Problems in Visiting Child Life Services for Multicultural Families and Alternatives Research: Centering on Expert Focus Group Interview

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: By means of Focus Group Interview (FGI) the study aims to deduce the practical problems and measures for child life service and to analyze expert content on chapter service effects, problems in current operation methods, and future improvement plans, and make policy suggestions. Methods/Statistical Analysis: The study conducted a Focus Group Interview (FGI) on 4 directors of multicultural family support centers and 3 visiting education supervisors the practice child life service for multicultural families to deduce the practical problems and measures for child life services and create practical measures. For the directors of multicultural family support centers, they were directors with more than one and a half years of experience or had long fueled supervisor experience, and visiting supervisors were supervisors with over four years of experience at A city Gyeonggi center where child life service has been in operation for the longest time. The interview was conducted in two groups on September 18, 2015 and one and a half hours to two hours was required for each of the groups. Findings: The study analyzed child life service effects, operation method problems, and future improvement plan areas through focus group interview comprising of 10 subcategories under 6 categories. First area is 'Effects of child life service' and the Category is 'Encounter', and subcategories are 'Opportunity for emotional exchanges and consultation' and 'Customized lessons through blind spot visits'. Second area is 'Operation problems' and Categories are 'Service', 'Personal perspective', and 'Regional association', and the subcategories are 'Subject anxiety due to the lack of supply opportunities', 'Education supervision centering on desire of mothers', 'Low status and improper service request of visiting supervisors' and 'Difficulties in association with multicultural family disabled children institutions'. Last area is 'Future improvement plans' and Categories are 'Service Improvements' and 'Increase of efficacy', and the subcategories are 'Detailed service broken down by child development status', 'Necessary services for various family types', 'Family focused service including fathers' and 'Service evaluation based on child needs'. Improvements/Applications: As a future improvement plan for child life service considering child development periods, and family characteristics, there needs to be systematic changes in the direction of emotional stability promotion, and there needs to be policy approaches considering the entire members of the family of multicultural families.

Keywords: Expert Focus Group Interview, Multicultural Families, Multicultural Family Support Center, Visiting Child Life Services, Visiting Education Supervisors

1. Introduction

According to the 2014 data in Korea by Ministry of Education, overall general students are decreasing by 200,000 every year but multicultural students are increasing by 6000 each year and after 2014, there were 71,504 and is predicted the ratio within the total number of students will reach over 1.12%. With the numerical increase
of multicultural children, there is need to focus on various difficulties multicultural children face. Multicultural children experience difficulties due to stresses caused by dual culture adaptation, childhood development pressures, and social discrimination and prejudice against multicultural families. Thus, children of multicultural families are experiencing various problems living within Korean society with non-multicultural families and children.1

Looking at it in detail, multicultural children have lower level of language development compared to children of non-multicultural families2–4, and it was found that they had lower level of academic performance5. Also it is reported that self-esteem6–8 and ego resilience in multicultural children are lower. It is also reported that they experience confusion in self-identity2,4,8, often experience depression and anxiety6–8, and experience discrimination due to lower social relations, skin color, and language proficiency. However, there are claims that assuming multicultural children to have deficiencies in overall development compared to non-multicultural children or assuming the experience difficulties, can be social prejudices5–11.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has been running a multicultural family visiting education business from multicultural family support centers since 2010 to help holistic development of multicultural children and social integration and improvement of quality of life through family life in general including the mother, the stable main caregiver. Multicultural family visiting education business through nationwide multicultural family support centers is a representative case of customized service. Multicultural family visiting education business is carried out divided into three areas, Korean language education service, parent education service, and child life service. Especially child life service has its own manual12–13 which they amend and supplement every year and the support capacity development and service quality improvement through refresher trainings for visiting supervisors. It is reported that visiting education service has a very high rate of satisfaction and especially there have been suggestions of the need for the supplementation on the system of the visiting education service for multicultural family mothers and children started in 2012.

The study conducted a Focus Group Interview (FGI) on 4 directors of multicultural family support centers and 3 visiting education supervisors the practice child life service for multicultural families to deduce the practical problems and measures for child life services and create practical measures.

For the directors of multicultural family support centers, they were directors with more than one and a half years of experience or had long fueled supervisor experience, and visiting supervisors were supervisors with over four years of experience at a city Gyeonggi center where child life service has been in operation for the longest time.

The interview was conducted in two groups on September 18, 2015 and one and a half hours to two hours was required for each of the groups. The interview used open questions in areas such as child life service visiting business effects, opinions about operation methods, views on improvement plans and suggestion of multicultural policy related visiting services, and recording was conducted with the consent of the participants.

For ethical consideration of research participants, the researcher explained the purpose and objectives of this research to the participants to receive prior consent and in the preliminary preparation process the interview questions that would be used in the focus group interview were sent to the participants and the overview was explained, giving the participants until time to think about the problems in this research.

2. Method

2.1 Research Process

The study conducted a Focus Group Interview (FGI) on 4 directors of multicultural family support centers and 3 visiting education supervisors the practice child life service for multicultural families to deduce the practical problems and measures for child life services and create practical measures.

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2.2 Data Processing and Analysis Methods

Data analysis about focus group was conducted immediately after the interviews of the primary and secondary groups. For data analysis process, related data were repeatedly read, and after making a preliminary category the
data were divided and the categorize data were restructured and reclassified into subcategories. The unclear parts that occurred during the transfer during analysis or analysis of transfer data were clarified by the researchers conducting the participants via email, telephone, or revisits, to obtain the validity of data.

3. Study Results and Interpretation

As a result of analyzing child life service effects, operation method problems, and future improvement plan areas through focus group interview, 10 subcategories under 6 categories as shown in Table 1 were derived.

Table 1. The results of analysis of focus group interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects of child life service</td>
<td>Encounter</td>
<td>Opportunity for emotional exchanges and consultation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Customized lessons through blind spot visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation problems</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Subject anxiety due to the lack of supply opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal perspective</td>
<td>Education supervision centering on desire of mothers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional association</td>
<td>Low status and improper service request of visiting supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future improvement plans</td>
<td>Service Improvements</td>
<td>Detailed service broken down by child development status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Necessary services for various family types</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increase of efficacy</td>
<td>Family focused service including fathers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Service evaluation based on child needs</td>
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3.1.1 Effects of Child Life Service

3.1.1.1 Encounter

- Opportunity for Emotional Exchanges and Consultation

As main effects of child life service, the participants discussed emotional exchange with marriage immigrant women through visiting and consultation about overall multicultural family life. Marriage immigrant women were feeling emotional comfort from the fact that a child life expert could visit their home and openly discuss about their children.

Well, that we actually visit the family. Through visiting and through service, like as a Korean, to that mother of the family and that mother, does not have any Korean friends. That’s why maybe being a friend to that mother is a Korean, and emotional support, isn’t that what helps? (Supervisor A).

I think for about 40% of the parents who ask for consultation, they also receive great emotional support. Although they are involved with exchanges with people of their own country, and because they exchange between themselves, information and things like that are limited. So for them to have people like us who have had education and know things professionally visit them to talk to them about lives of children and the overall things related such as nurturing, education and Korean education culture and other than that we provide consultation about conflict with husbands through things like education problems. So this means that about 60% of the consultations are about their children’s lives but it means that there is a large number of families the request consultation about the parents themselves (Supervisor C).

- Customized Lessons through Blind Spot Visits

The fact that service can be provided to neglected remote areas through center visits and that customized service rather than one way education in a blind spot were found to be the strength differentiating from other multicultural family services.

Finally, because this is a visiting business and I think that there is a bigger effect because there are customized lessons one-on-one by visiting them and providing things we can do at the center or through group education (Supervisor B).

3.1.2 Problems in Current Operation Method

3.1.2.1 Service

- Subject Anxiety due to the Lack of Supply Opportunities
Due to problems and operational methods, and the child life sector, it is possible to use once within the target age and in centers with many users as the order comes around, it is used regardless of the age of children and there are situations where effective child development is not being done. Therefore at A center, as an alternative, they conducted parent education first and although they are guiding the periods where their children need the service, the parents were anxious that their children would be omitted from the service.

Because this child life service is once in a lifetime thing, I would like to receive it when I would like to or when the child is 10. However if the center links it at 7, it just ends at age 7. Then that means I would like for the child to have it during school but there is no opportunity. So that's why I have an opinion that maybe we should do more in stages (Supervisor B).

Actually, when teachers see them, they determined that they should receive the service when they are in elementary school battered and now, but mothers, regardless of sessions just want to get the service when they think they can get it. At the center is difficult for teachers to persuade them. So that's why now after the parent education service, the receive it when the child actually needs it. But they are anxious that they will be omitted from the service and things like that (Director A).

Also as child life services became monetized, customers want adequate service and continued service after termination for as much as they paid for but even when it is paid, the operation where service is given through order is increasing the anxiety and dissatisfaction of marriage migrant women.

As this was monetized, many of these people tell us that because they pay, they would like as much service as they pay. The mothers are anxious when the 10 month service is over. They are saying that both the mother and the child were satisfied until now but what now? Then their anxiety increases. (Director A).

3.1.2.2 Personal Perspective

- **Education Supervision Centering on Desire of Mothers**

  Although in child life service, the domain of life in general is included in the manual, mostly marriage migrant women desire to conduct education guidance during the entire service time and visiting supervisors are becoming education supervisors. This is determined to be service that reflects desires of the mother rather than the desires of the child and this shows that there needs to be service desire exploration and satisfaction research on children to find out what the children really want.

  If you see this in a service aspect, mothers with children going into elementary school always request things about education. So these teachers would like to do other programs, read books, and talk to the children during the two hours but the mothers are telling them to quickly solve practice problems. So there becoming teachers who solve practice problem booklets with the children. So the teachers view our sense of shame and really, we are a child life service but why are we reflecting on only the desires of the mothers, and if the children actually want to receive the service… (Director A).

  For the desires by the families, when he generally tells them that we are going and that we are providing a child life service, they tell us, ‘oh you mean studying?’ so ‘do you teach Korean?’ And even that is stated in the manual. We told them that it is just a part of the process and although we tell them that ironically, we actually go and just do education guidance in the end. (Supervisor B).

- **Low Status and Improper Service Request of Visiting Supervisors**

  As a part of the operation methods of the service, when providing service for infants, many marriage migrant women think the visiting supervisors as nannies and request things that don't fit the service content and did not understand clearly about the role of the visiting supervisors.

  Actually, mothers of kids around ages 3 to 6 or something like that think of us as nannies and the mis-understand it as a concept of sleeping the children with the supervisors and although we tell them that it isn't like that, the often don't understand. (Director A).

3.1.2.3 Regional Association

- **Difficulties in Association with Multicultural Family Disabled Children Institutions**

  It is possible for visiting supervisors to quickly figure out if a child has disabilities and in this case, the current multicultural family support business is set up around non-disabled families and there are difficulties in linking with the regional handicap welfare centers.

  There is only one line of guideline in this visiting education business for child with disabilities, which says to connect. However, although we say the multicultural
family support business is a family business, this really is set up just for non-disabled families. So I did a research on others raising disabled children and met with our visiting supervisors. One of the supervisors told me that this child was rather different. So she said that she told the parents and they weren’t listening. They said that their child at no problems. However the child grandparents went to the hospital and the handicap welfare center and they found that the child did have disabilities. Although it was fortunate that this supervisor found out and this is why I say it is important what the supervisors do. However there are difficulties when trying to connect with the regional handicap welfare center (Director C).

3.1.3 Future Improvement Plans

3.1.3.1 Service Improvements

- Detailed Service Broken Down by Child Development Status

As a future improvement plan for child life service, field experts had hopes for aiding determine service usage through tools for the field that could figure out in detail the situation of the child or customizing the ten-month service through the possibility of effective service broken down by child development status.

We look at the service age ranges and we find that they are concentrated from 4 to 7. So we would like them to get the service during actual school years but there aren’t any of those children. The periods should be divided into five months or even if it is 10 months it should be divided into two or three since it is too long for the children. I wish there was some device or index for the supervisors to evaluate if some children are determined to not need visiting service but just various programs at the center (Director A).

There is a special affection during the 10 months of guiding the children. Like with the mind of a parent… It’s rather a shame… If there were some higher grades and some other lower grade stages… (Supervisor A).

- Necessary Services for Various Family Types

There have been suggestions of opinion that by re-attempting child life service in special situations such as divorced families, in a direction of promoting emotional stability, the child life service system should change according to the diversity of multicultural families.

I also think that 10 months is a bit short. The program ends when the child stabilizes emotionally or behaviorally. Ten-month is… Another thing is that because of the increasing divorce rates… There is a mother received this service before but has now divorced and is raising the child… She really needs the service but because of the reason that she received the service already, she can’t. There are things like the waiting process but there are also things like forms and family following family breakdowns. There needs to be consideration of this. Once isn’t enough. I think that in these cases there must be exceptions… (Director C).

3.1.3.2 Increase of Efficacy

- Family Focused Service Including Fathers

Through redevelopment of duplicate businesses for multicultural children within local society, there needs to be a process of increasing the adequacy of the target of child life service is required and for businesses targeting multicultural family children carried out at the multicultural family support Center, there was suggestion of improvement plans of child life services by emphasizing that it needs to be processed within the range of a family including the father.

We do often worry about those types of things. Because there is such a low-budget and we don’t try to deal with duplicate services... but… Just yesterday I had the chance to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family… I think that it is differentiated from local children centers and that it looks at it from the boundary of family. (Director B).

I believe that fathers should be educated too. In my case, when there is a father in the house, I strongly emphasized the importance of the father participat- ing education. Because Koreans are still patriarchal… There is still the notion that nurturing of the child should be done by the woman… Also the education levels of the fathers are lower so knowledge and things like that about children are all left to the wife and they have no idea how to exchange and communicate with the children or participate in nurturing the children. That’s why I emphasize about those things when the father is there so that the wife who has trouble with language barriers has someone to support her. However even when we say that the education is at the center, the fathers don’t come to dissenters. That’s why we tried to educate those fathers as much as possible when they are home. There are fathers who are very thankful of this. (Supervisor C).
• **Service evaluation based on child needs**

Field experts stated that through service evaluation based on the needs of the children of multicultural families, the focus should be on the children while the service content improvements are done and focusing on the overall understanding of multicultural family life through using service, and especially if there is signs of disability in multicultural family children, there needs to be business supplementation so that adequate approaches can be made.

Things like this… And evaluations. Result satisfaction surveys should be done for the children and not the mothers. The 100% say that they are satisfied when they see the teachers guiding the children. Even if the child doesn’t follow along, I think satisfaction survey of the children is necessary in this business (Director A).

Regardless of father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, it is shown that there is a higher occurrence of disabilities in children compared to general families. We must pay attention to this in the end and the woman one to receive the service at the multicultural Center they tell me why are you sending me to the welfare center and things like that. Then about this part, we told him that it is a visiting business but some parts of the family education business… We told the supervisors about this. Because I don’t know. However when they encountered them and found some behavioral or development problems, they connected directly to the center and talked about connection to the handicapped welfare center or some other measures. Because early detection is very important… (Director C).

## 4. Conclusion

As a future improvement plan for child life service considering child development periods, and family characteristics, there needs to be systematic changes in the direction of emotional stability promotion, and there needs to be policy approaches considering the entire members of the family of multicultural families.

Next, to maximize the efficacy of the visiting child life service considering focus group priorities on subjects of child life service support, there will be need for concentrated guidance and management from before elementary school to lower elementary school.

Third, there needs to be a “Child-Parent Package” multicultural family visiting child life service operation plan. When running the service, there needs to be a plan to provide Korean education service and parent education service to the mothers with the child life services as a package, and there needs to be connection of education content and usage methods of parent education service and child life service provided through home visits.

Fourth, there needs to be development of post- ‘child life service’ program. For healthy development of children, there needs to be consideration of nurturing attitude and characteristics of parents, and to support healthy growth of the children, it will be the most effective when services like parenting education from others and consultation are provided with the child targeted services.

## 5. Acknowledgements

This study is part of project in which the effectiveness of home visiting program for children of multicultural families.

## 6. References


