

A Study on the Status and Improvement of Physical & Mental Health for Middle-aged People

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The purpose is to find out utilization and necessity of public support related to the physical and mental health experienced by the middle-aged and elderly people.

Method/Statistical Analysis: In distribution of 28 cities and 3 Guns of Gyeonggi-Do, 8,653 subjects are middle-aged people between 50 to 64 years old, and 6,547 subjects are the group under 49 years old and 11,953 subjects are the group over 65 years old. This study examined the differences in physical and mental health characteristics of the middle-aged and comparative groups through χ^2 validation and one-way ANOVA analysis by SPSS 21.0 program.

Findings: The middle-aged showed relatively low level of difficulty than the group over 65 years old in all areas of physical health problems, physical health care difficulty, mental health problems, and mental health care difficulty. However, it showed a significantly higher level of difficulty than the group under 49 years old. The 6,731 people (77.8%) had no intention of using the social services provided to alleviate physical health problems, and 266 people (3.1%) are currently using related services. Among those who are willing to use the service, 1,135 people (13.1%) did not know the related service, the next highest rate, and 377 (4.4%) who knew the service but did not apply, 114 people (1.3%) applied for the application but could not use it. In the analysis of social service use to alleviate the difficulties of mental health, 7,165 (82.8%) of the middle-aged group had no intention of using it.

Improvements/Applications: The results showed that the physical and mental difficulties experienced by the elderly and the level of difficulty were lower than normal, but higher than those under the age of 49.

Keywords: Physical Health, Mental Health, Middle-aged people, Old age, Family Social Work Service.

Introduction

In Korea, middle-aged people face various social problems such as job insecurity, poverty, child rearing, housing, and preparation for retirement^[1], and the number of suicides is increasing in the 30s to 50s^[2], but related research is very insufficient^[3]. The middle

age group is the age group that is the foundation of our society^[4]. Therefore, their health and well-being can be a subject of social policy importance.

Recent longitudinal studies show that older age health, dependence, and quality of life are significantly affected by middle-aged lifestyles^[5-6]. In the West, men and women were sampled together to explore gender differences and factors of mental health and lifestyle^[7-8]. It was centered on women. In the early stages, studies were divided according to traditional stereotypes based on gender roles as well as gender separation^[9-10]. This study was initiated to identify the level of physical and mental health experienced by middle-aged people and to propose basic support measures based on it. This

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will help prepare for happy old age as well as the corresponding middle-aged, and could contribute to providing basic data in Korea’s insufficient middle-aged mental health sector.

Method

This study well reflects the characteristics related to physical and mental health of middle-aged and elderly in Gyeonggi-Do reflecting the population and its distribution of 28 cities and 3 Guns of Gyeonggi-Do. Among 27,153 subjects, 8,653 subjects are middle-aged people between 50 to 64 years old, and 6,547 subjects are the group under 49 years old and 11,953 subjects are the group over 65 years old. In order to examine the physical and mental health status and related characteristics of the middle aged and elderly, we investigated situations such as degree in physical and mental functions and difficulties in physical and mental health related to daily life, difficulty in in the choice of hospital or clinic, lack of health care support system, the need for support, the need for support for physical and mental health care, and the use of social security for physical and mental health support. For each item, physical and mental questions were classified into the difficulty of health problems, the difficulty of health care, the necessity of health care, and the use of health insurance.

This study examined the physical and mental health characteristics of the middle-aged and comparative groups, and conducted a technical analysis to identify the actual use and needs of related services. In addition, this study examined the differences in physical and mental health characteristics of the middle-aged and comparative groups through X^2 validation and one-way ANOVA analysis. SPSS 21.0 was used for statistical analysis of the study data.

Result

Participants’ Characteristics: As for the general characteristics of the research subjects, the middle-aged people between 50 to 64 years old showed a low level of male, 3,514 persons (40.6%) compared with female, 5,139 persons (59.4%) in [Table 1]. In the case of education, 6,260 (72.3%) were middle or high school graduates, and 1,914 (22.1%) were higher than college graduates and 476 persons (5.5%) were lower than elementary school graduates.

In the general characteristics of the subjects, the proportion of women was relatively higher than that of

group under 49 years old and the group over 65 years old. In the case of education, the level of education was higher than that of group over 65 years old with 6,398 (53.5%) elementary school graduates or lower but lower than the group under 49 years old with 4,445 (67.9%) college graduates or higher.

Table 1: Participants’ Characteristics

Variable		N	%	
Gender	≤ 49	Male	2,298	35.1
		Female	4,249	64.9
	50-64	Male	3,514	40.6
		Female	5,139	59.4
	≥ 65	Male	4,139	34.6
		Female	7,814	65.4
Age	≤ 49	20-29	395	6.0
		30-39	2,286	34.9
		40-49	3,866	59.0
	50-64	50-59	5,456	63.1
		60-64	3,197	36.9
	≥65	≥ 65	11,953	100.0
	Education Level	≤ 49	Elementary	62
Middle/High			2,040	31.2
>University			4,445	67.9
50-64		Elementary	479	5.5
		Middle/High	6,260	72.3
		>University	1,914	22.1
≥ 65		Elementary	6,389	53.5
		Middle/High	5,135	43.0
		>University	429	3.6

Comparison of Physical and Mental Health by Generation: [Table 2] shows the characteristics of the middle-aged and comparative groups through physical and mental health characteristics experienced by age group.

In the middle aged, the average level of physical difficulty was 1.85($SD=1.356$), which was lower than usual considering the response category. The comparison group was 49 years old and under, with an average of 1.46($SD=1.054$) and a group of 65 and older with an average of 2.35($SD=1.563$). The number of physical health management difficulties was 1.69($SD=1.241$) for middle-aged group, 1.40($SD=.962$) for those under 49 years old, and 2.04($SD=1.453$) for those over 65 years old. The level of difficulty in mental health was 1.62($SD=1.164$) in the middle-aged group, 1.39($SD=.954$) in the under 49 group,

and 1.88(*SD*=1.301) in the 65-year-old group. In the difficulty of mental health management, the middle-aged group had an average of 1.52(*SD*=1.060), the under 49 group had 1.34(*SD*=.861), and the over 65 group had an average of 1.70(*SD*=1.198).

The middle-aged showed relatively low level of difficulty than the group over 65 years old in all areas of physical health problems, physical health care difficulty, mental health problems, and mental health care difficulty. However, it showed a significantly higher level of difficulty than the group under 49 years old.

Table 2: Comparison of physical and mental health by generation

Variable	≤ 49		50-64		≥ 65		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Physical health problem	1.46	1.054	1.85	1.356	2.35	1.563	898.236***
Physical health care difficulty	1.40	.962	1.69	1.241	2.04	1.453	551.100***
Mental health problem	1.39	.954	1.62	1.164	1.88	1.301	366.816***
Mental health care difficulty	1.34	.861	1.52	1.060	1.70	1.198	249.042***

***: p<.001

Current Usage Status of Social Services for Physical and Mental Health: In order to alleviate the physical and mental health difficulties experienced by the elderly, the use of socially provided services was checked in [Tables 3 and 4]. First of all, 6,731 people (77.8%) had no intention of using the social services provided to alleviate physical health problems, and 266 people (3.1%) are currently using related services

the next highest rate, and 377(4.4%) who knew the service but did not apply, 114 people (1.3%) applied for the application but could not use it. The highest rate was found to be unwilling to use in all groups, including the elderly. However, the older group showed higher intention to use the service to management their physical and mental healthcare. And also there is a high intention to use but do not know the service. The distribution of social service usage to alleviate physical health difficulties by age group showed a statistically significant difference ($F = 948.961, p < .001$)

Among those who are willing to use the service, 1,135 people (13.1%) did not know the related service,

Table 3: Current Usage Status of Social Security Services for Physical Health by generation

Variable	≤ 49		50-64		≥ 65		F
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
No Intention to Use	5,636	86.10	6,731	77.80	7,949	66.50	948.961***
Service not known	600	9.20	1,135	13.10	2,489	20.80	
Service recognized but failed to apply	171	2.60	377	4.40	838	7.00	
Applied but can't be used	33	.50	114	1.30	215	1.80	
Experience in use, currently not available	4	.10	30	.30	36	.30	
Service in use	103	1.60	266	3.10	426	3.60	

***: p<.001

In the analysis of social service use to alleviate the difficulties of mental health, 7,165(82.8%) of the middle-aged group had no intention of using it. In addition, 107 people(1.2%) were using related services, which was lower than physical health related services.

Even though they were willing to use mental health-related services, 1,091(12.6%) of them did not know the service, and 225(2.6%) of them knew the service but did not apply for it. The middle-aged group showed a lower rate than the 65-year-old or older group, but compared to

the 49-year-old or younger group, they were willing to use the service but did not know the service. There were statistically significant differences in the distribution of

social service usage by age group to alleviate mental health difficulties ($F = 282.746, p < .001$).

Table 4: Current Usage Status of Social Security Services for Mental Health by generation

Variable	≤ 49		50-64		≥ 65		F
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
No Intention to Use	5,753	87.90	7,165	82.80	9,355	78.30	282.746***
Service not known	615	9.40	1,091	12.60	1,919	16.10	
Service recognized but failed to apply	98	1.50	225	2.60	424	3.50	
Applied but can't be used	24	.40	57	.70	83	.70	
Experience in use, currently not available	4	.10	8	.10	22	.20	
Service in use	53	.80	107	1.20	150	1.30	

***: $p < .001$

Need for Support of Physical and Mental Health by Generation: The results of analyzing the need for physical and mental health support and physical and mental health support are presented in [Table 5]. For the elderly, 1,594(18.4%) were aware of the need for physical health support, and 1,225(14.2%) indicated the need for

mental health support. In other words, the elderly had a higher recognition of the need for physical health rather than mental health. 1,422 respondents(16.4%) said they needed physical health care support, compared with 1,123 respondents (13.0%).

Table 5: Comparison of Need for Support of Physical and Mental Health by Generation

Variable	≤ 49		50-64		≥ 65		X ²
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Support for Physical health problem	729 (11.1)	5,818 (88.9)	1,594 (18.4)	7,059 (81.6)	3,413 (28.6)	8,540 (71.4)	825.976***
Support for Physical health care	665 (10.2)	5,882 (89.8)	1,422 (16.4)	7,231 (83.6)	2,932 (24.5)	9,021 (75.5)	615.331***
Support for Mental health problem	614 (9.4)	5,933 (90.6)	1,225 (14.2)	7,428 (85.8)	2,249 (18.8)	9,704 (81.2)	302.587***
Support for Mental health care	577 (8.8)	5,970 (91.2)	1,123 (13.0)	7,530 (87.0)	2,003 (16.8)	9,950 (83.2)	231.349***

***: $p < .001$

In addition, this study examined the differences in perceptions among middle-aged and other age groups regarding physical and mental health care support. The results of the analysis showed that the elderly have physical health support ($X^2=825.976, p < .001$), mental health support ($X^2=302.587, p < .001$), physical health

care support ($X^2=615.331, p < .001$), and mental health care. All elements of support ($X^2 = 231.349, p < .001$) were found to recognize the need compared to those under 49 years of age. However, they were perceived to be lower than those aged 65 or older.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the physical and mental difficulties of middle-aged people, their current use of social services, and their desire for services. In addition, the purpose of this study was to compare the current status of middle-aged group by each element with those under 49 years of age and those over 65 years of age, and to explore the characteristics of the physical and mental health of the elderly and future development directions.

The results showed that the physical and mental difficulties experienced by the elderly and the level of difficulty they experienced were lower than normal, but higher than those under the age of 49. This will make it very difficult in the future to be equal to the group aged 65 and over. However, the intention to use related services was still low. In addition, there were many cases where they did not know about the related services or even applied. In terms of service usage, the level of awareness of the service was lower than the age group of 49 and younger. Also, the elderly thought that the support for physical and mental health was very much needed compared to the group under 49 years old. Based on the research results, in order to alleviate the physical and mental difficulties of the elderly and to support the health care, an objective plan for the health verification of the elderly is needed. The physical and mental levels of the elderly identified through this study are the subjective opinions of the subjects, and there is no objective confirmation of the physical and mental health status.

In middle-aged and older age, physical and mental problems are often caused by deterioration of physical function, burden of social activities and relationship difficulties. For these middle-aged people, an objective judgment must first be made about their health level, and policies should be in place for health insurance, preventive services, and diagnosis through local agencies.

Secondly, middle-aged group often did not know or could not apply for the service even though they were willing to use it. In order to overcome the current situation, it is necessary to strengthen public relations at various levels of services and related institutions to support the physical and mental health of the elderly. In addition, it is necessary to find ways to increase the ease of application and access to services.

While older adults feel less physical and mental health difficulties than older people, but prevention is very important because they will be increasingly more intense as they aged. Especially that is important because the sooner they encounter social services, the faster they can adapt.

Ethical Clearance: Not required

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Conflict of Interest: Nil

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