

# Public Daycare Services for Primary School Children in Korea

– Current Status and Analysis

Eunjung Kim



People  
with People  
in Mind



KOREA INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS



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# Contents

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I. Introduction .....	1
II. Public Childcare Support for Schoolchildren in Korea .....	11
1. Elementary School Care Program (ESCP) .....	13
2. Community Child Centers (CCCs) .....	16
3. Community-Based Childcare Program (CBCP) .....	19
4. Implications .....	23
III. Use of Childcare Services for Schoolchildren .....	27
1. General .....	29
2. Use of Childcare Services .....	32
IV. Conclusion .....	45
References .....	51

# List of Tables

---

⟨Table 1⟩ General Characteristics .....	31
⟨Table 2⟩ Current Use of Public Childcare Services .....	33
⟨Table 3⟩ Current Use of Private Childcare Support .....	36
⟨Table 4⟩ Reasons for Not Using ESCP Services .....	37
⟨Table 5⟩ Reasons for Not Using ESCP Services by Grade .....	38
⟨Table 6⟩ Reasons for Not Using Local (Non-School) Childcare Services .....	39
⟨Table 7⟩ Reasons for Not Using Local (Non-School) Childcare Services by Grade .....	40
⟨Table 8⟩ Difficulty Experienced Because of the Lack of Care (Four-Point Scale) .....	41
⟨Table 9⟩ Percentages of Respondents Experiencing Moderate to High Levels of Difficulty Because of the Lack of Childcare ...	43

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# I

## Introduction



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# I Introduction

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The scope of childcare policy has been steadily expanded in South Korea since 2000 in response to the rising demand for policy solutions to slow the plummeting birth rates. Most policy services to date, however, have focused on the preschool-age groups, including infants and toddlers. There are indeed a variety of policy solutions targeting these age groups in households across all income levels, such as free daycare, childcare benefits, and child benefits. As of 2016, 68.3 percent of preschool children, including infants and toddlers, benefitted from public daycare services, while only 12.5 percent of children enrolled in elementary schools did (MOE, 2018).

Whereas preschool childcare support and services target households of all socioeconomic classes, childcare support for schoolchildren is narrowly tailored to the poor and households with actual needs. The fact that universal public childcare support stops as children enter schools makes it nearly impossible for working parents to sustain their work-life balance. Under the current structure, there are a very limited number of service users, resulting in a significant number of schoolchildren being denied the care they need or compelling parents to resort to private help, often at exorbitant costs.

Childcare services for schoolchildren today are available from disparate departments and agencies, such as the Elementary School Care Program (ESCP) at schools, Community Child Centers (CCCs), and the Community-Based Childcare Program (CBCP). In response to the growing call for a more integrated and continuous system of services, the Korean government has begun experimenting with fostering a locally based all-day-long care system. In 2017, the Ministries of Education (MOE), Health and Welfare (MOHW), Family and Gender Equality (MOGEF), and Public Administration and Safety (MOPAS) thus assembled interdepartmental advisory and steering committees, whose work led to the establishment of all-day-long care centers in a few chosen trial regions in 2019.

Despite the creation of a system for all-day-long childcare and the plans to increase available resources, such as the ESCP and CBCP, the total quantity of available childcare resources for schoolchildren still remains far too limited and concentrated in only specific classes and regions. There is, in other words, still a long way to go toward establishing a universal and child-centered public childcare system. The aim should be to respond to local needs for childcare services rather than focusing on the ministries and agencies that provide services. Furthermore, the service supply structure should be designed to cater effectively to different service needs and the wellbeing of children themselves. Yet the available childcare services for schoolchildren remain



fragmented across schools and policy programs. Until recently, the main focus of the public childcare policy was providing assistance for poor families with children. However, as the number of households with both parents working continues to increase, the absence of universal care for children in general has become a more urgent issue today (Cho, 2012).

According to recent studies by Lim (2017a, 2017b) on the impacts and factors of the absence of adequate care for 2,116 schoolchildren in lower grades, children whose parents are both working, whose parents have bachelor's or higher degrees, and who have siblings are especially prone to the absence of care. The studies also found that the lack of proper after-school care adversely affects children's ability to adapt to learning activities in school. Despite these findings, the number of "alone" children left in the absence of care continues to rise (Song, Jang, and Baek, 2017; Jang et al., 2015; Lim, 2017a, 2017b). According to a MOGEF study, 37 percent of schoolchildren in Korea spend at least one hour a day alone. The length of time children spend alone grows dramatically to four hours among children in single-parent households (Jang et al., 2015). One out of every 10 schoolchildren in lower grades spend nine hours a week on average without care from adults. The absence of care becomes all the more pronounced among children whose parents are both working, who have siblings, who live in low-income households, and who are in higher grades (Lim, 2017b).

The absence of pre-school and very limited availability school holiday care services are also problematic. According to a 2018 study by the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI), 31.4 percent of respondents overall indicated their need for pre-school care. That figure rose to 39.4 percent among respondents from households with both parents working. During school holidays, children spend 212.5 minutes a day on average during the week alone, far more than the 146 minutes per day during school semesters (Kim et al., 2018). Because parents have to get to work early and cannot take sufficient time off on school holidays, schoolchildren in Korea are exposed to the absence of care for extended periods of time on both daily and yearly bases. Short-term school breaks and long-term seasonal holidays only exacerbate this problem.

Households where both parents work are compelled to resort to the help of grandparents or privately hired babysitters to provide care for their children. Children are also driven from one cram school to another after their regular school hours until their parents return home. Other children are left to spend time either completely alone or in the company of their siblings. Families that cannot rely on help from grandparents or babysitters are in especially dire need of pre-school and holiday care.

The current situation requires the reform of the public child-care system in Korea, which is focused on preschool children and low-income households. The limited services for school-

children and youth are too concentrated on schoolchildren from low-income households, thus generating redundancies and omissions. In the meantime, children from non-poor households whose parents are both working are denied systemic care. The result is the unnecessarily high cost, society-wide, that parents have to pay for private education and care for their children.

The absence of public care for schoolchildren is also a major factor that causes working mothers to sacrifice their careers. A recent study found that married women's weekly working hours decrease by four hours and rate of employment in full-time jobs decline by 20 percent after their children enter school (Lee, 2018). Grandparents also face mounting pressure to look after their grandchildren (Baek, Song, and Jang, 2018). The lack of public care for schoolchildren is a critical issue not only for working parents but also for the rights and wellbeing of children. The literature abounds with studies on the extensive impacts that the people with whom children spend time and the quality of care children receive can exert on children's development. Yet the rights of children have been conspicuously absent from the discourse surrounding the childcare policy in Korea (Baek, 2015). It is high time for policymakers to search for and establish childcare policy measures that deeply consider the need for children's healthy development, to which children are entitled by right.

Lee (2012) explains that there are multiple areas across which care should be provided for children: after-school hours, protection against child abuse and neglect, preventive care within local communities, and care outside homes. After-school care is a foremost topic of research on the kind of care needed to protect children's rights. Lee and Cho (2011)'s analysis of the lack of after-school care confirms that being denied care and neglected during after-school hours adversely affects children's development. The authors' analysis of the effects of the lack of after-school care on schoolchildren in higher grades shows that after-school neglect compromises children's academic accomplishments and reinforces internalization. The authors conclude that after-school care should be carefully designed in light of children's development needs, and policy support tailored accordingly, rather than providing supervised spaces of care only. Education and care, appropriate for children's life-cycle and rights, should be provided (Kim, 2015).

How parents decide to have their schoolchildren taken care of after school, in the absence of universal care services for children in that age group, is determined on the basis of the means families have, parents' value systems, expectations of learning support for children, and culture surrounding each family. Shin (2016) finds that most parents send their children to private cram schools or other protected indoor spaces after school. Cram schools are especially popular among families in

which both parents work (Shin, 2016; Lee, Kim, and Eom, 2017).

The objectives of this study are: to review the available public childcare support programs for schoolchildren in Korea, analyze how families use available childcare programs, and identify policy implications.





## II

# Public Childcare Support for Schoolchildren in Korea

1. Elementary School Care Program (ESCP)
2. Community Child Centers (CCCs)
3. Community-Based Childcare Program (CBCP)
4. Implications





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## II Public Childcare Support for Schoolchildren in Korea

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### 1. Elementary School Care Program (ESCP)<sup>1)</sup>

#### A. Overview

The ESCP is the foremost childcare program primarily aimed at schoolchildren. The program's main purpose is to ensure the supervised care of schoolchildren on school sites after classes and on holidays. Originally, the MOE introduced the after-school class program for children in lower grades in 2004. In 2010, the program's name was changed to the current one, and the number of ESCP classes offered was increased to 6,200 nationwide. By 2014, the number of classes on offer had been increased to 10,966 for first- and second-graders who applied for the classes. In 2015, the program was revised to provide elective classes, which scored highly on satisfaction surveys conducted for first- and second-graders, and curriculum-connected classes for third-graders and older children from households with both parents working, low-income households, or single-parent

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1) This chapter is based on "Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education (2018). After-School Class Guide 2019." The source itself emphasizes that the guidebooks updated by individual offices of education take precedence over the Elementary School Care Program Guide 2019.

households. With the “all-day-long childcare system” having figured prominently on the current government’s policy agenda since 2017, the ESCP was revised accordingly in April 2018 to reflect that policy need.

## **B. Target Clients and Services**

The ESCP is open to children enrolled in elementary schools. Preference is given to schoolchildren in need of supervised after-school care, such as those from low-income families, families with both parents working, and single-parent families.

There are mainly three types of classes on offer: afternoon care for first- and second-graders, extracurricular activity-centered care for third-graders or older children, and evening care for all schoolchildren. Afternoon care classes mostly take place in classrooms specifically reserved for after-school care and activities and are held until 5 p.m. on weekdays. Some schools may allow these classes to be held until 7 p.m. without a dinner option, depending on parents’ needs. Each class has 20 or so students, but the number of students varies depending on the classroom size, total number of students per grade, end hours, and stage of child development. These classes mostly feature activities for individuals and groups. Individual activities include doing homework, writing journal entries, reading, and creative writing under the supervision of professional care-

takers and volunteers, while group activities include various athletic and artistic activities taught by instructors brought from outside institutes or the school faculty.

Extracurricular activity-centered (ECC) care is for students who take at least one ESCP class and are not enrolled in afternoon care classes. These programs are held in classrooms reserved for ESCP activities and are open until 5 p.m. on weekdays. Teachers, faculty members, and volunteers are mobilized as needed, and partnership (e.g., between parent volunteers and faculty members) is often encouraged for the operation of the activities. Each class contains around 20 students. Unlike afternoon care, ECC care does not provide free snacks or meals. When they are not engaged in a specific extracurricular activity, students are led to perform individual activities, such as specific learning assignments and reading books. Some schools have introduced more creative elements, such as learning traditional folk games, with the help of local volunteers.

Evening care classes are offered for schoolchildren who need extended supervised care in addition to afternoon or ECC care. Evening care activities are held in classrooms reserved for afternoon care from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. or as decided by individual schools. Each class contains 20 or so students. Schools where there are only five or fewer students in need of evening care are encouraged to entrust the care of those children to regional centers for children. Evening care activities are generally those

that students can freely choose. They include individual activities (e.g., watching child-friendly programs on TV) and group activities. Children can leave evening care only when their parents or other appointed legal caretakers come to pick them up. The safety protocols for evening care classes must include specific provisions on facility safety, safe procedures for returning children home, and emergency management.

The Korean government is currently working on expanding afternoon care to include schoolchildren in all grades and having schools extend their operating hours depending on parents' needs and school resources.

## 2. Community Child Centers (CCCs)<sup>2)</sup>

### A. Overview

Community Child Centers (CCCs) are private organizations that provide a wide range of childcare and related services, including supervised protection, education, recreation, and community involvement, for the healthy development of children (Article 52.8, Child Welfare Act). These centers' origins go back to the so-called "study rooms" that emerged amid the social

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<sup>2)</sup> This section is based upon "MOHW (2019a). 2019 Community Child Center Program Support Guide."

movements for the welfare of the poor and neglected in the past. The amendment of the Child Welfare Act (CWA) in 2004 incorporated study rooms into the formal social service system so as to ensure the universal welfare of children. Since this statutory change, CCCs have become local hubs through which much of the Korean state's child welfare services and benefits are delivered. Their numbers have also been increasing by 600 a year on average ever since. Operators can open new CCCs after reporting to the heads of their respective local governments.

## **B. Target Clients and Services**

In principle, CCCs must operate for at least eight hours a day from Monday to Friday. They are also to be open from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. during the school semester and from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. on holidays, at a minimum. Government subsidies account for the majority of the financial resources of these centers, but donations and owners' own out-of-pocket expenses also go toward their operation. The national and local governments in Korea bear equal shares in subsidizing these centers (except in Seoul, where the national government subsidizes 30 percent and local governments provide 70 percent) (MOHW, 2019a).

CCCs serve two groups of clients: at-risk children and children in general. The latter refers to children who are of the eligible age to attend CCCs. The centers are to fill at least 80 per-

cent of their capacities with at-risk children and 20 percent or less with children in general. The mandatory ratios, however, may differ from region to region, depending on local circumstances. At-risk children refers to children for whom subsidized care is especially needed, in light of their family income, family needs, and age. Specifically, these are children from households that are beneficiaries of the National Basic Living Security Program (NBLSP) and/or Medicare, single-parent households as defined by the Single-Parent Family Support Act, near-poverty households, or households whose heads are disabled and/or children living with their grandparents instead of parents.

Children and youth under the age of 18, mostly enrolled in elementary and middle schools, are the main clients of CCCs. However, high-school students over the age of 18 who have been attending CCCs, preschool or high-school siblings of children already attending CCCs, out-of-school teenagers under the age of 18, and preschool children living in communities where no other daycare or preschool facilities are available may also attend CCCs.

CCCs offer standard and specialized programs. Many of these centers strive to do more than simply babysitting children, going so far as to ensure children's safety, serve meals, provide education on the basic skills and necessities of daily life, provide learning support, provide emotional support (counseling, family support, etc.), and enlighten the children culturally (through

special activities, concerts, etc.). CCCs provide a wide range of educational services and cultural and emotional support for the healthy development of children.

Eligible children can attend most CCCs free of charge, but the centers can charge up to KRW 50,000 per month per child, subject to the approval of the operating committees and consent of the parents/legal guardians. CCCs are to spend the fees they charge on the programs and activities for the attending children.

### **3. Community-Based Childcare Program (CBCP)<sup>3)</sup>**

#### **A. Overview**

The Community-Based Childcare Program (CBCP) is another pillar of the state infrastructure providing care for schoolchildren beyond school hours. Ten centers were designated as agencies of the CBCP during the trial phase, which began in July 2017. The results of the trial went on to inform the interdepartmental all-day-long care policy for children unveiled in April 2018. As of December 2018, there were 17 CBCP centers across Korea. In January 2019, the Child Welfare Act was amended to provide

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3) This section draws upon “MOHW (2019b). Community-Based Childcare Program Guide 2019.”

for the establishment and operation of CBCP centers (Article 44.2, effective as of April 16, 2019). The program is still in an early stage, but its scope has been expanding. Other legal provisions for the program can be found in Article 8 of the Framework Act on Low Birth Rate in an Aging Society and Articles 5 and 6 of the Framework Act on Social Security. The program emphasizes the involvement of local communities in providing care for children. Whereas CCCs mobilize part of existing local resources, CBCP centers recruit and mobilize whole communities to provide services for children and parents. Unlike CCCs, which are privately owned and operated facilities, CBCP centers are created or commissioned by the heads of local governments. These centers are therefore better suited to providing various services tailored to local needs, including temporary/emergency care, cultural/artistic/athletic programs, escorting of children to and from schools, counseling and related services, and meals and snacks.

As local governments (officially, mayors and governors) are in charge of establishing and operating CBCP centers, the Korean government recommends that these local governments directly run the facilities themselves. However, local governments may elect to commission the creation and operation of these facilities to expert and specialized local groups to foster community involvement (MOHW, 2019b).

Like CCCs, CBCP centers depend on government subsidies



for much of their operations. Included in the subsidized expenses are facility, equipment and supply, and labor costs. The national and local governments bear equal shares (50:50) of the facility and labor costs (or 30:70 in the case of Seoul), while the national government entirely subsidizes the equipment and supply expenses (MOHW, 2019b). As with CCCs, national and local governments' subsidies are matched, and private donations are also welcome. The manners in which government subsidies are executed, however, differ, as CCCs are primarily private and nongovernmental facilities, whereas CBCP centers are, in most cases, under the direct control of local governments.

### **B. Target Clients and Services**

CBCP centers are to open for at least eight hours per day from Monday to Friday. The standard operating hours are from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. during the school semester, and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during holidays (including short-term breaks). The actual operating hours, however, vary from community to community, as determined by local governments. All-day-long care is provided during the standard operating hours, while hourly care is also provided at certain hours on each day or on certain days of the week.

All school-age children aged 6 to 12 can attend CBCP centers, regardless of their family income levels, but local govern-

ments can prioritize admissions depending on family and local circumstances. In general, children whose parents are both working, children from single-parent households, and children with two or more underage siblings are prioritized. Applicants are to indicate the working status of their parents, their parents' work hours, and other such family needs on the CBCP application form so that local governments can allocate admissions better.<sup>4)</sup> CBCP centers aim to provide universal care rather than catering to certain households of certain income levels (e.g., near-poverty) only. Parents or legal guardians can consult local CBCP centers either by telephone or in person and file their applications. Centers decide new admissions in light of their capacities, current enrollment, and prioritization policy.

CBCP centers typically provide standard, common, and learning/ extracurricular services. Standard services include attendance checks, meals, and snacks, while common services include supervision of homework completion and physical education activities. Learning/extracurricular programs include music and art classes, sports, computer-related classes, and other such elective programs designed to help students develop their skills and aptitudes. Centers also provide programs tailored to lower- and higher-grade children, children in need of all-day-long care

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4) The "Family Needs" column requires applicants to tick all the boxes that apply to their status, i.e., "Both parents working (both full time)," "Both parents working (one full time, the other part time)," "Three or more children," and "Other."

or temporary care, school semesters and holidays, and recreation, care, and learning needs.

Local governments can decide to charge families up to KRW 100,000 per child per month for part of the services CBCP centers provide for their children, depending on local conditions and the services provided.<sup>5)</sup> The monthly fees go toward funding learning and other activities, field trips (admission charges, transportation costs, etc.), insurances, and so forth.

## 4. Implications

In this chapter, we have surveyed the childcare services available for schoolchildren in Korea. The ESCP centers at public schools provide afternoon care, classes, and evening care. They are designed to provide a comprehensive range of care services, including evening care until 10 p.m. on weeknights, to help working parents. The biggest drawback, however, is that ESCP centers are currently provided for only certain groups of children and fall far short of satisfying the actual demand.

CCC and CBCP centers are both childcare services that mobilize local resources. However, while CCCs mainly serve to protect and care for children at higher risk—children from sin-

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<sup>5)</sup> Centers may additionally charge users for the snacks and meals they provide, in addition to the KRW 100,000 each family pays for the standard monthly fee.

gle-parent homes, low-income families, etc.—CBCP centers strive to provide services for all families with childcare needs regardless of their income or socioeconomic status. CBCP centers, moreover, provide temporary and emergency care services, which are not available from CCCs.

The ESCP and CCCs are not yet universal systems of childcare services, as they are rigidly tailored to certain groups of children and families. ESCP centers target children with parents who are both working and/or from low-income and/or single-parent households. CCCs may be open to a slightly greater proportion of the local child population than ESCP centers, but they, too, prioritize children disadvantaged by their income and family structure characteristics. While CBCP centers do target children in general, children with parents who are both working and/or with more than two underage siblings are still given preference in terms of admission. These priorities make it impossible for all three types of services to cater to the universal and growing demand for childcare for school-age children. As the Korean government intends to expand the reach of ESCP and CBCP centers, these services may evolve into more universal programs over time.

The current system discriminates against certain groups of children rather than providing universal care for all children. CBCP centers, in particular, are very likely to drive CCCs to focus more selectively and narrowly on certain groups of children.

Universal welfare services should be provided as a matter of course for all groups of citizens, and the Korean government should replace the current selective and hierarchical structure of service supply with a more universal and inclusive one, striving to differentiate between the types of services provided for different groups of children within the universal system. Only when childcare is made available universally can we, as a society, protect all children and ensure social cohesion (Song, 2012).

There is, furthermore, little attention being paid to parents' need for emergency and temporary childcare services. Only CBCP centers, the newest of the compared services, provide limited forms of temporary care, while ESCP centers and CCCs utterly lack such services. Although the Korean government allows families to use two or more of these services insofar as they use the services at different times, families are still struggling with shortages of childcare as moving from one form of care to another on a daily basis is not so easy for all families.





### III

## Use of Childcare Services for Schoolchildren

1. General
2. Use of Childcare Services





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# III Use of Childcare Services for Schoolchildren

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## 1. General

We conducted an online survey of 1,500 parents with school-age children regarding their use of available childcare services and policy needs. The questionnaire contained questions asking how parents were currently using or not using available services, what difficulties they were having due to the lack or shortage of services, and what specific policy care services they needed for their school-age children.

The survey was conducted over a 10-day period, from October 29 to November 7, 2019, using the existing registered panel of a polling company and subject to the Internal Review Board's approval for ethics. The sample was developed by dividing the target population into a number of groups depending on the key criteria, such as regions (metropolitan/urban/rural), parents' employment status (both working/one working), and school grades of children (lower grade, from grades one to three/higher grade, and from grades four to six), and sampling units from each group proportionally. An online questionnaire was first distributed to men and women aged 19 or older across Korea, and those who met the criteria were selected for inclusion in the sample. The "metropolitan" regions refer to the seven major

cities of Korea, including Seoul. The “urban” and “rural” regions were determined on the basis of the 10 provinces (including Sejong City) and their administrative districts (*eup*, *myeon*, and *dong*). Effort was made to include parents of children of all six school grades as evenly as possible<sup>6)</sup> For households with two or more schoolchildren, questions were asked concerning only the youngest child attending school.

Table 1 lists the general characteristics of the sample. Metropolitan, urban, and rural households made up 34.4 percent, 36.9 percent, and 28.7 percent of the sample, respectively. As the survey specifically targeted households with school-age children, the majority of respondents were aged 35 to 49. The overwhelming majority (88 percent) had university education or more. Respondents with only children, two children, and three or more children accounted for 34.5 percent, 55.2 percent, and 10.2 percent of the sample, respectively. The average number of children per family was 1.72 for metropolitan regions, 1.76 for urban regions, and 1.82 for rural regions.

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<sup>6)</sup> Each school grade represented on our survey included between 232 and 282 children.

<Table 1> General Characteristics

(Unit: percentage)

Subject	Metropolitan (N = 516)	Urban (N=554)	Rural (N=430)	Total (N=1,500)
Overall	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sex				
Female	46.3	52.7	57.2	777
Male	53.7	47.3	42.8	723
Age				
25 to 34	8.3	3.4	5.1	84
35 to 39	26.9	24.9	35.3	429
40 to 44	35.5	42.1	37.0	575
45 to 49	25.4	24.4	18.4	345
50+	3.9	5.2	4.2	67
Education				
High school or less	7.6	12.6	16.5	180
University	78.7	76.0	74.0	1,145
Graduate studies (including enrolled)	13.8	11.4	9.5	175
Working status				
Both parents working	53.7	51.6	43.5	750
One parent working	46.3	48.4	56.5	750
Monthly household income (KRW)				
Less than 2,000,000	6.2	8.3	5.6	102
2,000,000 to less than 3,000,000	8.7	7.4	11.4	135
3,000,000 to less than 4,000,000	17.6	22.2	24.2	318
4,000,000 to less than 5,000,000	22.7	21.3	29.1	360
5,000,000 to less than 6,000,000	19.0	16.8	12.8	246
6,000,000+	25.8	24.0	17.0	339
Number of children				
One	36.0	33.9	33.5	518
Two	55.6	56.7	52.8	828
Three+	8.3	9.4	13.7	154
Avg. number of children	1.72	1.76	1.82	1,500
Child's school grade				
Grade 1	17.2	15.3	23.3	274
Grade 2	17.8	15.2	13.0	232
Grade 3	16.5	19.0	12.6	244
Grade 4	15.1	17.0	14.7	235
Grade 5	14.0	14.8	18.4	233
Grade 6	19.4	18.8	18.1	282

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.

## 2. Use of Childcare Services

### A. Current Statistics

Table 2 provides the current statistics on families using available public childcare services in Korea. “Child Guardian” services were categorized as private childcare services along with babysitters. Respondents were asked to select all the services they were using at the time of the survey. Overall, 6.7 percent of respondents answered that they were using morning care services, and 31.8 percent, afternoon care (ESCP). Those who used morning, afternoon, and/or evening care services together made up 37.5 percent of respondents. Although CBCP services are available for schoolchildren, the percentage of respondents benefitting from the program paled in comparison to those of other services as the CBCP centers are still very few in number. Respondents aged 25 to 34 showed a particularly greater need for morning care, while rural residents, younger parents, parents with children in the first or second grade, and parents with monthly household income of less than KRW 2,000,000 were found to use afternoon care more than other groups. Evening care was more frequently used by metropolitan residents, parents aged 25 to 34, households with both parents working, and households with monthly income of less than KRW 3,000,000. Low-income families accounted for most of

the use of CCCs. In general, metropolitan families with both parents working and children in lower grades used available public childcare services more than other families. Families with children in higher grades, however, used evening care more than did families with younger children.

(Table 2) Current Use of Public Childcare Services

(Unit: percentage)

Subject	ESCP			CCCs	CBCP centers	After-school academe my for youth	Local government services	N
	Morning care	Afternoon care	Evening care					
N	100	477	80	95	46	130	18	1,500
Overall	6.7	31.8	5.3	6.3	3.1	8.7	1.2	1,500
Sex								
Female	6.6	29.3	6.4	6.8	4.1	7.6	1.7	777
Male	6.8	34.4	4.1	5.8	1.9	9.8	0.7	723
Region								
Metropolitan	10.9	30.4	7.6	6.4	5.4	11.2	2.5	516
Urban	3.2	30.5	2.5	4.5	1.6	7.8	0.2	554
Rural	6.0	35.1	6.3	8.6	2.1	6.7	0.9	430
Age								
25 to 34	25.0	33.3	9.5	13.1	11.9	14.3	8.3	84
35 to 39	5.8	38.7	7.0	6.8	4.7	8.2	1.4	429
40 to 44	4.5	28.5	3.0	3.8	1.4	7.0	0.2	575
45 to 49	7.2	29.0	6.4	8.1	1.4	10.7	1.2	345
50+	4.5	28.4	4.5	7.5	4.5	9.0	0.0	67
Education								
High school or less	6.1	25.6	4.4	8.9	2.2	6.7	1.7	180
University	6.3	32.0	5.6	5.7	2.6	7.9	1.2	1,145
Graduate studies (including enrolled)	9.7	37.1	4.6	8.0	6.9	15.4	0.6	175
Working status								
Both parents working	8.7	41.5	6.8	6.1	3.1	9.6	1.1	750
One parent working	4.7	22.1	3.9	6.5	3.1	7.7	1.3	750
Monthly household income (KRW)								
Less than 2,000,000	4.9	35.3	7.8	9.8	2.0	8.8	1.0	102
2,000,000 to less than	8.1	28.9	6.7	8.9	3.7	5.9	2.2	135

**34** Public Daycare Services for Primary School Children in Korea: Current Status and Analysis

Subject	ESCP			CCCs	CBCP centers	After-school academy for youth	Local government services	N
	Morning care	Afternoon care	Evening care					
3,000,000								
3,000,000 to less than 4,000,000	5.0	30.2	4.1	9.7	4.1	6.9	1.9	318
4,000,000 to less than 5,000,000	4.2	35.6	5.3	5.6	2.5	7.8	1.1	360
5,000,000 to less than 6,000,000	8.9	34.1	4.9	3.3	1.2	7.7	0.8	246
6,000,000+	9.1	27.7	5.6	4.1	4.1	13.0	0.6	339
Number of children								
One	9.1	29.2	5.8	6.6	2.1	7.1	1.4	518
Two	5.0	32.9	5.7	5.9	2.8	8.7	0.8	828
Three+	7.8	35.1	1.9	7.8	7.8	13.6	2.6	154
Child's school grade								
Grade 1	6.2	39.4	3.6	3.6	2.6	5.8	2.2	274
Grade 2	10.8	43.1	4.7	6.0	4.3	6.9	0.4	232
Grade 3	9.8	30.7	5.3	4.9	4.9	8.6	0.4	244
Grade 4	4.3	30.6	5.1	9.4	1.7	7.7	0.9	235
Grade 5	4.7	27.0	6.9	10.7	3.9	10.7	2.1	233
Grade 6	4.6	20.9	6.4	4.3	1.4	12.1	1.1	282

Note: The sum of the percentages is not 100 percent due to respondents selecting more than one option for certain questions.

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.

Table 3 shows the stats on Korean families' use of childcare services other than the public services discussed. Approximately 35.4 percent of all respondents reported that they relied on help from relatives, including their children's grandparents, for childcare. Another 43.1 percent also relied on private lessons (including cram schools) for childcare. Private extracurricular education, in other words, is the predominant way through which parents ensure the care of their children after school while the parents are working.

Respondents with children in lower grades, from households with both parents working, and with high household income tended to resort to privately hired help, such as Child Guardians. Respondents with lower-grade children, younger in age, living in metropolitan regions, and earning high household income also tended to rely on the help of grandparents and relatives.

As much as 21.7 percent of respondents, however, also reported that their children are left alone. This answer was chosen with greater frequency by respondents in metropolitan regions, younger in age, less educated, from households with both parents working, and with monthly household income of less than KRW 2,000,000. This does not mean that their children are left completely alone after school. Rather, although parents entrust their children to the care of certain services for a fixed period of time, the children still have to spend some time alone until their parents return home from work. There were 30 children in total who spent their after-school hours completely alone without any services or siblings. Notwithstanding the variance in the length of time children spend by themselves after school and the frequency at which they do so, the fact that 21.7 percent of children spend time alone suggests that neglect of children after school is a serious social issue in Korea. The percentage of children spending time alone was greater among children in higher grades than those in lower grades.

36 Public Daycare Services for Primary School Children in Korea: Current Status and Analysis

<Table 3> Current Use of Private Childcare Support

(Unit: percentage)

Subject	Child Guardians/ babysitters	Grandpa rents/ relatives	Private lessons	Siblings	Alone	Other	N
N	133	531	647	314	326	10	1,500
Overall	8.9	35.4	43.1	20.9	21.7	0.7	1,500
Sex							
Female	10.3	34.1	39.9	22.4	24.1	0.6	777
Male	7.3	36.8	46.6	19.4	19.2	0.7	723
Region							
Metropolitan	13.6	41.1	48.6	21.3	26.6	0.4	516
Urban	7.6	31.0	44.8	21.7	22.7	0.5	554
Rural	4.9	34.2	34.4	19.5	14.7	1.2	430
Age							
25 to 34	21.4	45.2	38.1	26.2	28.6	0.0	84
35 to 39	9.8	38.5	40.1	19.1	21.7	0.7	429
40 to 44	7.3	33.0	47.7	21.6	20.5	0.5	575
45 to 49	7.5	35.1	42.9	21.4	22.3	1.2	345
50+	7.5	25.4	31.3	17.9	20.9	0.0	67
Education							
High school or less	5.0	22.2	29.4	26.1	25.0	0.0	180
University	8.6	36.5	45.1	20.5	21.5	0.8	1,145
Graduate studies (including enrolled)	14.3	41.7	44.6	18.3	20.0	0.6	175
Working status							
Both parents working	12.3	43.7	53.1	27.6	28.5	0.7	750
One parent working	5.5	27.1	33.2	14.3	14.9	0.7	750
Monthly household income (KRW)							
Less than 2,000,000	7.8	32.4	35.3	17.6	26.5	1.0	102
2,000,000 to less than 3,000,000	5.2	29.6	34.8	13.3	20.7	0.7	135
3,000,000 to less than 4,000,000	6.6	28.0	36.5	20.8	22.0	0.0	318
4,000,000 to less than 5,000,000	7.5	35.8	45.0	19.7	16.7	0.8	360
5,000,000 to less than 6,000,000	7.7	35.8	43.9	23.2	20.3	1.2	246
6,000,000+	15.0	44.8	52.5	24.8	26.8	0.6	339
Number of children							
One	9.3	37.8	39.0	8.3	22.6	0.6	518
Two	8.0	35.3	46.4	27.5	21.6	0.7	828
Three+	12.3	27.9	39.6	27.9	19.5	0.6	154
Child's school grade							
Grade 1	11.3	40.5	43.4	13.9	10.6	0.4	274
Grade 2	9.9	38.8	41.8	19.4	18.1	0.9	232
Grade 3	10.7	35.7	48.8	26.6	22.5	1.6	244
Grade 4	8.1	31.9	44.3	20.4	23.0	0.4	235
Grade 5	7.7	37.3	42.5	23.2	26.6	0.0	233
Grade 6	5.7	28.7	38.7	22.7	29.8	0.7	282

Note: The sum of the percentages is not 100 percent due to respondents selecting more than one option for certain questions.

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.



### B. Reasons for Not Using Public Childcare Services

When respondents were asked to select the reasons for which they were not using available public childcare services, “Wanting to care for child at home” was the most favored answer, followed by “Lack of eligibility” and “Mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need” (16.2 percent and 15.3 percent, respectively). Another 8.1 percent answered “Lack of satisfaction with the content and quality of services.” If we included those who answered “Lack of available services from child’s school” and “Rejection of applications,” 47.7 of respondents were not using available public services not because they were unwilling to, but because they were unable to. Kim et al. (2018) conducted a similar survey and found that as much as 69.9 percent of respondents who were not using available public childcare services were inclined to use such services if they were made more available to them.

(Table 4) Reasons for Not Using ESCP Services

Reason	N (%)
(1) Wanting to care for child at home (availability of parents, Child Guardians, babysitters, grandparents/relatives, etc. at home)	376(46.2)
(2) Lack of eligibility	132(16.2)
(3) Mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need (child’s private lessons ending at different hours, parents able to pick them up at different hours, etc.)	124(15.3)
(4) Lack of satisfaction with the content and quality of services	66(8.1)
(5) Lack of available services from child’s school	36(4.4)
(6) Rejection of applications	30(3.7)
(7) Availability of other childcare services in local communities (CCCs, CBCP centers, after-school academy for youth, etc.)	27(3.3)
(8) Other	22(2.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>813(100)</b>

As children enter higher grades, the lack of satisfaction with the content or quality of services (4) begins to figure more prominently as a reason for not using available after-school care services. Mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need (3) is also chosen with greater frequency by parents of children in higher grades than those of children in lower grades.

(Table 5) Reasons for Not Using ESCP Services by Grade

Reasons	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	Total	N
Overall	46.2	16.2	15.3	8.1	4.4	3.7	3.3	2.7	100.0	813
Child's grade ( $\chi^2=64.148^{**}$ )										
Grade 1	48.1	18.6	9.3	7.0	5.4	8.5	0.8	2.3	100.0	129
Grade 2	52.6	17.5	5.2	12.4	1.0	5.2	3.1	3.1	100.0	97
Grade 3	38.9	14.3	23.8	10.3	3.2	4.8	3.2	1.6	100.0	126
Grade 4	39.3	17.9	17.1	7.9	7.1	1.4	6.4	2.9	100.0	140
Grade 5	56.2	16.8	13.9	4.4	3.6	1.5	2.9	0.7	100.0	137
Grade 6	44.6	13.6	18.5	8.2	4.9	2.2	3.3	4.9	100.0	184

Note: 1) \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.

As for why they were not using available childcare services in local communities, “Wanting to care for child at home” once again emerged as the most popular reason among respondents, followed by “Mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need” and “Lack of information on service providers” (12.9 percent and 12.5 percent, respectively). “Lack of eligibility” and “Lack of satisfaction with the content or quality

of services” also garnered 11.3 percent and 7.6 percent of responses, respectively. If we lump together all the respondents who were not using available childcare services in local communities due to negative perceptions, rejection of applications, or high cost, we may conclude that 63 percent of families not using these services are still inclined to use them.

(Table 6) Reasons for Not Using Local (Non-School) Childcare Services

Reason	N (%)
(1) Wanting to care for child at home (availability of parents, Child Guardians, babysitters, grandparents/relatives, etc. at home)	474(37.1)
(2) Mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need (child’s private lessons ending at different hours, parents able to pick them up at different hours, etc.)	165(12.9)
(3) Lack of information on service providers	159(12.5)
(4) Lack of eligibility	144(11.3)
(5) Lack of satisfaction with the content and quality of services	97(7.6)
(6) Inability to arrange transportation to service providers	96(7.5)
(7) Rejection of applications	61(4.8)
(8) Negative perceptions (socioeconomic status/behavior of other children attending given facilities, etc.)	50(3.9)
(9) Other	16(1.3)
(10) High cost	15(1.2)
Total	1277(100)

Among parents of children in lower grades, the lack of satisfaction with the content or quality of available services (5) and inability to arrange transportation to service providers (6) were more prominent reasons. Among parents of children in higher grades, on the other hand, the mismatch between available service hours and actual hours of need (2) emerged with greater frequency.

These findings indicate that parents are unable to secure childcare services for their children from local schools or communities despite their inclination to benefit from such services. In other words, there is much childcare demand that has not been satisfied. Active discussions are needed to improve the quality of after-school and local community care for children in lower grades, as well as address the need to provide transportation to community care. As for children in higher grades, measures are needed to provide services at the actual hours of parents' need.

(Table 7) Reasons for Not Using Local (Non-School) Childcare Services by Grade

Reasons	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	Total	N
Overall	37.1	12.9	12.5	11.3	7.6	7.5	4.8	3.9	1.3	1.2	100.0	1,277
Child's grade ( $\chi^2=98.477^{***}$ )												
Grade 1	35.3	6.8	15.3	13.3	6.8	8.4	6.8	4.4	0.4	2.4	100.0	249
Grade 2	34.8	7.0	15.4	11.9	10.0	11.4	2.5	6.0	0.5	0.5	100.0	201
Grade 3	30.8	17.8	13.5	7.7	8.2	7.2	9.1	3.4	1.4	1.0	100.0	208
Grade 4	35.1	13.4	11.9	15.5	9.8	7.2	2.6	3.6	0.5	0.5	100.0	194
Grade 5	47.1	16.6	10.7	8.6	4.8	4.8	2.7	3.2	0.5	1.1	100.0	187
Grade 6	40.3	16.8	8.0	10.5	6.3	5.9	4.2	2.9	3.8	1.3	100.0	238

Note: 1) \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.

### C. Absence of Care

Respondents were asked to rate the difficulty they experienced because of the lack of morning and afternoon care, both during the school semester and on holidays, using a four-point scale. The greater the difficulty, the higher the rating or score.

Featured in Table 8 are the mean scores given by respondents. Overall, respondents struggled most with the lack of afternoon care during the semester, followed by the lack of afternoon care on holidays, lack of morning care on holidays, and lack of morning care during the semester. Families with both parents working and children in lower grades especially struggled. Parents of children in lower grades, in particular, reported greater difficulty with the lack of morning care during holidays than those of children in higher grades.

(Table 8) Difficulty Experienced Because of the Lack of Care (Four-Point Scale)

Subject	Semester (Points)		Holidays (Points)		Total	N
	Weekdays		Weekdays			
	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon		
Overall	1.71	2.07	1.99	2.02	100.0	1,500
Sex						
Female	1.66	2.01	1.97	2.03	100.0	777
Male	1.77	2.13	2.02	2.01	100.0	723
Region						
Metropolitan	1.73	2.07	1.95	1.94	100.0	516
Urban	1.68	2.07	1.99	2.03	100.0	554
Rural	1.72	2.07	2.05	2.11	100.0	430
Age						
25 to 34	1.75	2.01	1.98	1.96	100.0	84
35 to 39	1.72	2.17	2.03	2.09	100.0	429
40 to 44	1.70	2.04	2.00	2.05	100.0	575
45 to 49	1.72	2.04	1.97	1.93	100.0	345
50+	1.60	1.88	1.84	1.85	100.0	67
Education						
High school or less	1.68	1.90	1.84	1.90	100.0	180
University	1.71	2.09	2.04	2.05	100.0	1,145
Graduate studies (including enrolled)	1.75	2.11	1.87	1.95	100.0	175
Working status						
Both parents working	1.75	2.23	2.17	2.20	100.0	750
One parent working	1.67	1.90	1.82	1.84	100.0	750

42 Public Daycare Services for Primary School Children in Korea: Current Status and Analysis

Subject	Semester (Points)		Holidays (Points)		Total	N
	Weekdays		Weekdays			
	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon		
Monthly household income (KRW)						
Less than 2,000,000	1.75	2.13	1.96	1.99	100.0	102
2,000,000 to less than 3,000,000	1.77	2.08	1.99	1.96	100.0	135
3,000,000 to less than 4,000,000	1.75	2.02	2.00	2.03	100.0	318
4,000,000 to less than 5,000,000	1.73	2.15	2.08	2.11	100.0	360
5,000,000 to less than 6,000,000	1.59	2.00	1.99	2.04	100.0	246
6,000,000+	1.71	2.06	1.91	1.95	100.0	339
Number of children						
One	1.72	2.06	1.99	1.98	100.0	518
Two	1.72	2.10	2.03	2.08	100.0	828
Three+	1.62	1.90	1.84	1.88	100.0	154
Child's school grade						
Grade 1	1.78	2.24	2.12	2.19	100.0	274
Grade 2	1.70	2.08	2.05	2.06	100.0	232
Grade 3	1.77	2.13	2.04	2.01	100.0	244
Grade 4	1.74	2.06	1.97	2.03	100.0	235
Grade 5	1.57	1.94	1.90	1.90	100.0	233
Grade 6	1.70	1.94	1.89	1.93	100.0	282

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.

Among respondents who reported moderate to high levels of difficulty because of the lack of childcare services, those who found the lack of afternoon care on weekdays during the semester difficult outnumbered those who found the lack of care on holidays difficult (Table 9). Households with monthly income of less than KRW 2,000,000, in particular, found the lack of afternoon care during the semester difficult to manage. Households with both parents working also found the lack of care far more challenging than households with only a single

working parent. Interestingly, parents in general found the lack of afternoon care during the semester more difficult to manage than the lack of care on holidays. Although parents with children in lower grades (Grades 1 to 3) found the lack of care more challenging, the percentage of parents of children in higher grades who also found it challenging amounted to nearly 25 percent.

(Table 9) Percentages of Respondents Experiencing Moderate to High Levels of Difficulty Because of the Lack of Childcare

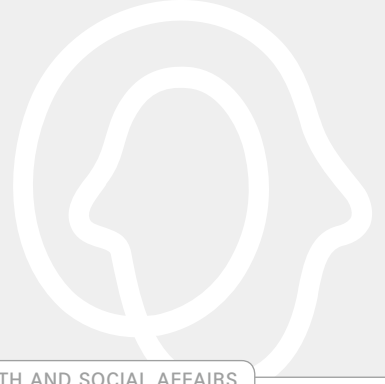
Subject	Semester (%)		Holidays (%)		Total
	Weekdays		Weekdays		
	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	
Overall	13.4	30.7	26.8	28.2	1,500
Sex					
Female	11.7	27.7	25.5	28.4	777
Male	15.2	34.0	28.2	27.9	723
Region					
Metropolitan	13.4	30.2	23.4	23.8	516
Urban	12.3	31.0	27.3	28.5	554
Rural	14.9	30.9	30.2	33.0	430
Age					
25 to 34	17.9	26.2	22.6	26.2	84
35 to 39	16.3	38.2	28.9	31.7	429
40 to 44	12.0	28.0	27.3	29.6	575
45 to 49	11.3	29.3	26.1	23.2	345
50+	11.9	19.4	17.9	22.4	67
Education					
High school or less	12.8	21.7	21.1	22.2	180
University	13.6	31.3	28.2	29.2	1,145
Graduate studies (including enrolled)	12.6	36.6	23.4	28.0	175
Working status					
Both parents working	15.7	39.7	36.1	37.7	750
One parent working	11.1	21.7	17.5	18.7	750
Monthly household income (KRW)					
Less than 2,000,000	14.7	36.3	24.5	25.5	102
2,000,000 to less than 3,000,000	16.3	31.1	30.4	25.2	135

**44** Public Daycare Services for Primary School Children in Korea: Current Status and Analysis

Subject	Semester (%)		Holidays (%)		Total
	Weekdays		Weekdays		
	Morning	Afternoon	Morning	Afternoon	
3,000,000 to less than 4,000,000	14.2	27.7	24.8	26.1	318
4,000,000 to less than 5,000,000	14.2	34.4	29.4	31.4	360
5,000,000 to less than 6,000,000	9.8	27.2	28.0	32.1	246
6,000,000+	13.0	30.4	24.2	26.0	339
Number of children					
One	14.3	29.7	25.1	24.9	518
Two	13.2	32.7	28.5	30.9	828
Three+	11.7	23.4	23.4	24.7	154
Child's school grade					
Grade 1	19.0	40.1	32.1	35.4	274
Grade 2	12.5	31.0	30.6	31.0	232
Grade 3	16.8	32.8	26.2	25.0	244
Grade 4	12.3	28.1	26.0	29.8	235
Grade 5	7.3	27.9	24.0	23.6	233
Grade 6	11.7	24.1	22.0	24.1	282

Source: Survey on Use of Childcare Services and Policy Needs.





# IV

## Conclusion



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## IV Conclusion

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The sources of public childcare services for schoolchildren in Korea remain diverse and decentralized, while most of the available services have limited eligibility. The gross mismatch of supply and demand has been justified, to some extent, by the prioritization of children thought to be especially in need of public childcare (e.g., children with both parents working, from single-parent homes, or exposed to other risks). The current structure makes it very difficult to respond to the growing demand for childcare services outside the established service supply structure, which leaves a considerable number of children in Korea in blind spots of care. Parents who are preparing to develop careers and/or are still enrolled in school cannot rely on these public services for the care of their children. Care services provided by local public schools are designed to look after children while their parents are away at work, but the rigid eligibility criteria and sheer shortages of available services leave many children vulnerable to the lack of care.

Our survey reveals that 30.7 percent of respondents struggle with the lack of afternoon care during the week. That figure rises to 39.7 percent among respondents from households with both parents working. While the length of times schoolchildren

spend by themselves without care and the frequency at which they do so vary somewhat, as much as 21.7 percent of schoolchildren inevitably spend time alone after school in Korea. The lack of care is especially challenging for households in metropolitan regions, earning less than KRW 2,000,000 a month, and with both parents working. Leaving children to spend time by themselves can have seriously adverse effects on their learning, living, and other aspects of their development. Systematic support should therefore be prepared to ensure care for children, whether in lower or higher grades.

In general, families living in metropolitan regions and with both parents working rely more on public childcare services. The demand for evening care also rises as children enter higher grades. A significant percentage of parents resort to private lessons (including cram schools) in addition to, or instead of, public childcare services in order to have their children taken care of in the afternoon and evening.

As for why parents were not using childcare services available from public schools, parents of children in lower grades were more concerned than parents of children in higher grades about the lack of available services of satisfactory quality. Parents of children in higher grades, on the other hand, were prevented from using those services by the mismatch between the service hours and their hours of need. As there are considerable numbers of families who are inclined to benefit from those services,

but are prevented from doing so by the lack of eligibility or matching service hours, it is critical to develop services that cater to the demand of these families as well.

The existing childcare service structure is limited in a number of ways to provide effective and adequate childcare in response to the demand. Childcare policy for schoolchildren ought to strive to provide universal care so as to protect and uphold children's right to care. Therefore, limits on eligibility should be removed to greatest extent possible, and the number, scope, and diversity of available services should be maximized. Certain groups of children may still be prioritized over others, but greater efforts are needed to provide care for children in general as well. As the Korean government plans to expand the ESCP for children in all grades and multiply the number of CBCP centers, more policy support should be designed to make childcare universal in Korea.



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