



The Implementation of Social Welfare Policy in Taiwan: Regarding Single Parent Families

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Abstract

Within members of the global village, affluent or poor nations alike, the family structure has undergone a dramatic change. Taiwan is no exception. In the past, the traditional Taiwanese family secures social order by fusing social forces adhesively. However, accompanied with economic development, feminist movement and population immigration, the traditional Taiwanese family structure has undergone a dramatically change. The traditional family has faced colossal challenges; the increased unwedded mothers, sky-high divorce rate, separated family due to parents working in the both side of the Taiwan Strait. All of these contribute towards making the single parent family as a “social fact” in the trend of Taiwan social change.

Unlike other countries, the ratio of single parent family with male headed families has been relatively high in Taiwan. A 2001 nationwide survey of 3500 single parent families in Taiwan indicates that the ratio of male headed and female headed single parent families respectively is close to 1:1, and the economic condition has no significant difference. Furthermore, since the remarried rate of parents in the single parent family is low (in 2007 the divorce rate in Taiwan was 2.5/1000, the remarried rate for male was 27.1/1000, for female was 11.2/1000), more than half of surveyed single parent families have lived in such structure more than five years. It shows that the lifestyle of single parent family in Taiwan has become commonplace.

Two distinctive characteristics of Taiwanese single parent family are the high ratio of (1) covert single parent family due to a conservative culture regarding separation being better than divorce; (2) three generation family with grandparents, single parent, and children becomes the most significant social support network of single parent family. Follow this line of thinking, Taiwanese social policy of single parent family should be planned to adjust to the special cultural needs of single parent families in Taiwan like single parent family living with grandparents. However, Taiwanese government has not yet implemented such policy and establishes various social aids for eliminating poverty. These unstructured aids have focused generally on single parent family with mother only while most single parent families relied on un-official and non-organizational support.

This study has suggested that the government should actively construct comprehensive family-focused policy and support network among single parent families to provide services to reduce their heavy housework and work load and

explore different needs of various single families.

Keywords: Social welfare policy, Taiwan, Single parent family

1. Introduction

Family, the nutshell of social organization, is the earliest socialization locale; it is the foundation and sanctuary for individual survival, race propagation, founding nation, culture heritage, and maintenance of the social order. Regardless of the social change, family has been the prime social unit providing co-living, protection, emotional support, economic cooperation, education, sex and reproduction. Nonetheless, the traditional family structure has qualitatively changed after the WW II. For instance, a 1995 report by the Population Council in New York points out that the family is no longer the cohesive and adhesive social unit. The modern decreased-member family, as Wetzel (1990:4-5) suggests, has experienced wobbly family life and heterogeneous families and significant reallocation of housework and family income.

On top of these phenomena, the undercurrents agitated the modern family are the increase of teenage mothers (in 2007, 4,312 out of 203,711, about 2.1% of new born babies in Taiwan were born by mother aged 19 and under), the increase of divorce rate (in 2007, the divorce rate was 2.23/1000), the increasing number of single parent families, and the increase of female poverty (in 2007, the labor participation rate of female headed families was 29.9%, male headed families was 52.8%). Within members of the global village, affluent or poor nations alike, the family structure has undergone a dramatic change. It is a worldwide phenomenon.

The single parent family is the fastest growing family type of the modern family. Bumpass (1984) had predicted that 50% of those who were born in the US in the 90's would live in the single parent family and McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) suggested that they would have a higher chance to live under the poverty line. Furthermore, Kamerman and Kahn (1989) reported that between 1960 and 1990, the single parent family has increased 50% in the UK and Austria, 20% in France and Swiss. Overall, the single parent family has increased 30 to 50% within the nations of OECD (Chang, 1995; Pong & Chang, 1996). Such increase rate also occurs in Taiwan in which the single parent family has increased 21% from 1990 to 2000 (as indicated in Table 1).

The operational and conceptual definitions of single parent family are diverse. There is no single agreement among official Taiwanese government, academic researchers and social welfare practitioners on the accurate numbers of such family in Taiwan, although everyone agrees that it is a growing fashion. For instance, based on a 1990 population survey, Hsueh (1996) has estimated that the number of single parent family is about 200,000--a 3.9% of the total family and the ratio of single male and female parent family is 4:6. However, it is 6.5% of the total family with children aged 18 and under.

In a latter report Hsueh (2001) reanalyzes 1991 to 99 data from "Family Income Survey" conducted by Department of Auditing, the Executive Yuan and redefines the single parent family as (1) single parent family of unwedded, divorced, separated, or widowed, (2) single parent family of the first definition and two parents family with one of the parents who lives outside the family or does not register in the family, and (3) single parent family of the first two definitions and lives (either with single parent or not) with grandparent(s). Hsueh reports that, according to the third definition, there are 277,585 single parent families--a 4.3% of total households, a 5.5% of total families, and a 9.4% of total families with children age under 18, at year 2000, in Taiwan. Among these single parent families, 80,986 belong to the third definition--a single family with grandparent(s), which is also the fastest growing household in the past ten years (Table 1, below). Furthermore, in comparison to 1990 survey the single parent family children are 325,476, about 5% of total children in Taiwan, the number has increased to 443,540, about 8% of total children in 2000. 3% increases of the single parent family children in the past 10 years indicate that the change of living condition of single parent family (Hsueh, 2002). Such growing trend can be found in a 2001 national survey conducted by Population Affairs Administration, Ministry of Interior, which reports that the single parent family is 318,544, 4.73% of total 6,738,529 families.

A noticeable finding in Hsueh (2001) analysis is that the separated single parent family becomes the third largest single parent family type (Figure 1). Furthermore, it appears as the second largest single male parent family type. One of the most important reasons of this type of single parent family is the separation of parents by living condition. It may have greater adjustment problems of traditional Chinese culture society and need more helps.

Toward the twenty-first century, the increase of single-parent families in Taiwan has become one of the most significant social changes. Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan (2007) reported that there were around 273,000 single-parent households in 1988 and however, 548,000 in 2004 with 100.7% growing rate. It is estimated that there are 334,825 children and adolescents staying in single-parent families, which has made up 8.63% of national households (Table 2 indicated as below). Furthermore, children under 18 years old in the single parent households increased from 112,000 to 167,000. Most single parent families are female headed households, three times as much as male headed households in 2004. (According to a 2001 survey based on 3500 single parents, the ratio between female headed families and male

headed families was 1:1)

In addition to demographic description, academic research of single parent family reflects the degree of attention given to this issue. There is no lack of research on the single parent family in Taiwanese learning of the past decade; they nonetheless, exhibit at least three deficiencies. First, research on single parent family has focused mostly on the single parent family children and mother; the spotlight has been upon the low-income single mother family. On the other hand, little attention has paid to single father family, and unwedded, adoptive, or separated single parent family. Secondly, subjects of these researches are purposive sample from either educational or social welfare institutional setting. Thus these qualitative analyses fail to generalize a representative result. And finally, there is a tendency of "e-sampling"--which on the one hand provides an alternative data gathering technique for sensitive subjects, while we cannot surmount the problem of sample's generalization on the other hand. Nonetheless, these studies indicate that the causes of single parent family are varied.

Since the discrepancy of Taiwanese single parent family is high, the nucleuses of their problems are quite different. For instance, the most common problem for single mother is property while the single father is pressure of parent-children relations, and children of single parent family have deviant behaviors. Research indicates that the problems of parents of single parent family can be categorized as "economic security", "children rearing", "psychological disposition", and "social adaptation" while those problems for children of single parent family are "psychological disposition", "self-concept", "social adaptation", and "deviant behavior". Compared to the nuclear family, the single parent family lacks of resources to deal with above difficulties and becomes more vulnerable (Chang,1995).

The research in the past two decades provides insights of our understandings of single parent family and clears its stereotypical views of "broken family" or "deviant family" for "alternative family" type. Moreover, Pong and Chang (1995) have discussed the upheld perspective of single parent family and concluded to help the single parent family overcome its crisis, solve problems, and self-develop from this upheld perspective.

Like many natural things, the marriage will eventually come to the end. Divorce, together with the sickness, accident (may or may not come to the death) and unwedded mother, have become common mean to end the marriage and contributes the single parent family as a "social fact" in the tide of Taiwanese social change. Evolved from this "social fact" are problems associated with both parent(s) and children of the single parent family--economic security, children rearing, psychological disposition, social relationship, job and living, as well as legal consultation. Policies to implement these families' welfare need to be able to discriminate the degree of emergency in accordance to the vulnerability of single parent family in question to provide adequate helps. Table 3 has summarized the needs of different single parent family by its economic conditions: the average single parent family, the low-income single parent family, and single parent family and its children age under 18 years old.

2. An international comparison of social welfare policy on general family

In this section, we will first compare social welfare policies of different nations on general family and then examine Taiwanese policy of single parent family.

2.1 Analysis of different nations' single parent family policies

Although different nations have different general family policies for the discrepancies of society and culture, the purpose of these policies is similar: to eliminate poverty or to provide various supports to solve impediments. Regardless of the similar purpose of various welfare policies to resolve problems of economy, children education, medical attention, psychological well-being of general family, there is great divergence of the implementation of such purpose. Few nations definitely designate the single parent family policies, while most of the nations implement a general welfare policy for female, mother, low-income, or minority population (Chang, 1998). These differences are shown in table 4 below.

A brief glance of table 4 indicates that:

- A. France and Germany have comprehensive family policies with few items being designed for the single parent family.
- B. Sweden and Denmark employ a two-tier policy, which combines working and welfare strategies and strengthens it with day/night-care system. Under the principles of encouraging working and the sexual equality of working place, these nations have high employment rate and less single parent family under the poverty line.
- C. Norway and Ireland treat single parent family as special interest group and design special policies for it. However, the problem of poverty still exists in the single parent family.
- D. The US, Canada, Spain, and Taiwan employ an anti-poverty policy and provide single parent family welfare from an assisting perspective.

From table 4, it is obvious that like the US, Canada, the UK, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, the Taiwan's social welfare

policy of single parent family is based on the concept of social assistance whose implementations indiscriminate the single parent family and the low-income family. Such conceptualization and operational definitions run into two complexities. First, although the income of many single parent families is below the poverty line, it may not be appropriate to treat them in unison. However, around 1% of the families can meet the supplementary aid standard below the poverty line and around 4% of the families can meet the middle-low-income level, but the subsidy is not enough to live with it. Compared with the Western countries like Japan, the U.S., England, Norway et al., fewer families can accept social assistance from the government in Taiwan. The needs and wants of single parent family may be the same as the low-income family. Second, the general welfare policy in any nation has to compete with other national policies in a shrinking budget situation. Besides, such policy has been altered because national resources cannot meet many needs of welfare industry and family, such as capability of raising funds, emphasis on welfare nation statement and new social changes (i.e., structure of population, employment and unemployment) (Taylor-Gooby, 2006). More than often, the administration would label the social welfare policy deepening the budget deficit and make no effort to realize or employ such policy.

Lin (1995) has argued that if the policy maker recognizes the single parent family as social sickness or problem, and only the double parent family is normal; then the welfare policy for the single parent family will remain as the remedy of social assistance or the subsidy of working stipend. On the other hand, if the policy maker treats the single parent family positively; then the policy will emphasize on the equal opportunity of working and multi-social service replacements and income preservation plans. Hence, in the latter, single parent family policy will include job training and employment for the parent of single parent family, day/night-care service and education subsidy for the children of single parent family, home consoling for psychological and legal problems, rental assistance and low-interest home mortgage, and school social work's net, et al. All these plans aim to establish the self-reliant ability of the single parent family, so it can eventually stand on its own foot.

2.2 Taiwanese single parent family policies

As stated above, like many nations around the world, the number of single parent family has increased dramatically in Taiwan in recent years. The divergence of family types, the increase of single parent family, and the advance of feminist conciseness have accelerated social change, weakened the interaction and structure of traditional family, and reconstruct family and its social relationship. Lee (1994) has pointed out that although questions like "do we have family policy?" or "do we need family policy" have been raised in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the family welfare policy or family social work is overlooked in most Asian nations. The crucial reason of this negligence (Hsu, Lee, & Chung, 2000) is a cultural value of family privacy and integrity underlying the traditional family system which requires individual to seek gratification from the family and to keep family secrecy in the family.

The negligence of family policy also reflects on the making of family policy. Currently, there is no single comprehensive family policy in Taiwan. Policies related to family have scattered in five different laws, administrative orders, drafts whose purposes do not aim to protect, support, or help family as a whole. Thus, the issue of family is dwindled into various separate "problems". In the following, we will try to illustrate the dispersed Taiwanese family policy in brief; special focus will be upon the articles related to the single parent family.

2.2.1 The Social Welfare Policy Guideline (revised by the Ministry of the Interior in June, 1994)

This Guideline reflects the government's recognition of a family-centered public welfare policy to intervening traditional family autonomy; the welfare service replaces the family's self-reliance. The Article 3 states that the principle is to construct a family-central social welfare policy to promote family ethics and improve family relationship to maintain welfare of its members.

2.2.2 The Civil Law (May, 23, 2008 revised) (Ministry of Justice, 2008)

In respect to the gender equality, the increasing female labor participation (49.4% in Taiwan in 2007, comparing to 67.1% of male labor participation) and the appreciation of equal responsibility of children rearing for both parents, the traditional patriarchy weakens and gender equality raise. The Civil Law is revised to acknowledge such change and to reduce the gender inequality. Furthermore, it states that when the families dissolve or dysfunction, the law should consider the children's best interests as the first priority, in its revised Articles 1055 and 1069.

2.2.3 The Children and Youth Welfare Law (May, 28, 2003 announced) (The Legislative Yuan, 2003)

The Children and Youth Welfare Law is to provide protection and support for children. In its Articles 15, 19, 24, 39, 40, 41, 48 and 49 state that the fundamental principle of protection of the custody, rearing, and family of children is in the child's best interest. When the family has suffered accidents (e.g., as parents' death and unwedded mother etc.), the government or private-sector welfare institutes should provide children's family life assistances, cares and medical aids.

2.2.4 Administrative Order of Family Assistance for Women Anomalous Condition (May 24, 2000 announced) (Ministry of the Interior, 2000)

The Administrative Order is to strengthen welfare policies upon those women who are in particular conditions (such as husband is dead or missing, being abandoned, being victim of family violence, sexual assault, or other crimes, being raped or adopted to pregnant, being single mother unable to work, or husband is in prison for more than one year). The Articles 4, and 6 to 12, state that the government should provide emergence living supports, children's educational subsidy, children's living stipend, medical aid of injury, children's day/night care subsidy, legal expense, and low-interest business loan for woman in particular conditions.

2.2.5 Draft of Family Education (February 22, 2000 reviewed) (Ministry of Education)

The law is to confront the structural change of family, and the decline of family function, role, and interaction in contemporary Taiwan, by educating the concept of family values, functions, roles. Thus, it takes an education perspective to preclude family problems and adolescent crime in advance.

In short, the implicit family policy design covering single parent family welfare policies in contemporary Taiwan's laws and orders reveal five characters.

- A. **A Patched Welfare Policy:** There is no comprehensive policy for the single parent family. Although there are many scattered supports and aids in various laws and orders, without treating the family as a unique unit, these supports and aids may not be sufficient enough. The chief responsibility for the government is to rebuild the family, to help it stand on its feet, then, to step aside to provide supportive social welfare services and networks.
- B. **Based on Children's Best Interest:** Welfare policies of single parent family consider the minority in the family--children and adolescent, so they provide services and helps from the viewpoint of the best interest of the children.
- C. **Government's Intervention to Family Autonomy:** Like many nations the government's "public authority" gradually intervene family "private sphere", thus it replaces the traditional protection of family secrecy or respect of family autonomy to the protection of the minority and maintenance of public interest.
- D. **Problem Solving and Prevention:** These welfare policies provide needs and helps for the single parent family on one hand; they also try to prevent the dysfunction of family by teaching family values, roles, and functions on the other hand.
- E. **Lack of Designated Public Office to Plan and Execute:** Figure 2 below shows that there are several patched social welfare services scattered in the different administrative departments, providing supports for the single parent family indicated in contemporary Taiwan's social welfare policies. However, there is not a designated public office for the overall planning and implementing these plans and policies. Questions regarding to the efficiency are obvious: Are policies and implementations overlapped? Are there places these policies neglect?

Currently, there is not a comprehensive and explicit family social welfare policy in Taiwan, but various patched social welfare services scattered in different laws and orders. These welfare services may, in fact, aid needing families from different perspective and dimension, the concept that the family is a holistic unit is dissolved in these practices. This economic security or anti-poverty concept adopted from early OECD nations focuses upon strengthening economic security by means of supplementary benefits or aids in order to beat poverty, emphasizes that the single-parent families lacking of opportunity and deprivation from the society are in the disadvantaged situation, thus, their children suffer welfare stigma from poverty in the long run and result in social exclusion as well. The economic disadvantage and living dilemma of single-parent family are not consequence of low income, but inclined to the working poor or marginal income target population (Chang & Pong, 1998). Hence Hsu, Lee, and Chung (2000), and Hsieh (1995) all point out that the social welfare system in Taiwan often lacks of integration while sometimes full of contradictions.

3. An initiative policy

In recent years, accompanied with economic growth and political democratization, Taiwan society undergoes a dramatic change; the needs of social welfare also increase proportionally. Under the change current, the number of single parent family becomes the second largest family type. Encountered with the difficulties of single parent family, Taiwanese government modifies its latent policy of economic security assistance to an active single parent family welfare policy. Based on a 2001 survey of Taiwanese single parent family, this section will discuss policy implementation from the perspective of these surveyed families.

3.1 *Re-conceptualize the essence of life of the single parent family from a "gender-neutral" perspective and recognize problems and needs of the male-single-family.*

We should discard traditional stereotypic image of the single parent family and treat it as "social fact", so we can discuss it from a macro-perspective. Furthermore, because of the role constrain of the traditional male gender expectation, male headed families are more reluctant to look for help than female headed families. Moreover, in current Taiwan social assistance system, most of the social benefits (aids) or services are income-tested, because of the lower labor participation (29.9% while the labor participation rate of male headed families was 52.8% in 2007) female headed

families usually tend to be more financially vulnerable than male headed families, so it is easier for female headed families to meet the aid qualification. For these reasons, many male headed families have been overlooked, and their family problems and special needs are neglected. Hence, government should pay special attention to male headed family problems and social welfare needs.

3.2 Face the tides of social change and initiate policies confronted to the challenges

Since 1970, feminization of poverty has become the focus of poverty problem (Karger & Midgley, 1994), and it has become a public issue in the 80's. Single parent family spends more on child-caring, talent training, and day/night care. With 35% of divorce rate (almost one of three marriages), the living condition and children's care and development become one of significant issues to pay more attention. Hence, government and private supporting sectors should design a comprehensive financial plan to assist single parent family children's caring, education, teaching as well as parent's job and career needs.

3.3 Subside the cost of raising the children

According to Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior (2002) survey, parent of single parent family thinks that the first priority of government's support should be "assistance of children education"; the second is "helping of emergency living support". Furthermore, over 60% of surveyed families say their "expenditure is bigger than income". Other studies report that more than 20% mother of single parent family work more than 53 hours weekly, (Cheng, 1988). Since parent of the single parent family lacks a pattern in the family life cycle to share the responsibilities, he/she often experiences role overloaded (i.e., care or rear children). In addition, due to poverty or low-payment job, single-parent family may consequently be in the underclass level and circularly reproduce intergenerational poverty. Hence, the government should provide policy to eliminate sexual separation, family ideology, and negative social security system, laws, or education contributing to sexual discrimination. Furthermore, it should provide humanized policies and family-focused services--such as economic assistance, career training, for the parent and quality and cheap day/night care for the children.

3.4 Construct effective welfare policy and economic safety net for the single parent family.

The government should encourage academic research institutes pay more attention to the single parent family, so they can provide analyses and suggestions for effective policy making. The single-parent family should be avoided in accordance with causal model of poverty. Instead, a holistic and comprehensive policy including economic security, vocational safety, health security, social security, etc. should be constructed as a whole in order to provide positive supports.

3.5 Provide career training program and employment information to the single parent family.

The same survey (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, 2002) also finds out that only less than 15% of parent of the single parent family is unemployed. Half of these parents express that they could not find any job while others say they are temporary out of work. In either case, it indicates that they have financial pressure and need job. Thus, government should provide job training and employment information to help them finding job. As for the employer, the best way to help the single parent family is to provide flexible working schedules or parental leave policy to reduce the conflict between parenting and working (Gladding & Huber, 1984; Keshet & Rossenthal, 1978:).

3.6 Offer social and organizational networking for emotional support and release.

Interpersonal relationship can be either a supportive network or a source of pressure. The two problems for Taiwanese parent of single parent family are economic pressure and children rearing, (Department of Auditing, the Executive Yuan, 2000:18). Many single father families receive children caring and housework taking as well as emotional supports from relatives; while single mother families receive financial assistance from the relatives at the beginning. On the other hand, sometimes the relatives and friends of marriage would change or dissolve when there is a divorce, (Wang, 1988). Hence, the co-living relatives play the most important informal supportive role, (Chang, 1998). Nonetheless, Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior (2002) survey also indicates that the greatest trouble for the members of single parent family is to feel sorry to their relatives, then the pressure of work or economy.

The same survey reports that 60% of single mother family constitutes with mother and children and less than 30% is composed of grandparent(s), mother, and children; on the other hand, 51% of single father family lives with the grandparent(s). It indicates that Taiwanese single mother family receives less unofficial support. Thus, the government needs to understand the support system of different family types and provides adequate assistance. For instance, to strengthen social support network of single mother family will release the emotional pressure for single mother family.

3.7 Encourage single parent family to participate in social networking.

As discussed above, most of the social supports for single parent family are from relatives and friends, while official supports of "government" and "social institute" are less utilized (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, 2002). Furthermore, the single father family participates less in the social activities and adjusts less of social life than the single

mother family, (Wu, 1992). Thus, parent of single parent family needs to rearrange their values and behavioral models to accept norms and behaviors of the new role for social interactions and self-balance. However, the government and private welfare sectors must also promote and encourage the participations of single parent family, (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, 2002).

3.8 Arrange home service for daycare children and elder.

More than 30% of the unemployed mother of the single parent family has to take care of the housework, grandparent(s), or children. Furthermore, the same study shows that more than 35% of the single parent family has children age between 6-11 years old. Hence, in addition to the job, parent of the single parent family has to take care of the children personally. The parent of single parent family experiences pressures from work and rearing children, he/she has no adequate channel to release his/her overloaded depression, loneliness, and frustration, (Wu, 1992). Government and private welfare institutes need to plan integrated home service and provide single parent family elders/children day-care service. Furthermore, the government needs to implement sexual equality law and parental leave in workplace.

3.9 Campaign for safety sex.

Like other types of single parent family, the number of unwedded single parent family also increases steadily. Noticeably, more than 80% of the parent-under-20-year-old single parent families are unwed mothers. They are the minors within the minority for they have to face their own uncertain careers on one hand and rear their children on the other. Thus, that the government and school have to teach adequate sex education is obvious.

3.10 Promote the importance of parenting education.

In contrast to the married and conflict families, children of the divorced single parent family exhibit more behavior problems, higher pressure, and worse parent-children relationship (Acock, 1988). Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior (2002) study also finds out that parents of the single parent family think that “children’s deviant behaviors”, “disciplinary problems”, and “no time to teach” are serious problem; and more than 30% of the parents feel their parental-children relationship being bad but do not know how to improve it. Poverty and role loads can become a child welfare issue, such as child abuse in the single-parent family. Hence, educational and social welfare systems need to provide the parental training and education as a support system in order to decrease child welfare issues.

3.11 Establish the “big-brother” and “big-sister” system.

Coletta (1979) and Hsieh (1993) suggest that from the dual parents to the single parent, the relationship between the parent and children becomes worse. Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior (2002) study shows the parents of single parent family think that children’s most serious education problem is “unable to help children’s homework”, the second one is “children’s low academic achievement”, and “children do not like to study”. Thus, government and schools can introduce collegial volunteers as big-brother/sister for assisting parent help children’s learning or autonomy in order to decline parent-child conflicts.

3.12 Provide part-time job for 15 year-old children of single parent family.

Children of the single parent family may also suffer a series of emotional crisis, adjustment problem, and identity problem in the family, (Wu, 1994). Furthermore, the children of the single parent family can also feel the economy pressure and financial insecurity, (Chen, 1998). Thus, it is suggested that by providing job opportunities for children of the single parent family can on one hand, even as a token, help the economic problem, and on the other hand build their self-reliance to reduce the tension within the family.

3.13 Teach children of single parent family self-concept and provide social support network.

Research suggests that the struggles of single parent family have impacts on children’s development of self-concept and may cause their deviant behavior, (Hsieh, 1993). Therefore, it is important for the government and private social welfare sectors provide social support network for the children to develop adequate well being and to feel valued.

3.14 Urge the mass media report positive aspects of the single parent family.

Part of the influences of the single parent family upon the children depends on the living conditions and socio-economic status of the pre-single parent family. Were the single parent family economic security and well adjusted relationships, environment, and the function after being single parent family would still work. Then the impact on the children may be little. On the other hand, the dysfunctional family of the single parent family is often labeled as “single parent family is deviant family” or “single parent family is minority family” by the mass media. Such labeling may cause psychological injury of the children as a stigma. Thus, it is important that the mass media, the educational system, and the government give the stereotypical perspective away and treat the single parent family as another “social fact”.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

In the process of modernization, Taiwan, like many nations, has undergone a dramatic social change--the improvement of female education, the raise of labor forces, and the recognition of sexual equality, that bring great impact on

traditional family structure and value of marriage, (Goode 1982, Hsu & Lin, 1984). The changed family has brought change on population structure, change in ideas and social values, and an increase of social pathological factors to the society in return.

Furthermore, limited by its structure, the fastest growth of single parent family has less resource, comparing to the nuclear family, to encounter difficulties and produces more problems, (Chang, 1995). Hence, the single parent family has been labeled as “broken family” or “deviant family”. However, there are no conclusive results from the research community on questions of how and what the single parent family influence its members (i.e., parent and children), or whether the impacts are positive or negative.

Nonetheless, a 2001, nationwide survey of Taiwanese 4,000 single parent families indicates that except the unwedded mother and low-income family, most of the single parent family receive little social welfare supports; most of the single parent family rely on personal or un-official supportive system (such as relatives, friends, NPO, and NGO’s); and most of the single parent family is financially imbalanced (i.e., expenditure exceeds income). In addition to the economic pressure, most of the parents of the single parent family have double roles (that is as the sole income provider and as housework and children rearing worker) in the family. Thus, more than 30% of the parents feel a worse relationship with the children and feel desperate about ways and time to teach children. In terms of the influences, the parent thinks that the single parent family influences children’s “mental health”, “study and career”, “interpersonal relation”, “behavioral norm”, “character building”, “living attitude”, and “marriage perspective”, etc.

In the past couple of decades, the economic growth and political democratization, in Taiwan, has inspired the demand of social welfare policies and needs. Under the steady social change, the single parent family has become the second largest family type in Taiwan. Facing the increasing demands, the Taiwanese government has changed its providing economic security family welfare policy to reconsider more comprehensive and specific welfare policies for single parent family. These include providing parent-children education, active and dense home services, establishing social support networks and making specific single parent family laws and policies to help single parent family overcome the crises, fulfill needs of members of the single parent family, and to improve their quality of life.

There are two reasons why the single parent family receives spotlight of social welfare policy: first, the traditional single parent family of deceased parent inherits a tragic characteristic and the newly formed single parent family of divorced, separated, or unwedded parent exhibits the vulnerability of modern marriage and the weakness of family. Both types of families may bring undesirable influences on the children. Thus, from the viewpoint of social welfare, the single parent family is a living unit composed by single parent (regardless of the cause of it) and depended children, (Hsueh, 2002).

In sum, we will propose five specific policy suggestions and their implementations in the following for Taiwanese policy makers making the social welfare policy of single parent family:

4.1 Re-evaluate welfare needs of the single parent family and actively campaign social welfare and service.

- A. Nationwide survey to determine the social needs of the single parent family and to establish single-parent family database.
- B. Adjust the implementation strategies and entrust private to execute in community social network.
- C. Retune current single parent family welfare, intensify psychological consulting and home service, and provide social welfare information, legal consultation, and social gathering activity.
- D. Actively provide information through educational systems, private institutes, social workers, and mass media.

4.2 Rebuild self-perspective, reduce the burdens of self, and provide emotional supports to improve the mental well-being of parent of single parent family.

- A. Provide free legal consulting for children custody right, alimony, marriage dispute, and inherit right to steady the life of single parent family.
- B. Encourage the private institutes from social welfare or educational systems to establish single parent family support groups to provide parenting education, healthy psychological management, crisis adjustment, counseling or mutual groups from peer groups or professionals.
- C. Encourage parent of the single parent family participating in working as job or volunteer to enhance social connections with children caring and rearing supporting measurements.
- D. Assist career planning and provide necessary job training.
- E. Provide social gathering or leisure activity in community to prevent self-isolation.
- F. Provide children of the single parent family after school caring and guidance service to improve achievement and the quality of parent-children interaction.

G. Organize grandparental supporting group to share experiences, study problem solving techniques, and to increase dialogues between parent(s) and grandparent(s).

4.3 *Provide job training to improve employment opportunity, set the minimal wage law to secure single parent family economic situation.*

A. Reconsider the low-income standard from the perspective of single parent family.

B. Provide a reasonable and fare social security system such as national retirement funds or pension system, so the single parent family can receive minimal life protection and economic security.

C. Reallocate finance of central and local governments and redistribute social welfare resources to provide single parent family financial support from particular resources.

D. Provide high production value job training such as computer operation and health care to advance the market experience of the parent of single parent family.

E. Plan high quality child-care service to inspire working desire of the parent of single parent family.

F. Provide child-care subsidy and education stipend (such as education voucher) to reduce economic burden of the single parent family.

4.4 *Construct supporting network for the single parent family to provide home service to reduce housework burdens and to create healthy and adequate living condition.*

A. Provide temporary child-care service to provide temporary relief for the single parent family.

B. Construct single parent family supporting network with the community or neighborhood as basic unit to build models of community workshop and problem consulting mechanism to provide immediate support.

C. Establish community relay system to discover covert single parent family within the network or find out the isolated single parent family outside the support system to provide adequate service.

D. Make “flexible working hours” and “pay-leave of caring sick children” policies to enforce working places and employers recognize single parent family needs.

E. Provide “low price” home service for elders in the single parent family.

4.5 *Enlarge the numbers of benefit population, raise the aid condition from low income level to middle-low income level families, and modify laws to enrich well-being of single-parent family.*

A. Promote pension system through insurance of social mutual assistance and survivor benefits for economic security of single-parent family.

B. Provide the holistic social security system to prevent intergenerational circular poverty and avoid social exclusion or culture of victimization for single-parent family.

C. Establish family-based policy, integrating working and caring needs for single-parent family.

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Table 1. The Estimation of Taiwanese Single Parent Family and Its Children

1990	Single Parent Family Ratio**	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000
3.9	A	5.1	5.6	5.9	5.4	5.7	5.8	6.2	6.6	4.7
	B	6.1	6.6	6.9	6.5	6.6	6.6	7.3	7.6	
	C	6.5	7.0	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.3	8.0	8.1	
*	A:include unwedded, divorced, separated and widowed B:A plus spouse outside household population and cohabited single parents families C:B plus the three-generation single parent family (either with single parent or not)									*
**:denominator is household families with children age under 18										

*: Single parent family is defined as "unwedded, divorced and widowed".

Source adapted from: Hsueh (1996, 2001); Population Affairs Administration, Ministry of Interior (2001)

Table 2. Estimated Children or Adolescents in Single-parent and Grand-parent Headed Households

Year	National households	Grand-parent headed households	Single-parent households	Estimated children or adolescents in grand-parent households	Estimated children or adolescents in single-parent households
2004*	7,083,445	81,799 (1.2%)	548,302 (7.74%)	87,607	315,822
2005**	7,206,883	92,979 (1.3%)	619,837 (8.6%)	98,558	334,712
2006***	7,307,999	80,518 (1.1%)	630,555 (8.63%)	86,235	334,825

*Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan (2005) "Income survey report in Taiwan area in 2004" published in 2005, table 9. Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan

**Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan (2006) "Income survey report in Taiwan area in 2005" published in 2006, table 9. Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan

***Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan (2007) "Income survey report in Taiwan area in 2006" published in 2007, table 9. Department of Auditing, Executive Yuan

Table 3. Single Parent Family Welfare Needs

A	B	C	Economical Aids	Living Arrangement	Child rearing Service	Counseling and Guidance	Employment Services	Medical Hygiene	Juridical Services
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daycare Allowance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare Service • After-school Guidance • In-home Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting • Encounter Group • Psychological Guidance • School Guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Guidance • Parental Leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Health Insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Prevention • Law Services • Law Protection
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living Aid • Living Allowance • Educational Grant • Lawsuit Grant • Medical Grant • Low-interest Loan • Rent Allowance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public House Application • Housing Rental 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational Training • Running Business Aid 		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Adoption • Child Foster Care • Institute Placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-to-school Guidance • Career Guidance • Sex Education 			

A: single parent family and its children age under 18

B: low income single parent family

C: single parent family

Table 4. Worldwide Single Parent Family Welfare Policy

Nations \ Items	France	German	Belgium	Holland	Switzerland	Denmark	Norway	Ireland	UK	Canada	USA	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Greek	Japan	Taiwan
Economical Support																	
I. Social Security Program																	
1. Survivors' Pensions	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	◊	?	◊	?	?	◊	
2. Abandoned Benefit								◊									
3. Child Allowance												◊	◊	◊	◊		
4. Unemployment Benefit	◊	◊			◊		◊		◊	◊	◊						
5. Unemployment Assistance								◊									
6. Childrearing Payment		◊															

II. Universal Allowance Program																			
1. Family(child) Allowance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Education Payment						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
III. Single Parent Program																			
1. Education Payment																			
2. Single Parent Family Allowance						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Transitional Allowance																			
4. Child Allowance																			
5. Single Parent Allowance	✓																		
IV. Means Test Program																			
1. Child Life Allowance																			✓
2. Low-income Life Allowance																			✓
3. Living Aid																			✓
4. Family Income Supplement																			✓
5. Family Credit																			✓
6. Income Maintenance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Social Welfare Allowance																			✓
8. Supplemental Welfare Allowance																			✓
9. Aid to Families with Dependent Children																			✓
10. Subsistence Income	✓		✓																✓
11. Abandoned Allowance																			✓
12. Single Parent Allowance																			✓
13. Unwedded Mother Allowance																			✓
14. Emergency Relief																			✓
15. Emergency Relief for the Misfortune Woman																			✓
Nations	France	German	Belgium	Holland	Switzerland	Denmark	Norway	Ireland	UK	Canada	USA	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Greek	Japan	Taiwan		
Items																			
Child Care																			
I. Child Care	✓ +	✓ +	✓	✓ ?	✓ +	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
II. Childrearing Grants	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ #	✓	✓ #	✓ ?	✓ ?	✓ #	✓ ?				
III. Childrearing Allowance	✓																		
IV. Child Daycare Allowance																			✓

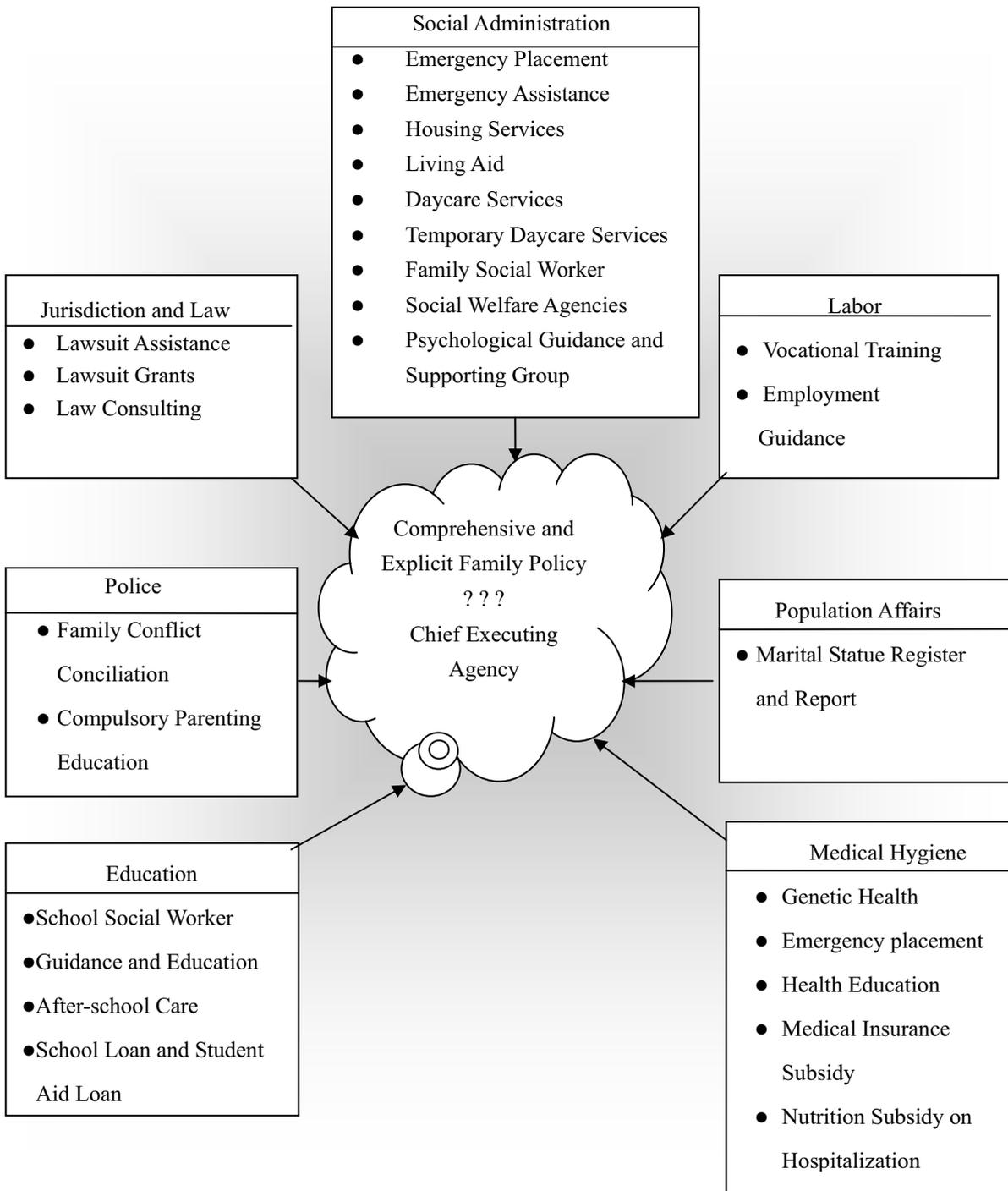


Figure 2. Single Parent Family’s Supporting Protection