

# GROUNDING THEORY ANALYSIS ON THE REARING EXPERIENCE OF FATHERS WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine father's experience of raising children with disabilities according to the grounded theory. **Method:** The participants were 6 Korean fathers who rear children with disabilities. In-depth interview data was analyzed on the grounded theory. **Results:** As a result of, firstly, the phenomenon in the rearing experience of fathers with children with disabilities was 'constraint', and the causal condition acting on 'constraint' were 'seethe' and 'powerlessness'. The contextual factors which influenced 'seethe' and 'powerlessness' were 'wife's rearing attitude', 'financial status', and 'education system'. The intervening condition which influenced action strategies to resolve the 'constraint' were 'disposition', 'immersion in work', and 'severity of disability.' The consequences which fathers resolve the 'constraint' were 'reborn', 'settlement for reality', and 'denial.' Secondly, as analyzing the situation relations, social gaze and educational welfare environment existed in the outermost concentric circles while in the innermost concentric circles, a father himself, a child with a disability and wife's rearing attitude were appeared to develop by interacting around the father. Thirdly, fathers with children with disabilities were classified into five types according to the paradigm model. **Conclusion:** The results of this study will provide useful information for developing the support program for fathers with children with disabilities.

**Key words :** Children with disabilities, Father's rearing, Grounded theory

## I. INTRODUCTION

The birth of a child with disabilities brings about various difficulties for the entire family. Substantial established research (Kim & Han, 2013; Han & Kim, 2007; Lee, Ryu, & Han, 2007) proved that mothers, who were primarily responsible for raising their children within their families, experienced significant stress due to the overwhelming role burdens they faced in caring for their children with disabilities. Interestingly, fathers with strong family responsibilities could be also expected to encounter comparable levels of stress to that of mothers with children with a disabilities. Despite this noteworthy finding, it is unfortunate that there remains a limited number of studies on this particular topic.

Recently, due to the increase of employment of women and the improvement of women's status, and the role sharing of couples in the family based on changing gender roles in terms of gender equality have continuously been discussed and a result of it, there is a growing awareness that fathers should also actively participate in rearing children. In addition, it is reported that when the father is actively involved in rearing children and affectionate to them, accordingly, it affects the degree of the social awareness and gender role development of the children and therefore the father's role in the family is becoming more important than ever (Kim, Chong, & Oh, 2013). This changing role of fathers can put a lot of stress on fathers by demanding not only economic responsibilities but also complex activities to promote affection with children. It is already proven that as a support system for a mother, the role of the father with a child with disability plays a significant role in relieving the mother of the child with disability from rearing stress (Han & Kim, 2007) and we can claim that fathers' role is a crucial factor in rearing children with disabilities.

According to a previous study on fathers of children with disabilities (Kim & Park, 2015), fathers of children with disabilities had a significantly lower level of happiness than fathers of children without disabilities, especially in terms of economic power. If the father of a child with disability has a low sense of happiness, it is necessary to find out what factors are related to it and why the father of the child with disability has a low sense of happiness through the experience of raising children. In addition, considering that a positive relationship between father and child can promote child development (Kim & Kim, 2014) and that fathers of children with disabilities can affect the child rearing through another interaction with mothers (Noh, Park, & Kim, 2013), the need for research on the experience of raising children with disabilities is raised. Fan and Chen (2000) also insisted that fathers' rearing have an impact on the development and problem behavior of children with disabilities.

As such, because the fathers' rearing attitude directly affects the development and education of children with disabilities, the role of the father, along with the role of the mother, becomes an essential feature in determining the future of children with disabilities. Despite the importance of fathers' role, research on fathers with children with disabilities is very few, compared to studies involving mothers of children with disabilities. In addition, studies on fathers' rearing participation of children with disabilities (Jeong & Kim, 2010; Jung & Hwang, 2016; Kim, 2006) did not address major themes; for example, what are fathers' difficulties when they rear children with disabilities? and how those hardship can be resolved? Meanwhile, in a qualitative study by in-depth interviews with fathers of children with disabilities (Kim & Yoon, 2013), it is reported that fathers had psychological issues such as chronic anxiety in the process

of rearing children with disabilities. They spent quality time with their family, but at the same time, they were strongly aware of the financial burdens as heads of the household. Previous research had conducted studies on how parenting difficulties of parents with children with disabilities appear and what factors affect parenting. However, they did not address the psychological problems of fathers, which were focused on in this study.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how difficulties that fathers face while rearing children with disabilities, what they originate from, and the factors affecting such problems and the

process of solving them on the basis of grounded theory research methodology. The data obtained through this research will provide basic data for the development of programs, which increase reflection on fathers with children with disabilities and their participation in rearing them.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Participants

Participants in this study were 6 fathers of children with disabilities who received inclusive education at an elementary school in Gyeong-Nam province. The specific characteristics of participants are as shown in <Table II-1>.

<Table II-1> Characteristics of the participants

Participant	Characteristics of Fathers				Characteristics of Children with disabilities			
	Age	Education	Job	Gender	Age	Disabilities	Siblings(age)	Disability diagnosis (Age)
A	42	BA	Self-employ	Boy	11	Developmental disability	Elder sister (13) Younger brother (7)	3
B	48	BA	Self-employ	Boy	11	Intellectual disability	Elder sister (19)	5
C	37	High school	Employee	Boy	11	Intellectual disability	Younger sister (7)	6
D	43	High school	Employee	Girl	9	Intellectual disability	Younger sister (7)	6
E	40	High school	Service	Girl	8	Autistic disorder	Younger brother (7)	3
F	48	BA	Self-employ	Boy	14	Spasticity cerebral palsy	Elder sister (19)	4

2. Interview question

The main questions used in this study were how did you feel as a father of a child with disability when your child was diagnosed with disability?, what were the difficulties and rewards of raising a child with disability?, what do you think about the future problems of a child with disability?, and what are stresses of siblings with children with disabilities?, what are the expect on the social institutions for children with disabilities?

During the interview process, the researcher agreed with the participant's opinions and maintained an encouraging expression and attitude so that participants could express their personal thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Interview questions were derived through consultation with one professor majoring in special education with 12 years of experience, two special education teachers with 10 years of special education experience, and one professor with abundant experience in grounded theory research.

3. Data collection and analysis

Before the interviews, the researcher explained the objectives of this study to the participants in advance, asked for cooperation, and was allowed to interview. After obtaining the permission, the researcher recorded the contents of the interview and transcribed them. Interviews were conducted at the appointed time and place the participants agreed to. While participants A to D were met at the restaurant after work in the evening, because participant E worked mainly at night, so the researcher visited his home after school to conduct interviews. In the case of participant F, it was difficult to visit the home due to the wife's refusal, so the researcher met participant F at a

cafe on Sundays. When interviewing at restaurants and cafes, the researcher gave consideration to request a separate room where the interview could be conducted without interruption in a quiet environment.

Individual interview times ranged from 2 to 3 hours, with interviews covering from one to three times. Basically, the interview was conducted without limiting the interview time or the number of interviews. If necessary, additional interview was made by telephone for supplement. The interview was conducted by the first author, who met with all the fathers who participated in this study as homeroom teachers. All participants gladly responded to the interview because they had a strong faith in the first author, who was the homeroom teacher.

Immediately after the interview, the researcher repeated the recording and transferred directly to the computer while listening to the recording. Expressions of the participants were recorded as they were in the process of transcription, and the personal information of the participants including names were marked with symbols for confidentiality. Observational records made during the interview were also copied and documented for future reference. The data transcribed from the recording of the interview corresponded to pages 18-20 on A4 paper with a letter size of 12 points and a line interval of 170 per participant. The number of lines of all recorded data was 450-580.

The analysis of this study was carried out according to open coding, axial coding, and selective coding on the basis of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory analysis method. First of all, while reading the interview contents through open

coding, similar concepts were grouped together and each was named as a main term. The examples are as follows:

“I wouldn't believe it when I knew my child was disabled, it can't be.”

--> disability diagnosis

“At first, I was really frustrated. I really and badly was.”--> stuffiness

Then, through axial coding, the concepts named in open coding were grouped with similar meanings and categorized, and the categories were connected into causal conditions, contexts, phenomenon, intervening conditions, action strategies, and consequence. For example, concepts such as ‘disability diagnosis’, ‘shock’, and ‘stuffiness’ were categorized as ‘anger.’

Selective coding is to find key categories by integrating and linking concepts and categories obtained through open coding and axial coding. In this study, categorized concepts through open coding and axial coding, such as ‘overwhelming, feeling burden, frothy expectation, and feeling guilty’ are grouped into a phenomenon and it is named ‘constraint.’

In addition to the interview data, disability diagnosis materials of children, photos, and learning materials were brought at the time of the interview, used for interviews and data analysis, and returned later. For example, the data on the disability registration card was used as the concept of ‘disability diagnosis,’ and the concept of being ‘accompanied together’ or expressing ‘a desire not to accompany’ was derived through family photos.

### 3. Research reliability and validity

In order to increase the reliability and validity of qualitative research, it is necessary to invest a lot of time in the research process, apply the triangulation test, and share the research contents with the participants in the research (Kim, et al., 2009). Therefore, in this study, not only in-depth interviews, but also the photographs with the father and the child with disability together, the father's memos and diary records about the child while rearing him/her were also recorded in the

observation record sheet. In company with them, since the first researcher was also a school teacher of the participants' children with disabilities, a variety of data of the children with disabilities were documented as well so that the relevant data could be utilized for the analysis of this study.

In this way, in-depth interviews and photographic and documentary resources, as well as the opportunity to observe the interaction between participants and children with disabilities during interviews, were all applied to the triangulation test. All the materials passed after the interview was sent to the participants by e-mail to confirm the contents, so that they could make a reliable interpretation of the data analysis. Besides that, we consulted with 1 professor in special education major that has 12 years of experience, 2 teachers of 10 years career of special education fields, and 1 professor of extensive experiences of the grounded theory as well as the researchers in order to enhance the validity of the data analysis process, particularly including, naming categories of transferred materials in description process, analyzing situational models, and constructing paradigms.

### 4. Research ethics

The following points were considered with ethical awareness of participants. First, the whole procedure of research was preceded by voluntary consent of the participants. Second, efforts were made to maintain confidentiality to protect the privacy of participants. Third, participants' names were treated under the pseudonym, and all interview contents were approved beforehand. Fourth, all the transferred data was shown to the participants and confirmed by them.

### III. RESULTS

#### 1. Paradigm model of the experience of raising children of fathers with children with disabilities

In this study, data analysis on the rearing experience of fathers with children with disabilities revealed 120 concepts, 33 subcategories, and 18 upper categories. The relevant concepts and phenomenon in rearing experience of fathers with children with disabilities were presented in <Table III-1>.

<Table III-1> Concepts and categorization of the child-rearing experience of fathers with children with disabilities

Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Paradigm
Diagnosis of disability, Shock, Sadness, Stuffiness	Anger	Seethe	
Distorted perceptions, Labels, Rumors	Social stigma		
Attention deficits, Crying, Shouting, Emotional disturbances, Irritation, Echolalia, Self-injury, Non-speech, Over-attachment, Non-interaction, Non-ambulation, Orthopedic deformities, Cognitive deficits, Overly sexually curious behaviors	Challenge behavior of child	Powerlessness	Causal condition
Passivity, Social withdrawal, Anxiety about public perceptions, Over-protectiveness, Denial of diagnosis, Showing only videos to the child, Leaving the other siblings unattended, Lack of acceptance of the child's delayed development,	Distortion	Wife's rearing attitude	Contexts
Going out with the child, Encouraging independent attitudes	Encouragement	Financial status	
Financially stability, Enable to bear financial burden	Stability		
Failure of business, Debt, Financial difficulties, Separation from family	Unstability		
Homeroom teacher neglecting the child, Distrust of therapists/therapy techniques	Distrust	Education system	
Considerateness, Positive reinforcement, Accessibility	Trust		

# RESEARCH

O&G Forum 2024; 34: 1545-1554

Feeling stupid, Discouraged by results of treatment, Thinking about suicide, Consider immigration, Despair about the future	Anguish	Overwhelming	Phenomenon: Constraint
Being excluded, A laughing stock, Worry about child’s self-sufficiency	Worry		
Burden on other siblings, Take care of children for life	Burden		
A wish to live longer than the child, Having a community for the child after they are gone	Wish	Feeling burden	
High cost for treatment and education	High cost		
Marriage, Independence, Becoming a typical person	Expectation	Frothy expectation	
Guilt, Lack of confidence that other siblings will support the child	Blaming themselves	Feeling guilty	
Meeting with friends and having company, Being outgoing, Enjoying hobbies (e.g. Fishing)	Optimistic	Disposition	
Anxious, Timid, Fatalist	Pessimistic		
Wishing for a break, Feeling that there is no time to rest, Hard working, Working on weekends	Hard working	Immersion on work	
Mild symptoms, Good communicative ability, Making progress in treatment	Moderation	Severity of disability	
Ineffectiveness of treatment, Behavioral modification and education	Severity		
Saving money, Encouraging independent attitudes	Preparation	Doing the best	Action strategies
Constant teaching, Providing the child a variety of experiences, Focusing on the child’s potential to improve, Trying a variety of medications, occupational, physical, and speech-language therapy	Doing the best		
Compliments, Hugs, Kisses, Physical contact, Playing with the child, Scolding (not being over-protective)	Showing affection		
Social welfare center, church, private institutions	Using intuitions		
Perceiving the life of the child as atypical, Institutionalization	Giving up	Resignation	Consequences
Tiredness, Irritability, Feeling more comfortable at work than at home	Avoidance	Avoidance	
Pride, Attitudes, Relaxedness, Confidence, Calmness. Parental motivation, Empathy towards his child, Nonchalance towards others’ stares	Psychological stability	Reborn	
Hoping for miracles, Thinking about the child getting better	Hope	Settlement for realty	
Absence of expectations, Openness to discuss the child, Lack of reservation	Realistic attitude		
Denial, Lack of acceptance, Negative feelings about disabilities, Cancellation of disability registration	Suppression	Denial	
Blaming the wife, Conflicts and arguments with wife, Redirecting frustration	Blame		
Hiding, Avoiding going out. Avoiding meeting with friends, Avoiding make new friends	Hiding		

The paradigm model was presented in [Figure III-1] based on Strauss and Corbin (1998) for the concepts and category of the therapy experience for children with disabilities presented in <Table III-1>. Based on this model, phenomenon, causal conditions, contexts, intervening conditions, interaction strategies, and consequences were stated.



[Figure III-1] A paradigm model of rearing experiences of fathers

As a result of the data analysis of this study, fathers of children with disabilities first encountered abnormal behavior of children with disabilities, resulting in feelings such as anger, shock, and sadness, and on the other hand, experienced 'seethe' and 'powerlessness' due to social stigma of people around them, which became a direct cause of the occurrence of the phenomenon, 'constraint.'

The context affecting the intensity of the phenomenon, 'constraint' were the degree of distrust or trust in 'wife's rearing attitude', 'financial status', and 'education system.' It can affect on the 'constraint' that whether the wife's parenting attitude was distorted or encouraging, and whether the financial condition was good or not. At the same time, if children's teacher was interested in their children and counselled well, they would have trust in the educational system, which affected the degree of 'constraint.'

The phenomenon, 'constraint', was found to be that parents felt 'overwhelming' due to their children's disabilities, always 'felt as a burden' to have children with disabilities, had 'guilty' about children with disabilities, or sometimes had 'frothy expectation.'

The intervening conditions that affected the strategy for solving the phenomenon was different depending on whether fathers' tendencies were optimistic or negative, or whether their children's disability was severe or mild. In addition, it was found that the degree of immersion on economic activities influenced the strategy for phenomenon solving. Strategies to solve the phenomenon of fathers of children with disabilities who participated in this study were 'doing their best', 'resignation' or 'avoidance', and the results of these strategies were 'reborn', 'settlement for reality', and 'denial.'

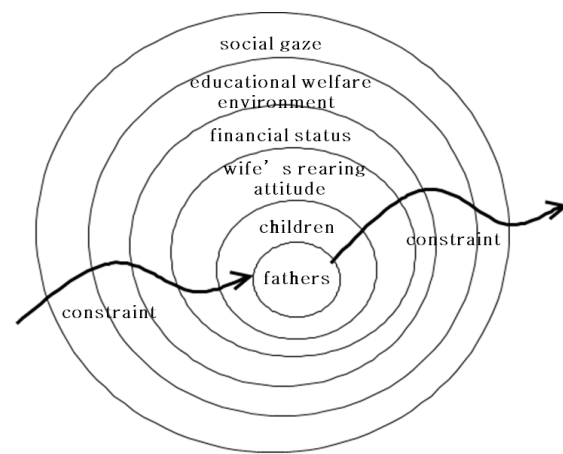
## 2. A situational analysis and hypothetical relationship statement

In the outermost concentric circles of the situational relations of fathers with children with disabilities who participated, there were social gaze and educational welfare environment that viewed children with disabilities negatively. In addition, there was an economic problem such as an increase in burden of education and medical treatment costs compared to children without disabilities. In the innermost concentric circle, there were fathers himself who reared children with disabilities, interacting with fathers and their children with disabilities and wife's rearing attitude.

On the side close to fathers, there were their children and wife's rearing attitude and on the outer side there was a society that views disability in a negative way and the educational welfare environment. And there was the situational characteristics of financial conditions interacting with each other between wife's rearing attitude and educational welfare environment, and eventually they affected the formation, presentation, and resolution of the 'constraint.' The details are as shown in [Figure III-2].

The analysis results indicated that the phenomenon of 'constraint' that fathers of children with disabilities experienced when rearing children worked externally and internally. The external factors were social, economic, and educational welfare environment, and on the other hand, the internal factors were wife's rearing attitude, children with disabilities, and fathers themselves. These factors had various actions-reactions with different relations and levels, and the

types of actions-reactions were formed by forming a framework of situational relations by generating unexpected and accidental events by constantly changing conditions.



[Figure III-2] Diagram on the situational relationship

Hypothetical relationship statements use the domain of degree as a function to present a form of statement about the phenomenon revealed in the data analysis process and the hypothetical relationship between causal relationships, contexts, arbitration situations, and the attributes of results and strategies. The hypothetical relationship statements that may appear in this study are as follows.

- (1) The more distorted the wife's rearing attitude is, the stronger the level of 'constraint' will be.
- (2) The more encouraging the wife's rearing attitude is, the weaker the level of 'constraint' will be.
- (3) If the financial status is in good condition, the level of 'constraint' will weaken.
- (4) If the financial status is not in good condition, the level of 'constraint' will be strong.
- (5) The higher the level of distrust in the education system is, the stronger the level of 'constraint' will be.
- (6) The higher the level of trust in the education system, the weaker the level of 'constraint' will be.
- (7) The more optimistic the father's disposition is, the more he will do his best to deal with 'constraint.'
- (8) The more pessimistic the fathers' disposition is, the more likely he will take resigned action against 'constraint.'
- (9) If the father is fully responsible for economic activities, he will avoid 'constraint.'
- (10) The milder child's disability is, the more father will do his best to deal with 'constraint.'
- (11) The more severe the child's disability is, the more likely fathers will experience resignation and avoidance towards 'constraint.'
- (12) The more fathers do their best to deal with 'constraint', the more they will experience 'reborn.'
- (13) The more parents experience resignation and avoidance towards 'constraint', the more likely they will reject the disabilities of their children.
- (14) Even if parents do their best to deal with 'constraint', they may still face 'settlement for reality.'
- (15) Even if parents resort to avoidance to deal with 'constraint', they may still have opportunity for 'reborn.'

3. Types of rearing experiences

The phenomenon of the father’s experience of raising children with disabilities was the process of generating-representing for solving ‘constraint.’ During the process of raising their children, fathers experienced feeling of seething and powerlessness, and as a result, they experienced ‘constraint.’ The intensity of the generated ‘constraint’ was determined by the degree and interaction of the wife’s rearing attitude, financial status, and education system. Therefore, there was a difference in the intensity of ‘constraint’ perceived by the participant. When ‘constraint’ was generated, the father chose a coping strategy to escape the situation, and the interaction process between the intensity of ‘constraint’ and structural situations

such as the father’s disposition, immersion on work, and severity of disability affected either the father’s choice of ‘doing the best’ or ‘resignation’ and ‘avoidance.’ Depending on the selected strategy, the adaptation to ‘constraint’ appeared differently. If the response to ‘constraint’ was shown to be doing the best, the father himself obtained ‘reborn,’ and if the response to ‘constraint’ was resignation or avoidance, he would be in either ‘settlement for reality’ or ‘denial.’ The types of rearing experiences of the fathers of children with disabilities derived based on situation analysis and hypothetical relationship statements are presented in the following <Table III-2>.

<Table III-2> The rearing experience types of the fathers with disabilities

Paradigm		Property	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
Causal conditions	Seethe Powerlessness	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contexts	Wife’s rearing attitude	Degree	Encouraging	Encouraging	Distorted	Encouraging	Encouraging
	Financial status	Aspect	Satisfactory	Difficult	Difficult	Difficult	Difficult
	Education system	Degree	Trust	Distrust	Distrust	Distrust	Distrust
Phenomenon	Constraint	Degree	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Intervening Condition	Disposition	Degree	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Optimistic	Pessimistic
	Immersion on work	Aspect	Fully responsible	Fully responsible	Fully responsible	Fully responsible	Fully responsible
	Severity of disability	Degree	Mild	Mild	Mild	Mild	Mild
Action strategy	Doing the best Resignation Avoidance	-	Doing the best Avoidance	Avoidance	Doing the best the Resignation	Resignation Avoidance	Resignation Avoidance
Consequences	Reborn Settlement for reality Denial	-	Reborn	Settlement for reality	Settlement for reality	Settlement for reality	Settlement for reality Denial

1) First Type

In the first type, the constraint of fathers was weak, the wife’s attitude was encouraging, the financial status was abundant, the educational system was trusted, the degree of disability was mild and he was fully responsible of economic activities but if he was optimistic, he would be reborn by responding to constraints with doing the best even if he used sometimes avoidance. Cases of this type were participants D and F. They had educated and treated their children in all possible ways because they were optimistic and had no financial burden when their children’s disabilities were suspected. Although participants D and F were in a state of being fully responsible for economic activities and thus, bound to work, they were satisfied with their wives’ rearing attitudes and trusted the education system. It can be interpreted that these situations would act as significant contexts and they believed the children’s disability status would be improved, and that they had achieved the results of being reborn with psychological stability and hope. “I don’t usually get too much stress. I’m easygoing. I don’t fight either. (...) Because my daughter is getting so much better... There’s no such thing as a bad relationship because of my daughter. My wife is a caring mom and takes care of the children well, so I leave all to my wife. (...) I can see that my

daughter is getting better. I feel more relaxed as well. Unconditionally, I’m always looking at the bright side.” (Interview with D) “I don’t have any financial difficulties, and the disability of my child is not severe, so I think I can raise my child. I take my child with me to almost meeting with relatives or friends. My friends all know my child’s disability. I’m busy doing business. So I’ve left all of my child’s parenting and education issues to my wife. (...) I think parents should raise the child stronger because he has disability. I never give up because I don’t think my child’s disability won’t improve. I’m not ashamed of my child’s disability.” (Interview with F)

2) Second Type

In the second type, the constraint was strong, the wife’s attitudes was encouraging, and the child had mild disability but if the financial status was poor and the education system was distrusted, he was in charge of economic activities and he was pessimistic, he would be settlement for reality with the response of avoidance. A case of this type was participant E. He was frustrated and heartbroken about his child’s challenge behavior. He was fully responsible for economic activities and was stressed about the financial condition that was not abundant due to business failures and was forced to work until dawn to support the child

with disability economically. Not only was the stress caused by the child's disability, but also the stress of being tied to work was also considerable. Although he distrusted the education system, his wife's rearing attitude was encouraging and it shows that he settled for reality through the strategy of coping with it by avoiding confrontations with his wife.

"The business I was doing last time went well, but as I forced myself to expand a bit too much for supporting my daughter with disabilities, I ended up lost all my property. Now I'm working till dawn, and because of this, I can't afford to pay attention to my child. (...) My child enters in a regular elementary school, but her homeroom teacher didn't answer my wife's phone, so we are really frustrated. At one time, when I was seriously struggling, I even contemplated suicide with my child. (...) It's a lot harder for my wife than me. Sometimes I feel a little bit bothered." (Interview with E)

### 3) Third Type

In the third type, the constraint was strong, the wife's attitude was distorted, the economic conditions were not abundant, the education system was distrusted, and he was in charge of economic activities but if the child's disability was mild and he was optimistic, he would be settled in reality by responding with doing the best and resignation.

The case of this type was participant B. He had an optimistic disposition, such as fully understanding his child's disability and not ashamed of it, but he was under a lot of stress because of worry about his child's future problems financially. In addition, the wife's rearing attitude was distorted, such as being ashamed of the child's disability, hiding it, and trying not to go out in front of others. He felt different education values from his wife and therefore he was stressed by it, but he did not want to get in trouble with his wife and he employed an avoidance strategy to take on. This strategy could be interpreted as acknowledging the reality that he did his best for the child with disability, without expecting significant improvement.

"My wife is so conscious of other people's eyes that she doesn't want to take her child to her relatives' house, and she doesn't go to parents' meetings for children with disabilities. If I point it out and talk about it, it'll only be a fight. In addition, the child's self-reliance ability should be developed, but my wife does everything for him even to wash his face and go to the bathroom. My wife has severe compulsion. If I have any disagreement with my wife, I can't go my way at all. I must go with my wife's opinion, so I have no choice but to neglect raising my child." (Interview with B)

### 4) Fourth Type

In the fourth type, the constraint was strong, the wife's attitudes was encouraging but the economic conditions were poor, the education system was distrusted and he was in charge of economic activities but if he was optimistic, he would be settled in reality by responding to constraints with resignation and avoidance.

The case for this type was Participant A. He was under a lot of stress due to the difference in educational values from his wife, who focused all attention only on the child with disabilities. He believed that more time and effort should be put into siblings without disabilities as well so that they could help the sibling with disabilities in the future. Even if he was fully responsible of economic activities, he showed great stress about the poor financial condition, and employed a strategy of resignation and

avoidance. With optimistic disposition, he did not have prejudice on the child with disability and tried to spend more time with the child. It could be interpreted as showing the results of settling down on the reality that does not hide or be ashamed of child with disabilities, but he also has no high expectations.

"It's hard to make money these days. However, all my wife's attention is on the son with disabilities, so I feel other siblings are alienated. (...) I try my best to play with the son with disabilities even if I get home late. (...) My child's disability is unavoidable and I am afraid but I do not expect it to become normal. I don't think it's necessary to enter a child with disability to a regular middle school." (Interview with A)

### 5) Fifth Type

In the fifth type, the constraint was strong, the wife's attitudes was encouraging but if financial status was poor, the education system was distrusted, he was in charge of economic activities and was pessimistic, he would be responded with resignation and avoidance and denied the reality.

The case for this type was participant C. He blamed himself about his child's disability and refused to diagnose disability of his child. It was not economically abundant, and distrust of the education system acted as a context, so the intensity of the phenomenon was strong. He used avoidance strategy to hid his child's disability from relatives and to take over his wife, hoping she took care of their children on the reason that he was immersion on economic activities. He still did not believe in disability of his child and even tried to cancel their disability registration after military exemption. The strategies resulted in settlement for reality and denial.

"My wife had our child tested for disability, and the diagnosis confirmed he has disability. However, I find it challenging to readily accept the reality. My parents don't know yet either. Because I didn't tell them either. (...) It hurt my pride. If we say that our child has disability, it's obvious that my wife's family will blame me for that. I couldn't tell my friends either. When I get back from work, I need to take rest at home. I think raising and educating a child is wife's responsibility." (Interview with C)

## IV. DISCUSSIONS

In this study, the phenomenon of father's rearing experience of children with disabilities was the feeling of 'constraint.' This 'constraint' was resulted from 'seethe' which is caused by the diagnosis of the children's disability, and 'powerlessness' from their challenge behaviors.

One of the concepts of this study, challenge behaviors of child with disabilities, was show also on the study on the rearing experience of mothers with children with cerebral palsy (Han & Kim, 2007) and the study on the rearing experience of mothers with children with progressive muscular dystrophy (Kim & Han, 2013). In the two studies (Han & Kim, 2007; Kim & Han, 2013), the degree of disability of the child was severe cerebral palsy and progressive muscular atrophy, so they felt great regret and fear of their challenge behavior but did not feel a strong social stigma. However, in this study, despite the overall mild severity of disability in the children, fathers perceived disability as a social stigma and experienced feelings of anger. This finding contrasts with the experiences of mothers of children with disabilities. The result was consistent with a study on fathers' rearing experiences (Kim & Yoon, 2013),

which showed that fathers of children with disabilities tended to be more sensitive to the social image associated with their children's disabilities compared to mothers. Due to concerns about the negative perception of their children's disabilities, fathers often assumed a passive stance in their interactions within social groups and at work. It was also highlighted in a study by Kim (2006) that fathers were more affected by challenge behavior of children with disabilities than mothers.

In this study, fathers of children with disabilities felt a great burden as the father of child with disability as well as the head of family. Fathers of children with disabilities were struggling with taking responsible for financial problems and the expectations of the head of household, and at the same time, putting up with the life-long burden of taking responsibility for children with disabilities. In the study of Kim and Yoon (2013) also, it was found that fathers of children with disabilities were economic problem solvers and tried to meet the role and expectations of the head of the household, while at the same time having a burden of taking responsibility for children with disabilities to the end. Fathers felt burdened not only with responsibility for the family economy but also with responsibility for raising children at the same time. This means that the role of members of our society today has changed from traditional roles and that the responsibility for raising children has been transferred to fathers (Kim & Kim, 2012). This burden of responsibility for raising children with disabilities was also a factor in increasing fathers' parenting stress (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith & McLean, 2005). This parenting stress was derived in more detail as the phenomenon, 'constraint,' in this study.

This study investigated the various contexts that influenced on the phenomenon of fathers with children with disabilities. The significant factors identified were the wife's rearing attitude, the family's financial status, and the educational system they were part of. Regarding the rejection of wife about the acceptance of the child's disability and the denial of diagnosis, it was reported that almost all parents felt regardless of the type of disability (Han, Song, & Park, 2003). When they found out that their children have disabilities, they said they felt tremendous shock and utter desolation (Hanson & Lynch, 2004).

In this study, the wife's parenting attitude influenced the phenomenon of the fathers of children with disabilities, which were 'constraints.' A study by Kim & Han (2013) also mentioned the husband's attitude, which was found to influence the mother's parenting experience with a child diagnosed with 'progressive muscular dystrophy.' It was found that the spouse's attitudes toward children with disabilities affect each other's lives as a father and a mother, respectively. In view of this, in order to support parents of children with disabilities, it is necessary to develop a program to understand the thoughts and attitudes of spouses and to engage in activities that cooperate with each other.

In this research, the degree of 'constraint' of the fathers of children with disabilities was weakened when they felt that teacher's attention, praise, and counseling were well carried out. This means that trust in the educational system was critical in the phenomenon of fathers of children with disabilities. The 'education system' served as a context that influenced the phenomenon, 'constraint', for mothers of children with

disabilities. Previous studies (Han & Kim, 2007; Han, Song, & Park, 2003; Kim & Han, 2013) also explored this aspect. This shows that the educational system is an essential factor that affects the raising of children by mothers and fathers of children with disabilities. In the case of 'special teachers' in the position of providing education to children with disabilities (Han, Song, & Yun, 2013; Jo & Han, 2019) or 'pediatric physical therapist' (Heo, Han, & Kim, 2021), parents' attitudes and trust in providing education had been reported to affect. From this, it can be demonstrated that parents and teachers were important factors that affect each other's life experiences in education for children with disabilities.

In this study, there was a 'financial status' in the context of affecting the 'constraint' of fathers of children with disabilities. In a study by Kim & Park (2015), it was found that fathers with disabilities had a higher sense of happiness when they had a high economic income than low economic income. The same was true of the case of fathers of children without disabilities (Kim & Kim, 2008). However, in the case of fathers of children with disabilities, they thought that their children's education and treatment costs were higher than those of children without disabilities, so they could feel constraint more strongly due to their economic conditions.

In this study, the phenomenon of the rearing experience for fathers of children with disabilities was 'constraint.' Constraint appeared in the form of 'overwhelming', 'feeling burden', 'frothy expectation' and 'feeling guilty.' Feeling 'burdened' or 'guilty' in raising children with disabilities was also seen in the studies of mothers of children with disabilities (Han, & Kim, 2009; Han, Song, & Park, 2003; Kim & Han, 2013). In addition, it can be illustrated that fathers of children with disabilities feel 'powerlessness' with 'frothy expectation' and feel the constraints that they could not escape from children with disabilities.

The influential elements in forming a strategy for coping with the 'constraint' of fathers with children with disabilities were 'disposition', 'immersion on work', and 'the severity of disability.' The more optimistic disposition the father with a child with disability had, the less stressful on rearing experiences he was. In a study by Chang & Hwang (2016), it was also reported that the higher positive thinking about the difficult experiences or stress experienced by fathers of children with disabilities, the higher the participation in child rearing. Park & Chang (2014) also reported that the optimism of parents of children with disabilities was highly correlated with life satisfaction and positive perception of raising children with disabilities.

In this study, there was a severity of disability of children as an intervening situation that affected the strategy used by fathers of children with disabilities to solve constraints. This result has been shown in the previous study such as mothers with children with severe disabilities had higher rearing stress than mothers with children with moderate disabilities (Lee, Ryu, & Han, 2007) and parents with children with disabilities (Jeon, 2016) also had same results. The fact that severity of disability affected the coping mechanisms of parents with children with disabilities was also reported in the previous study, Korean mothers who rear children with disabilities in the United States (Han, Song, & Cho, 2014). If the disability was severe and unlikely to improve, coping strategies that expected miracles

and relied on religion, rather than pragmatic coping, were adopted. In this study, even though all the children had mild disabilities and took inclusive education in the general class, fathers perceived the child's disability as severe case. Therefore, the perception of the severity of disability was based on the subjective judgment of the father of the child with disability, which means that it could be changed.

As a result of this study, it was found that fathers of children with disabilities employed the strategy such as 'doing the best' or 'resignation' or 'avoidance' as a strategy to solve 'constraint.' In the case of using 'doing the best', fathers of children with disabilities accepted their children's disabilities, had hope for their children's future, and felt 'reborn.' On the other hand, the use of 'resignation' or 'avoidance' strategies were found to hide and reject children's disabilities, or to be complacent without hope.

In this study, the father's parenting experience was classified into five types. If these types are classified only as 'consequences of parenting experience', it can be classified into three types: 'reborn', 'settlement for reality', and 'denials.' In a study by Kim & Yoon (2013), the parenting types of fathers of children with disabilities were classified into the following four; a father who has low expectations and denies the disabilities, a father who has low expectations but is receptive, a father who has high expectations but is passive, and an active father who has high expectations. In this study, First Type was similar to the active father with high expectations in the Kim & Yoon (2013) study, and Fifth Type of this study was similar to the father who denies the disabilities with low expectations revealed in the study of Kim & Yoon (2013). Unlike Kim & Yoon's (2013), this study clearly revealed how each type felt differently about 'constraint' and what factors were related to 'constraint.'

In this study, it was found that all types of fathers of children with disabilities exhibited a strong sense of responsibility for economic activities under the interaction conditions that addressed the 'constraints' they faced. A study by Kim & Yoon (2013) also reported that fathers of children with disabilities felt a strong sense of economic responsibility. A study by Kim & Park (2015) also revealed that the economic responsibility and burden felt by fathers of children with disabilities affected the psychological burden. Recently, the voucher projects have provided a lot of support for education of children with disabilities, but fathers still felt a strong sense of economic responsibility because of Korea's cultural influence on the role of the head of household.

In this study, the important thing is that trust in the 'education system' and cooperative relationships with their wives are critical for fathers of children with disabilities to accept their children's disabilities and foster the result as 'reborn.' In order to trust the 'education system', it is necessary to develop an connecting program between fathers at each school so that regular meeting and communication with fathers can take place. In most cases, parent programs are attended mainly by mothers. Therefore, it is essential to support regular participation of fathers. These programs for fathers will also help improve cooperation with their wives in raising children, by inducing interest in education for children with disabilities and active participation in parenting and child care.

Based on the results and discussions of this study, the limitations of this study and suggestions for follow-up research are as follows.

First, since this study was conducted on six fathers of children with disabilities, the results of this study cannot be generalized as a result of all fathers of children with disabilities. In subsequent studies, it is necessary to increase the number of participants.

Second, this study has limitation to present parenting experiences according to the type of disability because participants were fathers of children with disabilities attending special classes regardless of the type of disability of their children. Therefore, in future studies, it is necessary to study differently depending on the child's disability type.

Third, based on the results of this study, it is necessary to conduct program development and application research to support fathers of children with disabilities in follow-up studies.

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