The role of NPO Yamanashi Foodbank alleviating food insecurity of the Japanese poor mother-child households

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Abstract. The relative poverty of Japanese mother-child households in Japan is increasing and has complex factors. This study based on qualitative methods and using secondary data from Japan's national government survey, electronic articles, scientific journals, blogs, videos, and social media. Wage and employment disparities are the main causes of mother-child households living in poverty; a liberal labour system also makes it difficult for mothers to obtain stable employment. The patriarchal structure of Japanese society and lack of public assistance adds to the difficulty of mother-child households moving out of poverty. Being a single mother in Japan is very difficult because they must balance making a living and taking care of children. The Japanese mother-child households face food insecurity due to a lack of income and a high living cost. NPO Yamanashi Foodbank makes initiatives to donate food to them, ease single mothers' burden, and save their children from hunger and malnutrition. The analysis results show that Yamanashi Foodbank contributes to innovations in dealing with social changes to poverty and food waste; Yamanashi Foodbank adds problem-solving capacity to Japanese society because the welfare state's power gradually loses to maximize public assistance.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, poverty has become a global issue because the poverty rate is gradually increasing in developed countries; however, it has a slightly different poverty factor from developing countries; poverty in developed countries like Japan is fascinating. In all OECD member countries, including Japan, the average shows one in seven children living in poverty. Japan itself falls in the ranking of countries with the intermediate range of child poverty. Its position level is above the OECD average, which means Japan is relatively high in child poverty rates [1]. In 2015 the child poverty rate in Japan was 13.9% [2]. In 2016, the child poverty rate in Japan was 15.6% or 1 in 7 children were said to be in "relative poverty" (相対的貧困 / aitaiteki hinkon), half of the 15.6% were single-parent households [3]. "Relative poverty" is a condition in which children live in a household with an income of less or half of the average (median) disposable income of a household in a particular country and year [4] [5]. Household disposable income is the household's net income, which has been deducted by taxes, insurance, and the like, divided by the number of household members. Japan's poverty line in 2018 is 1.22 million yen for a one-person household, 1.73 million yen for a two-person household, 2.11 million yen for a three-person household, and around 2.44 million yen for a four-person household [6]. Japan's relative poverty rate is the percentage of household members whose income is equal to or less than the poverty line, but the less does not reach half of the poverty line. If a household earns half of the poverty line, those household is in absolute poverty. The poverty level can also be calculated based on the...
household's disposable income where the child lives. Relative child poverty levels are useful for determining poverty at a certain point in time; the relative here means that the poverty threshold can change over time based on changes in the country's median income.

Based on the 2016 survey, the number of mother-child households was 1,232,000 [7]. Mother-child households belong to minorities, marginalized, have vulnerable to living in Japan's poverty line. According to Zhou, Japan is one of only two countries where more than half of single mother households live below the poverty line; Zhou added that the per capita income of single mother households is about half of the total household income of two parents [8]. Although more than 80% of single mothers participate in the labor market, the average annual working income is only around 1.33 million yen for temporary employees, showing that single mother and child households are relatively poor. The relative poverty rate for single-parent families is 50.8%, and one in every two households has a relatively poor standard of living [9]. In 2018 the relative poverty rate of mother-child households was 51.4%, which was previously 47.0% in 2016 [10]. The number of mother-child households in Japan has increased 1.5 times in the last 30 years [11]. In 2016, single mothers in Japan reached 1,000,304, and 80.8% experienced divorce [12]. Being a mother and the breadwinner in the family has its challenges; being a single mother in Japan is like living in a "war" in everyday life. They must divide their time between work and children, which is not easy if work is full time. Most single mothers will work in the non-regular sector, where the wages earned are lower and do not provide benefits.

Besides the complicated financial problems caused by low-wage work, mothers of child households also lack food, especially if they have more than one child [13]. Eating is the most essential thing in life for every human being because it is a source of energy and survival. Seeing the importance of food safety for mother-child households, an NPO in Japan named Food Bank Yamanashi conducted a social movement to collect and distribute food loss that is still safe and edible to mother-child households. It is called food loss because the food is still suitable for food but is wasted because of several reasons such as damaged packaging, excess production, short expiration date, etc. There is excess food or food surplus, but on the one hand, there is a shortage of proper food; therefore, NPO Yamanashi Foodbank is working with the local government on the "Food Safety Net" project; this project aims to help people regain their welfare even when they do not receive government welfare subsidies, by receiving food losses that are still fit for consumption. Food Safety Net is defined as easy access to safe and nutritious food in sufficient quantities; NPO Yamanashi Foodbank accepts food donations from companies and individuals. NPO Yamanashi Foodbank acts as a service provider that manages food loss. It does not turn into garbage and waste that endangers the environment and saves mother-child households from social exclusion, food poverty, and those that endanger their future. This paper will discuss the factors that cause Japanese child mothers to be vulnerable to relative poverty and how the role of NPO Yamanashi Foodbank reduces food poverty in child mothers households while at the same time creating a more sustainable socio-economic and environmental.

Poverty is sometimes seen because of a lazy individual who does not want to work and cannot maximize his / her abilities. However, the relative poverty of mother-child households in Japan has several factors that are interconnected and complex. There is a general view in critical social science that sees poverty as inequality; scholars should discuss poverty by knowing the root causes of socio-economic inequality, studying institutional structures, and identifying what structural components of society help explain poverty [14]. Poverty results from a perpetual gap; the gap between rich and poor results from government policies, changes in employment-related structures, and unemployment scale [15]. The high unemployment rate is related to economic structural transformation, and the manufacturing industry's decline caused low-wage employment and fewer jobs. This causes men who must support their families financially to begin to sink, and the institution of marriage becomes unattractive, so that female family heads begin to appear [16]. Ezawa said that although government policy is generally known to emphasize women's domestic role as mothers, single parent policies in Japan treat them more as workers than as mothers [17]. The figure below is a conceptual framework developed by the author based on the theoretical framework that the author has reviewed.
Nevertheless, on the one hand, as workers, Japanese women also face forms of discrimination in the labor market, both because of the prejudices filled by men and because of the institutional structure around work. The wage system of paid female workers relies on the stereotype that domestic work and childcare are considered unpaid or cheap works, and mothers cannot give full potential power in the labor market. All these methods are indirectly a form of social exclusion related to non-economic factors, and therefore irrelevant to women's employability [18]. Exclusion is also related to perpetuating the social system structure and patriarchal practices such as men who dominate, oppress, exploit women, and labor division based on sex [19]. This makes it difficult for a mother to get career mobility, highly paid and has job security. Abe attributed the poverty that occurred in Japan to the economic crisis make *hiseki* (non-regular workers) households much more severely than *seiki* (regular workers) households [20]. Most non-regular workers are women; there is a recognition that “working poor” is a problem for women, which leaves a lasting negative impact, especially if they are single mothers [21]. Therefore, in this paper, the authors discuss economic recession factors that cause changes in society's socio-economic structure that result in changes in the labour market and family structure. Moreover, this has triggered the imbalance between household types in Japan, thus giving birth to poverty. Poverty is much more common among women-headed households than in other types of family structures; the relationship between family structure and poverty helps explain why women and children have higher poverty rates than men [22].

In this paper, there are two issues that the author tries to examine, the problem of mother-child household poverty and the charity activities of NPO Yamanashi Foodbank to prevent food poverty in mother-child households, as well as trying to reduce food loss and food banking management. First, non-profit organizations show a different set of functions from those offered by the government and the business sector; their roles are easily applicable, not in all countries, including developing countries [23]. The non-profit management model is characterized by broader stakeholders, complex objectives and structures, the result of a push and pull between the state, market, and civil society, from several aspects that require an organization-focused approach [24]. NPO has an advocacy role in the political process that helps determine or improve social improvement policy, gives voice to minority, and discriminated groups' needs, which is not always considered [25]. Besides, NPOs have a decisive role in innovating new approaches, processes, or programs in service delivery and are agents of change [26]. NPOs use social movements to transfer personal issues to public issues. Social movements begin first with a person's small, personal concerns and actions. However, when the momentum is built, these social
movements can grow into formal organizations and combine hundreds or thousands of individuals and eventually form organizations; successful social movements can influence government policy on private matters to become public problems [27].

The role of non-profit actors is particularly prominent in almost all European countries in dealing with food poverty since the welfare state regime gradually lost their capacity and responsibility and handed it over to social actors [28]. Food banking networks provide the supply, storage, processing, and distribution of surplus food under safe conditions. Simultaneously, public action is often limited to enabling third sector initiatives to carry out these activities [29]. 'Household food insecurity' has been defined as the inability to obtain or consume an adequate and socially acceptable quality or quantity of food [30]. Food loss has an impact on the food system and affects the balance of economic (economic losses), social (hindering social development), and environmental (greenhouse gas emissions) dimensions [31]. The gap between food loss and food insecurity data in several high-income countries highlights a choice of solutions between restoring food to reduce waste and donating it to people in need to overcome food poverty [32]. The food donation system is considered very important in reducing food surpluses and reducing food poverty, but its operations depend on voluntary and non-profit organizations [33].

2. Method

The research method that the writer intends to use in this thesis is a qualitative method using literature review and literature study; qualitative research is descriptive-analytical. Data collected from various literature resources, including government sites, international organizations OECD, social media platforms, blogs, various interviews, and surveys conducted by researchers and news sites. The reason for choosing this research approach is because a qualitative approach can analyze holistically and thoroughly research problems, both general and specific, and complex issues. Qualitative research can be applied if the nature of the problem to be studied demands exploratory research, requires a long time, and has flexible procedures. Another advantage of the qualitative method approach is the flexibility in extracting the information obtained [34]. In this article, the authors used five Japanese single mother respondents who were vulnerable aged 25-45 years. Respondents were obtained through social media platforms: Instagram. This is done because of the spread of COVID-19, which does not allow the author to travel abroad, so the alternative use of social media platforms to get respondents, is beneficial. Besides, the authors interviewed one of the coordinators of the NPO Yamanashi Foodbank via email to obtain data related to their activities. The data collected is then analyzed using a descriptive analysis approach. Descriptions, interpretations, and words explain problem analysis.

3. Results and discussion

When economic stability is reached, it will create an orderly system of the social structure of society. However, if the opposite occurs, it will trigger social change and so that new social problems arise. Japan experienced two recessions quite severely, which triggered poverty in mother-child households, namely the bubble burst in the 1990s and the Lehman shock in 2008. In the 1950-1970s, Japan achieved high economic stability; in that vulnerable year, perpetuate the patriarchal culture to create an order that men were breadwinners and women were in the domestic sector. However, in the 1990s, a bubble burst shook the Japanese labour market and triggered the employment ice age (a condition of instability in employment), waning long-time employment system; decreased employment in the regular sector; and increased vacancies, non-regular workers. Japan's gloomy period for ten years after the bubble burst is known as the lost decade; many women who graduated from high school and university or wives joined the

The highest number of single mothers based on age in 2015 fill in by 40-44 years of 303,000 (28.5%) [36]. This age is part of the employment ice age generation; this indicates that these mothers have a dim career path, especially if they previously had no work experience. Japan is famous for its M-shaped curve, which depicts the Japanese women's work pattern. Women who are married and leave work because they have children, and they want to return to the labour market again tend to find difficulties
to be accepted back into the company or enter the regular sector; their options can only enter the non-
regular sector part-time. For the *ice age generation* who have entered the non-regular sector from the
start, it will undoubtedly be challenging to enter the regular sector because Japan's job selection system
is rigorous and rigid. They still cannot leave the circle of work in the irregular sector. For single mothers
who are divorced over the age of 35 and have never had work experience, they have no other choice but
to become workers in the non-regular sector. However, suppose they already have a permanent job in
the regular sector. In that case, it will not have a significant impact on mothers in the ice employment
generation and have no previous work experience. These mothers are economically vulnerable,
especially single mothers, because non-regular sector jobs have low wages and are unstable minimal
benefits, and job security affect the standard of consumption quality and the pattern of mother-child
household life. Japanese single mothers who work in the regular sector earn an average salary of 2.7
million yen in one year, while single mothers who work in the non-regular sector (part-time, temporary
worker, hourly worker) only get an average salary of 1.25 million yen in one year [37]. The participation
of child-mother households in the labour market is relatively high and shows an increase from 2011 to
2018; however, mother-child households have an unemployment rate of 1.5 times higher than father-
child households [39].

The percentage of mother-child households that are part-time workers is almost 6x higher than that
of father-child households. The irregular sector of workers, such as part-time is more dominated by
women who have children; this is related to the division of time between work and children. Being a
single mother in Japan is a difficult choice, especially if their child is a toddler. They must balance the
time between work and children. When they become full-time or regular workers, there is very little
time to take care of children, and less attention for children, and worries if they are left alone unless they
can put their child in child care known to be quite expensive. If mothers still want to be regular workers
and do not spend much money on childcare, they must have a support system from family or friends
that they can rely on to help with their troubles. While mothers who do not have a support system from
family or friends and are unable to pay for child care, single mothers will choose part-time so that they
can still balance the time between work and children even with a minimal salary.

Moreover, Japan is known for its "shame culture" that does not bother others (*meiwaku wo kakenai*)
and highly respects the privacy of their personal lives. Therefore, a mother-child household often tends
not to admit that their life is complicated. There is a fear of facing discrimination and harmful
stereotypes, afraid that their child can face bullying because of Japan's bullying culture. Women,
especially single mothers, must face career choices, which are not profitable and limited options. Single
mothers' career choice is considered as "a structured choice," which is already structured in such a way
in society because of the traditional gender role socialization. Women are often socialized to prioritize
the family over education or careers; women are expected to take significant responsibilities in childcare
and the domestic sector; this contributes significantly to women and mother-child households' poverty.

The percentage of relative poverty in mother-child households does not show a significant reduction
each year; it tends to be stagnant compared to other household types' relative poverty. The relative
poverty of mother-child households in 2018 was still relatively high at 51.4%, while the poverty of
father-child households was only 22%. This trend shows that it is difficult for mother-child households
to obtain income above the median disposable household income throughout Japan. It is related to the
high number of mother-child households working in the non-regular sector in 2018, amounting to
46.5%, while father-child households were only 22.3% [38]. Based on the 2016 Comprehensive Survey
of Living, mother-child households have always been ranked the lowest among other household types
in terms of low income from 1985-2015, even though their average annual income is lower than elderly
households [40]. The median income of mother-child households was 2.5 million yen, father-child
households 4.0 million yen, and 6.65 million yen for two-parent households [41]. This income inequality
impacts children who find it difficult to follow or enjoy the standard of living of children from other
family types because the mother's income is only sufficient for their basic needs. The income gap
between regular and irregular jobs was triggered by structural reforms during the Koizumi cabinet
administration to revitalize the economy and deflation. The applied neo-liberal policies resulted in a
"domination gap" of capital over the workforce and discrimination between regular and irregular workers [42]. During the structural reformation period, public assistance also does not correctly carry out its duties, which guarantees every needy Japanese citizen's minimum life. Double employment structure increases income inequality and deprives low-income people of the right to a minimum standard of living; the long term creates layers of various kinds of poverty issues among the lower class. Although the Japanese minimum wage continues to be revised, it is still relatively low; the company has a weak ability to pay workers' living needs and the lack of government control, increasing irregular workers to become working poor. The participation of single mothers in the labor market is very high, but the problem of low-paid work causes them to become "working poor" single mothers, they have been working hard, but they are still experiencing financial difficulties; therefore, the wage policy for all sectors of work needs to be reviewed.

Previously, PM Abe stated that the 'womenomics' program aimed to open more jobs chance for women; still, it seems that the company's work system is not yet ready to adapt mother-child households require flexible working time. Suppose the company has tight financial management and working hours. In that case, single mothers will find it challenging to apply for leave when their child is sick, especially when there is no support system such as family or friends to help; of course, the mother will sacrifice her working hours to possibly wages will be cut. This is a dilemma for mother-child households to work in the regular or irregular sector; both do not necessarily help save their children's lives, make it difficult, and sacrifice their children's rights. The rigidity of Japanese society's structure hinders the mobility of mothers. It increases the gap in employment opportunities for mother-child households, which impacts income disparities and then leads to poverty in mother-child households in Japan.

Japan is a welfare state that convinces every community to pay for their basic needs; the government still gives responsibility to the family as the first person to provide social security for everyone; if no family can help, the government provides public assistance conditions. Low-income mother-child households will receive a Child Rearing Allowance (Jidou Fuyou Teate) from the government of 41,000 yen per month. Not all mothers receive child support for divorce from their husbands; only about 34% of mothers receive it; this indicates that the law of child support from divorce is still weak, the government does not encourage fathers to be responsible for providing economic assistance to ex-wives, so this is the case. Make it difficult for mother-child households. Although there are free school fees, the high costs of other school needs are also considered burdensome and not to mention the regressive social insurance tax. Therefore, if they only rely on public assistance, they will not survive. If they only work without public assistance, they also cannot survive. Single mothers' choice is to continue working with the minimum wage to receive public assistance. The choice of welfare policies for mother-child household cases is still deemed insufficient and burdensome. It does not provide solutions for mother-child households to survive and get out of life's difficulties. To get government funding assistance, household members of child mothers must meet several relatively rigid financial requirements, have a minimum income by prefecture, and do not have tertiary items to obtain an eligibility childcare allowance. There is a case of a mother-child household in Yamanashi City who did not get government assistance because those households had a car, even though the car was used for work mobility where the place where she worked was quite far. Surviving in Japan only relying on government social assistance sounds very unlikely, especially since before facing stereotype and social exclusion, the choice of welfare policies for mother-child households still makes it difficult for them to move around, so the authors feel welfare practices 'maximize people's ability to help themselves' which is indirectly implemented by Japan makes it difficult for mother-child households to get out of relative poverty cycle. Strengthen public policies that focus on social exclusion, inequality, and increase the dynamic private sector's role in providing public services to marginalized minorities.

Apart from the bubble burst that caused economic stagnation for ten years, the 2008s Lehman Brother's bankruptcy shocked the global economy. At that time, Japan was affected quite firmly so that Japan's GDP fell drastically, reaching -5 below the United States; exports of the auto industry declined, and the company went bankrupt. The increasing number of people who have lost their jobs and homes causes the poverty rate to increase. The survey conducted by MHLW showed that the poverty rate of
children under the age of 17 in 2000 was 14.4, then 15.7 in 2009 and 16.3 in 2012, while the relative poverty was 9.2 in 2000, 10.1 in 2009. The relative poverty rate for children tended to increase in 2000 and 2009, during which the bubble burst, recession, and relief shock occurred. This indicates that the domestic and global economic recession has had a significant impact on increasing the relative poverty of children in Japan. In 2009, poverty was 15.7% due to the impact of the Lehman shock and continued to increase to reach the highest level of 16.3 in 2012, the increase in child poverty began to occur around the 2000s drastically. Child poverty in Japan is referred to as "invisible" (mienikui / 見えにくい) poverty; identified as malnutrition and hunger. Children need food as a source of strength to live life, encouraging NPO Yamanashi Foodbank to donate food preventing food poverty and malnutrition in children, and prevent a more significant lousy impact on poverty. Another objective of Food Bank Yamanashi is to create a "rich" society where people can share their food and consume food without producing food waste (food waste). According to the information the author got from the NPO Food Bank Yamanashi website, in Japan annually there are around 6,430,000 tons of food that are still edible wasted, and this is equivalent to the Japanese who throw away a bowl of rice every day, even though some people suffering from hunger. Food banking is an activity where a company donates food that cannot be sold anymore due to printing errors, leftovers, surplus supplies, and standard products. These products are still fit for consumption only because there are printing errors, and the giving of too short, expired dates causes the food to be withdrawn from the market. NPO Yamanashi Foodbank took the initiative to donate the abundance of food that could not be marketed to the needy and welfare facilities.

The Yamanashi Food Bank obtains and collects food from companies and individuals, a process known as "food drive." Individuals or companies bring or send food directly to the Yamanashi NPO Food Bank; then the Yamanashi Foodbank sends to individual households and welfare facilities using courier services; this is done because some households such as mother-child households have to work or cannot leave the house, so they do not have time to take a food donation. NPO Food Bank Yamanashi obtains information and identifies children and families in need of food through requests of the municipalities they live in, social welfare boards, schools, and children's canteens (kodomo shakudo), etc. The municipality assigns a symbol number to families who need food to be identified. Sometimes NPO Foodbank Yamanashi directly communicates and provides support for welfare consultations with beneficiary households. In addition to boxes containing various kinds of food, they often include warm greeting cards such as Christmas or The Valentine cards from the volunteers so that the organization and beneficiaries have a close and intimate relationship. NPO Yamanashi Foodbank also always carry out evaluation and control of household food shortages by checking the status of food use that has been dominated. The food storage area is always arranged periodically to determine if the supply is sufficient when distributed en masse or when sudden demand appears. During the summer of 2018, Yamanashi Foodbank teamed up with Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd to promote support to the Aotori mother-child household; one of the beneficiaries said, "I usually cannot buy candy, and my child is happy." Yamanashi Foodbank collaborated with the administration support for Toru City, Yamanashi City, and Uenohara City; delivered food donation to 639 households where 77% of the recipients were mother-child households in summer 2018.

The urgency for change, the emergence of the need to help and do charity, offer innovative solutions to significant social changes in society, Yamanashi Foodbank provides new hope in mitigating household food poverty for mothers and children known to have difficulties in life and are marginalized. Dissatisfaction with the government's response and the power of the welfare state gradually losing to maximize public assistance nourish the role of NPOs, which are more direct and closer to the root of the problem. The solutions that are offered seem more useful and right on target. Due to poverty experienced by mother-child households and massive food loss in society, Yamanashi Foodbank created a service provider role that helps the government prevent food insecurity through the food bank management system. Yamanashi foodbank saves mother-child households from food poverty. It pays attention to global problems related to food waste in a country where industrialized countries have high food waste levels.
In connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, NPO Yamanashi Foodbank plays a large enough role in distributing worthy of food to mother-child households. It is known that this pandemic has an impact on the Japanese economy, the manufacturing sector, and the tourism sector. This has triggered a reduction in labor and working hours in irregular employment sectors engaged in services such as restaurants, tourist attractions, and hotels. Reducing labor and work will undoubtedly impact mothers' and children's household income, not to mention household spending in the pandemic is felt to be greater because children stay at home longer. After all, there are no school activities, some households living expenses are increasing, and food expenditure is one of the high ones; Yamanashi Foodbank is one of the mother-child households to receive food support. Yamanashi Foodbank quickly served and provided food on March 9, 2020, did not forget to disinfect more than 20 types of food such as dry noodles and instant food, distributed to 650 households. On April 20, Yamanashi Foodbank made another food donation due to the increasing spread of the COVID-19 in Yamanashi prefecture; about 800 households received the aid. Even though this charity activity has not reached all households experiencing food insecurity, this social movement triggers the government and the private sector to play a more active role in creating economic and food stability in Japan.

4. Conclusion
While increasing relative poverty in mother-child households due to economic recession, income gap, 'working poor,' the lack of policies oriented towards the needs of mother-child households, creating interests in the private sector with a market-oriented approach solutions to that issue. Yamanashi Foodbank contributes to innovations in dealing with social changes to poverty and food waste; Yamanashi Foodbank adds problem-solving capacity to Japanese society. Donation of surplus food ranks high in the food waste management hierarchy, as it allows it to maintain the primary function of food, namely human consumption. Food poverty due to lack of income has a significant impact on the quality of health, education, mental health, and mother-child households' survival in the future. Children as the successor to the Japanese state's survival need to be given more attention besides just focusing on the elderly. Food security and freedom from hunger are fundamental things for children. Food security is a critical contingent on shaping human resources that determine their career prospects and integrate their future labor market needs. Solidarity and integrity between the government, the market, and the private sphere are essential during global poverty and food waste problems. Gendered oriented policies are needed to prevent intergenerational poverty cycles, eliminate wage gaps in all employment sectors, and eliminate traditional values that hinder equality.

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