



2016

English Research Paper – 01

# A Study on Child Support Measures for Grandparents in Double-Income Households

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## I. Introduction

### 1. Research Necessity and Goals

The proportion of grandparents who provide supporting care for their grandchildren has been steadily increasing. As child-rearing has traditionally been the mother's responsibility, the increase in double-income households and working mothers is one direct cause of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the extent of grandparents' role in child-rearing is directly dependent upon the policies and provisions of childcare support by the state. If the state fails to provide a childcare service for young children in day time when both parents are employed then working mothers have to find ways to cover the childcare individually; if they fail to do so they tend to give up their jobs. The support of grandparents in childcare is one alternative to this, and is found to be common throughout the world.

Several factors can be identified to explain increase in grandparents providing care for their grandchildren. Above all, full-time employment and late-night overtime are such a common practice in the working environment of ROK that double-income households with young children must have help from somebody in order to maintain their

employment. This has been one motivating factor for the state to expand childcare support, but blind spots in the state childcare policy have led to gaps which are often filled by the care of grandparents.

This study attempts to assess the feasibility of a state policy to support grandparents who care for pre-school children, particularly infants and toddlers, especially when their care is relied upon by double-income parents or working mothers. It aims to investigate the current situation and needs of the grandparents who care for their grandchildren, and thus to suggest ways in which their grandparenting activities can be effectively supported.

## 2. Research Overview

This study examines the current situation of childcare policy, including costs of caring for one child, so as to make a comparative analysis between existing state childcare support policies and the childcare provided by grandparents. Further, it analyses the factors behind grandparents' role in families where both parents are employed, including the grandparents' own perspectives on childcaring, the opinions of the children's parents about the grandparents' support, and a survey of general trends in grandparenting.

Through mapping out the current childcare roles of grandparents in double-income families, this study attempts to identify the types and hours of childcare provided according to the age of the children, the impact of state policies, and the positive benefits and difficulties grandparents face in providing support for their grandchildren. Considering the results of this research, some policy alternatives are put forward to support grandparents' role in childcaring.

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### 3. Research Methods

This study includes a literature review to draw some lessons from existing works about overall childcare policy and grandparenting in particular. Simultaneously, the statistics and policy documents of childcare support are compared and analysed. Policies relevant to grandparenting in other nations are also assessed.

As part of this research questionnaire surveys have been conducted with grandparents with a significant childcaring role in five hundred double-income households, and with a hundred parents from the same households to investigate their opinions on grandparenting. The surveys were carried out between 29th May and 29th July 2015, and additional in-depth interviews with nineteen grandparents and two parents were conducted to complement the survey results. Finally, three meetings with experts in consultancy were organised.

## II. Current Environment for Grandparenting

### 1. Overview of Childcare Policy

In an overview of childcare policy, this study has investigated the provisions of nurseries and kindergartens, the budgets allocated for childcaring and early childhood education, and programmes to support childcaring, in order to highlight what factors need to be considered when making policies to support grandparenting.

### 2. Support for Grandparenting

Reviewing the recent trends of grandparenting (Seo M-H et al, 2005; Seo M-H et al, 2009; Seo M-H et al, 2012; Yu H-J et al, 2014), the proportion of households in which grandparents (and extended family) help in caring for infants (aged 0-2) has been steadily increasing, from 23.6 percent in 2004 to 26.1% in 2009, and 37.8% in 2012. Amongst households in which the mother is employed, the rate reaches 53.0%. While the rate of grandparenting help for pre-schoolers (aged 3-5) is less than that for infants, it also shows an increasing trend from 20.2% in 2004 to 21.9% in 2009, and 31.5% in 2012. In households with working mothers, it reaches 36.4%. The works of Baek SJ et al (2011) and Ha JH et al (2013) have been useful to consult here.

In an analysis of case studies on grandparenting overseas, the current environments of grandparenting, the rates of grandparenting and the reasons behind it, and the interrelation between state policies of childcare and grandparents' roles in different countries have been considered. Case studies of the U.K., Australia, and the U.S. have been used with examples of policies relating to grandparenting highlighted.

### III. Survey of Grandparenting in Double-Income Households

#### 1. Outline of the Questionnaire

The Questionnaire was designed to identify the needs of double-income households regarding support for grandparenting, based upon an examination of their current use of grandparent led childcare. One aim of this is to investigate the feasibility of encouraging grandparenting as an alternative method of infant-care.

The survey was conducted in 500 double-income households in which grandparents currently provide care for their grandchildren, and responses were collected from the grandparents in each household and the parents in a subgroup of 100 households. The responses from the survey of parents were paired to those from the survey of grandparents in the same households. In addition, in-depth interviews were undertaken with nineteen grandparents and two parents.

#### 2. Survey Results

##### A. The Current Situation of Care for Grandchildren

The survey examined the factors which led the grandparents to provide care for their grandchildren. The major reasons identified by grandparents were to help their own children in their working lives (67.0%) and a lack of viable alternatives available for infant-care (42.8%). The major reasons identified by parents were their preference for their own parents to look after the grandchildren (45.4%), followed by the need for somebody who can look after

their children until they return home from work (19.5%), the lack of other childcare options they feel they can trust (11.5%), that they consider their children too young for a nursery environment (11.4%), and that their parents themselves want to care for the grandchildren (10.3%). These responses can be interpreted as a sign of anxiety in using social childcare facilities and a lack of such facilities which can cover all their working hours.

Regarding the locations where the grandparents most commonly care for their grandchildren, the responses were: at the grandparents' own home, 37.0%; at a communal family home 27.0%; and at the grandchildren's own home (26.8% through visits, and 9.2% by temporarily moving in together).

In 69.0 percent of households the grandchildren also attend caring facilities like nursery or kindergarten. Breaking down this figure by age of the grandchildren, only 4.3% of infants (of one year or younger) attend such a facility. In contrast, 94.5% of those between three and five and 100% of those between five and seven are in attendance. This indicates that infants especially tend to be in the full care of grandparents during the day.

In terms of the activities involved in grandparenting, 99.2% of respondents cited everyday tasks such as napping the children, helping them with toilet training, helping them dress and wash, and so on; 89.6% provide time to play together; 79.6% have taken grandchildren to hospitals for treatments and vaccinations; 51.4% take them to and from nursery or kindergarten; and 1.2% have a role in supervising other care-givers.

Regarding the financial remuneration grandparents receive for their work, 73.0% of respondents said they are paid regularly; 14.0% paid

irregularly; and 13.0% received no pay. The average money received amongst those grandparents who are paid was reported as KRW 610,000 per month in the survey of grandparents. A similar question in the survey of parents found an average of KRW 596,000 per month.

The survey also questioned grandparents as to the positive and negative sides of their grandparenting role. Regarding the positives, 66.0% of respondents said being of help to their children made them feel worthwhile, 65.4% said they feel happy to be able to see their grandchildren grow up everyday, 32.4% enjoy having more dialogue and meetings with family members, 16.2% said the role made them feel revitalized and gave new significance to their aging life; 12.2% highlighted being able to pass on their life experiences to their grandchildren; and 7.8% cited the money they can earn to help support themselves.

In contrast, the grandparents also recorded hardships and difficulties including the physical demands of the work, cited by 59.4 percent; the impact it had on their social life, 41.0 percent; excessively long hours, 32.0%; and difficulties in combining their caring role with other domestic chores, 30.8%. Finally, when asked whether they want to continue grandparenting, 73.8% of the respondents said that if alternative care arrangements were possible they would choose to quit, whereas 26.2% say they would want to carry on, even if they didn't need to.

## **B. The Feasibility of a Policy to Support Grandparenting**

The survey also recorded grandparents' opinions about potential government policies to support and encourage grandparents to be

directly involved in childcaring. 61.6% of respondents thought such policies would be worthwhile, whereas 38.4% disagreed. Of those in favor of such policies, the reasons given were: parents can rely on the care of grandparents with trust, 62.3%; such policies would help the parents have a comfortable working life, 45.1%; the grandparenting role makes grandparents feel revitalized, 25.2%; the benefits of grandparenting to the grandchild's mental stability, 22.4%; that such policies could help support the finances of the elderly, 17.2%; likewise the finances of the parents, 16.2%; and that grandparenting helps increase the frequency of meetings and dialogue between family members, 6.2%. The main reasons oppose such policies were the harm grandparenting can do to the elderly's health, 68.2%; and that grandparenting takes away the time of the elderly, 53.6%. In the survey of parents, 86.9% of respondents were in favour of policies to support and encourage grandparenting.

Regarding the ingredients policies should have to make the lives of grandparents in double-income families easier, 44.0% of grandparents have said that the government should pursue policies to increase the time that parents can spend with their own children, such as parental leave, flexible working hours, and fostering a working culture against excessive overtime; 35.6% said that public childcaring services such as nursery, kindergarten, and visiting child-minders should be expanded; and 20.0% that efforts should be made to help grandparents through education programmes or the distribution of information about childcaring. As for the respondents amongst parents, 48.0% have said that policies should aim to increase the time they can spend with their own children; 32.0% that public childcaring services should be expanded; and 19.0% that the policy should

directly help grandparents through provision of education and information on childcaring.

Regarding the kind of help that grandparents want to receive from the government or other public bodies, 49.0% of respondents pointed to the extension of operating hours of caring facilities; 39.8% to the provision of spaces where grandparents can play and rest with their grandchildren; 35.0% to the provision of financial support; 20.4% to programmes to help maintain their health; 10.0% to the need for visiting childcare helpers; and 2.2% to a service to support their domestic work.

## IV. Policy Recommendations to Support Grandparenting

### 1. Current Considerations for Grandparenting Policy

In the ROK, the grandparenting role has become increasingly important as the number of double-income households expands. Whilst public childcare services tend to finish around 4 pm, often both parents don't come back home from work until around 8 or 9pm, and the gap between these times has been increasingly filled by grandparents. Therefore, if social childcare services were to offer care for the children of double-income families until the late evening then the hours of grandparenting may fall significantly.

However, according to the results of the in-depth interviews, most parents and grandparents tend to feel more comfortable when their young children are looked after by their relatives rather than in collective childcare services. This is reflected in the steady increase in families where grandparents or relatives provide care for infants, which accounted for 23.6% of households with infants in 2004, 26.1% in 2009, and 37.8% in 2012, rising to 53.0% in families with working mothers. Similarly, for children aged between three and five, the figures were, 20.2% in 2004, 21.9% in 2009, and 31.5% in 2012, rising to 36.4% in families with working mothers.

### 2. Methods for Supporting Grandparenting

#### A. The Targets of Support for Grandparenting

The provision of support for grandparenting needs to concentrate on infant-care, for which some appropriate measures are considered below.

## B. Provision of Costs of Grandparenting

The state currently provides a per-child subsidy to social childcare facilities. If infants (age 0 to 2) are not attending social childcare facilities and are instead cared for by their grandparents, it is suggested that thirty to fifty percent of the potential subsidy be provided directly to the grandparents. In other words, that 3-500,000 KRW be given to carers of grandchildren under age 1, 25-350,000 KRW for grandchildren aged 1 to 2, and 20-250,000 KRW for grandchildren aged 2 to 3 (see Table 1). However, it is important that the policy to subsidize social childcare facilities also continues at the current level, as they are used by the majority of preschoolers.

〈Table 1〉 Allowance for Grandparenting (suggested)

\*Unit: KRW

	Subsidies for National/Public Nurseries	Current Home Care Allowance	Allowance for Grandparenting*
Age 0	1,048,712	200,000	300,000-500,000
Age 1	755,009	150,000	250,000-350,000
Age 2	588,136	100,000	200,000-250,000
Age 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Independent Kindergarten: 785,423</li> <li>• Public School-Affiliated Kindergarten: 616,070</li> <li>• Nation/Public/Corporate Nurseries               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age 3: 389,128</li> <li>- Age 4-5: 372,085</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	100,000	100,000

\* Allowance for Grandparenting is only for those who do not use social childcare facilities.

Overseas examples of policies which provide an allowance for grandparenting include the childcare benefits for relatives in the U.K., Grandparent Child Care Benefit in Australia, and Subsidized Guardianship in the U.S., the latter of which supports grandparent-grandchildren families.

### C. Provision of Helpers

When grandparents provide care for infant grandchildren, most often it is full-time care. According to the results of the survey grandparents look after grandchildren an average of 6.7 hours per day, which stretches to 10.8 hours in the case of infants. As such, infant care involves long hours of work, starting before the parents go to work and continuing until they return home, which grandparents report to be very physically demanding.

Care for infants was reported to include activities such as washing and clothing, toilet training, putting them down for naps, preparing meals and feeding, washing up, and even tidying up the house and other domestic chores. One way to lessen the grandparents' burden would be to provide visiting assistants or care-givers who can allow the grandparents time to rest. It is suggested that such service could be provided for a few hours twice a week.

### D. Practical Support for Childcaring Activities

In order to support grandparents' childcare, educational programs on the features of infant development and growth, the methods of infant care, what to do in an emergency, and the management of their own wellbeing could be provided. Existing childcare courses, such as the "Village for Toddlers" run by Seoul City can be referred to.

Public space for grandparenting can be secured by the use of current Childcare Complex Centers, which exist in local communities. Programmes in which grandparents can get together to look after their grandchildren, exchange information and receive counselling about childcaring would be worthwhile. Suggested names are the Baby-Grandparent Playground or the Grandparents' Childcare Sharing Center.

### E. Monitoring and Supervision of Grandparenting

If the government is to provide subsidies for grandparents, it may be necessary to accompany this with the supervision of grandparenting in order to make the policy effective. Specifically, it is suggested that a manual for grandparenting be developed as an educational document, and that childcare helpers in each region are empowered to offer advice to grandparents on childcare, and to provision and manage the Allowance for Grandparenting.

These tasks can be undertaken in parallel by the government department in charge of infant childcare as part of the overall childcare support policy.

### F. Comprehensive Support for Grandparent-Grandchildren Families

Households where grandparents support the childcare for their grandchildren because both parents are working must be separated from cases where the grandparents are fully responsible for their grandchildren because the parents are altogether absent. In our in-depth interviews, the results show that these latter grandparent-grandchildren households tend to live in poverty, and suffer hardship throughout their lives. Hence it is necessary to provide more comprehensive support for such impoverished grandparent-grandchildren households, including covering the cost of living, helping the grandparents find work and childcare support, and so on. As seen in the case of the U.S., Subsidized Guardianship, an alternative to parental allowance needs to be considered for those young children whose parents are absent.

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