

## Psychological and Emotional Capacity Strengthening Program Development and Effectiveness Study for Independence of Single Mothers with Children

<sup>1</sup>Ki-Jung Kang and <sup>2</sup>Su-Sun Park

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Welfare, Beakseok University, 31065 Cheonan City, Korea

<sup>2</sup>Department of Social Welfare, Seowon University, 28674 Cheongju City, Korea

**Abstract:** The purpose of this program is for single mothers to improve confidence about roles as parents and strengthen personal capacity to have a sense of independence through the processes of self-exploration, child nurturing method learning and making relationships with regional society. As the first stage of the study, literature review on single mothers with children was conducted. Next, interviews were conducted on five single mothers with children living in Cheon-an, one of the representative cities in the Korean Central Region to investigate and analyze program demand. Based on literature review and investigated demand in the third stage, a 5 session program with the goal of promoting psychological and emotional stability to promote independence of single mothers with children was developed. Finally, the program developed for single mothers with children was operated and conducted and the program effectiveness was analyzed. The developed 5 session program was progressed for 5 weeks from July 2015, 1 session a week, the verification of effectiveness was done through qualitative research for the five person small-group and the perceived personal changes were figured out through interviews after the end of each session and program. The reason the name of this program is ‘the wings of mother’s is because mothers must be wings for children and for the three possible mothers must have strength and the significance is in the hope that the program content will help the strong wings of mothers. Upon the interview results to understand the needs on this program, it was shown that unmarried mothers wanted to develop the relationship and the communication skills such as relationship building with others, communication with communities and so on. To live the independent and autonomous life, nurturing unmarried mothers wanted to build the relationship with surrounding environment first, therefore, the programs was developed with building relationships with families and communities based on this. Ecological viewpoints were used as the theoretical basis of this program. In the result of the analysis of changes by session of the program participants, it became a chance for them to clearly figure out themselves and through honest communication with single mothers with children in similar conditions, the created a sense of togetherness and stated that the gained confidence. Also for them it became a chance to realize that they are not problematic people but independent women and a chance to seriously think about what kind of parent they must be for their children and was found they had created motivation to pioneer life as an independent single mother with children.

**Key words:** Capacity strengthening program, single mothers with children, independence, ecological system perspective, subject perspective

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### INTRODUCTION

While recently single mothers choosing to raise their children after birth are increasing (Kim *et al.*, 2008a, b) and even if in the single parent family support act it recognizes them as subjects of assistance until now, research about single mothers have been conducted focusing on institutions. The reality is that there is almost no basic or systematic data about local society single mothers who give birth and raise their children without help from institutions (Nam, 2013). In an investigation that figured out the number of single-parent families, it estimates through the ratio of single mothers and fathers and the

number of single-parent families increased from 1594 in 2000-1749 in 2014 and it is shown that among them, 11.6% of them are families of single fathers or mothers (NSO, 2014). Many single mothers that chose to raise their children experience financial burden and parenting stress as the provider and over the prejudice due to social stigma, they live as mothers. While there have been social changes that mediate relatively open compared to the past with the diversity of life styles and families still, women who live as single mothers raising their children or blocked by social prejudice and it has negative effect on the single mother as well as her children and the family. Although, it is being said that social tolerance towards

sexual relations before marriage is increasing, the branding of deviance of sexual and family norms on single mothers due to pregnancy and birth by sexual relations before marriage and when they choose to raise her children (Lee, 2007). Especially for teenage single mothers, they experience nested discrimination and prejudice for being a woman that was pregnant and gave birth without being married along with the negative views of underage sexual experience and if they decide to raise their children, they will experience continuous difficulties. Studies about single mothers with children mainly consisted of roles as mothers and support plans including livelihood study of single mothers with children (Lee and Jeon, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2008a, b; Nam, 2013; Chang, 2009), study of support plans for single mothers with children (Kim *et al.*, 2006; Park, 2016; Hong and Nam, 2011) study about the parenthood and maternity of single mothers with children (Kweon, 2014; Kim and Kim, 2006; Nam and Hong, 2011). Final goal of all research for single mothers with children can be said to be children and single mother focused welfare thus the pursuit of happiness of subjects and independence for this is crucial. In an era of low birth rate problems and increase of diverse family forms, thinking about children who are the future generation, there are plenty of reasons to relieve labeling and prejudice against single mothers who have clear intentions to raise their children without giving up. Therefore, this program was started as a part of a comprehensive program to prepare positive attitude to minimize social labeling and prejudice of single mothers with children and independence of subjects.

This program that was planned for the purpose of promoting psychological and emotional stability and confidence of single mothers with children is a part of the happy mom business and the name of the program is “wings of mothers”. This program approached from an ecological system perspective and in the perspective that single mothers with children are exposed to various harsh environments and adopt in various ways and in that their lives are influenced by continuous instruction with the environment, this perspective was chosen.

According to this perspective, the content was composed where for intermediate system, regional society for microsystem, relationship with family including self and children was focused on.

In more detail, the program is composed of a total of 5 sessions, making relationship with my self (1 session), making relationship with children (2 sessions) and making relationship with regional society (2 sessions) and it was conducted with five people in a group so that the dynamism of small groups will be maximized. The purpose of this program is for single mothers to improve confidence about roles as parents and strengthen personal capacity to have a sense of independence through the processes of self-exploration, child nurturing method learning and making relationships with regional society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research process:** As the first stage of the study, literature review on single mothers with children was conducted. Next, interviews were conducted on five single mothers with children living in Cheonan, one of the representative cities in the Korean central region to investigate and analyze program demand. Based on literature review and investigated demand in the third stage, a 5 session program with the goal of promoting psychological and emotional stability to promote independence of single mothers with children was developed.

Finally, the program developed for single mothers with children was operated and conducted and the program effectiveness was analyzed.

**Data processing and analysis methods:** The developed 5 session program was progressed for 5 weeks from July 2015, 1 session a week with the basic content of making relationships with micro-environment to local society environment for promotion of psychological and emotional stability of single mothers with children.

A total of five people participated in the program, the age range from 21-36 and the raising 1-2 children in Table 1. To find out about the performance of the program, program objective related variables were selected to conduct effectiveness verification.

The verification of effectiveness was done through qualitative research for the five person small-group and the perceived personal changes were figured out through interviews after the end of each session and program.

Table 1: Participant information

Subject	Age	Education history	Occupation	No. of children (age)	Child's school stage
A	27	High school graduate	None	1 (10 months)	-
B	21	Middle school dropout	None	2 (51 months, 33 months)	-
C	36	University graduate	None	1 (8 years)	Second year elementary
D	23	High school graduate	None	1 (6 months)	-
E	22	High school graduate	Office worker	1 (4 years)	-

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Program development:** The content of the program developed in the study is shown in Table 2. The first cycle consists of interviewing each other with making relationship with oneself, expressing oneself and seeking one's desires by the current desire profiles. In the second and third cycles, they prepare the time to seek the methods to make the relationship with the sons and daughters with two steps to diagnose oneself as the parents to investigate the desirable relationship between parents and children and to establish the individual role model of parents. In the fourth and fifth cycles, they acknowledge the meaning of living together in the community with making relationship with community and acquire the methods to search the community and to network with them. By the time to seek oneself, they can understand their own strengths and weaknesses well and prepare to enhance their individual competency. The reason the name of this program is The wings of mother's is because mothers must be wings for children and for the three possible mothers must have strength and the significance is in the hope that the program content will help the strong wings of mothers.

The goal of the program is nurturing psychologically and emotionally stable mothers with increased motivation of independence and implementing independent life through the program of 5 sessions of relationship making including the mothers themselves, family, neighbors and local society.

**Program effectiveness verification:** In the result of the analysis of changes by session of the program participants, it became a chance for them to clearly figure out themselves and through honest communication with single mothers with children in similar conditions, the created a sense of togetherness and stated that the gained confidence.

Frankly speaking, there have been programs or educational courses like this and I had little expectation on these. That was my first thought. The other educational courses so far were just to listen. It seems to be the first time to talk about our stories for a long time like this. Though there are many acquaintances here among the participants, we have never had the time to talk about our stories such a long time openly. I can understand how other people live from the conversations and I can think about how I have to live. Surely, they seem to be in the same situation and strong intention was raised to help each other (Participant C).

Seems to be the enemies here and there. Man, his parents my company problems... I wish to be confident upon working hard. Because of many conflicts, broken relationships... Since, I heard from the sisters who overcame the problems well, it seems that I could be better. Anyway, it doesn't look like gloomy situation so I can breathe somewhat. I can understand a little bit how I approach them how I behave in the relationships with others and so on (Participant E).

Also, for them it became a chance to realize that they are not problematic people but independent women and a chance to seriously think about what kind of parent they must be for their children and was found they had created motivation to pioneer life as an independent single mother with children.

I hope they do not see us as the unusual women but as the responsible people who give birth of children and raise them well. In fact, there are many cases of abortions and giving up the babies. But we are the mothers who keep and raise our babies until the end. Frankly speaking, we know we have to consider this first but we forget it so frequently due to the hard work. Then, we feel guilty to the babies. From this opportunity, I decided not to do that anymore for my baby. Above all, I thought I would be a dignified mother (Participant B).

Table 2: Wings of mothers program overview

Session	Program name	Program objectives	Program content
1	Making relationship with myself	Through a process of exploring oneself one's own strengths and weaknesses are clearly figured out and preparation for personal capacity strengthening can be done	Interviewing each other Expressing my current self-identifying real needs through real need profile
2	Making relationship with children 1	It is a time for exploring methods to make relationship with the children and to diagnose oneself as a nurturer to the child-showing your weaknesses	Showing yourself as a mother Creating a list of resources you can get and strengths
3	Making relationship with children 2	Exploring ideal parent child relationship and establishing personal parent image	Exploring personal ideal parent child relationship and establishing personal parent image
4	Making relationship with	Recognizing the meaning of living within a local society and learning methods to network with local society	Resource exploration of surroundings and local society personal local network level exploration and psychological and emotional connection exploring
5	Making relationship with local society 2	Exploring local society with children and learning to live amongst neighbors	Exploring local society with children and configuring coexistence method

Since, I had difficulty in expressing myself to others, I only kept the existing relationships with my friends and past acquaintances and anger to the parents. I thought my children would be the same as the others if I met the others well. I cared for what I looked like from the others. Frankly, I would like to be shown better. I didn't know how to react and I know what I show (Participant D).

I only received the goods and economic support, it was good but... Unknowingly, I care for those, at the moment, it is good because it is needed. Without these, I wish I could do by myself but I don't know how to do it. Time passes. For us, we don't know what we have to do. Nobody volunteers the leader position... Just... But it doesn't mean to ask someone doing something but I have to prepare what I want well. Something different from now. More confident more aggressively (Participant A).

### CONCLUSION

In the verification of the program effectiveness with the progression of the program sessions personal self-esteem increased and independence improved and increase of quality of life could be expected.

For the participants it became a chance for them to honestly reveal themselves to develop confident and strong self-image and in this process the educational meaning of growth and development of single mothers with children could be found.

This positive effect unlike previous single mother programs dealt with within social prejudices is a result of single mothers themselves participating in a program dealing with making relationships with surrounding environments for independence by themselves and through this, changes in attitude towards relationships with environment and a broader understanding about themselves.

It is expected that these results will be useful for increase in independence motivation during development and operation of single mother related programs in the future and as a basis for effective fundamental data necessary in subject perspective programs and provision of practical service.

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