



EFFECTS OF A WORKING ENVIRONMENT CAUSING EXHAUSTION ON JOB STRESS OF CHILDCARE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how a working environment causing exhaustion affects the job stress of childcare teachers. 250 childcare teachers working in daycare centers in Seoul were the subjects of the study. The scale of Jayaratne & Chess (1981) was used to measure the nursery teacher's working environment. To measure job stress, the scale of D'Arienzo, Maracco & Krajewski (1982) were used. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 23.0 program. The research results are as follows: (1) there was a significant positive correlation between working environment and job stress, and (2) the working environment causing exhaustion was found to have a significant static effect on job stress. Based on these results, the study outlines measures on how to lower the job stress of childcare teachers.

KeyWords

Working environment, Exhaustion, Job stress, Childcare teacher

I. Introduction

As the number of working families increases due to the economic development of the Korean society and the increasing number of working women, the responsibility of nurturing infants and toddlers is being transferred to childcare centers. This reality highlights the importance of quality of daycare centers. The role of childcare teachers is grounded on a mutual relationship that goes beyond protecting and nurturing infants and toddlers (Noddings, 1988). Such a relationship involves the love, passion, familiarity, and other emotions of childcare teachers, which makes meeting the increasing expectations of parents and the society a challenge. A notable variable that affects the condition of childcare teachers is the working environment. Childcare teachers work in an environment where both physical and mental fatigue are possible. In some cases, the working environment involves working for more than 8 hours a day, low social awareness, and dissatisfactory salary and treatment that cause childcare teachers to experience stress (Lee, 2016).

Heavy job stress can lead to exhaustion if it persists over the long term. Exhaustion refers to physical and positive depletion that stems from negative results in physiological and behavioral aspects due to excessive job stress (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1976). Maslach & Jackson (1981) reported that exhaustion is the main symptom of emotional problem, depersonalization, and impaired personal accomplishment. This exhaustion is a common phenomenon in helping professionals whose main job is to help others.

Teachers are considered representative tidal workers who are the most exhausted (Shaw et al., 1981). Farber (1984) argued that teacher exhaustion was the most serious educational problem. When the teacher is exhausted, the motivation for work weakens, and morale decreases. In terms of quality and quantity, the teacher's work performance deteriorates and vigor vis-à-vis the job is lost (Kim et al., 2005). The exhaustion of teachers not only seriously negatively affects the attitude of the teaching profession, but also causes teachers to lose positive feelings or interest in students, resulting in deteriorating education (Corey, 1996).

Factors in the working environment leading to exhaustion include the lack of opportunities for challenge, role conflict, role ambiguity, and excessive workload. These factors have been reported to be significant causative factors creating job stress and exhaustion in teachers (Farber, 1991; Lee, 2008). However, it is difficult to find a study that has empirically analyzed this. Therefore, this study aims to examine how a working environment causing exhaustion affects the job stress of childcare teachers.

Research Question

This study raises the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between working environment and job stress?
2. What is the effect of working environment on job stress?

Purpose of Study

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the relationship between working environment and job stress
2. To examine the effect of working environment on job stress.

II. Method

Study Design

The conceptual framework of this study is shown below:

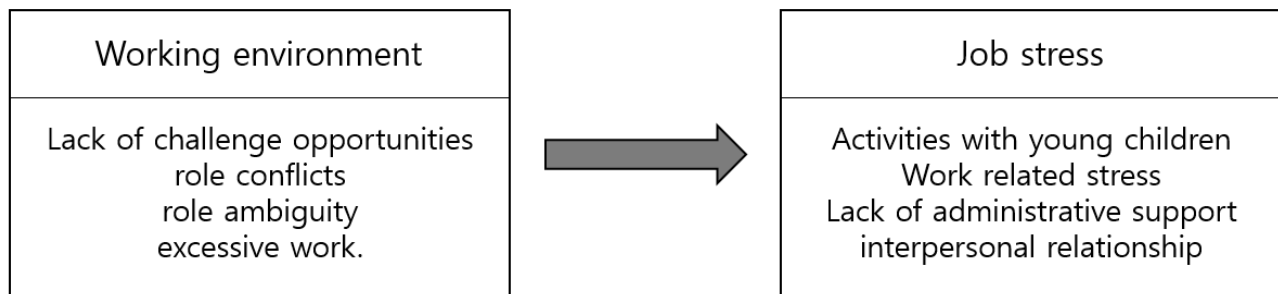


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Participants

The subjects of this study were 250 childcare teachers working in childcare centers in Seoul, South Korea. For the educational background of the subjects college graduates were 45.2%, childcare teachers who worked in public daycare centers were 46.4%. Work experience in the field of education was less than 3-5 years and less than 5-8 years, with 24.0% each

Instrument

Working Environment. Based on the scale of Jayaratne & Chess (1981), the Working Environment's scale was developed by Yoon (2000) and Yoo & Park's (2002) questionnaire was used in this study. This questionnaire consists items for the lack of opportunity for challenge (6 items), role conflicts (5 items), role ambiguity (3 items), and excessive workload (5 items) as demand in the work environment that cause dissipative exhaustion. Measurements were made on a 5-point Likert scale, and items 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 14 were reversed. The overall reliability coefficients were .92, and .84, .90, .89, and .91 for each sub-factor.

Job Stress. To measure job stress, this study employed the job stress measurement developed by Clark (1980) and modified by D'Arienzo, Maracco and Krajewski (1982), supplementing the "Modified Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire" of Kim's (2009). The subfactors included of activities for the children (5 items), work-related stress (10 items), lack of administrative support (11 items), and fostering healthy interpersonal relationship (12 items). These items were measured using the 5-point Likert scale. The overall reliability coefficients were .96, and the sub-factors were .79, .88, .93, and .91.

Data Analysis



The data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. The data analysis processes are fourfold. First, the reliability coefficient of the measurement variable was calculated. Second, frequency analysis was conducted to investigate the demographic characteristics of the subjects. Third, correlation was conducted to find out the relationship between working environment and job stress. Lastly, multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the effect of working environment on job stress.

III. Result

Relationship between Working environment and job stress

Significant positive correlation ($r = .26$, $p < .001$) was found between working environment and job stress. In other words, the higher the working environment by exhaustion, the higher the job stress. Table 1 shows the correlation between the subfactors.

Table 1. Correlation analysis result

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	-									
2	.33***	-								
3	.26***	-.03	-							
4	.35***	.76***	.01	-						
5	.59***	.85***	.35***	.87***	-					
6	.04	.30***	-.09	.31***	.26***	-				
7	-.02	.31***	-.05	.43***	.31***	.60***	-			
8	-.13*	.30***	-.10	.31***	.22**	.56***	.83***	-		
9	-.11	.19**	-.11	.19**	.12	.51***	.70***	.83***	-	
10	-.06	.32***	-.10	.36***	.26***	.77***	.80***	.85***	.86***	-
<i>M</i>	3.32	3.73	2.58	4.11	2.86	2.48	2.84	2.60	2.24	2.22
<i>SD</i>	.54	.45	.95	.65	.99	.71	.81	.82	.82	.80

***p<.001, **p<.01

Note: 1. Lack of challenge opportunities, 2. Role conflicts, 3. Role ambiguity, 4. Excessive workload, 5. Working environment, 6. Activities for the children, 7. Work-related stress, 8. Lack of administrative support, 9. Fostering healthy interpersonal relationship, 10. Job stress.

The Effects of working environment on job stress

The regression equation for job stress in the working environment was significant ($F = 13.274$, $p < .001$), and the explanatory power for job stress in the working environment was 17.8%. Lack of challenging opportunities ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$) and excessive workload ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) in the work environment were found to have significant positive effects on job

stress.

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analysis on working environment and job stress

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)
Lack of challenging opportunities	.32	.10	.21	3.21	.001	.178	13.274 (.000)
Role conflicts	.09	.07	.13	1.41	.161		
Role ambiguity	7.05	.07	-.05	-.74	.458		
Excessive workload	.24	.06	.34	3.71	.000		

The regression equation for activities for children in the working environment was significant ($F = 8.076, p < .001$), and the explanatory power for activities for the children in the working environment was 11.6%. It was found that excessive workload ($\beta = .23, p < .05$) in the work environment had a significant positive effect on the activities for the children.

Table 3. Results of multiple regression analysis on working environment and activities with young children

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)
Lack of challenging opportunities	.12	.12	.07	1.01	.314	.116	8.076 (.000)
Role conflicts	.12	.08	.14	1.48	.139		
Role ambiguity	.08	.08	.07	1.04	.300		
Excessive workload	.19	.08	.23	2.48	.014		

The regression equation for other work-related stress in the working environment was significant ($F = 16.839, p < .001$),

and the explanatory power for work-related stress in the working environment was 21.6%. The lack of challenging opportunities ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) and excessive workload ($\beta = .51, p < .001$) in the work environment were found to have a significant positive effects on work-related stress.

Table4. Results of multiple regression analysis on working environment and work-related stress

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)
Lack of challenging opportunities	.33	.11	.18	2.86	.005	.216	16.839 (.000)
Role conflicts	.02	.08	.02	.26	.796		
Role ambiguity	.02	.08	.01	.21	.832		
Excessive workload	.42	.07	.51	5.77	.000		

The regression equation for lack of administrative support in the working environment was significant ($F = 13.014, p < .001$), and the explanatory power for lack of administrative support in the working environment was 17.5%. The lack of administrative opportunities ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), role conflicts ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), and excessive workload ($\beta = .26, p < .01$) were found to have significant positive effects on support.

Table 5. Results of multiple regression analysis on working environment and the lack of administrative support

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)
Lack of challenging opportunities	.50	.12	.28	4.25	.000	.175	13.014 (.000)
Role conflicts	.16	.08	.19	2.08	.039		
Role ambiguity	.03	.08	.03	.42	.673		

Excessive workload	.21	.07	.26	2.88	.004		
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The regression equation for the interpersonal relationship in the working environment was significant ($F = 5.634$, $p < .001$), and the explanatory power for fostering healthy interpersonal relationship in the working environment was 8.4%. The lack of challenging opportunities ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) in the working environment was found to have a significant positive effect on fostering healthy interpersonal relationship.

Table 6. Results of multiple regression analysis on working environment and fostering healthy interpersonal relationship

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)
Lack of challenging opportunities	.34	.12	.20	2.87	.005	.084	5.634 (.000)
Role conflicts	.12	.08	.14	1.44	.151		
Role ambiguity	.07	.08	.05	.84	.401		
Excessive workload	.12	.08	.16	1.64	.102		

IV. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine how the working environment causing exhaustion affects the job stress of child-care teachers. As the data showed, the working environment had a significant effect on job stress, and the lack of challenging opportunities and excessive workload had a significant static effect. Looking at each subfactor of job stress, excessive work had a significant static effect on activities with young children, and the lack of challenging opportunities, role conflicts, and excessive workload had a significant static effect on the lack of administrative support. The lack of challenging opportunities had a significant static effect on the teacher's fostering of healthy interpersonal relationship. The study then concludes that the higher the exposure of childcare teachers to a working environment that causes exhaustion,

the higher the job stress is.

The results of this study correlates to the findings of Hwang (2014) who asserted that the working environment had a significant effect on the job stress of the nursery teacher. In addition, the results of the study of Hwang & Bae (2014) are similar to the finding that the working hours and the number of working days had a significant effect on job stress. These related studies supports the primary conclusion of this study.

Against this backdrop, the study recommends that it is necessary to ensure that the work environment minimally causes exhaustion in order to lower the job stress of childcare teachers. Specifically, measures that will reduce the amount of work and also provide opportunities for childcare teachers related to their jobs should be explored to directly lower the job stress of childcare teachers.

V. Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations of this study and suggesting further studies are as follows. First, this study was targeted at childcare teachers working only in childcare centers in Seoul which can limit the generalization of the results. Future studies with a broader locale and larger number of subjects are recommended. Second, the focus in this study is the working environment and job stress related to exhaustion, but in the future studies, it is beneficial to examine the structural model of the working environment and job stress with related other variable.

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