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# The Effect of Early Childhood Teachers' Empowerment on Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of early childhood teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment, and to ascertain whether there is a difference in teacher efficacy and organizational commitment according to the level of empowerment of early childhood teachers. The subjects of this study were 204 teachers working in day care centers in Seoul. The collected data was subjected to simple regression analysis to examine the effects of the early childhood teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. In order to identify the differences of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment according to the level of empowerment of early childhood teachers, the level of empowerment was divided between upper and lower groups with a standard deviation (SD) according to the mean (M), and an independent sample t-test was performed afterwards. The results and conclusions of this study are as follows: early childhood teachers' empowerment was found to affect teacher efficacy and organizational commitment; and in the difference of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment according to the level of empowerment of early childhood teachers, teacher efficacy and organizational commitment were found to be statistically higher when the level of empowerment of early childhood teachers was 'high'. Therefore, it is important to recognize the importance of early childhood teachers' empowerment, and it is expected that childcare, quality education services and the internal motivation of early childhood teachers will be enhanced through the empowerment of early childhood teachers.

Keywords: Empowerment, early childhood teacher, teacher efficacy, organizational commitment

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## Introduction

As the social activities of women increased and the number of double-income families increased, the responsibility of child-care and the education of children changed from the home to a shared responsibility of the nation and society, and so it became necessary to provide quality day care education. In order for a good education to be carried out in a daycare center, the role of a competent child-care teacher is most important. Childcare teachers spend most of their day with young children and infants on behalf of their parents. They carry out childcare and education. Childcare teachers realize goals and values pursued by the organization. They are responsible for the growth, development and learning of young children and infants, and have an important influence to them (Park, 2010). The behavior of teachers, their educational beliefs and teacher efficacy, which directly affect the quality of education and the development of young children, are closely related to the improvement of the quality of education. Teacher efficacy is especially related to the teacher's own ability, interests, personality, and self-perceived self-efficacy (Kang, 2010). Those with high self-efficacy were tended to be more active and positive with confidence and hope, and endeavoring with perseverance even in the face of difficulties. Therefore, teachers with high teacher efficacy are challenged with confidence, without fear of various problems encountered in the education field, which can improve the quality of education. Infants are most affected by teachers compared with other age groups. Therefore, the teacher's role not only contributes to the level of achievement of the infant, but also increases the teaching ability of the teacher (Kang, 2010).

In order to provide high quality childcare, the organizational commitment of childcare teachers is very important (Jeong, 2015). Organizational commitment refers to the relative degree of individual identification and commitment to an organization, that is, how much an individual identifies with his or her organization. Kim (2010) stated that the organizational commitment of nursery school teachers is the degree to which they feel they are an organizational member in the nursery to which they belong, and this shows an attitude of trying to achieve the organizational goals beyond individual interests. This is also a desire to stay in the organization, and it encompasses the teacher's attitude toward the organization (Kwon & Kim, 2015), reducing the factors that lead to the deterioration of quality of childcare, and bringing quality childcare services (Lee & Moon, 2011). However, if the childcare teacher is not able to engage in organizational commitment or the level is low, they cannot demonstrate their abilities in childcare activities and this negatively affects the provision of excellent childcare programs, thus reducing the quality of childcare (Han & Moon, 2012).

Recently, empowerment is emerging as a new perspective to analyze and explain teachers' behavior (Kim & Moon, 2011). Conger and Kanungo (1988) refer the empowerment is the process of empowering members of the organization. This could mean the allocation of certain powers within the organization, the allocation of legal power to organizational members. The members have the sense of efficacy that they can do something through the process of granting authority (Lee, 2007). Empowerment has

become an important concern in the field of education, and it has been seen as an attempt to activate the organization of the school through the enhancement of the professionalism of teachers and their autonomous and active participation (Kim & Moon, 2007).

Teacher empowerment is an act or process that promotes voluntary action to activate an organization by empowering members of the organization to participate in decision-making or to induce intrinsic motivation in order to achieve an organization's goals successfully (Kim, 2012). In this study, Kim and Kim (2005) showed that teachers who have been empowered have important responsibilities for nursery organization, so they have confidence in their strength and ability. It is said to play an important role in improving the quality of childcare. Short and Rinehart (1992) found teachers with a high level of empowerment to be able to build confidence in their role, which is teacher efficacy (Kim, 2016).

Organizational commitment allows the childcare teacher to overcome the difficult work practices of their own work and to provide high quality childcare services by reducing the factors that cause deterioration in the quality of care. However, if the childcare teacher is unable or unwilling to engage in organizational commitment, he/she will not be able to demonstrate their abilities in childcare activities and will not be able to utilize excellent childcare programs.

Recently, empowerment has become a new point of view for analyzing and explaining teachers' behaviors as a factor for realizing high quality education in relation to the professionalism of teachers (Kim & Moon, 2011). Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined the concept of empowerment as the process of granting power to members in order to create organizational vitality, or the process of distributing certain powers or legal powers within an organization to organizational members (Lee, 2007). Empowerment is also an important concern in the field of education, and it can be seen as an attempt to revitalize the organization of a school by enhancing the professionalism of teachers and by them voluntarily and actively participating (Kim & Moon, 2007).

Kim and Kim (2005) concluded that as authorized teachers eventually play a responsible role in the organization of day care centers, they have an important role in positively improving the quality of daycare centers. Short and Rinehart (1992) found that teachers with a high level of empowerment gain confidence in their roles and can form beliefs about their own abilities, that is, teacher efficacy.

There is a correlation between a teacher development stage, teacher efficacy, and teacher empowerment. High self-regulated efficacy and confidence depends on the level of the decision-making, autonomy and self-efficacy (Lee, 2007). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined empowerment as the members of the organization increasing their internal motivation by exercising their self-control; empowerment for the members of an organization was to be more self-motivated and more effective in their work with self-control. Organizations with high empowerment are active, so they act with high performance and positive attitudes toward the organization and their work (e.g., Yeh, 2014). The reason why the research on empowerment is necessary in relation to the organizational commitment of the childcare teacher is that the impaired teacher can confidently control them with self-confidence, which can lower the stress of work and improve the quality of the childcare. Thus, the empowerment of daycare teachers is one

of the organizational efforts used to make the organization vigorous and to enable teachers to innovate and leap by further strengthening their self-efficacy.

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in research on elementary school teachers' empowerment, early childhood teachers' organizational culture and empowerment, and empowerment and organizational effectiveness. However, there are few studies on the effects of childcare teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.

The role of empowerment is important because the changing jobs rate is high in the case of childcare teachers and the professional consciousness or esteem of the role is relatively low compared to teachers in other areas. Therefore, to improve the quality of day care, it is necessary to study the empowerment of teachers, teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. If childcare teacher's empowerment increases, the childcare teacher will be able to flexibly respond to environmental changes by making full use of his or her competence in order to improve the quality of the education service by oneself. Also, it can increase teacher professionalism and teacher efficacy.

The quality of education depends on the competence and qualities of teachers with specialization. Therefore, continuous research on childcare teachers is needed for intellectual, emotional, social development and quality childcare of young children. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of childcare teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. The research question to be confirmed in this study is as follows. 'How does the childcare teacher's empowerment affect teacher efficacy and organizational commitment?'

## Method

### Participants

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of childcare teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. For data collection, 204 copies were collected by directly visiting the institution or distributing the questionnaire by mail. Childcare teachers' ages were in their 20s to 30s, and 181 teachers were working at national daycare centers.

### Scales

#### *Empowerment scale*

The school participant empowerment scale (SPES) developed by Short and Rinehart (1992) was used to measure the childcare teacher empowerment. In addition, this test was re-validated by Kim (2007) and reconstructed into 18 items. Self-determination (2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13), decision-making (3, 5, 9, 10, 14), self-efficacy (15, 16, 17, 18), and professionalism (1, 6, 11) were the sub-variables of the test. Each item was rated on the Likert 5 point scale. The higher the rating score, the higher the childcare

teacher's empowerment. The reliability of the test was Cronbach  $\alpha$ .916 (Cronbach  $\alpha$ .787~.856).

#### *Teacher efficacy scale*

The teacher efficacy test used in this study was a teacher efficacy in science test tool developed by Enochs and Riggs (1990). The sub-factors of teacher efficacy were composed of 12 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5\*, 6, 7\*, 8, 9, 10, 11) of general teacher efficacy that teachers believed that they could affect upon infants. 13 items (13, 14\*, 15, 16\*, 17\*18, 19\*, 20, 21\*, 22\*, 23\*24, 25\*) were of individual teacher efficacy, which were beliefs about whether teachers could do well as teachers). The total 25 items were ranked on the Likert 5 point scale, and the reliability of the test was Cronbach's  $\alpha$  .681 for general teacher efficacy and .866 for individual teacher efficacy, and the total reliability was Cronbach  $\alpha$  .827.

#### *Organizational commitment scale*

In order to measure the organizational commitment of childcare teachers, the organizational commitment test that developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). The test was modified by Lee (2012). Each item in the Organizational Commitment Scale was rated by the Likert 5 point scale, and the total number of questions was 24. The higher the rating score meant the higher level of organizational commitment. The sub-factors of organizational commitment were Cronbach  $\alpha$  of emotional commitment (1, 2, 3, 4\*, 5\*, 6\*, 7, 8) at .683, persistent commitment (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) was Cronbach  $\alpha$  .798, normative commitment (17, 18\*, 19\*, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) was Cronbach  $\alpha$  .606, and total organizational commitment was .786.

#### Procedure and statistics

The survey was conducted from October 30 to November 9, 2017, to teachers working in daycare centers in Seoul. The questionnaires were distributed to daycare teachers who agreed to the purpose of the study. The subjects were directly visited and had the questionnaires collected upon visit. The collected data was used for a statistical analysis, which was a reliability analysis (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ), simple regression analysis and two independent sample t-tests using the SPSS Statistics 24.0 program.

## Results

### Effect of childcare teacher's empowerment on teacher efficacy

In this study, simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of childcare teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy. The results are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. The ANOVA Table 1 indicates that there is a significant relationship between teacher efficacy and empowerment in the regression model ( $F=9.133$  and

$R^2=.292$ ). In this method, it was confirmed that the empowerment of the childcare teacher is a factor affecting teacher efficacy.

Table 1. Effect on teacher efficacy: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	4703.002	1	4703.002	83.416	.000
Residual	11388.822	202	56.380		
Total	16091.824	203			

$R^2$ (revised  $R^2$ ) = .292(.289)      Durbin-Watson=1.610

Note: dependent variable: teacher efficacy, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 2. Effect on teacher efficacy: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	Collinearity	
	B	SE	$\beta$			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	58.201	3.410		17.069	.000		
Empowerment	.476	.052	.541	9.133	.000	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: teacher efficacy

### Effect on general teacher efficacy

A simple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the effect of empowerment on general teacher efficacy as a sub factor of teacher efficacy. The results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Effect on general teacher efficacy: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	472.998	1	472.998	25.178	.000
Residual	3794.748	202	18.786		
Total	4267.745	203			

$R^2$ (revised  $R^2$ ) = .111(.106)      Durbin-Watson=1.878

Note: dependent variable: general teacher efficacy, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 4. Effect on general teacher efficacy: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	Collinearity	
	B	SE	$\beta$			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	31.663	1.968		16.087	.000		
Empowerment	.151	.030	.333	5.018	.000	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: general teacher efficacy

The ANOVA Table 3 indicates that significant relationship between general teacher efficacy and empowerment in the regression model ( $F=25.178$ ,  $p=.000$ ), and Durbin-Watson suggests that the regression model is suitable because there is no correlation

between residuals. Also, the teacher's empowerment influences individual teacher efficacy ( $t=5.01, p=.000$ ).

#### Effect on individual teacher efficacy

A simple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the effect of empowerment on individual teacher efficacy as a sub factor of teacher efficacy. The results are shown in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. Effect on individual teacher efficacy: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	2193.042	1	2193.042	69.791	.000
Residual	6347.467	202	31.423		
Total	8540.510	203			

$R^2$ (revised  $R^2$ ) = .257(.253) Durbin-Watson=1.878

Note: dependent variable: individual teacher efficacy, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 6. Effect on individual teacher efficacy: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		Collinearity		
	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	tolerance	VIF
(constant)	26.537	2.546		10.425	.000		
Empowerment	.325	.039	.507	8.354	.000	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: individual teacher efficacy

The ANOVA Table 5 indicates the significant relationship between individual teacher efficacy and empowerment in the regression model ( $F=69.791, p=.000$ ), Durbin-Watson suggests that the regression model is suitable because there is no correlation between residuals. Also, teacher's empowerment influences individual teacher efficacy ( $t=8.354, p=.000$ ). Effect of childcare teacher's empowerment on organizational commitment

In order to confirm whether the empowerment of the child care teacher influences the organizational commitment of the teacher, a regression analysis was performed by setting empowerment as the independent variable and organizational commitment as the dependent variable. The results of the simple regression analysis are shown in Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 7. Effect on organizational commitment: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	2540.802	1	2540.802	33.125	.000
Residual	15494.272	202	76.704		
Total	18035.074	203			

$R^2$ (revised  $R^2$ ) = .141(.137) Durbin-Watson=1.755

Note: dependent variable: organizational commitment, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 8. Effect on Organizational Commitment: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity	
	B	SE	$\beta$			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	51.104	3.977		12.849	.000		
Empowerment	.350	.061	.375	5.755	.000	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: organizational commitment

In this study, a simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of childcare teachers' empowerment on organizational commitment. The results are shown in Table 7 and Table 8. The ANOVA Table 7 indicates the significant relationship between organizational commitment and empowerment in the regression model ( $F=33.125$  and  $R^2=.141$ ). In this method, it was confirmed that empowerment of the childcare teacher is a factor affecting organizational commitment ( $t=5.755$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

#### Effect on emotional organizational commitment

A simple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the effect of empowerment on emotional organizational commitment as a sub factor of organizational commitment. The results are shown in Table 9 and Table 10.

Table 9. Effect on emotional organizational commitment: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Regression	859.643	1	859.643	75.387	.000
Residual	2303.430	202	11.403		
Total	3163.074	203			

$R^2(\text{revised } R^2) = .272(.268)$  Durbin-Watson=1.930

Note: dependent variable: emotional commitment, predictor:(constant) empowerment

Table 10. Effect on emotional organizational commitment: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity	
	B	SE	$\beta$			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	14.565	1.533		9.498	.000		
empowerment	.204	.023	.521	8.683	.000	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: emotional commitment

The results are shown in Table 9 and Table 10. The ANOVA Table indicates that the relationship is significant and that emotional organizational commitment and empowerment, and the regression model ( $F=75.387$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $R^2=.272$ ) was suitable. It was confirmed that empowerment of the childcare teacher is a factor affecting emotional organizational commitment ( $t=8.683$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

### Effect on persistent organizational commitment

A simple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the effect of empowerment on persistent organizational commitment as a sub factor of organizational commitment. The results are shown in Table 11 and Table 12.

Table 11. Effect on persistent organizational commitment: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
regression	93.557	1	93.557	3.371	.068 <sup>b</sup>
residual	5605.423	202	27.750		
total	5698.980	203			

R<sup>2</sup>(revised R<sup>2</sup>) = .016(.012) Durbin-Watson=1.949

Note: dependent variable: persistent commitment, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 12. Effect on persistent organizational commitment: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p	Collinearity	
	B	SE	β			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	18.150	2.392		7.587	.000		
Empowerment	.067	.037	.128	1.836	.068	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: persistent commitment

The ANOVA Table 11 indicates that the relationship is not significant ( $p > .05$ ), and the regression model was not suitable in this study. Therefore, this means teachers' empowerment was not effective to the persistent organizational commitment of a childcare teacher.

### Effect on normative organizational commitment

A simple regression analysis was conducted to confirm the effect of empowerment on normative organizational commitment as a sub factor of organizational commitment. The results are shown in Table 13 and Table 14.

Table 13. Effect on normative organizational commitment: ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
regression	130.284	1	130.284	8.829	.003 <sup>b</sup>
residual	2980.696	202	14.756		
total	3110.980	203			

R<sup>2</sup>(revised R<sup>2</sup>) = .042(.037) Durbin-Watson=1.579

Note: dependent variable: normative commitment, predictor: (constant) empowerment

Table 14. Effect on normative organizational commitment: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity	
	B	SE	$\beta$			tolerance	VIF
(constant)	18.388	1.744		10.541	.000		
Empowerment	.079	.027	.205	2.971	.003	1.000	1.000

Note: dependent variable: normative commitment

Table 13 and Table 14 indicate the significant relationship and the influence of teacher's empowerment on normative organizational commitment ( $p < .05$ ).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of childcare teachers' empowerment on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. As a result, it was confirmed that the empowerment of the childcare teacher was a factor affecting teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. The conclusion of these results is as follows.

First, the empowerment of the childcare teachers influenced both personal teacher efficacy and general teacher efficacy, which was similar to the results of Kang and Moon (2011). In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between teacher empowerment and teacher efficacy in Lee (2007), and this study was related to the findings that the empowerment of the teacher had a significant effect on teacher efficacy.

Second, it was confirmed that the empowerment of childcare teachers is an important variable that influences organizational commitment. It is similar to the results of the study conducted by Yeh (2014) and the study by Lee (2014). The results showed that when teachers were given the authority to make decisions related to the goals and effectiveness of the organization, teachers showed that internal motivation was induced, voluntary behavior was promoted and organizational commitment was improved.

The results of this study suggest that it is necessary to increase the empowerment of daycare teachers to improve the quality of daycare. The empowerment of childcare teachers has a significant effect on teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. Childcare work is a type of emotional labor job, which gives the childcare teacher authority to have a positive attitude toward the job and improve the quality of daycare.

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### Korean Abstract

#### 보육교사의 임파워먼트가 교사효능감과 조직몰입에 미치는 영향<sup>b</sup>

이숙향 (송실대), 이경화 (송실대)

본 연구에서는 보육교사의 임파워먼트가 교사효능감과 조직몰입에 미치는 영향과 보육교사의 임파워먼트 수준에 따라서 교사효능감과 조직몰입에 차이가 있는지를 확인하였다. 연구대상은 서울지역 소재 어린이집에 재직 중인 교사 204명이었다. 수집된 자료는 보육교사의 임파워먼트가 교사효능감 및 조직몰입에 미치는 영향을 확인하기 위하여 단순회귀분석을 실시하였으며 보육교사의 임파워먼트 수준에 따른 교사효능감과 조직몰입도 차이를 확인하기 위해 임파워먼트 수준을 평균(M)을 기준으로 표준편차(SD)의 범위로 상, 하 집단으로 분류한 뒤 독립표본 t검정을 실시하였다. 본 연구에서 나타난 연구결과는 첫째, 보육교사의 임파워먼트가 교사효능감에 미치는 영향관계를 분석한 결과 유의한 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났으며 둘째, 보육교사의 임파워먼트가 조직몰입에 미치는 영향관계를 볼 때 유의한 영향을 미치는 것으로 확인되었다. 셋째, 보육교사의 임파워먼트 수준에 따른 교사효능감과 조직몰입의 차이를 보면 보육교사의 임파워먼트 수준이 상일 때 교사효능감 및 조직몰입이 통계적으로 높은 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구결과를 종합해볼 때, 보육교사가 임파워먼트를 가지게 된다면, 이로 인해 교사효능감과 조직몰입도 영향력을 가지게 된다는 것이 확인되었다. 따라서 보육교사들과 원장들에게 임파워먼트의 중요성을 인식시키고, 어린이집에 근무하는 보육교사들이 임파워먼트에 대해 잘 인식을 못하고 있으며 임파워먼트가 주어지지 않는 점에 대하여 재조명하고, 보육교사의 임파워먼트로 인하여 어린이집의 보육, 교육의 질적 서비스가 높아지고 보육교사의 내적동기를 높일 수 있기를 기대해 본다.

주요어: 보육교사, 임파워먼트, 교사효능감, 조직몰입

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