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# The Effect of Social Support on the Feeling of Happiness of Children Using Community Child Care Centers

Geum-ok Woo<sup>1</sup> and Su-Sun Park<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Seowon Community Child Care Center, Korea; slikmg20@hanmail.net <sup>2</sup>Department Social Welfare, Seowon University, Korea; sunybono@seowon.ac.kr

#### **Abstract**

Background/Objectives: This study aims to find the community care center children's level of awareness of the social support including teachers at the centers and its influence on children's feeling of happiness. Methods/Statistical Analysis: This research conducted a self-reported survey on 235 children in the 4th~6th grade in elementary school, who attend a community child care center in the city of Cheong-Ju, North Chung-cheong province. Questionnaires were filed in and collected by personal visit to 30 community child care centers in 4 districts in the city of Cheong-Ju from March 18 to April 4, 2015. To verify the influence of social support on children's happiness, various analyses were conducted including analysis of frequency, independent sample t-test, Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis using basic statistical analysis SPSS 18.0. Findings: The result of analysis on the level of social support depending on children's socio-demographic variables, female students perceived the social support of their teachers to be higher than male students and the higher grades are the more support they get from friends. Analysis on children's feeling of happiness depending on socio-demographic variables - sex, grade at school, household financial status, time of communication, type of family and the period of using child care center - showed meaningful difference. In this study, in order to analyze the effect of social support for children using community child care center on their feeling of happiness, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Related variables are socio-demographic and social support. Application/ **Improvements:** This study showed that children's happiness is influenced by the level of support of their friends, family and center teachers. It implies that beyond the individual approach to the children using community child care centers, practical approaches are needed such as programs that incorporate children's friendship and family relationship.

**Keywords:** Community Child Care Center, Community Child Care Center Teacher, Elementary School, Feeling of Happiness, Social Support

# 1. Introduction

Community child care center which provides with the comprehensive welfare services such as protection, education, culture, emotional support, community linkage and so on had been legalized in 2004 and there are 4,061 centers nationwide as of 2013. Children in community child care centers have parents, who are busy making a living and cannot take good care of their children's upbringing and education, so the children are not fully developed physically and cognitively<sup>1</sup>. Also, they are under a lot of

stress and pain due to financial problems at home, and are exposed to various risk factors personally, socially, psychologically and culturally<sup>2-4</sup>. In the meantime, according to the recently conducted<sup>5</sup> the level of happiness of Korean children was the lowest and it was even lower than the global average. The sense of happiness which felt in the child period can be the driving force to live the satisfactory and happy life in the adult period<sup>2</sup>. The factors that affect children's feeling of happiness are the environment surrounding a child and the influences from family and parents<sup>6</sup>. Various research especially showed that the

<sup>\*</sup>Author for correspondence

higher the support of friends, family and teachers, the higher the feeling of happiness<sup>4,7–9</sup>. Social support is the comprehensive concept including information advice and objective supports so as to have the beneficial outcomes on the individual emotion or behavior<sup>10</sup> and the sources of social support are families, friends, school teachers, etc4,11,12. Upon summarizing the results of the previous studies, social support was proven to be the important environmental variable to affect the happiness which was the individual psychological and subjective well-being and it contributed to enhance the happiness by satisfying the needs of love and recognition and developing the harmonious social relations.

But there has not been enough research on the influence of support sources including the teachers at the center on the children using community child care center. Teachers at community child care centers are another support source other than school teachers and they are viewed as someone that children can trust, depend on and get emotional support<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, it is required to conduct the survey including not only existing subjects of social support such as families, friends and school teachers, but also teachers in the community children centers.

This study aims to find the community care center children's level of awareness of the social support including teachers at the centers and its influence on children's feeling of happiness. Through this, it would be possible to produce basic statistics to devise specific strategies to raise the happiness level of children in community care center and lay the foundation for proposing relevant policies.

# 2. Method and Procedure of Study

# 2.1 Study Topics

- Topic 1. How is social support level different depending on socio demographic variables of children?
- Topic 2. How is the feeling of happiness different depending on socio demographic variables of children?
- Topic 3. How is the feeling of happiness different depending on the level of social support for chil-
- Topic 4. How is the influence of relative related variables that affect children's feeling of happiness?

#### 2.2 Objects of Study

This research conducted a self-reported survey on 235 children in the 4th~6th grade in elementary school, who attend a community child care center in the city of Cheong-Ju, North Chung-cheong province.

# 2.3 Data Collection and Method of Analysis 2.3.1 Organization of Index

Social support index is the tool for the children in the community child care center to measure the cognitive assessment on love, recognition, help, interest, information and so on from the others in the social relation. Reorganized index<sup>13</sup> was used combining the perception index of social support developed by14 and the index of social support developed by<sup>15</sup>. Since community child care center provides the children with protection and education of the children in majority of time after school, the role of social workers in the community children center is important to provide the social support which was classified as four types of support including friends, families, teachers and the teachers in the community child care center. Four-point Likert scale was used for the answers to each questionnaire representing higher social support as the score is higher.

Happiness Scale for Korean School-aged Children (HSKSC) developed by 16 was used for the index of happiness. The original indexes, which is self-report index with four-point Likert scale, consist of 6 domains including 9 items for self-esteem, 5 items for relation with parents, 4 items for school life, 4 items for extracurricular activities, 4 items for overall living environment and 3 items for desire satisfaction, with total 29 questionnaires.

Since 29 questionnaires are too many for children, they were amended to 18 questionnaires so as for the children to understand easily selecting 3 questionnaires per each domain after amendment and supplement processes. Negative questionnaires, 10, 11 and 12 were reversely numbered, which represented higher level of happiness as the score was higher. Upon the measurement results for the reliability of each domain for the social support indexes, Cronbach's α were 0.909, 0.885, 0.871 and 0.946 for friends, families, school teachers and teachers in the community child care center, respectively. Overall reliabilities of social support index for the children and the sense of happiness were 0.948 and 0.859 in this study, showing overall high level of reliability.

#### 2.3.2 Data Collection

Questionnaires were filed in and collected by personal visit to 30 community child care centers in 4 districts in the city of Cheong-Ju from March 18 to April 4, 2015. Among 239 of them, excluding questionnaires improperly or incompletely answered, 235 questionnaires were used for analysis.

#### 2.3.3 Method of Analysis

To verify the influence of social support on children's happiness, various analyses were conducted including analysis of frequency, independent sample t-test, Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis using basic statistical analysis SPSS 18.0.

#### 3. Results

# 3.1 General Characteristics of Children in Community Child Care Centers

Regarding socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, 110 of them were male (46.8%), 125 were female (53.2%), 91 respondents were 6th graders, which was the biggest grade group (38.7%) and 119 said they get 'average' grade (50.6%). As for household financial status, 'average' was the majority with 120 respondents (51.1%) and as to type of family, 164 respondents answered two-parent household (69.8%), 47 said one-parent household (20.0%) and 24 lived with grandparents or relatives (10.2%). Regarding the time spent for conversation, '10-30 minutes' and '30-60 minutes' had the most respondents, 55 respectively (23.4%) and regarding the period of using community child care center, '3-5 years' was the biggest group with 58 respondents (24.7%).

# 3.2 The Level of Social Support for the Children

The result of analysis on the level of social support depending on children's socio-demographic variables, female students perceived the social support of their teachers to be higher than male students and the higher grades are the more support they get from friends. Also, the higher the household financial situation is, the more support they get from friends or family. As for family type, children from one-parent household gets more support than those from two-parent household. The longer the time of conversation with their parents, the more social support

children felt they are getting from friends, family and school teachers. As for the period of using community child care center, groups of 'less than 1-2 years' and 'more than 5 years' in regard to friend's support and groups of '3-5 years' and '1-2 years' in regard to care center teacher's support, received more support than the group of 'less than 1 year'.

#### 3.3 Children's Feeling of Happiness

Analysis on children's feeling of happiness depending on socio-demographic variables - sex, grade at school, household financial status, time of communication, type of family and the period of using child care center showed meaningful difference. Females (3.33) perceived feeling of happiness higher than males (3.17) and those whose grade was 'very good' or 'fairly good' showed higher level of happiness. As to household financial status, when the status was 'very good' and 'fairly good', respondents revealed higher level of happiness. Children from 'two-parent household' were happier than those from 'one-parent household' or 'other types of household (living with grandparents or relatives)' and the group of children whose conversation time was 'more than one hour' (3.37) or 'more than 2 hours' (3.37) were happier than other groups. As for the period of using community child care centers, groups of '3-5 years' and '2-3 years' felt happier than other groups.

# 3.4 Children's Social Support and Happiness

In this study, in order to analyze the effect of social support for children using community child care center on their feeling of happiness, multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 1). Related variables are socio-demographic (individual features related to the use of the centers) and social support (friends, family, school teachers and center teachers); the variables of individual features are sex, school year, grade, household financial status and type of family; and variable regarding the use of child care center is the period of using the center. The correlation analysis conducted before multiple regression analysis to check the multicollinearity among variables revealed that there were no problems with all the variables lower than .60 and VIF also below 10.

First, the power of explanation for independent variables against dependent variables was 55.7% and F was 25.467 (p = 0.000) upon the test of model properness showing appropriate regression model statistically. With respect

Table 1.	Effect of the social support on the sense of happiness in the children of community				
children centers					

	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient			ME
Variable	В	Standard error	Beta	t	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	1.020	0.153		6.665***	0.000	-
Sex	0.028	0.043	0.031	0.661	0.471	1.096
Grade	-0.008	0.044	-0.009	-0.190	0.847	1.097
Performance	0.060	0.045	0.065	1.350	0.156	1.151
Family economy	0.097	0.043	0.105	2.257*	0.027	1.087
Family type	-0.032	0.046	-0.032	-0.687	0.466	1.104
Conversation time	0.040	0.045	0.042	0.883	0.335	1.153
Duration of usage	0.051	0.046	0.051	1.093	0.253	1.116
Friends	0.222	0.046	0.310	4.862***	0.000	2.049
Families	0.236	0.048	0.285	4.893***	0.000	1.710
School teacher	0.079	0.043	0.105	1.820	0.082	1.683
Teacher in the center	0.099	0.039	0.140	2.537*	0.012	1.525
Test statistics	R = 0.746, R2 = 0.557, adj. R2 = 0.536, D/W = 2.154, F = 25.467***					

<sup>\*</sup>p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

Dependent variable: sense of happiness

Dummy variables: Sex\_female = 1, grade\_6th grade = 1, performance\_well = 1, family economy\_rich = 1, family type both parents = 1, conversation time\_not less than 1hour = 1, duration of usage less than 3 years = 1.

to the effect of social support on the sense of happiness, it showed the statistically significant effects by the order of families (b = 0.236, t = 4.893, p = 0.000), friends (b = 0.222, t = 4.862, p = 0.000) and teachers in the center (b = 0.099, t = 2.537, p = 0.000). In terms of socio-demography, family economy (b = 0.097, t = 2.257, p = 0.015) demonstrated significant effect on the sense of happiness.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study showed that children's happiness is influenced by the level of support of their friends, family and center teachers. It implies that beyond the individual approach to the children using community childcare centers, practical approaches are needed such as programs that incorporate children's friendship and family relationship. It was found that if children feel that they get enough social support from meaningful people around them, their level of happiness increases. Especially, family-related variables, household financial status and time of communication that children perceive, had an influence on children's awareness of social support. This indicates that the level of health and satisfaction in family relationship has a meaningful influence on

children's awareness of social support. This study reaffirms that in a healthy family relationship, a healthy child can be brought up and there needs to be parent's education to promote close interaction and form supportive relationship with their children. Therefore, to increase the feeling of happiness for children attending community child care centers, support sources for children within the community should be expanded. Especially, to present healthier family environment to children who are exposed to various risks due to parents' poor upbringing and financial difficulties, diverse policy measures are required.

# 5. Acknowledgments

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