

The Effects of Child Care Teacher's Job Stress and Personality on Child Abuse Protective Behaviors

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child abuse protective behaviors, which consist of perception and reporting intention of child abuse, and to verify the moderating effect of past child abuse experience. A survey was conducted on 246 child care teachers nationwide, and the collected data were analyzed through regression analysis and t-test. The results showed that job stress had a negative effect and personality had a positive effect on child abuse protective behaviors. In addition, there was a significant difference in the influence of job stress and personality on protective behaviors according to the presence or absence of past child abuse experience. Based on these results, practical implications for preventing child abuse by child care teachers were discussed.

Keywords: child care teacher, job stress, personality, child abuse protective behavior, past child abuse experience

1. INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a serious social problem that hinders the healthy development of children and violates their basic rights. In particular, infancy and early childhood are a period of great physical and emotional vulnerability, and abuse experienced during this time can have persistent negative effects into adulthood. Child care teachers, who spend the most time with infants and young children, play a pivotal role in preventing and detecting child abuse early on. Therefore, child care teachers' sensitivity to child abuse and their ability to actively respond are crucial. In this study, we define child abuse protection behavior as a concept that includes child care teachers' awareness of child abuse and their intention to report it. In other words, it encompasses not only sensitively recognizing abusive situations but also the willingness to actually report them. According to previous studies, both professional awareness and practical will of child care teachers are essential for preventing and responding to child abuse[1]. However, there may be a difference between awareness and intention to report, so it is necessary to examine them separately. On the other hand,

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it is important to pay attention to teachers' job stress and personality as factors influencing child care teachers' child abuse protection behavior. Child care teachers experience a high level of job stress due to excessive work and poor treatment, which can be a factor in responding passively to child abuse issues[2]. In contrast, teachers' positive personality traits such as humanity, ethical consciousness, and sense of mission can contribute to abuse prevention and active intervention[2],[3]. Furthermore, the relationship between job stress, personality, and child protection behavior may differ depending on the child care teacher's personal background of whether they experienced child abuse in the past. Numerous studies report that childhood abuse experiences have long-term effects on interpersonal relationships and occupational activities in adulthood[4],[6]. Therefore, this study aims to empirically identify the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on their awareness of child abuse and intention to report it, and to examine the differences according to whether they have experienced child abuse in the past. Through this, we expect to obtain implications for measures to improve the professionalism of child care teachers for child abuse prevention and policy support. Ultimately, we aim to contribute to protecting all infants and young children from abuse in child care settings and promoting their healthy development.

2. Theoretical Background

In this study, we intend to define child abuse protection behavior as consisting of awareness of child abuse and intention to report. Awareness of child abuse refers to sensitively recognizing and understanding the types and risks of child abuse, and intention to report means the will to actively report when an abusive situation is discovered.

According to previous studies, both professional awareness and the will to practice it, that is, the intention to report, are required for child care teachers' child abuse protection behavior[1]. However, there may be a difference between awareness of child abuse and intention to report, so it is necessary to examine them separately.

On the other hand, this study focuses on teachers' job stress and personality as factors influencing child care teachers' child abuse protection behavior. Job stress refers to the psychological burden and burnout experienced by teachers due to child care work, and personality refers to the basic character and qualities of teachers.

Previous studies have reported that job stress negatively affects child care teachers' awareness of child abuse and intention to report [2], while teachers' personality level can have a positive effect on child protection behavior[3],[5].

In addition, the relationship between job stress, personality, and child protection behavior may differ depending on whether the child care teacher has experienced child abuse in the past. This is because childhood abuse experiences can have a lasting impact on interpersonal relationships and job attitudes in adulthood[4],[6].

Therefore, this study aims to identify the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on their awareness of child abuse and intention to report, and to verify the differences according to whether they have experienced abuse in the past. Through this, we will be able to derive implications for strengthening the child protection competency of child care teachers.

2.1 The impact of childhood abuse experiences on child protection behavior

In this study, we predicted that there would be differences in child protection behavior depending on whether child care teachers had experienced child abuse in their childhood. Child protection behavior is a concept that includes sensitively recognizing child abuse and intending to report it, and in this study, we defined it as consisting of two sub-factors: child abuse awareness and intention to report. According to previous studies, people who experienced abuse in childhood were found to be negatively affected even as

adults[4],[6]. In particular, child care teachers who experienced child abuse tended to be insensitive to child abuse or showed tendencies as abusers [7],[8], and displayed attitudes of viewing child abuse as a means of controlling children or justifying their own experiences[9],[10]. In addition, child care teachers with past child abuse experiences were reported to be passive in reporting child abuse. These results from previous studies suggest that child care teachers' childhood abuse experiences can negatively affect their child protection behavior, that is, their awareness of child abuse and intention to report. Therefore, in examining how child care teachers' job stress and personality level influence child protection behavior, this study also seeks to verify the differences according to whether teachers have past child abuse victimization experiences. Through this, we will be able to understand the characteristics of child protection behavior according to teachers' personal backgrounds and derive implications for related education and treatment improvement

2.2 The impact of teachers' job stress on child protection behavior

As defined earlier, child protection behavior includes awareness of child abuse and intention to report. According to previous studies, child care teachers experience a high level of job stress due to excessive workload, role ambiguity, and low treatment[11],[12]. Such job stress causes teachers' burnout and negative emotions, which in turn negatively affect interactions with children.

In fact, many studies have reported that the higher the level of job stress of child care teachers, the higher the likelihood of child abuse occurring, and the lower the awareness of abuse and intention to report[2],[13]. This can be interpreted as teachers not being able to sensitively recognize child abuse situations or being reluctant to take on additional burdens caused by reporting abuse due to excessive stress.

However, previous studies pointed out that the impact of job stress on child protection behavior may differ depending on the individual characteristics of child care teachers[11],[14]. In other words, there may be differences in the influence of job stress on child abuse awareness and intention to report depending on teachers' internal resources, expertise, and working conditions.

Therefore, this study aims to empirically analyze the relationship between child care teachers' job stress and child protection behavior, while also considering teachers' personality and past abuse experiences to explore more deeply the impact of job stress on child protection behavior. Through this, we will be able to seek ways to strengthen the competency of child care teachers to prevent and respond to child abuse even in stressful situations.

2.3 The impact of teachers' personality on child protection behavior

As examined earlier, child protection behavior was defined as a concept that includes awareness of child abuse and intention to report. The personality of child care teachers refers to the basic qualities, character, and attitudes necessary for performing teaching duties, and this has a significant impact on the way teachers treat children and their educational philosophy[15].

According to previous studies, the higher the personality level of child care teachers, the more they tended to have child-centered thinking, sensitively respond to child abuse issues, and actively cope with them[5],[3].

On the other hand, teachers with low personality levels showed inappropriate attitudes such as condoning child abuse or avoiding reporting[16],[17].

These results suggest that the personality of child care teachers has an important influence on child protection behaviors such as child abuse awareness and intention to report. In other words, the higher the personality qualities such as a teacher's humanity, dedication to education, respect and love for children, the more likely they are to sensitively respond to child abuse and have an attitude of actively reporting it.

However, the relationship between teachers' personality and child protection behavior may differ

depending on teachers' past child abuse victimization experiences or level of job stress. Therefore, this study aims to more deeply analyze the relationship between personality and child protection behavior by considering these variables together.

Through this, we will be able to suggest ways to strengthen child abuse prevention and response capabilities through the cultivation of child care teachers' personalities. Furthermore, we aim to provide basic data for enhancing practical child protection activities in child care settings through customized support considering teachers' individual characteristics and working conditions.

Table 1. Hypothesis setting

Hypothesis	Relationship
Hypothesis 1 1. Child care teachers' job stress will influence child protection behavior. 1-1. The higher the job stress, the lower the level of child abuse awareness. 1-2. The higher the job stress, the lower the intention to report child abuse.	Independent variable → Dependent variable Causal relationship verification
Hypothesis 2 2. Child care teachers' personality level will influence child protection behavior. 2-1. The higher the personality level, the higher the level of child abuse awareness. 2-2. The higher the personality level, the higher the intention to report child abuse.	Independent variable → Dependent variable Causal relationship verification
Hypothesis 3 3. The influence of child care teachers' job stress and personality level on child protection behavior will differ according to whether they experienced child abuse in childhood. 3-1. The influence of job stress on child protection behavior will differ between groups with and without childhood abuse experiences. 3-2. The influence of personality level on child protection behavior will differ between groups with and without childhood abuse experience	Intergroup difference verification t-test

*Divided into groups with and without childhood child abuse experiences

3. Research Design

3.1 Research subjects and data collection

The subjects of this study were child care teachers working in child care facilities nationwide, who were surveyed using an online questionnaire through the Naver platform. To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, it was necessary to verify that the respondents were currently working as child care teachers, so the survey was conducted targeting an online cafe where only those who attach their child care teacher employment certificate can join and participate. In addition, before conducting the survey, the questionnaire items were reviewed by 10 experts in the child and infant care field to verify the respondents' understanding and appropriateness of responses, and the questionnaire content was revised and supplemented based on their opinions to finalize the items. A total of 306 questionnaires were collected, and among them, 60 questionnaires with low item reliability due to insincere responses and those who had not received personality enhancement education were excluded, resulting in a total of 246 responses used as data for this study. The general background of the survey respondents is as follows in <Table 2>.

Table 2. Surveyor's status

Item	Category	Frequency (cases)	Percentage (%)
Education	Child Care Teacher Training Institute	14	5.7
	Academic Credit Bank System	26	10.6

	Associate's degree	114	46.3
	4-year Bachelor's degree*	78	31.7
	Graduate school or higher**	14	5.7
Class in charge	0-year-olds	24	9.8
	1-year-olds	61	24.8
	2-year-olds	57	23.2
	3-year-olds or older	104	42.3
Work experience	Less than 2 years	17	6.9
	2-5 years	60	24.4
	6-9 years	78	31.7
	10 years or more	91	37.0
	20s-30s	61	24.8
	31s-40s	87	35.4
	41s-50s	84	34.1
	51 or older	14	5.7
Childhood abuse experience	Yes	47	19.1
	No	199	80.9
Total		246	100

* Including graduates from cyber universities

* Including those enrolled in graduate programs or higher (including master's graduates, doctoral students, and those who have completed all coursework but not yet graduated)

3.2 Appropriateness and reliability analysis of research model and measurement tools

3.2.1 Research model and analysis method

This study aims to verify the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality level on child protection behavior and to confirm whether this influence relationship differs according to whether teachers have experienced child abuse in their childhood.

As independent variables, child care teachers' job stress and personality level were set, and as dependent variables, child abuse awareness and intention to report, which are sub-factors of child protection behavior, were set. In addition, child care teachers' socio-demographic characteristics such as age, work experience, education level, working hours, and type of work were included as control variables.

To test the research hypotheses, we first intend to conduct multiple regression analysis to analyze the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality level on child abuse awareness and intention to report. The enter method will be used to simultaneously input the independent variables of job stress and personality, and the influence of the independent variables can be identified while controlling for the effects of the control variables.

Next, to verify whether there is a difference in the relationship between job stress, personality, and child protection behavior according to whether child care teachers have experienced child abuse in the past, we intend to conduct an independent samples t-test by dividing the groups. Through this, we can confirm whether the influence of independent variables on dependent variables differs by group.

The difference in regression coefficients between groups will be analyzed through Fisher's Z-test. This is a method used to test the significance of the difference between two independent sample statistics such as correlation coefficients or regression coefficients.

Through the above analysis methods, this study aims to empirically identify the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality level on child protection behavior and to confirm the differential effects according to past abuse experiences. Furthermore, we aim to provide policy implications for measures to strengthen teacher competency for child abuse prevention.

3.2.2 Measurement tools

By utilizing surveys related to child care teachers' job stress, child protection behavior, and personality from existing studies, new questionnaire items were created and used. First, to measure child care teachers' job stress, questionnaire items were reconstructed using job stress assessment tools developed in a series of previous studies[11],[14],[18],[19]. The sub-factors of job stress consisted of 33 items including work overload, colleague relationships, parent relationships, lack of principal leadership and administrative support, etc. Internal consistency was measured through Cronbach's α coefficient, and its value was found to be high at 0.90 or higher.

Next, to measure child care teachers' personality, self-personality assessment tools developed in a series of previous studies were utilized and reconstructed[14],[15], and the sub-factors consisted of a total of 46 items: humanity, job performance, and social relationships. Internal consistency was measured through Cronbach's α coefficient, and its value was found to be high at 0.85 or higher. Finally, to measure child protection behavior, questionnaire items used in existing previous studies were modified and supplemented[21],[22],[23],[24]. First, in the case of child abuse awareness, it consisted of a total of 15 items, and next, in the case of intention to report, it consisted of a total of 16 items. In addition, reliability (internal consistency) was measured as Cronbach's α coefficient value, and both sub-factors were found to be high at 0.85 or higher. These results are summarized in the following <Table 3>.

Table 3. Measurement by variable

Variable	Sub-factor	Number of items	Cronbach's α	
Job stress	Work overload	8	.91	
	Relationship with colleagues	8	.93	
	Relationship with parents	8	.93	
	Lack of director leadership and administrative support	9	.93	
	Total	33	-	
Teacher's personality	Humanity	10	.89	
	Job performance	24	.86	
	Social relations	12	.84	
	Total	46	-	
Child protection behavior	Child abuse awareness	Physical abuse	4	.85
		Emotional abuse	4	.90
		Neglect	4	.88
		Sexual abuse	3	.87
		Total	15	-
	Physical abuse	Reporting attitude	8	.87
		Reporting self-efficacy	8	.88
		Total	16	-

4. Analysis Results

4.1 Relationship between job stress, personality, and child protection behavior

To examine the correlation between child care teachers' job stress, personality, child protection behavior,

and other related variables, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis Measurements

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
(a)	1						
(b)	.74**	1					
(c)	.78**	.68**	1				
(d)	.62*	.76**	.77**	1			
(e)	-.55*	.45	-.66**	.74***	1		
(f)	.56*	.66**	.81**	-.57*	-.75***	1	
(g)	.81**	.69**	.88***	-.63*	-.87***	.85***	1

*(a) Education level (b) Age (c) Work experience (d) Class in charge (e) Job stress (f) Teacher's personality (g) Child protection behavior * p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.*

Child protection behavior ((g)) showed a negative correlation with job stress ((e)) ($r=-.87$, $p<.001$) and a positive correlation with teacher's personality ((f)) ($r=.85$, $p<.001$). This suggests that the higher the job-related stress of child care teachers, the more desensitized and passive they become in responding to child abuse, while the higher the teacher's personality level, the more sensitive they are to child abuse situations and the more actively they tend to report them.

In addition, child care teachers' education level ((a)), age ((b)), and work experience ((c)) showed significant positive correlations with child protection behavior ((g)) ($r=.69\sim.88$, $ps<.01$), indicating that the higher the teacher's expertise, the higher the level of awareness and practice of child protection.

On the other hand, the class in charge ((d)) showed a negative correlation with child protection behavior ((g)) ($r=-.63$, $p<.05$), indicating a tendency for teachers' child protection behavior level to decrease for younger age groups. This can be seen as evidence that abuse of infants occurs relatively more frequently.

Through these correlation analysis results, it was confirmed that various factors such as teachers' job stress, personality, expertise-related variables, and characteristics of the class in charge complexly interact to influence child protection behavior. Therefore, it is judged that the related variables included in this study will meaningfully contribute to explaining and predicting teachers' child abuse prevention and response behaviors.

4.2 Differences in perceptions of major variables according to child abuse experiences

The differences in perceptions of job stress, personality level, and child protection behavior according to child care teachers' childhood child abuse experiences were verified. The results are as shown in <Table 5>.

Table 5. Difference in Perception of Main Variables by Group

		Childhood abuse experience		T-value
		No (M)	Yes (M)	
Job stress	Work overload	3.52	4.16	.384***

	Relationship with colleagues	3.81	3.83	.166
	Relationship with parents	3.84	4.17	.312***
	Lack of director leadership and administrative support	3.68	3.71	.277
Teacher's personality	Humanity	3.77	3.54	.362***
	Job performance	3.90	3.64	.315***
	Social relations	4.01	3.87	.304**
Child protection behavior	Child abuse awareness	4.15	3.84	.439***
	Child abuse reporting intention	4.36	4.05	.417***

* p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.

First, we examined whether there were differences by variable according to child care teachers' childhood child abuse experiences. For job stress, the variables of work overload (.384) and relationship with parents (.312) showed significant differences in perception at the group level. Second, for personality, all of humanity (.362), job performance (.315), and social relationships (.304) showed significant differences in perception at the group level. For child protection behavior as well, the differences in perception of abuse awareness (.439) and intention to report abuse (.417) were significant at the group level.

4.3 The influence of major independent variables on dependent variables

To find out the influence of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child protection behavior, which are the main variables of this study, regression analysis was conducted. First, multicollinearity between independent variables was checked, and the tolerance value was above 0.01 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was less than 10, so it was judged that there was no multicollinearity problem, and regression analysis was conducted

4.3.1 The influence of job stress on child protection behavior

The analysis results showed that child care teachers' job stress had a significant negative influence on child protection behavior. This means that as the level of job stress increases, it negatively affects child protection behavior, and in particular, there was a difference in the influence between the group with childhood child abuse experiences (-.512, -.556) and the group without such experiences (-.712, -.696) in the regression analysis results, indicating that there is a difference between the two groups in terms of the influence of job stress on child protection behavior. The analysis results are as shown in <Table 6>

Table 6. Difference in Perception of Main Variables by Group

Abuse experience (○)	Child protection behavior			
	Child abuse awareness		Child abuse reporting intention	
	B(β)	t	B(β)	t
(Constant)	3.562	5.361***	2.544	4.653***
Job stress	-.463 (-.512)	-8.265***	-.502 (-.556)	-5.664***
R²	.352			
F	184.62**			
Abuse experience (x)	Child protection behavior			
	Child abuse awareness		Child abuse reporting intention	
	B(β)	t	B(β)	t
(Constant)	3.057	5.311***	3.874	4.251***

Job stress	-0.663 (-0.712)	-11.334***	-0.633 (-0.696)	-7.335***
R²	.451			
F	213.53***			

* p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.

4.3.2 The influence of personality enhancement on child protection behavior

The analysis results showed that child care teachers' personality level had a significant positive influence on child protection behavior.

This means that as the personality level increases, it positively affects child protection behavior, and they tend to become more sensitive to child abuse awareness and more active in reporting child abuse. In addition, there was a difference in the influence between the group with childhood child abuse experiences (.480, .534) and the group without such experiences (.563, .595) in the regression analysis results, indicating that there is a difference between the two groups in terms of the influence of personality level on child protection behavior. The analysis results are as shown in <Table 7>.

Table 7. Difference in Perception of Main Variables by Group

Abuse experience (○)	Child protection behavior			
	Child abuse awareness		Child abuse reporting intention	
	B(β)	t	B(β)	t
(Constant)	4.265	4.623**	3.149	3.509***
Personality	.422 (.480)	6.352**	.507 (.534)	5.185***
R²	.413			
F	179.63**			
Abuse experience (x)	Child protection behavior			
	Child abuse awareness		Child abuse reporting intention	
	B(β)	t	B(β)	t
(Constant)	4.365	4.785**	3.451	3.845***
Personality	.512 (.563)	7.196***	.540 (.595)	6.152***
R²	.508			
F	196.36***			

* p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.

4.4 Summary of analysis results and verification of hypotheses

4.4.1 The influence of child care teachers' job stress on child protection behavior

This study aimed to examine the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child protection behavior and to verify whether this influence relationship differs according to whether teachers have experienced child abuse in the past. The results of the study are summarized as follows.

First, child care teachers' job stress was found to have a negative influence on child protection behavior consisting of child abuse awareness and intention to report. That is, as the level of job stress increased, the level of awareness of child abuse decreased and the intention to report abuse also decreased. In particular, this negative influence was greater in the group without past child abuse experiences.

Second, child care teachers' personality level was found to have a positive influence on child protection behavior. The higher the teacher's personality level, the more sensitive they were to child abuse and the more

actively they tended to report it. This positive influence was greater in the group without past child abuse experiences.

Third, the influence of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child protection behavior differed according to whether teachers had past child abuse experiences. This negative influence was found to be greater in the group without child abuse experiences, where the negative influence of job stress was greater.

Table 8. Hypothesis testing results

	Hypothesis	Test result
Hypothesis 1	1. Child care teachers' job stress will influence child protection behavior. 1-1. The higher the job stress, the lower the level of child abuse awareness. 1-2. The higher the job stress, the lower the intention to report child abuse.	Adopted Adopted Adopted
Hypothesis 2	2. Child care teachers' personality level will influence child protection behavior. 2-1. The higher the personality level, the higher the level of child abuse awareness. 2-2. The higher the personality level, the higher the intention to report child abuse.	Adopted Adopted Adopted
Hypothesis 3	3. The influence of child care teachers' job stress and personality level on child protection behavior will differ according to whether they experienced child abuse in childhood. 3-1. The influence of job stress on child protection behavior will differ between groups with and without childhood abuse experiences. 3-2. The influence of personality level on child protection behavior will differ between groups with and without childhood abuse experience	Adopted Adopted Adopted

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of research results

This study verified the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child protection behavior and analyzed whether this influence relationship differs according to whether teachers have experienced child abuse in the past. As a result of the study, job stress was found to have a negative influence on child protection behavior consisting of child abuse awareness and intention to report, while teachers' personality level was found to have a positive influence. This is consistent with the results of previous studies [2],[3],[5], confirming that excessive work burden and stress lower teachers' sensitivity to child abuse and motivation to report, while teachers' positive personality and qualities promote child protection behavior.

In particular, this study discovered that there is a difference in the influence of job stress and personality on child protection behavior depending on whether teachers have past child abuse experiences. This supports the discussions of previous studies [4],[6] that childhood abuse experiences affect interpersonal relationships and job attitudes in adulthood, suggesting the need for customized intervention and support considering individuals' situations and characteristics. This study has significance in extending previous research by empirically identifying the effects of child care teachers' job stress and personality on child protection behavior and revealing the differential effects according to personal background.

5.2 Implications of the study

The results of this study provide practical implications for strengthening child care teachers' competency in preventing and responding to child abuse. First, institutional support is needed to relieve teachers' job stress and improve working conditions. Excessive work burden and poor treatment can cause teacher burnout and hinder child protection behavior. Therefore, along with improving the working environment such as

adjusting child care teachers' workload, ensuring break time, and providing personnel support, it is necessary to establish an emotional support system such as providing counseling and healing programs and activating self-help groups.

Next, education and training should be strengthened to cultivate child care teachers' personalities and increase their sensitivity to children's rights. Teachers' internal qualities such as humanity, ethical consciousness, and sense of mission can lead to the practice of respecting children. To this end, personality education should be made mandatory in child care teacher qualification and in-service training courses, and professional education for child abuse prevention and rights protection should be expanded. In addition, it is necessary to develop customized educational content considering teachers' personal backgrounds and characteristics, working conditions, etc., and to utilize teaching methods that enhance field applicability, such as case-centered practice and discussion.

On the other hand, this study has limitations such as relying on cross-sectional data at a specific point in time and being based on subjective surveys, which may lead to inferring causality and the possibility of response bias. In follow-up studies, it is necessary to complement the limitations of this study through concurrent use of longitudinal research designs and qualitative analysis methods, and exploration of multi-level factors influencing child care teachers' child protection behavior. Through this, it is hoped that measures to strengthen teacher competency will be prepared to create a safe child care environment without child abuse and to realize the rights and welfare of infants and young children.

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