

Abstracts

The Realities and Relevant Policy Responses Pertaining to Singles' Work & Care: How Singles Have been Taken into Consideration in the Policy Making process

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In this paper, I examined the realities of singles' work and care (never-married/divorced, and widowed) and explored the issues involved. Furthermore, I reviewed the policy responses to and policy-making processes for the individual issues, examining the extent to which singles have been taken into consideration. As a result, the major issues involved in singles are found to include (1) the high proportion of non-regular workers, many of whom have difficulty maintaining their livelihoods, (2) the difficulty of balancing work with childcare and nursing care, especially for unmarried people living with their parents and single parents; and (3) single short term employees who are not enrolled in Employees' Pension Insurance and Employees' Health Insurance. I look at the recent major policy responses to each of these relevant issues. Regarding (1), measures have been taken to ensure equal and balanced treatment of non-regular and regular workers through the enactment of the Part-Time Work Law that has been amended several times since 2007. Regarding (2), the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act was enacted in the mid-1990s, and subsequent revisions to the act have expanded measures such as childcare/ family care leave, restrictions on non-scheduled/ overtime work, and shortening of scheduled working hours. Regarding (3), the coverage of Employees' Pension Insurance and Employees' Health Insurance has expanded to short term employees in 2016. The backgrounds to these policy responses include (1) the number of non-regular workers has increased after the collapse of the bubble economy in the 1990s, (2) poverty/ inequality became a social problem in the latter half of the 2000s, prompting calls for correction of the disparity between regular and non-regular workers, and (3) social awareness of the declining birth rate has risen since the 1990s, requiring relevant responses. The issues involved in "singles" who, unlike couples, cannot divide the roles of breadwinning and care have hardly been taken into consideration. Rather, it is assumed that these policy responses had emphasized issues of male non-regular workers who are expected to play the roles of main providers under "the male breadwinner model" as well as the declining birth rate.

Mechanisms Underlying the Trend Toward Later and Less Marriage in Japan: Money, Support, and Values

Akihiko Kato (Meiji University)

This paper comprehensively describes the mechanisms underlying the trend toward later and less marriage based on empirical evidence from event history analyses of marriage and the Japanese family system conducted by the author over the past twenty years. The proportion of men who have never married began to increase just after the high economic growth period around the mid-1970s, while the proportion of women who have never married started to increase in the late 1980s and rose rapidly in the 1990s. The decreasing rate of marriage among men was explained primarily by increasing disparities between occupational classes accompanying a decline in Japan's macroeconomic performance. However, no such associations were found for women except non-regular employment. In contrast, the most prominent factor behind later and less marriage for women was the shift in values about marriage and family from altruistic to individualistic as well as from conservative to progressive. The new ideology stressing love-based marriage with premarital romantic and sexual experience had a strong effect on delaying marital timing for women but little effect for men. As the marriage rate has fallen for men in relatively lower occupational classes, the population of economically marriageable men has gradually decreased. This has resulted in limited marriage partners for women, leading to a general decline in the marriage rate, especially among women who believe in romantic idealism. Moreover, the spread of the individualistic views of marriage dismantled conventional community-based match-

making systems, including meetings and dates arranged or semi-arranged by families, local communities, and workplaces. Consequently, the number of men and women who have never married and have neither a partner nor opposite-sex friends has rapidly increased among younger birth cohorts born after the 1980s.

Single Women's Work and Poverty Risks: Factors That Decrease the Likelihood of Staying Employed

Kaoru Okaze (Kyoto Notre Dame University)

This study aimed to explore single women's barriers and hurdles to continued employment and present poverty risk factors that affect their retirement years. An analysis of semi-structured interviews with 22 unmarried women aged 40–57 years showed that (1) an unrewarding job, long work hours, and poor relationships with colleagues led to unplanned job separation of single women at a young age; (2) unexpected factors such as illness, bankruptcy, and the restructuring of employees resulted in the job separation of middle-aged unmarried women; (3) single women's feelings of fatigue due to working for long terms reduced their motivation to work; and (4) parental caregiving roles decreased single women's possibilities for staying employed. The findings of this study indicate that women who remain employed for a long time may face various hurdles and obstacles in continuing to work, which—if not overcome—may lead to the risk of poverty during their retirement years. Therefore, we believe that in an unmarried society that is likely to continue in the future, women must prepare for an independent way of life regardless of their life course, and we must make an effort to develop a social system to support such a way of life.

Working Conditions and Career Support Issues Among Single Mothers

Kiriyo Nakazono (Hokkai-Gakuen University)

The participation rate of single Japanese mothers in the labor force is high among OECD nations. However, they are in a state of working poverty. In this paper, I conducted a questionnaire survey of members of the Sapporo-Shi Boshi-Kafu Fukushi Rengoukai, an association of single mothers and widows, to clarify their working conditions, economic situation, and efforts to achieve economic independence. Single mothers with children under 20 years old have been shown to have lower incomes because they choose non-regular jobs with shorter working hours because of the stress of raising children (or because they value time with their children). This study revealed that some non-regular employees work as many or more hours than regular employees. It also revealed that single mothers who are regular employees work longer hours but earn lower wages than regular female employees of the same age group. The ratio of single mothers and widows with grown children who are full-time employees has not increased at all. Working as non-regular employees, these women strive to increase their income by increasing working hours and side jobs. Single mothers actively use employment support but are unable to find regular employment. The root of the problem is that membership-based employment typical among regular male employees prevents single mothers from entering well-paid, stable jobs. Reform in the way regular employees work is required.

Support for Single Carers to Achieve a better Work-Life Balance

Mai Yamaguchi (Japan Lutheran College)

How can we help single carers achieve a better work-life balance? To answer this question, this study investigates the current status of and support system for single carers. Single carers, especially those who cohabit with an incapacitated parent, contribute to society by providing care duties and catering for the unmet needs of people. However, single carers risk the deterioration of their health, and many live in poor conditions. For continued care, the various needs for carers' work-life balance must also be met. This approach entails addressing the economic and health issues of carers as well as their accumulated disadvantages. The number of single carers is expected to increase, and special attention must be paid to not overburden them and risk burnout. This study suggests establishing a comprehensive support system for carers, reconsidering the relationship between work and life, revaluating care work, and

establishing carer-friendly workplaces. In summary, recognizing the social contribution of carers and making carer support a core part of care policy together form the premise of support for single carers.

Issues of Single People in the Workplace: Experiences in Gender Equality Efforts at Unions

Kayo Goto (Labour Research Council)

The number of single people has risen due to an increase in the unmarried rate, and issues related to the work and life of singles, such as low income among single women and loneliness among middle-aged and elderly singles, have become evident. However, various social systems and labor union efforts have fixed notions of traditional family structures and struggle to see the existence and issues of single people. Currently, unions in Japan are diversifying membership to include elderly and foreign members. Surveys of union members show that the family structure of union members is also diversifying and that the number of single men and single mothers is increasing. However, most efforts still center on married men, and there are almost no initiatives targeting singles. In this paper, I attempt to summarize the current issues among singles based on union efforts toward gender equality in the workplace. The issues faced by singles, such as the payment of family allowances, balancing childcare and nursing care, and harassment, are common to the issues of gender equality and to LGBTQ and elderly union members. In other words, efforts by unions to address the issue of singles may lead to the creation of gender equality and the resolution of problems among many workers.

Growing Singlehood, Their Work, Income and Potential Policy Measures: Are Singles Happy?

Nobuko Nagase (Ochanomizu University)

The number of young people in non-regular employment has increased significantly following the year 2000. During this period, the number of unmarried men and women in Japan has been increasing dramatically, with 30% of the 40-44 age group being unmarried. This paper focuses on the employment status and income of unmarried men and women using the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office's survey titled, "Marriage, Work, and Income in the 100-Year Life Era". Those who has irregular employment increases with age, and the wage gap between regular and irregular employment is large. The median annual income of middle-aged single women is in the 2 million yen range, while that of men is in the 3 million yen range, with many living with their parents to subsist themselves. Are these expanding class of unmarried people happy? When subjective happiness is analyzed as the independent variable, the absence of a partner clearly lowers happiness, and there is also a negative relationship between failure in the search of a first long-term job and happiness. For single women, additionally, having a child under the age of 19 living with them and having a high personal income were positively related to subjective happiness, while living with a parent was negatively related. The low wages of informal employment started as the employment practice that goes with social insurance protection rules targeted for dependent housewives. This employment practice expanded to younger age singles without work rules being reconsidered. It is necessary to review the work rules and social insurance coverage rules and to establish training opportunities for "irregular workers" in order to ensure sustainable human investment and self-sufficiency in earnings.

The Impact of the Minimum Wage on Employment in Japan: A Meta-Analysis

Yanli Dong (Japan Science and Technology Agency)

Shun Ibaragi (Yokohama City University)

Using the database of evidence for policy-making established by the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research, this paper conducted a review of the results of empirical studies on the impact of minimum wage policies in Japan published since 2000 and attempted a meta-regression analysis to examine the real effects of minimum wage on employment. The result of the meta-analysis shows that an increase in minimum wage significantly

slows down employment growth. This effect was found to be smaller among female workers compared to the overall labor force in research focused on women's employment rates. This suggests that an increase in minimum wage may cause changes to employment status as workers with wages higher than the revised minimum wage lose their jobs while female part-time workers and temporary workers with low wages increase. This is likely because companies tend to control labor costs to prior levels even after the minimum wage is revised.