



# The outcomes of foster care in South Korea ten years after its foundation: A comparison with institutional care



Hyunah Kang<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ick-Joong Chung<sup>b</sup>, JongSerl Chun<sup>b</sup>, Choong Rai Nho<sup>b</sup>, Seokjin Woo<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Division of Child Welfare, SookMyung Women's University, Republic of Korea

<sup>b</sup> Department of Social Welfare, Ewha Womans University, Republic of Korea

<sup>c</sup> Department of Economics, Myongji University, Republic of Korea

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 20 June 2013

Received in revised form 31 January 2014

Accepted 31 January 2014

Available online 8 February 2014

### Keywords:

Korean foster care

Institutional care

Comparison between foster care and

institutional care

Developmental outcomes of children in

out-of-home care

## ABSTRACT

This study is one of the first longitudinal investigations of outcomes from different types of out-of-home foster care services in Korea. The main purpose of the study is to compare foster care with institutional care by focusing on two concerns: (1) children's perception of the caregiving services and (2) developmental outcomes of such services. Study participants included 342 children in institutional and foster care in Korea, all of whom participated in both the first and the second wave surveys for the Panel Study on Korean Children in Out-of-Home-Care. The first-wave survey was conducted in 2010; the second wave survey was conducted in 2011. The data were analyzed using the Generalized Estimating Equation (GEE), the Chi-square test, ANOVA, and descriptive data analysis.

The results from GEE showed significant relationships between placement types and placement outcomes. In particular, children in foster care groups perceived caregiving services more positively than those in institutional care overall. In addition, each of the foster care groups revealed more positive developmental outcomes compared to the institution group. We did not find major differences among different types of foster care placements. In summary, our findings suggest that the effects of foster care are more positive than those of institutional care. Based on the results, we discuss practice implications, including the concern of using institutional care as a major out-of-home care service in Korea.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

South Korea established a family foster care system one decade ago. At the outset, the government expressed preference for family foster care over institutional care, which for more than 60 years had been the main out-of-home service for Korean children. Despite child welfare practitioners and academia both responding to foster care with a combination of hope and skepticism, foster care has become one of major forms of out-of-home care in South Korea. Given its broad acceptance, it is now important to ask whether Korean foster care is a truly reliable out-of-care option compared to traditional institutional care. To answer this question, we designed a study to investigate the quality of foster care and its environment and how foster children fare compared to those in traditional institutional care.

This study represents one of the first longitudinal studies in South Korea of children in out-of-home care. The study compares different placement types in terms of their caring services and the developmental outcomes of the children receiving these services. More specifically, the current study analyzes the first available case-level data longitudinally collected on children in care in South Korea, including both foster and

institutional care. By providing the essential data of long-term assessment of services and service outcomes, we hope to provide more detailed insight into the current status of foster care and institutional care in South Korea.

### 1.1. The context of out-of-home care in South Korea

In 2012, 6,926 children were placed in out-of-home care for various reasons, including extra marital births (28.7%), family breakups (24.2%), child maltreatment (16.2%), runaways (10.2%), death of parents (7.7%), poverty (6.5%), and parental illness (2.4%) (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). Among these children, 2,973 (42.9%) were placed in institutional care, 2,289 (33%) in foster care, 775 (11.2%) in group homes, and 772 (11.1%) were adopted (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013).

Both the number of children placed in out-of-home care and the cost of providing care to them have steadily increased. However, the effectiveness of out-of-home care services according to the type of care has never been assessed appropriately. For several decades, caring institutions, once termed orphanages, were the only out-of-home care option in South Korea. The major change in out-of-home care services in Korea occurred when the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recommended that the Korean government establish out-of-home care services for 'more family-like' care, which it did in 2003 (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003).

\* Corresponding author at: SookMyung Women's University, Cheongpa-ro-47-gil 100, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea (140-742).

E-mail addresses: [hkang3@sm.ac.kr](mailto:hkang3@sm.ac.kr) (H. Kang), [ichung@ewha.ac.kr](mailto:ichung@ewha.ac.kr) (I.-J. Chung), [jschun@ewha.ac.kr](mailto:jschun@ewha.ac.kr) (J. Chun), [dmo@ewha.ac.kr](mailto:dmo@ewha.ac.kr) (C.R. Nho), [sjwoo@mju.ac.kr](mailto:sjwoo@mju.ac.kr) (S. Woo).

In response to this recommendation, the Korean government established 17 family foster care support centers nationwide. In addition, the Child Welfare Law was revised in 2005, an occurrence that has had significant implications for out-of-home care services in Korea, most notably being the provision of legal support for family foster care. With this political and legal support, foster care placements increased sharply, though it should be noted that many of these placements were kinship based. This increase was also due to the conversion of 'child headed families' to placement of children in foster care. A 'child headed family' designates a family composed of a minor(s) with parents or a guardian in which the child plays the role of household head due to the parents' inability to protect their children. With the absence of adult parents, children in these families tend to be disadvantaged economically. The Korean government had provided financial assistance to these types of families as a form of child protection, but this policy provoked strong criticism both domestically and internationally (Oh, 2000; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996).

Responding to this critical pressure, the Korean government sought to reduce this type of assistance and established kinship foster care as a preferable alternative (Lee, 2007). However, there has been substantial cultural resistance to raising children from other families and professional skepticism regarding the practice and policy readiness for foster care.

Korean jurisdiction distinguishes three types of family foster care: general foster care, relative foster care, and grandparent foster care. In 2010, the proportion of general foster care was only 7%. In contrast, most children were placed in grandparent (66%) or relative (27%) foster care (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2011). This breakdown in types of foster care can be explained by the rapid conversion of child headed families and cultural resistance to raising the children of strangers.

There has also been criticism and concern that children referred to out-of-home care are being placed without any proper assessment of caring environments or of potential foster parents. Civil service workers at local governmental offices bear the responsibility of placing a child in need properly, but many of these workers lack the time and professional knowledge to conduct appropriate placement assessment. Consequently, children in need are usually placed based on the personal preferences of the workers or those of the children's parents or are based on the availability of placements (Nho & Kang, 2009). For these reasons, resistance to foster care in Korea has not diminished. More precisely, concerns have focused on grandparent foster care, as these caregivers seem to face many challenges in taking care of their grandchildren (Lee, 2007). At the same time, it has been reported that both the caring costs provided by local governments<sup>1</sup> and the non-governmental financial support for foster care are substantially less than those for institutional care (Kang, Woo, Chung, & Chun, 2012).

Indeed, the caring institutions, also referred to as orphanages, in South Korea are not free of problems or concerns. Beginning as a philanthropic cause during the Korean War in the early 1950s, the caring institutions have provided caring services but they have failed to provide professional child welfare services such as counseling, therapeutic services, and case management. Thus, this type of care differs from therapeutic residential care in the United States. Despite the movement in child welfare practice and pressure from the government to change their main functions from exclusively taking care of children to incorporating more professional and therapeutic functions, many caring institutions still continue to play their longstanding role in a traditional manner. Because professional services are lacking in Korean out-of-home care, a previous study (Kang, Shin, & Park, 2009) reported that, once children entered the system, they tended to stay in care, never returning to their homes. Most of these children remained in caring

institutions for more than an average of 10 years, and many grappled with various emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems during their tenures.

At the current juncture, it seems premature to conclude which type of care would be the best option for children needing out-of-home care. Although there is political support favoring foster care over caring institutions, there is not enough empirical evidence showing that foster care children are likely to be better off than children in caring institutions in South Korea. Moreover, as mentioned above, skepticism regarding foster care challenges assumptions of its superiority to caring institutions. It is in this context that we began this investigation in 2011—the first panel study of children in out-of-home care in Korea. Below we provide a preliminary report of the developmental outcomes of children in out-of-home care compared to children receiving foster care within institutional settings.

## 1.2. Developmental outcomes of children in out-of-home care

Although a comparative longitudinal study of Korean children in out-of-home care has been lacking, a modest amount of research has been conducted on the developmental status of children in caring institutions. Research on service in caring institutions has pointed to an absence of professional social work and therapeutic services due to a shortage of financial and human resources (Kim, Kim, Park, Kim, & Lee, 2005). Early studies (Noh & Chang, 1998; Yoo, Min, & Kwon, 2001) revealed that children in caring institutions exhibited many emotional and behavioral problems, such as social withdrawal, depression, and aggression. Children in institutional care also appeared to suffer learning delays and experience difficulties at school (Sung, Yi, & Lee, 2001). More recent studies (Kang, Park, & Shin, 2009; Lee & Choi, 2008; Won, 2008) have reported that, as in the United States, adolescents who 'aged out' of institutional care experienced many difficulties adjusting to schools and employment.

As foster care practice in Korea rapidly expanded, new research began to document and explain the developmental outcomes of children in foster care. Some of these studies (Huh, 2008; Nho, Kim, Park, Kang, & Shin, 2008) reported that a high percentage of foster children showed symptoms of clinical depression and behavioral problems. However, little is known about the degree of difference between the problems of foster care children and those of children in institutional care.

In countries with a longer history of foster care, such as the United States and Great Britain, much more comparative research has accumulated. However, this research primarily seeks to resolve the debate over the relative merits of kinship care and general foster care. Previous literature on children in institutional care (i.e. residential care) has primarily assessed the effect of therapeutic or intervention programs (Leichtman, Cornsweet Barber, & Neese, 2001; Malmgreen & Leone, 2000; Mayes et al., 2001).

The previous research comparing foster care types investigates differences in caregiving environment, children's developmental outcomes, placement stability, and permanency achievement. In particular, studies (Barth et al., 2008; Berrick, 1998; Berrick, Barth, & Needell, 1994; Courtney & Needell, 1997; Dubowitz, Feigelman, & Zuravin, 1993; Ehrle & Geen, 2002; Farmer, 2009; Gebel, 1996; Le Prohn, 1994) suggest that kinship care would prove more disadvantages for children than general foster care due to (a) caregiver demographic characteristics and (b) less service and financial support. However, recent studies suggest that kinship caregivers' emotional bond and close cultural identity with the children in their care, as well as their strong commitment to caregiving, should be recognized as benefits of kinship caregiving environments (Cuddeback, 2004). Recent studies using advanced statistical methods also report no differences in permanency rates between kinship and non-kinship placements (Koh & Testa, 2008) and better outcomes of kinship foster care in placement stability (Koh, 2010).

<sup>1</sup> Korea has decentralized its child protection system, ceding authority to each autonomous local government.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6834406>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6834406>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)