clearly and concisely.

The above analysis also indicates that although some of the programs (Program 4) are effective in shortening the length of the job search period, programs other than Program 1 are basically ineffective in leading single mothers to secured and well-paid jobs. In the case of Program 2, for example, many respondents of the JILPT survey noted that they failed to find a full-time job even after they used this program and obtained some supposedly useful qualifications (computer skills, bookkeeping, etc). For Program 3 (intensive assistance for

[12] Kaitsuka shares Program 4 with other small and medium-sized cities within Osaka prefecture. The Center for Work Resource and Life Support of Osaka prefecture is located in the city of Osaka.

job matching), as many respondents of the survey noted, it sometimes take more than one or two weeks to schedule a meeting with the job consultant. For those who are seriously and urgently seeking a job, Program 3 is just not helpful. However, Programs 2, 3 and 4 are considered worth continuing because they might contribute in other areas, as some of the respondents noted: faster job searches, giving job-search tips to beginners, providing necessary life support as needed, and serving as a networking channel for mothers, etc.

Program 5, however, was already been abolished in 2008 because of its extremely low coverage rate and the stagnant number of job placements. Since Program 5 is targeted at the employers instead of single mothers themselves, the majority of single mothers did not even notice its existence. In the end, Program 5 just disappeared very quietly after five years of implementation.

VI. Concluding Remarks

This paper gives a brief introduction to the five employment promotion programs for single mother enacted after 2003 in Japan. These programs are designed with specific features: grants for professional skill training (Programs 1 and 2) to boost a mother's employability, job consulting for job-seekers to find a well-matching job faster (Program 3), accessible centers for work and life resources to cover comprehensive needs (Program 4), and subsidies for employers to encourage more full-time employment of single mothers (Program 5).

We employed two methods to evaluate the performance of the programs. One is to use the official data published annually on the coverage rate and number of job placements by program. Another one is to use a recent survey of single mothers and interviews with municipal offices to investigate and compare the outcomes of programs.

When using the criteria of coverage rate and number of job placements, we found that Program 4 performed the best among the five. For instance, the overall coverage of Program 4 was as high as 94.9% in 2006, with 100% coverage rate within the 47 prefectures and 13 major metropolitans. In 2005, Program 4 has helped in realizing 1,682 job placements through work skills seminar and 4,372 job placements through job consulting, which is a big lead over the other programs.

However, while looking at whether the programs have led to more secured or well-paid jobs, we found that only Program 1 (grants for high-level skill training) was effective. More than 80% of the job placements in Program 1 are full-time jobs, and users of Program 1 are more likely working as full-time regular workers and earning higher income than the non-users. Utilization of Programs 2, 3 and 4, however, is associated with less likelihood of full-time and well-paid jobs. Since these programs are not likely to undermine a mother's employability, these surprising results are possibly caused by the initial unobservable ability gap between the treatment group (program users) and the control groups (non-users).

The survey also disclosed the low awareness degree and utilization rate of the programs. Among every 100 single mothers, only 37 knew Program 1, 50 knew Program 2, 34 knew Program 3, and 63 knew Program 4. The share of previous or current users for Program 1 hits the lowest rate of 2.3%, and even the best-known Program 4 has a utilization rate of less than 20%. The estimation results show that probability of not knowing about the programs is especially high among the less-educated, part-time workers or non-working mothers. The probability of utilizing the programs is relatively low among the older, less-educated, newly single mothers and those who have younger children.

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