

Abstract

Research on Childcare Policy after Covid-19

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Due to the unstable operation and suspension of socially provided childcare due to COVID-19, childcare has returned to being the burden of women and families, and despite efforts to socialize childcare, it has been vividly exposed that childcare depends on women and families. In addition, while the public childcare system became paralyzed, it could be confirmed that vulnerable groups expanded and became stratified according to family type, whether or not the family had resources, whether it was possible to adjust working hours, and whether or not they had the resources to be able to secure hourly childcare. At this time of COVID-19, it is necessary to prepare recommendations for childcare policy, as it has become apparent that childcare policy has not yet fundamentally

solved the structural problem of gender inequality in childcare, nor has it adequately considered blind spots such as vulnerable groups with regard to childcare.

The purpose of this study is to re-examine Korea's childcare policy, reset the goals of future childcare policies, and propose tasks to be promoted in order to solve the fundamental problems of groups that are vulnerable with regard to childcare, who existed before but were not made visible until COVID-19.

As a result of the study, it was confirmed that restrictions due to COVID-19 that were imposed on caregivers who were publicly provided or hired privately led to an increase in time when parents (families) were caregivers or children were left alone, and meanwhile, it was confirmed that the burden of caring for children during COVID-19 was again concentrated on women. As the use of public and private childcare was restricted, the social relationship network that could support parental caregiving was a narrow range of "family" such as grandparents, and not only were the systems that working parents could use to work and use childcare in parallel insufficient, but this was only possible for some workers (wage earners), as men (fathers) still have an insignificant presence in the subject of childcare.

During the era of COVID-19, it was mainly women who adjusted their jobs or stopped working due to childcare. "Jobs that people quit" due to COVID-19 were jobs with relatively low employment stability, low income levels, low work flexibility, and low flexibility for caring for children, as opposed to "jobs that people continued working in." In addition, unlike men, who mainly consider objective characteristics of jobs such as employment stability and income when deciding whether to adjust their work, it was also confirmed that women's decisions to adjust their work was accompanied by factors

related to the care of their children, such as the age of their children, whether or not there was support for emergency childcare, and work flexibility. This result shows that vulnerability with regard to childcare and the experience of having to adjust work during the COVID-19 period follow gender and job characteristics and are unequal.

This shows that childcare policies up until now have focused on expanding the public childcare system and services to ease the burden of family care, and they did not imagine a situation where the public system did not work smoothly, and more fundamentally, they failed to establish a universal support system to support gender-equal childcare within the family, the expansion of social childcare beyond the family, and balance in all work-family matters.

Therefore, future childcare policies need to be reviewed and expanded in the direction of guaranteeing childcare for all parents and children, regardless of the type of work or whether or not the family has resources, not just outsourcing the family's childcare burden outside the family or solving the difficulties of specific types of families (such dual income families or single parent families). Concretely, this should encompass active policy intervention that promotes gender-equal childcare within the family, from establishing an emergency childcare system when public childcare infrastructure and services are not working, to establishing a childcare support system that covers diverse working parents.

Based on the results of this research, the direction of the childcare policy after COVID-19 was set as “guaranteed childcare without discrimination according to gender, family type, or type of work.” According to the policy direction, three policy tasks were proposed: 1) resolving gender inequality in caregiving, 2) resolving blind spots in the hourly childcare support system, and 3) establishing a public

babysitting system in response to situations of infectious diseases/crisis/disaster.

Research areas: Family, childcare

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