

# **Analysis of Differentials across Municipalities in Regional Job Support Program: Based on the Survey in Osaka Prefecture**

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ISS Discussion Paper Series  
F-194  
November 2019

Key words: Regional Job Support Program, Differentials across Municipalities, Osaka Prefecture

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper was to examine the differences among municipalities with regard to the number of people who find employment through job support programs across Osaka Prefecture—an area that is relatively ahead of the curve in this regard compared to the rest of the country—and investigate how such differences may occur. The investigation was carried out using data from a survey conducted in 2016 across municipalities in Osaka Prefecture. As a result of the analysis, the following points became clear. Firstly, a large difference was found in the relationship between the number of employed persons and various support program factors depending on whether or not the local government had a program plan in place for employment support. The difference was particularly prominent in the relation between the number of employed persons and the number of full-time coordinators and general funds. Secondly, again within the municipalities with program plans in place, when comparing municipalities with many employed persons against those with few, the former was found to have a stronger relationship in which the number of employed persons increased as general funds increased. Furthermore, when confirming the changes in general funds over the past few years, it was found that the disparity tended to widen between municipalities with many employed persons versus those with few. Based on these results, one cause of the disparity between municipalities' job support programs seems to be that the “directions” at which funding is secured are opposite.

## 1. Introduction

In today's Japanese society, there is a large class of people who, despite a desire and willingness to work, face various barriers to employment (employment challenged<sup>1</sup>). How to integrate those with lower levels of education, disabilities, or those who lack stable lifestyles or personal connections into their local communities through employment and other initiatives has become both a social and academic challenge (e.g., Tabata 2006, Sakurai 2009). The creation of job support programs in the early 2000s was one response to this challenge.

Job support programs are aimed at the employment challenged and are “programs in which municipal employment and labor initiatives collaborate with local institutions to provide employment and labor support in order to realize a society in which every individual with a desire or willingness to work is able to do so meaningfully” (Hashimoto 2007: 2).

This paper looks at an employment support and consultation program aimed at employment-challenged individuals in the Osaka Prefecture area, starting in 2002 and beginning in 2003 as the “Osaka Prefecture Local Job support program” (hereinafter the “Job support program”). The program is an Osaka-based job support program developed by the Osaka Prefecture Department of Commerce, Industry and Labor as a new local labor policy directive following decentralization reforms (Nishioka 2017: 177).<sup>2</sup>

Osaka-based job support programs are currently still running, and the number of support cases continues to increase gradually, suggesting that there is still a strong need for such support. However, program initiatives are showing differences in development in each municipality. Such differences are thought to arise out of whether a municipality's local government is able to implement employment support at a policymaking level, including the development of original support programming, recruitment initiatives, and connecting with businesses (Nishioka 2017: 177–8). However, there is still much room for examination regarding how different municipalities differ in their programming initiatives.

This paper thus investigates and clarifies how and why discrepancies in the number of people who are able to find employment through employment support occur across municipalities in Osaka Prefecture, whose job support programs are ahead of the curve compared to the rest of the country. This investigation is based on the results of a survey conducted in 2016. The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the existing research on job support programs and describes the remaining research issues and analysis frameworks. Section 3 explains the data and variables and section 4 details the analysis results of this study. Finally, section 5 discusses the results of the analysis and future considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> “Those who have difficulty finding work” refers to “disabled persons, single mothers, middle-aged and elderly persons, persons from ‘assimilation districts’, etc., who have a desire to work but are unable to find employment” as well as “graduates who have been unemployed since leaving school and are poorly informed regarding work and employment” (Hashimoto 2007: 2). This paper uses “those who have difficulty finding work” and the “employment challenged” to mean the same thing.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to existing research on job support programs for more details (e.g., Okuda 2008; Otani 2002, 2008; Saguchi 2006; City of Toyonaka 2008; Tsutsui et al. (Eds.) 2014).

## 2. Literature review

### 2-1 Degree of effectiveness across municipalities

According to an investigation on the creation and progress of local employment support government initiatives in Osaka Prefecture, one issue that has been identified is the challenge of overcoming differences in the degree of effectiveness of job support programs across localities (Saguchi 2006: 29).<sup>3</sup> The disparity in employment support effectiveness across municipalities has been shown in other studies, as well (e.g., Council on Promotion of Osaka Prefecture Municipal Employment Support Projects 2009). Furthermore, there are studies that point to the existence of “municipalities that show stalling [in their job support programs]” (Fukuhara 2007: 236) and a widening gap between the program and initiative standards of different municipalities (Otani 2008: 26). The causes of such regional disparities and measures that can be taken to overcome them have been identified at the outset of such programs (Council on Promotion of Local Employment Support Projects 2006).

However, while there is a continuing precedent for qualitative, interview-based studies on employment support projects (e.g., Tsutui et al. 2014), quantitative studies looking at the degree of difference in such projects across municipalities and how the differences occur have not been conducted to any sufficient degree. Our survey in 2016 was thus conducted to fill in gaps in the literature. As the disparities in program effectiveness across municipalities mentioned in the above research have likely widened further from the late 2000s to the 2010s, being able to understand the current situation and circumstances that give rise to such differences is now an urgent matter.

For example, according to a study on how several job support programs have been unified as grant subsidy programs (unified counselling program grants), “in municipalities with low performing programs to start with, distribution of grants will be further reduced. As a result, if program activities are insufficient, it becomes difficult to allot the budget according to the number of counselling cases” (Sakurai 2009: 85). This observation suggests a vicious cycle in which the conferring of grants is accompanied by widening disparity among municipality programs.

Such differences across municipalities have also been identified by other studies, with one observing a situation in which “program promotion councils themselves are not in agreement with regard to whether program effectiveness should be evaluated on the basis of the number of counselling cases or how many cases connect with actual employment” (Otani 2008: 27). As will be described later, this paper will, as a starting point, focus its analysis on the number of people who find employment through a program (“employed persons”). For example, one aspect of evaluating program performance could be looking at the number of case workers; cases making use of a center; case workers’ work–life balance; or, depending on the case, looking at work outside of being employed

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<sup>3</sup> Other issues that have been identified include “how programming is coordinated with other programs (for example, when there are separate support policies for single mothers, middle-aged and senior people, young people)” and “creating and securing local jobs” (Saguchi 2006: 29).

(whether in a regular or non-regular position). In other words, the objective of a job support program is not just to help individuals find employment, as individuals may have differing individual goals. Nonetheless, the number of employed persons remains an indispensable indicator of how a support program is doing. This paper will discuss program performance primarily from the aspect of the number of employed persons.<sup>4</sup>

## 2-2 Different factors in job support programs

What factors contribute to performance differences across job support programs? These factors may include how a program is positioned within local government plans (the position of the council and chairman), what the governing agency's internal organization of government programming looks like, the governing agency's external affiliations, the development of outlets for employment, etc. (Sakurai 2016). Of course, while it is important to look at the situation at present (2016, at the time of this study), “[program] outcomes are dependent on what local governments’ past programming has looked like” (Sakurai 2016: 35). For example, the city of Toyonaka positions employment support, which includes building relationships with local businesses as local workplaces, as a matter of policy (Nishioka 2017). A local government that puts time into its program development can expect to see growing results. Of course, because the economic situations and human resources available to job support programs differ greatly across municipalities, it is necessary to exercise caution when drawing conclusions based on overly simple comparisons.

There are other factors that could be considered relevant at the same time as the aforementioned, such as what services are being provided by job support programs; who is providing those services; and the programs’ financing, scope, management history, degree of involvement, etc. The current local political climate (e.g., how much is organized by the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers’ Union and National Federation of Prefectural and Municipal Workers’ Unions) and factors that determine the necessity of policymaking—such as the number of people currently on public assistance, the unemployment rate, and the ratio of job availability—are also relevant when considering the current circumstances surrounding local governments (Sakurai 2017). The complex manner in which these various factors connect results in performance differences across programs. However, it must be noted that “differences or disparities are not necessarily ‘problems’ that must be resolved” (Sakurai 2017: 70). Again, each local government has very different preconditions for implementing job support programs. For this reason, it is necessary for an analysis to focus more on the relation between the number of employed persons and various aspects of job support programs.

## 2-3 Understanding the number of employed persons

With the above in mind, I would like to explore more specific perspectives for comparing employment support-related policies across different municipalities. After going through the existing

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<sup>4</sup> Research on other factors is currently underway in collaboration with research members.

research from my own point of view, this paper will be broadly divided into looking at the systemic and human factors involved.<sup>5</sup>

“Systemic factors” refers to support organizations’ structures (Askim et al. 2017). More specifically, it can refer to a local government’s financial situation, scope, affiliations with support organizations, degree of involvement, and more. On the other hand, “human factors” refers to a support organization’s size (number of centers and staff), number of managers and their level of experience, etc. (Fossetol et al. 2015). Based on these indicators, Figure 1 shows a framework for the number of employed persons.

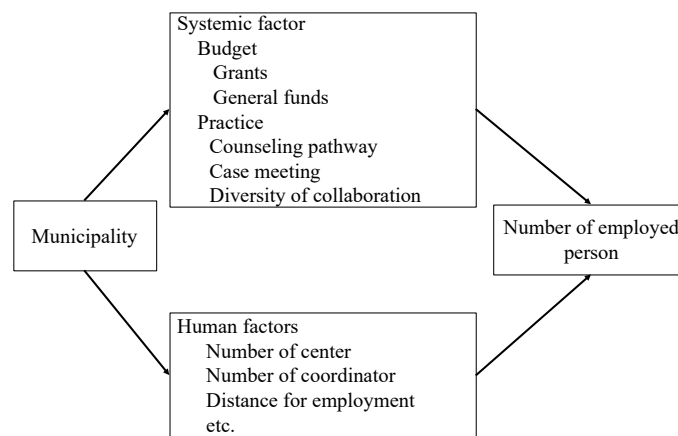


Figure 1 Analytical framework

Though this figure assumes moderate causality, the analysis in section 4 is a limited but thorough look at the relationship between systemic and human factors. It can be understood that the number of employed persons in each municipality differs. This difference signifies what can be assumed to be the influence of systemic and human factors. These two types of factor will be examined in this paper in the following way. For the systemic factors, budget (grants and general funds), the amount of employment support services available, and the frequency of meetings on job support programming in general and cases therein will be used as variables. (Variables are explained in more detail in section 3.2.) For the human factors, the number of coordinators and categorization of clients seeking counsel (young people, seniors, etc.) will be used as variables. As described in section 2.2, while it would be ideal to also take into consideration the specific economic circumstances surrounding each municipality and its policy needs, that is something that this paper is unable to address directly. Because it is not included in the analysis, although it is a factor that influences local government, it is marked with a dotted line arrow.

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<sup>5</sup> This paper does not deal with the socioeconomic factors (unemployment rate, welfare rate, etc.) or political factors (strength of social democratic influences in an area, etc.) as identified by Bonoli (2013). The latter is an issue with regard to the political power of parties in parliament in the context of Japan. An examination of the situation in Osaka Prefecture is subject to future consideration.

## 2-4 The analysis framework

Finally, one must consider how to go about comparing municipalities to one another. Of course, while it is possible to examine each municipality one by one, doing so becomes too complex and unfocused. For this reason, the comparison will be made in two stages. Firstly, a comparison will be made based on whether or not job support program-related program planning is in place (23 municipalities have program plans and 17 do not). Whether or not program planning is in place is the focus because it is an important nexus for determining the direction of job support programming.

In 2000, the Regional Job support program Review Committee was established, and job support programs were launched in the cities of Izumi and Ibaraki as model programs for Osaka Prefecture. Based on a recommendation from the committee, the “(Provisional) Municipal Employment and Labor Support Plan” program plan was established (Okuda 2008: 23). This program plan functioned as a sort of basic policy and was the starting point for program planning. Since 2004, job support programming has been adopted in all 44 municipalities of Osaka Prefecture, and municipalities that adopted such programming later are thought to be using the plans and practices of the earlier adopters. While the policy needs of job support programs will naturally vary depending on regional circumstances, it is still essential to establish a basic policy for program planning associated with employment. In the words of Tsutsui, “Municipalities that are later adopters, when it comes to employment support, will find themselves intentionally and strategically systematizing regional resources, which is instrumental in creating an eventual ‘exit’ from the program. This is not something that can be done overnight, so comprehensive mid-to-long-term planning is necessary” (Tsutsui 2017: 15). With this perspective in mind, municipalities that have formulated program plans will be compared to those who have not.

As will be described later, municipalities with program plans in place will be further divided into municipalities with many employed persons versus those with fewer employed persons. Therefore, as a second comparison, after limiting the municipalities to only those with program plans in place, municipalities with many vs. few employed persons will be compared with regard to how the number of employed persons relates to the systemic and human factors. The above analysis outline is summarized in Table 1. Specifically, section 4.2 will compare (1)+(2) and (3)+(4), while section 4.3 will compare (1) and (2).

Table 1 Comparative framework

	More employed persons	Less employed persons
Municipalities with program plan	(1)	(2)
Municipalities without program plan	(3)	(4)

Using the analysis framework described above, this paper will consider the following two research questions. First, what is the relation between the systemic/human factors and the number of employed persons and does that relation differ by municipality and whether there is a program plan in place? Second, what factors correlate with the number of employed persons in municipalities with program plans in place? Through analyses of these problems, we will gain a clearer picture of what leads to

disparities in job support programming across different municipalities.

### **3. Research method**

#### 3.1 Data

The data used for the analysis came from the “2016 Survey on Osaka Prefectural Municipal Job support programming” described in the previous section (hereinafter “employment survey data”). This survey was conducted by our research team between September and December 2016 with 43 municipalities in Osaka Prefecture as the potential population. The survey was distributed by email to division managers in charge of job support programs in each municipality. The sample size was 40 municipalities (three towns declined to respond), resulting in a response rate of 93.0%.

#### 3-2 Variables

The explained variable in this study is the number of employed persons (number of people who found work through the support of a regional employment support center). The average values from 2013 to 2015 were taken and logarithmically transformed for use in the analysis. Since the number of employed persons varies by population size, calculating and using the employment rate was considered as well, but it was decided for this study to use the number of employed persons so that the municipalities could be divided into two groups based on size.<sup>6</sup>

The explanatory variables are the systemic and human factors described in the previous section. The former includes the regional job support program budget (grants and general funds) for 2015FY, the number of services provided, the number of affiliated organizations, and the number of meetings (consultations on both general program operations and individual cases with relevant departments both internal and external to the agency). The latter includes the number of coordinators (full time and part time) and a breakdown of types of client seeking support (young people, seniors, single mothers, and persons with disabilities).<sup>7</sup>

### **4. Descriptive Analysis**

#### 4-1 Number of employed persons and workplace industry

First, let us look at the number of employed persons (logarithmic values) in each municipality

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<sup>6</sup> An analysis that uses the employment rate while taking into account the population size will be examined in a separate paper.

<sup>7</sup> The question fields and basic tabulation of each variable are described in chapter 1. The question fields for the variables used were as follows: “Number of employed persons” (Q10); “2015 Local Job support program Budget (Grants and General Funding)” (Q18); “Number of employment support services provided” (Q13); “Number of affiliations with other organizations” (Q14); “Number of meetings (general meetings related to program operations both within/outside the agency and meetings on individual cases)” (Q17); “Number of coordinators (full-time and part-time)” (Q2); “Client type breakdown (young people/seniors/single mothers/disabled persons)” (Q9).

(Figure 2). The figure shows the number of employed persons in the cities of Suita, Osaka, and Toyonaka, followed by Sakai, Izumi, and Yao. Of course, it is difficult to compare the number of employed persons between municipalities with different population sizes, but it can be seen that the municipalities are ordered from those with a relatively large number of employed persons to a moderate amount, before being followed by the rest.

It seems that the dispersion of values has to do with the relationship with the trustee of the job support program and the availability of free job placement services (Nishioka 2017).<sup>8</sup> This paper focuses on basic profiles rather than looking at the specifics of each municipality individually and will proceed with a big-picture description of how much job support programming differs depending on whether a program plan is in place or not. However, first let us go over the types of workplace industry that end up hiring people

Table 2 shows the percentages of employed persons who found work through an job support program in the last three years, from the most common workplace industry type to the third most common. From the figure, it can be seen that the industries with the highest percentages are manufacturing (34.5%), cleaning (27.6%), and social services (13.8%). Since these three industries account for around 75%, it can be understood that finding work through job support programs may be limited in terms of what industries one can find work in. The second most common industries are cleaning (34.6%), distribution and retail (19.2%), social services (11.5%), and security (11.5%). The third most common industries overlap with the second most common industries, but we can see that they include construction (8.7%) and public services (4.3%). Looking at these percentages, it can be understood that the primary industries that people are hired into are manufacturing, cleaning, and social services.

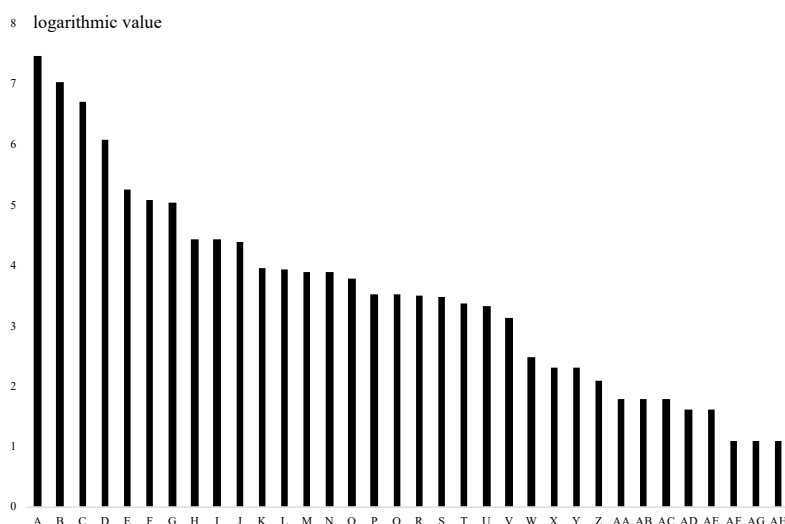


Figure 2 The number of employed persons (logarithmic values) in each municipality

<sup>8</sup> For example, it seems that Suita is ranked highly because the municipality offers a free job placement service.



Table 2 The percentages of employed persons who found work through a job support program

First		Second		Third	
Manufacture	34.5	Cleaning	34.6	Welfare	26.1
Cleaning	27.6	Retailing	19.2	Security	26.1
Welfare	13.8	Welfare	11.5	Cleaning	17.4
Security	6.9	Security	11.5	Construction	8.7
Farm	3.4	Manufacture	7.7	Retailing	8.7
Shipping	3.4	Shipping	7.7	Manufacture	4.3
Retailing	3.4	Restaurant	3.8	Public	4.3
Restaurant	3.4	Health	3.8	Other	4.3
Health	3.4				
Number	29		26		23

How much does the dispersion in the number of employed persons vary depending on whether a municipality has in place a program plan or basic policy regarding regional employment support policies? Regarding this point, groups were compared using logarithmically transformed values (Figure 3).

Looking at this figure, the average for municipalities without a program plan is 2.06, and the average for those with a program plan is 3.62. The value for those with a program plan is more than 1.5 times greater than those without. When the average difference was tested, it was found that the difference was statistically significant ( $t=-2.46$ ,  $df=38$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.02$ ). Of course, there is some dispersion within each group (as seen by the size of the error bar), but nonetheless, it is apparent that there is a clear difference in the number of employed persons depending on whether a program plan is in place or not.

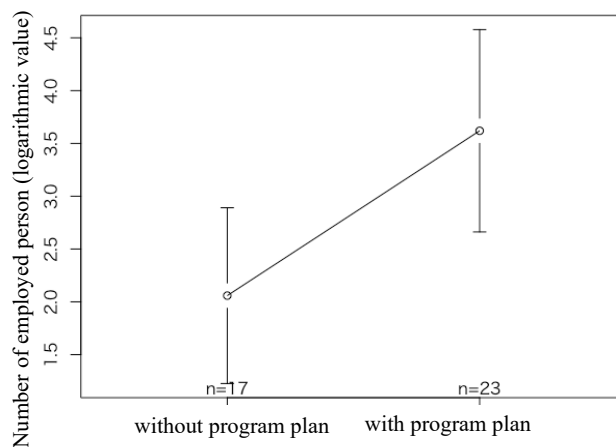


Figure 3 Municipalities with/without a program plan and the number of employed persons

#### 4-2 Relation between systemic/human factors and the number of employed persons based on the existence of a project plan

Section 4.2 will look at the relation between systemic/human factors and the number of employed persons (logarithmic values) with regard to whether a project plan is in place or not. This analysis used Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, which is an index for measuring the degree of correlation.<sup>9</sup> Figure 4 shows a summary of the correlation coefficients between systemic factors and the number of employed persons; a larger value indicates a stronger correlation, and a positive value indicates that as one value increases, so does the other.

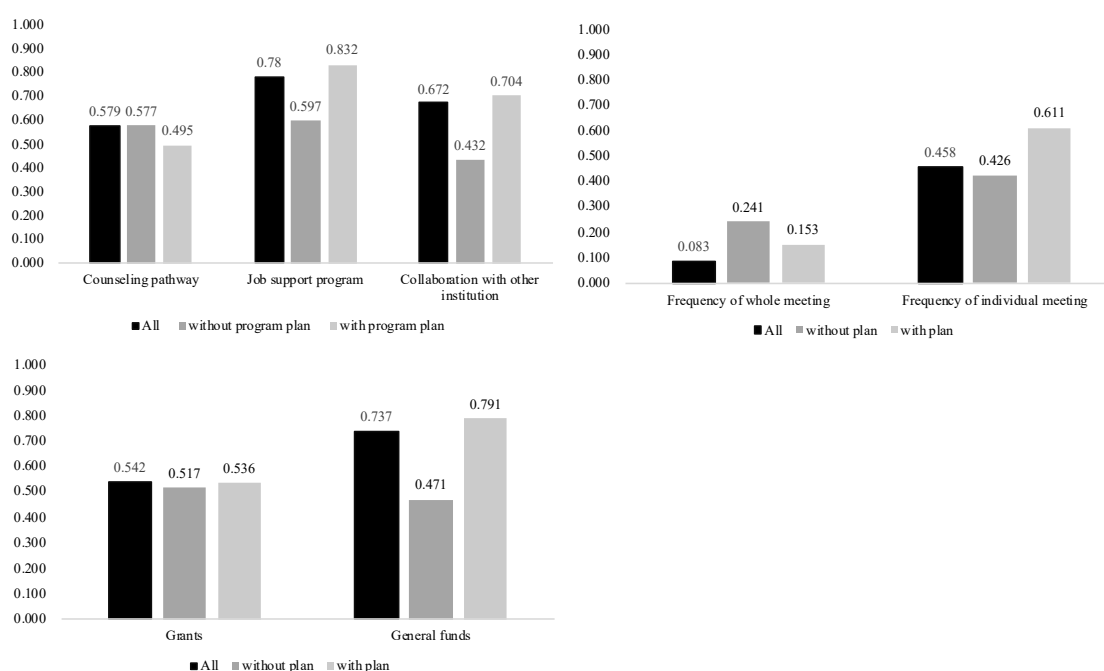


Figure 4 Correlation coefficient between systemic factors and the number of employed persons

From this figure, it can be seen that the path to support from a regional employment support center (e.g., being referred from a support line for the disadvantaged, a welfare office, a municipal disability welfare line, Public Employment Security Office (Hello Work), etc.) does not seem to depend much on whether a project plan is in place. Conversely, when it came to the number of services available and external affiliations, municipalities with program plans showed higher values compared to those without. In other words, for municipalities with program plans, a marked relation can be seen in which the more services are available and the more external affiliations an job support program has, the greater the number of employed persons.

<sup>9</sup> The sample size to be analyzed was extremely small at around 40, so rather than analyzing strictly statistically, coefficient values were checked relatively. This method is exploratory, and quantitative comparative analysis (QCA) is suitable when analyzing a small number of cases. Reexamining with analytical methods may be a future point of consideration.

Next, we looked at how job support programming was implemented by examining the relation with the frequency of regular meetings with relevant departments and organizations both internally and externally, or other such opportunities to discuss and exchange information on program operations. When comparing the frequency of meetings related to the general program operations with that of meetings regarding individual cases, the latter value was relatively high. In other words, the number of employed persons tended to increase as the frequency of individual case meetings increased, and this tendency was prominent in municipalities with program plans in place.

Similarly, we then confirmed the relation with grants and general funds. Looking at the figure, one finds almost no difference in grant money depending on whether a program plan is in place or not, but there is a notable difference when it comes to general funds. The value for municipalities without a program plan is 0.471, compared to 0.791 for those with a program plan. The value of this coefficient is higher than those of the other variables. The relation between general financial resources and the number of employed persons will be examined again in the following section, but it is worth noting that differences in general funds occur depending on whether there is a program plan in place or not.

Next, let us examine the relations between the human factors (number of centers, number of coordinators, and categorizations of clients seeking counsel) and the number of employed persons, focusing in particular on the large differences that occur in the numbers of full-time coordinators and middle-aged and senior clients seeking counsel depending on whether a program plan is in place or not. In municipalities with a program plan, the values for the number of full-time coordinators and middle-aged and senior clients were noticeably higher than in municipalities without a program plan. In other words, there was a strong tendency for the number of employed persons to increase as the number of full-time coordinators increased and as the number of middle-aged and senior clients increased.

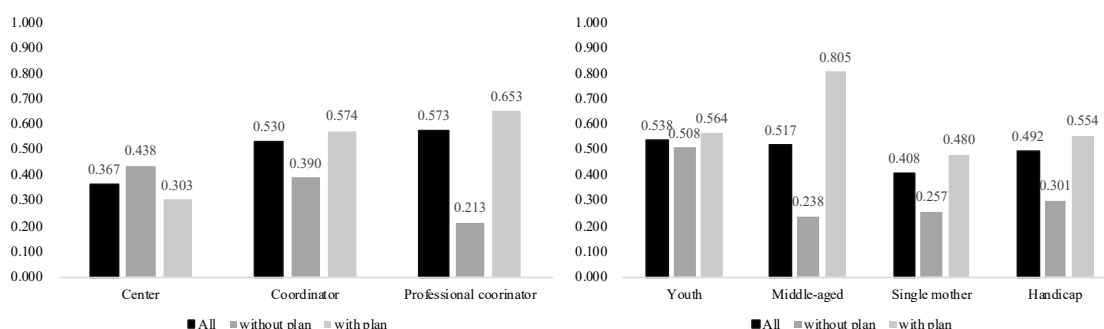


Figure 5 Correlation coefficient between human factors and the number of employed persons

To summarize the above analysis, there were variables in which the relation between systemic/human factors and the number of employed persons varied significantly depending on whether or not a program plan was in place. Specifically, it was found that in municipalities with program plans, the number of employed persons tended to increase along with the values for general funds, external affiliations, the number of full-time coordinators, and the number of middle-aged and senior clients. Of course, one cannot make any conclusive statements based on two variables without

controlling for the other factors, but the analysis results nonetheless suggest that these variables are key indicators of disparity among local governments.

#### 4-3 Relation with various factors for municipalities with program plans

After looking at the results in section 4.2, the next question is, what factors are related to the number of employed persons for municipalities with program plans in place? Here, municipalities with many employed persons will be compared against those with few. The delineation between many and few here was set arbitrarily using logarithmically transformed values for the number of employed persons and resulted in the following classification. The municipalities with many employed persons were the cities of Suita, Osaka, Toyonaka, Sakai, Izumi, Yao, Sugawara, Kaizuka, and Hirakata. All other municipalities were considered to have few employed persons.<sup>10</sup> In looking at the relation between the number of employed persons and the various factors, there will be particular focus on the number of coordinators and general funds (Figure 6).

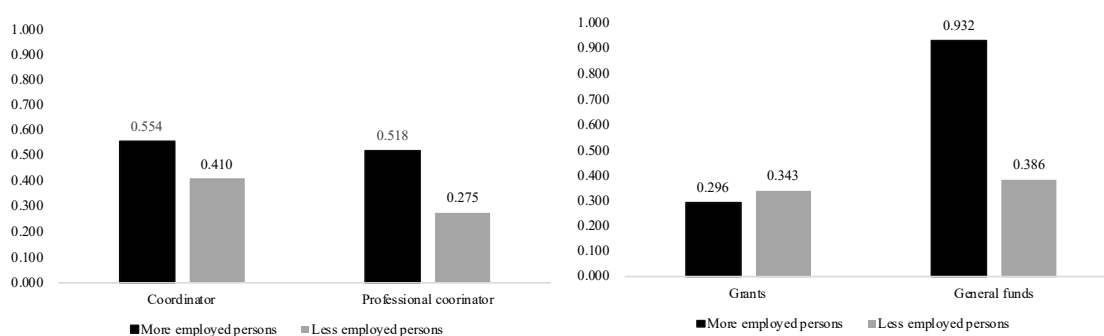


Figure 6 Correlation coefficient between number of coordinators/general funds and the number of employed persons

From this figure, one can see that there is a tendency for the number of employed persons to be greater when the number of coordinators is greater, regardless of whether or not they are full time. This relation tends to be stronger in municipalities with many employed persons. In addition, there was almost no difference in the number of employed persons with regard to grant funding. In contrast, clear differences could be seen with regard to general funds. In other words, a strong relation could be seen in municipalities with many employed persons in which the number of employed persons increased as the general funds available increased. Differences could again be seen depending on general funds. A comparison of “general funds per capita” calculated by dividing the general funds by the population is shown in Figure 7.

As seen from this figure, the average value of general funds per capita for municipalities with many employed persons was 64.7 yen, whereas for municipalities with few employed persons it was

<sup>10</sup> This classification is not only a delineation of whether the number of employed persons is many or few, and in municipalities where the number is fewer than in Hirakata, there is a mixture of municipalities with and without program plans in place. In other words, the classification used in this paper is appropriate in terms of grouping municipalities by whether or not they have a program plan in place.

10.0 yen. Examining the difference in mean values, we found that the difference was statistically significant ( $t=3.16$ ,  $df=17$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.01$ ). To investigate why such a large difference exists, job support programs' general funds were compared to those from five years ago (2011) to see what has changed. This is shown in Figure 8.

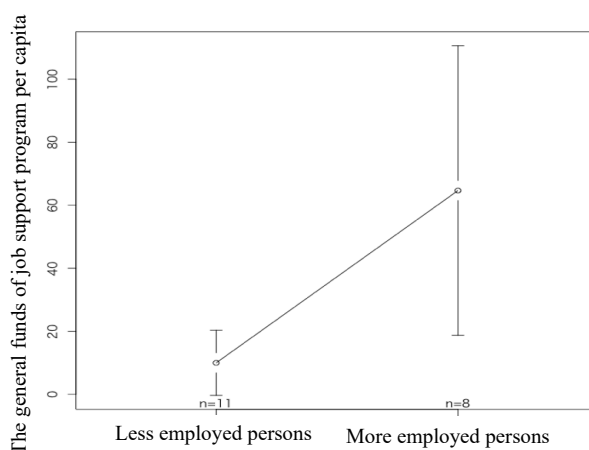


Figure 7 The general funds of job support programs per capita

From this figure, one can see that municipalities with a large number of employed persons are increasing (44.4%), while those with few employed persons are decreasing (36.4%). Although this result alone does not show a causal relationship, it can be surmised that the disparity widens as municipalities with many employed persons continue to gain funding and those with few employed persons lose it. From these results, it is understood that how general funds are secured has a great influence on the number of employed persons in a municipality. However, since around 40% of municipalities responded that there has been no change, one cannot jump to any conclusions.

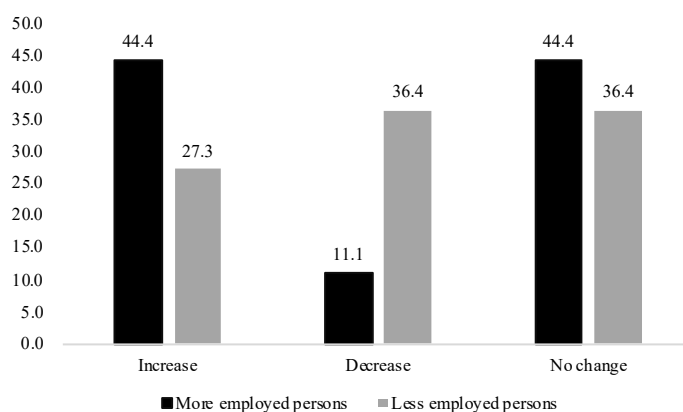


Figure 8 The change of general funds of job support programs

## 5. Summary and Future Considerations

The purpose of this paper was to examine the differences among municipalities with regard to the number of people who find employment through job support programs across Osaka Prefecture—an area that is relatively ahead of the curve in this regard compared to the rest of the country—and investigate how such differences may occur. The investigation was carried out using data from a survey conducted in 2016 across municipalities in Osaka Prefecture. As a result of the analysis, the following points became clear.

Firstly, a large difference was found in the relationship between the number of employed persons and various support program factors depending on whether or not the local government had a program plan in place for employment support. The difference was particularly prominent in the relation between the number of employed persons and the number of full-time coordinators and general funds. Specifically, for the municipalities with program plans in place, as the number of full-time coordinators increased, or the general funds increased, the number of employed persons increased.

Secondly, again within the municipalities with program plans in place, when comparing municipalities with many employed persons against those with few, the former was found to have a stronger relationship in which the number of employed persons increased as general funds increased. Furthermore, when confirming the changes in general funds over the past few years, it was found that the disparity tended to widen between municipalities with many employed persons versus those with few. Specifically, it became clear that as the financial resources available to municipalities with many employed persons increased, the financial resources available to municipalities with few employed persons decreased. Based on these results, one cause of the disparity between municipalities' job support programs seems to be that the "directions" at which funding is secured are opposite. Why is that? Some possible reasons will be considered below, from the perspective of program plan contents, how necessary employment support is, and differences in economic power across municipalities.

First, all municipalities with program plans publicly available online were looked at, and it was found that there were a number of differences across municipalities in terms of their number of employed persons and program plan contents. For example, comparing municipalities with many employed persons and those with few, the program plans of the former were found to be independent from more general composite plans. Such program plans also differentiated programming depending on the categorization of the client seeking counsel (young people, middle-aged and seniors, single-parent households, etc.), with program approaches being determined by the target group. There were also differences in whether job support programs were being positioned as part of a mid-to-long-term solution. The contents of a program plan are considered to be an important basis for obtaining funding. However, differences can also reflect the necessity of policymaking in an area, so there are many cases that cannot be understood only on the basis of the program plan contents.

Upon confirming, as much as possible, references that pointed to the necessity of job support programs in program evaluation sheets for each municipality, it was found that municipalities with

fewer employed persons still indicated a strong need for such programs.<sup>11</sup> In other words, despite a strong need for job support programming, financial resources in municipalities with fewer employed persons tend to decrease, perhaps due to the municipalities having little economic power. That is to say, it is a question of whether a municipality's economic power is sufficient to secure funding for job support programming.

Using an "Economic Power Index" value to characterize municipalities' economic circumstances, we found that the value was higher for municipalities with many employed persons, while being relatively small for those with few employed persons.<sup>12</sup> This signifies a relative lack of resources in the latter group. That is to say, it is apparent that there are municipalities that may want to put more resources into job support programming but lack sufficient resources to do so. With this in mind, the analysis results of this paper, which showed prominent differences depending on funding availability, point to the possible significance of how employment support grant money is allocated.

However, since job support programming was changed into grant allocation programming in 2008, there are concerns that disparities will widen even with grant money (Sakurai 2009). To add to this issue, if one considers that more than 90% of a program's budget may depend on limited government funding (Sakurai 2014: 141), the allocation of grant money and general funds potentially becomes a big challenge. Whether the disparity further widens in this respect may be determined by whether there is an increase or decrease in the number of municipalities that report no changes in the amount of funding in the past five years.

This paper was only a rudimentary attempt to understand what lies behind the differences between the job support programs across Osaka Prefecture's municipalities, and as such, there remain several issues to consider. The first relates to the process by which funding is decided, as mentioned in this paper. In a quantitative investigation, there are limitations to the extent to which this can be explored, and it will be necessary to consider a program's relationship with not only the local municipal office, but also with the national parliament. The second issue lies in understanding what the number of employed persons signifies. In this paper, the employed persons themselves were not profiled, and it may be necessary to find out more on the quality of their work lives: the circumstances of their employment, how long they have been working, and whether they will continue to work at their current places of employment. Furthermore, "even if employment support efforts do improve, it is only natural for such improvement to take time" (Tsutsui 2011: 100). Therefore, looking only at the number of employed persons as an indicator of performance may only give partial insights. It is necessary to look at performance from other angles as well. Thirdly, there is a methodological issue in using quantitative analysis on such a small sample. Regarding this point, a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) may be an effective approach to understanding what conditions cause differences among municipalities as this method is typically applied in the social sciences.

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<sup>11</sup> The name of the evaluation sheet varied by municipality but was called either a "Program Evaluation Sheet" or an "Operations Evaluation Sheet." The 2011 version was referred to, which has a relatively large amount of data publicly available online.

<sup>12</sup> The financial power index is calculated by dividing the "basic fiscal revenue" by the "basic fiscal demand" for the past three years, which determines the amount of taxes normally granted to municipalities. Values for 2016 were found at <http://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/attach/2413/00239828/4-1%20zaiseiryokusisuu.pdf>.

## Acknowledgements

This research was made possible through the JSPS KAKENHI Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (Project No. 15K03991) and Young Researcher (B) (Project No. 17K13870). In addition, this paper was supported by the Center for Social Research and Data Archives at the Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo. The data for this research were used with permission from the relevant research team members. I would like to thank the floor audience of the 80<sup>th</sup> Social Policy Society Kansai Meeting for their advice. Finally, I would like to express my deep thanks to the municipal governments who offered their cooperation with the survey.

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