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A Study on the Relationship between Young People and Employment Support Agencies after Achieving Employment: A Case Study on the Users of the Regional Youth Support Station

Yuta Kanamoto

Abstract

This study examined the situation of young people who have used the regional youth support station (RYSS) program after they have achieved employment. Discussions on youth employment support have so far lacked a perspective on the daily and professional lives of young people after they have achieved employment and have not sufficiently assessed whether young people can rely on their supporters again when they have problems in their professional lives. Accordingly, this research explored how young people maintained their relationship with RYSS after achieving employment, whether they could rely on RYSS when they had problems, and how the relationship with RYSS changed.

The young people in the case study wanted to rely on RYSS to help them cope with their problems after they started working. However, when they faced problems, they could not always casually rely on RYSS. They were reluctant to consult RYSS when they did not have the mental or time capacity to do so although they thought that they needed the advice and support of others. Moreover, as they became accustomed to their jobs and gained confidence, they stopped consulting RYSS for minor problems, and their relationship with RYSS became weaker. Therefore, one effective way to maintain the relationship between the young people and RYSS after they have achieved employment is to continue encouraging them.

key words: Employment Support, Young People, Social Inclusion, Social Integration

1 Introduction

From the late 1990s to the 2000s, an increasing number of young people in Japan were out of the transition process of “entering the labor market after graduation from school” (hereinafter referred to as “transition”). They were unstably employed such as part-time employment or unemployed¹⁾. Difficulty in transition is not only an economic problem, such as lack of income, but can also be

understood as an ontological problem, such as loss of self-confidence and self-negation (Katase 2015: 10). Thereafter, loss of confidence and self-negation may make the transition even more difficult. Thus, in addition to injuries, illnesses, and disabilities, internal disincentives to work, such as self-doubt and self-denial, are also considered, and the state in which a person wants to work but cannot or does not even have the will to work is defined in this paper as “difficulty in transition.”

In 2006, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare started the “regional youth support station (RYSS) program” as comprehensive employment support for young people having difficulty in transition. RYSS is a facility that provides “professional consultation by career consultants, step-up training through communication training, and work experience at cooperating companies for those aged 15 to 49 years²⁾ who are having problems with work” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2021). While the ultimate goal of RYSS is to help young people achieve employment, its starting point is to support various types of independence that differ from person to person. In FY2020, the program was implemented in 177 RYSSs throughout Japan by various entrusting entities, such as specified nonprofit corporations, incorporated associations, social welfare corporations, foundations, educational corporations, joint-stock companies, and labor unions. Additionally, 9,758 users of the RYSS program were employed or received public vocational training (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Human Resources Development Directorate 2021).

RYSS is expected to restore the social integration of young people who have difficulty in transition and are isolated from society (Miyamoto 2015: 27). Hitherto, RYSS has been discussed mainly in terms of support activities and views of supporters and the viability of the program (Inoue 2016; Oyamada 2017, 2018; Miyamoto 2015). However, about users, only a few studies (Higuchi 2013; Kanamoto 2020) have focused on the process from the period of using RYSS to achieving employment. The trend of users after they achieve employment has not been sufficiently examined.

How do they lead their daily lives and regain contact with society after they receive support and achieve employment? How do they make use of the experience of using RYSS? Without clarification of these points, evaluating RYSS as a methodology for restoring the social integration of young people and fully discussing the development potential of youth employment support will be impossible. In light of this, the present study examined the actual conditions of young people who used RYSS and achieve employment.

2 Previous Studies

Recently, difficulty in transition has often been considered “difficulty in living” for young people (Okabe 2019). According to Okabe, the “difficulties in living” of young people have been described as their inability to confidently participate in society due to their inability to build interpersonal

relationships well and their strong preoccupation with self-responsibility norms. Furthermore, young people as a whole are not easily targeted by social welfare and social security systems. Hence, the “lack of a system that they can rely on when they face difficulties in their lives” can be assumed to be a determinant factor of their “difficulties in living” (Okabe 2019: 3-4).

Youth employment support has played a role in alleviating such “difficulties in living” for young people. For instance, at RYSS, in addition to consultation support by supporters, opportunities for interaction with other users have led to improved communication skills and confidence of young people (Inoue 2016). These opportunities to interact with others have significance as a “place to stay” for isolated young people. While there are various discussions on the concept of a “place to stay,” Minamide (2015) stated that a “place to stay” makes it possible to “retreat from the values imposed at school and work” and “gain social recognition.”

Young people who were trapped by self-responsibility norms and driven to achieve employment gradually change through the efforts of RYSS. They achieve employment by gaining the recognition that “they can manage somehow or another if they rely on others” (Kanamoto 2020). However, the effectiveness of this kind of youth employment support is demonstrated within only the framework of “young people with difficulties in transition and their supporters.” There is room for debate as to how such a “place to stay” and relationships with supporters are maintained and built for young people who work in the labor market after achieving employment.

Okabe highlighted in her case that a cafe as a part of employment support for young people has become a reliable place for young people after they have achieved employment. At the cafe, young people who have received support in the past can come to consult with the cafe staff about their work problems, eat there as customers, or participate in cafe management activities again even after they have left the cafe due to employment attainment. Some of the young people who visit the cafe appear to be customers, but they need help. Even in such cases, the support staff does not try to elicit their concerns but leaves everything up to the youth, including whether to consult with them. Moreover, Okabe corroborated that the relationship of trust between the young people and the support staff that they can consult with if they have any problems is what makes it possible to respond in a way that respects the independence of the young people (Okabe 2019: 174-5).

Previous studies have clearly shown that young people with difficulties in transition recover through interaction with supporters and young people in the same situation and re-establish contact with society. In these cases, reading the attitude of the young people that they can consult with their supporters is possible if they are in trouble and the supporters who try to respect the independence of the young people. Such an attitude is based on the premise of a relationship of trust with their supporters.

Contrarily, young people may try to distance themselves from their supporters in the process of

becoming independent when they do not have a problem or are unaware of their problem. When they are faced with a problem at a stage where they gradually distance themselves from their supporters and become accustomed to not relying on them, are they able to ask for help if they have a problem? There is a possibility that even if they have a problem, they may not be able to consult or may not even be aware that they have a problem. In such cases, the relationship with supporters, which is based on the independence of the young people who “can consult with us if they have problems,” will not function well, and it will be difficult to support the transition of the young people³⁾.

From this perspective, the present research examined the situation of young people who have used RYSS after they have achieved employment based on the fact that there are insufficient previous studies that have clarified the actual situation of young people after they have used employment support. In doing so, this study would like to focus on changes in their relationship with RYSS and how they experience and cope with problems.

3 Survey and Analysis Methodology

This study explored the situation of Mr. X and Ms. Y (hereafter, titles omitted), who have achieved employment by using RYSS. RYSS that they used (hereinafter referred to as “RYSS-A”) is managed by a nonprofit organization established in 2001. The organization has its roots in an organization established by people who lost their jobs after the postwar unemployment program was abolished due to the rapid economic growth of Japan. It operates its own offices in the community and mainly provides childcare support, employment independence counseling support, and management and operation of public facilities. The strength of RYSS-A is the fact that it is easy to secure opportunities to implement support programs, such as work experience, by utilizing the business offices owned by the management entity and by cooperating with other business offices in the community that understand youth employment support.

After receiving a referral from RYSS-A, semi-structured interviews were conducted with X in November 2018, June 2019, July 2020, and August 2021 and with Y in November 2018, December 2018, June 2019, July 2020, and August 2021. During the interview in November 2018, how X and Y came to use RYSS-A was mainly asked. In the subsequent interviews, their current employment, living conditions, and prospects were asked for approximately 1½ to 2 hours, respectively. Before each interview, the objectives of the study and the use of the interview data were explained in writing and orally, and the consent of X and Y was obtained. The interviews were conducted after explaining that it was possible to refuse to answer or to cancel the interview. Further, each interview was recorded and transcribed with permission, and the content of the verbatim transcripts and this paper were checked by X and Y for any errors.

Table 1 Basic Attributes of Survey Subjects

	Gender	Age	Academic Background	Marital Status Household Status	Main Causes of Difficulty in Transition	Work Experience before Using RYSS	Work Experience after Using RYSS	RYSS Usage Period
X	Male	Late 20s → Early 30s	Leaving University during Term	Single Single-Person	Withdrawal due to Poor Academic Performance	None	Regular Employee → Contract Employee → Temporary Employee	1 Year and 1 Month
Y	Female	Late 30s → Early 40s	University Graduation	Single Living with Sister	Mental Illness due to Deteriorating Relationships	Regular Employees in the Private Sector	Non-Regular Employee	2 Years

Table 1 exhibits the basic attributes of X and Y. On the basis of the experience of receiving RYSS support, both X and Y were trying to develop their occupational life while facing their problems and challenges. Therefore, although the number of cases is limited to two, X and Y were selected as case studies because of their significance in examining the question of this paper, “how can we deal with the problems and challenges faced after achieving employment?” However, it should be noted that X and Y can be regarded as cases in which support was successful in the overall picture of persons who had difficulty in transition, in that they were able to continue working while becoming accustomed to their jobs.

This study also focuses on the narratives obtained from the interviews conducted several times and examines the situation of X and Y after they achieved employment. By doing so, clarifying how they responded to the changes in their professional lives that occurred over a certain time frame and whether there were any changes in their attitudes toward work is possible. Recently, problems such as long hours, overcrowded work, and poor labor management have been highlighted even among those in regular employment. Employment status is not necessarily directly related to the stability of work life. Therefore, grasping the overall situation of the survey subjects, including how they evaluate their situation and whether they can overcome their situation and have a positive outlook on their future, is also necessary for addition to employment status, working environment, and job change status. Therefore, this study assessed the post-employment status of the survey subjects by using the narratives obtained through continuous interviews.

4 Survey Results

In the following, we will first confirm the circumstances that led X and Y to use RYSS and then look at their situation after they achieved employment, citing their narratives as appropriate.

4.1 Case of X

4.1.1 Background to the use of RYSS and the process of employment achievement

First, let us look at the case of X. During his university years, X experienced withdrawal for nearly five years due to a loss of self-confidence caused by poor academic performance. His poor academic performance was due to his difficulty in balancing his studies and club activities. During the period of withdrawal, X had a chance to see a counselor who was an acquaintance of his father. Nevertheless, at the time, he felt that he had to do something on his own without accepting support from RYSS or the counselor.

Later, when he began attending RYSS-A with the introduction of the counselor, X was impatient to achieve employment because he felt, “if I do not work, I am not a full-fledged person.” In response, the RYSS-A staff persuaded X that it was better to do what he could do little by little without being in a hurry and advised him to have opportunities to interact with people during the work experience to broaden the scope of his future professional life. X accepted the advice and did work experience at the sales store of a cooperative (hereinafter referred to as “the co-op”).

The atmosphere at the workplace was favorable; thus, X quickly became accustomed to the work. One month later, he was hired as a part-time worker at the sales store of the co-op. While working part-time for a year, X wanted to become a full-time employee at the co-op; hence, he continued to correct his application documents and practice interviews at RYSS-A. Thereafter, when he took the employment examination of the co-op for a full-time employee, his past part-time work experience and growth were highly evaluated, and he was hired as a regular employee of the co-op in January 2019. X described the situation at that time as follows.

X: (Assuming that he will become a regular employee from January 2019) I think that I will have to bear various burdens or that my working hours and workload will increase and that it will be difficult, but I think that I will just give it a try. I think I will be able to make it work if I consult with people at RYSS and my workplace. If I can't manage it, I'll have to turn to someone else. (November 2018; figures in parentheses are the notes of the author.)

After X started working as a regular employee, his work schedule made it difficult for him to visit RYSS-A frequently. In an interview in June 2019, he said that he had called RYSS-A a few times to say that he is alright. He also said, “I know that I can talk to them if I have any problems. I am aware that I can consult with them if I have any problems.”

In this way, through the use of RYSS, X was able to improve his situation by accepting the advice and support of others and experienced being evaluated by others as he gradually made changes. Consequently, he had the prospect of developing his professional life by accepting the advice and

support of others in the future.

4.1.2 Need to change jobs

From January 2019 onwards, X was mainly responsible for delivering services to members of the co-op. X wanted to work at the sales store because of the positive atmosphere. However, at the employer of X, it was customary to be transferred to a sales store after several years of experience in delivery work. Thereafter, X had a rainy-day accident in July 2019 while operating a truck for a delivery business, and he slipped and hit a guardrail. Fortunately, there were no other vehicles, and X was not injured, but after the accident, X became anxious about driving the truck and began to think that one day he might cause a major accident and trouble for the co-op. After the accident, X was interviewed by his supervisor and asked to continue delivery work, but his driving anxiety did not disappear. He then began to think that it would be difficult for him to continue working at the co-op.

Before formally submitting his resignation request, X consulted with a friend who worked as a contract employee for a major temporary staffing agency about changing jobs. X and his friend were former users of RYSS-A, and X was advised to work as a contract employee for the company where his friend worked. In October 2019, X became a contract employee of the same temporary staffing agency and began to engage in work commissioned by the government agency. Although consulting with RYSS-A was an option at the stage of thinking about changing jobs, X reported to RYSS-A after his contract with the temporary staffing agency was finalized. The reason for this was as follows:

X: I also felt a sense of apology for leaving the co-op where I was able to be employed with the support of RYSS, and I also felt that I might be swayed by the advice to “continue to work at the co-op” when I consulted with them. So I decided to report back after I had made a decision. (July 2020)

When X reported the situation to RYSS-A, the staff said, “We wish we could have consulted with you earlier, but what has been decided is inevitable, so let’s look for another job now.” Even if X continued to renew the contract, the maximum contract period would be three years. In addition, considering the age of X, he agreed that it would be better for him to work as a contract worker and look for a new job.

However, X did not use RYSS-A again to find a new job, but instead decided to seek a regular position with the temporary staffing agency. X was interested in such work and actively participated in the training programs of the company. He also said that one of the reasons he sought a regular position with the temporary staffing agency was that he was not asked to submit his resume when he signed the contract. On the basis of his experience as a social withdrawal, he thought, “how to explain

the gap period is a problem that I will have to deal with for a long time to come” and that it would be less burdensome to seek regular employment at a temporary staffing agency than to go back to RYSS to correct his application documents and practice interviews.

Conversely, in an interview in July 2020, X also expressed regret that he should have discussed his retirement from the co-op with RYSS-A and the co-op more.

Author: In the interview after the accident, did you ever talk about moving to a non-driving department or a store for that matter?

X: No, I did not at the time of the interview. I thought that the basic procedure for transferring to a store was to stay on the truck for a number of years and that employees who did not have sufficient experience in delivery work would not be transferred to a store. That was the explanation I received when I was hired, so I thought that was the way it was, and I didn't say that I wanted to be transferred to a store.

Author: In terms of your feelings, did you wish to move to a store if you could?

X: Yes, that's right. Looking back on it now, I think I should have expressed my hopes to the co-op although it might have been impossible. I also wish I had consulted with RYSS at an earlier stage and asked them how I could express my wishes to the co-op. (July 2020)

X felt sorry for resigning from the co-op and was bothered by the consolations from the co-op and the burden of using RYSS again to prepare for a new job, so he distanced himself from RYSS and changed his job for the first time. Contrarily, when he looked back after changing jobs, he felt that if he had consulted with RYSS and the co-op a little more, he might have been allowed to continue working at the co-op, for example, by being transferred to the sales store.

4.1.3 Need to change jobs again

After changing jobs for the first time, X, who was engaged in window service work at an administrative agency as a contract employee of the temporary staffing agency, was rewarded by the satisfaction of visitors and recognition from his coworkers by utilizing his customer service skills cultivated in his previous job as a delivery worker at a co-op. Although he was a contract employee, he was able to join social insurance and take paid vacations, and he was generally satisfied with his compensation.

However, around the end of 2020, X heard that the temporary staffing agency with which he had a contract would be integrated into the parent company. Until then, the temporary staffing agency with which X had contracted had jurisdiction over the prefecture in which he resided and its neighboring prefectures. Nonetheless, the merger with the parent company would expand the work locations of

regular employees nationwide, and the recruitment examinations would be held at a higher ratio because of the nationwide recruitment. Therefore, X, who had always wanted to work in a location closer to his hometown, decided to give up the idea of being hired by the temporary staffing agency for a regular position. From the end of the year to March 2021, X changed jobs again, and from April 2021, he has been engaged in clerical work at a cooperative in the transportation industry as a temporary worker for a different temporary staffing agency.

During his second job search, X was introduced to his current temporary staffing agency by a friend who had been using RYSS-A. Nevertheless, not only that, X was thinking of consulting RYSS-A during his second job search. He wanted to find another job and get it over with as soon as possible during his first job search, but since his second job search was “a positive one,” he had the mental and time capacity to consult RYSS. Furthermore, in the interview in August 2021, following the abovementioned July 2020 interview, X said, “looking back, I think I should have consulted with RYSS more properly instead of suddenly quitting, but I guess I was in a state of mind where I could not do so at that time.” He still felt regret that he should have consulted with RYSS at the time of his first job search but was unable to do so. Perhaps because of this, X called RYSS-A for consultation during his second job search. However, at that time, they were unable to arrange a schedule for an interview. Although they had to reschedule the interview for a later date, X did not use RYSS as a result because he was hired for the job he had applied for before he rescheduled the interview.

During the first job search, X said that he wanted to find another job and get it over with as soon as possible because he felt sorry for RYSS and the hassle of being consoled by the delivery service. X did not have the mental and time capacity to consult with RYSS and felt burdened to consult with RYSS. Conversely, it was also apparent that he regretted not consulting with RYSS or his workplace and not seeking to continue working at the co-op. This may have been the reason why they tried to contact RYSS again in their second job search although they did not use the service.

4.2 Case study of Y

4.2.1 Background to the use of RYSS and the process of employment achievement

Next is the case of Y. After graduating from a university, Y worked for a private company for about five years as a regular office worker. During that time, her friends from college returned to their hometowns for employment or marriage. Y wondered whether she should return to her hometown or continue to work. Moreover, Y had a mental disorder due to the deterioration of her relationship with her boyfriend at that time, and her rhythm of life was disrupted, making it impossible for her to work. Subsequently, she returned to her parent’s home. After quitting her job and returning to her parents’ home, Y had a bad relationship with her mother. Soon, she began living alone with her younger sister who lived near her parents’ home and entered a period of rest.

The apartment was a condominium that her parents had purchased for retirement; thus, she did not have to pay rent, and her parents provided support for living expenses. However, her mother did not think well of her lack of work. Y herself had “a very strong feeling that she is still half a man” and was also in a state of self-denial. When her health improved, she sometimes worked part-time in anticipation of full-fledged job hunting, but this sometimes caused her to fall ill again. Finally, the period of rest lasted for eight years. Thereafter, Y waited for her health condition to stabilize and began using RYSS that had been introduced to her by her doctor.

Y used RYSS-A for a long period of two years. She thought that she had been lucky enough to find a job during the ice age, but she did not have a foundation of what kind of work she was suited for and what she wanted to do. Hence, she wanted to take steps toward employment in a way that she was satisfied with. Therefore, during the first half of the program, she participated in a communication class and a drawing class and first rehabilitated her social participation.

Consequently, Y wanted to reflect on what kind of person she was and what kind of experiences she had and asked the RYSS-A staff to conduct a self-analysis. After the work experience, she waited for her health condition to settle down, and in April 2017, she started working as a non-regular employee in an administrative office. Y was able to make a good living even as a non-regular employee because of the support from her parents, but she wanted to change her job eventually and rely on RYSS again in that case.

Y: I'm too old, so I guess there's a risk of changing jobs.

Author: Do you mean that you feel the risk as much as other people do, but not that much, because you have places to turn to, such as RYSS?

Y: That's right, even after I found a job, I kept coming to RYSS from time to time. I came mostly for fun. When I had a bad day at work, I would come to complain. When something happened at work, I would just say, “excuse me,” and go to the office without calling in. Then I would ask someone who was there to listen to me. (omission) I know that I was once able to rely on someone like that, and I am sure that I am not alone in that part of my life (November 2018).

In this way, the self-confidence of Y was generated by the experience of facing herself through self-analysis at RYSS. Even after achieving employment, she disclosed, “I can go to RYSS whenever I want, and I will be accepted as usual.” Y tried to work while maintaining the relationship with RYSS, for example, by going there for consultation if she had any problems in her work life.

4.2.2 Consideration of changing jobs

From the time she achieved employment to the present, Y has continued to work as an

administrative assistant at an administrative agency as a non-regular employee, almost all day, three to four days a week. When she first started working, it was difficult for her to get used to the busy work schedule, but since the year before last, she has gradually become accustomed to it. Contrarily, as she became accustomed to her job and gained confidence, she visited RYSS-A less frequently. She felt that it may be good to be independent of RYSS. She also thought that it was a little conceited and careless to think about her problems in daily life and professional life and her future alone.

Y: I guess I've gotten used to this life. But getting used to it is scary. At that time (interview in November 2018), I said so ("I want to rely on RYSS even after I start working."). But recently, as I started thinking about what I'm going to do next year, I thought to myself, "Oh, I'm thinking alone." At first glance, that seems like a good thing. But the reason I've reached where I am today is because I can rely on various things. In the past, I couldn't rely on them at first, so I didn't even think of it that way. I guess I'm a bit conceited and careless. (June 2019)

In an interview in June 2019, Y said, "I'm working right now, so it's a little hard to visit RYSS. But I realized that it was better for me not to think things alone." It indicates that she wanted to maintain the relationship with RYSS. In an interview in July 2020, Y also said the following.

Y: There used to be RYSS-A closer to my office. At that time, if I had any problems, I would go there after work and talk to them. These days, it's a little further away, and I guess I don't think it is necessary to visit and consult with RYSS. Maybe I should vent, but I don't do that anymore. I think the meaning of RYSS changed. It's almost directly related to job hunting now. Once I started working, the importance of RYSS changed. (When I first started working), there was a phase that I would go to RYSS if something happened. But now, I'm in my fourth year. RYSS is not gone, but it's like a parental separation. (July 2020)

In this interview, too, although she said, "not enough to talk," she also disclosed, "maybe I should get in touch with RYSS," indicating that she thinks it is desirable to maintain the relationship with RYSS.

Conversely, the latter part of the narrative suggests that Y has a different meaning for the change in the relationship with RYSS. Thus, Y has moved from the stage where she consults with RYSS whenever she has a problem to the stage where she uses RYSS again when she needs to do a full-scale job search (job change) as she has gotten used to her job and gained confidence. Y is currently living in an apartment owned by her parents although she is a non-regular worker, and she does not have any difficulties in living. Nonetheless, she has a desire to eventually become financially independent, and

she would like to change to a regular job if she can continue working as a non-regular worker for three years.

However, the physical condition of Y was not always perfect from the time she achieved employment to the present. It is precisely because she has become accustomed to her job and has more time to spare that she has begun to think about her personal relationship problems and the prospects for her professional life in the future. Y tries to avoid thinking about these things as much as possible because she said, “If I think about it too much, I get mentally overwhelmed,” but even so, there are many days when she naturally cannot fall asleep, and she continues to visit the hospital once a month. Even if she could change jobs using RYSS, it would be difficult for her to work satisfactorily while her physical condition was not perfect, and she thought that she shouldn’t change jobs. Therefore, while regretting the dilution of her relationship with RYSS, she became conscious that she would rely on RYSS only when she needed to change jobs. Therefore, she became distant from RYSS when she was not in good physical condition; thus, the relationship between Y and RYSS remained diluted.

Now, in her fifth year, she is seriously considering a career change. The reason for this is that human relations at her workplace are not going well. In her workplace, administrative assistants are renewable as long as they wish, and there is little turnover. Further, a former RYSS-A staff member who had taken care of Y was returning from maternity leave, and Y felt that it was good timing and that she wanted the staff member to assist her in her job search. Y has resumed using RYSS and hopes to change jobs within this fiscal year if possible. Currently, she works three or four days a week, but she is considering working five days a week to gradually increase her working hours with an eye to the future. Because of her health condition, she would like to work in a clerical position in the government, which seems to offer better benefits than in the private sector. In August 2021, she visited RYSS for the first time in a year and a half and began discussing her future job search.

Thus, immediately after achieving employment, Y had a sense of security that she could always rely on RYSS if she had any problems. She went to RYSS for consultation for minor problems while working. However, as her confidence increased and her work became busier, her relationship with RYSS naturally became weaker although she felt that she should consult with RYSS. Furthermore, the position of RYSS changed for her. She was thinking of using RYSS again when she changed jobs, but her relationship with RYSS remained diluted partly because she was not in perfect physical condition.

5 Considerations

So far, we have confirmed the situation of X and Y after using RYSS. While both of them were aware of their relationship with RYSS in the process of overcoming difficulties and challenges in their

professional lives, they did not necessarily maintain their relationship with RYSS with the positive attitude of “relying on others if anything happens” as Kanamoto (2020) asserted. Rather, the case studies in this paper revealed the difficulty of maintaining a positive attitude of “relying on others if anything happens” and of maintaining such a relationship even after achieving employment.

Accordingly, the following section examines the factors that influence changes in the relationship between young people and RYSS after they achieve employment and whether they promote or inhibit the maintenance of the relationship, along a time axis. Among the users of RYSS, X and Y have not experienced employment difficulties, such as unemployment, again after achieving employment; thus, they are positioned as cases with relatively stable transitions. Therefore, the following discussion is based on the situation of young people who were able to make a relatively stable transition after using RYSS.

First, unlike those who are unemployed or in the period of using RYSS, young people who have attained employment have employment as a central part of their lives. The number of working hours increases if the worker is a regular employee like X. Nonetheless, even if the worker is a non-regular employee like Y and does not work many hours, he or she will think about and worry about work outside of working hours. In this context, young people do not necessarily dissolve their relationship with RYSS even if they have achieved employment, and they position RYSS as a place where they can casually consult about problems in their daily and occupational lives.

For these young people, RYSS is not a specialist who can provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary for job search activities but rather an entity that they can feel free to consult if they have any problems, and that gives them a sense of security. Under these circumstances, young people must resolve new problems and anxieties they face when they start working, which promotes their desire to maintain a relationship with RYSS and actual contact with them. The fulfillment of the need of young people for emotional support will allow for a more stable transition.

How does the relationship between the youth and RYSS change thereafter? While the workload increases and new problems arise, young people gradually become accustomed to their work with the help of RYSS and others, and their self-confidence improves. The emotional support provided by the connection with RYSS functions in this way. Contrarily, as in the case of Y, the young people come to feel that they can cope with problems in their daily and occupational lives on their own without consulting RYSS. In this situation, although relying on RYSS may be an option, the maintenance of a relationship in which they consult RYSS is more likely to be suppressed. Instead, as time passes since they started working, they gradually build relationships in the workplace and have more people to consult with. In addition to the relationships in the workplace, there are other consultation partners other than RYSS, such as friends from the period of RYSS, use for X and a medical institution for Y. Thus, the weight of RYSS becomes smaller.

In this way, the desire of the young people to maintain the relationship with RYSS and the actual contact with RYSS tend to be suppressed at the stage when they become accustomed to the work and gain confidence. Furthermore, for Y, RYSS was not so much a provider of emotional support as a provider of technical support, a specialist who could give her the knowledge and skills necessary for her job search. However, in the case of Y, she did not use RYSS again for her job search due to her physical condition, and her relationship with RYSS remained weak.

Although the maintenance of the relationship with RYSS tends to be suppressed, if there are no major difficulties in daily or work life, this seems to be desirable for both the youth and RYSS, “like parental separation” as Y called it. However, in the case of the present paper, once the relationship with RYSS is suppressed, the youth is faced with difficulties related to employment. In the case of X, he faced the difficulty of having to resign or change jobs. X was in a situation where he felt sorry for RYSS and was burdened by the hassle of being consoled by RYSS, which made it difficult for him to have mental leeway. He also did not have enough time at the time because he wanted to decide on a new job as soon as possible. He consulted a friend who was another advisor, but looking back later, X regretted that he had not consulted RYSS and had not sought to continue working at the cooperative. Hence, relying on RYSS again when faced with some difficulties is difficult, and the maintenance and resumption of the relationship with RYSS are restrained by the lack of mental and time availability. As a result of this dilution of the relationship with RYSS, the options of X for coping with difficulties were reduced.

In sum, first, the relationship between the youth and RYSS becomes weaker as the youth becomes accustomed to employment, and their self-confidence improves. In this context, for some young people, the weight of the support they expect from RYSS shifts from emotional to technical support. However, when occupational lives are stabilized, the need for technical support remains low, and the relationship with RYSS becomes more tenuous. In addition, when young people have difficulties in daily or occupational life, recovering the relationship with RYSS is difficult because the youth may feel burdened to consult with RYSS if they do not have enough time or mental capacity to do so. Even if there is someone other than RYSS to consult with, not being able to consult with RYSS means a reduction in the opportunity to receive emotional and technical support. This can be said to reduce the number of options for coping with difficulties.

How then can we evaluate the relationship between these young people and RYSS after they have achieved employment? On the basis of Okabe’s (2019) discussion of the “optionality of dependence,” we would like to further examine this issue. The “optionality of dependence” means that young people can choose the degree to which they receive support from others, depending on their condition and the situation they face. For instance, when a young person has a problem, he or she can increase his or her dependence on the supporter, and when he or she regains some energy or

when the supporter's support becomes too much, he or she can often leave and reduce the degree of dependence (Okabe 2019: 216-7). On the basis of Okabe's point, can we say that X and Y have "selectivity of dependence?" X and Y decided whether to consult or contact RYSS based on their situation after achieving employment. However, when X has a problem, it does not increase the degree of dependence on the supporter but rather makes it difficult for him to have contact with the supporter. If the situation of not being able to consult continues, then it may lead back to the "difficulty of living without a place to rely on," which X has overcome through the use of RYSS. As Y also became accustomed to her job and gained confidence, she began to see RYSS as a source of technical support for her, but she was not feeling well, and her relationship with RYSS was becoming weaker. It is unclear whether he came to think that she no longer needed emotional support, but rather, she continued to feel that she needs to let it out.

Then, how can we avoid a situation in which we are unable to consult although we have a problem? One direction is to establish a system to continue reaching out to young people after they have achieved employment. For instance, RYSS may be able to provide periodic telephone counseling as an effective support program for young people after they have achieved employment. Currently, the RYSS program provides consultation and support for job placement and job change activities after achieving employment as "Settlement and Step-up Support." In the "Settlement and Step-up Support," young people who have achieved employment can continue to participate in various support programs at RYSS if they wish (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2023). Therefore, whether the relationship between RYSS and youth is maintained depends on whether the youth visit RYSS or not. However, it is precisely in situations, where young people do not have the mentality or time to go to RYSS voluntarily or where they are unaware of their problems, that encouragement from a reliable place, such as RYSS, is important.

Therefore, by having regular contact with RYSS, even in the form of a phone call, it is thought that it will be easier to avoid situations in which the only options are to cope on one's own or to choose coping methods that are easily influenced by the quantity and quality of personal relationships even if one does not have the mental or time resources to do so.⁴⁾ In light of these points, specific ways of supporting young people after they have achieved employment is an issue that must be considered in the future.

6 Conclusion

Finally, we would like to discuss the findings and limitations of this paper. This paper has revealed that maintaining the relationship between young people and RYSS is difficult after they have achieved employment. Even if young people have the desire to consult with RYSS about their problems and

issues, they are inhibited by various factors. To maintain the relationship with RYSS even after achieving employment, one of the possible methods is to implement a support program in which RYSS encourages young people to consult with RYSS.

The next limitation of this paper is that we failed to examine the cases of young people who had no contact with RYSS after achieving employment or who experienced difficulties in finding employment again. Moreover, the question remains as to how X and Y will develop their professional lives in the future. In this context, further examination of whether the relationship with the support system as presented in this paper is sustainable or desirable for young people is necessary. Therefore, we would like to continue to follow up on the future of the two young people.

The perspective of the supporters could not be examined in this paper. It remains to be examined whether the supporters consider the maintenance of the relationship after the achievement of employment as important, whether such efforts are possible with the current support system, and how such awareness and support system differ among the various management entities. We would like to continue to consider these points in the future.

Notes

- 1) The number of young unemployed persons, those who are neither doing household chores nor attending school among the non-working population aged 15-34, has increased from 400,000 in 1996 to 690,000 in 2020 (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2021).
- 2) The target age group for support has been 15-39 years old, but from FY2020, the target age group will be 15-49 years old because support for the generation in the “ice age” of employment has been included in the content of the support.
- 3) When young people have difficulties in their professional lives, they do not necessarily turn only to employment support providers, such as RYSS. On the basis of the interviews conducted with 49 young people in a nationwide survey, Kidoguchi (2017) clarified the reality of young people who experienced difficulties in their professional lives. The young people in the case studies coped with their difficulties by using the specialized knowledge and skills they had acquired in higher education, by obtaining information and resources in their professional networks, and by receiving various types of support based on geographical and kinship ties. However, these ways of coping with problems were barely established through the individual efforts of the young people and their families. Therefore, developing practical and institutional mechanisms is crucial to support young people who are unable to have such consultation services (Kidoguchi 2017).
- 4) When a relatively stable transition is achieved, the youth themselves and their supporters may

wish to become independent from the employment support agency. Nonetheless, the continued encouragement from RYSS after employment may confine the youth in a “support-supported” relationship and, in some cases, may inhibit the independent choice of the youth, including whether to rely on RYSS. However, as shown in the case of X, even if the choice seems to be voluntary, in retrospect, regret may arise for not having considered other options. Hence, it is important to have someone like RYSS who can provide emotional and technical support and who has extensive experience in determining whether a young person’s voluntary choice is appropriate, even if he or she has a friend or work relationship with whom he or she can talk. How to avoid confining the youth to a “support-supported” relationship and how to maintain the relationship with the supporter without restricting their independent choices will be an issue for further study. Providing continuous support within the current RYSS support system is not always necessary. However, the continuation of the approach from RYSS proposed in this paper may be one of the possible directions in terms of making the most of the situation in which the young people have established a relationship of trust with RYSS.

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