

Original Article

The Impact of Social Relationship Characteristics on Quality of Life among Single-Person Households: A Focus on Social Activities and Community Life

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study aimed to examine the maintenance of social relationships and the characteristic differences among single-person households by analyzing levels of social activities, social relationships and communication, and community life. **Methods:** An online survey was conducted from September 15 to September 21, 2025, targeting 409 individuals living in single-person households. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and one-way ANOVA with SPSS Statistics 29.0. **Results:** The results indicated that mean scores for social support (3.42), social relationships and communication (3.19), and community life (3.34) were all within the low-to-mid 3-point range, reflecting a moderate level overall. Social support differed significantly according to age, occupation, monthly income, and duration of single-person living. Social relationships and communication showed significant differences based on age, education level, and duration of single-person living, while community life demonstrated statistically significant differences according to age, occupation, education level, monthly income, and duration of single-person living. These findings suggest that the social relationships of single-person households vary according to individual characteristics as well as economic and social environmental conditions. Accordingly, this study highlights the need to expand participation opportunities through appropriate programs and improved accessibility to social support, social relationship and community life activities that promote communication among single-person households. **Conclusions:** This study is meaningful in that it highlights the need for systematic interventions to strengthen social networks and promote community integration in order to improve the quality of life of single-person households.

Keywords: Single-person households, Social activities, Social relationships, Communication, Community life

Received 12 Feb 2026

Revised 16 Apr 2026

Accepted 27 Apr 2026

Citation: Kim JS, Sung SI, Kim KH. The Impact of Social Relationship Characteristics on Quality of Life among Single-Person Households: A Focus on Social Activities and Community Life.

The Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies. 2026; 10(1): 1-11.

<https://doi.org/10.22685/jts.2026.10.1.1>

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1. Introduction

In modern society, rapid changes in social structures and the growing prevalence of individualistic values have resulted in single-person households accounting for more than one-third of all households. This trend is expected to continue rising and has become a social reality attracting considerable public attention. Such changes both influence and are influenced by individuals' lifestyles and social

relationships, thereby revealing a range of underlying social issues. Within traditionally family-centered social systems, the emergence and expansion of single-person households have raised concerns that social isolation and the weakening of interpersonal relationships pose significant risks to communication [1]. In particular, reduced frequency of social contact resulting from limited communication substantially increases the likelihood of mental health problems, including psychological stress, depression, and

anxiety [2, 3]. Furthermore, in the Korean context, where social support systems remain insufficiently developed, the deterioration of social relationships among single-person households has emerged as a critical social issue from the perspective of well-aging [4,5].

This reduction in social communication not only deepens emotional isolation by limiting opportunities to share experiences and build trust with others [6], but also significantly increases the risk of further social exclusion by hindering the formation of social ties and the exchange of information [7].

Social communication thus influences individuals' lives in multiple ways. Previous studies on single-person households have primarily focused on structural factors such as economic poverty, housing instability, and health management. More recently, however, scholarly attention has shifted toward deficiencies in social relationships and limited participation in community activities, as these factors are closely associated with psychological stability and a sense of community, including interpersonal trust. In this context, there is a growing need to examine social support, communication, and community life in an integrated manner. Kim & Jeon [8] argue that network formation through social participation facilitates interpersonal communication, strengthens trust, and contributes to addressing community-level issues. In other words, expanding social activities and community life is essential not only for enhancing individual psychological well-being but also for strengthening community resilience.

Kim Seong-ah (2022) [9] defined individuals who lack support systems for seeking help during times of difficulty or hardship as being 'socially isolated,' noting that such isolation hinders the development of a sense of community. From this perspective, social activities function as a primary channel linking individuals to the community by enabling them to perform social roles in which they mutually provide and receive support within the broader social framework [10]. However, participation in social activities among single-person households varies significantly according to individual characteristics, including age, educational level, monthly income, occupation, and duration of single-person living.

Previous research indicates that while younger generations demonstrate relatively high levels of participation in social activities, middle-aged adults and older adults exhibit considerably lower participation rates, thereby increasing the risk of social isolation. Additionally, individuals with higher levels of education and those who have lived alone for extended periods tend to exhibit stronger individualistic orientations, which are associated with lower levels of participation in community activities. In

contrast, individuals with lower incomes often face constraints on social participation due to economic limitations. This gap in participation in social activities is not merely an imbalance in economic leisure activities but leads to inequality in opportunities to form social relationships, negatively impacting [11] mental health and quality of life [12] in the long term.

In this context, communication has emerged as a key factor enabling social integration within evolving interpersonal relationships. Beyond a simple means of information exchange or rudimentary interaction, Han et al. [13] emphasized the rationality of communication grounded in positive trust and cooperation, noting that its meaning has a profound impact on individual identity and quality of life. However, with the recent normalization of technology-mediated, non-face-to-face communication, there is a growing body of research that points to a decline in the quality of face-to-face relationships and an increase in social isolation [3,14]. Although communication may appear smooth in online environments, diminished expressiveness and empathy in face-to-face interactions increasingly contribute to the burden and avoidance of forming social relationships, thereby eroding interpersonal trust. This is particularly pronounced among single-person households, where limited interpersonal interaction and a lack of emotional communication heighten the risk of social disconnection.

Conversely, forming interpersonal relationships and experiencing a sense of belonging within a social community play a crucial mediating role by affirming individual identity, strengthening trust and cooperation, and contributing to the resolution of community issues [15,16]. Accordingly, enhancing communication skills and social relationships among single-person households should be understood not merely as an individual-level response but as a core task for broader social integration. In light of the importance of social relationships and communication, community life holds particular significance as a fundamental social foundation in which individuals build connections as members of society and practice mutual care [17].

However, in contemporary Korean society, the rate of community participation among single-person households remains relatively low [18]. This limited engagement, combined with insufficient social activities and communication, undermines the development of rational and constructive communication. Kim et al. [19,20], emphasize the importance of social relationships, noting that participation in local community activities is a key factor in strengthening individuals' social capital and social ties.

Recently, new forms of communication utilizing artificial intelligence technologies [20,21], such as ChatGPT, have

emerged. Nevertheless, the restoration of individuals' everyday lives and the strengthening of social relationships and community bonds remain essential foundations for social stability [14,17]. Despite this importance, empirical research examining the expansion of community participation and relationship formation among single-person households remains limited [22]. Previous studies have focused on individual factors such as loneliness, depression, housing, and economic issues, but there are relatively few studies that have examined these variables in an integrated manner. A review of existing studies indicates the need to explore differentiated welfare policies and rational support measures centered on social relationships in order to support well-aging among single-person households [23].

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze differences in social activities, social relationships and communication, and levels of community life according to the general characteristics of single-person households, as well as to examine the correlations among these factors. Based on these analyses, the study seeks to propose policy and cultural measures that contribute to reducing social isolation and expanding social connections among single-person households [24]. by analyzing differences in social support, social relationships and communication, and the quality of community life among single-person households, while also providing practical implications and empirical foundations for addressing communication challenges and the restoration of community in contemporary society.

2. Research Subjects and Methods

2.1. Research Subjects and Design

This study employed a cross-sectional design using an online survey, with participants completing a self-administered questionnaire. The survey took approximately 25-30 minutes to complete. A quota sampling method was applied based on an online panel from Korea Opinion Research, with efforts made to ensure balance by reflecting population proportions by both gender and age. However, given the nature of online panel surveys, the characteristics of individuals who voluntarily chose to participate may be partially reflected in the sample, which limits the direct generalizability of the findings to the entire population. Nevertheless, as the study specifically targeted single-person households as its primary population and collected data mainly from respondents within this group, the sample is considered to have an appropriate level of representativeness for the study's objectives.

In total, 409 respondents who completed the survey were included in the analysis. The study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board (Approval No. KYU 2025-06-038) and adhered to its ethical guidelines.

2.2. Research Tools

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of a total of 21 items across three subdomains, social activities, social relationships and communication, and community life. The social activities domain comprised seven items and was developed with reference to the concepts of relational interaction and exchange of help presented in the Korean Social Support Measurement Tool by Oh GS et al. [25]. This was designed to reflect the foundation for individuals to interact with those around them and exchange practical and emotional support, as well as their willingness to participate in social activities. It included items such as 'Availability of a helper in times of difficulty,' 'Provider of health-related advice,' 'Regular contact: friends, neighbors,' and 'Willingness to participate in social activities.'

The social relationships and communication domain consists of seven items and was developed based on the Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS-18), which was validated for the Korean version by Kim Yong-seok (2020) [26]. This domain is designed to measure factors such as contact frequency, the number of close relationships, the likelihood of asking for help, and experiences of emotional support within networks of family, friends, and neighbors. It includes items such as 'regular contact with family,' 'openness in expressing emotions,' 'consulting with family on important decisions,' 'providing emotional stability,' and 'contributing to a reduction in loneliness.' Additionally, items assessing feelings of estrangement from family were reverse-scored. The community life domain was constructed with reference to the study on community consciousness and community participation by Kang & Lee [27]. This domain was designed to capture a sense of belonging as a member of society, trust in others, connection with the local community, a desire for harmony, and experiences of participation in community activities. It included items such as 'sense of belonging within the community,' 'participation in community activities,' 'recognition of the importance of harmony,' 'perception of the interdependence between the individual and society,' and 'trust in others.' Each item was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels within each respective domain. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to verify the construct validity of the research instrument. The results showed KMO values of 0.928 for social support, 0.889 for social relationships

and communication, and 0.934 for community life. The KMO value is an index used to assess the suitability of data for factor analysis. All three subdomains exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.80, specifically, social support and community life were found to be at a very high level, while social relationships and communication were at a good level, indicating that the construct validity of the instrument was adequately established. The reliability of the scales, assessed using Cronbach's α , was 0.815 for social activities, 0.870 for social relationships and communication, and 0.922 for community life, indicating good internal consistency for each scale.

2.3. Data Analysis Methods

This study utilized SPSS Statistics 29 to examine the effects of social support, social relationships, and communication on the quality of life of single-person households. The general characteristics of the participants were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA were conducted to assess differences in the levels of the main variables. When significant differences were identified, Duncan's post-hoc test was applied to determine specific group differences. In addition, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effects of social support, social relationships, communication, and community life on the quality of life among single-person households.

3. Research Results

3.1. General Characteristics of Single-Person Households

Among the 409 respondents who participated in the survey of single-person households, males accounted for 56.2% and females for 43.8%, indicating a slightly higher proportion of males. The largest age groups were those aged 20–29 years (23.0%) and 30–39 years (22.0%), while respondents aged 60 years or older comprised 21.0%, suggesting a relatively even distribution across age groups. In terms of occupation, clerical workers represented the largest group at 34.2%, followed by the unemployed/other category (27.4%), service and sales (12.7%), and managerial/professional workers (11.7%). Regarding educational level, a college degree (4-year) was the most common at 48.4%, followed by high school graduation (28.4%) and college graduation (3-year) (13.2%). Monthly household income was most frequently reported in the 2–4 million won range at 46.7%, followed by less than 2 million won

at 32.0%, indicating a high proportion of middle- to lower-income households. With respect to the duration of single-person household living, the largest proportion of respondents had lived alone for 10 years or more at 33.0%, followed by those living alone for less than 10 years at 28.1% and less than 5 years at 17.8%, indicating that long-term single-person households constituted the majority <Table 1>.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Single-Person Households

Category		N(%)
Gender	Male	230(56.2)
	Female	179(43.8)
Age Group	20~29	94(23.0)
	30~39	90(22.0)
	40~49	63(15.4)
	50~59	76(18.6)
	60 and over	86(21.0)
Occupation	Managerial/Professional	48(11.7)
	Clerical	140(34.2)
	Service/Sales	52(12.7)
	Production/Skilled Labor	23(5.6)
	Day Labor/Unskilled Labor	34(8.3)
	Unemployed/Other	112(27.4)
Highest Level of Education	High School Graduate	116(28.4)
	College Graduate [3-year program]	54(13.2)
	College Graduate [4-year program]	198(48.4)
	Graduate School [Master's Degree]	37(9.0)
Monthly Household Income	Graduate School [Doctorate]	4(1.0)
	Less than 2 million won	131(32.0)
	2 to 4 million won	191(46.7)
	4 to 6 million won	64(15.6)
	6 to 8 million won	13(3.2)
	8 to 10 million won	6(1.5)
Duration of Single-Person Living	10 million won or more	4(1.0)
	Less than 1 year	26(6.4)
	Less than 3 years	60(14.7)
	Less than 5 years	73(17.8)
	Less than 10 years	115(28.1)
	10 years or more	135(33.0)

3.2. Social Support, Social Relationships and Communication, and Community Life for Single-Person Households

The means and variances of social activities, social relationships and communication, and community life related to communication among single-person households were examined, and the results are presented in Table 2.

The mean scores for communication-related dimensions among single-person households were 3.42 for social support, 3.19 for social relationships and communication, and 3.34 for community life, indicating overall moderate

levels within the low 3-point range on a 5-point Likert scale. Within the social activities domain, the item “Regular Contact: Friends, Neighbors” received the highest mean score of 3.60, whereas “willingness to participate in social activities” recorded the lowest mean score of 2.93. In the domain of social relationships and communication, “regular contact with one’s family” showed the highest mean score of 3.45, while “Recognize loss of connection with family” showed the lowest mean score of 2.37. Regarding community life, awareness of the importance of harmony scored the highest at 3.83 points, while participation in community activities scored the lowest at 2.72 points.

Figure 1 illustrates the levels of social support, social relationships and communication, and community life

among single-person households across age groups. The mean scores were highest among individuals aged 20–29 years and lowest among those aged 50–59 years. These patterns are consistent with the results of the analysis of variance presented in Figure 1, indicating that younger age groups demonstrate higher levels of social activities and community participation.

3.3. General Characteristics and Social Relationships of Single-Person Households

Differences in the mean scores for social activities, social relationships and communication, and community life according to the general characteristics of single-person households are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Social Support, Social Relationships and Communication, and Community Life for Single-Person Households

Social Support	M±S.D	Social Relationships and Communication	M±S.D	Community Life	M±S.D
Presence of helpers in times of difficulty	3.51±0.95	regular contact with one’s family	3.45±1.06	building a sense of belonging within a community	3.40±0.88
Depression/stress communication partner	3.52±0.95	openness of emotional expression	3.22±1.06	Participation in community activities	2.72±1.09
Advice, Encouragement Motivators	3.52±0.92	Provides emotional stability	3.44±1.04	Social Adaptability and Flexibility	3.33±0.96
Regular Contact: Friends, Neighbors	3.60±0.99	Important Decision Consultation with Family	3.24±1.14	recognition of the importance of harmony	3.83±0.84
health advice provider	3.38±1.08	Contribute to Loneliness Reduction	3.29±1.12	Individual Society - Recognition of Interrelationships	3.39±0.88
Connecting with a Healthy Life	3.52±0.94	Recognize loss of connection with family	2.37±1.13	a sense of trust in others	3.35±0.87
willingness to participate in social activities	2.93±1.08	Improving social life adaptation	3.35±0.99	Motivation to participate in social activities	3.34±0.92
Total	3.42±0.81		3.19±0.74		3.34±0.69

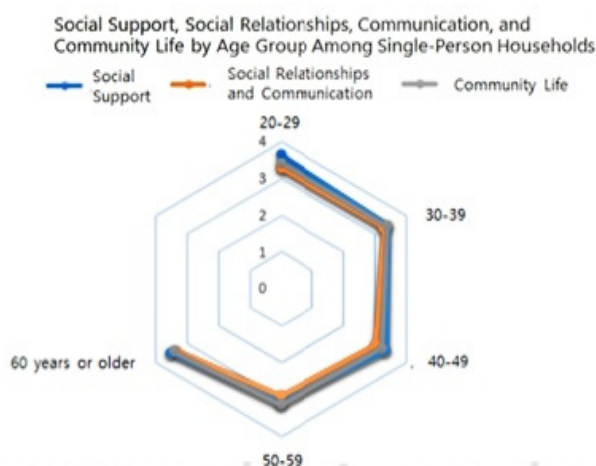


Fig. 1. Social Support, Social Relationships and Communication, and Community Life by Age Group Among Single-Person Households

Table 3. General Characteristics and Social Relationships of Single-Person Households

Category		Social Activities	Duncan <i>p</i>		Social Relationships and Communication	Duncan <i>p</i>		Community Life	Duncan <i>p</i>	
		M±S.D			M±S.D			M±S.D		
Gender	Male ^a	3.35±0.83		0.04	3.17±0.72		0.56	3.31±0.69		0.25
	Female ^b	3.52±0.80			3.22±0.78			3.38±0.70		
Age Group	20-29 ^a	3.64±0.78	d<a	<.001	3.28±0.81	d<e	<.001	3.42±0.73	d<a	0.04
	30-39 ^b	3.43±0.85			3.30±0.71			3.41±0.69		
	40-49 ^c	3.38±0.84			3.04±0.75			3.23±0.77		
	50-59 ^d	3.10±0.79			2.91±0.71			3.16±0.60		
	60 and over ^e	3.51±0.75			3.36±0.74			3.41±0.63		
Occupation	Managerial/Professional ^a	3.65±0.83	e<a	0.03	3.29±0.78	n/a	0.51	3.59±0.69	f<a	0.00
	Clerical ^b	3.53±0.82		0.00	3.25±0.73			3.43±0.70		
	Service/Sales ^c	3.29±0.66			3.07±0.79			3.32±0.64		
	Production/Skilled Labor ^d	3.29±0.90			3.02±0.82			3.30±0.71		
	Day Labor/Unskilled Labor ^e	3.17±0.90			3.21±0.79			3.31±0.71		
	Unemployed/Other ^f	3.37±0.80			3.17±0.70			3.15±0.65		
Highest Level of Education	High School Graduate ^a	3.28±0.88	n/a	0.09	3.06±0.77	n/a	0.02	3.21±0.71	e<d	0.03
	College Graduate [3-year program] ^b	3.34±0.68			3.02±0.76			3.25±0.61		
	College Graduate [4-year program] ^c	3.53±0.80			3.31±0.71			3.42±0.67		
	Graduate School [Master's Degree] ^d	3.49±0.79			3.27±0.72			3.51±0.73		
	Graduate School [Doctorate] ^e	3.36±1.34			3.07±0.89			2.96±1.11		
Monthly Household Income	Less than 2 million won ^a	3.26±0.81	a<f	0.00	3.11±0.76	a<f	0.07	3.15±0.71	a<f	<.001
	2 to 4 million won ^b	3.43±0.80			3.19±0.70	n/a		3.35±0.65		
	4 to 6 million won ^c	3.66±0.70			3.29±0.69			3.55±0.60		
	6 to 8 million won ^d	3.42±1.18			3.25±1.19			3.65±0.84		
	8 to 10 million won ^e	3.70±0.94			3.62±0.88			3.50±0.92		
	10 million won or more ^f	4.39±0.44			4.04±0.91			4.21±0.71		
Duration of Single-Person Living	Less than 1 year ^a	3.58±0.66	e<b	<.001	3.09±0.63	e<b	0.00	3.16±0.59	a<b	<.001
	Less than 3 years ^b	3.72±0.83			3.47±0.78			3.60±0.64		
	Less than 5 years ^c	3.56±0.81			3.32±0.83			3.46±0.74		
	Less than 10 years ^d	3.38±0.80			3.16±0.75			3.34±0.68		
	10 years or more ^e	3.23±0.81			3.06±0.67			3.19±0.67		
Total		3.47±0.82			3.23±0.77			3.38±0.68		

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

The analysis of means and standard deviations for social support, social relationships and communication, and community life by general characteristics showed that, for social support, there was a statistically significant difference in social support scores between men at 3.35, and women at 3.52 ($p < .05$). Respondents aged 20–29 years recorded a mean score of 3.64, whereas those aged 50–59 years recorded a mean score of 3.10. The 20–29 age group demonstrated a higher average level of social activities, and this difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

With respect to social activities, statistically significant differences were observed across occupational groups

($p < .05$). Managerial/professional groups recorded a higher mean score of 3.65 than daily laborers/unskilled workers of 3.17. Monthly household income also showed statistically significant differences in social activities, with respondents earning 10 million won or more reporting a higher mean score of 4.39 compared to those earning less than 2 million won of 3.26 ($p < .001$). In terms of the duration of single-person household living, respondents who had lived alone for 10 years or more recorded a mean score of 3.23, whereas those who had lived alone for less than 3 years recorded a higher mean score of 3.72, indicating a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$).

For social relationships and communication, respondents aged 50–59 years recorded a mean score of 2.91, whereas those aged 60 years and older recorded a higher mean score of 3.36. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

With respect to educational attainment in social relationships and communication, college graduates [3-year program] recorded a mean score of 3.02, while those indicating a [4-year program] recorded a higher mean score of 3.31, resulting in a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$). In terms of occupation, production or skilled workers recorded a mean score of 3.02, whereas managerial/professional groups recorded a mean score of 3.29. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Regarding monthly household income and social relationships and communication, respondents earning less than 2 million won recorded a mean score of 3.11, while those earning 10 million won or more recorded a mean score of 4.04, although this difference was not statistically significant.

In terms of social relationships and communication, respondents who had lived alone for 10 years or more recorded a mean score of 3.06, whereas those who had lived alone for less than 3 years recorded a higher mean score of 3.47, indicating a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$). Regarding community life by age group, respondents aged 20–29 years recorded a mean score of 3.42, while those aged 50–59 years recorded a mean score of 3.16. The rate was higher among those aged 20–29 than among those aged 50–59. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Differences in community life were also observed across occupational groups, with the unemployed/other group recording a mean score of 3.15 and the managerial/professional group recording a higher mean score of 3.59. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$). In community life, the highest level of education showed a mean score of 2.96 for graduate school [doctoral degree] and 3.51 for graduate school [master's degree], with the graduate school [master's degree] group scoring higher. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). In terms of monthly household income in community life, respondents earning less than 2 million won recorded a mean score of 3.15, whereas those earning 10

million won or more recorded a higher mean score of 4.21. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Regarding the duration of single-person household living in community life, respondents who had lived alone for less than 1 year recorded a mean score of 3.16, while those who had lived alone for less than 3 years recorded a higher mean score of 3.60, indicating a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$).

4. The Impact of Social Support, Social Relationships and Communication, and Community Life on Quality of Life Among Single-Person Households

An analysis of the effects of social support, social relationships and communication, and community life on the quality of life of single-person households revealed that social support ($\beta = .239$, $p < .001$) and social relationships and communication ($\beta = .260$, $p < .001$) have significant positive effects on quality of life. Specifically, a one-unit increase in social support is associated with a 0.239-unit increase in quality of life, while a one-unit increase in social relationships and communication corresponds to a 0.260-unit increase in quality of life. In contrast, community life ($\beta = .111$, $p = .064$) was not found to be statistically significant. Furthermore, tolerance values ranged from .497 to .627 and variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.594 to 2.010, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern <Table 4>.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how single-person households form and maintain social networks in modern society by analyzing differences in levels of social activities, social relationships and communication, and community life according to their general characteristics.

The analysis revealed that the economic stability of a person's occupation and a positive perception of economic participation are key factors in enhancing life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting

Table 4. The Effects of Social Support, Social Relationships and Communication, and Community Life on Quality of Life in Single-Person Households

Category	B	S.E	β	t	p-value	Tolerance	VIF
Social support	.168	.042	.239	3.980	<.001	.497	2.010
Social relationships and communication	.199	.041	.260	4.853	<.001	.627	1.594
Community life	.092	.049	.111	1.861	.064	.508	1.967

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

that perceived economic stability serves as a crucial foundation for emotional well-being and overall quality of life. In particular, individuals who perceived their occupations as more stable reported higher levels of social activity and community engagement. Moreover, a positive perception of economic participation appears to contribute not only to greater overall life satisfaction but also to the maintenance of social relationships. These results indicate that economic activity extends beyond income generation, playing an important role in fulfilling social roles and enhancing self-efficacy. Furthermore, these findings are in line with prior studies showing that social capital is closely associated with quality of life [18,28].

In terms of differences by occupational group, managers and professionals exhibited relatively high levels of social activity, whereas day laborers, unskilled workers, and production and technical workers tended to show lower levels of social relationships and communication. This suggests that occupational stability and broader socioeconomic conditions serve as key foundations for social participation and the formation of interpersonal relationships. In addition, higher educational attainment is generally associated with broader social networks and greater capacity to maintain diverse forms of social capital. In this regard, the finding that individuals with a college degree or higher demonstrated relatively higher levels of social activity and community engagement is consistent with prior research. Furthermore, as highlighted in studies on healthy aging, social, emotional, and economic factors are closely interconnected components of quality of life. The results of this study provide empirical support for this integrated perspective [29].

Conversely, groups with lower monthly incomes or unstable employment tended to have fewer opportunities to form social relationships, and longer durations of living alone were also associated with declines in social relationships and communication levels [30,31]. These findings indicate that the vulnerability of social relationships among single-person households is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by structural conditions such as income, employment, and the allocation of daily time. In particular, a study examining time use among young single-person households found that the time devoted to interpersonal relationships was significantly shorter compared to other household types, and that income level and occupational characteristics had a significant influence on social relationships. Furthermore, research on single-person households in Seoul reported that loneliness, social isolation, and depression are closely interrelated, and confirmed that support needs vary across different groups. Taken together, the findings of this study reaffirm

that social isolation among single-person households is not merely an emotional issue but is closely associated with broader socioeconomic vulnerability [14,32].

In the detailed subcategories by domain, items reflecting direct social interaction, such as participation in social gatherings, maintaining relationships with family, and engagement in community activities, showed relatively low scores. This suggests that social isolation may be becoming increasingly institutionalized, driven not only by economic and time constraints but also by prolonged periods of living alone. In particular, when family gatherings or community activities are structured around family ties or pre-existing personal networks, single-person households may face inherent barriers to participation. Therefore, social isolation and the weakening of relationships should be understood not simply as matters of individual choice, but as outcomes of a complex interplay between structural conditions and lifestyle patterns. This interpretation is consistent with prior research indicating that local communities can serve as alternative support systems for single-person households lacking family-based support. Furthermore, given findings that civic participation and a sense of community are closely linked to the formation of social capital, expanding opportunities for single-person households to engage in community life represents an important policy priority for improving quality of life [17,32].

A distinctive feature of this study is that, unlike previous research, which has primarily focused on psychological and mental health aspects such as loneliness, depression, and social isolation, or has been limited to specific age groups, it provides a comprehensive analysis of single-person households by examining social support, social relationships and communication, and community life in an integrated manner. For instance, Park Min-jin and Kim Seong-ah (2022) categorized single-person households based on levels of loneliness, social isolation, and depression to identify groups at risk for mental health problems, while Noh Hye-jin (2018) analyzed the social relationships of young single-person households in relation to daily time use. In addition, Yoon Kang-in et al. (2018) focused on the psychological well-being of middle-aged and older single-person households with weakened or severed family ties. In contrast, the significance of this study lies in its ability to shed light on quality of life among single-person households from a more integrated and socially relational perspective by jointly analyzing the domains of social support, social relationships and communication, and community life.

Second, this study extends existing research by interpreting the quality of life of single-person households not merely in terms of individual psychological states, but within

the broader relational context of social support and community participation. This perspective is consistent with prior studies showing that social participation reduces social anxiety and positively influences self-esteem, as well as research indicating that a sense of community mediates the relationship between civic participation and social capital. In other words, this study offers practical implications by demonstrating that improving the quality of life for single-person households requires a comprehensive approach that includes not only emotional support, but also active community participation, the strengthening of social networks, and the development of community-based programs [17,32].

Meanwhile, new forms of emotional support and communication utilizing AI and digital technologies have recently attracted increasing attention. However, because this study did not directly measure experiences with AI or the extent of digital platform use, it is more appropriate to consider AI as a topic for future discussion rather than as a direct finding of this research. Indeed, a study on AI-based check-in call services for older adults living alone reported that AI is often accepted as a presence that regularly checks in on users, contributing to a certain degree of emotional stability and the alleviation of feelings of isolation. In addition, recent research has emphasized the need for AI-based emotional monitoring, community connection platforms, and life cycle-tailored digital welfare strategies to address social isolation among single-person households. Nevertheless, such technologies should not be seen as substitutes for community, but rather as complementary tools that support community-based care and human relationships. Therefore, future research should pursue more in-depth analyses by considering both face-to-face and non-face-to-face communication patterns, experiences with digital platform use, and the utilization of AI-based emotional support services among single-person households.

It is understood that a combination of personal and structural factors, such as economic conditions, job stability, educational attainment, and length of residence, interact to influence the formation and maintenance of social relationships among single-person households. These dynamics can lead to disparities in social support and community participation, ultimately resulting in weakened social integration, a trend that is also supported by the findings of this study. In other words, improving the quality of life for single-person households requires comprehensive measures, including support for economic stability, expanded opportunities for social participation, community-centered relationship-building programs, and improved access to community resources. This suggests that

strengthening social relationships, communication, and social support should be prioritized, while community life warrants further consideration from a longer-term and more expansive perspective.

This study has several limitations. First, because all data was based on self-reported responses, respondents' subjective judgments may have influenced the results, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, as the study employed a cross-sectional design, it is difficult to clearly establish causal relationships among the variables. Third, the analysis did not sufficiently account for a range of factors that may influence social relationships and participation in community life, such as health status, housing type, digital communication methods, and characteristics of the local community environment. Therefore, future research should incorporate a broader set of influencing variables and utilize longitudinal data to enable a more in-depth examination of the causal pathways linking the social relationship characteristics of single-person households to their quality of life.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of the Korea and National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2020S1A5C2A04092504).

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