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[LETTER]

Young Carers as Unanticipated Students: Library Collections and Information Access in Japanese Universities

IMOTO Saori[1]

< Abstract >

This study examines young-carer-related materials in Japanese university libraries through analyses of C codes and the Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC). Although most materials are classified within the social sciences, they span multiple disciplines and formats. Disciplinary biases in collection development may reduce access to information for university student carers, who are often difficult to identify. Enhancing multidisciplinary collections can support student awareness and function as a form of quiet, anonymous student support.

Key words: young carers Information access Library collections

1. Introduction

In recent years, young carers have received increasing attention as an important social issue. In Japan, the presence of children and young people who provide care for family members has gradually become more visible, and discussions regarding the need for support have developed primarily in the fields of education and social welfare. More recently, media coverage has further stimulated public debate, and social awareness of young carers has steadily increased.

In contrast, young carers at university are more difficult to identify than those in high school or younger and tend to remain less visible within existing support systems. This invisibility arises not only from young carers' tendency to regard caregiving as a natural family responsibility, but also from structural features of higher education. Unlike primary and secondary education, universities do not operate under a homeroom teacher system, making it difficult for institutions to identify students' circumstances unless self-disclosed. Furthermore, caregiving responsibilities may hinder access to higher education, resulting in a relatively small number of university student young carers[1)]. Consequently, awareness of student young carers and the development of support structures within universities have remained limited.

Thus, despite growing social recognition of young carers in general, their presence within universities continues to be difficult to

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visualize.

In previous work, the author analyzed holdings of young-carer-related materials in Japanese university libraries and demonstrated that availability varied significantly according to institutional size and academic specialization[2]. However, these disparities cannot be attributed solely to differences in collection size; they also raise broader questions about how university libraries conceptualize their student populations and which social issues they choose to address.

Building on this prior study, the present research analyzes the C codes and Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC) numbers assigned to the 59 previously examined young-carer-related materials. The study focuses on the following questions:

Which subject areas do these materials fall under?

What readership is targeted in their publication?

In addition, this study explores the potential significance of library materials in contexts where young carers remain difficult to identify and considers how collection development may function as part of student support.

2. Methods

Of the 59 young-carer-related materials examined in the previous study, 55 books were selected for analysis. For each item, publisher-assigned C codes and NDC numbers assigned by the National Diet Library were collected. C codes indicate the intended readership and subject area as conceived by publishers, whereas NDC numbers are assigned by library professionals based on subject matter. Three of the 55 books did not have C codes assigned.

3. Results

3-1. Analysis of C Codes

Among the 52 items with assigned C codes, general books comprised the largest group (28 items), while specialist books accounted for 11 items. This indicates that many young-carer-related materials are intended not only for professionals but also for a broad readership, including the general public. Children's books and general-interest works were also identified, suggesting the presence of resources aimed at young carers themselves and their supporters.

【Table 1. Subject Areas and Content Based on C Codes】

Subject Area / Content	Number of Items
Philosophy	1
Psychology	3
General Social Sciences	1
Politics	1
Law	2
Society	30
Education	3
Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy	3
Housekeeping	1
Comics	2
English Language	1
Japanese Literature	2
Criticism / Essays	1
Foreign Literature	1

Of the 52 items, 30 were classified under "Society," indicating that young-carer issues are primarily addressed within a social-scientific context. Materials spanning psychology, education, law, medicine, literature, and comics were also identified,

reflecting the cross-disciplinary nature of the topic. Notably, three items were classified under medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy in the C code system; however, these same items were not categorized within the medical field under NDC (Table 2).

Discrepancies between publisher-assigned C codes and library-assigned NDC numbers suggest that interpretations of subject matter differ, which may influence acquisition decisions and collection development in university libraries.

【Table 2. NDC Classification of Young-Carer-Related Materials】

NDC Classification (Assigned Numbers)	Number of Items
Class 1: Philosophy & Psychology (146)	2
Class 3: Social Sciences (316, 364, 367, 369, 375)	45
Class 5: Technology & Home Economics (598)	1
Class 7: Arts & Manga (726)	4
Class 8: Language (837)	1
Class 9: Literature (913)	2

3-2. Analysis of NDC

Under NDC, 45 of the 55 items were classified within social sciences, confirming that young-carer issues are most frequently framed in relation to social welfare, family studies, and education. Nevertheless, some materials were assigned to non-social-science categories such as psychology, home economics, arts, language, and literature, further demonstrating the multi-disciplinary nature of these materials.

4. Discussion

The analysis of C codes and NDC demonstrates that young-carer-related materials, while centered on social sciences, extend across multiple fields including psychology, education, medicine, and literature. They are published in diverse formats, such as general-interest books, specialist monographs, and comics, and are intended for a broad audience, including experts, young carers, and the general public. These findings reflect the multi-dimensional nature of young-carer issues.

Smaller universities tend to hold fewer young-carer-related materials, suggesting that collection development may be biased toward institutional academic specializations. Under such conditions, differences between C code and NDC interpretations may result in the exclusion of relevant materials from university library collections. For instance, items classified as medical under C codes were categorized as non-medical under NDC, which may explain their absence from nursing-focused university libraries.

University student young carers are inherently difficult to identify due to both caregiving responsibilities and the structural characteristics of higher education. Previous caregiving experience has been reported to affect later career development; a survey by the Japan Research Institute found that 4.0% of university students had prior caregiving experience[1]). University libraries, being freely accessible and allowing anonymous use, provide rare opportunities for students to access information. Library materials can therefore serve as an initial point through which young carers recognize their circumstances, deepen their understanding, and connect with available support.

These findings suggest that collections focused solely on specialized academic fields

are insufficient for serving students with diverse backgrounds. By ensuring access to materials addressing students' social and life-related challenges, university libraries can function not only as scholarly information providers but also as spaces that acknowledge and support student diversity. Developing multi-disciplinary collections can thus be seen as a form of "quiet support" offered by university libraries.

5. Conclusion

This study examined C codes and NDC numbers assigned to young-carer-related materials held in Japanese university libraries, focusing on disciplinary placement and intended readership. The results show that, although these materials are primarily situated within social sciences, they also span fields such as psychology, education, medicine, and literature, and are published in a range of formats from general-interest books to specialist works and comics. This underscores that young-carer issues cannot be fully captured within a single academic discipline.

University library collections tend to be oriented toward institutional specializations, and in combination with differences between C code and NDC classification practices, multi-disciplinary materials may be insufficiently acquired. This bias in collection development can further restrict access to information for university student young carers, a group already characterized by high invisibility.

University libraries are freely and anonymously accessible to all students. Enhancing young-carer-related collections can therefore serve as a form of "quiet support," helping students recognize and better understand their situations and seek assistance. Revisiting discipline-centered collection policies and ensuring access to multi-disciplinary materials addressing students' social and life-related challenges is essential for university libraries to fulfill their roles both as providers of academic information and as supportive environments for students from diverse backgrounds.

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[LETTER]

General Consideration of Revenue Decline in Academic Research-Oriented Nonprofit Organizations in Japan

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< Abstract >

This study examines the revenue structure of academic research-oriented nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Japan and analyzes the challenges associated with financial sustainability. Japanese academic NPOs rely on diversified funding sources, including membership fees, donations, grants, commissioned research, consulting services, and intellectual property utilization. However, excessive dependence on project-based competitive funding has increased financial instability and organizational vulnerability. By reviewing previous studies on nonprofit management and public service provision, this paper argues that diversified fundraising strategies and cross-sector partnerships are essential for sustainable organizational management. The study further highlights the importance of transparency, institutional credibility, and the social dissemination of research outcomes in strengthening financial foundations. The findings suggest that academic NPOs should develop balanced revenue portfolios combining flexible private funding with competitive public resources to maintain long-term research capacity and public trust.

Key words: Academic Research-Oriented NPOs Fundraising Financial Sustainability

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Specified nonprofit corporations (NPOs) in Japan expanded rapidly following the enactment of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities in 1998 [1)]. The institutionalization of nonprofit corporations reflected broader transformations within Japanese society, including the decentralization of public services, the diversification of social needs, and increasing recognition of civil society organizations as important providers of public-interest activities. Unlike for-profit corporations, nonprofit organizations prioritize social missions and public contributions over profit distribution [2)]. Consequently, nonprofit organizations have emerged as significant actors in fields such as welfare, healthcare, education, environmental conservation, international cooperation, and scientific research.

Among various nonprofit sectors, academic research-oriented NPOs occupy a particularly important position because they contribute to production, dissemination, and social

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application of knowledge. These organizations engage in a wide range of activities, including medical and healthcare research, environmental studies, educational development, policy analysis, technological innovation, and interdisciplinary social research. In many cases, academic research-oriented NPOs function as alternative research institutions that complement universities and governmental agencies by conducting independent and socially oriented research projects.

However, despite their growing social importance, academic research-oriented NPOs have recently encountered severe financial difficulties. Japanese nonprofit organizations generally operate within structurally fragile financial environments characterized by limited philanthropic traditions and high dependence on unstable project-based funding [4]. Compared with nonprofit sectors in North America and Europe, Japanese nonprofit organizations receive relatively low levels of private donations and philanthropic support. Consequently, many organizations rely heavily on business income, commissioned services, and competitive grants to maintain their activities.

This tendency is especially problematic for academic research-oriented NPOs because research activities frequently require long-term investment, stable personnel arrangements, and flexible funding structures. Competitive grant systems often prioritize short-term outcomes and measurable performance indicators, thereby limiting the capacity of nonprofit organizations to conduct exploratory or interdisciplinary research projects. Moreover, unstable financial foundations make it difficult for organizations to recruit and retain highly qualified researchers and administrative professionals.

The financial instability of academic research-oriented NPOs has broader implications for Japanese society. These organizations contribute not only to academic knowledge production but also to public education, policy advocacy, and community-based problem solving. Therefore, declining revenue structures may weaken civil society's capacity to address increasingly complex social issues through independent research and collaborative innovation.

1.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the declining revenue structures of academic research-oriented NPOs in Japan. Specifically, the paper aims to clarify the structural causes of financial instability, examine the characteristics of major revenue sources, and identify the organizational challenges associated with sustainable nonprofit research activities.

In addition, the study seeks to evaluate the significance of diversified fundraising strategies and institutional support mechanisms, including certified nonprofit corporation systems, university-industry partnerships, and competitive research funding programs. By integrating discussions from nonprofit studies, public administration, and research policy analysis, this paper aims to contribute to the broader understanding of nonprofit sustainability within knowledge-

based societies.

1.3 Structure and Main Argument

This paper is organized into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section reviews previous studies concerning nonprofit financial structures, fundraising systems, and research sustainability. The third section analyzes the revenue composition of academic research-oriented NPOs and examines the structural causes of declining revenue. The fourth section discusses the implications of these findings for nonprofit governance, publicness, and civil society development. Finally, the fifth section summarizes the study's conclusions and proposes future research directions.

The principal argument advanced in this paper is that academic research-oriented NPOs cannot maintain sustainable research activities through dependence on a single funding source. Rather, organizational sustainability requires a multidimensional funding model integrating donations, membership fees, competitive grants, commissioned projects, and self-generated business income. Furthermore, institutional trust, transparency, and intersectoral collaboration are indispensable conditions for strengthening nonprofit financial sustainability.

2. Literature Review

Research concerning nonprofit organizations has emphasized the importance of financial structures for organizational sustainability and public legitimacy. Yamauchi (2002) argued that Japanese nonprofit organizations differ significantly from their Western counterparts because they operate within relatively weak philanthropic environments characterized by limited private donation culture and insufficient institutional support [2]. According to Yamauchi, Japanese nonprofit organizations compensate for this structural weakness by relying heavily on business income and commissioned activities.

Similarly, Yamauchi (1999) demonstrated that the financial structures of Japanese nonprofit organizations are characterized by excessive dependence on self-generated income rather than donations or endowments [4]. This structural tendency reflects broader institutional and cultural conditions within Japanese society, including limited tax incentives for donations and historically strong governmental dominance over public service provision.

Ushiro (2009) further argued that the financial vulnerability of nonprofit organizations undermines their capacity to provide stable and independent public services [5]. According to Ushiro, nonprofit organizations often experience tensions between organizational missions and revenue-generating activities because financial pressures encourage organizations to prioritize economically profitable projects over socially necessary but less profitable activities.

Research on nonprofit governance has also highlighted the importance of transparency and public trust. Tanaka (2017) emphasized that certified nonprofit corporation systems contribute significantly to organizational legitimacy by promoting accountability, tax incentives, and donor confidence [7]. However,

Tanaka also noted that certification procedures impose substantial administrative burdens on small and medium-sized nonprofit organizations.

In the field of research policy, studies have examined the growing dependence of research institutions on competitive grant systems. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2024) reported increasing competition within Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI), with declining acceptance rates intensifying financial instability among research organizations dependent on external funding [6]. Although competitive grants stimulate research productivity and innovation, scholars have criticized these systems for encouraging short-term evaluation standards and discouraging long-term fundamental research.

Furthermore, previous studies concerning nonprofit labor conditions have identified chronic shortages of professional personnel within Japanese nonprofit sectors. Financial instability frequently results in low salaries, unstable employment contracts, and excessive workloads, thereby contributing to high turnover rates among nonprofit staff members [3]. This issue is particularly severe for academic research-oriented NPOs because research activities require highly specialized expertise and long-term institutional continuity.

While previous studies have examined nonprofit finance, governance, and research policy independently, relatively few studies have comprehensively analyzed the declining revenue structures of academic research-oriented NPOs from the perspective of organizational sustainability. Therefore, this paper contributes to existing literature by integrating discussions of nonprofit finance, publicness, and research sustainability within a unified analytical framework.

3. Analysis

3.1 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative literature review methodology based on academic publications, governmental reports, policy documents, and institutional analyses concerning nonprofit organizations in Japan. The analysis focuses specifically on financial structures, fundraising systems, organizational sustainability, and research policy affecting academic research-oriented NPOs.

Rather than conducting quantitative statistical analysis, the paper emphasizes theoretical interpretation and institutional examination. This methodological approach is appropriate because the objective of the study is to clarify structural characteristics and conceptual relationships within nonprofit financial systems.

3.2 Characteristics of Revenue Structures

Academic research-oriented NPOs generally maintain diversified but unstable revenue structures composed of membership fees, donations, subsidies, competitive research grants, commissioned projects, consulting services, publication sales, and educational programs. However, the relative importance of each revenue source differs significantly depending on organizational size, research specialization, and institutional

networks.

Membership fees represent one of the most stable and flexible funding sources available to nonprofit organizations. Because membership fees are generally unrestricted, organizations can utilize these resources for administrative operations, exploratory research activities, personnel development, and long-term strategic planning. In much academic research-oriented NPOs, membership systems also function as mechanisms for building intellectual communities and strengthening public engagement.

Donations constitute another important source of flexible funding. However, Japanese nonprofit organizations receive substantially lower levels of donation income compared with nonprofit organizations in Western countries [4]. This tendency reflects structural limitations within Japanese civil society, including insufficient philanthropic traditions and limited public awareness of nonprofit activities.

Competitive grants and subsidies represent essential financial resources for research-oriented organizations. Programs such as KAKENHI provide significant funding opportunities for nonprofit researchers and research groups [6]. Nevertheless, competitive funding systems also generate substantial instability because acceptance rates remain relatively low and funding periods are typically limited. Furthermore, many grant programs prioritize measurable short-term outcomes, thereby discouraging exploratory and interdisciplinary research projects.

Business income has therefore become increasingly important for nonprofit sustainability. Academic research-oriented NPOs frequently generate revenue through commissioned research projects, consulting services, seminars, training programs, and publication activities. These activities allow organizations to convert specialized expertise into financial resources while simultaneously contributing to social education and public problem solving.

However, excessive dependence on business income may create tensions between organizational missions and financial objectives. Nonprofit organizations that prioritize revenue-generating activities may gradually weaken their commitment to public-interest research and social advocacy. Consequently, maintaining an appropriate balance between financial sustainability and nonprofit publicness represents a central challenge for academic research-oriented organizations.

3.3 Human Resource Problems and Organizational Sustainability

Financial instability is closely connected to human resource challenges within nonprofit organizations. Academic research-oriented NPOs require highly specialized personnel capable of conducting advanced research, managing organizational administration, securing external funding, and engaging in public communication. However, unstable financial conditions frequently prevent organizations from offering competitive salaries and secure employment opportunities.

As a result, nonprofit organizations often experience high turnover rates among researchers and administrative staff members. This problem is particularly serious because

research activities depend heavily on accumulated expertise, institutional memory, and long-term collaborative relationships. Frequent personnel changes therefore undermine both research continuity and organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, financial pressures may increase dependence on volunteer labor and short-term contractual employment. Although volunteer participation constitutes an important aspect of civil society activities, excessive reliance on unpaid labor may reduce organizational professionalism and limit the capacity for sustained research activities.

3.4 Diversification Strategies

In response to these challenges, diversification of funding sources has become increasingly important for nonprofit sustainability. Membership expansion strategies, recurring donation programs, and certified nonprofit corporation systems may strengthen flexible funding capacity and public trust.

In addition, academic research-oriented NPOs can strengthen financial sustainability through partnerships with universities, corporations, governmental agencies, and international organizations. Collaborative research projects and interdisciplinary initiatives allow nonprofit organizations to access broader financial, intellectual, and institutional resources.

Digital fundraising methods, including crowdfunding and online donation campaigns, also represent emerging opportunities for nonprofit organizations. These methods may enhance public participation and facilitate communication between nonprofit organizations and broader civil society audiences.

Moreover, intellectual property utilization constitutes an increasingly significant revenue source for research-oriented organizations. Patents, copyrights, licensing agreements, and educational materials allow nonprofit organizations to convert research output into sustainable financial resources while maintaining public-oriented missions.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the financial instability experienced by academic research-oriented NPOs reflects broader structural limitations within Japanese civil society and research systems. Compared with Western countries, Japan maintains relatively limited traditions of private philanthropy and civic fundraising. Consequently, nonprofit organizations often operate within fragile financial environments characterized by unstable project-based funding.

This structural condition creates significant tensions between nonprofit publicness and market-oriented revenue generation. On the one hand, business income contributes to organizational survival and operational stability. On the other hand, excessive commercialization may weaken organizational independence and shift priorities away from public-interested activities.

Academic research-oriented NPOs face particularly complex challenges because research activities require long-term investment and intellectual autonomy. Short-

term project funding may support immediate operational needs but often fails to provide sufficient stability for fundamental or interdisciplinary research.

The analysis also highlights the importance of institutional trust and transparency. Certified nonprofit corporation systems play an important role in strengthening organizational legitimacy and encouraging donation-based fundraising. However, institutional certification alone cannot solve structural financial problems unless broader societal support for nonprofit activities expands.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that collaboration represents a crucial strategy for nonprofit sustainability. Partnerships with universities, corporations, and governmental agencies not only provide financial resources but also facilitate knowledge exchange, technological innovation, and public engagement. Such intersectoral cooperation may strengthen both organizational capacity and social impact.

At the same time, nonprofit organizations must maintain careful governance structures to preserve independence and public accountability. Excessive dependence on governmental contracts or corporate sponsorship may compromise organizational autonomy and weaken critical research functions.

Ultimately, the sustainability of academic research-oriented NPOs depends on the establishment of balanced funding systems capable of supporting both organizational stability and intellectual independence. Strengthening civil society infrastructure, expanding public understanding of nonprofit research activities, and improving institutional support mechanisms therefore represent essential policy challenges for contemporary Japan.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Main Findings

This paper examined the declining revenue structures of academic research-oriented nonprofit organizations in Japan. The analysis demonstrated that Japanese nonprofit organizations operate within structurally fragile financial environments characterized by limited donation culture, excessive dependence on business income, intensified competition for research grants, and chronic shortages of professional personnel.

The study also revealed that academic research-oriented NPOs face unique sustainability challenges because research activities require long-term investment, specialized expertise, and intellectual autonomy. While business-oriented activities contribute to organizational survival, excessive dependence on commercial revenue may weaken nonprofit publicness and constrain independent research activities.

5.2 Academic and Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that sustainable nonprofit research activities require multidimensional funding systems integrating donations, membership fees, competitive grants, commissioned projects, and intellectual property utilization. In addition, institutional transparency, certified nonprofit

systems, and intersectoral partnerships are essential mechanisms for strengthening organizational legitimacy and financial sustainability.

From a practical perspective, nonprofit organizations should pursue balanced fundraising portfolios that combine flexible funding sources with stable project-based revenues. Furthermore, policymakers should expand institutional support systems capable of promoting long-term nonprofit research activities and strengthening civil society infrastructure.

5.3 Prospects and Remaining Challenges

Future research should conduct comparative analyses between Japanese nonprofit systems and nonprofit sectors in Europe and North America to clarify the distinctive institutional characteristics of Japanese civil society. In addition, empirical case studies examining successful fundraising strategies among academic research-oriented NPOs would contribute significantly to nonprofit management research.

Moreover, emerging fundraising mechanisms such as digital crowdfunding, social impact investment, and online membership systems require further scholarly examination. As contemporary societies become increasingly dependent on knowledge production and collaborative problem solving, academic research-oriented NPOs are likely to assume increasingly important roles within democratic civil society.

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[SHORT NOTE]

Comparison of Waist Circumference Changes Between Same-Day Company-Based Specific Health Guidance and Later Facility-Based Guidance

TANAKA Cocoa[3] KIYOKAWA Takuma[4]

< Abstract >

This study compared changes in waist circumference between participants who received Specific Health Guidance on the same day as their health checkup and those who received counseling at a later visit. The study included 96 individuals classified as requiring motivational support in 2023. Participants were divided into a same-day group (n = 71) and a later-visit group (n = 25). Waist circumference and body weight were measured at baseline and after three months. The mean reduction in waist circumference was −0.37 cm in the same-day group and −3.4 cm in the later-visit group. Counseling records suggested that participants in the later-visit group had stronger motivation for behavioral change. The findings indicate that intervention timing and participant readiness may influence the effectiveness of Specific Health Guidance.

Key words: Specific Health Guidance Waist Circumference Behavioral Change

1. Introduction

The Specific Health Guidance program was introduced in Japan in 2008 to prevent lifestyle-related diseases. Among participants classified as requiring “motivational support,” lifestyle modification is encouraged to reduce future metabolic risk. In practice, health guidance may be provided either on the day of the health checkup or at a later scheduled visit. However, little is known about how the timing of intervention affects behavioral change and health outcomes. This study aimed to compare changes in waist circumference and body weight between participants who received guidance on the same day as their health checkup and those who received guidance at a later visit. In addition, the study examined how readiness for behavioral change may influence intervention effectiveness.

2. Methods

The study included individuals who underwent specific health checkups in 2023 and were classified as requiring motivational support. In Company A, participants received counseling immediately after the physician’s

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explanation of the health checkup results (same-day group). In the Association setting, participants reviewed their results and voluntarily scheduled counseling later (later-visit group).

Counseling was conducted individually in both groups and included assessment of dietary and exercise habits as well as goal setting for lifestyle improvement. Waist circumference and body weight were measured at baseline and again three months later. The primary outcome was change in waist circumference.

A total of 96 participants were analyzed, including 71 in the same-day group and 25 in the later-visit group. All data were anonymized and securely managed.

3. Results

After three months, the mean reduction in waist circumference was −0.37 cm in the same-day group and −3.4 cm in the later-visit group. Participants who received counseling at a later visit showed greater improvement in waist circumference than those who received counseling on the same day as the health checkup. Body weight reduction showed a similar tendency.

Counseling records also suggested differences in participant motivation. Individuals in the later-visit group frequently expressed strong willingness to improve their health, whereas some participants in the same-day group reported limited time, low interest, or difficulty concentrating during the counseling session.

4. Discussion

Participants who received counseling at a later visit demonstrated greater improvement in waist circumference than those who received same-day counseling. One possible explanation is that individuals who voluntarily scheduled counseling had higher readiness for behavioral change and stronger intrinsic motivation. According to the transtheoretical model, many may have already been in the preparation or action stages.

In contrast, same-day counseling included participants regardless of readiness for change, including individuals in the precontemplation or contemplation stages. Furthermore, health checkups are often conducted during busy work schedules, limiting participants' ability to fully engage in counseling.

Nevertheless, same-day counseling remains valuable because it ensures broad intervention coverage and may serve as an important trigger for future behavioral change. To improve effectiveness, strategies such as advance information sharing, active physician recommendation, motivational educational materials, and ICT-based follow-up systems may be beneficial.

5. Conclusion

The timing of Specific Health Guidance may influence short-term improvements in waist circumference. Participants who received counseling at a later visit achieved greater

reductions, possibly due to stronger motivation and readiness for behavioral change. However, same-day interventions remain important for maximizing participation and promoting early awareness. Future approaches should focus not only on intervention timing but also on methods to enhance participant motivation and sustained behavioral change.

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[SHORT NOTE]

Impact of the Transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4 on Waist Circumference Changes Among Participants Receiving Same-Day Motivational Support in Specific Health Guidance

YANAGIDA Rina[5] KIYOKAWA Takuma[6]

< Abstract >

This study examined the impact of the transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4 of Japan's Specific Health Guidance program on same-day health guidance outcomes at Company A. Participants requiring motivational support who completed the program in 2023 or 2024 were included. The completion rate increased from 82.9% in 2023 to 90.0% in 2024. Mean waist circumference changed from +0.37 cm in 2023 to −0.36 cm in 2024. The improved outcomes may be associated with the shortened support period and earlier follow-up intervention introduced in Phase 4. These findings suggest that the revised program contributed to improved participant outcomes.

Key words: Specific Health Guidance Motivational Support Waist Circumference

1. Introduction

Japan introduced the nationwide system of Specific Health Checkups and Specific Health Guidance in 2008 as a major policy initiative to prevent lifestyle-related diseases and control healthcare expenditures. In 2024, the fourth phase of the program was implemented, introducing several operational revisions, including a reduction in the support period and changes in evaluation indicators. In particular, the shortening of the support period from six months to three months may influence participant engagement and the effectiveness of behavioral modification.

This study aimed to examine the impact of the transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4 on the effectiveness of same-day health guidance conducted at Company A in 2023 and 2024. Changes in waist circumference, an important indicator associated with metabolic syndrome, were evaluated.

2. Methods

The study included 177 participants who underwent health checkups at Company A in 2023 and 2024, were classified as requiring motivational support under the Specific Health Guidance program and completed the program successfully.

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In 2023, 94 individuals received health guidance, and 78 participants completed the program (completion rate: 82.9%). In 2024, 110 individuals received health guidance, and 99 participants completed the program (completion rate: 90.0%). Completion rates and changes in waist circumference were compared between the two years.

All data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality. Participants were informed both orally and in writing that their data would be used exclusively for research purposes, and ethical considerations were appropriately addressed.

3. Results

The completion rate increased from 82.9% in 2023 to 90.0% in 2024. Among program completers, the mean change in waist circumference was +0.37 cm in 2023 and −0.36 cm in 2024.

These findings indicate improved waist circumference outcomes in 2024 compared with 2023, suggesting that the revised program implemented during Phase 4 may have enhanced the effectiveness of health guidance.

4. Discussion

The results demonstrated greater improvement in waist circumference in 2024 than in 2023. One possible explanation is that the shortened support period in Phase 4 enabled participants to establish more concrete and achievable short-term goals, thereby promoting behavioral change within a manageable timeframe.

In addition, our association modified the timing of follow-up email support during the intervention period. Under Phase 3, follow-up emails were sent three months after the initial consultation, whereas under Phase 4 they were sent approximately one and a half months afterward. This earlier intervention may have reinforced participant awareness and motivation during the early stages of behavioral change.

However, the shorter support period may also create challenges in maintaining lifestyle improvements after completion of the program. Therefore, it is important to support participants in establishing realistic long-term goals at the end of the intervention to sustain motivation and healthy behaviors.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the Phase 4 revisions, including the shortened support period and earlier follow-up intervention, contributed to higher completion rates and improved waist circumference outcomes. Further studies are needed to evaluate the long-term sustainability of these effects and to identify strategies for strengthening health guidance beyond the official support period.

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