

A Study on What Makes Young Children Happy

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were to understand children's perception of happiness and to propose suggestions for improving the level of happiness based on children's needs by analyzing individual interviews about what makes them happy and why. The subjects of the study were 163 children aged three to five at two kindergartens and one daycare center in Seoul, South Korea. Research results were as follows. First, they indicated *living things* (human, animal, plant) and *inanimate things* (plaything, school supply/book, tool/machine, accessory, food, property) as the objects that make them happy. The most frequently indicated objects that make children happy included *plaything* (toy) (31.9%), *human* (12.3%), *school supply/book* (10.6%). Secondly, the reason why specific objects make children happy was because those objects provided *satisfaction with desire for play*, *emotional satisfaction*, *practical satisfaction*, *esthetic satisfaction*, *satisfaction with desire for creation*, and *moral satisfaction*. The most frequent reason regarding why they become happy was because they could play with playthings, and felt fun or good when they play. The identified playthings that make children happy and satisfy their various needs were those which they could easily find at home and in the early childhood institutes. Such results suggest that children's happiness could be positively influenced by the setting where they could freely play while interacting with meaningful things.

Keywords: perception of happiness, objects, satisfaction, playthings

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Recently, global interest and researches on happiness are increasing, and many countries actively investigate the ways to enhance the happiness of their people (Lyubomirsky, 2007/2008a). Since *the right to pursue happiness* belongs to people's basic human rights in a democratic country, accordingly, it is natural that a country should prepare a happiness enhancement plan for its citizens. The reason why the interest in happiness has risen in the 21st century seems to be because they are trying to find the solution to the problems caused by achievement-orientation and materialism (Hong, Kim, & Jeun, 2014).

According to the Korean dictionary, happiness means a *state of being pleased due to feeling of pleasure and satisfaction in life*, which is used when describing positive emotion in daily life such as *being happy, feeling happy*, and so forth (National Institute of Korean Language, 2016). This definition coincides with the positive psychologists' opinion which defines happiness as subjective wellness, good life, and satisfaction with life (Lyubomirsky, 2007/2008a; Peterson, 2006/2010; Seligman, 2002/2006). Positive psychology, which scientifically studies enhancement of quality of life and enhancement plan for happiness, defines happy life based on harmony of *pleasant life, meaningful life, and engaged life* (Seligman, 2002/2009). *Pleasant life* is to feel temporary pleasure or satisfaction along with satisfaction with desire, *meaningful life* is to contribute one's knowledge and ability to others' life, and *engaged life* is to achieve goals by immersing oneself in the work that one pursues. Lyubomirsky (2008b) defined happiness as "the experience of joy, contentment or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile" (p. 32), emphasizing that it is required to keep making an effort to maintain one's happy life.

If the meaning of happiness is to maintain pleasure from managing valuable life by self-actualizing and contributing to others' welfare, *meaningful life*, it could be the major goal of education. In Korea, also, recently *happiness education* has emerged as the major educational goal. *Happiness education* has already been conducted successfully in several countries, and the positive effect of happiness education has been proven in many studies (Ben-Shahar, 2007/2008; Center for Happiness studies, 2011; Hong, Ra, Jang, Kim, & Jeun, 2013; Kang, 2012; Lee, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2007/2008a; Peterson, 2006/2010; Seligman, 2002/2009). Such research results support the educational significance of *happiness education*. The educational goal emphasizing the goal of life that pursues happiness and

enhancement of happiness should be applied also to children. Nuri curriculum for the children aged 3-5, which has been conducted since 2013 in Korea, suggests the direction of education to lead the children to enjoying a happy life (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology & Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). This way, for the children, happiness should be the main point of life, which should be protected as a right, and should be enhanced through education. However, unfortunately, children's happiness is not properly protected in Korean society. In the research that compared children's happiness level to other countries, Korean children's feeling of happiness was ranked low among 8 countries (Lee & You, 2013, May). According to the investigation of Korea Education Development Institute (2015), 70.5% of children in Korea experience prerequisite learning for basic skills such as reading, writing, counting, etc. before they enter the elementary school. The current situation in Korea where children are expected to achieve academic success beyond their learning capacity though they feel happiness from play is not irrelevant to Korean children's low feeling of happiness. Along with the efforts to guarantee and enhance children's happiness, in-depth researches are needed.

Recently, social and academic interest in children's happiness has been rising. People who experience happiness in relationships with others in family and school during their childhood can anticipate a happy life henceforth (Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012). Children's happiness is significant in life. Further researches that investigated children's perception about happiness are as follows. Kim (2013) suggested *happiness from material*, *happiness from relationship*, and *happiness from effectiveness* as the concepts of children's happiness at age 5. According to Hwang, Kim, and Tak (2013), children at age 5 feel happiness in *the play situation*, *the situation to get along with family and friends*, *the situation to concentrate on things as they please*, *the situation to pursue change by escaping fixed rules*, and *the situation to experience achievement by overcoming difficulty*. According to Chaplin (2009), the things that make children aged 8-18 most happy were human, pet, hobby, and so forth. According to Thoilliez (2011), happy experiences of children aged 6-12 included, *daily things they had along with family or friends*, *experiences of special events such as birthday or anniversary*, *high academic achievement*, *morally proper behavior*, and so on. According to Hong, Ra, and Jang (2015), children aged 3-5 perceived happiness as a positive emotional state such as *feeling good*, *loving*, *feeling glad*, *liking*, *having fun*, and

being excited. And happy moments they perceived were when *engaging in their favorite play or activity, being or staying together with their favorite person, having emotional supports, receiving presents, going to some special place, having their favorite food, being comfortable physically and mentally, and achieving what they wanted through efforts*. These researches show in common that the children showed feelings of happiness when they participated in the play or activity that they liked and wanted to do or when they got along with their family or friends. Also, they all displayed the relationship between children and surrounding people as a common factor of happiness, which implies that the core of the feeling of happiness is the social relationship that children have.

It is necessary to be aware of children's experience of happiness, and actively investigate the ways to enhance children's level of happiness based on in-depth researches. To guarantee and enhance children's happiness, it is necessary to let the children express their own thoughts and emotions about happiness. Happiness is the primary emotion that appears naturally after birth, which infants also can perceive and express (Chung, Chung, & Im, 2007). When the children are able to talk about their happiness, the disregarded concept of children's happiness made by adults could be deepened and extended (Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2009).

This research aimed at investigating practical ways to enhance children's happiness by searching for what makes children aged 3-5 happy and why. The following questions are discussed in this study:

1. What makes young children happy?
2. What is the reason that specific objects make children feel happy?

Methodology

Subjects¹

The subjects include 163 three-, four- and five-year-olds attending B public kindergarten, D private kindergarten, or E daycare center in Seoul, South Korea. 163 children were selected as interviewees, excluding those who did not comprehend the meaning of

¹ Name of research objects was changed into pseudonym.

happiness or responded irrelevantly. Table 1 shows the distribution of the subjects by age and gender.

Table 1. *Distribution of the subjects by age and gender*

Age	Boy	Girl	Total
Age 3	16	19	35
Age 4	31	26	57
Age 5	35	36	71
Total	82	81	163

Procedures

The research was conducted from September, 2012 to January, 2013. First, the researcher explained the research purpose and the interview questionnaires to the institution, and then obtained consent for the recording of interview sessions with the children. The interviews were conducted in a familiar setting such as a small group activity room and the library in each institute during the individual activity time. The semi-structured interview questions were used for all subjects.

The interview procedures were as follows: we first introduced ourselves to the young children so that they would become familiar with us, and then they moved to the interview place. Before starting an interview, we had a small talk with the children about the weather, life at the kindergarten, and friends as an ice breaker which helped to create a comfortable atmosphere. During the interview, we allowed the children to have enough time to answer the following question.

“Imagine ○○’s home has an amazing storage which could keep everything. If you want to put into the storage what makes you happy, what would you like to put? (After 5 seconds) Tell me what you'd like to put in it because it makes you happy. Tell me why you think (the object that the child mentioned) makes you happy. Do you have another one that you want to put into storage because you think it makes you happy? What is the reason? Do you have another one that you want to put into the storage because it makes you happy? What is the reason?”

The follow-up interviews were conducted when further information related to the interview responses was needed. After completing all scheduled interview sessions, we acquired information about their family, relationship with friends, and developmental stages from the early childhood institutes to further analyze the interview responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interview sessions were digitally recorded with scripted notes taken by the researchers. After the interview, we composed the overall report of the interview based on the video recording and scripted notes. While carefully reading the overall report of the interview, we labeled the responses related to happiness and included a memo for generating a preliminary list of categories. We revised the preliminary list of categories repeatedly to generate an upper category list. After determining sub categories along with the upper categories, we excerpted proper cases accordingly for each category. The collected data was re-analyzed based on the categories and the results were tabulated with frequency and percentage. The responses addressing multiple contents at the same time related to the meaning of happiness and the time of being happy were all included in the collected data and counted multiple times.

Results

The Objects Which made Children Feel Happy

The objects which made children feel happy were divided into living things (22.4%) and inanimate objects (74.5%), which appeared in order of plaything (31.9%), human (12.3%), school supply/book (10.6%), tool/machine (9.2%), animal (9.0%), accessory (8.5%), food (6.1%), property (treasure/money) (4.7%), others (4.5%), plant (3.1%). The results of investigating the objects which made the children feel happy according to gender and age are as in Table 2.

Table 2. *The objects which made children feel happy*

	The objects from which made children feel happy	Total	Gender		Age				
			Boy	Girl	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5		
living things	Human	52(12.3)	28(6.6)	24(5.7)	6(1.4)	18(4.3)	28(6.6)		
	Animal	103(24.3)	23(5.4)	15(3.5)	9(2.1)	15(3.5)	14(3.3)		
	Plant	13(3.1)	3(0.7)	10(2.4)	3(0.7)	6(1.4)	4(0.9)		
	toy	43(10.2)	20(4.7)	23(5.4)	8(1.9)	13(3.1)	22(5.2)		
	doll	35(8.3)	7(1.7)	28(6.6)	8(1.8)	13(3.1)	14(3.3)		
	mini-car	22(5.2)	18(4.3)	4(0.9)	10(2.4)	12(2.8)	0(0.0)		
	plaything	135(31.9)	17(4.0)	3(0.7)	3(0.7)	7(1.7)	10(2.4)		
	block	20(4.7)	17(4.0)	3(0.7)	3(0.7)	7(1.7)	10(2.4)		
	robot	9(2.1)	9(2.1)	0(0.0)	1(0.2)	5(1.2)	3(0.7)		
	Gaming instrument	6(1.4)	6(1.4)	0(0.0)	2(0.5)	1(0.2)	3(0.7)		
Inanimate object	school supply/book	45(10.6)	19(4.5)	26(6.1)	7(1.7)	19(4.5)	19(4.5)		
	tool/machine	39(9.2)	25(5.9)	14(3.3)	10(2.4)	14(3.3)	15(3.5)		
	accessory	36(8.5)	1(0.2)	35(8.3)	10(2.4)	21(5.0)	5(1.2)		
	food	26(6.1)	15(3.5)	11(2.6)	8(1.9)	5(1.2)	13(3.1)		
	property	20(4.7)	6(1.4)	14(3.3)	1(0.2)	7(1.7)	12(2.8)		
	Others	19(4.5)	10(2.4)	9(2.1)	2(0.5)	5(1.2)	12(2.8)		
	Total	423(100.0)	207(48.9)	216(51.1)	88(20.8)	171(40.4)	164(38.8)		

Including overlapping answers, N (%)

According to the children's responses, the object which made them feel the happiest was plaything (31.9%). They felt happy when they were immersed in the play they liked because they felt positive emotions like freedom and pleasure when they participated in the play they wanted to do (Hong et al., 2015). In this research, children also mentioned plaything as the object that made them happy. Particularly, the number of children who indicated a plaything as the object of happiness was greater than those who chose other objects. This implied that the majority of children felt happy through the play in their daily life and it shows that play has a very important role in children's happy life.

Those who indicated a plaything as the object that made them feel happy mentioned toy (10.2%), doll (8.3%), mini-car (5.2%), block (4.7%), robot (2.1%), gaming instrument (1.3%), and so forth. The definition of *playful behavior* in the Korean dictionary is interpreted as "things that children mainly do for fun or kill-time, wicked deed done mischievously". However, the definition of *plaything* is "various things that children play with" (National Institute of Korean Language, 2016). That is, children feel positive emotions like freedom, sense of accomplishment, pleasure, delight, restfulness, and so forth, while participating in the play they like.

Those who responded that they felt happy from playthings showed a distinct difference by gender. For instance, a doll as the object that made them feel happiness was mentioned more by girls (6.6%) than boys (1.7%) as opposed to a mini-car (boys 4.3%, girls 0.9%), block (boys 4.0%, girls 0.7%), robot (boys 2.1%, girls 0.0%), gaming instrument (boys 1.4%, girls 0.0%). Such gender differences generally coincide with difference in the type of play that they participate in (Kim, Yoo, Lee, & Cho, 2010). It indicates that children feel a sense of happiness in the play in which they usually participate frequently.

The second object about which they felt a sense of happiness was human (12.3%). Children feel a sense of happiness when they have a positive relationship and keep a close interaction with others (Chaplin, 2009; Hong et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Kim, 2013). In this research, the objects that made children feel happiness were mother, father, younger brother or sister, and friends, etc., who are important to them. Children who mentioned human as the object that made them feel happiness appeared in order of ages 3 (1.4%), 4 (4.3%), 5 (6.6%), which showed a tendency to increase as they get older. This implies that children get more experience of feeling happy in relationships with others as their scope of

social relationship gets broader as they get older.

The objects that the children indicated third most were school supply and book (10.6%). Considering that the activities utilizing school supply and book were mostly related to study, it seemed that a sense of happiness with school supply and book comes from academic accomplishment and learning experience. It was reported that children felt happiness when they achieved a goal through their efforts (Hong et al., 2014). The results of this study also showed that children do feel a sense of accomplishment by doing activities with school supply and book and this is connected to their happiness. Children who answered they felt happiness from school supply and book appeared in order of the ages 3 (1.7%), 4 (4.5%), and 5 (4.5%), that is the number of children aged 4 and 5 appeared more than those aged 3. It seemed because the older children had more experience of purchasing school supplies and books, they had more experience of being happy in learning.

There were also children who responded that they felt happiness from accessory (8.5%), food (6.1%), property such as treasure and money (4.7%), and so on. The response that they felt happiness from the accessory appeared higher in girls (8.3%) than boys (0.2%), however the age 5 (1.2%) appeared lower than the age 4 (5.0%) and the age 3 (0.2%). Children who responded that they felt happiness from property appeared in order of the ages 3 (0.2%), 4 (1.7%), and 5 (2.8%), so the number of responses increased along with age. This suggested that children could socially learn the value and advantage of property such as money, jewels, and so forth as they acquire more social experience. Finally, the response categorized as *others* was 4.5%, and those who responded *plant* were 3.1%.

The Reasons Why Children Felt Happiness from the Objects

The reasons why children felt happiness from the objects were *satisfaction of desire to play* (29.7%), *emotional satisfaction* (24.5%), *aesthetic satisfaction* (14.0%), *practical satisfaction* (12.9%), *creative desire satisfaction* (6.1%), *moral satisfaction* (4.2%), *others* (7.2%), and *no response* (1.3%). The results of the analysis of the reasons why children felt happiness from the objects are described by gender and age in Table 3.

Table 3. *Reasons why children felt happiness from the objects*

Reason why children felt happiness from the objects	Total	Gender		Age		
		Boy	Girl	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5
satisfaction of desire to play	70(14.8)	42(8.9)	28(5.9)	15(3.2)	27(5.7)	28(5.9)
	140(29.7)	35(7.4)	20(4.2)	9(1.9)	18(3.8)	28(5.9)
	15(3.2)	4(0.8)	11(2.3)	4(0.8)	5(1.1)	6(1.2)
Emotional satisfaction	64(13.6)	36(7.6)	28(5.9)	12(2.5)	28(5.9)	24(5.1)
	23(4.9)	4(0.8)	19(4.0)	3(0.6)	4(0.8)	16(3.4)
	116(24.5)	8(1.7)	10(2.1)	6(1.2)	4(0.8)	8(1.7)
	11(2.3)	6(1.2)	5(1.1)	2(0.4)	5(1.1)	4(0.8)
Aesthetic satisfaction	42(8.9)	2(0.4)	40(8.5)	9(1.9)	18(3.8)	15(3.2)
	66(14.0)	0(0.0)	15(3.2)	3(0.6)	5(1.1)	7(1.5)
	9(1.9)	6(1.2)	3(0.6)	2(0.4)	4(0.8)	3(0.6)
	61(12.9)	34(7.2)	27(5.7)	11(2.3)	25(5.3)	25(5.3)
Practical satisfaction	29(6.1)	11(2.3)	18(3.8)	1(0.2)	14(3.0)	14(3.0)
	20(4.2)	4(0.8)	7(1.5)	2(0.4)	4(0.8)	5(1.1)
Moral satisfaction	9(1.9)	1(0.2)	8(1.7)	4(0.8)	0(0.0)	5(1.1)
	34(7.2)	23(4.9)	11(2.3)	16(3.4)	9(1.9)	9(1.9)
creative desire satisfaction	6(1.3)	4(0.8)	2(0.4)	0(0.0)	4(0.8)	2(0.4)
	472(100.0)	220(46.6)	252(53.3)	99(21.0)	174(36.9)	199(42.2)

Including overlapping answers, N (%)

Satisfaction of desire to play. The reason the majority of children felt happiness from specific objects was because their desire for play was satisfied. Children seemed to experience happiness when their desire was fulfilled and they felt satisfaction by playing with significant others who were meaningful to themselves. When we investigated the reason for satisfaction of desire to play, *because of being able to play* appeared the highest (14.8%). Children who answered they felt happy when they participated in play, who felt happy when playing with toys (see the excerpt of Jinseo), who mentioned friends who played well with them though they quarreled sometimes (see the excerpt of Dahee), and who mentioned parents who played with them at the playground (see the excerpt of Ji-a), they mostly indicated parents, brothers or sisters, friends, and playthings as the objects that made them happy.

Plaything. Because I want to have it and play with it. I feel very happy when I play, because it's so fun.
(Jinseo, Age 4, Boy)

Friends. I sometimes quarrel with them, but they play well with me. (Dahee, Age 5, Girl)

Mom and daddy. They always play with me at the playground. Daddy especially plays a lot with me. Daddy touches my back, climbing up the red stairs of the playground. Then I become the tagger and play.
(Ji-a, Age 5, Girl)

The reason for *because of being able to play* appeared in order of *because it's fun to play* 11.7% and *because it feels good when playing* 3.2% (Table 3). Yuchan answered that the object that made him happy was Lego, saying that he keeps playing because Lego is very fun.

Lego. That's really fun. Once I start, I do it today, tomorrow, and the next day, then the next day, then the next day again and again~, I keep doing it. I made it from here to there. Alone. Nobody helps me. That's a dragon ball, which spreads its wings. On the back, it spreads this way, it spreads when pulling this way, another one flies whoosh when pressing down the button. And this shines at night.
(Yuchan, Age 5, Boy)

In the case of Jiyeon, Jiyu, and Somi as described below, some children responded that they felt pleasant and happy because of dolls and toys, necklaces and bracelets in their accessory box. Children seemed to feel joy, pleasure and happiness from experiencing positive emotion through play activities.

White lion doll. I play with it everyday, which is fun, because I feel happy playing with it.

(Jiyeon Age 3, Girl)

Necklace, bracelet in the jewel box. When I wear them, I feel like playing with my friends so I feel good.

(Jiyu, Age 4, Girl)

Plaything. Toys. It's fun to play with them.

(Somi, Age 5, Girl)

When investigating gender difference, boys showed a higher rate in *because of being able to play*, and *because it's fun to play*, 8.9%, 7.4% respectively, higher than girls (5.9%, 4.2%). In respect of *because it feels good when playing*, girls' response was 2.3%, while that of boys was 0.8%. When investigating age difference, all items related to *satisfaction of desire to play* scored higher as the age got older.

Emotional satisfaction. The second reason that children felt happiness from specific objects such as family, friends, plaything, school supply, etc. was because those objects gave them *emotional satisfaction*. They felt happiness because they liked the objects (13.6%), they were cute (4.9%), they were delicious (3.8%), and they felt good when touching them (2.3%). The response, *because I like it*, which rated highest, displayed children's activeness. Mother, father, brother, sister, and friends frequently appeared in their happy experiences. Children responded they became happy because they liked the others who were important to them. Children said they liked to hug them, wanted to tell them they loved them, and wanted to spend a pleasant time with them. Siwoo also mentioned his mother, father, brother, grandmother, and grandfather as the objects that made him happy, because "I like them" (interview, 2012/10/09). Some children expressed happiness from the plaything or play and activity they liked. This suggested that children felt satisfied and happy in the process of thinking of the plaything itself that they liked or preferred to use.

Tiger pig. Its posture is good and it's cute. It's very cute and I like it. (Gangmin, Age 4, Boy)

Food. I ate it at a zoo picnic together with mom. It contained grapes, which were delicious.
(Ayoung, Age 3, Girl)

Cake. It's delicious. I ate it with mom and daddy on my birthday and at Christmas.
(Jihun, Age 4, Boy)

Doll. My doll is so soft. (Sungmin, Age 3, Boy)

Also, children answered they were happy because the animal or the doll of their own was cute, food was delicious, or touching a specific object felt good. Certain delicious food they ate on a special occasion and the fluffy touchy feeling of a doll gave them happiness. The feeling of happiness that children experienced when they were emotionally satisfied with a specific object illustrated their activeness. Emotional satisfaction that had similar characteristics to positive emotion coincided with the definition of happiness, which means in other words subjective happiness (Peterson, 2006/2010). Children expressed a positive emotion while they were thinking of the person or object they liked such as significant others with whom they exchange love, delicious food, and playthings, etc. that gave them joy and a sense of accomplishment in the process of talking about the things that made them happy.

When investigating gender difference, 4.0% of girls who mentioned that they felt happy *because it was cute*, but only 0.8% of boys. Girls mostly mentioned a doll as the object that gave them happiness. Children aged 5 (3.8%) responded they felt happiness because the object was cute, compared to those aged 3 (0.6%) and 4 (0.8%), mostly girls.

Aesthetic satisfaction. Children responded that they felt happy when they felt aesthetic satisfaction from a specific object. As indicated in Seonyu's response that she felt happy due to her colorful and beautiful necklace, ring, and bracelet (interview, 2012/10/08), children felt happiness by discovering beauty in beautiful or glittering things. People experience positive emotion and discover happiness in the process of discovering beauty. Children also feel pleasure, joy, and delight in the process of appreciating beautiful nature,

things, and objects. Such positive emotions seemed to make them happy. The responses that showed children felt happiness from specific objects because they were beautiful, brilliant, and nice are as below.

Rabbit. It's cute. (Yoosun, Age 3, Girl)

Molecule. Human cells are made of molecules, and I feel happy when I feel beauty spreads. (Jaewon, Age 5, Boy)

Heart shaped stick. It looks like a heart, which has a stick. It makes sound and light. (Yoona, Age 3, Girl)

Necklace, ring. Lots of stars, and it has many hearts. It glitters, so I feel good and happy. (Yoonmi, Age 4, Girl)

Jewel. It's brilliant. When I see a brilliant jewel, I feel good. (Yoojoo, Age 5, Girl)

Eagle. Because it's quick, and it's nice and beautiful when it flies in the sky with its huge wings. (Jungwoo, Age 5, Boy)

To investigate *aesthetic satisfaction* based on type, children gave the highest response that they were happy *because it's beautiful* (8.9%), next, *brilliant* (3.2%), and *nice* (1.9%). When analyzing difference by gender, girls were respectively 8.5% and 3.2%, saying they experienced happiness because a specific object was *beautiful* or *brilliant*, which was much higher than boys (0.4%, 0.0%). Those who indicated they were happy *because it's nice* were 1.2% in boys, slightly higher than girls (0.6%).

Practical satisfaction. Some children responded they were happy when practical satisfaction was given by specific objects. They seemed to feel pleasure, fun, and a sense of accomplishment when a specific object allowed them to do something they wanted or in the process of satisfying their needs. The cases of children who felt happy when being satisfied with practical needs and specific objects are as below.

Mouse. Because I become small by magic and enter a small hole riding on the back of a mouse when I want to enter a small hole. (Hari, Age 3, Girl)

Whistle and horn that my aunt bought me. I can blow the whistle, it goes 'whoosh'. When I blow the horn, it goes 'whoosh'. Though the whistle cannot sing, the horn can sing. (Hyerin, Age 4, Girl)

Puppy. A puppy eats anything like a wolf, quick, does an errand well, and walks. (Sungjin, Age 4, Boy)

Money. Because I can be rich when I grow up. If I have money, I can buy more things. (Taeyoung, Age 5, Boy)

Those who indicated they felt happy because they could make their dream come true via specific objects or because they achieved what they hoped to get were 12.9%, and in respect of gender difference, boys were 7.2%, higher than girls (5.7%). Children also identified the objects that made them happy because their needs or desire were satisfied while playing with them in daily life, though some children like Hari mentioned imaginary factors in a fictional space to achieve their desired goal.

Creative satisfaction. Children felt happiness in the process of satisfying the desire for creativity while performing activities such as drawing, decorating, and crafting with specific objects. *Creation* refers to making something new for the first time or performing creative art works (National Institute of Korean Language, 2016). Those who responded they felt happy when a specific object satisfied their desire for creativity were 6.1% including children aged 3 at 0.2%, which was relatively lower than the children aged 4 and 5, who responded 3.0%. Concerning gender difference, girls were 3.8%, while boys were rated at 2.3%, which shows that girls were slightly higher than boys.

Book. When I read a book, there are pictures. And it tells me to be smart. I like coloring. (Jiwon, Age 3, Boy)

Princess sketchbook. Because I can draw pictures. Sticker books. Because I like stickers and it's fun to attach them. (Yerim, Age 4, Girl)

Toy block. I like building houses with blocks.

(Jihye, Age5, Girl)

Children mentioned that their desire for creativity was satisfied when they were reading books, drawing pictures in the sketchbook, building structures with blocks, etc. People feel pleasure, fun, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment while doing challenging new tasks and experiencing a process of creating something in a free and less restricted situation. Children also seem to feel happy when they are allowed to freely express their imagination and creativity via a specific object.

Moral satisfaction. Some children indicated that they were morally satisfied when they felt happy. People experience true happiness while contributing to the enhancement of others' happiness which is beyond their individual satisfaction status (Hong et al., 2013). Such behavior of being kind to others gives on-going happiness to the giver, as well as the beneficiary. Children indicated that they felt happiness because *they could give others a specific thing, love, or help, etc.* (2.3%), and *being kind* (1.9%).

All things. I can give them all to mom. I will give mom a birthday gift with a heart, saying "I love you", "I'm happy".

(Soohun, Age 3, Boy)

Yeonseok. My younger brother. Yeonseok likes me, I like to hug and hold him tight. I want to hug him even though he pinches and bites me sometimes.

(Jihyo, Age 3, Girl)

Desk. Because daddy is glad when I study at the desk. Later, when daddy goes on a business trip and works in the office, he feels relieved when I study at the desk.

(Jiahn, Age 4, Girl)

Chestnut, acorn, persimmon. One day I picked them up at the mountain. I wanted to peel them, but I couldn't. So I gave them to grandma to peel.

(Heeyeon, Age 4, Girl)

I want to give a birthday gift to my elder brother. He knows history well, so I want to give him a history book.

(Hojun, Age 5, Boy)

Children mentioned that they felt happiness while generously giving and loving significant others who were important and meaningful to them. Also, they expressed a

feeling of happiness when they considered others' feelings, emotion, or taste, etc. as well as providing materials and goods. Besides the reason for *because of being able to give things to others*, some children responded they were happy because of treating others kindly. Geunho mentioned *love* which makes him happy, because friends would only care for themselves and hate each other without love, therefore, *love* is necessary to consider other friends (interview, 2012/10/08). It shows that showing kindness to others was the source of Geunho's happiness. Dahee mentioned that *family* was the object that made her happy, because they take care of her (interview, 2012/10/08). The kindness to family members who care for each other in the relationship of *family* appeared to satisfy children's moral desire and make them experience more mature happiness. However, those children who responded they felt moral satisfaction and happiness from specific objects were 4.2%, relatively lower than other types. Accordingly, it is necessary to educate children to give them a morally mature attitude in their relationship with others and to feel happiness while giving or being kind to their family, friends, and others around them.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research investigated the objects that made children feel happiness, and the reasons for this, via individual interviews. As a result, the objects the children perceived as sources of feeling happy appeared to be playthings, human, school supply/book, tool/machine, animal, accessory, food, property (treasure/money), plant, etc. As for the reason that children felt happiness from specific objects, it appeared to be because of satisfaction with desire for play, emotional satisfaction by arousing positive emotions, aesthetic satisfaction by perceiving beauty, practical satisfaction by being allowed to do what they want, desire for creativity by producing things they want, and moral satisfaction to satisfy moral values. Based on the above results, the researcher discussed the following points.

First, the majority of children indicated playthings as the object that made them happy. Such a result coincides with the result of the further studies (Hong et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2013) that children feel happy when they participate in the play they like. The reason why playthings make children happy was because their desire for play was

satisfied, they felt good when participating in play, and play was fun. Since play has been considered “a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement” (Caillois, 1958, p.6), the response that they are happy when they play is truly natural. Because play is not governed by the rules of society, can be chosen voluntarily, and is process-oriented, children enjoy play itself and feel pleasure and delight while playing (Ohm, 2009). As positive emotions such as pleasure and delight, etc. are more dominantly expressed while doing a play activity than a non-play activity (Kim, 2001), children feel emotional satisfaction and happiness through play. One of the reasons that playthings make children feel happy is because their desire for creativity is satisfied during play. According to Jeon (2016), children appeared to enjoy playing while they were drawing a picture or making artworks. This shows that children should be given ample opportunities for playing in the proper environment in order to enhance their happiness.

However, considering the current situation in Korea, it is difficult to say that children in Korea are in an environment in which they can enjoy playing as much as they want. Many preschoolers in Korea receive prerequisite learning which is beyond their capability at their developmental stage (Kim, 2010; Korean Educational Development Institute, 2015). Furthermore, the age at which they start prerequisite learning is gradually getting younger (Lee & Kim, 2010). Despite the fact that the advanced prerequisite learning may cause problems such as distress (Hong & Kim, 2004), problematic behavior (Baek, Kim, & Woo, 2005), and deterioration in their relationship with their parents (Min & Bae, 2014), many children are forced to perform prerequisite learning due to the competitive school system. However support for play which shows a close relation to their happiness is not sufficiently available. Many mothers acknowledge the importance of play, though they do not participate in and support play (Park & Kim, 2011). The current situation that Korean children are facing is well illustrated in the study that the main reason why children could not play after school is due to lack of time as they spend much time on advanced prerequisite learning via TV/media, prep-school, self-study materials at home, etc. (Kim, 2010). It is necessary to be aware of the importance of providing ample opportunities for voluntary play that makes children happy.

Second, people were indicated as the object that made children feel happy. The reason for happiness from people appeared to be emotional satisfaction they felt when they were

with people they liked, desire satisfaction, and moral satisfaction. The results showing that children felt happy when they were with people meaningful to them such as parents, brothers and sisters, and friends, coincided with other similar researches (Chaplin, 2009; Hong et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2013; Kim, 2013; Thoilliez, 2011) that people of all ages feel happy when they are in a relationship with others (Lyubomirsky, 2007/2008a). The research showed that children feel happier when they have more time playing with their mother at home and when they get a greater sense of closeness with their family members (Park & Kim, 2011; Park, Kim & Hong, 2011) supporting the view that children get emotional and desire satisfaction when playing with the people meaningful to them. It is critical that children need to receive caring and loving support from significant others such as teachers and parents in order to feel happiness.

Children could enhance their happiness by building a positive relationship with others. In this study, many children indicated *human* as the object of happiness. Especially they mentioned moral satisfaction as the reason for happiness which was not indicated when they mentioned *object*. Although not many children indicated moral satisfaction as the reason for happiness, it implies that children could feel happiness from kindness and good deeds. The fact that people feel happy when helping others or being kind to others has been proven through several researches (Buchanan, & Bardi, 2010; Hong et al., 2014; Lyubomirsky, 2007/2008a; Otake, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsui, & Fredrickson, 2006; Peterson, 2006/2010; Seligman, 2002/2009). This research shows that children also feel happy when observing others' generous behavior or kindness. Children feel happy when receiving caring and loving support from adults as protected beings. However they also can feel happiness when being kind and generous to others as independent beings. It is necessary to educate children in order for them to be able to create happiness by themselves as they improve a relationship with others (Hong et al., 2013).

Third, the objects that gave happiness to children were the playthings such as doll, jewel, ring, accessory, property, and so forth, which gave them aesthetic satisfaction. The fact that children felt happiness from specific objects because they were beautiful, shiny, and nice implies that they feel happy from the beauty of objects and aesthetic activities. Aesthetic experience means that they vividly feel the beauty of objects from sensory operation and intuition, and are immersed in the aesthetic objects (Im, Lee, & Kim, 2006). Considering

immersion is the anticipated factor of happiness (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003), it could be deduced that children could reach happiness by having aesthetic experiences while discovering the beauty of specific objects. This implies that it is necessary to provide children with the opportunity and environment for having aesthetic experiences in daily life as one of the ways to give children a feeling of happiness. On the other hand, girls were more likely to respond that aesthetic satisfaction was the reason to feel happiness. In contrast, more boys appeared to feel happy when they can play, and enjoy playing. Aesthetic satisfaction is achieved differently based on gender, inclination, disposition, and interest. Therefore, parents and teachers should provide a rich environment in which children can play and participate in aesthetic activities in daily life.

As the result of investigating the objects that children perceived as causing them to feel happiness and the reason for happiness, implications were derived as follows. First, the objects children perceived as causing them to feel happiness are those which they find easily in daily life. Children felt happiness while playing with the objects that satisfied their basic desire as they were experiencing positive emotion from the object, or achieving the desired goal through the objects. This occurred when they were at home or in early childhood educational institutions. This implies that children's happy life is achieved via common objects they find in daily life, not the special support or rich environment provided by teacher or parents. Therefore, it is important for teachers and parents to support children's playing with the objects that make them happy, immersing them in the things they like, and experiencing emotional, aesthetic, and moral exchange with the objects that satisfy their desire in order to enhance children's happiness.

Second, it is necessary to plan and put into practice an educational program that helps children find happiness by themselves and enhances their happiness. Children could refresh their happy experience, express it in various ways, understand the true meaning of happiness, and search for a helpful way to enhance their happiness while they participate in the educational activities designed for happiness. It is important to support children to enjoy happiness via daily experiences. However, it is necessary to educate them to realize that happiness is not merely achieved by the outer condition, but can be achieved through their own intentional efforts and practice. If the education is implemented in a way that helps children discover, practice, and enhance their own happiness autonomously, many children

will be able to continue enjoying a happy life as well as being more active in achieving happiness.

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