

## A Case Study: The Daily Routines of Elementary School Children in Care Centers

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the daily routines of elementary school children who use 24-hour care centers. It evaluates the childcare system and develops a comprehensive 24-hour care model that addresses existing gaps in childcare for children needing urgent protection. To this end, we applied a case study method, one of the qualitative research methods. We selected 13 elementary school children who used the childcare center and collected research data through in-depth interviews. This study focuses on first- and third-graders using a care center together. The results of the study are as follows. First, in the childcare system, informal care provided by schools, community centers, churches, and families during weekdays, and care from relatives on weekends, plays an important role. Because the care center does not operate on weekends, dual-income families face a gap in childcare during unexpected work commitments. In some cases, children are left alone, which can cause problems in managing their basic daily needs, and consequently, their right to a happy and secure life is not guaranteed. Second, despite many families using the care center on weekdays, there are periods when no care system is available. This situation necessitates offering services that accommodate the hours of care provision and parents' working hours. Third, to ensure no disruptions during emergencies or when children use services, integrated care should be available to address any potential gaps in care. In conclusion, effectively supporting children in need requires the government to establish a comprehensive "all-day care system" that would integrate various departmental care policies and services, offering more detailed functions and support within the childcare framework.

### KEYWORDS

Care center, child care system, daily life for all, lower-grade children, public care for primary school children

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Necessity and Purpose of Research

As women's participation in economic activities increases, so does the social demand for after-school care. However, the supply of elementary care services is relatively insufficient, and as a result, more and more children spend time alone. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare's comprehensive survey of children, 45.2% were alone at home at least one day a week as of 2019. Thus, over 20% of the population aged six to 17 is "one child" left unsupervised after school on weekdays.

As the need for emergency care has increased due to the recent restriction of children's school attendance due to COVID-19, researchers emphasize that such a gap in child care is closely related to their safety and welfare in the absence of parents (Yonhap News, 2020). This viewpoint indicates that children could end up in care blind spots after school hours, and without proper supervision, they may become vulnerable to safety incidents and criminal activities. Particularly, as neglect of school-age children emerges as a social issue, the demand for after-school care and guidance for these groups grows.

In addition, the proportion of double-income households reached 45.4% on average. Among dual-income families with school-age children aged seven to 12, 51.3% (Statistics Korea, 2020) face significant challenges in providing care. As the number of dual-income families rises, the difficulty for parents of school-age children to manage childcare increases. Despite the growing number of double-income families and changes in the child-rearing environment due to increased social and economic participation by women, society continues to place the responsibility for children solely on families. The understanding that this care gap results from social and

structural changes rather than individual family issues has led to a societal demand to reduce this gap and create an environment where parents can confidently raise their children (Shin et al., 2020). Scholars have argued that society should faithfully fulfill its function to clarify its role in child care and create an environment and system to help children grow (Ryu, 2012).

The government set up a one-day care system as a major national task to strengthen the national responsibility for elementary school care. It pushed for strengthening the public nature of elementary school care (Kim et al., 2019). The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and the Ministry of Government Administration and Security are promoting the “add-day care policy” to solve the problem of after-school care. In addition, Korea’s 2018 “All Day Care System Establishment and Operation Implementation Plan” projected expanding the number of children in care children to 530,000 (as of 2022), including school care (elementary care classes) and village care (care centers, community children centers, and after-school academies).

The Ministry of Health and Welfare promotes the childcare center to provide various childcare services such as public facilities (resident centers, welfare centers, community centers, libraries, schools, etc.) and apartment residents’ common facilities. In addition, the plan is to resolve the childcare gap for elementary school children in double-income families by operating the childcare center. The policy assessment of this government-led project concludes that by focusing primarily on vulnerable children, existing local children’s centers are not adequately addressing the childcare needs of children from double-income families.

A joint public offering project by the Ministry of Public Administration and Security and the Ministry of Health and Welfare established and operated ten care centers in July 2017. As of 2023, 21,906 children in 926 places are using the centers, steadily increasing yearly. The care centers operate five days a week (including Monday and Friday) and eight hours daily, including standard service delivery hours. In contrast, the extended pilot project participation center operates two hours of morning and evening care in addition to standard service delivery hours. By expanding the child protection services at existing local children’s centers and offering universal services to all elementary school children, the government found that, through its user satisfaction survey last year, the centers provided high-quality care services, achieving a 91.6% satisfaction rate. Examining the trends in care center revitalization, these centers will play an important role in the community’s child protection system.

The increase in double-income families and the interruption of female careers due to childcare responsibilities contribute to a low birth rate and an increase in children left to fend for themselves or unsupervised after school. Addressing the need for 24-hour childcare solutions for double-income families is especially crucial. To solve this problem, the government also supports care and protection services by ministries and agencies, which require the attention and active cooperation of local communities and related institutions to ensure that no children are in the blind spot of care. During crucial periods when family care is essential, children needing support and protection throughout their growth and maturation may experience psychological difficulties and feelings of loneliness (Jeong, 2013).

Therefore, this study analyzes children’s daily lives in care centers to determine whether a reliable protection system exists for those in dire need and to understand why vulnerabilities frequently appear without such a system. Considering the current status of the child protection system, the government aims to outline a community network strategy for a 24-hour protection system and explore potential alternatives.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **2.1 Selection of Study Subjects**

We conducted this study in Ulsan metropolitan city and prioritized children from nursery schools and the primary schools that most need care. We sought recommendations for potential participants from center directors and childcare teachers, ultimately determining the research subjects based on who would best serve the study’s objectives.

### **2.2 Analysis Method**

This study followed a qualitative research method with several established criteria for selecting interview participants. First, this study aimed to analyze children’s daily lives in elementary school and care centers, focusing on first- and third-graders among children using the center. Second, in adherence to research ethics, we only included children who agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. Considering that the participants were elementary school students, we obtained the parents’ consent with the center institution’s cooperation in advance. The consent form presented the purpose of the study, procedures, privacy, standards for data utilization, recording, and explanations about the disposal of data after the study.

Next, we used a semi-structured questionnaire for case analysis through in-depth interviews, with the questionnaire organized as follows. First, we included basic information about the interview participants, i.e., first- and third-grade children using the care center. We compiled 27 questions about family life, school life, care center life, academy life, and protection system for children, and based on this, we organized a weekday and weekend schedule for children. The weekday and weekend schedule design for the children involves creating a detailed chart that tracks children's daily activities, including who they are with, their locations, whether they are with their parents, and if a child protection system is in place.

The study used conversations as data through in-depth interviews with subjects and recorded files, interview records, and daily routine tables as data collection tools. We recorded all interviews to ensure the interview's quality and reliability. All interviews occurred from September 18 to 22, 2023, one-on-one, and took an average of 40–60 minutes. We explained the study's purpose and obtained each participant's consent before starting the interview. We collected data through in-depth interviews once or twice for each individual. After the interview, we followed up with additional questions and supplements with the cooperation of the institution's care teacher. After conducting the interview, we transcribed the recorded content. We also compiled and organized notes on the children's nonverbal expressions. Then, using the agreed-upon qualitative research methodology, we analyzed the data through case analysis, cross-analysis, and the writing process.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Characteristics of Study Subjects

Thirteen elementary school children participated in this study together; Table 1 describes the subjects' population and sociological characteristics. First, this study comprised seven women, six men, four second-graders, and nine third-graders in the school year. Two of the subjects held Christian beliefs, and 11 cited no religion. All subjects had an average economic level and were in double-income families.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Case	Gender / Age	Religion	Economic Level	Income	Living Family
A	Boy / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Older Sister
B	Boy / 9	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother
C	Girl / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Older Sister
D	Girl / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Younger Brother
E	Boy / 9	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Older Brother.
F	Boy / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Younger Brother
G	Girl / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother
H	Girl / 9	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Younger Brother
I	Girl / 10	Christian	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Older Brother.
J	Boy / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Older Sister
K	Girl / 9	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Younger Brother2
L	Girl / 10	Christian	General	Dual	Father, Mother, Younger Brother
M	Boy / 10	None	General	Dual	Father, Mother

#### 3.2 The Daily Lives of Children Using the Care Center

We categorized the data obtained from in-depth interviews into five areas: family life, school life, life at the care center, academy life, and protection systems. This classification allows for a detailed analysis of children's daily routines. We prepared the following weekday and weekend schedules by interviewing children who use the daycare centers.

### 3.2.1 Case 1: Child A's Daily Life

**Family Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends, and move to the care center together after regular classes. In the past, parents used after-school care, but now, everyone goes to the care center together due to the internal construction of the school. On weekends, the couple spend weekdays with their mother and sister, and my father goes home on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. When my mother comes home from work, she prepares meals and looks at my homework. My father comes on weekends, and I spend time with my family only on weekends. Usually, on Saturdays, Child A spends time outdoors with their favorite inline, and on Sundays, they have time to play games and talk at home. On Sunday afternoon, my father heads to Suwon, where he works.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, meals, and friends, and move to the care center together after regular classes. In the past, parents used after-school care, but now, everyone goes to the care center together due to the internal construction of the school.

**Living in a Care Center.** Spend time at the center from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., have a snack break, and play with friends.

**School Life.** From 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., English, Taekwondo, and piano classes move in order. They travel on foot, and after finishing the piano class, they drive home.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system includes the home, school, academy, and center. The child has a protection system except when the mother leaves work late on weekdays, so the child spends time alone.

Tables 2 and 3 outline Child A's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 2.** Child A's Weekday Schedule

Time	0-7	8	9-13	13-16	16-18	19-22	23-24
Who	Mother, Older Sister	Mother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Mother, Older Sister	Mother, Older Sister
What	Go to Bed	Getting up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	English, Piano, Taekwondo	Meals, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 3.** Child A's Weekend Schedule

Time	0-9	9-12	12-18	18-22	22-24
Who	Father, Mother, Older Sister	Father, Mother	Father, Mother	Father, Mother, Older Sister	Father, Mother, Older Sister
What	Getting up, Meals	Playing Games, Meals	Inline, Outside Activities	Meals, Watching TV, Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home or Outside	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.2 Case 2: Child B's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Instead of parents who come to work early on weekdays in dual-income families, grandmothers eat together and prepare for school. On weekdays, Child B often spends time with his mother because his father's time at work is inconsistent. He also spends time with his dog. Both parents are away from home on Saturday morning because of work; the mother leaves work around 1:00 p.m., while the father does not have consistent hours. On Sundays, we all spend time together and go out for outdoor activities or play board games together at home.

**School Life.** From school time to 1:00 p.m., they stay at school in classes, at meals, and with friends. They move to the care center together after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child B spends time at the center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., they move to the sports center and drive home.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, academy, and the center. On weekdays when parents are not at home, grandmothers protect children. There is no protection system on Saturday morning, and when there is no protection system, the children spend time with puppies.

Tables 4 and 5 outline Child B's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 4.** Child B's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–17	17	18–22	23–24
Who	Father, Mother	Grandmother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Father, Mother	Father, Mother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Sports	Meals, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	×	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 5.** Child B's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–8	9–13	13–17	17–20	20–24
Who	Father, Mother	–	Mother	Father, Mother	Father, Mother
What	Getting Up, Meals	Watching TV, Playing Games	Meals, Homework, Other Activities	Conversation, Board Game	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	×	○	○	○
Protection	○	×	○	○	

### 3.2.3 Case 3: Child C's Daily Life

**Family Life.** On weekdays, my father leaves work late and spends time with my mother and sister. I usually talk to my mother and sister over dinner, and after dinner, I spend time alone watching TV or playing with my sister. Even on weekends, fathers often stay away from home due to early and late work, and mothers and sisters often do art activities such as drawing with their sisters at home rather than outdoor activities. Sometimes, when my father takes a break on weekends, we spend time together.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child C spends time at the center from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child C goes to an English and Taekwondo academy and then walks home.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, academy, and the center; there is a protection system on weekdays and weekends.

Tables 6 and 7 outline Child C's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 6.** Child C's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–16	16–18	18–21	21–24
Who	Parents, Older Sister	Mother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Parents, Older Sister	Parents, Older Sister
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	English, Taekwondo	Meals, Watching TV	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 7.** Child C's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–8	9–13	13–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Older Sister	Mother	Mother	Parents, Older Sister	Parents, Older Sister
What	Getting Up, Meals	Watching TV, Cell Phone Game	Meals, Other Activities	Meals, Conversation, Watching TV	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.4 Case 4: Child D's Daily Life

**Family Life.** On weekdays, both parents work but spend time together after 6:00 p.m. After finishing weekday meals, the mother cares for the younger son while doing housework. Both parents often work on weekends and travel to see Child D's grandparents, so Child D spends the weekend separately from her younger brother.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child D spends time at the center from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**Protection System for Children.** Children's protection systems are home, school, the center, and grandparents. On weekends, grandparents play an important role in the protection system—the children mainly watch TV or play games with their grandparents.

Tables 8 and 9 outline Child D's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 8.** Child D's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother	Mother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Parents, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Meals, Homework, Watching TV	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 9.** Child D's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–7	7–18	18–22	22–24
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Time	0–7	7–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents	Grandparents	Parents, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Getting Up	Meals, Watching TV, Cell Phone Game	Conversation, Playing with Younger Brother	Go To Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home Or Outside	Home
Parents	○	×	○	○
Protection	○	×	○	○

### 3.2.5 Case 5: Child E's Daily Life

**Family Life.** On weekdays, both parents work early, and Child E prepares for school with their older brother. Family time is from the evening to the next day before school. I usually have a lot of conversations with my brother, but I don't have much time to talk with my parents. When my family is together, I play games with my brother. On weekends, my father goes to work on Saturdays and spends time at home with my mother and brother. On Sundays, when my father is at home, we ride bicycles or play basketball together for outdoor activities.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child E spends time at the center from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., Child E attends piano class and then his father drives him home from the academy.

**Protection System for Children.** Children's protection systems are home, school, the center, and academy. Except for an hour in the morning on weekdays, there is always a protection system, and when there is no protection system, I spend time with my brother.

Tables 10 and 11 outline Child E's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 10.** Child E's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–16	16–17	17–21	22–24
Who	Parents, Older Brother.	Older Brother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Parents, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Piano	Meals, Game	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	×	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	×	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 11.** Child E's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–7	7–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Older Brother	Parents	Parents, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother
What	Getting Up	Meals, Riding a Bicycle, Playing Basketball	Meals, Watching TV, Cell Phone Game	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home Or Outside	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×
Protection	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.6 Case 6: Child F's Daily Life

**Family Life.** “On weekdays and weekends, my grandmother comes to school early; she prepares meals due to my parents’ early work. Family members spend time together in the evening and before school the next day. My mother’s job as a freelancer is not constant, and I spend that time with my grandmother. My mother is busy preparing for lectures on weekday evenings, so I spend more time alone doing my homework and playing games than talking with her.”

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child F spends time at the center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child F attends piano class and then his father drives him home from the academy.

**Protection System for Children.** Children’s protection systems are homes, schools, academies, and centers. Families and grandmothers form a protection system on weekdays, and there is always a protection system except for weekends, from afternoon to evening. Child F spends time with their friends and playing together at home when there is no protection system.

Tables 12 and 13 outline Child F’s weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 12.** Child F's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–17	17–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother	Grandmother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Parents, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Piano	Meals, Game	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	×	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 13.** Child F's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–8	8–13	13–16	16–18	18–21	21–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother	Grandmother, Mother	Friend	Parents, Younger Brother	Teacher	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go To Bed	Getting Up, Watching TV	Riding A Bicycle, Cell Phone Game	Meals	Homework, Reading	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home Or Outside	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	×	○	○	○

### 3.2.7 Case 7: Child G's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Even though they are working families, they spend weekends with their mothers on weekdays. Before the mother leaves work, she eats dinner with a babysitter and reads. After their mother leaves for work, the family spends about an hour discussing their daily lives. “My father takes a vacation on Friday, goes home, and spends time with me. I have time to take a walk with my father every Saturday morning, and we talk a lot at this time.”



**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child G spends time at the center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child G attends Taekwondo, and then his father drives him home.

**Protection System for Children.** Children's protection systems are homes, schools, academies, and centers. There is always a protection system except from Saturday afternoon to evening; on weekdays, mothers and babysitters act as protection systems. Child G usually spends time reading alone when there is no protection system.

Tables 14 and 15 outline Child G's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 14.** Child G's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–17	17–18	18–20	20–21	21–24
Who	Mother	Mother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	A Child Carer	Mother	Mother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Taekwondo	Meals, Reading	Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 15.** Child G's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–7	7–8	8–12	12–14	14–18	18–20	20–24
Who	Parents	Father	Parents	Father	–	Mother	Mother
What	Go To Bed	Walk	Meals, Conversation	Conversation	Reading	Meals, Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Outside	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	×	○	○

### 3.2.8 Case 8: Child H's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Child H says, “On weekdays, I usually spend time with my mother, and my father spends little time with me because he works late.” On weekends, they often meet and spend time with their mothers, grandparents, and aunts, and their fathers go to work on Saturdays and spend little time together on Sundays due to their participation in baseball clubs. “If my mother is also absent on weekdays, I sometimes spend time with my grandparents.”

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child H spends time at the center from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child G attends English class, studies magazines, takes piano lessons and then walks home.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, academy, and the center; there is also a protection system on weekdays and weekends. On weekdays, mothers and grandmothers are usually together; on weekends, mothers, grandmothers, and aunts are together.

Tables 16 and 17 outline Child H's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 16.** Child H's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–17	17–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother	Mother, Younger Brother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Mother, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Piano, English	Meals, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 17.** Child H's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–8	8–13	13–18	18–21	21–24
Who	Parents	Mother	Grandmother, Mother	Mother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Reading	Watching TV	Meals, Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.9 Case 9: Child I's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Child I said, “On weekdays, I usually spend time with my mother and brother, and my father doesn’t spend much time together because he works late. My mother is busy with housework after meals, so I play with my brother. My father goes to work on weekends, so I hardly have any communication with him.” Child I spends time with her mother, older brother, and nephew.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child I spends time at the center from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Child I attends Taekwondo and piano classes before going to the care center.

**Protection System for Children.** Children’s protection systems are homes, schools, academies, centers, and churches. There is always a protection system except for weekend morning hours, and the church plays an important role in the weekend protection system.

Tables 18 and 19 outline Child I’s weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 18.** Child I's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–15	15–18	18–21	21–24
Who	Parents, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother	Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Care Teacher, Friend	Mother, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Taekwondo	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Meals, Reading	Go to Bed

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–15	15–18	18–21	21–24
Where	Home	Home	School	Academy	Center	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Table 19. Child I's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–7	7–11	11–13	13–17	17–20	20–24
Who	Parents, Older Brother	Older Brother	Older Brother	Mother	Parents, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Reading	Worship, Study, Meals	Play, Watching TV	Meals, Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Church	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	×	×	○	○	○
Protection	○	×	×	○	○	○

### 3.2.10 Case 10: Child J's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Child J said, “I live with my father, mother, and older sister, and my family is together from the evening to school the next day. I usually talk to my parents over dinner; at other times, I do art and homework with my sister.”

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child J spends time at the center from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

#### School Life. . .

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, and center, and there is always a protection system except for an hour on weekday evenings and afternoon hours on weekends. On weekdays, Child J spends this one-hour gap eating snacks at home and watching TV while their mother works and her sister is at school. On weekend afternoons, Child J plays at her friend's house or a playground.

Tables 20 and 21 outline Child J's weekday and weekend schedules.

Table 20. Child J's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–18	18–19	19–21	21–24
Who	Parents, Older Sister	Mother, Older Sister	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	–	Mother, Older Sister	Parents, Older Sister
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Eat Between Meals, Watching TV	Meals, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	×	○	○

**Table 21.** Child J's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–9	9–13	13–17	17–20	20–24
Who	Parents, Older Sister	Parents	Friend	Parents, Older Sister	Parents, Older Sister
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Play	Play, Watching TV	Meals, Conversation	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Outside	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	×	○	○

**11) Case 11: Child K's Daily Life**

**Family Life.** Child K says, “I spend time with my father, mother, and two younger sisters. My father is only at home on Sundays and has little communication with me.” The time with the family is from the evening before going to school until the next day, and since the younger brother is young, he spends time playing alone while the mother does housework. For this reason, Child K is with her mother but hardly interacts with her.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child K spends time at the center from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** . . .

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, and the center. Child K has a protection system on weekdays and weekends.

Tables 22 and 23 outline Child K's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 22.** Child K's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother2	Parents, Younger Brother2	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Parents, Younger Brother2	Parents, Younger Brother2
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go To School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Meals, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 23.** Child K's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–9	9–13	13–22	22–24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother 2	Parents, Younger Brother 2	Parents, Younger Brother 2	Parents, Younger Brother 2
What	Getting Up	Meals, Clean Up	Meals, Watching TV, Cell Phone Game, Homework	Go To Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.12 Case 12: Child L's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Child L said, "I spend time with my father, mother, and younger brother, and my family stays together from the evening until before going to school the next day. I spend all my time doing various activities by myself except for meal time. My mother is so busy with housework that my father watches over my homework." On weekdays, both parents are busy and don't have time to talk, but they have a family meeting every Saturday and record and share what they usually don't share.

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child L spends time at the center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child L attends Taekwondo and then walks home with his friends.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, the center, and church. Child L always has a protection system on weekdays and weekends.

Tables 24 and 25 outline Child L's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 24.** Child L's Weekday Schedule

Time	0-7	8	9-13	13-17	17-18	18-22	22-24
Who	Parents, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Parents, Younger Brother	Parents, Younger Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go to School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Taekwondo	Meals, Reading	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 25.** Child L's Weekend Schedule

Time	0-7	7-11	11-13	13-17	17-20	20-24
Who	Parents, Older Brother	Older Brother	Older Brother	Mother	Parents, Older Brother	Parents, Older Brother
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Reading	Worship, Study, Meals	Play, Meals, Watching TV	Family Meeting	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Church	Home	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○

### 3.2.13 Case 13: Child M's Daily Life

**Family Life.** Child M said, "I live with my parents, and my family stays together from the evening until before going to school the next day." After dinner, she does her homework and practices writing with her mother. After that, she often has time to talk with her father about her day. She says, "On weekends when my father is with me, I go outdoors and spend time with my family."

**School Life.** From school until 1:00 p.m., they stay at school, spend time in classes, at meals, and with friends. The children move to the care center after regular classes.

**Living in a Care Center.** Child M spends time at the center from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., has a snack break, and plays with friends.

**School Life.** From 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Child M attends Taekwondo and then walks home with her friends.

**Protection System for Children.** The child protection system is home, school, and the center. Child M always has a protection system on weekdays and weekends.

Tables 26 and 27 outline Child M's weekday and weekend schedules.

**Table 26.** Child M's Weekday Schedule

Time	0–7	8	9–13	13–17	17–18	18–22	22–24
Who	Parents	Parents	Teacher, Friend	Care Teacher, Friend	Teacher	Parents	Parents
What	Go to Bed	Getting Up, Meals, Go To School	Study, Meals	Play, Learning, Eat Between Meals	Taekwon do	Meals, Reading	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	School	Center	Academy	Home	Home
Parents	○	○	×	×	×	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

**Table 27.** Child M's Weekend Schedule

Time	0–9	9–18	18–21	21–24
Who	Parents	Mother	Parents	Parents
What	Go to Bed	Meals, Reading, Play	Meals, Watching TV, Cell Phone Game, Homework	Go to Bed
Where	Home	Home	Home or Outside	Home
Parents	○	○	○	○
Protection	○	○	○	○

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the quality of children's daily lives using childcare centers. The study's findings are as follows.

First, a child's family life encompasses the period starting from the end of their time at a care center or educational institution for the day, until they leave for school the next day. Children from double-income families often found themselves alone, with friends (with parental permission), or under the care of informal providers like siblings or family members until their parents returned home. For example, children stated, "I spent my time watching TV, doing homework, and playing with my younger brother." Even in the presence of their parents, siblings often spent time together, facing challenges in emotional connection. This difficulty was particularly evident when their interaction primarily revolved around assisting with their mothers' accumulated housework. Parents engaged in activities such as eating snacks, reading books, and watching TV alone, having previously discussed these arrangements with their children. They used the children's care service in emergencies, a public assistance program.

Second, over half of the study's participants used after-school care programs. However, school renovations temporarily halted these programs, leading to all participants jointly using services provided by a care center. For children from dual-income families, attending these after-school programs meant less time spent alone at home, as it filled the gap between the end of regular school hours and their parents' return from work.

Third, after regular classes, all children move to the care center for snacks, curriculum-based instruction, and homework assistance. In a double-income family, these services, typically provided by a mother at home, are instead offered by the center. In addition, the main center offers detailed and safe care for the children during brief periods before and after their academy sessions.

Fourth, most of the children's extracurricular academy activities were near the center, enabling them to walk to these academies alone. The center logged the times as scheduled by parents, ensuring the children's safe travel to and from the academy.

Finally, as a vital system for protecting children, care centers within schools, community centers, and homes play a crucial role during weekdays. The weekend protection system mainly consisted of informal care by families and churches. Most often, the time a child has no supervision corresponds to the time it takes for parents to commute home from work. This situation is especially common in families where both parents work, and their travel time results in their children being left unattended. The community network culminating at the care center should expand into a comprehensive child protection system offering absolute safety to enhance child protection. As the introduction suggests, this involves integrating various government care and protection services with childcare support projects. These initiatives should aim to offer 24-hour care services to children in need.

By analyzing how children use daycare centers daily, including their interaction with local school-based childcare and existing care systems, it is clear that children engage significantly with schools, relatives, and churches. Churches, in particular, play a multifaceted role in providing informal childcare, especially on weekends. Despite these care structures' existence, there is a need to enhance safety measures, expand care spaces, and extend the hours of care services to address gaps in the current system.

Furthermore, it is essential to offer emergency care services that are available around the clock, ensuring that children can access immediate assistance whenever needed, without any restrictions on time. Therefore, there needs to be a robust protection system in place specifically designed to safeguard children who might otherwise be without adequate care. As we highlighted in the introduction, there is a pressing need to establish a comprehensive care and interconnected system—supporting all children requiring care and ensuring no child is left unattended or vulnerable.

"Everyone" conducted this study, focusing on children attending childcare centers outside elementary school settings. However, while one can only accurately depict the unique features of childcare centers, the government has been unable to unify the supported diverse childcare protection systems. Therefore, future research should analyze Korea's historical and current child protection systems and examine children's living conditions and environments.

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