

Abstract

Title

The Relationship Between Middle-Aged Women's Economic Resources, and Their Supporting Role to Their Parents, and Their Happiness: The Chronological Change in their Single Status

Name

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Nowadays, the number of women who have never been married is increasing in Japan. According to the results of the national census taken in 2010, the figure has reached 10.6%. Moreover, it is expected to increase to 23% in 2030. However, little research has been conducted, particularly in Japan, to examine the relationship between their economic resources, as well as their supporting role to their parents and their happiness. Moreover, it is unclear how these relationships change while they are single.

In this quantitative research, a secondary panel data was used to target middle-aged women who have never been married and have a father or mother. The purpose of this study is to first investigate major factors affecting their economic resources and to examine how these factors change. Second, the study aims to clarify the factors affecting their supporting role to their parents, and to comprehend how these factors change while they are single. The third purpose of the study is to reveal how such women's economic resources and supporting role to their parents affect their happiness, as well as how these relationships change. The subjects were women aged between 35 to 54 years old in 2012, and were from the Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers (JPSC) conducted in 2004, 2008, and 2012.

To examine these causal relations and those changes, research hypotheses are derived from various theories including the Intergenerational Family Relations Theory and Role Theory.

The summary of the results is as follows:

- ① The majority of middle-aged single women's income did not increase throughout their careers. Consequently, it is presumed that a large share of such women could not make a living independently. In addition, their income, age, and expectations of financial transfer from their parents enhanced their assets. The factors facilitating their expenditure at their own disposition were their income and years of education.
- ② Their income and living with their mothers had significant effects on middle-aged single women's financial support for their parents. In regards to providing care for their parents, this is affected by the age of such women.

- ③ Single middle-aged women's economic support for their parents had a positive effect on their happiness in middle ages, which was not present when they were younger. On the contrary, to provide care for their parents lowered their level of happiness in middle age, however, providing care for their parents had a positive effect on their happiness in their younger age.
- ④ Their assets had no effect on their level of happiness; however, their expenditure improved this.
- ⑤ Supporting their parents did not lower their economic resources.

In past studies, women who have never been married were mostly absent from social relations research, although the rate of women in this category is increasing. This research sets out to reveal the relationships between these types of women's subjective well-being and their economic resources, as well as their supporting roles to their parents within a theoretical framework. Moreover, this study indicates that providing care for parents is a heavy burden for these types of women in middle and later life. Finally, this research highlighted the importance of single women's economic independence.