

The Effect of Socio-Economic Deprivation in Middle-Aged People with Disability on Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Economic difficulty—that is, poverty—is reported to be an important factor that worsens health inequality. Although Korea has been experiencing continuous economic growth, it is expected that inequality in mental health will deepen in the country due to socioeconomic polarization and income inequality.

However, previous studies on mental health defined poverty as a concept centered on income. When poverty is defined in such a way, this approach will have limitations that make it hard to have a comprehensive understanding of the various socioeconomic situations that disabled people face, and it will also be hard to extract effective policy implications. The purpose of this study was to identify the diverse types and patterns of socioeconomic deprivation that people with disability experience by using the concept of socioeconomic deprivation, which means relative poverty and social poverty. The study also explored the relationship between the experience of poverty and mental health. For its analysis, this study used the data of the Korea Welfare Panel Study (KoWePS) from the first year through the thirteenth year, and the analysis was conducted by extracting the data of a total of 12,457 people with disability aged 18 or older. Socioeconomic deprivation was structured in six dimensions—dietary life, residence, social security, job/economy, society, and health/medical care—and they were measured based on the fuzzy set theory.

For analysis of the longitudinal data, a GLM (generalized linear model) was adopted as a major analysis method. The results showed that among the general characteristics, gender, age, region, educational level, working ability, disability grade, and disability type influenced mental health, while among socioeconomic deprivation, deprivation occurring in the sectors of dietary life, residence, employment, social deprivation, and health/medical care (except for the social security sector) primarily affected mental health.

Based on these results, this study presented methods for policy and practical intervention for establishing a multidimensional social security net and improving mental health.

Keywords: depression; mental health; people with disability; poverty; socioecono mic deprivation