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## What benefits did mothers receive by participating in community activities and characteristics of these activities?

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**Statement of the Problem:** Social isolation among mothers of infants can cause serious problems, such as mental disease or undue anxiety, which are related to child abuse in Japan. Public health nurses (PHNs) belonging to local governments support mothers by providing them with services individually. Recently, PHNs, as a national policy, designed community activities for mothers in collaboration with a non-governmental organization, midwives and people in communities to help them connect with others. This paper examined what mothers benefitted by participating in community activities for mothers that aimed at creating connectedness in the communities and solving their problem. Additionally, it examined the characteristics of these activities from a mother's perception.

**Methodology:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 mothers who were responsible for raising infants and who actively participated in community activities, which were conducted on a regular basis for more than two days a month. Data were analyzed qualitatively and inductively.

**Findings:** Six categories emerged regarding the benefits received by mothers through participation in community activities. The categories indicated that mothers gained confidence in child rearing, had affirmative feelings regarding child rearing, decreased anxiety levels, relief, reduced social isolation, and connectedness with people in the community, sense of attachment with the community, and increase in trust in people of their community. Additionally, five characteristics of the activities were identified. These included fulfilling mother's need for knowledge and child rearing skills, developing connectedness between mothers and people in their community, reducing the tensions that emerged from a sense of responsibility toward the child, and improving mothers' self-esteem.

**Conclusion & Significance:** Participation in community activities had positive effects on mothers' child rearing practices, mental health and social health. Characteristics of the activities function can be explained with concepts such as experiential knowledge, helper-therapy principle, empowerment, social network, social support, trust and reciprocity.

### Biography

Chie Kawasaki has her expertise in "Public health nursing; especially in prevention child abuse, solve social exclusion and healthy community building". She has been tackled with the subject related to radiation protection in Fukushima. She also teaches public health nurses who belong to local governments.

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