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## **Issues and Tasks Entailing the Enforcement of the Framework Act on Gender Equality**

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With the enforcement of the Framework Act on Gender Equality, the realization of a de facto gender-equal society was redeclared to the whole nation. Under the circumstances, this research intends to examine expected changes in policy environment and changes in the family, which are usually explained by individualization, so as to draw issues of family policies, and to diagnose the reality and tasks of policy issues through surveys with experts and ordinary citizens as subjects, and thereby, determine the future direction and tasks of family policies.

Specifically, the implications of the Framework Act on Gender Equality on family policies and the meaning of changes in family were discussed to draw issues related to policies on gender-equal family. On top of that, a diagnosis

was made with a survey of experts on the direction and tasks of family policies. Plus, with regard to the balance between gender-equal work, family and individual life, another survey was conducted with those employed who are in their 20s thorough 40s as subjects to grasp their current status of spending time and balance between work, family, and individual life. The results of the surveys were analyzed and the implications were discussed to suggest policy tasks for gender-equal family.

To achieve the purposes of this research, the existing researches on gender equality and family, those on work-family balance, time spending, and family friendliness, current legislation concerning policies on family and gender equality, and relevant data were collected for study. In addition, with a view to examine the future direction and tasks of family policies, a survey of experts and a survey of those in their 20s through 40s on their use of time, work, and life were conducted; and round tables of experts and consultation meetings were held a total of nine times.

The enforcement of the Framework Act on Gender Equality in 2015 offered the opportunity to reaffirm to the whole realm of the society the value of implementing a de facto equal society through the improvement of social structure that causes gender inequality, honoring individuals and guaranteeing their rights, and equal participation and sharing responsibilities. This occasion also highlighted the necessity for the family to value each of its members and become a place where the right of an individual member is guaranteed, and thus suggested that family policies henceforth should be restructured in the direction of supporting the rights of each member(individual) of the family. This orientation of policies should also be reflected as policies for gender-equal participation under the Framework Act on Gender Equality in supporting work-family balance. For the realization of balance between gender-equal work, family and individual, structural improvements, particularly improvement in the structure of labor hours, are required. In this respect, future family policies need

to highlight as key policy issues improvement of structural conditions in the direction of guaranteeing time resources for each family member (individual) and sociocultural support for resolving inequality in the distribution of guaranteed hours.

As to the results of the survey of experts, for the balance between gender-equal work, family and individual, most of the experts agreed and expressed sympathy to expanding family policies to include policies concerning use of time, but at the same time, they noted some points that need to be considered in designing relevant policies, including the problem of effectiveness of such policies intended for linking employment and family policies, and the concerns of deepening inequality stemming from reduction of working hours, etc. Experts also noted the necessity to consider the situation and needs of users in designing time-related policies. For the balance between gender-equal work, family and individual life, they finally requested to seek policy measures to proceed with ‘improvement of working hours,’ ‘improvement of inequality in time distribution,’ ‘improvement of culture and perception to accommodate the changes in value regarding work and family,’ and ‘expansion of community network and family-friendly infrastructure for leisure and caregiving, etc.

Results of the survey of those employed in their 20s through 40s revealed that long working hours reduce their time for family and individual life, which leads to lack of individual time and feelings of exhaustion. The use of time they desired is to allocate more time for individual and family life. For desired use of time, they wanted the guarantee of already-secured rights, and structural improvement of existing labor hours, along with ‘society-wide joint effort on time distribution,’ and also made quite a few demands related to recently raised issues concerning labor rights. Another finding was that although the average working hours of participants of the survey was not seriously long, there exist a universal desire for reduced working hours. As to concerns related to reduced working hours, many of them mentioned ‘reduction in pay,’ and there were also

those who voiced concerns about public opinion and social atmosphere. This suggests the necessity to discuss measures for structural improvement of working hours in the future in the orientation that includes improvement of labor culture as well as minimization of pay loss.

Measures to support harmonious allocation of hours in accordance with individual desire and necessity are also necessary. In the group of respondents who have a spouse, differences in opinion between genders regarding reduction of labor hours and fairness in family participation were observed: male respondents revealed the desire to have time for individual use as well as time for family participation. In this context, policy measures that positively intervene to link the time secured through reduced working hours to positive family participation and substantial improvement in inequal structure is necessary. On the other hand, the groups of those without a spouse and those without children are the group of people newly discovered through the survey. They are the group of people who have distinct desire for securing time for themselves and tendency for individual life. Therefore, attention for the group is required in future preparation of measures related to working hours and balance between work, family, and individual life. For the support of balance between gender-equal work and life, the following tasks of family policy are suggested: First, changes in the structure of working hours is required for restructuring daily life. As relevant measures, to reduce working hours without loss of pay, a system of working 4.5 days a week and a paid leave system that can be available for use any time are suggested. And to secure flexible working time that will increase individual's right of choice, 'system of choosing from switchable working hours' can be considered. Also, to accomplish a substantial change in the culture of working time, introduction of such measures that will firmly establish a culture of 'leaving work on time,' including strengthened management and supervision of statutory labor hours, reinforced operation of 'family love day,' 'guarantee of minimum break,' 'right to disconnect,' etc., are

needed to be examined.

Second, a family-friendly infrastructure considering the needs of each different group (situation) and creation of a culture that supports restructuring of daily lives of individuals are required. First of all, establishment and expansion of such spaces that offer the opportunities to experience family participation, and thus promote men's participation in family affairs is required. To this end, experience/play-based spaces where father and children can enjoy together, and 'communal kitchen,' etc. can be considered. And with a view to secure individual time of those unmarried and women with spouse or women with children, expansion of public infrastructure, including installation of 'in-and-out' house and expansion of child caregiving services to support the respite for women in the period of intense infant care, etc. are necessary. Finally, for coexistence of individual and family, education on equality of family members in daily life is suggested.

Last, for the adjustments and cooperative operation of many systems and policies concerning the balance between gender-equal work and life, strengthening the function of general management and coordination is necessary. To serve the purpose, establishment of a new institution that would exclusively take charge of time management, installation of a commission for work-life balance, building of promotional structure for the creation of family-friendly social environment, reinforced utilization of promotional structure under the Framework Act on Gender Equality, etc. are required.