

# The Relationship between Parenting Stress of Custodial Grandparents and Family Relations: Focusing on the Moderating Effect of Poverty Status

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## Abstract

*This study confirmed the moderating effects of poverty status in the relationship between parenting stress of custodial grandparents and family relationships, and analyzed data collected from 144 custodial grandparents from Jeollanam-do, South Korea. The SPSS 17.0 statistics program was used to conduct a descriptive statistical analysis, and the Amos 18.0 statistics program was used to conduct a multiple group analysis. The study found that there was no moderating effect of poverty status on the relationship between parenting stress of custodial grandparents and family relations. However, we were able to confirm that parenting stress of impoverished custodial grandparents did have a significant influence on family relations. Based on these results, we present a practical policy proposal that can improve family relations of impoverished custodial grandparents.*

**Keywords:** *Custodial grandparents, Parenting stress, Family relation, Poverty status*

## 1. Introduction

Previous studies[2][8]support the hypothesis that parenting stress has a negative influence on family relationships. However, despite previous studies showing that custodial grandparent parenting stress has a significant influence on family relationships, they have the following limitation. Custodial grandparents may experience similar parenting stress, but the research does not explain the differences in these families' relations. Regarding these causes, Baron and Kenny [3] pointed out that moderating variables buffer the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. Therefore, previous studies are limited, as they do not consider the characteristics of circumstantial variables in parenting stress of custodial grandparents and family relationships. In this respect, in this study the moderating variable that we are interested in is poverty status, which signifies the poorest classes. The reason that we see poverty status as a moderating variable is because the complexity of family

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### Article history:

Received (July 13, 2016), Review Result (September 11, 2016), Accepted (October 12, 2016)

relationships changes differently according to poverty status. For example, Ko and Lee [9], who analyzed relationships with children of non-poor elderly women and poor elderly women, found that relationships were more positive between non-poor elderly women and their children than poor elderly women and their children. Baik and Lee [2] also reported that groups of families with high standards of living appreciated family relationships more than groups with lower standards of living.

The parenting stress of custodial grandparents from impoverished backgrounds, that is to say from the poor class, has a huge influence on family relationships, while the parenting stress of custodial grandparents from non-poor classes has a relatively small influence on family relationships. With this as the backdrop, the study seeks to examine the moderating effect of poverty status in the relationship structure of family relations and parental stress of custodial grandparents. Given these findings, this study is meaningful as it proposes empirical data for practical policy proposals with the intention of improving custodial grandparent family relationships.

## **2. Materials & methods**

The purpose of this study is to confirm the moderating effect of poverty status in the relationship between family relationships and parental stress of custodial grandparents. In order to do this, 149 custodial grandparents living in Jeollanam-do, South Korea were surveyed in 2014. Five answers were excluded due to being undependable, so ultimately data from 144 people was analyzed. We used the parenting stress criterion modified in part by Sin [4] and developed by Abindon, and which was confirmed to have a Cronbach's alpha of .899. Family relationships were measured using the family relationship criterion used by Moos and Moos (1986) and Kim (1995) and used in An [1]'s research, and the Cronbach's alpha was reported as .919. The poor class was set as 130% or below the minimum cost of living, and 130% above the minimum cost of living was set as non-poor classes.

In order to verify our study hypothesis, we used a social science statistics package composed of SPSS 17.0 and Amos 18.0, and a multiple group analysis was conducted to confirm the moderating effect of poverty status.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics**

The sociodemographic characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 1. First, the gender of respondents was mainly female with 130 female respondents (90.8%) and just 14 male respondents (9.2%). The average age of respondents was 69.5 years, with 74 people (51.4%) in their 60s and 70 people (48.6%) in their 70s. In all, 67 (46.5%) respondents reported that their health was poor, 46 (31.9%) said their health was average, and 31 (21.6%) said they were in good health. Most respondents (68 people, 47.9%) were raising just 1 child, with 57 respondents (40.1%) raising 2 children, and 17 respondents (12.0%) raising 3 or more children. The number of non-poor class respondents was 75 (52.1%), slightly higher than the 69 (47.9%) poor class respondents.

Table 1. Respondent sociodemographic characteristics

Classification		Frequency (%)	Classification		Frequency
Gender	Male	56(40.9%)	Age	30s and under	35(25.5%)
	Female	81(59.1%)		40s	78(56.9%)
				50 or older	24(17.5%)
Academic Background	Middle School Graduate or Less	23(16.8%)	Employment Status	Self-employed	5(3.6%)
	High School Graduate	87(63.5%)		Regular worker	15(10.9%)
	University Graduate	26(19.0%)		Non-regular worker	65(47.4%)
	Graduate School Graduate	1(0.7%)		Unemployed	30(21.9%)
	Graduate School Graduate or higher			Other	22(16.1%)
Number of Children	1	33(24.1%)	Government Support	Receiving Support	103(75.2%)
	2	70(51.1%)		Not Receiving Support	
	3	24(17.5%)			
	4 or more	10(7.3%)			

### 3.2. Moderating effect analysis

The measurement equivalence hypothesis was satisfied, so a multiple group structural equation model analysis was carried out. First, Table 2 shows the results of examining path coefficients and level of significance of the poor class model and the non-poor class model. In the case of the poor class model, parenting stress had a statistically significant influence on family relationships ( $B = 0.465$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ), while there was no significant influence on the non-poor class model ( $B = .789$ ,  $p = .063$ ).

Table 2. Multiple group structural equation of poor class model and non-poor class model results

Model	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Sig
(Poor Class model) Parenting Stress → family relationship	.465	.212	2.191	.028
(Non-poor Class model) Parenting Stress → family relationship	.789	.425	1.856	.063

We investigate the difference in  $\chi^2$  in the unconstrained and equality constrained models,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.449$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ , and the significance level is 0.503. That is to say, the probability of observing a 3.84  $\chi^2$  value in a  $\chi^2$  distribution where the degree of freedom is 1 is 50.3%, and the level of significance exceeded 5%. we can judge that poverty status did not have a moderating effect on the relationship between custodial grandparent parenting stress and family relationships.

## 4. Conclusion and implications

This study examined the moderating effect of poverty status in the relationship between custodial grandparent parenting stress and family relationships. Our results found that poverty status did not have a moderating effect in the relationship between custodial grandparents parenting stress and family relationships. This result does not agree with previous studies [2][8][9], which stated that poverty status did have a moderating effect in the relationship

between parenting stress and family relationships. However, in the case of non-poor class custodial grandparents, parenting stress did not have a significant influence on family relationships, while in poor class custodial grandparents, we confirmed that parenting stress did have a significant influence on family relationships. Therefore, practical policy interventions for parenting stress are required to improve family relationships in poor custodial grandparents.

First, conflict occurs between grandparents and their adult children owing to differences of opinion in their methods of rearing their grandchildren and owing to generational differences between grandparent and grandchild. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a program for resolving these conflicts [5][7]. Specifically, this study found that 46.5% of custodial grandparents reported that they were in bad health. If we take into account the fact that existing social welfare institutions are running institution-centered programs, these institutions need to also run visiting programs for conflict resolution. On a different note, self-help meetings need to be revitalized in order to promote conflict resolution between poor custodial grandparents, their children, and their grandchildren. Thus, while poor custodial grandparents from similar environments interact with each other, they can learn about conflict resolution. According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family [10], 90.8% of custodial grandparents report that they are struggling because childrearing costs for their grandchildren are so expensive. In particular, in the case of custodial grandparents in the near-poverty class, it can be understood that these grandparents are suffering extreme economic difficulties because their adult children cannot provide support and also because the government assistance is insufficient. Therefore, custodial grandparents at the near-poverty level need economic support, such as a childcare allowance, to support their grandchildren.

However, despite the significance of these results, this study does have the following limitations. This study postulates that poverty status has a moderating effect in the relationship between parenting stress and family relationships. Therefore, there is a limit in how much we can understand about the relationship between these two variables. In future, there is a need to consider inserting other situational variables that exist between parenting stress and family relationships.

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