Food Insecurity and Quality of Life among the Poor Elderly in South Korea

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Abstract : Poverty has become a social problem in South Korea, given that seven out of ten elderly experience multidimensional poverty. As quality of life is a major social welfare measure of a society, verifying the major factors affecting the quality of life among the elderly in poverty can be used as baseline data for the promotion of welfare. This study aims to investigate the longitudinal relationships between food insecurity and quality of life among the elderly in poverty. In this study, panel regression analysis using 5-year longitudinal panel data were derived from Korea Welfare Panel Study (KWPS, 2011-2015) were used to identify the research question. A total of 1,327 elderly people aged 65 or older with less than 60% of median income was analyzed. The main results of the study are as follows; first, the level of quality of life of the poor elderly was on average of 5, and repeated the increase and decrease over time. Second, food insecurity and quality of life of the elderly in poverty had a longitudinal causal relationship. Furthermore, the statistical significance of food insecurity was the highest despite controlling for major variables affecting the quality of life among the poor elderly. Therefore, political and practical approaches are strongly suggested and considered regarding the food insecurity for the quality of life among the elderly in poverty. In practical intervention, it is necessary to pay attention to food insecurity when assessing the poor elderly. Also, there is a need to build a new delivery system that incorporates segmented health and nutrition-related services. This study has an academic significance in that it brought out the issue of food insecurity of the poor elderly and confirmed the longitudinal relationship between food insecurity and quality of life.