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Improving the Linkage System between the Police and Social Welfare Agencies for Effective Response to Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in South Korea

¹Nam Young-Hee

¹Prof., Dept. of Welfare and Public, Chungang Univ., Korea
E-mail yhn0435@naver.com

Abstract

This study aims to explore improvement measures for the linkage system between the police and social welfare agencies in responding to domestic violence and child abuse issues in South Korea by comparing and analyzing the current systems in South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Despite the legal and institutional foundations for victim protection and perpetrator correction in each country, the effectiveness of actual cooperation faces several limitations. In South Korea, the level of cooperation is insufficient due to the lack of information sharing, role conflicts, and ambiguity of cooperation procedures. The United States and the United Kingdom operate more systematic cooperation programs, showing notable achievements in mental health crisis intervention and domestic violence response. To improve the linkage system in South Korea, this study proposes the following measures: (1) developing a clear cooperation protocol, (2) conducting regular education and training programs, (3) establishing an integrated information system, and (4) strengthening the victim-centered approach. Implementing these measures will contribute to more effective responses to domestic violence and child abuse issues, ultimately leading to a healthier and safer society by reducing social costs through victim protection and perpetrator correction.

Keywords: domestic violence, child abuse, police, social welfare agencies, linkage system CopyRetry

1. INTRODUCTION

As child abuse has emerged as a serious social problem, the roles of the police and child protection agencies have been emphasized. After the enforcement of the Special Act on Punishment of Child Abuse Crimes in 2014, police activities to respond to child abuse have been strengthened, and child protection agencies have been carrying out the tasks of protecting child victims and supporting families. However, there are limitations in responding to child abuse due to the lack of cooperation between the two agencies. For example, in 2022, 38.5% of the cases judged as "no suspicion of abuse" based on the field investigation by child protection agencies were re-determined as child abuse by the police.

To effectively respond to child abuse, it is crucial to strengthen cooperation between the police and child protection agencies. However, there is a lack of research focusing on the linkage between the police and child protection agencies in Korea. Some studies have pointed out problems such as lack of information sharing and role conflicts between the two agencies, but studies that present specific improvement measures are limited.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to pay attention to the relationship between domestic violence and child abuse. This is because the possibility of child abuse is high in families where domestic violence occurs, and the

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Corresponding Author: yhn0435@naver.com

Tel: ***-****-****

Professor, Dept. of Welfare and Public, Chungang, Korea

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experience of exposure to domestic violence during childhood can lead to violent behavior in adulthood. Therefore, it is important to identify and intervene in child abuse when domestic violence occurs. To this end, cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies is essential. The police should play a role in checking for child abuse victimization of children who accompany them when reporting domestic violence and linking them to social welfare agencies. Social welfare agencies can contribute to preventing the recurrence of child abuse and restoring family functions by providing victim support and offender correction programs.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the current status of linkage between the police and social welfare agencies in responding to domestic violence and child abuse, and to seek ways to strengthen the linkage system through domestic and international best practices. Through this, we intend to present practical policy alternatives for protecting victims and correcting offenders, thereby contributing to breaking the vicious cycle of domestic violence and child abuse. Furthermore, we aim to contribute to creating a society where children can grow up healthy and free from violence.

2. Theoretical Background

Domestic violence refers to physical, emotional, and sexual violence occurring between family members. It is characterized as violence based on an intimate relationship, as the perpetrator and victim are family members. There are various types, such as spousal violence, child abuse, and elder abuse, and it takes various forms such as verbal insults, economic control, and sexual coercion, in addition to physical violence.

Child abuse refers to physical, mental, and sexual violence and harsh treatment inflicted on children by adults, including caregivers, and neglect of child protection and nurturing. Article 3, Clause 7 of the Child Welfare Act defines child abuse as "an act of physical, mental, or sexual violence or harsh treatment by adults, including caregivers, that may harm the health or welfare of a child or impede normal development, and an act of abandonment or neglect of a child by the child's caregivers."

Domestic violence and child abuse occur in closed homes, making it difficult to be known to the outside, and it is easy to be concealed as it is difficult for victims, especially young children, to seek help. In addition, as perpetrators are often parents or caregivers who raise children, children are easily exposed to continuous and repeated abuse. In fact, among child abuse cases in 2021, 81.9% were abuse by parents, and among them, abuse by stepparents accounted for 3.8%.

Table 1. Types of child abuse perpetrators in 2021

Classification	Number of abusers (persons)	Percentage (%)
Parents	24,018	81.9
Step-parents	1,107	3.8
Relatives	1,037	3.5
Surrogate caregivers	1,009	3.4
Others	2,155	7.3
Total	29,326	100.0

*Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare (2022). 2021 Major Statistics on Child Abuse.

Domestic violence and child abuse not only leave physical and mental aftereffects on victims but also cause social harm through intergenerational transmission of violence. According to Kim Jae-yeop et al. (2022), the experience of witnessing domestic violence during childhood, along with the experience of abuse victimization, influences school violence perpetration behavior during adolescence. In this way, domestic violence and child abuse hinder the healthy development of individuals and lead to the inheritance of violence, incurring social

costs, which necessitates a socio-structural approach.

Establishing a linkage system between the police and social welfare agencies is essential to effectively respond to domestic violence and child abuse problems. Previous studies point out the following regarding the necessity of police-social welfare linkage systems:

First, cooperation between police officers and social workers can provide clients with a perspective of humanity, empathy, and care, and prevent trauma caused by police intervention. The accompaniment of social workers can keep excessive use of force by the police in check and contribute to promoting fair treatment of minorities.

Second, as the police are the first agency to respond to crisis situations, they need social welfare skills. As 50-90% of police work is devoted to information gathering and social service provision, it is required to strengthen social welfare competencies such as problem-solving skills, communication, mediation, and intervention strategies.

Third, cooperation between police officers and social workers can contribute to reducing preventable casualties and increasing public trust in the police. In particular, as the roles of the two agencies overlap in responding to community problems such as drug addiction, mental illness, and homelessness, close cooperation is required.

Fourth, many countries abroad operate police-social welfare cooperation programs. In the United States, the hiring of social workers within police stations has expanded since the establishment of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in 1968, and police-social welfare cooperation models have also developed in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, and other countries.

Fifth, in Korea, the academic community has consistently suggested ways to strengthen police-social welfare cooperation to revitalize community policing. However, actual cases of cooperation or the level of institutionalization are insufficient.

As such, previous studies present the necessity of police-social welfare linkage systems and domestic and international cases. However, additional research is needed on specific ways of cooperation, performance, limitations, etc. In particular, it is necessary to develop a police-social welfare cooperation model focusing on responding to domestic violence and child abuse and to streamline related policies and systems.

3. Comparison of Police-Social Welfare Linkage Systems in Korea and Major Countries

3.1 Police-Social Welfare Linkage System in Korea

A. Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims

The Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence stipulates the responsibilities of the national and local governments, the obligation and procedures for reporting domestic violence, protection orders for victims, support for victims, etc., to prevent domestic violence and protect victims of domestic violence. The following provisions are prepared regarding the roles of the police and social welfare agencies:

The national and local governments shall establish and operate counseling centers and protection facilities, and conduct education and publicity for the prevention of domestic violence to prevent and stop domestic violence (Article 4).

Judicial police officers shall take necessary measures such as protecting victims and separating perpetrators when receiving a report of a domestic violence crime or dispatching to the scene (Article 8).

Employees of counseling centers and protection facilities, as mandatory reporters of domestic violence, shall report to investigative agencies when they become aware of the occurrence of domestic violence (Article 12).

The court may issue a protection order for victims upon the request of the victim or their legal representative, and the police shall take emergency measures when the protection order is violated (Articles 29 and 55-2). In this way, the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence promotes cooperative intervention between the two agencies by stipulating the initial response and judicial measures of the police and the victim support role of counseling centers and protection facilities.

B. Child Welfare Act

The Child Welfare Act was enacted to ensure the welfare of children so that they can be born healthy and grow up happily and safely. The following provisions are made regarding the roles of the police and child protection agencies in preventing child abuse and protecting child victims:

The national and local governments shall establish and operate child protection agencies, and conduct education for preventing child abuse and education for mandatory reporters to prevent and stop child abuse (Articles 22 and 26).

Mandatory reporters of child abuse shall immediately report to investigative agencies or child protection agencies when they become aware of child abuse in the course of their duties, and the personal information of the reporter shall not be disclosed (Articles 25 and 26).

Anyone who becomes aware of a child abuse crime may report it to investigative agencies, and emergency measures and protective measures for child victims are carried out by child protection agencies (Articles 29 and 15).

Mayors and governors of cities, counties, and districts shall establish a cooperative system with relevant agencies such as the police, education offices, and medical institutions for the protection and support of child victims (Article 22-2).

The Child Welfare Act specifies the roles of the police and child protection agencies in the child protection system and promotes active response to child abuse by strengthening the obligation to report and cooperation between agencies. In particular, with the enactment of the Special Act on the Punishment of Child Abuse Crimes in 2014, public intervention in child abuse has been further strengthened.

As reviewed above, the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Child Welfare Act provide a legal basis for the roles and linkage of the police and social welfare agencies in responding to domestic violence and child abuse. However, in actual operation, there are limitations such as lack of information sharing and cooperation between the two agencies and the occurrence of blind spots in victim support. In the future, to increase the effectiveness of the laws and strengthen the protection of victims, it will be necessary to improve the professionalism of the police and social welfare agencies, strengthen education for practitioners, and develop cooperation manuals, along with institutional support.

C. Current Status and Limitations of Linkage System Operation

Linkage between the police and social welfare agencies is mainly taking place in the process of responding to crimes against vulnerable groups such as domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse. The police are responsible for receiving 112 reports, on-site dispatch and emergency measures, and case investigation, while social welfare agencies provide victim protection and support, and offender correction programs.

Recently, with the introduction of the autonomous police system, cooperation between local governments and the police is being strengthened. The Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency and Seoul Metropolitan Government signed a business agreement in 2018 to establish an "integrated support system for families in crisis" and are promoting the discovery of families in crisis by the police and linkage with Seoul's welfare

resources. The Gyeongbuk Provincial Police Agency has also established a cooperative system with the Elder Protection Agency and Gyeongsangbuk-do Province to prevent elder abuse and activate reporting.

At the government level, information linkage between the police and social welfare agencies is supported through the social security information system. This system enables the provision of customized services centered on the recipients by integrating information on welfare recipients. The Ministry of Health and Welfare is utilizing the linkage system between medical social workers in medical institutions and local governments to discover and support households in crisis.

D. Limitations of the Linkage System

However, the current police-social welfare linkage system faces several limitations. First, it is difficult to respond promptly due to the lack of information sharing and communication between the two agencies. There are delays due to administrative procedures such as official document requests in the linkage process, and follow-up management is insufficient even after case processing.

In addition, conflicts arise due to the lack of clear role establishment and understanding between police and social welfare personnel. In particular, there are cases of confusion due to differences in judgment criteria between the police and child protection agencies in the process of handling child abuse cases.

Above all, there is a lack of cooperation models and manuals for the police and social welfare agencies to collaborate on domestic violence and child abuse issues. Sporadic cooperation is taking place in each region, but there is no standardized linkage system in place. Education and training programs for practitioners of both agencies are also insufficient, limiting the enhancement of professionalism.

As such, the linkage between the police and social welfare agencies shows institutional limitations, requiring the establishment of a more close and official cooperative system. Although the basis for regional-level cooperation has been prepared with the recent implementation of the autonomous police system, it is necessary to seek specific implementation measures and expand related infrastructure. Above all, it seems necessary to form an organizational culture in which both agencies cooperate and communicate as equal partners.

Table 2. Current Status and Limitations of Police-Social Welfare Linkage System Operation

Classification	Main Contents
Current Status of Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linkage in the process of responding to crimes against vulnerable groups such as domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse- Strengthening of local government-police cooperation with the introduction of the autonomous police system - Support for information linkage through the social security information system
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty in prompt response due to lack of information sharing and communication- Role conflicts between police and social welfare personnel - Absence of standardized cooperation models and manuals- Insufficient cooperation education and training for practitioners

3.2 Police-Social Welfare Linkage System in the United States

A. Related Laws and Policies

In the United States, various laws and policies are being implemented to strengthen the linkage between the police and social welfare agencies. Major laws include the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, which stipulates support for education, peer support programs, etc. to promote police officers' mental health and prevent suicide. In addition, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act grants the Department of Justice the authority to investigate whether police practices violate citizens' rights.

B. Current Status of Operation

The police-social welfare linkage system in the United States mainly focuses on mental health crisis intervention, domestic violence response, and child abuse case handling. These linkage systems were established with the purpose of simultaneously promoting the safety and welfare of the community.

Mental Health Crisis Intervention: Through the Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) program, the police and mental health experts cooperate to manage crisis situations. This program provides training for police officers to effectively respond to mental health crisis situations and links them to appropriate treatment services when necessary.

Domestic Violence Response: In the process of responding to domestic violence cases, the police cooperate with social welfare agencies to provide victim protection and perpetrator correction programs. This focuses on securing the safety of victims and preventing recurrence.

Child Abuse Case Handling: Child abuse cases are handled through cooperation with child protection agencies. The police are responsible for initial response and investigation, and social welfare agencies support the treatment and recovery of abused children.

C. Implications

Lack of Resources and Training : In some areas, the effectiveness of the linkage system may be limited due to lack of resources or insufficient police training. This is particularly evident in rural areas or small cities.

Need for Consistency and Standardization : To maximize the effectiveness of linkage programs, consistent operating guidelines and standardized training programs are needed at the national level.

Policy Consistency and Implementation : There is often a lack of consistency in policies between the federal and state governments, or even within states. As a result, cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies may not be consistently carried out

Given these current status and limitations, it can be said that there is still much room for improvement in the police-social welfare linkage system in the United States. The development of systematic training programs, appropriate allocation of resources, and securing policy consistency are derived as important implications

3.3 Police-Social Welfare Linkage System in the United Kingdom

A. Related Laws and Policies

In the United Kingdom, cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies plays an important role in responding to domestic violence and child abuse issues. In particular, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognizes children who witness domestic violence or experience its impact as victims and includes provisions to ensure their access to necessary services.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has updated its guidelines to make prosecution decisions considering the impact on victims in domestic violence cases.

Police and health agency cooperation: Police and health agencies are working together with common goals to improve outcomes, reduce crime, and enhance health outcomes.

Initiatives such as the Equally Safe Strategy aim for early intervention in domestic violence cases, and the Caledonian Programme has been expanded to target men involved in domestic violence crimes, contributing

to reducing recidivism.

B. Implications

While the police and social welfare linkage system in the United Kingdom has a positive impact in many ways, there are still areas that need improvement.

Lack of resources and need for training: In some areas, the effectiveness of the linkage system may be limited due to lack of resources or insufficient police training. This is particularly evident in rural areas or small cities.

Policy consistency and implementation: There is often a lack of consistency in policies between the federal and state governments, or even within states. As a result, cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies may not be consistently carried out.

Victim-centered approach: It is necessary to strengthen the victim-centered approach and make efforts to minimize the trauma experienced by victims. This is important to enable victims to actively participate in legal proceedings and protect their rights.

Given these current status and implications, it can be said that there is still much room for improvement in the police-social welfare linkage system in the United Kingdom. The development of systematic training programs, appropriate allocation of resources, and securing policy consistency are derived as important implications.

3. Improvement Measures for the Police-Social Welfare Linkage System in Korea

3.1 Strengthening Police-Child Protection Agency Cooperation to Respond to Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

To effectively respond to children exposed to domestic violence, it is crucial to strengthen cooperation between the police and child protection agencies. Specific improvement measures for this are as follows.

Clarification and Reinforcement of the Cooperation System

- **Development of Cooperation Protocol:** Develop an official protocol that clearly defines the cooperation procedures and roles between the police and child protection agencies. This protocol should include the roles of each agency, communication methods, information sharing procedures, etc..

- **Regular Cooperation Meetings:** Through regular cooperation meetings between the two agencies, check the current cooperation status and make necessary adjustments. It is desirable to hold these meetings at least once a quarter.

Strengthening Education and Training Programs

- **Joint Education Program:** Conduct joint education programs for the police and child protection agency staff to increase understanding of children exposed to domestic violence and educate effective response measures.

- **Case Management Training:** Through case management training based on actual cases, enable staff to effectively respond not only in theory but also in real situations.

Establishment of Information Sharing System

- **Joint Database:** Establish a joint database that can be shared between the police and child protection agencies to share case information, intervention results, etc. in real time.

- **Strengthening Information Security:** Strengthen the security of the information sharing system to ensure that sensitive information is not leaked to the outside and is thoroughly managed.

Legal Support and Policy Development

- **Strengthening Legal Support:** Strengthen legal support for cases of children exposed to domestic violence so that necessary legal measures can be taken promptly.
- **Policy Development:** Develop comprehensive policies to protect children exposed to domestic violence and secure budgets and resources to support them.

Establishment of Information Sharing System

- **Joint Database:** Establish a joint database that can be shared between the police and child protection agencies to share case information, intervention results, etc. in real time.
- **Strengthening Information Security:** Strengthen the security of the information sharing system to ensure that sensitive information is not leaked to the outside and is thoroughly managed.

The goal is to strengthen cooperation between the police and child protection agencies regarding children exposed to domestic violence and to enable these children to be more effectively protected through these improvement measures. To this end, it is essential to improve related laws and systems and strengthen the capacity of practitioners, and it is also important to strengthen the support system at the community level through cooperation with local governments. To present improvement measures for the legal system for victim safety and perpetrator punishment and correction, the current legal system and related research in Korea are reviewed, and specific policy proposals are derived by comparing and analyzing domestic and international cases.

3.2 Improvement measures for the legal system for victim safety and perpetrator punishment and correction

The current legal system and related research in Korea are reviewed, and specific policy proposals are derived by comparing and analyzing domestic and international cases. In Korea, several laws have been established to respond to domestic violence and child abuse issues. In particular, the Child Welfare Act and the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims are at the center of stipulating victim protection and perpetrator punishment and correction. These laws include emergency measures for victim protection, protection orders, and no-contact orders for perpetrators.

The current legal system has several limitations. First, punishments for perpetrators are often not strict or consistent, which is not sufficient for victim protection and prevention of recurrence. Second, there are cases where victims do not receive substantial protection due to lack of resources or low accessibility to victim protection programs. Third, the problem of high recidivism rates continues due to the low effectiveness of perpetrator correction programs.

- **Strengthening the effectiveness of victim protection orders:** Strengthen the system to enforce compliance with victim protection orders and apply stricter punishments for violations.
- **Expansion of victim support services:** Expand comprehensive victim support services including psychological, legal, and financial support, and increase accessibility
- **Verification and improvement of the effectiveness of perpetrator correction programs:** Regularly review the effectiveness of perpetrator correction programs and improve them into effective programs.
- **Strengthening monitoring for recidivism prevention:** Strengthen monitoring of perpetrators after their return to society to reduce the possibility of recidivism
- **Strengthening the linkage between legal systems:** Strengthen the linkage between laws related to domestic violence and child abuse to minimize legal loopholes.
- **Securing policy consistency and sustainability:** Secure policy consistency and establish sustainable

measures from a long-term perspective

These improvement measures should focus on ensuring the safety of victims and preventing recidivism through effective correction of perpetrators. In addition, these improvement measures should be implemented based on cooperation between related agencies and social support.

3.3 Cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies

Cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies is being implemented in various countries, and such cooperation has a positive impact on victim protection and social problem-solving. In particular, police officers' understanding of social welfare and social welfare professionals' knowledge of law enforcement are important, and systematic education and practical guidelines are needed for this.

a. Development of Education Programs

- Basic curriculum: Develop a basic curriculum for police and social welfare professionals. This course provides education on basic concepts of domestic violence and child abuse, legal procedures, victim support methods, etc.

- Advanced curriculum: Conduct in-depth education on specific situations to enhance the ability to respond in real situations. This course may include case studies, role-playing, simulations, etc..

b. Development of Practitioner Guidelines

- Cooperation procedures: Clarify the cooperation procedures between the police and social welfare agencies. This includes the roles of each agency, communication methods, information sharing systems, etc.

- Emergency response: Establish guidelines to respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency. This includes emergency measures, victim protection, perpetrator management, etc.

c. Evaluation and Improvement

- Program evaluation: Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of education programs and practitioner guidelines and improve them if necessary. Through this, continuously manage the appropriateness and effectiveness of the programs.

Education and development of practitioner guidelines for police and social welfare professionals are essential for effective response to domestic violence and child abuse issues. The education programs and practitioner guidelines proposed in this study will contribute to enhancing expertise in these issues and promoting cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies. Through this, we will be able to present effective policy alternatives for victim protection and perpetrator correction and contribute to reducing social costs

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore improvement measures for the linkage system in Korea by comparing and analyzing the linkage system between the police and social welfare agencies in responding to domestic violence and child abuse issues in Korea and major countries (USA, UK). The results of the study showed that each country's linkage system has various legal and institutional foundations for victim protection and perpetrator correction, but the effectiveness of actual cooperation is facing several limitations.

In the case of Korea, although cooperation between the police and social welfare agencies is legally stipulated, the actual level of cooperation is insufficient. This is due to the lack of information sharing, role conflicts, and the ambiguity of cooperation procedures. In the United States and the United Kingdom, the police and social welfare agencies operate more systematic cooperation programs, and they are showing remarkable achievements, especially in mental health crisis intervention and domestic violence response.

Accordingly, the following measures are proposed to improve the police-social welfare linkage system in Korea:

Clarification of cooperation protocol: Develop a cooperation protocol that clearly defines the cooperation procedures and roles between the police and social welfare agencies, and effectively educate all relevant agencies.

Regular education and training: Conduct regular education and training programs for police and social welfare professionals to enhance expertise and improve the quality of cooperation.

Establishment of an integrated information system: Establish an integrated information system to facilitate information sharing between the police and social welfare agencies. This system enables real-time information sharing to support rapid response.

Strengthening the victim-centered approach: Strengthen the approach that prioritizes victim protection and reflects the opinions and needs of victims in policy and program design.

If the improvement measures derived through this study are actually applied, it will be possible to respond more effectively to domestic violence and child abuse issues in Korea. In addition, the strengthening of this linkage system will contribute to reducing social costs through victim protection and perpetrator correction, and ultimately to creating a healthier and safer society.

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