

# Roles of Childcare Teachers toward Child Abuse Prevention

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## 아동학대예방을 위한 보육교사의 역할

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**Abstract** The purpose of this study is to identify childcare teachers' self-reported perception of child abuse and neglect, reporting procedures, and reporting experience in Korea. The total average score of knowledge in child abuse and neglect was relatively high and most childcare teachers consider child abuse and neglect as a highly serious problem. About eighty six percent daycare teachers perceived reporting legislation toward child abuse and neglect, and most teachers in the study population perceived themselves as mandatory reporters. As the Child Welfare Act included a clause on mandated reporters, childcare teachers' role in intervening in child abuse cases has become more critical. In order to increase childcare teachers' reporting, education program should be designed for childcare teachers to effectively involve them in reporting child abuse and neglect.

**Key Words** : Child abuse, Roles of childcare teachers, Mandatory reporting, Perceptions of child abuse, Experiences of child abuse

**요약** 본 연구는 아동학대와 신고의무제에 대한 보육교사의 인식과 경험을 파악하기 위해, 아동학대에 대한 인식, 신고의무제도에 대한 법과 절차, 아동학대 발견과 신고에 대한 경험 등에 관한 자기보고식 설문조사를 실시하였다. 연구결과 아동학대와 신고의무제도에 대한 보육교사의 인식은 매우 높게 나타났다. 특히 개정된 아동복지법과 아동학대 특례법에 대한 이해수준도 높게 나타났다. 아동학대 발견시 신고해야 하는 규정과 절차 등 이론적 이해수준은 매우 높게 나타났는데, 아동학대와 관련된 지식은 대중매체와 아동학대 훈련 프로그램을 통해서 얻은 것으로 밝혀졌다. 아동학대와 관련된 인식은 보육교사의 연령, 어린이집 유형, 교사기간, 교육수준에 따라 차이가 있는 것으로 나타났다. 그러나 실제 아동학대를 발견했을 때 신고한 경험은 매우 낮게 나타났다. 보육교사는 아동학대에 대한 높은 인식에 비해 낮은 신고인식을 가지고 있어서 실제 아동학대 예방에 기여하지 못하고 있었다. 본 연구결과에 근거하여 보육교사의 신고비율을 높일 수 있는 프로그램 개발을 위한 시사점을 제안하였다.

**주제어** : 아동학대, 보육교사의 역할, 신고의무, 아동학대 인식, 아동학대 경험

## 1. Introduction

Child abuse is a global social problem that impacts

a significant number of children and their families[11, 23]. The financial burden associated with child abuse includes costs associated with social care for the child

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and the indirect costs associated with the responses of child protection services(CPS) and education[18, 28]. Using national survey, it was estimated that in 2014, children in the Korea experienced maltreatment at a rate of 1.10 per 1000 children in the general population[17], while US rates of substantiated child maltreatment in 2006 were estimated at 17.1 per 1000, Canadian rates of substantiated child maltreatment in 2008 were estimated at 14.1 per 1000, and Australian rates of substantiated cases in 2010-2011 were estimated at 6.1 per 1000[24].

However, estimates of child maltreatment should be interpreted cautiously, as the true extent of child abuse is uncertain and generally regarded to be more prevalent than official reporting or community surveys can determine[7, 23, 24]. Therefore, given their role with children and families, child-care teachers are in a unique position to intervene on behalf of children and to advocate for their right and protection. However, in practice, childcare teachers experience many barriers to reporting suspected child abuse issues with families. It includes lack of knowledge in understanding the process of initiating a report to CPS where mandated by law. In addition, most childcare teachers failed to report due to discomfort related to reporting child abuse concerns directly with the child's parents or caregivers.

Although an increasing number of studies about the teacher's role as a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect are beginning to emerge in published literature around world, the Korean childcare teachers seem to pay little attention to the issue. Despite the opportunities to detect child abuse, Korean childcare teachers are reluctant to report child abuse and neglect due to fear of potential negative effects on the child or the child's family, as well as concerns about confidentiality. In addition, despite mandatory reporting laws and regulations, most Korean childcare teachers – who are classified as mandatory reporters – do not report, even when they know of cases as child abuse and neglect.

In Korea, few study has fully investigated the influence on reporting behavior of the full range of childcare teachers' personal and demographic characteristics, such as age, education, years of experience, training child abuse and neglect, and previous reporting experiences. In addition, little is known of the influence of childcare providers' knowledge on their reporting behavior, or how to best prepare them for their role. Therefore, the purpose of this study was as followed: 1) to analyze the perception of childcare teachers toward child abuse, and 2) investigate the reporting experiences of childcare teacher regarding child abuse and neglect.

## 2. Literature Reviews

### 2.1 Child abuse and neglect in Korea

The low number of reported cases of child maltreatment relative to the estimated occurrence rate in Korea may be due to the long history of using corporal punishment as common disciplinary methods for children. Moreover, there is a potentially social consensus that society should not intervene in family matters[5]. There were 15,025 Korean Children reported as suspected to be neglected and abused in 2014. Among those suspected, 10,027 children(66.7%) were substantiated as abused and neglected. The most common type of abuse was psychological(40.4%), followed by physical abuse(36.9%), neglect(20.3%), and sexual abuse(2.9%). Victim's parents were found as the major perpetrator(81.6%). Parents that are perpetrators have the following characteristics: poor parenting skills(33.1%), social stress and isolation(20.4%), and couple and/or family problem(10.1%). 30.6% of the abused children are mistreated and abused on a daily basis[17]. Surprisingly, 28.5% of abused children were 1-7 years of age, who are most vulnerable to child abuse and neglect.

Since 2013, when a death of a 7-year old girl from

violence by a step-mother became widely publicized in Korea, the public attention toward child abuse and neglect has sharply increased. After the investigation for the girl's death, the Korean government initiated efforts to revise the Child Welfare Act and to extend the scope of the mandated reporters in child abuse and neglect. To strengthen the measures in investigation and intervention for the abuser and abused child, the Special Act of Child Abuse Crime came into effect as of January 2014.

Through this new act, the Korean government expanded the types of occupations that constitute mandated reporters, and increased the penalty for mandated reporters who do not report toward child maltreatment cases. However, it seems that most mandated reporters have been unaware that they are mandated to report suspicious child abuse and neglect cases. In addition, it is pointed that they have also lacked knowledge and awareness regarding child abuse and neglect[4].

## 2.2 Mandated report

In Korea, the Child Welfare Act includes provisions for mandatory notification in suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. According to this law, mandatory reporting, defined as a "legislation that specifies who is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect." The law mandates all professionals in child care with the obligation to report any suspected child abuse or/and neglect to the appropriate authorities. Professionals who work with children and families listed under such mandate include: social workers, educational personnel, health care workers, mental health professionals, child care providers, medical examiners, and law enforcement.

Although knowledge and reporting of suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are important to intervene[8], the reporting rate by those obligated to report, mandated reporters(e. g., teachers for children, workers related to child places) was lower compared

with those that are not considered as mandated reporters, non-mandated reports, in Korea. In practice, the reporting rate of child abuse and neglect from mandated reporter was 29.0% compared with 71.0% of reporting from non-mandated reporters. Among mandatory reporters, school teachers had the highest reporting rate(13.2%), followed by social service officials(4.7%), childcare teachers(1.8%), and child welfare workers(1.8%)[17].

According to Alvarez et al.,[1], mandated reporters have failed to report for a variety of reasons. Consequently, a golden time to help abused children is missed, and resulting in the worst case scenario, the loss of many children's lives[15]. As stated in ratio previously, the reporting rate from the Korean childcare teachers is the lowest. Korean mandatory reporters were reluctant to report the case of suspected child abuse and neglect due to the lack of knowledge toward child abuse and neglect, personal risks associated with reporting, fear of revenge from perpetrators, and discomfort from intervening in family issues[16].

The low reporting rates of alleged child maltreatment cases among mandated reporters was regarded as a major obstacle to prevent child maltreatment. In comparison to U.S. that receive more than half of alleged child maltreatment reports from mandated reporters[27], reporting rates from mandated reporters constitute only 32% of the cases reported to the Korean CPA. The low reporting rate by mandated reporters in Korea has been attributed to a lack of awareness, poor knowledge about child maltreatment, and insufficient institutional enforcement of mandatory reporting[16].

## 2.3 Childcare teachers and child maltreatment

As professionals entrusted with the care of society's most vulnerable children, childcare teachers differ in important ways from other mandated reporters[19]. Young children are particularly vulnerable because of their developmental characteristics, which include

immaturity and inability to identify abuse[8]. In addition, the knowledge of child abuse situation is the first step toward preventing child abuse and neglect[2]. Reporting of suspected or identified cases of child abuse and neglect is one of the most important methods in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. To avoid an increase in the number of child abuse cases, immediate reporting is crucial[20].

Childcare teachers are in a unique position to identify and respond to child abuse and neglect as they have extended opportunities to observe children on a daily basis. Younger children(aged 0-5 years) are more vulnerable to victimization, account for three-quarters of deaths from abuse, and comprise a greater proportion of cases than older children(aged 6-18 years) for all categories of maltreatment except child sexual abuse[27]. With the opportunity for early detection of abuse, childcare teachers have the potential act as key supports for children and families involved in child protection systems[6]. Studies of childcare teachers and their reporting of child abuse and neglect are relatively few compared with the volume of studies undertaken on other mandated reporters having high levels of contact with children such as school teachers, nurses, and doctors[26].

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Sample and procedure

Purposive sample technique was used to select teachers of childcare center in Korea. Samples of this study recruited from east-south area cities of Korea. Informed consent was received by all respondents, agreeing to participate in this study. A total 250 questionnaires were distributed to the teachers. A total 235 questionnaires were returned, representing a return rate of 94%. Finally, 205 questionnaires were used for statistical analyses.

The management of possible ethical issues was

considered throughout the research process. Informed consent was acquired from participants before they engaged in the research and at the beginning of the research; they were also provided with information about research aims and procedures, research benefits, and usage of data. All respondents gave their informed consent to participate in the study and were not compensated.

#### 3.2 Measurement

The knowledge and reporting of child abuse and neglect, initially developed by Seo[25] to investigate the perception and reporting level of child abuse and neglect for teachers in Korea, was revised to better fit the childcare center teachers. The questionnaire consisted of several questions using a Likert type scale, which consisted of demographic information, knowing four types of child abuse and neglect, knowledge of reporting procedures, and experiences of the number of cases encountered. The knowledge of child abuse and neglect scale was based on responses to child abuse and neglect vignettes. Twelve short scenarios of parental behaviors are presented to childcare teachers; three scenarios include three abuse areas as physical, sexual, and psychological/emotional abuse and neglect. For each area, the participant is asked whether the scenario is subject to a case of child abuse and neglect. The response are scored on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability(Cronbach's alpha) of this measurement was .888.

#### 3.3 Analysis

A descriptive analysis was conducted on all respondents. T-test and ANOVA were conducted to identify the difference of demographic factor and perception toward child abuse/reporting. Correlations between reporting intention and the types of abuse were conducted. The descriptive statistics display the general statistics means and standard deviations. Significance level was set at  $p < .05$ .

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographics

A total of 205 participants were included in this study; all participants were females. With respect to age, 24.4% of participants were between 20 and 29 years; 32.7% between 30-39 years; 35.1% between 40-49 years; and 7.8% over 50 years. With respect to marital status, 53.2% were married with children; 33.2% not married; and 12.2% married without children. Participants' educational background was as follows: 48.3% had associate's degree; 27.3% had bachelor's degree, and 11.7% had high school diplomas with a certification to be a childcare teacher. As for their career length, 11.7% were under 1 year; 23.9% were 3-5 years; 25.4% between 5-10 years; and 15.1% over 10 years. Approximately 72% percent childcare teachers had worked at private childcare centers and 80% of them were teacher position. Sixty percent of childcare teachers were in charge of children under 2 year old. Half of them were major in early childhood education<Table 1>.

<Table 1> Demographics

Type		N	%
sex	female	205	100.0
age	20-29 year	50	24.4
	30-39 year	67	32.7
	40-49 year	72	35.1
	Over 50 year	16	7.8
	married with children	109	53.2
Marital status	married without children	25	12.2
	not married	68	33.2
	other	3	1.5
Types of childcare center	National/public	33	16.1
	nonprofit	24	11.7
	private	148	72.2
Length of teacher	Under 1 year	24	11.7
	1-3 year	49	23.9
	3-5 year	49	23.9
	5-1 year	52	25.4
	Over 10 year	31	15.1
position	teacher	164	80.0
	Head teacher	24	11.7
	Assistant director	17	8.3

Type	N	%	
In charge of children	under 0 year	10	4.9
	1 year	37	18.0
	2 year	79	38.5
	3 year	31	15.1
	4 year	24	11.7
education	5year	24	11.7
	High school diploma	2	1.0
	Childcare training institute with high school diploma	24	11.7
	Childcare training institute with college degree	18	8.8
	College degree	99	48.3
major	University degree	56	27.3
	Graduate degree	6	2.9
	Early childhood education	98	47.8
	Child development	24	11.7
	Social welfare	10	4.9
other	Child care	37	18.0
	other	36	17.6
Total	205	100.0	

### 4.2 Perceptions

The total average score of knowledge in child abuse and neglect was 4.68 (SD=.33 ); highest was 'sexual abuse' as M=4.83 (SD=.41), followed by physical abuse M=4.73 (SD=.37), psychological/emotional abuse M=4.64 (SD=.40 ), and neglect M=4.59 (SD=.46)<Table 2>.

<Table 2> Perceptions of child abuse

Types of abuse	Mean	SD	
perception of child abuse	physical	4.73	.37
	emotional	4.64	.40
	neglect	4.59	.46
	sexual	4.83	.41
General perception	4.68	.33	

Based on these findings, most childcare teachers consider child abuse and neglect as a highly serious problem. They perceived that child abuse and neglect occurred frequently(63.9%); 22.9% of teachers responded that it occurred very often; 10.7% usually; 2% rarely, and 0.5% never happened. Majority(76.1%) of childcare teachers knew the laws about child abuse and neglect; 23.9% did not know.

In this study, most teachers in the study population(93.2%) perceived themselves as mandatory

reporters in child abuse and neglect. They obtained the information of mandatory reporting through educational programs or child abuse seminars(36.6%), mass media (TV, radio, newspaper, etc 26.0%), internet(18.1%), and official letters(10.9%).

With respect to knowledge of mandatory reporting legislation about child abuse and neglect, 85.5% of teachers were aware; and among those, 73.2% of them had general knowledge of the child abuse legislation; 64.2% had legal knowledge for the punishment of perpetrators; 78.2% had practical knowledge of the procedure for reporting to the authorities if there was any sign of abuse and neglect<Table 3>.

<Table 3> Perceptions of mandated reporting

Types		N	%
Prevalence of child abuse	never	1	.5
	few	4	2.0
	usually	22	10.7
	often	131	63.9
	Very often	47	22.9
Law of child abuse	Yes	156	76.1
	No	49	23.9
Helping agency in reporting (plural, total=577)	Municipal child agency	80	13.9
	Korean welfare foundation	45	7.8
	Korean child abuse prevention	156	27.0
	Korean child care center	99	17.2
	Korean NGO agency	30	5.2
	Police Office	164	28.4
	Other	3	.5
Revision of mandated report procedures	Yes	179	87.3
	No	26	12.7
Channel of knowledge (plural, total=251)	Mass media	81	32.3
	Internet	35	13.9
	Child abuse training program	81	32.3
	Conversation with surrounding people	16	6.4
	Official document	34	13.5
	other	4	1.6
Definition	Yes	165	92.2
	No	14	7.8
Code of mandated reporter	Yes	153	85.5
	No	26	14.5
Rule of child abuse	Yes	131	73.2
	No	48	26.8
Rule of perpetrator	Yes	115	64.2
	No	64	35.8
System of reporting	Yes	140	78.2
	No	39	21.8

According to the findings of this study, there was a significant difference between age and perception. Korean childcare teachers aged 30-39 was in the highest level of awareness in child abuse and neglect(M=4.78, SD=.20), followed by over 40(M=4.69, SD=.30); teachers aged 20-29(M=4.53, SD=.45) perceived the lowest(F=8.789, p<.001). The perception about child abuse and neglect by teachers with children(M=4.73, SD=.26) was higher than by those without children(M=4.62, SD=.39) (t=2.363, p<.05).

<Table 4> Demographic factors and perceptions

Type	N	Mean	SD	t/F	p	Scheffe	
age	20-29 year (a)	50	4.53	.45	8.789***	.000	b,c>a
	30-39 year (b)	67	4.78	.20			
	Over 40 year(c)	88	4.69	.30			
With/without children	with	109	4.73	.26	2.363*	.019	-
	without	96	4.62	.39			
Types of childcare center	National/public (a)	33	4.80	.19	4.902**	.008	a,c>b
	nonprofit (b)	24	4.53	.56			
	private (c)	148	4.68	.29			
Career length	Under 1 year(a)	24	4.82	.18	3.974**	.004	a,e,c,d>e,c,d,b
	1-3 year (b)	49	4.57	.45			
	3-5 year (c)	49	4.70	.28			
	5-10 year (d)	52	4.64	.32			
	Over 10 year(e)	31	4.79	.20			
position	Teacher (a)	164	4.65	.35	5.426**	.005	c,b>b,a
	Head teacher(b)	24	4.77	.19			
	Assistant director (c)	17	4.89	.14			
In charge of children	under 1 year	47	4.71	.29	1.981	.118	-
	2 year	79	4.73	.26			
	3 year	31	4.61	.32			
	over 4 year	48	4.61	.44			
education	Child care training institute with high school diploma (a)	26	4.52	.31	4.669*	.010	c,b>b,a
	Childcare training institute with college degree (b)	117	4.68	.34			
	Over university degree (c)	62	4.75	.30			
Major	Early childhood education	98	4.69	.38	.258	.856	-
	Child development	24	4.69	.28			
	Child care	37	4.64	.30			
	Other	46	4.70	.26			

The findings of this study suggest that there was a

significant difference between career length and perception. The perception of child abuse and neglect was different by teachers' career length, in decreasing order: under 1 year ( $M=4.82$ ,  $SD=.18$ ), over 10 years ( $M=4.79$ ,  $SD=.20$ ), 3-5 year ( $M=4.70$ ,  $SD=.28$ ), 5-10 year ( $M=4.64$ ,  $SD=.32$ ), and 1-3 year ( $M=4.57$ ,  $SD=.45$ ) ( $F=3.974$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Also, there were significant differences by teachers' academic background: bachelor's degree was the highest ( $M=4.75$ ,  $SD=.30$ ), followed by two year college ( $M=4.68$ ,  $SD=.34$ ), high school graduates with childcare teacher's certification ( $M=4.52$ ,  $SD=.31$ ) ( $F=4.669$ ,  $p<.05$ ) <Table 4>.

### 3.3 Reporting experiences

Teachers' reporting intention in child abuse was measured by Likert point scale. The mean score of reporting intention toward child abuse and neglect in this study was 3.55 ( $SD=.52$ ). Korean childcare teachers recognized the necessity of mandatory reporting as 'very necessary' (82.9%), 'necessary' (13.7%), and 'usually' (2.9%). There was a significant difference between career length and reporting intention. The reporting intention toward child abuse and neglect in Korean childcare teachers was different by career duration of teachers: highest for those with under 1 year experience ( $M=3.74$ ), followed by over 10 years ( $M=3.69$ ), 1-3 years ( $M=3.48$ ), and 5-10 years ( $M=3.41$ ) ( $F=5.712$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

About 12.2% of childcare teachers in this study have detected potential cases of child abuse and neglect, and 29.8% of teachers have experienced cases of suspected child abuse. However, only 2.9% of them have reported suspected cases of child abuse by a telephone and visiting the centers for child abuse. The Korean childcare teachers who did not report any cases provided the following reasons: "cases of abuse were not serious enough to be reported (29%)," "uncertainty about child abuse situations (27%)," or "burden of responsibility and assessment procedures after reporting (19.3%)." During the last year, 84.4% of

childcare teachers participated in seminars about the prevention of child abuse and neglect, although 97.1% of them had intention to participate prevention education.

## 5. Discussions and Conclusion

A major goal of this study was to examine how Korean childcare teachers identify child abuse and neglect. In addition, this study investigated how many childcare teachers are aware of the new law, Special Act on of Child Abuse Crime, as well as how many childcare teachers know the reporting procedures of child abuse.

In general, Korean childcare teachers are reported to have a great deal of perception in detecting the signs of child abuse, as defined by the law and its reporting procedures. Although most childcare teachers are aware of their legal obligation to report child abuse, many do not know when to report such cases in practice. In addition, their perception of child abuse did not correlate with reporting intentions and actions in practice, despite having had suspicion of child abuse and neglect. The most commonly cited reason not reporting child abuse cases was the fear of making an inaccurate report. Korean childcare teachers seemed not to report unless there were visible, and often times certain, signs of child abuse. Although they perceived well vignettes of child abuse and neglect, they failed to continue to pursue and distinguish which cases should be reported to the authorities.

Most Korean childcare teachers have taken prevention education programs on child abuse and neglect, but such programs appear to be ineffective in increasing the intention to report and the actual reporting rate. That is, prevention programs have been effective to increase knowledge of mandated reporting, but have not improved their reporting behavior. These findings suggest that current programs toward child

abuse and neglect seem to adequate information about child abuse recognition, but does not provide sufficient motivation to report child abuse and neglect for childcare teachers in Korea.

Although many childcare teachers stated that they perceived signs of child abuse and neglect, they rarely reported cases of child abuse, despite having suspicions. The present findings were consistent with other research[12], which found that school teachers are reluctant to report child abuse and neglect. The rate of reporting toward child abuse and neglect for Korea childcare teachers were the lowest(2.9%), compared with their counterparts in Canada, with the number of reports at 24%, and in the U.S. at 16.4%.

Most Taiwanese kindergarten teachers are female; and it is considered a relatively low-paid job in the education sector[8]. Kindergarten teachers often doubt their own ability and judgment in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse cases[9]. The findings of this study were consistent with such previous studies. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that almost all Korean childcare teachers, who were female with low incomes, were less likely to report suspected child abuse due to the lack of confidence.

Professional training has been instituted as the chief mechanism by which childcare teachers become aware of child abuse and neglect and their obligation to report it—as it is widely assumed that increasing knowledge about child maltreatment will promote its reporting[19]. Studies of mandated reporters from other professional backgrounds suggest that lack of education is a much wider problem, especially regarding circumstances that warrant reporting[1, 3, 14].

It is imperative that teachers are trained in understanding their legal duty and reporting protocols to promote proper reporting of child abuse cases. Training needs to allow for experiential exercises and hypothetical situations to help childcare teachers to develop the skills necessary to properly report child abuse, minimizing their fear of making a false

report[12, 13]. In addition, it appears that the directors of childcare centers need to provide continued training for diagnosing child abuse and neglect to their staff and provide support to these childcare teachers when they do report suspected child abuse cases.

It is crucial that childcare teachers have adequate education and training not only for fostering age-appropriate play and learning environment, but also for identifying and reporting child abuse cases. Educational prevention program/training plays an important role in constructing the belief that child abuse issues are entitled to protection from all of the childcare teachers working with them. It is stated that pre-service preparation of childcare teachers for their child protection role in the early years of child care system is important[21].

The findings of this study suggest that general childcare teacher education curriculum need to include training programs for pre-teachers in how to identify all types of abuse toward children. However, there are no special courses in the college/university in the field of educational sciences that enhance the perception and reporting for identifying the child abuse issues.

According to the UN Convention Rights for Children, children have the right to be protected and to have a secure environment for their development and growth. It can be said that the level of welfare of the child in need in a preschool is somewhat related to the professional teacher who is well educated and believes in the protection rights of children. Sufficient perception and knowledge also decrease the fear of making an inaccurate report and the childcare teachers in this study indicated that this was the most common reason for not reporting abuse. Maximizing childcare teachers' resources and enabling ongoing support (perception, training, partnership with social services), early detection of a child abuse cases contributes to better help and the level of welfare for the child and the family([13]. Furthermore, early identification of child abuse cases in a child care system would benefit from



a compulsory assessment (screening) during every daily life.

### 5.1 Implications

Based on this study several practical outcomes should be mentioned. First of all, the finding of this study suggest that strengthening childcare teachers' perception and reporting related to the identification of child abuse and neglect. Quality of identification of child abuse cases and reporting can be ensured through training program(e. g., a specific child abuse protection program/training), supervision, and continuing professional development. Second, in the absence of clear guidelines/regulations of reporting toward child abuse and neglect, childcare teachers are left to establish their own criteria for reporting/not reporting of suspected child abuse cases. Third, in order to increase the rate of report, this study indicated the need of enhanced collaboration between childcare center and the CPA in community. Agency training could be one of the most powerful catalysts for collaboration. Forth, to increase the childcare teachers' confidence and to report the suspicions, the inverstigative procedure of the CPA should be enhanced.

Future research may benefit from obtaining knowledge in regard to teachers' perceptions and beliefs related to occupational standard, and parents' knowledge in receiving help and support. Future well-designed, large scale evaluation studies would make a contribution to the field.

### 5.2 Limitations

There are several limitations which apply to this study. First, this study gathered only limited data from childcare teachers' self-reports. Also, the sample size is small; therefore these findings are exclusive to the particular study context and there is no intention to seek generalizations. A second limitation concerns the use of a rather simple questionnaire. Despite these limitations, the study's findings still contribute to the

understanding of childcare teachers' perceptions of and experiences toward child abuse and neglect.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Childcare teachers have an important role to play in identifying and reporting toward child abuse cases. Nevertheless, not all the studied childcare teachers have sufficient perception to identify these children. Childcare teachers need additional perception/skills, including reminding teachers about their duties as teachers to protect the rights of children, providing base for early screening and reporting of child abuse cases for timely help and support. The findings of this study suggest that childcare teachers need to be supported in order to foster the level of welfare for children as advocates are an important link in this reporting procedures.

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