The Concept of Livelihood Support in Japanese Social Work: Views Around Support for Domestic Violence Victims in Japan

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Abstract

Livelihood support often involves independent and self-reliant living as its purpose or goal. Thus, the concept of livelihood support is closely connected to that of independence and self-reliance. However, many problems have also been reported at a less conceptual and more concrete level of the establishment of independence, i.e. at the level of support activities in an actual helping relationship.

This paper focuses on, Japanese social work and livelihood rehabilitation for domestic violence victims who have taken refuge in public women's protection facilities or private shelters, and analyzes the fundamental ideas of livelihood support through problems arising in such social work practices.

In particular, social work theory was taken as a theoretical basis for examining domestic violence victim assistance in this paper. Some cases of domestic violence victim assistance have detrimentally aggravated the situation, driving victims to reconstruct and escalate their domestic violence relationship. Measures to avoid such dilemmas are discussed. In addition, important points when carrying out appropriate livelihood support not only in domestic violence victim assistance, but also in social work practices in general are considered. Namely, we show that livelihood support in social work calls for the establishment of a multifaceted and wide-level support system, which, along with support provided at a personal level, involves intervention at a community, social network and societal level. Furthermore, the goal is to establish a support system capable of accommodating the multifaceted problems mentioned above, and to develop a type of support that can deal with the ever-changing problems in life.

Introduction

There is no clear definition for the concept of livelihood support in Japanese, and the concept has been interpreted and used in a variety of ways, for example as a synonym for support for self-reliance living or for a life support system (Yoshikawa, 2005). Yoshikawa points to the confusion in usage as a cause of the ambiguous interpretations of livelihood support. According to her, "livelihood support is a methodological concept to achieve a certain purpose (goal), and it is contradictory to take it as a concept of the final cause". She then identifies livelihood support as a methodological concept that presupposes an established purpose or goal (Yoshikawa, 2005).

The purpose or goal of livelihood support is often identified with independent and self-reliant living. Just like livelihood support, independent and self-reliant living also lacks a clear definition, and is employed ambiguously (Iwasaki et al., 2002; Yoshikawa, 2003). For example, *The Yuhikaku Dictionary of Social Welfare* defines 'seikatsu-shien(livelihood support, living support)' as a new helping relationship that assists

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realization of living independently. In addition, as has been often noted, the concept of livelihood support is often used in combination with self-reliant support, and thus it is closely connected to those of independence and self-reliance (Akimoto et al., 2003).

However, many problems have been reported with helping relationships that support the establishment of independence. For example, *the Intern Report on Basic Structural Reform of Social Welfare Services* edited by the Central Social Welfare Council of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare identifies as ideal objectives of future social service, a social-solidarity based assistance in the problem solution and in the establishment of independence (Central Social Welfare Council of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 1998). Such support is supposed to facilitate every individual, regardless of presence/absence of disability or age, such that they can secure a private life with human dignity in a family or a community[1]. Furukawa, however, notes that the concept of 'self-reliant support' introduced in the basic structural reform of social welfare services is grounded in the idea which basically assumes full responsibility on the part of citizens in conducting their life, and provides support based on social solidarity only when one cannot sustain living independently by his/her effort alone (Furukawa, 2004). It is also pointed out that living independently and self-reliant support have a risk of resolving themselves into 'independence by self-help' - one of the traditional ideas in Japanese social welfare policy. Furukawa further warns that self-reliant support based on social services which lack a perspective on independence may result in coercive independence, making self-reliance a synonym for the denial of living or life for most disabled

people and elderly persons (Furukawa, 2007).

In fact, there are some cases in Japan where victims of domestic violence once take refuge in protection facilities such as shelters but fail to build enough self-confidence to resume their lives in a severe social environment. Due to the difficulties of actualizing self-reliant life, these victims give up livelihood rehabilitation and return to their assailant despite being terrified by their violence (Sudo, 2003). In other cases, victims succeed in severing all their ties with the assailant, but are overwhelmed by difficulties in living by themselves after leaving the protection facilities. They rebuild a new dependent relationship with another man and once again become victims of domestic violence (Terada, 2009).

In order to avoid such dilemmas involved with support that distresses the victims, it is necessary to concretely examine a procedure for an appropriate support, and to define an objective of livelihood support for social work.

Method

Given these remarks, this paper focuses on, Japanese social work and livelihood rehabilitation for domestic violence victims who have taken refuge to public women's protection facilities or private women's shelters, and analyzes the fundamental ideas of livelihood supports through the problems encountered. Since these social workers need to assist domestic violence victims in reestablishing their self-reliance through livelihood rehabilitation, their practice is highly significant.

In particular, social work theory was taken as a theoretical basis for examining domestic violence victim assistance. Measures are then sought to avoid the dilemma seen in some cases of domestic

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[1] Other than the report presented in this paper, several documents issued from relevant divisions of the (former) Health and Welfare Ministry refer to the ideal and direction of the basic structural reform of the social welfare service, but they are not necessarily consistent with each other (Furukawa, 2004).

violence victim assistances in Japan, in which support as resulted in the reconstruction and/or escalation of the domestic violence relationship. Our goal is to clarify important points not only in carrying out appropriate domestic violence victim livelihood support, but also in social work practices in general.

Since social work theory concerning domestic violence has been primarily developed in Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada, we will focus on the theories constructed in these countries. We should note, however, that these theories have been developed in countries foreign to Japan and have different historical backgrounds, cultures and social situations regarding admittance of foreigners. In the application of social work theories developed in foreign countries, we have to take into account Japanese social characteristics. However, given that support activities for domestic violence are practiced without being fully recognized as social work in the Japanese clinical situation (Sudo, 2003), we think it meaningful to apply the stoical work theories developed in foreign countries to domestic practices.

The main focus of this paper is on introducing the ideas and findings of major social work theories concerning domestic violence, and not on the illustration of social work practices as seen in case work studies or practice reports. Needless to say, provisions for domestic violence require not only victim support but also multifaceted intervention such as preventive measures for domestic violence and countermeasures for assailants. In this paper, however, we take up support for domestic violence victims only as an example of social work with livelihood support, and not as an overall solution to the problem of domestic violence.

Result

1. Definition of domestic violence and the current state of victim support

Domestic violence lacks a clear definition in Japanese. According to "The Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and Protection of Victims" (hereafter the Domestic Violence Prevention Law), "the term 'spousal violence' as used in this Act means bodily harm by one spouse or the words and deeds of one spouse that cause equivalent psychological or physical harm to the other". Hence the concept of domestic violence includes not only physical abuse such as punching and kicking, but also various types of violence like emotional or psychological abuse such as denigrating verbal attacks, neglect or threat and sexual abuse such as coerced sexual acts or refusal to cooperate in contraception.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Law also defines 'victims' as follows: "the term 'victims' as used in this Act means a person(s) who has been subjected to spousal violence". Further, "the term 'spousal violence' shall cover cases where, subsequent to being subjected to violence by one spouse, the other spouse has obtained a divorce or annulment of the marriage but continues to be subjected to violence by his/her former spouse", domestic violence victims are those who have ever suffered violence from a person with whom they are intimately involved, such as spouse or partner.

As a provision for victims, the Domestic Violence Prevention Law stipulates a cooperative prevention of domestic violence and protection of victim through spousal violence counseling and support centers, police, women's consulting offices, welfare offices and other related municipal institutions. It also specifies the responsibility of the government for self-reliance support, and requires prefectural governments to establish a basic plan for domestic violence prevention and victim support.

Primal institutions in which victims who

escape from domestic violence can receive Emergency Temporary Protection and livelihood rehabilitation include temporary protection centers at women's consulting offices and shelters managed by private organizations. In particular, private shelters are more flexible compared to public organizations and play an important role in accommodating to a variety of needs. At the same time, many private shelters experience financial difficulties and many of them barely manage to maintain their minimum activities, reducing the amount of support they can provide (Takai, 2000). Therefore, enhancing the public support system, extending financial support for private organizations, as well as reinforcing cooperative support systems from both public and private organizations are necessary.

The types of support required for domestic violence victims are not limited to temporary assistance such as protection from the impending violence and/ or provision of clothing, food and sheltering, but also mental/ physical care, financial support towards independence and other kinds of social services. Repeated violence, excessive strain and persistent stress often cause chronic diseases or sequela, such as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), apathy, feelings of helplessness, anthrophobia, a loss of self-respect, and deprivation of personal worth. In addition to a loss in social network, these physical and/ or mental damage make the recovery from domestic violence even harder (Radford & Hester, 2006).

Although the protection facilities provide victims with a safe place and various kinds of assistances, escape from domestic violence can mean a total loss of daily life. When a victim leaves the shelter and reengages in self-reliant living, she faces various kinds of difficulties such as leaving their home town, losing personal

connections built in that place, and in establishing a new life from scratch in a fresh place. The 'Survey on independence supports for victims of spousal violence' by the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan,[2] and the 'Survivor life-reconstruction questionnaire' by a NPO FTC Shelter report the many difficulties of livelihood rehabilitation in domestic violence victims, including difficulties in legal procedures, financial and/or mental instability and the accommodation to a new environment (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2007; FTC Shelter, 2003).

Ideally, intensive support from protection facilities must be followed by stepwise support from intermediate facilities such as a step house and a group home. However, there are insufficient numbers of these intermediate facilities to deal with the current situation. Moreover, it is extremely difficult for domestic violence victims to locate these facilities and to go through the necessary procedures by themselves to use the social services they need after leaving the protection facilities (Kawakida, 2005). Given this situation, social resources for domestic violence victims are severely limited, and that the support system in general is insufficient.

Despite this, if individual efforts and/or strong motivation are required of victims for livelihood rehabilitation one-sidedly, it is tantamount to attributing the cause of domestic violence to personal factors, leaving the hard obstacles in reaching independence unsolved. Certainly, there are some cases in which victims succeed in reestablishing their lives and in livelihood rehabilitation, either by their determination, the use of informal support networks or dedicated efforts by individual support organizations. Not all the cases, however, can be solved by individual effort alone. Rather, support that urges

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[2] Objects of the survey by the Cabinet Office are people who have realized an independent life or those who are taking some action toward independence. Hence it highlights that even victims who have overcome, or are in the process of overcoming, obstacles to achieving an independent life are facing many problems in their livelihood rehabilitation (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2007).

victims experiencing anxiety or fear towards independent life or to achieve financial independence from protection facilities or support groups may lead victims to give up attaining self-reliance and return to the domestic violence relationship. Thus, support without careful consideration complicates the problem.

2. Analysis of social work theories on domestic violence victims

Social work theories on domestic violence victims have emphasized the importance of the support by means of changing society. This has been discussed from various perspectives (Dobash & Dobash, 1992), including feminist social work, psychoanalytic theory, family systems theory and social learning theory. The fundamental idea is not to assume a single cause for domestic violence, but rather to recognize multiple factors that elevate the risk for domestic violence that exist within assailants and victims, in relationships and family systems, at the community level, and in society (Carlson, 2008). The support and the distribution of social resources must be based on such an understanding, and social workers are expected to support domestic violence victims and solve the problem by providing support and/ or facilitating its use (Prylke & Thomas, 1998). It is further pointed out that domestic violence should be understood as a compound problem arising from intertwining factors, with an emphasis on assessment from various viewpoints such as social background and personal relationships. Thus, multilevel assessment from personal, interpersonal, organizational and ideological perspectives becomes essential - the focus is not on violent acts as a result of a problem, but in understanding domestic violence in its context (i.e. the time course before and after the emergence of the problem, such as the background condition of the occurrence of domestic violence and the subsequent

continuation of violence) (Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

In addition, it is argued that we should not blame potential victims who cannot escape from their assailant or voluntary victims who return to their assailant after leaving protection facilities to rebuild a domestic violence relationship because of institutional obstacles, fear of the assailant, apathy or helplessness caused by domestic violence, or their weakness in continuing the domestic violence relationship, but that we should change the society in order to help the victims. For this purpose, social workers are expected to not only support victims and to defend their rights, but also to play the role of agents who change the society by cooperating with local residents (Einat et al., 2000).

Jenkins and Davidson summarize social work theories on domestic violence victim support in two points. First, there are many institutional obstacles for domestic violence victims to receive the support they need. Second, in order to provide continuing support to victims in the community, the obstacles that prevent victims from requesting support needs to be eliminated. Based on these remarks they argue for the necessary cooperation of the whole community for the prevention and the intervention of domestic violence. They further emphasize the significant role of the community and social network, through which various institutions cooperate and share knowledge about domestic violence for its prevention (Jenkins & Davidson, 2001).

Furthermore, few victims are capable of escaping from domestic violence relationships. Considering the number of potential victims beyond the reported cases as well as the importance of domestic violence prevention and actions against assailants, it is important to turn our attention not only to the concerned parties but also to the social background from which domestic violence arises. In particular, the expectation is to form a society that does not

tolerate domestic violence through an integrative support activity across an entire local region or community, for example by a cooperation of relevant institutions including private organizations and the use of social resources by a local society.

However, besides social factors, needless to say direct and clinical intervention for victims and assailants is important in the social work practice of domestic violence. In order for domestic violence victims in an extremely powerless state to overcome a number of obstacles and reconstruct their life, social workers need to provide individualized support for each victim (Dutton, 2006). For domestic violence victims suffering from mental trauma and deprived of feelings of self-respect or personal worth, approaches focusing on empowering victims become important. Such approaches allow victims to regain their spirits as well as feelings of self-respect and self-control through counseling or the construction of a relationship with supporters based on trust (Dubois & Miley, 1992). Therefore, livelihood support for domestic violence victims should not only be limited to temporary measures such as the protection of victims from an impending attack and the provision of clothing, food and sheltering, but require support that stress self-determination and self-actualization that empower victims to exercise judgment and the power to take action. In addition, beyond the support in protection facilities, long term and comprehensive support with a view to the context of domestic violence, a support relationship, and self-reliant living after leaving the facilities is required.

Discussion
Consideration of livelihood support in social work in Japan

As we have argued, domestic violence arises from complex and intertwining factors. It is essential, therefore, to reject a narrow interpretation of domestic violence as a relationship between assailants and victims and to understand various situational factors. Thus, multifaceted support is required in livelihood support for victims, without limiting an approach to either an individual or to society. In addition, in view of the self-determination and self-actualization of domestic violence victims, the empowerment of victims that enriches their ability for autonomous judgment and action through the use of social work skills such as strengths perspective is of great importance, and this requires social case works that gives first priority to recovery of domestic violence victims.

If, regardless of these facts, we attribute the cause of domestic violence to the personal factors of the involved parties, support adversely affects the problem. That is, support that urges extremely powerless victims that have taken refuge in protection facilities to become independent only demands individual effort and/or strong motivation of the victim, leaving the hard obstacles towards independence unsolved. This may conversely lead victims to give up attaining self-reliance and impose on them the risk of reconstructing a domestic violence relationship. Furthermore, if we note that those capable of escaping from domestic violence consist of just a small part of all the potential victims beyond the reported cases, and considering the importance of domestic violence prevention and action against assailants, it is important to turn our attention to the improvement of the social background, rather than blaming the victims continuing to suffer in a domestic violence relationship or who rebuild a domestic violence relationship from lack of effort, negligence or dependency.

On the other hand, it should also be noted that if we pursue the social approach alone and set aside factors surrounding victims and assailants, this leads to a benign neglect or even an acceptance of the problem. In particular, casework practices which empower victims for

autonomous judgment and action is highly important, and case work with a respect to the victim's self-determination and self-actualization is required.

The importance of the multifaceted supports is, however, not necessarily limited to livelihood support for domestic violence victims.[3] Various kinds of social work practice incorporate the pluralist perspective, which does not address a problem in terms of the person/environment dichotomy, but places greater importance on the reciprocal relationship between people and their environments.[4] In fact, such a viewpoint constitutes the fundamental principles of client-oriented social work. Kubo, for example, identifies the principal concern of social work with the reciprocal relationship between people and the environment, and sets its objective to the solution or alleviation of problems that arise between them. She further argues that the idea of empowerment bases social work on client initiative; empowerment is a process of social work practice that enriches a client's power (personal, social, political and economic) to perform legitimate social roles and to exercise the right of self-determination in a social relation, as well as bringing change at individual as well as social levels (Kubo, 2007). On the other hand, Ohta identifies the goal of processes in social work practice with the solution or improvement of a problematic situation especially by clients by cooperative livelihood support from social workers. Such a process is a practical activity consisting of a series of different support phased

by a time course. A scientific and professional sequence of support system constitutes the process in social work practice - whose final outcome is to support clients (Ohta, 1992). Therefore time plays a significant role in support, casting a long-term viewpoint on the temporal flow and change essential for support activities.

In conclusion, livelihood support in social work calls for the establishment of multifaceted and wide-level support systems which, along with support provided at a personal level, involves intervention at a community, social network and societal level. Such support must not limit its scope to a particular aspect such as economical independence, but needs to deal with the social background from which the problem arises. In addition, in order to overcome the dilemma in livelihood support, namely the paradoxical aggravation of the problem caused by support activities, it is essential to have an integrated understanding of the temporal development inherent in the reciprocity of person and environment. To achieve this goal, we need to establish a support system capable of accommodating the various problematic factors mentioned above, and to realize a support that can deal with the ever-changing problems in life.

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[3] The concept of empowerment in social work is a general concept used in broad contexts other than the support for domestic violence victims. Originally, the theory of empowerment approaches has developed as a social work practice for those considered as minorities in a social structure, such as destitute, disabled, colored or elderly persons and children (Lee, 1996). In recent years, however, the goal of empowerment is generalized to include the enhancement of individual abilities to improve a situation and realize social justice (Mickelson, 1995). The approach is recognized as applicable not only to people discriminated in a social structure but to a broader range of people, and the concept is now adopted in a variety of fields.

[4] Ecological perspective and ecological framework emphasize the reciprocity of person and environment exchanges, in which each shapes and influences the other over time. C. B. Germain, who first advocated social work based on these concepts, states that the ecological concepts and principles enable social workers to keep a simultaneous focus on people and their environments and the reciprocal relationships (Gitterman & Germain, 2008).

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