The Effects of Rule-Making Activities Based on Decision-Making Models on Young Children's Social Competence and Self-Regulation

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of rule-making activities based on decision making models on young children's social competence and self-regulation ability. The subjects were 40 five-year-old children in the G kindergarten located in G city. The subjects were divided into an experimental group of 19 and a control group of 21. The research tools consisted of rule-making activities based on the decision making models for the experimental group children and teacher-led rule-making activities for the control group children. The results of pre and post-tests between the experimental group and the control group were analyzed with a t-test, using the SPSS program. The results are as follows. Rule-making activities based on the decision making models had a positive impact on the children's social competence and self-regulation ability. Therefore, Rule-making activities based on decision making models are educationally valuable as effective teaching methods in early childhood education.

Keywords: Rule-making activity, decision-making model, young children, social competence, self-regulation

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Introduction

Young children interact with their peers from an early age due to social conventions. Through group interaction, they experience communicating with others, collaborative problem solving, conflicts with others, and encounter various rules they have to follow. Rules are particularly necessary for a harmonious social life for both teachers and peers in infant education institutions.

Young children who attend infant education institutions are required to follow the procedures and policies in place. These rules are based on the virtues and skills necessary for normal social interaction. These rules help children conform to normal mores and rules of conduct, and are thus very important for helping young children to cultivate normal social skills (Kim, 2007).

Piaget (1965) found that the relationship between child and child, that is, between peers is more important than the relationship between adult and child in the development of the concept of rules. Accordingly, the aim of rule acquisition in an educational institution should be to help children to interact harmoniously, rather than to restrain or prohibit their behavior.

In many cases, rules are educational institution. A teacher explains to the children the rules needed in the class, and they are guided by various control methods to follow them (Lee, 2005; Wi, 2006). In other words, at the beginning of the semester, children somewhat understand the necessity and meaning of the rules, and follow the rules that teachers think necessary because they have them imposed on them, rather than making rules between themselves. This is to assist with classroom management and prevent conflict between children. However, most children become developmentally aware of the necessity of classroom rules by the middle of the semester, and children have an increasing tendency to set and keep rules themselves (Wi, 2006). Whereas the children obey the rules set by the teacher at the beginning of the semester, and understand the reasons for keeping them, rule-making activities that reflect children's opinions are required during the semester, when peer relations are formed and children’s understanding of the concept of rules expands.

The decision-making power to judge and choose the most appropriate option from among the alternatives created in the problem-solving process arising from the social relations that the child faces, is an important basic ability necessary for fostering the child as a desirable citizen. However, children have difficulty in recognizing that the younger the child is, the more likely it is that his or her goals may be different from the goals of others. As children participate in the decision-making process themselves they become more understanding of others, and through experience become more adept at facing dilemmas. The Nuri curriculum, for five year olds, is a national-level curriculum that aims to cultivate competent citizenship with a conscious recognition of community developed from an early age (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology-Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). It stresses the, need to provide a child with choices in everyday situations and to guide the child in the decision-making process.

The decision-making model proposed by Hurst (1978), is a model of the stages which determine the final alternative through the process of identifying the decision situation or problem, thinking about the alternatives, determining the evaluation criteria of the alternatives, and deducing predictable results. In this study, we used a model to determine final alternatives through the process of deducing predictable results after setting alternative evaluation criteria. Based on this decision-making model, we attempt to develop appropriate teaching and learning stages to assist in children's development, particularly as they pertain to rule-making.

Social competence is the ability of a child to control his or her emotions and behavior by understanding the norms of his or her society, as well as the individual social skills required to live as a member of their society, and the ability to maintain good relationships with others. It is an integrated ability that includes cognitive and emotional domains (Hubbard & Coie, 1994; Lee, 2005; Raver & Zigler, 1997; Rose-Krasnor, 1997). The social competence of a child is formed not just by the ability of the child, but by meaningful interactions with others, including with parents, teachers, peers, as well as the overall group experience (Oh, 1992). As such, children should socialize through the experiences of social interaction with their peers and teachers to understand and expand their knowledge of the surrounding world, and acquire the values and norms of their society (Do & Kim, 2015). In other words, children come to recognize that rules are not fixed, but that it is possible to change them by agreement with others, and children learn how to participate in the process of making rules and develop social competence.

Human beings also need self-regulation ability in their constant interactions with others, to appropriately control desires and behaviors, and to respond appropriately to the needs of their environment. Bronson (2000) emphasizes that self-regulation by children is an important skill developed in the child's socialization process. She further claims self-regulation is a sign of maturity and that the appropriate socialization process begins to appear in early childhood, affecting social emotional development from that time on. Self-regulation ability is the process of controlling self-functioning and self-behavior in a variety of social contexts (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004), and is a variable related to rule-making activities that help children control themselves and accept other's opinions when with other children.

Rule-making activities can develop social competence, which is the ability to achieve personal goals while maintaining positive relationships with others based on diverse social relationship experiences (Ford, 1982; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998), and through the rule-making process, children will be able to develop self-regulation to appropriately control their needs while interacting with other children.

Existing qualitative studies related to rule-making activities with children have focused on the process of making rules (Choi, Kim, Lee, Jo, & Seo, 1999b), in particular the cultural and technological perspectives on rule making (Ko, 2003; Kim, 2007, Choi & Jeon, 1994). In addition, quantitative research as to the effects of rule-making on children's development

includes studies of analyzing the effects of child's interpersonal behavior, democratic attitudes, and interpersonal problem solving (Choi, Kim, Lee, Jo & Seo, 1999a; Choi et al., 2000; Kim, 1996).

However, these studies simply demonstrate the value and effectiveness of rule-making activities in simple situations. However, there is no existing research that specifically focuses on the process of agreeing to and choosing the most appropriate alternatives in the problem solving process, based on a decision making model. Thus, this study attempts to investigate the effects of children's experience of self-regulation and social capacity through rational thought process, and their experience of choosing the best alternatives. As such, the specific research problems are as follows:

First, what is the effect of rule-making activities based on the decision making model on young children's social competence?

Second, what is the effect of rule-making activities based on the decision making model on young children's self-regulation?

Method

Participants

The research participants were 40 five-year-old children from the G kindergarten in G city. Candidate kindergartens for possible participation were randomly sampled before selection. Class A of 19 children (10 boys, 9 girls) was selected as the experimental group and Class B of 21 children (11 boys, 10 girls) was selected as the control group. The subject's gender and average ages are shown in Table 1.

Table1.The gender and average ages of participating children

Group	n	Gender		Avg. Month of Age (SD)	*t*
		Male	Female		
Experimental	19	10	9	64.94	-.836
Control	21	11	10	65.75	

Research tools

Social competence

The test tools were used to examine the effects of rule-making activities on children's social competence and self-regulation based on the decision making model. The child social competence test is a teacher assessment scale of child social competence made by Lee (2005). This test consists of a total of 41 items including 12 items concerned with emotion regulation,

9 items that focus on emotionality, 12 items related to peer relationship skill, and 8 items investigating understanding social norms. Each item has a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 25, and with a higher score indicating that the child has a higher level of social competence. It was found that Cronbach's α of emotional regulation was .94, of emotionality was .83, of peer relationship skill was.95, of social norm was .93, and for the whole test was .97.

Self-regulation

Child self-regulation ability was measured using Kim's (2005) scale which was revised and supplemented with the maternal evaluation child self-regulation ability scale that was developed by Lee (2003). This scale consists of a total of 31 items and 4 sub-factors, namely self-evaluation (5 items), self-determination (9 items), behavior suppression (10 items) and emotionality (7 items). Each item has a 5-point scale, with a higher score indicating that the child has higher self-regulation ability. Scores range from a minimum 31 to 155 points. It was found that Cronbach's α of self-assessment was .87, of self-determination was .78, of behavioral inhibition was .79, of emotionality was .81, and for the whole test was .87.

Preliminary study and tester training

Before this study was begun, in order to determine the timing of the rule-making activities based on the decision making model, the duration of the activities and the appropriateness of the research methods, etc., a preliminary study was conducted on 15 5-year old kindergarten children who were not the subjects of this study. Through this preliminary study, the adequacy of the research method, the level of understanding of the test tools, the time required for the test tools, and items that were difficult to understand were revised and supplemented, and it was confirmed that the proposed study method was suitable for children. Training for teachers and reviewers was conducted between May 8 and 14, 2018. The aim of teacher training was to guide each class teacher to understand the purpose, content, process and method of this study, and to fully explain the role of the teachers in the experiment.

Study design

(1) Period and operation of experimental treatment

The experimental treatments of this study were conducted a total of 12 times twice a week for 6 weeks between June 4, 2018 and July 13, 2018. The experimental group children were allowed to conduct rule-making activities based on the decision making model, and the control group was instructed to conduct teacher-led rule-making activities. Each group had a separate classroom. Table 2 shows a specific comparison of the activities of the

experimental control groups.

Table 2. Specific comparison of the activities of experimental control groups

Division		Experimental group	Control group
Subjects		19	21
Research performance		A total of 12 sessions	A total of 12 sessions
Pre-examination		Social competence, self-regulation	Social competence, self-regulation
Experimental treatment		Rule-making activity based on decision making model	Teacher-led rule-making activity
Activities and Process	Introduction	Recognize situations that require rules	Recognize situations that require rules
	Deployment	Brainstorming about a problem	Talk about the rules needed
		List proposed problems and predict results	
		Create rules based on the results	Listing required rules
		Describe and edit rules	
	Finishing	Publish rules	Publish rules
	Post-test	Social competence, self-regulation	Social competence, self-regulation

(2) Extraction of rule-making problem situations

This study selected problem situations based on previous studies related to rule-making (Han & Yoon, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2018; Ko & Jeong, 2009). These were finalized by verifying content validity with 3 child education experts and 5 kindergarten teachers. Table 3 shows the problem situations and the content of rule-making activities in this study.

Table 3. Problem situations and the content of rule-making activities

Division	Problem situation	Content
1	Promises to keep in the classroom	In the classroom, determine the rules that everyone must follow to live safe and comfortable lives.
2	Promises to keep by area	Consider the potential discomforts of each area, and determine the rules to be followed.
3	Limiting the number of participants in the play area	When there are friends beyond the number of people who can enter each zone at the time of free choice activity
4	Promises to keep in the corridor	Think about the injuries and inconveniences that may occur in the corridor and determine the rules to be followed.
5	Promises to keep at lunch	Think about the inconvenience that may occur at lunch time and decide on the rules to be followed.
6	Promises to keep	Think about the inconvenience that may occur at snack time and

	at snack time	decide the rules to be followed.
7	Promises needed for outdoor play	When playing outside, think about the inconveniences that may occur and decide the rules to be followed.
8	Playing safely at the outdoor playground	Think about ways to play safely at the outdoor playground and make rules accordingly.
9	Crossing the road safely	Find out how you can safely cross as you come and go to and from kindergarten.
10	Safe water play	Before engaging in water play, think about ways to make it safe and pleasant and make rules accordingly.
11	Organizing your toys	Think about ways to use and organize toys and create appropriate rules.
12	Using your life utensils carefully	Find out how to use life utensils and make promise to use them correctly.

(3) Process of conducting rule-making activities based on the decision making model

In this study, the process of rule-making activities based on the decision making model was made as follows by referring to existing studies on the decision making model (Kim & Kim , 2018; Obenchain & Morris, 2007) (See Table 4).

Table 4. Process of conducting rule-making activities based on the decision making model

Division	Step	Activity content
Introduction	Identify decision-making situations or issues	Recognize that images or pictures related to situations that require rules are necessary for problematic situations.
Deployment	Thinking about alternatives	Identify the problem, and brainstorm the necessary rules.
	Determine evaluation criteria for alternatives	Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives.
	Think about predictable results for alternatives	Create rules based on the results determined by the decision table.
	Deciding the final alternative	Describe the conditions and rules to follow. Modify rules using positive words rather than negative ones.
Finishing	Evaluation	Post the modified rule where everyone can see them.

(4) Process of activity development of the experimental group

The children of the experimental group were instructed to conduct rule-making activities based on the decision making model a total of 12 times, two times a week for six weeks between June 4 and July 13, 2018, and the control group was instructed to conduct teacher-led rule-making activities. The duration of the activity was 40-50 minutes, and the rule-making activity plan based on the decision making model of the experimental group is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. The rule making activity plan based on the decision making model of the experimental group

Date	June 20, 2018	Subjects	19 persons aged five
Activity name	Rules for lunch	Problem situation	Dirty lunch time
Activity goals	Know the necessity of rules. Share opinions with each other and set rules. Express thoughts by using the decision-making table.		
Division	Step	Activity content	
Introduction	Identify decision-making situations or issues	Talking while looking at pictures of lunch time in Yuri class (Photos of food left behind, photos of food on the floor, etc.). What do you think when you see the pictures?	
Deployment	Thinking about alternatives	Talk about the experience of not observing rules at lunch time and feeling uncomfortable. Have you ever been uncomfortable because the rules were not followed during lunch time? Of the problems, select problems that many children chose Talk freely about opinions to solve these problems. What should we do to make lunch time better?	
	Determine evaluation criteria for alternatives	List the proposed rules in a decision-making table. Decide on the good and bad points of keeping the rules and not keeping the rules. Would it be better if you followed the rules? What problems may occur if we don't follow rules?	
	Thinking about predictable results for alternatives	Predict whether you can keep the rules you have created. How will the lunch time change when the rules are observed? If the rules are followed, what will improve?	
	Deciding the final alternative	Describe the situations where rules need to be followed and the rules to follow. Modify the rules using positive words rather than negative ones.	
Finishing	Evaluation	Find out why you should keep the rules. How do you feel about creating your own rules? How will our class be when the rules are well kept? Why did we make the rules? Attach the created rules in a prominent place.	

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed with SPSS 23.0 software. To examine the reliability of the assessment tool, Cronbach'α was calculated for the inter-rater reliability. The average scores and standard deviation were calculated for children's social competence, and self-regulation for the experimental group and the control group. An independent sample t-test was performed to verify homogeneity. As the homogeneity of ex-ante test scores between groups was verified, a t-test was performed on averages of ex-post test scores to analyze the differences between the groups.

Results

The effects of rule-making activities based on decision-making models on young children's social competence

As shown in Table 6, the average ex-post test scores of the experimental group were higher than the average ex-ante test scores in all sub-categories and the sum total in children's social competence. The sub-categories of social competence, 'emotion regulation' (t=2.113, p<.01), 'emotionality' (t=2.337, p<.01), 'peer relationship skill' (t=10.055, p<.001), 'social norms' (t=4.817, p<.001) and the sum total (t=6.694, p<.001) all showed a statistically significant increase. Therefore, the rule-making activities based on the decision-making model is proven to have positive effects on children's social competence.

Table 6. Ex-ante and ex-post test scores for social competence

Sub-Category	Group		n	M	SD	*t*
Emotion regulation	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	31.57	3.61	.686
		Control	21	30.75	3.91	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	49.15	6.50	2.113**
		Control	21	43.45	9.91	
Emotionality	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	22.26	2.51	-1.032
		Control	21	23.00	1.91	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	37.47	5.98	2.337**
		Control	21	33.00	5.96	
Peer relationship skill	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	32.47	2.48	-.739
		Control	21	32.95	1.43	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	55.15	3.30	10.055***
		Control	21	37.55	6.91	
Social norms	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	20.78	1.75	-.410
		Control	21	21.00	1.45	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	35.84	2.43	4.817***
		Control	21	29.10	5.61	

Total Score	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	107.10	6.99	-.285
		Control	21	107.70	6.00	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	177.63	13.81	6.694***
		Control	21	143.10	17.99	

**p<.01, ***p < .001

The effects of rule-making activities based decision-making models on young children's Self-Regulation

As shown in Table 7, the average ex-post test scores of the experimental group were higher than the average ex-ante test scores in all sub-categories and the sum total in children's self-regulation. The sub-categories of social competence, 'self-evaluation' (t=5.072, p<.001), 'self-determination' (t=4.657, p<.001), 'behavior suppression' (t=12.091, p<.001), 'emotionality' (t=4.008, p<.001) and the sum total (t=9.215, p<.001) all showed a statistically significant increase. Therefore, the rule-making activities based on the decision-making model is proven to have positive effects on children's self-regulation.

Table 7. Ex-ante and ex-post test scores for self-regulation

Sub-category	Group		n	M	SD	*t*
Self-evaluation	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	11.52	3.16	-.812
		Control	21	12.25	2.65	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	21.78	22.65	5.072***
		Control	21	16.15	4.09	
Self-determination	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	15.73	5.74	.509
		Control	21	14.90	4.48	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	38.78	5.53	4.657***
		Control	21	28.60	7.09	
Behavior suppression	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	33.94	8.61	-.022
		Control	21	34.00	5.91	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	43.89	5.29	12.091***
		Control	21	28.25	2.29	
Emotionality	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	20.57	5.33	.516
		Control	21	19.70	5.30	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	27.89	3.57	4.008***
		Control	21	24.30	1.78	
Total Score	Ex-ante	Experimental	19	81.78	18.14	.199
		Control	21	80.85	10.49	
	Ex-post	Experimental	19	132.36	12.95	9.215***
		Control	21	97.30	10.75	

***p < .001

Discussion and conclusion

This study examined the effects of rule-making activities based on the decision-making model on children's social competence and self-regulation in 5-year-old children. The results of this study lead to the following discussion.

First, rule-making activities based on the decision making model were found to have a significant effect on the promotion of children's social competence. Emotion regulation, emotionality, peer relationship skills, and social norms were significantly different in the children of the experimental group participating in rule-making activities based on the decision-making model compared to those of the control group. In the results of this study, it can be explained that the children have learned how to coexist harmoniously with other people while experiencing conflicts and facing various problematic situations rationally through the rule-making activities based on the decision making model. This outcome was also partly achieved because the rule-making activity was adapted to the group's activities to acquire the criteria of desirable behavior, and to foster the opportunity to practice the ability to regulate one's own behavior according to these criteria. This is consistent with the findings of Corsaro (1985), and Lash (2008) that children need a process to understand rules because they also have their own thoughts and attitudes about rules.

Second, it is found that rule-making activities based on the decision-making model have a significant effect on the enhancement of children's self-regulation ability. The sub-factors of self-evaluation, self-determination, behavioral inhibition, and emotionality of the children in the experimental group participating in rule-making activities based on the decision making model were found to be significantly different from those of the control group. The results of this study can be explained by the fact that children participating in rule-making activities based on the decision making model came up with alternatives while participating in the decision-making process. After looking up relevant information, they took into account expected results, conducted a self-evaluation and then suppressed aberrant behavior while accepting responsibility for the result. This result supports the findings of Pu and Yoon (2018) that children acquire those standards of good behavior that internalize social values and the morality required by their social community, and that they regulate their behavior according to these standards themselves. The study results are similar to those of Kim & Kwon (2018), who found that children adapt their rules to their needs, adapt themselves to the rules, and promote self-regulation ability.

Based on the above discussion, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are as follows: First, this study examined the effects of rule-making activities based on the decision-making model on the social competence and self-regulation ability of children in a specific region. In subsequent studies, efforts should be made to increase the likelihood of generalization by verifying effects on a larger number of children, and additionally, it is necessary to examine more closely whether groups are homogeneous through normality testing. Second, in the present study, the topics of the rules were set by

teachers, but in subsequent studies, it will be necessary to compare the effects of the rules that children set by themselves. Third, this study failed to find out whether the rule-making activities based on the decision-making model were sustainable due to the limitation of only 12 sessions of experimental treatment activities. Therefore, research is needed that continuously applies the activities in the child education field by increasing the duration of the experiment.

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Korean Abstract

의사결정모형에 기반한 규칙만들기 활동이 유아의 사회적 유능감과 자기조절력에 미치는 영향

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본 연구의 목적은 의사결정모형에 기반한 규칙만들기 활동이 유아의 사회적 유능감과 자기조절력에 미치는 영향을 분석하고자 하였다. 연구대상은 G 광역시에 소재한 G 유치원만 5세 유아 40명을 선정하였으며, 한 학급 유아 19명을 실험집단으로, 다른 학급 유아 20명을 통제집단으로 임의 배정하였다. 실험을 위해 의사결정모형에 기반한 규칙만들기 활동을 구성한 후 실험집단에서는 의사결정모형에 기반한 규칙만들기 활동을 실시하였고 통제집단은 교사주도의 규칙만들기 활동을 실시하였다. 실험집단과 통제집단의 사전 및 사후 시험 결과를 해석하기 위해 SPSS프로그램을 이용하여 t-검증 통해 분석하였다. 연구결과 의사결정모형에 기반한 규칙만들기 활동은 유아의 사회적 유능감과 자기조절력을 향상시키는데 효과적인 교수학습 방법으로 적용될 수 있음을 시사한다.

주요어: 의사결정모형, 규칙만들기, 자기조절력, 사회적 유능감