

# 지역아동센터의 지역사회연계에 관한 탐색적 연구

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## The Exploratory Study on Community Link of Community Childcare Center

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**요 약** 지역아동센터는 아동의 지역사회 내 건강하고 안전한 보호와 적응으로의 종합적 복지서비스를 담당하는 사회복지서비스기관으로, 한정된 자원을 가지고 서비스의 효과성을 높이기 위해서는 지역사회연계가 필수불가결하다. 그러나 지금까지의 지역사회연계는 매우 협의적이며 제한적인 의미로만 사용되었으므로 지역사회 내에서 성장하고 지역사회를 배움의 터로 활용해야하는 아동에게는 그 어느 영역보다 넓은 의미에서의 지역사회연계에 대한 새로운 해석이 요구되어진다.

이에 본 연구는 생태체계론적 관점에서 보다 “확장된 개념”의 지역사회연계에 대한 탐색적인 고찰을 통해 아동, 그 중 더욱 사회적 관심과 지원이 촉구되는 빈곤 등의 취약상황에 놓인 아동들의 지역사회 적응과 자기성장을 돕는 기초적 자료로 활용코자 하는 목적을 가지고 있다.

**주제어** : 지역아동센터, 빈곤아동, 아동복지서비스, 생태체계이론, 지역사회연계

**Abstract** Since 2004, community childcare centers are legislated and the centers are running as the concept of community-oriented child welfare services. Recently child welfare paradigm are changed from simple "study room" for protection to the future capabilities of the "social welfare". For children who grow in their community, it must request to new construction with ecological system.

**Key Words** : community childcare center, poor children, child welfare service, ecological system theory, community link

### 1. Introduction

The recent national project for education welfare preferential support, introduction of Dream Start, and legislation of the national program for community child center by the government mean that child issues are

not treated as responsibilities of family any longer but have increasingly become national and social issues.

Child-related issues have significantly attracted social concerns in association with the issues of low childbirth and juvenile delinquency since the 2000s, consequently spreading the idea that they determine the

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future of Korea.

What does a community mean to children? Why is a community link needed? According to the answers to these questions given by the UNESCO Korean Committee (1997) [1] a community is a specific reference group for children and an educational field. In other words, the meaning of community includes both the geographical factors and the aspects of human relations to allow it to serve as a field of learning for children. Since children and adolescents today are more sensitive and adaptable to their environment, a living group based on locality, or a community, is a variable and protective system that indefinitely affects their growth on the basis of social interactions and a sense of mutual bond.

Community discussion is essential in child welfare service because child welfare can only be supported successfully by a good understanding of a locality unique to each community and the use of local needs. Lee et al. (2011) [2] suggested that youth study rooms similar to community child centers should be run in consideration of different community resource distributions and according to the size of cities, with community links being essential to activate youth projects.

Unfortunately, however, previous studies on community child centers have limitations in terms of scope because of community child center workers, children serving as center users, and center programs. It has also raised few questions concerning the most fundamental topic: "the direction for the presence of child centers within a community." Researching on the experience of community service links by community child center workers, preparation for the practice of case management at community child centers, and planning for activating the centers based on the use of community resources sufficiently recognize the importance of community but, unfortunately, deal with community links in a very narrow scope restricted to resource links.

The value of the community child centers as a place for social growth is the positive growth of children. In this context, this study selects an exploratory research to make a new approach to the plan for community links and to community child centers legitimated in 2004 on the basis of the ecosystem theory. To enable the results of this study to become the fundamental data for running community child centers that are progressive and that support children's adjustment within a community, consideration is made from the experimental perspective based on the existing research and literature.

## 2. Understanding of Community Resource Links to Community Child Centers

### 2.1 Community Child Center

Private nonprofit day care centers were run for neglected infants and young children within unprivileged communities at the early stage of industrialization, and study rooms for children of school age have spontaneously been organized and run within a community since the mid-1980s.

The community child centers that started as study rooms not only served as after-school programs to supplement school education but also as child welfare facilities to provide integrated welfare service and socially alternative homes that give care, healing, and recovery to the entire family as well as children by providing protection, care, learning guidance, cultural support, counseling, and community links to children who need social care. The five standard programs run by community child centers are classified and organized into protection, education, culture, welfare, and community link programs. The centers provide these elements that may be lacking in the growth of children belonging to unprivileged or underprivileged family. [3]

The most recent research on the actual state of

national community child centers for the first half of 2013 conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare and Headquarters for Community Child Center shows that of the current programs, 33.6% are education programs including study guidance; 20.4% are welfare programs giving psychological and emotional support including child counseling; 17.4% are culture programs based on cultural experiences; 16.0% are protection programs based on meal provision and nutrition support; and 12.6% are community link programs [4]

Although it is impossible to give the first priority to community link programs with the conditions and capabilities of community child centers, the fact that those programs are given the least priority tells the reality of community links.

Each study on the subject also indicates an inclination in community child center programs, and reports significant stress to their educational agenda, including cognitive learning guidance, due to the historical background that they started with regard to the function of a study room. In particular, Kim et al. (2011) [5] conducted an empirical research in 128 community child center workers in South Gyeongsang Province and indicated that most of them (57.5%) were experienced in community links but had five sessions of the experience and that the centers experienced in those links were mostly experienced in education (53.1%), followed by culture (53.1%), administration (52.1%), and social welfare centers (51.6%), which showed insufficient experience of links with diverse institutions.

The inactive community link despite the ecological meaning of community child centers can also be attributed to the assessment of the centers. Two sessions of formal assessment were nationally implemented in 2009 and 2010, respectively, with the purpose of checking the operating system and performance of the centers and establishing a governmental management system to support the establishment of the centers' status as formal service

providers giving qualitative improvement of service.

On the basis of Article 43.1 of the Law of Social Work, community child centers shall also be assessed as social welfare centers; the score for the centers at three areas in 2009 was ①45 out of 100 for children and service, ②45 for manpower and center operation, ③10 for comprehensive conditions, with "using of community resources" in the category of community links included in the area ①with a score of not more than 5.

The existing center evaluation criteria (intensified evaluation) that are newly implemented in 2013 are comprised of ①10 points for operation basis, ②35 for programs, ③45 for children (15 for information collection to identify needs, 30 for development support through customized service provision), ④5 for resources, and ⑤ for comprehensive area. Each of the "family links" and "school and community links" in the category of community links is included in the subarea ③of development support through customized service provision with the score of 5 [6] respectively, which shows the attempt to give importance to and activate links gradually. However, the attempt alone is not sufficient to improve the local presence of the centers and help children create growth within the community.

## 2.2 Community Links

Kim et al. (2011) [5] suggested that since most of the children using community child centers were from family in the low-income bracket or from that with weakened family functions and had mixed needs, case management should be practiced to search for and link comprehensive services in the context of community. They analyzed the factors affecting community child center workers' experience of community service links to identify the effects of their personal, organizational, and environmental characteristics on the basis of service links with other organizations. However, both of them had the limitation of restricting community links on the use of resources and cooperation within the

community.

Rubin (2001) [7] indicated that link skills reinforce interpersonal relationships within a community to form a social property possibly called a network. This intangible social property is stronger than any tangible one and serves as a social support network in which community members can safely lead a community life of their own.

A link in the field of social welfare also denotes cooperation, collaboration, coordination, network, and partnership [5]. For all social welfare institutions, community links are the key task that determines the existence of the institution. Moreover, community child centers cannot exist without the understanding and link of a community, which is the ground for the growth of children.

The Community Child Center Operation Manual (2013) [6] specifies that "community child centers need to link children to community-specialized institutions via a community network and make integrated management of them. Particularly, they must use the diverse resources of society to provide the necessary service to children, receive necessary resources through communication with the community, and become resources required by the community."

Community child centers are inseparably linked to the community in their operation. It can also be said that community links are the start of the philosophy for their operation when their fundamental start as "comprehensive welfare service to protect and adapt children to community health and safety" is recalled.

Kaneco's (1993) explanation of community is highly persuasive in understanding community links'role to community child centers. While human beings live in diverse social relationships, the community exhibits numerous factors that hinder assembly needs. Welfare resources are needed to solve these problems, and the community has the following four elements: the first element, human resource, refers to human relationships within the community; the second element, material

resource, refers to institutions and facilities within a community; the third element, consciousness, refers to a sense of belonging to a community, a will to participate in community, and intimacy with community; the final and fourth element is an activity or movement to solve common problems on the axis of intimate human relationships. It can be said that comprehensive community links refer to all the elements of a community suggested by Kaneco (Kim et al., 2012) [8].

In this respect, community links can not only refer to understanding and linking welfare resources for community members but also make individuals lead an affluent life within the community and participate actively in community activities as members of the community to facilitate community exchanges. To do this, the exchanges with diverse systems within the community should be preceded by the understanding of multiple systems that coexist with a community.

Section 3 aims to make a theoretical consideration of the ecosystem theory and search for the direction that community child centers need to pursue community links

### 3. Community Child Centers Seen from the Perspective of the Ecosystem Theory

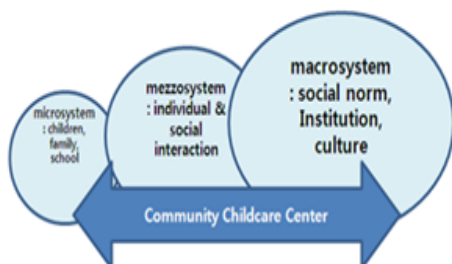
The ecosystem theory suggested by Bronfenbrenner in 1979 states that the surrounding environment forms an interdependent and dynamic double-layer model in human development and that the interaction between human beings and the environment is revealed within this systematized structure of the ecological system, with human beings going through the process of adapting themselves to the environment within a complex interpersonal relationship network. This multi-system was conceptualized into four ecological environmental systems: microsystem, mesosystem,

exosystem, and macrosystem [9].

To its contrary, Zastrow (2001) [10] suggested that systems should be complete entities by themselves. He further emphasized the interaction between them in three fundamental forms: the microsystem, which refers to an individual as a form of physiological, psychological, and social system; the mezzosystem, which is a small group including family, workplace, and several social groups where an individual interacts with intimate people and is closely related to them (it is not easy to make a distinction between two systems and assess them. Finally, the macro system, which is bigger than a small group, and which refers to social, political, historical, economic, and environmental power affecting all the conditions of personal life.

In particular, some studies on children and adolescents suggested the idea that children's developmental properties should be affected by the ecological context surrounding them and their characteristics must exert a multilateral influence on the context with the prospect of a life cycle and from an ecological perspective [11] analyzing those factors interacting with the life or environment of their family in a mesosystem and macrosystem to provide a framework of macroscopic and comprehensive understanding [12, 13]

This study summarizes children's systems into three categories from Zastrow's viewpoint:



[Fig. 1] Community Childcare Center and Multisystem by Ecological Perspective

Kim (2006) [14] contended that human beings have

the following characteristics from the perspective of ecosystem theory: first, human beings have a will and ability to change their environment; second, any human being possesses and values self-esteem. Finally, any person has self-direction to determine his or her direction in life, which is the expression of one's will to become an active being, not a passive one, through interaction with the environment. Self-direction can essentially have the same meaning as self-decision, which is the key value of social welfare studies.

In summary, to understand the ecosystem theory based on ecological properties, individuals need to interact positively with the environment to meet human needs and perform developmental tasks, which purports the understanding and use of the multi-system to which human beings belong. The clients' effective community resource links through the correct understanding and analysis of resources are the key point.

What is a community child center from the perspective of an ecosystem theory? When the center is regarded as a central system to help unprivileged local children make healthy growth, proper use of resources within a community can be the key to the achievement of what the center pursues. A lineal approach can never deal with the problems in the living and growth of unprivileged children. Comprehensive assistance can only be made by a good reading of interactions among children's diverse microsystems, the mesosystem formed by the dynamics and relations between microsystems, and the comprehensive macrosystem surrounding it.

#### 4. Suggestions for Expanded Community Links to Community Child Centers

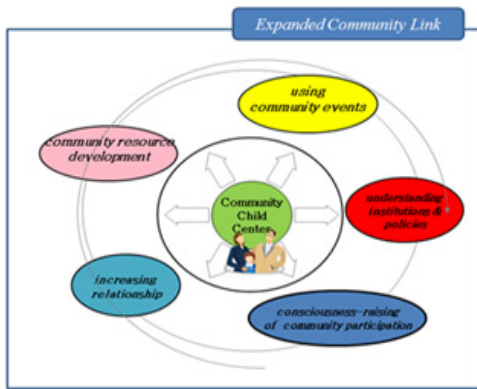
From the perspective of the ecosystem theory in Section 3, the environment significantly affecting

human life is composed of the multi-system in layers, and it is impossible to discuss human changes or adaptation without the understanding of such multi-system and human interactions.

The following suggestions were made to allow community child centers to reinforce their community links.

#### 4.1 Having a Sense of Community

In the ecosystem theory, the emphasis is placed on interaction between human beings and the environmental multi-system surrounding them.



[Fig. 2] Community Childcare Center and Community Link

Community child centers have the same application. In other words, the inextricable connection between human beings and their environment is transferred to relationships between community child centers and the community. Just as human beings cannot be understood with the exclusion of environment and systems, so can community child centers not be understood without community.

Community child centers need to have a sense of unity with a community, a sense of participation in it, integration into it, and an open mind to constantly exchange and collaborate with other organizations within a community.

#### 4.2 Increasing Relations

Like dough, which becomes more viscous by kneading, a relationship in human society becomes stronger through the interaction of constant meeting and exchange. This means that a network is formed by multi-dimensional, active exchanges, and shared values lead to trust and increased social capital. Such social capital is intangible and becomes property or a strong fundamental power to resolve diverse limitations and problems with community child centers within a community.

#### 4.3 Searching for and Developing Resources

Like nonprofit organizations, many social work agencies can hardly meet increasing needs with limited public resources. Today, it is not exaggeration to say that the fate of all these organizations depends on resource search, development and institutional public relations, and marketing, even imitating those of for-profit companies.

As a means of economic support for community child centers that fail to do what they have to do due to insufficient resources, personal and material support from volunteers, sponsors, donations, and a steering committee can be another property of the centers and the most visible community link.

#### 4.4 Using Community Events

Any community holds community events reflecting its characteristics. These events, including community academies for residents to encourage their involvement, district residents' schools, and community festivals, are used as the spot for residents' unity and exchange. It is essential to remember the fact that community child centers become proactive entities in changes in a community by using these events positively, letting their presence become known to the community and offering a chance to facilitate inter-generation exchange between children using the centers and

residents.

#### 4.5 Understanding Systems and Policies

To run community child centers more efficiently, it is necessary to have a wide-ranging understanding of many systems and policies on child welfare and social welfare. These systems and policies arise from emotions and values that are socially shared and recognized; for example, the attitudes of community to children, such as permission of violence, abetting attitude toward juvenile delinquents, and neighbors' treatment of child abuse as simply a household problem, serve as emotions specific to the community and affect its systems and policies.

For this reason, community child centers should not forget the fact that they chiefly influence local culture for children and affect systems and policies, and that they should implement the existing systems and policies in a practical way. Figure 2 shows the contents mentioned above.

### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

The phenomenon of aging and low birthrate in Korean society, which is on an unprecedentedly rapid progress, reminds one of the importance of human resources. When the fact that Korea lacks resources is recalled, concerns about children as human resources cannot be overemphasized. Creating safe and healthful growth conditions and reinforcing preventive service for unprivileged children who can easily be neglected and exposed to crimes is highly significant with respect to national competitiveness and national resource protection against the social phenomenon of family disorganization.

In this respect, this study puts a new illumination on community child centers as nonprofit social welfare service organizations for unprivileged children and makes an approach based on the ecosystem approach to

get a comprehensive understanding of the children and to consider relationships between the environment and them; on this basis, the following five suggestions are made for expanded community links by the centers.

First, it is necessary to have a sense of community in an effort to exist as a part of a community; second, relations to accumulate social capital must be established as it signifies the power of social relations and intangible property; third, resources should be continually searched and developed as such leads to a visible performance of community links; fourth, a sense of presence within a community by using community events in a proactive way must be enhanced; finally, a close investigation of systems and policies within a community must be made as it is an expression of community culture.

Although a community child center is not the only solution to the problems of unprivileged children, it is expected to address child and adolescent welfare, family welfare, and social welfare in a rapidly-changing Korean society. Although a center has several limitations and restrictions, it is expected to play a role in protecting and cultivating national human resources by providing integrated preventive service to children requiring social care due to worsened family disorganization and social polarization, removing those limitations and restrictions, and offering after-school learning.

Most of all, community links should not be regarded simply as helping community child centers with sponsors or volunteers through resource search and development. Community links require an eye for lots of meanings contained in them. "Expanded" community links as mentioned in this study need to be considered with a significant understanding of a community's role in children's growth.

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