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## Effect of Communication and Time Spent with Children on the Parenting Difficulties of Single Parents in Korea

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Spring 2022 Capstone

Effect of communication and time spent with children  
on the parenting difficulties of single parents in Korea

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## □ **Executive Summary**

This research aims to analyze the effect of the time spent with children and the degree of communication with children on the difficulties of parenting children by single parents in Korea. As for the single parents' parenting difficulties, economic hardships have been widely discussed. However, not many studies examined other psychosocial factors between single parents and children, such as the problem of communication between parents and children and the lack of time spent with parents and children, despite their importance in parenting children. This study claims that the focus of public policies, governmental support, and non-profit organizations' roles to resolve the parenting difficulties faced by single parents needs to be changed and diversified toward addressing psychosocial factors. The data used for the analysis is the 2018 Single-parent Family Survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, where 949 single-parent families with children aged 7 to 12 and 1,535 single-parent children aged 13 to 17 responded.

The OLS regression analyses show several findings regarding the association between psychosocial factors and parenting challenges. First, the more difficult it is for single parents to communicate with children, the more difficult it is to raise children. Second, the more time single parents spend with their children, the less difficult it is to raise them. Third, when single parents are female, the greater the number of children, the more difficult it is to raise children. However, the age of single parents, the educational background of single parents, the period of becoming single parents, household income, and net assets do not significantly affect the stress of single parents' childrearing.

The research results highlight the importance of parents of single-parent family communicating with their children and securing time spend with their children in supporting single-parent families.

## □ Introduction

It is not uncommon to see single-parent families around us today. According to US Census data, about 30 percent of America's families with children under 18 years old, amounting to 10 million households, are single-parent families in 2020. The share of American families with children living with a single parent has tripled since 1965. Looking at the formation process of single mothers, around half (49.5%) of single mothers have never married, almost a third (29.9%) are divorced, and 20.5% are either separated or widowed. The number of single-parent families in Korea is not small. According to the 2019 statistics from the National Statistical Office, there were 1,529,000 single-parent households, accounting for 7.3% of the total. In addition, the number of divorces in Korea is steadily increasing from 106,000 in 2016, 108,700 in 2017, and 118,000 in 2019 (for reference, the number of marriages in 2019 was 239,000), which shows that the number of single-parent families can continue to increase.

Single parents are more likely to face economic difficulties. According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family's 2018 Single-parent Family Survey, single parents earn an average of half of all households even if they work more than 10 hours a day without a holiday set, and single-parent families have a quarter of all households' net assets. Another study on family policies and single-parent poverty in 18 OECD countries from 1978-to 2008 also showed that single parents have a higher risk of poverty than married parents (Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis, 2015).

However, single parents also tend to face psychosocial difficulties, such as low mood, anxiety, and depression, which are tied to the lack of ability to continue with parenting responsibilities and behaviors (Stack & Meredith, 2018). Single-parent families are more

likely to experience difficulty building positive relationships with their children and parenting children than couple-parent families (Nam et al., 2013). Single parents have shown high levels of chronic parenting stress and depression mainly due to the lack of support from spouses, neighbors, or communities, which in turn negatively influences their parenting responsibilities and duties (Kwon, 2020; Bang et al., 2013). The 2018 Korean single-parent Family Survey reported that 84.2% of single parents said it was challenging to balance work and family due to long working hours.

Although both financial and psychosocial conditions relate to single parents' parenting difficulties (Stack & Meredith, 2018), the current Korean government's national policies seem to primarily focus on addressing the single parents' families economic conditions (Nam et al. 2013). The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which is the ministry in charge, has been implementing various economic support policies such as housing support, child support payment support, and childcare service cost support for the economic difficulties of single-parent families. However, it should not be overlooked that single parents face not only economic difficulties but also psychosocial difficulties influencing parenting their children. The Korean government has not paid much attention to parenting challenges that single-parent families face and the social relationship between single parents and their children from the psychosocial perspective. Therefore, in addition to financial support for single-parent families, the government needs to develop and implement policies that help single parents spend more quality time with their children and build supportive relationships between parents and children.

## □ **Research Questions**

This study examines psychosocial factors that cause single parents' parenting difficulties in parenting children, focusing on relationships between parents and children described as (1) communicating with their children and (2) time spent together. My research questions include: (1) How do perceived difficulties in communicating with their children play a role in parenting challenges single parents face? (2) How does the time spent with children play a role in parenting challenges single parents face?

As mentioned earlier, the Korean government needs to implement policies that can help with childrearing issues in addition to financial support for single-parent families. Then, the question of what type of policy the government should implement will be a problem, and this study intends to provide an answer.

## □ **Literature Review**

### **Difficulties faced by single-parent families and problems with parenting children**

One of the biggest difficulties single-parent families face is economic problems, which is more pronounced in the case of single-parent women (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). The poverty rate of single-parent women in the United States was 31%, nearly five times that of married couples (5%) (Census.gov, 2019). In addition, 33.6% of children living only with their mothers lived in poverty, while only 7.9% of children from two-parent families were considered impoverished (National Women's Law Center, 2020). Such poverty in single-parent families is an important variable that affects parents' adaptation and parenting attitudes, and consequently affects the health problems, academic adjustment, and psychosocial adaptation of single-parent children (Nam et al., 2013).



Meanwhile, the parenting responsibilities and financial difficulties they bear alone lead to pain and anxiety (Stack & Meredith, 2017). Moreover, single parents are more likely to experience depression. According to a study conducted to investigate risk factors affecting depression in single mothers, the prevalence of depression differed notably between single mothers and controls at 33% and 8%, respectively, and such depression was associated with low income, residential instability, and high stress (Kim et al., 2018).

Difficulties in parenting children can occur in both single-parent and couple-parent families, but due to their circumstances, single parents face difficulties that couple parents do not. In other words, the difficulties in parenting children of single parents appear due to the dual role of the parent due to the absence of one parent (Nam et al., 2013), and also due to time constraints as the single parent balances work and parenting as the head of the household. According to Kwon's case study (2020) on parenting stress of single parents in Korea, single parents working and parenting children at the same time tend to expect their children to follow their guidance because they do not have enough time. They are most likely to experience stress when those expectations are not met. In addition, there are studies conducted comparing single parents and couple parents, and in a study by Bang and colleagues (2013), which compared the psychological and behavioral characteristics of single parents and couple parents, it was found that couple parents had higher parenting satisfaction and parenting pleasure than single parents, and couple parents showed more positive parenting behavior. On the other hand, some studies show a positive relationship between single parents and their children. Asmussen and Larson (1991) found that regarding the intimacy between parents and adolescents, youth in single-parent families perceive both their mother or father as more friendly than youth in married-parent families.

As shown in Table 1, drivers behind the parenting difficulties faced by single-parent families can be primarily divided into four: (1) financial problems, (2) psychological

problems, (3) relational problems, and (4) other demographic and family characteristics. But, it should be noted that these problems are interconnected. Single-parent financial problems can affect psychological and relational problems, and vice versa. However, existing studies paid less attention to relational difficulties between single parents and children from the single parents' perspective. Some previous empirical research has focused on how children perceived relational difficulties with single parents (Kim & Brody, 2015; Heo, 2018; Kwon & Baek, 2004), and studies on the effect of these factors on single parents are insufficient. Hereinafter, this study will examine how the relationship between parents and children leads to single-parents' perceived parenting difficulties.

**Table 1. Drivers of Single-parent Families' Parenting Difficulties (DV)**

<b>Drivers (IV)</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Economic difficulties	Low income; Poverty	Richards & Schmiede, 1993 Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis, 2015 Stack & Meredith, 2017 National Women's Law Center, 2020
Psychological difficulties	Depression; Anxiety; Low mood	Bang et al., 2013 Stack & Meredith, 2017 Kim et al., 2018 Kwon, 2020
Relational difficulties	Difficulty in communication; Lack of time spent together	Kwon & Baek, 2004 Jeong, 2013 Lam and his colleagues, 2012 Heo, 2018
Others	Parent's age; Parent's gender; Parent's educational background; Number of children; Period of being a single parent	2018 Single-parent Family Survey

### **Communication between parents and children**

If parents and children talk a lot with each other and the content of the communication is positive, it is not difficult to guess that the communication will positively

affect the overall life of the family. This is because communication between parents and children is the process and behavior of transmitting and receiving messages to each other, establishing meaning, and forming relationships (Noh, 2006), and through conversations between parents and children, parents can effectively help their children because they can better know their children's lives, concerns, and what they need (Jeong, 2013).

A study on the impact of conversation or communication between single parents and children within single-parent families confirmed that communication with parents has an important effect on the behavioral development and maturity of children from single-parent families (Kwon & Baek, 2004). Jeong (2013) found that single-parent families had less time to talk to their children than couple-parent families, but the amount of conversation time between single-parent and children was related to their children's academic achievement. Specifically, the families with more than 2 hours of conversation had a positive effect on children's academic achievement compared to the families with less than 30 minutes of conversation time between parents and children. There are also research results on the effect of the quality of communication, which is another important element of communication. According to Hanson (1986), good communication in single-parent families positively affects parents' and children's physical and mental health, and effective communication has more effect on mental health than their physical health. In addition, Bae's study (2010) found that positive communication between single parents and children from single-parent families can reduce conflict between parents and children and promote understanding of each other.

Hypothesis 1: *The perceived difficulties in communication between single parents and their children are positively associated with single parents' parenting difficulties.*

## **Time spent with single parents and children**

Single parents have to work alone, do housework alone, and take care of their children alone, so the time spent with their children is insufficient. According to Heo's 2018 study of the time spent by single female parents with their children and their children's life satisfaction, the more time female single parents spent with their children, the higher the level of parental supervision, but parental supervision had no significant effect on their children's life satisfaction. Time with children had a significant effect on children's self-esteem, but it was found that time spent with children by single female parents did not directly affect children's life satisfaction. In another study, Kim and Brody (2005) reported that children's psychological and behavioral problems were lower as parents spent time with their children or showed interest in how their children were doing outside of school.

Similarly, Lam and his colleagues (2012) examined the effects of time spent with parents and children on the children in Korea. They found that, on average, youths who spent more time with their fathers had higher general self-worth. Of course, all types of parental time are not conducive to a child's development (Hsin & Felfe, 2014), but time with children can be special for single parents who are short on time.

*Hypothesis 2: The amount of time a single parent and child spend together is negatively associated with the difficulty of parenting a child as a single parent.*

### **□ Data**

To test the two research hypotheses, I used the 2018 Single-parent Family Survey data conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in Korea. This national survey has been conducted every three years by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family since

2015 in order to use it for policy establishment for support for single-parent families, and 2018 data are the latest data currently available. This survey consists of 80 questions, of which about 15 are needed for this study. This data is provided on the website of the National Statistical Office of Korea.

The main items to be used in this survey are as follows. The survey gauges the degree to which single parents are aware of problems that arise in parenting their children using the following questions: "I cannot communicate well with my children," "It is difficult to guide my children's career," and "I am stressed out in the process of parenting my children." In addition, there is a question about how much time you spend with your child per day. On the other hand, this survey was conducted by dividing the categories related to childrearing into three categories based on the age of the children: under 7 years old, 7 to 12 years old, and 13 to 17 years old. Because the question types for parenting children under 7 years of age are different from those of the rest of the age groups and do not fit the subject of this study, responses related to children under 7 years old were excluded from this study.

## □ Data analysis

OLS regression analyses were employed to test two research hypotheses. As mentioned above, single parents who responded to the survey responded by dividing the responses into 7–12-year-old and 13–17-year-old children, which seems to have been classified into an elementary school group and a middle school/high school group according to school level in Korea. Therefore, this analysis is carried out in two categories.

The dependent variable is the degree of parenting stress or difficulty in providing career guidance, and the independent variable is the level of communication with the child and the time spent with the child. As part of the analysis, I controlled for parent's gender,

parent's age, parent's education level, number of children, children's gender, household income, household net assets, and the period of being single parents are used as control variables. The linear regression equation used to perform this analysis is as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 &Y(\text{difficulties in parenting a child}) \\
 &= \alpha + \beta_1(\text{difficulties in communication}) + \beta_2(\text{time spent}) \\
 &+ \beta_3(\text{male parents}) + \beta_4(\text{parents' age}) + \beta_5(\text{parent's education}) \\
 &+ \beta_6(\text{number of}) + \beta_7(\text{household}) + \beta_8(\text{net household}) + \beta_9(\text{period}) \\
 &+ \varepsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

**Table 2. The Regression Variables**

	Name	Definition	Measures (question #)
Dependent variable (DV)	DV1: stress	Stress on parenting children (aged 13 to 17)	Four-level Likert item (#15-6) (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly agree.
		Aged 7 to 12	(#9-6)
	DV2: career	Difficulty in providing career guidance to children (aged 13 to 17)	Four-level Likert item (#15-4)
Independent variables	difficulty in communication	Difficulty in communicating with children (aged 13 to 17)	Four-level Likert item (15-1) (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly agree.
		Aged 7 to 12	(#9-1)
	time	Time spent with children per day (aged 13 to 17)	Five-level Likert item (#17)

			(1) not at all; (2) less than 30 minutes; (3) 30 minutes to less than 1 hour; (4) 1 hour to less than 2 hours; (5) more than 2 hours
		Aged 7 to 12	(#11)
Control variables	parent's gender	Gender of the parent	0. female / 1. male (#2-3)
	parent's age	Age of the parent	Age (#2-2)
	parent's education	The parent's educational background	Category (#2-6) 1. no education 2. elementary school 3. middle school 4. high school 5. college (under 3y) 6. college (4 years) 7. graduate or higher
	number of children	Number of children	Number (#2)
	household income	Monthly income of the household	unit; dollar (#43)
	net household asset	The number of assets minus liabilities	unit; 1,000 dollars (#47)
	period	Period of being a single parent	1. less than 5 years 2. less than 10 years 3. more than 10 years

My first dependent variable is the stress of parenting. In the 2018 Single-Parent Family Survey, there is a question about how much stress a single parent perceives while parenting children, which captures the overall difficulty of parenting.

My second dependent variable is the difficulty in providing career guidance. According to the survey results, the responses of single parents with children aged 7 to 12 and single parents with children aged 13 to 17 were quite different regarding childrearing. Excluding financial difficulties related to childrearing, "parenting stress" was the most

significant difficulty faced by single parents aged 7 to 12 (58.8%), and "child career guidance difficulty" was the most frequently mentioned difficulty by single parents aged 13 to 17 (72.7%). Children aged 13 to 17 have to decide on their career paths, such as college choice or career choice, so it can be interpreted that career guidance is the most difficult for their single parents. Therefore, in the case of single parents with children aged 13 to 17, 'difficulty in providing career guidance' is additionally designated as the second dependent variable.

## □ Findings

### Descriptive analysis

As shown in Table 3-1, for the characteristics of single parents of 2,500 survey subjects, the average age is 43.69 years (sd=6.73), and they vary from 20 to 67 years old. Also, the average number of their children is 1.57 (sd=.67). Single-parent families' average monthly gross income is \$1,692.46 (sd=945.21), and their average net worth is \$60,730.

**Table 3-1. General Characteristics of Survey Subjects 1**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Parent's age	2,500	43.6936	6.726323	20	67
Number of children	2,500	1.5668	.6741807	1	7
Household income (\$)	2,500	1692.46	945.2064	1666.67	10,000
Net assets (1,000 \$)	2,500	60.72966	120.4344	-280.83	1504.16



As shown in Table 3-2, the gender distribution of single parents is 34.88% male and 65.12% female, with a higher proportion of females. As for the educational background of single parents, high school graduates accounts for nearly 60% of the total, followed by three-year or two-year college graduates (17.08%) and four-year college graduates (15.56%). And the period of becoming a single parent is 31.16% of those under 5 years, 40.88% of those between 5 and 10 years, and 27.96% of 10 years or more.

**Table 3-2. General Characteristics of Survey Subjects 2**

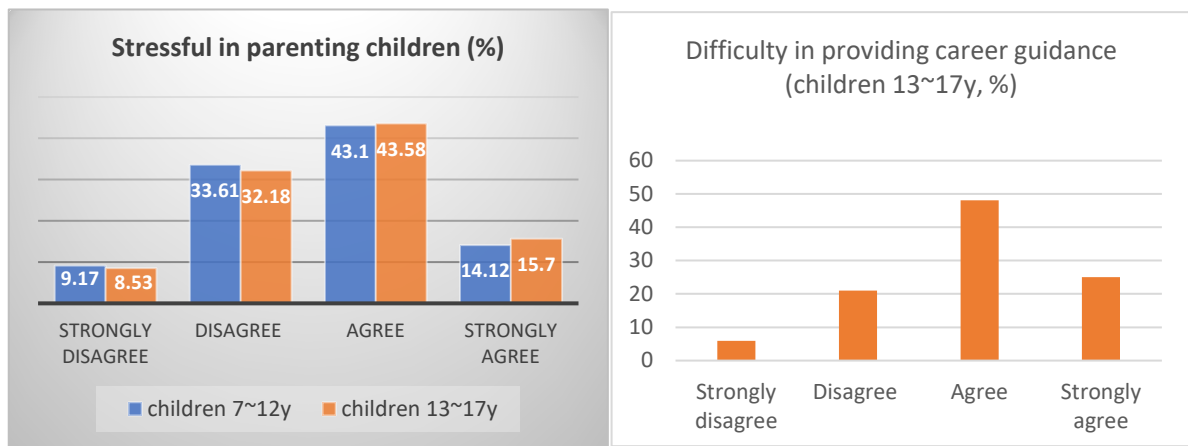
Variable	Observations	Category	N	%
Parent's gender	2,500	Male	872	34.88
		Female	1,628	65.12
Parent's education	2,500	No education	7	0.28
		Elementary	42	1.68
		Middle	133	5.32
		High	1,491	59.64
		College (under 3y)	427	17.08
		College (4 years)	389	15.56
		Graduate or higher	11	0.44
Period of becoming a single parent	2,500	less than 5 years	779	31.16
		less than 10 years	1,022	40.88
		more than 10 years	699	27.96

### Summary of response statistics

The number of survey respondents who have children aged 7 to 12 (i.e., 7-12-year-old group) is 949, and the number of respondents having children aged 13 to 17 (i.e., 13-17-year-old group) is 1,535. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of single parents who

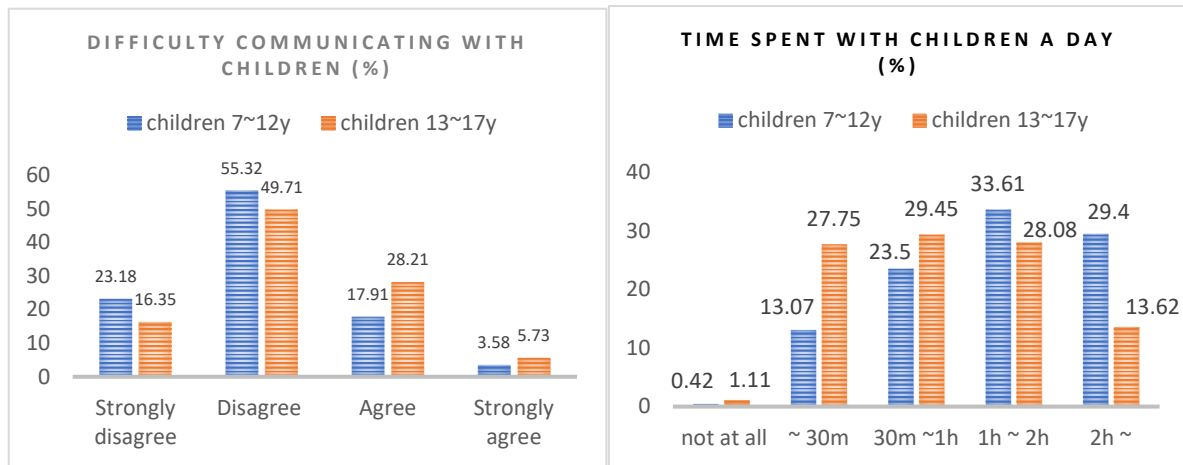
responded that they were stressed about parenting their children was 57.22% in the 7-12-year-old group and 59.28% in the 13-17-year-old group, and the two groups had similar responses. Also, regarding the levels of difficulties in providing career guidance to children, 48.08% of respondents having children aged 13 to 17 answered yes, and 25.02% of the respondents answered very much.

**Figure 1. Response statistics 1**



As shown in Figure 1-2, 21.5% of the respondents having children aged 7 to 12 and 33.94% of the respondents with children aged 13 to 17 answered that it was difficult to communicate with their children. In addition, 63.01% of the 7-12-year-old group and 47.41% of the 13-17-year-old group answered that they were with their children for more than an hour a day. From these results, we can infer that, in single-parent families, communicating with adolescent children is more difficult than that with middle childhood, and the time spent with parents is less during adolescence.

**Figure 1-2. Response statistics 2**



## □ Analysis & Results

### Correlation

First, I analyzed the correlation between the stress of parenting children, the difficulty in providing career guidance (only for children aged 13 to 17), the difficulty of communication with children, and the time spent with them. The correlation analysis is used to examine whether there is a significant linear relationship between variables. In addition, the strength and direction of the correlation between variables can be checked.

Tables 4-1 and 4-2 below show the correlation between the dependent and independent variables input to the research model. The stress of parenting children, difficulties in providing children's career guidance, communication with children, and time spent with children were positively correlated with one another. As shown in Table 4-1, for the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable of the 7-12-year-old children's group, the 'communication with children' variable shows a higher correlation with the dependent variable ( $r = .390, p < .001$ ) than the 'time spent with children' variable ( $r$

= -.174,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, as shown in Table 4-2, the correlation results of the 13-17-year-old children's group also show that the 'communication with children' variable has a higher correlation with the two dependent variables ( $r = .412 / .325$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than the 'time with children' variable ( $r = -.224 / -.193$ ,  $p < .001$ ). On the other hand, as a result of the analysis, the correlation between the independent variables was less than 0.8, so it was analyzed that there was no variable suspicious of multicollinearity (Jeong, 2019, pp. 274).

**Table 4-1. Correlation between dependent and independent variables (aged 7 to 12)**

	DV: stress	IV1: difficulties in communication	IV2: time spent
stress	1		
difficulties of communication	.390***	1	
time spent	-.174***	-.291***	1

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 4-2. Correlation between dependent and independent variables (aged 13 to 17)**

	DV1: stress	DV2: career guidance	IV1: difficulties in communication	IV2: time spent
stress	1			
career guidance	.556***	1		
difficulties in communication	.412***	.325***	1	
time spent	-.224***	-.193***	-.226***	1

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### OLS regression

A regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of the perceived

difficulties in communicating with children and the time spent with children on the stress of single parents parenting children and difficulties in providing the children’s career guidance. Control variables such as parents’ age, gender, and educational background were included in this regression analysis.

First, as shown in Table 5-1, a result of regression analysis for single parents with children aged 7-12 and parenting stress, the explanatory power of the independent variables for the dependent variable, childrearing stress, is 18.6% ( $R^2=.186$ ), and the research model is found to be suitable ( $F=23.86$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In addition, independent variables, difficulties with communication (Coef=.431,  $p<.001$ ) and time spent together (Coef=-.067,  $p<.01$ ), are found to have a significant effect on single-parent childrearing stress. In other words, the more difficult it is to communicate with children, the more stress single parents have to raise children, and the more time they spend with their children, the less stress they have. Another fact we can get is that the degree of communication with children had a greater effect on single parents' childrearing stress than the time they spent with their children. Regarding the control variables, the gender (Coef.= -.152,  $p<.01$ ) and the number of children (Coef=.156,  $p<.001$ ) of single parents have a significant effect on the childrearing stress of single parents, which means that the single parent is female and the greater the number of children, the more stress they have about parenting their children. Conversely, parent’s age, parent’s educational background, household income, and net household assets do not have a significant effect on single-parent childrearing stress.

**Table 5-1. Effect on Parenting Stress (DV1) (aged 7 to 12)**

	Coef.	SE.	t
--	-------	-----	---

difficulties in communication	.431***	.035	12.27
time spent	-.067**	.026	-2.60
parent's age	.005	.004	1.21
parent's gender (ref.=female)	-.152**	.055	-2.78
parent's education	.016	.029	0.56
number of children	.156***	.035	4.48
household income	-3.93e-05	3.72e-05	-1.06
net assets	2.82e-04	3.20e-04	0.88
period of a single parent	-.029	.038	-0.78
constant	1.591***	.282	5.65
R <sup>2</sup>	.186		
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.178		
F(sig.)	23.86***		
N	949		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Second, as shown in Table 5-2, the regression analysis results for single parents with children aged 13-17 and parenting stress show that they are similar to single parents with children aged 7-12. Specifically, the explanatory power of the independent variables for the dependent variable, childrearing stress, is 20.5% ( $R^2 = .205$ ), and the research model is found to be suitable ( $F = 43.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, the independent variables, communication (Coef. = .416,  $p < .001$ ) and time spent together (Coef. = -.124,  $p < .001$ ), are presented to have a significant effect on single-parent parenting stress, which is the same result as the group with children aged 7-12. However, in the influence of time spent with children on the parenting stress of single parents, the group of 13-17-year-old is 1.85 times greater than the group of 7-12-year-old. As control variables, the gender (Coef. = -.137,  $p < .001$ ) and the number of children (Coef. = .062,  $p < .05$ ) of single parents are found to have a significant effect on

childrearing stress, which is the same as the group with children aged 7-12. However, the influence of the number of children on single-parent parenting stress is relatively small for single parents in the group of 13-17-year-old, 40% of that in the group of 7-12-year-old. On the contrary, parent's age, parent's educational background, household income, and net household assets do not have a significant effect on the parenting stress of single parents as in the 7-12-year-old child group.

**Table 5-2. Effect on Parenting Stress (aged 13 to 17)**

	Coef.	SE.	t
difficulties in communication	.416***	.025	16.42
time spent	-.124***	.019	-6.39
parent's age	.004	.003	1.65
parent's gender (ref.=female)	-.137***	.042	-3.28
parent's education	.011	.023	0.46
number of children	.062*	.029	2.17
household income	-5.7e-05	.29e-04	-1.96
net assets	5.7e-05	2.19e-04	0.26
period of a S. P.	-.028	.027	-1.04
constant	2.003***	.202	9.89
R <sup>2</sup>	.205		
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.200		
F(sig.)	43.58***		
N	1,535		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Finally, as shown in Table 5-3, the results of regression analysis and the difficulties in providing career guidance of single parents with children aged 13 to 17 years are generally

similar to the results of stress on parenting. The independent variables' explanatory power for the difficulty in providing children's career guidance, the dependent variable, is 13.3% ( $R^2=.133$ ), and the research model is found to be suitable ( $F=25.90$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In addition, independent variables, communication (Coef.=.323,  $p<.001$ ) and time spent together (Coef.=-.107,  $p<.001$ ), are presented to have a significant effect on the difficulty of single-parent children's career guidance. In other words, the more difficult it is to communicate with children, the more difficult it is for single parents to guide their children's careers, and the more time they spend with their children, the less difficult it is. As control variables, single parent's gender (Coef.=-.154,  $p<.001$ ) and the number of children (Coef.=.061,  $p<.05$ ) are found to have a significant effect on the difficulty in providing career guidance. This means that when a single parent is female, the more children they have, the more difficult it is for single parents to guide their children. On the other hand, parent's age, parent's educational background, household income, and net household assets do not have a significant effect on the difficulty in providing the career guidance of single-parent children, showing the same results as in the previous two analyses.

**Table 5-3. Effect on Difficulty in Providing the Career Guidance (DV2) (aged 13 to 17)**

	Coef.	SE.	t
difficulties in communication	.323***	.026	12.34
time spent	-.107***	.020	-5.35
parent's age	-.002	.003	-0.57
parent's gender (ref.=female)	-.154***	.043	-3.58
parent's education	-.009	.024	-0.36
number of children	.061*	.029	2.09
household income	-4.46e-06	.3e-04	-0.15
net asset	7.74e-06	2.26e-04	0.03
period of a S. P.	-.004	.028	-0.15



constant	2.624***	.209	12.56
R <sup>2</sup>	.133		
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.128		
F(sig.)	25.90***		
N	1,535		

*\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Taken together, the types of the independent and control variables that significantly influence the dependent variables are the same in all three regression analyses. In other words, communication with children, time spent together, parent’s gender, and the number of children have a significant effect on the stress from childrearing and the difficulty of child career guidance. However, the control variables of parent’s age, parent's educational background, household income, and net household assets do not significantly affect the dependent variables.

## □ Discussion & Conclusion

This study aims to verify the effect of the time single parents spend with their children and the level of communication with their children on the single parents' parenting difficulties. For this purpose of analysis, the original data of the 2018 Single-parent Family Survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family were used, and the results of the analysis are as follows.

First, the analysis indicates that the more difficult it is to communicate with children, the more stress single parents experience in raising children. The more time single parents

spend with their children, the less stress they experience in parenting children. In addition, it is found that the difficulty of communicating with children has more effect on the stress of parenting children than the time spent with them.

Second, when the single parent is female, or the number of children increases, single parents are more likely to experience stress in raising children. However, the age of single parents, the educational background of single parents, the period of becoming single parents, household income, and net assets of single parents do not significantly affect the stress of parenting children.

Third, the first and the second results are the same as single parents with children aged 7-12 or single parents with children aged 13-17, and the above results are also found for the difficulty in providing their children's career guidance.

The implications based on the analysis results of the study are as follows.

Among the eight questions representing the difficulty of parenting children in this survey data, "stress from childrearing" and "difficulty in child career guidance," which were suitable for this research and with the highest percentage of responses as difficult, were set as variables indicating difficulties in parenting children. As shown in the results above, the result of using stress from parenting as a dependent variable and the result of using difficulty in child career guidance as a dependent variable have only slightly different coefficients, but the same direction and significance. Therefore, it can be inferred that the degree of communication with children or time with children is a major variable influencing the difficulty of parenting children.

Until now, the Korean government's public policies for supporting single-parent families have been primarily centered on providing child care subsidies or improving the economic conditions of single-parent families (e.g., food assistance, housing subsidies, job

training, and tax credits). They have not paid much attention to single-parent families' various social and psychological conditions. Of course, financial support is essential for addressing single-parent families' parenting challenges because it is often mentioned that various childrearing difficulties faced by single-parent families are interrelated to their economic situations. However, this study focused on two underlying factors leading to parenting difficulties— (1) a lack of communication with children and (2) a lack of time spent with children. The findings suggest that public policies and service programs are needed to help or support for single parents' parenting difficulties in social relationships with their children. In doing so, single parents can learn the importance of securing time with their children and have opportunities to interact with their children and facilitating communication with their children to solve the challenges of parenting their children as a single parent.

If so, what kinds of specific policies and services can be discussed? First, for single parents to increase the amount of time they spend with their children, policy intervention to solve the problem of single parents' lack of time must precede. For example, in the workplace, there may be ways to guarantee time with children by granting single parents the right to take paid leave with their children or by expanding policies that reduce single parent housework, such as dispatching housekeepers. In addition, single parents are likely to lose psychological composure due to changes in the family structure and increased role burden, and may not be able to lead to conversations with their children due to a lack of communication skills with them (Heo, 2018). Therefore, to facilitate high-quality interaction with children, policies that provide technical education, psychological counseling support, and family activity programs can be considered. In this way, related governmental agencies and non-profit organizations can develop policies or social service programs that allow single parents to spend time with their children and communicate smoothly.

## □ **Limitations of this study**

Although this study provides theoretical and practical insight into the research regarding drivers behind single parents' parenting difficulties in Korea, it still has some limitations. First, the analyses show that the time spent with children and the level of communication had an effect on the difficulty of parenting children of single parents. However, since the correlation analysis or OLS regression analysis used in this analysis does not reveal the causal relationship, it is difficult to conclude that these independent variables cause difficulties in parenting children. Nevertheless, the lack of time and communication with children could be one of the reasons that cause difficulties in parenting children of single parents, and further research is needed to clarify this causal relationship.

Second, the research findings are limited by a cross-sectional single observable quantitative survey data conducted by Korean government agencies. Since it is data on single parents in Korea, it may be difficult to generalize this study to other countries, such as the United States and other European countries, that do not share socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. Also, the results of this study can only be applied in 2018. This weakness can be overcome by analyzing it with longitudinal analysis with time series data more than three times in the future. Future research is needed to clarify the dynamic trajectory of the impact of communication and time spent on perceived levels of parenting difficulties by employing multiple case studies and mixed methods.

Lastly, there is a limit to the use of variables that come from the use of the single-parent family survey, which is the data of this research. Specifically, first, only the amount of time a single parent spends with his or her child was surveyed, and not for the quality of time. A parent and children spend time together, but there may be negative times they spend fighting each other or meaningless times they just spend together without any interaction, so

it is necessary to measure the time they spend together in more detail. Second, before conducting this study, the dependent variables of regression analysis, 'stress from child rearing' and 'difficulty in child career guidance', were defined as difficulties in parenting children. However, difficulties in parenting children include various factors such as academic performance, sexual problems, and health problems, and cannot be defined only in the above two. Still, this research represents the difficulties of parenting children with "stress from childrearing" and "difficulty in child career guidance" that respondents most sympathized with, and it is necessary to take this into account.

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