

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Social Service Strategy for a Low Birth Rate and an Aged Society¹

Youngaa RYOO ¹⁾ Jaewon LEE ^{2)*}

1) Legislative Researcher, National Assembly Research Service

2) Pukyong National University

ABSTRACT

Based on the observation that the phenomena of a low birth rate and an aged population are rapidly occurring in South Korea, the present study established a research question on how to provide social services in this context and examined the “Social Service Project to Cope with a Low Birth Rate and Aged Society,” which is being implemented by each local government.

The result of the analysis is as follows. To cope with the low birth rate, 17 metropolitan local governments operate various social services, such as: creating an atmosphere that encourages childbearing and parenting; establishing policies that encourage childbearing; paying medical expenses during delivery for low-income families; providing a comprehensive care package for pregnant women; developing applications on pregnancy–childbearing–parenting; building public daycare centers; and lending toys. The social services to cope with an aged society include: removing inconveniences in homes for the elderly; hiring assistants to help with the health and safety of the elderly; managing dementia in the elderly; pairing “buddies” with those elderly residing alone; building a silver town (retirement home) for the low-income elderly; creating a living space for the elderly living alone; hosting video festivals; and providing jobs for the elderly.

Although the social services to cope with the low birth rate and aged society are diverse, they have limitations in that they lack a “medium-to-long-term vision” and that they do not “secure the budget” in advance. Because this problem cannot be solved within a short period, Korean society need a change in direction to establish a long-term goal and push forward the core projects. In particular, budgetary agreement between central and local governments must be drawn up before nationally funded projects related to social services are planned. Considering current economic recession and negative policy environments, we suggested an alternative social service policy approaches such as an on-line based social service market for overcoming the jurisdictional restrains, social service industry for stable and high quality service, social responsibility investment as a new fund for social service.

<Key-words>

Social Services, Low Birth Rate, Aged Society, Local Governments

*corresponding author : jaewon@pknu.ac.kr (Jaewon LEE)

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I . Introduction

As recently as the 1990s, Korea was unconcerned about its low birth rate and few people were aware of the aging and aged society. Birth control policies through family planning were promoted instead of policies to tackle the low birth rate and statistics on children were not systematically collected. In addition, awareness of the issue of an aging/aged/super-aged society was low.

A birth control policy was enforced in the 1960s when the total fertility rate was 6.0 per woman, and as a result the birth rate dropped drastically. The total fertility rate in 1983 was 2.08 (Jung, et al, 2012: 56), and 1.65 in 1995. Although the Korean government abolished the birth control policy in 1996, the rate continued to decrease after the 1997 financial crisis and the total fertility rate in 2005 was 1.08, the lowest in Korean history (Lee, et al, 2012: 31-35). Since then, there has been a slight increase; however, in 2014 it was 1.23, which is the lowest fertility rate among the OECD countries.

As of June 2015, the percentage of the Korean population who are 65 years and above reached 13.1%, thus indicating an aging society. Among the OECD countries, Korea also has the highest elderly suicide rate. Korea entered the state of being an aging society (the percentage of the elderly population being 7%) in 2000 and is expected to become an aged society in 2018 (the percentage of the elderly population being 14%). In 2026, Korea will move to the status of a super-aged society (the percentage of the elderly population being 20%). It will take 18 years for Korea to move from an aging to an aged society (115 years for France and 72 years for the United States), and it is expected to take another 8 years for Korea to move to being a super-aged society; this is a drastic change from the world's standard (Choi, 2011: 35-36).

The Korean government's efforts to cope with a low birth rate and aged population are manifested in many policies and projects. In 2006, the Korean government established the "first masterplan for low birth rate and aged society (2006–2010)" centering on 12 departments including the Ministry of Health and Welfare; in so doing, the government planned policies addressing the issues of low birth rate, aging, and strengthening the workforce. First, to address the problems of a low birth rate, the government lowered the social burden of childrearing and assisted families to keep both jobs and homes. Second, to address the problem of aging, the government ensured income and healthcare for the elderly and created an environment where they could enjoy free time in their later years. Third, to address the workforce problem, the government increased the utilization of the potential workforce, such as the elderly, women, and foreigners, while developing elder-friendly jobs. In 2011, the Korean government established the "second masterplan for low birth rate and aged society (2011–2015)" and has been implementing a variety of policies since then (Lee & Lee, 2011: 59-60).

With the research question on the method of providing social services in a society with a low birth rate and aged population, this study reviewed the social service project to cope

with a low birth rate and aged population currently implemented by local governments. This study identified the current conditions and drew implications by examining the policies implemented by 17 metropolitan local governments as of December 31, 2014. The data from these local governments were obtained from the Combined Evaluation of Local Government, which is annually evaluated by the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA).

II. Projects to Cope with Low Birth Rate & Aging Population

1. Social service project to cope with a low birth rate and an aging population.

According to the “second masterplan to cope with a low birth rate and aged society (2011–2015),” Korea’s social service projects are being implemented by 16 central government organizations.² Those projects can be divided into two types of project: (1) projects to cope with the low birth rate and (2) projects to cope with an aged population.

One of the projects that address the issue of a low birth rate is the implementation of a fixed pay rate during parental leave (500,000 KRW at the lowest level to 1,000,000 KRW at the highest) so that families can maintain their jobs while taking care of their families. Other projects include reduced work hours during parenthood, a work-hour saving system for vacations, three-day-long paid paternity leave, and a job-sharing system to facilitate public servants’ part-time employment (whereby a full-time job is shared by two part-time employees). The projects that are designed to reduce the burden on the married couples include increasing the assistance for the newlywed house fund and transferring military personnel (with children) on active duty to the military reserves. The projects to relieve the burden of childrearing include expanding the scope of recipients of full childcare costs for the first four years of a child’s life to the lowest 70% of income earners, increasing childcare costs for parents who do not use a childcare facility, providing high school scholarships for parents who have more than two children, and providing tax deductions (Lee & Lee, 2011: 60-62).

The projects that address the issue of an aged society include increasing the budget for and scope of the basic pension, differentiating work conditions and pay levels by diversifying the type of jobs that employ the elderly, establishing an agency to employ senior citizens, and providing 50% of the training costs to businesses that employ the elderly as interns. In addition, the Korean government has increased support for the elderly who reside alone or have been diagnosed with pre-dementia and has strengthened the capability of geriatric care workers by increasing their training hours (Lee & Lee, 2011: 62-63).

² Ministry of Health and Welfare; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family; Ministry of Employment and Labor; Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs; Ministry of National Defense; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Land, and Transport and Maritime Affairs

As a reference, the “Childbearing Encouragement Fund,” one of the most well-known projects of all those that cope with the low birth rate, is run autonomously by the local governments; therefore, the eligibility and the amount of money available differ from one local government to another. Because local governments are conducting various projects with a limited budget, the budget for each project is minimal (Lee, et al, 2012: 35-36).

<Table 1> Birth rate and percentage of aged people

	Birth rate (%)					Percentage of aged people (%)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Seoul	0.962	1.015	1.014	1.059	0.968	9.17	9.72	10.19	10.84	11.45
Busan	0.94	1.045	1.078	1.135	1.049	10.78	11.26	11.77	12.50	13.25
Daegu	1.029	1.109	1.146	1.217	1.127	9.73	10.04	10.37	10.94	11.56
Incheon	1.143	1.214	1.232	1.301	1.195	8.33	8.62	8.94	9.39	9.81
Gwangju	1.137	1.223	1.234	1.295	1.17	8.66	8.97	9.32	9.85	10.31
Daejeon	1.156	1.206	1.261	1.315	1.234	8.39	8.66	8.96	9.38	9.83
Ulsan	1.308	1.369	1.393	1.481	1.391	6.57	6.82	7.09	7.47	7.91
Sejong	-	-	-	1.597	1.435	-	-	-	15.22	14.70
Gyeonggi	1.226	1.309	1.314	1.355	1.226	8.42	8.67	8.98	9.39	9.77
Gangwon	1.248	1.313	1.338	1.374	1.249	14.36	14.81	15.18	15.71	16.18
Chungbuk	1.317	1.402	1.428	1.485	1.365	12.97	13.20	13.40	13.75	14.13
Chungnam	1.408	1.479	1.496	1.571	1.442	14.78	14.87	14.99	15.27	15.64
Jeonbuk	1.279	1.374	1.405	1.44	1.32	14.97	15.22	15.58	16.21	16.70
Jeonnam	1.445	1.537	1.568	1.642	1.518	17.97	18.29	18.61	19.19	19.64
Gyeongbuk	1.274	1.377	1.434	1.489	1.379	15.44	15.57	15.72	16.21	16.76
Gyeongnam	1.323	1.413	1.446	1.503	1.367	11.63	11.81	12.07	12.50	12.95
Jeju	1.378	1.463	1.487	1.598	1.427	11.86	12.19	12.60	13.01	13.36
Total	1.149	1.226	1.244	1.297	1.187	10.58	10.90	11.24	11.74	12.22

Source: <http://kosis.kr>.

2. Situations in Local Governments

Low birth rate and an aged society have negative impacts on the local society and economy. The birth rate in Korea has decreased rapidly and the proportion of elderly in the population has risen as quickly; therefore, Korea is heading toward being an aged society at a faster pace than other countries worldwide. This indicates that the Korean government does not have enough time to establish a preventive policy. Due to the low birth rate, the workforce is decreasing sharply and the rate of aging of the workforce is accelerating, which will lower productivity. Due to the aging workforce, the domestic market will be shrunk and government expenditure on social welfare related to aging

will increase, while the financial earnings of the government will deteriorate as the workforce that can support the elderly population decreases (Kim & Park, 2013: 195-196).

With regard to local society and economy, major statistics are outlined as Table 1. Although the birth rate rose slightly from 1.149 (in 2009) to 1.187 (in 2013), this is the lowest fertility rate among the OECD countries. The percentage of aged people has continuously increased from 10.58% (in 2009) to 12.22% (in 2013). The GRDP of Korea increased from 1,151,367,386 billion KRW in 2009 to 1,430,254,931 billion KRW in 2013; the rate of participation in economic activities rose from 60.8% in 2009 to 61.5% in 2013 while the rate of unemployment decreased from 3.6% in 2009 to 3.1% in 2013.

<Table 2> GRDP and rate of participation in economic activities

	GRDP (bil. KRW)					Rate of participation in economic activities (%)					Rate of unemployment (%)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Seoul	273,199	289,719	303,813	313,479	318,607	60.8	61.8	62.5	62.3	62.3	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.2	4.0
Busan	60,695	63,737	66,648	67,999	70,338	56.6	56.3	56.4	57.9	58.0	4.3	3.6	3.6	3.9	3.8
Daegu	36,017	38,580	41,448	43,021	44,754	59.0	59.4	59.0	60.2	59.6	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.3
Incheon	53,796	60,708	61,854	62,208	64,654	61.8	62.5	63.3	64.2	63.7	4.6	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.2
Gwangju	23,834	26,401	27,789	28,914	29,763	58.6	59.0	58.4	57.8	58.7	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.7	2.9
Daejeon	25,535	27,632	29,684	30,884	31,456	59.4	59.1	59.4	59.7	59.5	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.1
Ulsan	52,556	62,852	68,748	70,783	68,348	60.5	60.5	60.7	60.8	60.0	4.2	3.6	2.8	2.6	2.1
Gyeonggi	237,319	266,562	276,155	288,147	313,671	61.3	61.5	61.2	61.6	61.8	3.9	4.0	3.5	3.3	3.0
Gangwon	29,111	30,628	32,438	33,853	35,357	59.0	57.6	57.6	58.2	57.3	2.0	2.6	2.2	2.5	2.4
Chungbuk	34,837	39,470	42,489	43,628	47,402	60.6	61.0	61.1	59.9	61.0	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.1
Chungnam	71,756	83,167	91,816	95,308	99,154	62.4	62.2	62.4	62.9	64.6	3.0	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.8
Jeonbuk	34,739	36,632	39,960	40,432	42,513	59.3	58.5	59.1	58.6	59.3	1.9	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.0
Jeonnam	51,544	59,901	62,689	64,642	62,289	64.9	63.4	63.3	63.6	63.0	1.6	2.1	2.0	1.6	2.1
Gyeongbuk	72,973	80,839	82,276	85,401	89,132	63.9	64.3	63.6	63.6	63.7	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.5	3.1
Gyeongnam	83,163	87,419	91,233	95,635	99,619	61.4	60.8	61.5	60.7	61.1	3.0	2.8	2.2	1.9	2.1
Jeju	10,296	10,899	11,847	12,707	13,198	67.8	66.0	66.9	67.3	67.1	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.8
Total	1,151,367	1,265,146	1,330,888	1,377,041	1,430,255	60.8	61.0	61.1	61.3	61.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.1

Source: <http://kosis.kr>.

III. Low Birth Rate and Aged Society Projects: Case Studies

Based on the characteristic of each service, the Low Birth Rate and Aged Society Projects implemented by 17 local governments were classified into care, development, and information services. As the following table indicates, many services are related to care; the services that provide care for pregnant women, children, or elderly people comprise more than half of all projects.

<Table 3> Low Birth Rate and Aged Society Projects

Project Characteristics	Project for Low Birth Rate Society	Project for Aged Society
Care	Seoul (Public Childcare Facilities Tailored to Seoul Citizens)	Daegu (Memory School for the Elderly with Minor Dementia)
	Incheon (Free Childbirth and Mother-Baby Room for Low-Income Families)	Sejong (Sejong-style Silver Town for Low-Income Seniors)
	Gangwon (Providing a Complete Maternity Service)	Gyeonggi (Carnation House as a Shared Living Space for the Elderly in Solitude)
		Chungbuk (Happiness Keeper Project)
		Chungnam (Living Welfare Mobilization Team)
		Jeju (Aides for Elderly Health and Safety)
Development	Ulsan (Creating a Social Atmosphere that is Childbearing-Friendly)	Busan (Silver Image & Video Festival)
	Jeonnam (Childbearing Encouragement Policy Tailored to the Province)	Gwangju (Buddy Project for the Solitary Elderly)
	Gyeongnam (Toy Bank)	Jeonbuk (Jeonju Bread Café and Traditional Korean Homes as Bed and Breakfast)
Information	Daejeon (Creating a Social Atmosphere that Encourages Childbearing and Childrearing)	
	Gyeongbuk (I-Mom App)	

1. Project for Overcoming Low Birth Rate Society

1) Care Services

① City of Seoul: Public Childcare Facilities Tailored to Seoul Citizens

Seoul has the lowest fertility rate of all the cities in Korea: the national average is 1.187 children per woman, while Seoul's rate is 0.968 (as of 2013). Looking at childcare facilities in Seoul, private providers make up 88.9% of the total (as of 2012), and 70.3% of working mothers in Seoul wish for an increase in the number of reliable childcare

providers. The city of Seoul has decided that they urgently need to establish a policy to address the issue of the low birth rate and to build reliable childcare facilities. To meet this need, starting in 2012, Seoul established a medium-to-long-term masterplan to increase the number of national and public daycare centers; the city plans to invest 630 billion KRW to build 1,000 national and public daycare centers by 2018 (as of 2014, there were 934 places; by 2015, 150 daycare centers will have been newly built; 300 in 2016, 300 in 2017, and 250 in 2018).

Seoul passed the “Ordinance for Establishing National or Public Childcare Facilities” in December 2012 and has been providing financial assistance of up to 90% of the building cost based on the financial capacity of 25 districts in the city of Seoul. While the Ministry of Health and Welfare provides financial assistance of up to 250 million KRW per facility, the city has separately established a budget and provides up to 90% and 2.5 billion KRW per facility. In addition, the city also receives financial support from the Federation of Korean Industries and the Life Insurance Philanthropy Foundation for building national or public childcare facilities.

② City of Incheon: Free Childbirth and Mother-Baby Room for Low-Income Families

In an attempt to lessen the burden of childbearing for low-income families, the city of Incheon established a “24-hour mother-baby clinic,” which performs free child delivery for the first time in Korea. The family welfare department in each Gu and Gun affiliated with the city of Incheon advertises and promotes the project to find eligible families; clinics in each Gu and Gun affiliated with the city of Incheon that are connected with the programs provide assistance to pregnant women, while the Department of Public Health Policy establishes the budget and provides administrative assistance as needed.

The Korea Population and Health Welfare Association, a public organization for health welfare, educates pregnant women and takes full responsibility for a 24-hour free childbirth service for low-income families. During 2014, 401 women benefited from the service and 842 women received a medical examination. For this project, the city invested a total of 330 million KRW, which was 100% supported by the allocated budget. Apart from this, the city invested 80 million KRW to replace old ultrasound equipment and 350 million KRW to expand the women’s health clinic. The results of a survey on the level of satisfaction showed an 87% satisfaction rate.

③ Gangwon Province: Providing a Complete Maternity Service

Starting in 2011, the city of Wonju in Gangwon Province has been providing necessary services to expectant mothers residing in the city. The city ensures the expectant mothers receive the necessary services by issuing them a voucher for 140,000 KRW, every month for six months. Any pregnant woman with a monthly family income under 100% of the national average is eligible for the service. The service includes a special lecture on prenatal education (once a month), cultural programs for expectant mothers (twice a

month), exercise programs for expectant mothers (three times a week), and a post-natal program (three times a week).

The survey of the satisfaction level showed that over 90% of the participants were satisfied with the service. When the vouchers are used, the participants are supposed to pay a small part of the cost (2% in 2013, 5% in 2014).

2) Development Services

①City of Ulsan: Creating a Social Atmosphere that is Childbearing-Friendly

The city of Ulsan has many projects to increase the birth rate. First of all, the city sends a congratulatory message along with a baby gift worth 400,000 KRW to a family that resides in the city and gives birth to a baby; the city also interviews the family and releases this interview in the media. Second, the city has “increased the financial assistance for childbearing” as the mayor promised the citizens. When a family gives birth to a third child or when a baby is born to a family with a disabled parent, the city gives one million KRW to the family. In the near future, the city will pay the childbearing costs when a second child is born. Third, families with more than three children will temporarily receive reduced water bills until 2019. The city has also hosted a festival for families with multiple children.

②Jeonnam Province: Childbearing Encouragement Policy Tailored to the Province

Based on the need to establish a policy that encourages childbearing and to find solutions for a decreasing population in Jeonnam Province, the local government provides various forms of assistance to 17,000 expectant mothers and babies residing in Jeonnam Province. In 2001, for the first time in Korea, they passed an ordinance that assists with childcare costs for newborns; they offered 100,000 KRW (2001), 200,000 KRW (2002–2003), and 300,000 KRW (since 2004) per newborn baby respectively. The province has been enforcing an ordinance regarding a parking lot exclusively reserved for pregnant women, which was passed in 2010. In 2014, the province passed an ordinance to build a public maternity care center; they are planning to build two centers in 2015 and two more in 2016.

Jeonnam Province has many islands and nine Guns have particularly poor facilities for childbirth. All pregnant women are registered on the homepage of the National Emergency Management Agency, and in an emergency, they can ring 119 from a registered phone to go to an OBGYN doctor.

③Gyeongnam Province: Toy Bank

By providing a space for children to have fun with their parents and by lessening the financial burden through a rental service for childcare items, Gyeongnam Province is creating a happy environment for childbearing and parenting. Gyeongnam Province has set up three Toy Banks to lend toys, books, and audiovisual materials and operates play

programs and nursing rooms. The number of rentals during 2014 was 20,000.

Recently, the Toy Banks signed an MOU with four neighboring colleges and three private organizations for information exchange, program operation, support for volunteer services, and contribution of talents. In addition, by creating the “Story Grandma” project (an elderly woman tells a story to children at the toy bank), the toy bank is used as a source of employment for the elderly.

3) Information Services

①City of Daejeon: Creating a Social Atmosphere that Encourages Childbearing and Childrearing

The city of Daejeon determined that changing the negative perception of childbearing and childrearing has a long-term effect in increasing the birth rate, although it does not bring about any immediate visible changes.

To this end, the city has established a strategy to promote childbearing: posting promotional images that encourage childbearing on the sides of 900 official vehicles and playing promotional videos at locations with a high volume of human traffic (i.e., bus stops, department stores, wholesale stores, the city hall, baseball stadiums, sports stadiums, and swimming pools). In addition, the city also produced a promotional video that campaigns for childbearing, which they broadcast extensively in the time slots when most families watch television, showed on movie screens before movies began, and installed on the screen doors at subway stations. Song for multiple children, composed by the Department of Applied Music at a local college, is used as theme music at various events.

②Gyeongbuk Province: I-Mom App

Because there are not enough media where the information necessary from pregnancy to parenting can be easily located, the province offers an integrated information platform encompassing pregnancy, childbearing, and parenting, through a Smartphone App, assisting with the rental service of required items in connection with a support center for baby care products. Any families who reside in Gyeongbuk Province can obtain information through the app and rent baby care items for free.

The I-Mom App was used by 4,474 people during 2014, an average of 373 per month. The type of information available on this app is as follows: government projects for supporting pregnancy (i.e., beautiful mother card, a project to support married couples suffering from infertility, and medical assistance for pre-natal check-ups), projects to support childbearing (i.e., assistance with the Childbearing Encouragement Fund, health insurance fees, home attendants for the mother and newborn, and assistance with screening tests for abnormalities in pregnancy), and the project for childcare support (i.e., the Nutrition Plus project, assistance with childcare costs, financial assistance with childrearing, assistance with babysitting services, and vaccination guides).

2. Project for Aged Society

1) Care Services

①City of Daegu: Memory School for the Elderly with Minor Dementia

For the first time in Korea, the city of Daegu has set up a “memory school” in order to systematically manage elderly people with minor dementia who are not eligible for a long-term care service. The participants are 320 elderly people who have been diagnosed with minor dementia and are not eligible for a care service; there is one school in each of the eight Gu (district) and in each Gun (county) affiliated with the city of Daegu. The tuition is between 10,000 KRW and 20,000 KRW per day, and the elderly on a low income can participate for free.

The Memory School in Daegu offers the following programs to the elderly with minor dementia: during the day, it offers memory rehabilitation programs (i.e., educational therapy, art therapy, and preventive exercises for dementia) and a counseling program for the elderly and their families; at night, the school offers a transportation service to take the elderly to their homes. The school comprehensively manages elderly people with minor dementia by working with the Metropolitan Dementia Center and the clinics with a Dementia Supervision Project.

②City of Sejong: Sejong-style Silver Town for Low-Income Seniors

Drawing from the fact that existing silver towns are luxurious, the city of Sejong has built a silver town for the low-income elderly tailored to the city’s specific needs for the first time in the country. By investing a total of 15 billion KRW (3.2 billion KRW for the lot, 11.8 billion KRW for construction), the city started construction in October 2012 and completed building “Milmaru Welfare Village” in June 2014.

The city publicly advertised for a dedicated manager to run the silver town professionally; as a result, “Sejong Central,” a social welfare foundation, was selected as the manager. They built a fitness room and a multi-program room; a full-time medical staff member (triage nurse) is in residence and is in charge of emergency treatment including health counseling and health examination. Currently, 42 elderly people are living in 40 units; there are 7 elderly people in their 60s, 24 in their 70s, and 11 in their 80s or over. The results of a satisfaction survey showed that 90.5% of the residents were satisfied.

③Gyeonggi Province: “Carnation House” as a Shared Living Space for the Elderly in Solitude

Due to the rapid increase in the number of the elderly living in solitude who require protection and care, Gyeonggi Province determined that they need a space where they can gather to ease the loneliness, and to work and perform leisure activities together. Carnation House is a shared living space remodeled from pre-existing places such as senior-citizen centers and community centers. It is a space that operates leisure

programs and a studio where they can work together. It is not a residential space, but a space for daily activities.

In 2013, 6 Si and Gun affiliated with Gyeonggi Province conducted a pilot project for Carnation Houses; in 2014, an additional 23 Si and Gun in Gyeonggi Province established and operated Carnation Houses. Existing volunteer organizations provided voluntary services to install boilers and put up wallpaper. Each Si and Gun recruits sponsors for the Carnation House. The elderly living in solitude gather to work together, performing tasks such as folding facial masks and fruit-holding nets, and earn a monthly income of between 160,000 KRW and 170,000 KRW.

④Chungbuk Province: Happiness Keeper Project

Chungbuk Province has the second-highest elderly suicide rate in the nation: the percentage of isolated elderly is high (18.5%) as is the percentage of the elderly living in poverty (OECD average: 12.8%, Chungbuk Province: 49.3%), which indicates an urgent need to establish a strategy to help them. Therefore, Chungbuk Province selected 2,000 senior citizens over 65 years of age who are healthy and well-respected, as “happiness keepers.” On a daily basis, they visit the isolated elderly in their neighborhood to greet them, check the status of their health, and inform them about any village events; when there is a problem, they report to affiliated organizations. Chungbuk Province allocated 5.1 billion KRW to the project and created jobs for the elderly by paying the happiness keepers 200,000 KRW monthly.

⑤Chungnam Province: Living Welfare Mobilization Team

The population of elderly over 65 years of age in Chungnam Province is 16.7% of the total population of the province. The elderly population over 65 years of age in Hongsung Gun, affiliated with Chungnam Province, is 21%. Because there are many elderly people living in single or married-couple households, there were numerous issues related to everyday living, such as replacing electrical equipment, replacing damaged pipes, etc. To resolve such inconveniences in these homes, the city established and is operating a living welfare mobilization team. The team consists of personnel from the community self-supporting centers and the Korea Electrical Contractors Association. When a senior citizen places a request by calling or visiting the Gun office, the team visits their home and solves the problem.

Hongsung Gun in Chungnam Province invested 7.5 million KRW (100% supported by the Hongsung Gun budget) and resolved problematic issues such as electrical installation, piping equipment, and small repairs by visiting. A total of 164 requests from basic pension recipients or elderly households have been resolved.

⑥Jeju Island: Aides for Elderly Health and Safety

In JeJu, 70% of the elderly population of the island is over 70 years of age and in need of assistance with hearing aids as well as dentures. Since the number of elderly people with dementia is increasing, a technology to track their location is imperative. For the first time in Korea, the local government of Jeju Island pays 50% of the total cost for dentures and hearing aids. They also advertise on local TV commercials or posters that they provide this assistance.

For the first time in the country, the Jeju government distributed mobile phones with a tracking program free to people who have been diagnosed with dementia or are suspected of having dementia. For the first two years, the rental of the mobile phone as well as the phone usage is free. Currently, 122 dementia patients are using the mobile device with tracking app.

2) Development Services

①City of Busan: Busan Silver Image & Video Festival (BSIF)

The city of Busan hosted the Silver Image & Video Festival that was held in September 2014. A total of 325 videos (i.e., 43 on any topic desired, 282 on a topic related to the elderly) were submitted and 27 videos (i.e., 12 videos on any topic desired, 15 videos on a topic related to the elderly) received an award. The grand prize went to “Romance in the Twilight of Life: An Old Couple’s Journey to Overcome Dementia.”

Ever since the first BSIF was held in 2011, participation has increased annually, as have the number and quality of submissions. Busan assigned mentors in 12 adult daycare centers and conducted media education among the elderly, assisting in the video-making process. Groups of five to ten elderly people from adult daycare centers or senior-citizen colleges in the Busan area competed.

②City of Gwangju: “Buddy” Project for the Solitary Elderly

To make life more enjoyable for elderly people, the city of Gwangju invested 60 million KRW to promote a project that pairs elderly people as friends based on their personality types. In other words, the project introduces a buddy that the solitary elderly person can trust and rely on. First of all, the elderly at high risk for death in solitude are reclusive people who are disconnected from society. Second, the elderly who have been diagnosed with depression by a medical doctor and those who have attempted suicide are in a high suicide-risk group. Third, the elderly who are designated as people with limited relationships are senior citizens who reside alone; they feel very lonely and depressed and are at medium risk for committing suicide.

First, for the elderly who belong to the group at high risk of death in solitude, the city offers personal counseling, regular visits, free meal deliveries, and safety checks during police patrols. Second, for the elderly who belong to the high-risk suicide group, places such as mental health promotion centers attempt to pair the elderly with buddies by

providing group counseling sessions, art activities, vegetable gardens, picnics, etc. Third, for the elderly who belong to the group of people with limited relationships, the city tries to pair them up with buddies by creating informal social gatherings, hosting a program called Laughter Heals, and supporting social outings.

③Jeonbuk Province: Jeonju Bread Café and Traditional Korean Homes as Bed and Breakfast

The number of tourists who visit traditional Korean villages in Jeonbuk Province is constantly increasing (over four million visitors per year as of 2011), thereby leading to a lack of accommodation for tourists. For this reason, to cope with the shortage of accommodation and to create jobs for the elderly, Jeonbuk Province promoted bed and breakfast homes owned by the elderly. In addition, the province is attempting to create jobs for the elderly by training them to become baristas or bakers at Jeonju Bread Café.

In 2013, of all the tourists who visited Jeonbuk Province, 1,239 stayed at bed and breakfast homes owned by the elderly, and 1,446 did so in the following year. Currently, 10 senior citizens are employed at Jeonju Bread Café.

3. Summary of Case Studies

The overall characteristics and problems that have been identified with the 17 local governments are as follows. First, the representative project of each local government displays a “huge disparity” based on the financial condition of the local government. Large local government (e.g., Seoul, Gyeonggi), which have relatively better financial conditions, strengthen infrastructure such as building daycare centers and creating shared workspace for the elderly residing alone. By contrast, areas with relatively poor financial conditions cannot implement any projects that require the local government’s financial investment. Such discrepancy between regions could deteriorate.

Second, there is limitation in creating a “specific result-oriented outcome” despite diverse projects being designed and implemented. This is because the projects do not have systematic structures that enable the local government to set goals for solving local issues and to achieve those goals. In reality, symbolic projects and similar projects are being implemented among the local governments as opposed to separate masterplans for respective regions being established and reinforced. Although each local government has problems that stem from low birth rate and an aged society, they do not have the mature condition to establish active policies to cope with the problems.

Third, there is a dearth of strategies to “support the connection of social services” among local governments. It is necessary to establish active aging programs beyond jurisdiction; in reality, however, social service projects are implemented only within the respective jurisdictions of the corresponding governmental organization. In particular, there is no project that reflects the reality that the elderly need not only caring services within certain buildings in the jurisdiction, but they also need programs that provide

assistance with transportation.

Fourth, the projects absolutely depend on “the government’s public financial programs.” It is difficult to vitalize social service programs, as financial mobilization becomes difficult due to the deteriorating financial condition of local governments. Although it is necessary to make diverse social efforts to mobilize various sources of finance besides the government, no significant policies related to this have been established. Moreover, local governments are complaining of being in the red because the source of financial support for various social services that are designed to cope with the low birth rate and aged population is obscure. In particular, although the basic pension is the central government’s project, the local governments are unilaterally given the responsibility to supply the remaining budget apart from the central government subsidy. In the future, the central and local governments must agree on the budget in advance before planning any social service projects that receive subsidies from the central government.

Fifth, although there are various social service projects to address the issues of a low birth rate and aged population, the social services in Korea have limitations in that they lack “a medium-to-long-term vision.” In other words, while there are projects that are run by the central government or by the local governments, there is no intensive project that the government is pushing forward as a core project and the various projects are being carried out one at a time. For this reason, it is difficult to identify the focus and effect of each policy (Jung, 2012: 33-34). Furthermore, the government is concentrating on financial assistance while seeking short-term success. The issue of a low birth rate and aged population cannot be solved within a short period; instead, it is necessary to establish long-term goals and devise core projects.

IV. Discussion and Implications

In a society experiencing a low birth rate and aged population, strategies to encourage childbearing and support childcare are imperative, as are strategies to ensure welfare and strengthen the workforce. The result of analyzing the social services in 17 metropolitan local governments can be summarized as follows. The social services to cope with the low birth rate include such as ; creating a societal atmosphere that cares about childbearing and parenting; establishing policies that encourage childbearing; establishing free childbearing projects for low-income families; providing a total service for expectant mothers; developing apps on pregnancy, childbearing, and parenting; building national and public daycare facilities; and providing toy rentals. The social services to cope with an aged population include: resolving daily inconveniences at homes for the elderly; hiring aides to ensure the health and safety of the elderly; establishing projects that manage the elderly with dementia; pairing the elderly in solitude with

buddies; building silver towns for the low-income elderly; creating shared living spaces for the elderly in solitude; hosting video festivals; and creating jobs for the elderly.

The policy implications of this study are as follows. First, it is necessary to build “an alternative system for social service policy centered around the local government.” In other words, social service policy should be established systematically so that local governments can adapt to a society with low birth rate and an aging population. Unlike social welfare policy for low-income vulnerable classes, the policies to cope with low birth rate and an aged society are region-based investment for all residents. When the central government implements basic policies to secure people’s income and health, the local government should take charge of policies that concern citizen’s daily living to maintain and vitalize the local society.

Second, it is necessary to “diversify the financial sources for social services.” If the tight financing continues, it will not be possible to vitalize the social service programs that are dependent on the government’s budget as expected. Therefore, strategies should be sought out to secure a variety of finances that can operate social service projects. To this end, it is crucial to make an effort to connect the corporations’ social contribution activities with the programs dealing with low birth rate and an aged society.

Third, it is necessary to “expand the infrastructure to provide social services.” Individuals have different desires for social services, and there are various providers that can meet such diverse needs; in the meantime, there is a huge regional discrepancy in the conditions of social service providers. Therefore, strategies should be found to expand the infrastructure that provides social services. In this regard, it is necessary to develop new policy means (e.g., an alternative to build and vitalize the online-based social service market as one of the social service R&D projects by the Ministry of Health and Welfare) such as “building an online infrastructure of social service information,” which helps with distribution of the information about the quality and content of the programs that small social service organizations offer.

This study is significant in that it has drawn implications by analyzing local government projects that are independently operated to cope with the low birth rate and an aged population. However, it has limitations: it has failed to examine related theories and previous literature, so it lacks academic foundation as well as in-depth research and analysis. It is hoped that follow-up studies will perform academic research and compensate for these limitations.

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