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Research Article

Moderated Mediation Effect of Self-esteem on the Relationship Between Parenting Stress and Depression According to Employment Status in Married Women: A Longitudinal Study Utilizing Data from Panel Study on Korean Children

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SUMMARY

Purpose: This study was to examine the moderated mediation effect of self-esteem on the relationship between parenting stress and depression among married women with children using longitudinal data from the 3rd to 6th Panel Studies on Korean.

Methods: The data from the Panel Study of Korean Children (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education) was collected as part of a longitudinal inquiry of babies born in 2008, their parents and their community environments. Only the data collected from the married women over the age of 20 who participated in the maternal survey was used for this study.

Results: The initial level of married women's parenting stress affects the initial level and the rate of change in self-esteem; the initial level of self-esteem, the initial level and rate of change in depression; and the initial level of parenting stress, the initial level of depression. However, the impact of the rate of change in parenting stress on that of self-esteem was significant only in employed women while the impact of the rate of change in self-esteem on that of depression was significant only in unemployed women.

Conclusion: It is necessary to manage parenting stress among married women through various programs and education that increase self-esteem in order to reduce their level of depression.

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Introduction

The World Health Organization has identified depression as one of the more common diseases afflicting humankind, and predicts that it will be the most common disease for all age groups by 2020 [1]. According to the Epidemiological Survey of Psychiatric Illnesses in Korea, conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2011, the 1-year prevalence rate of depression is 3.1% and its lifelong prevalence is 6.7%, with women having twice the lifelong prevalence than that of men [2]. Women aged 20–40 years have a high incidence of depression; among married women, it negatively

affects their individual mental health and the mental health of their families, which require proactive management [3]. Furthermore, depression among married women with children affects their children's emotional and behavioral development; therefore, it is important to implement early preventive education and treatment.

Multiple factors, including physiological, psychological, social and cultural factors, affect depression in married women. The probability of experiencing depression increases in women through the processes of childbirth and menstruation, and the level of depression rises with the physical changes that follow menopause and various types of stress in everyday life [4]. Among married women with children, or, specifically, women who assume a maternal role, the stress associated with child rearing is directly related to depression; hence, parenting stress is an important factor influencing depression, which must not be overlooked [5].

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Parenting stress refers to the daily stress, where parents experience the burden of their roles cognitively and emotionally after difficulties with child-rearing activities have accumulated [6]. In Korea, the woman's role as the person primarily responsible for child rearing is emphasized, and compared to men, women experience a higher level of parenting stress. When mothers experience higher levels of parenting stress, the incidence of verbal abuse, physical abuse and children's self-esteem decline and developmental disabilities increase [7]. As the entry of women into public affairs increases, their fatigue from job stress, childcare, and housework exacerbates their child-rearing stress; consequently, depression among married women in Korean society will become worse according to experts' predictions [8].

According to the stress-vulnerability model [9] and the stress-resistance model [10], the degree of depression differs by individual even when the stressor is identical. Furthermore, people suffering from severe levels of depression have different cognitive characteristics from people with mild levels of depression. This theoretical basis implies that researchers must examine cognitive variables that induce or buffer depression by their interactions with stress, and it highlights the role of self-esteem as an important cognitive variable in the relationship between stress and depression [6]. Human beings assess themselves and the work they do as valuable and important when their self-esteem is high; they also believe the work they do will increase in value in the future when they perform new tasks. Therefore, people with high self-esteem have a lower probability of experiencing symptoms of emotional dysphoria, such as self-denial, self-contempt, anxiety and depression [11]. A study [12] on married Korean women found that although the various types of stress experienced by women induced depression, self-esteem acted as a buffer against stress to produce an effect that lowered their degree of depression. A study [11] of American adults and another study [13] of married American women found that self-esteem decreased depression among the married women and had a mediating effect on the relationship between stress and depression.

However, the levels of parenting stress, self-esteem, and depression are factors that continuously change, depending on the time and situation, and their manifestation is diverse among individuals. Despite the limitation of cross-sectional studies in evaluating the relationship between these factors, most studies on parenting stress and depression among married women are cross-sectional. Furthermore, married women who hold jobs and are full-time housewives have been found to differ in their levels of stress and depression experienced in daily life [14].

The relationship among parenting stress, self-esteem, and depression of married women requires an examination suited to the participants' characteristics, comparing their employment status and investigating the changes in each factor over time. Hence, this study compared an employed group and an unemployed group of married women with children using longitudinal data from the third to sixth panel studies on Korean children, and examined the relationship among parenting stress, self-esteem, and depression by group to establish basic knowledge for the purpose of reducing depression among married women. Details of the stipulated purpose are as follows: (a) identify the women's general characteristics; (b) check the developmental trajectories of the women's parenting stress, self-esteem and depression; (c) check the longitudinal relationships among the developmental trajectories of the women's parenting stress, self-esteem and depression; (d) check the moderated mediation effect of self-esteem on the relationship between parenting stress and depression according to employment status; (e) check the direct and indirect effects of employment status in longitudinal relationships among parenting stress, self-esteem and depression.

Methods

Study design

This study used a longitudinal descriptive research design to examine the relationship among the longitudinal developmental trajectories of the parenting stress, self-esteem, and depression of married women.

Setting and sample

The data from the Panel Study of Korean Children (Korea Institute of Child Care and Education) was collected as part of a longitudinal inquiry of babies born in 2008, their parents and their community environments. Only the data collected from the married women over the age of 20 who participated in the maternal survey was used for this study. The study recruited participants for comparisons between those who were employed and unemployed, and ultimately selected participants without changes in their employment status (resignation, parental leave, re-employment) during the corresponding survey period; women with employed status totaled 328 and women with unemployed status totaled 625.

Ethical consideration

The study underwent examination (KU IRB 2016-103) by Kosin University's Institutional Review Board, and was approved.

Measurement

Parenting stress

The tool used to measure parenting stress consisted of 11 questions from the instrument developed by Kim and Kang [15] that was revised to fit the purpose of the panel study on Korean Children. Each question is rated on a 5-point scale: from *strongly disagree* (1 point), *mildly disagree* (2 points), *neutral* (3 points), *mildly agree* (4 points), to *strongly agree* (5 points). A higher score indicates a higher level of stress related to parenting. The reliability of the tool in Kim and Kang's study [15], as measured by Cronbach α , was .86, and Cronbach α was .86 for the third panel study on Korean children used in this study, .87 for the fourth panel, and .88 for the fifth panel and the sixth panel.

Self-esteem

The instrument used to measure self-esteem consisted of 10 questions (rated on a 5-point scale) from the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale [16], which were translated and revised to fit the panel study on Korean children. A higher score indicates a higher level of self-esteem. A preliminary study targeting Korean women [17] in 2007 reported a reliability of .82, as measured by Cronbach α , whereas Cronbach α for the third panel study on Korean children that was used in this study was of .86, and .88 for the fourth, fifth, and sixth panel studies.

Depression

The instrument used to measure depression consisted of 6 questions from the tool developed by Kessler and colleagues [18], which was translated and revised to fit the purpose of the panel study on Korean children. Each question includes a 5-point scale: from *none of the time* (1 point), *a little of the time* (2 points), *some of the time* (3 points), *most of the time* (4 points), to *all of the time* (5 points). A higher score indicates a higher degree of depression. The reliability of the tool in Kessler's study [18], as measured by Cronbach α was .89. Cronbach α for the third and fourth panel studies on

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