



Panel analysis on the changes in the quality of life of the divorced elderly

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Abstract. In this study, a panel analysis was conducted by combining the 2013 Korea Welfare Panel data and 2018 data to examine the differences in the quality of life of the divorced elderly and the difference between the married elderly. To this end, I analyzed data from 3,049 married elderly and 149 divorced seniors among 3,098 married persons over 60 years of age in the eighth Wave of Korea Welfare Panel 2013. The frequency, reliability, cross tab, paired t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were performed using SPSS 21.0. First, the change in marital status of the elderly was not significant. Second, the divorced elderly were adjusting to life after divorce. In other words, income satisfaction, family relationship satisfaction, child relationship satisfaction, leisure life satisfaction, and life satisfaction were all positively changed in 2018 compared to 2013. Third, the divorced elderly had a lower quality of life compared to the married elderly. In other words, despite the positive change in quality of life for five years after divorce, the income satisfaction, family relationship satisfaction, child relationship satisfaction, social relationship satisfaction, and leisure life satisfaction were all lower than those of married elderly people were. It is important to find ways to improve the quality of life after divorce. Efforts are needed to reduce negative social perceptions about divorce in old age. And, alternative family linkages are needed.

Keywords: Panel study; Divorced elderly; Changes and difference in the quality of life; Ancova; Korea Welfare Panel data.

Received: 07.12.2020

Accepted: 10.01.2021

Published: 05.02.2021

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term twilight divorce has frequently appeared in Korea. However, twilight divorce is a social term rather than a legal institutional term. Twilight divorce is a new word that originated in the early 1990s. When the Japanese economy entered a recession, Korean media reported that the number of salaried people who filed a divorce lawsuit from their wives after taking severance payments began to appear (Lee HS, 2018). In the sense of consultation, it is synonymous with divorce in old age after the 60s to 70s, but in the broadest sense, it means divorce after the children became independent or became independent as college students, or the divorce of a couple who has been married for 20 years or more. The number of old age divorces in Korea tends to increase every year. Among the total divorces in Korea, married couples divorced more than 20 years, 33.4%, up 9.7% year-on-year. This is considerably higher than the increase in the total number of divorces by 2.5%, contrary to the diminishing divorces of other ages (Kostat a, 2019).

Reasons for the increase in old age divorce, first, the opinion of the elderly divorced was somewhat positive. Second, the baby boomers entered the elderly and the population itself grew. Third, because of the prolonged lifespan, old age was extended. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to focus on how their quality of life will be in the midst of divorce due to the change in opinion on divorce, the growth of the middle-aged population, and the longevity of humanity. In particular, from a longitudinal perspective, this study focused on how the quality of life after divorce will change.

Looking at previous studies related to divorce, divorce can ruin the quality of life of old age. In other words, divorced people experience more health problems (Lillard A *et al.*, 1995; Zick D *et al.*, 1991), and divorced men have higher suicide rates, lower levels of happiness, and higher depression than married men (Kostat a, 2019). The economic difficulties after divorce are common (Andreevna S., 2015), this is also because they tend to decide on divorce when economic conditions are difficult (Hetherington M *et al.*, 2002). But especially for women, it is extremely difficult for women outside the marriage system to recover economically again [Morgan, 1991]. Social relations are also difficult. Divorced women feel limited in their relationships with others and experience discrimination and alienation in their relationships with others because of the stigma of divorce that still exists in society (Kitson C *et al.*, 1990).

Although elderly divorce is on the rise, only a few studies have been conducted on the elderly. A study on the increase and characteristics of old age divorce at the social level (Park H *et al*, 2013 ; Anuara H *et al*, 2019), a study on the effect of divorce intentions on elderly couples (Jo YS, 2014), and Korea-Japan comparison. Adaptation studies of divorced males (Lee HS, 2018). As a qualitative research method, there is a study dealing with adaptation after divorce (Lee H S., 2015; Moon J H *et al*, 2014).

However, these previous studies, firstly, do not reveal the level of adaptation after divorce through 'change' of quality of life as a limitation of cross-sectional design. Secondly, studies mainly on divorced people lack information on whether the quality of life of a divorced elderly person is lower than that of a married person. Finally, there are limitations in identifying the substance of divorce mainly by studying divorce intention or by using qualitative research methods.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the difference in the quality of life of the divorced elderly and the difference in quality of life through comparison with the married elderly by combining the Korea Welfare Panel 2013 and 2018 data. First, is the marriage status of the elderly changing? Second, does the quality of life of elderly divorced changed? Third, is there a difference in quality of life between the divorced elderly and married elderly after 5 years, depending on the divorce in 2013?

Materials and Methods

Data and Subject

In this study, the 8th wave of Korea Welfare Panel Data 2013 and the 13th wave of 2018 were used (Korea Welfare Panel Study, 2019). A total of 3,198 people (3,049 married and 149 divorced) were selected and analyzed among the elderly aged 60 and over in 2013. Bereaved, remarried, and unmarried were excluded from the analysis.

Characteristics of subject

Males were 1,622 (50.7%) and females were 1,576 (49.3%). The most common was elementary school (41.6%), and 59.5% were religious. 94.3% were married couples or 3rd generation households, and 33.5% were the elderly living in urban areas.

Measurement

The variables selected to achieve the purpose of this study were shown in Table 1, and the higher the score, the higher the tendency.

Table 1 : Instrument

Variables		Measurement	Reliability
Physical health	Subjective Health Status	Single item, 5-point Likert	
	Alcohol dependence	3 items, 5 points Likert	.940(13yr), .963(18yr)
Economic condition	Income satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	
Family Relations	Family relationship satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	
	Child relationship satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	
	Family conflict	5 items, 5 points Likert	.787(13yr), .826(18yr)
Social activity	Social relationship satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	
	Leisure life satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	
Mental Health	Depression	CESD, 10 items, 4 points Likert	.961(13yr), .964(18yr)
	Self-esteem	Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, 10 questions, 4 points Likert	.931(13yr), .945(18yr)
	Life satisfaction	Single item, 5-point Likert	

Statistic method

The frequency, reliability, cross tab, paired t-test and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were performed using SPSS 21.0.

Results

Changes in the marriage status of the elderly

In order to examine the change in the marital status of the elderly, I analyzed the marital status in 2018

according to the marital status in 2013 (married vs. divorced) using the cross analysis in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the results are statistically significant. However, it is reasonable to assume that the marital status of the elderly tends to be maintained rather than fluctuated. Except for bereavement, both groups seem to have little change in marriage status.

Table 2 : Changes in the marriage status of the elderly
<n=3,198>

			Marriage status_18yr					total	chi-square
			Married	Bereavement	Divorce	Separation	Others		
Marriage status_13yr	Married	N %	2,670 87.6%	334 11.0%	21 .7%	8 0.3%	16 .5%	3,049 100.0%	2477.943***
	Divorced	N %	1 0.7%	11 7.4%	134 89.9%	3 2.0%	0 0.0%	149 100.0%	

*** p<.001

Changes in the quality of life of the divorced elderly

A paired t test was conducted to examine the changes in the quality of life of divorced elderly people in Table 3. As a result, income satisfaction increased and family relationship satisfaction, child relationship satisfaction, leisure life satisfaction, and life satisfaction improved. Therefore, it can be seen that the quality of life of the elderly who are divorced changed positively in 2013.

Table 3 : Changes in the quality of life of the divorced elderly
<n=149>

		M	S.D	paired-t value
Physical health change	Subjective Health Status_13yr	3.19	.961	.565
	Subjective Health Status_18yr	3.14	.87	
	Alcohol dependence_13yr	1.24	.551	-.772
	Alcohol dependence_18yr	1.40	1.364	
Economic condition	Income satisfaction_13yr	2.34	.889	-3.280***
	Income satisfaction_18yr	2.64	.894	
Family Relations	Family relationship satisfaction_13yr	3.05	.957	-2.305*
	Family relationship satisfaction_18yr	3.25	.914	
	Child relationship satisfaction_13yr	3.33	2.078	-2.293**
	Child relationship satisfaction_18yr	3.68	2.256	
	Family conflict_13yr	1.40	.866	.978
Family conflict_18yr	1.33	.819		
Social activity	Social relationship satisfaction_13yr	3.47	.848	-.635
	Social relationship satisfaction_18yr	3.51	.697	
	Leisure life satisfaction_13yr	3.05	.820	-1.901*
	Leisure life satisfaction_18yr	3.21	.832	
Mental Health	Depression_13yr	1.78	.440	-.658
	Depression_18yr	1.83	.953	
	Self-esteem_13yr	2.76	.469	1.533
	Self-esteem_18yr	2.88	.8529	
	Life satisfaction_13yr	3.12	.713	-1.943*
Life satisfaction_18yr	3.26	.724		

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Quality of life differences after 5 years by marital status (Married vs. Divorced)

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the difference in quality of life in 2018 according to the marital status in 2013 (divorced vs. married). The 2013 quality of life score was controlled. In all analyzes, Levene's Test for Equality of Error Variances was not significant, confirming homogeneity.

As a result of analyzing the differences in the quality of life according to the divorce or not of the elderly,

significant differences were found in all variables except subjective health status, alcohol dependence among physical health, and depression among mental health status in Table 4. That is, in 2013, divorced elderly people had lower income satisfaction, family relationship satisfaction, child relationship satisfaction, social relationship satisfaction, leisure life satisfaction, and family conflict than those who were married in 2018. Self-esteem and life satisfaction were also lower. Therefore, after five years, except for family conflict, divorced elderly people had lower quality of life than married elderly people did.

Table 4 : Quality of life differences after five years by marital status (Married vs. Divorced) <n=3,198>

18yr	Marital status_13yr	N	M	S.D	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	F	Partial Eta Squared		
Physical Health	Subjective Health	Married	3,049	3.10	.892	Corrected Model	243.288 ^a	169.488***	.096	
		Divorce	149	3.14	.870	Intercept	879.537	1225.473***	.277	
	Alcohol dependence	Married	604	1.22	1.013	Subjective Health_13yr	243.038	338.630***	.096	
			Divorce	39	1.40	1.364	Marriage status_13yr	.000	.000	.000
		Divorce	604	1.22	1.013	Corrected Model	47.021 ^a	23.376***	.068	
			39	1.40	1.364	Intercept	98.431	97.870***	.133	
	Economic Status	Income satisfaction	Married	2,800	2.95	.855	Alcohol dependence_13yr	45.784	45.523***	.066
			Divorce	146	2.64	.894	Marriage status_13yr	1.444	1.436	.002
		Family relationship satisfaction	Married	2,800	3.82	.565	Corrected Model	149.862 ^a	108.899***	.069
				Divorce	146	3.25	.914	Intercept	1126.289	1636.863***
Divorce			2,800	3.82	.565	Income satisfaction_13yr	136.141	197.858***	.063	
			146	3.25	.914	Marriage status_13yr	7.599	11.044**	.004	
Family Relations		Family relationship satisfaction	Married	2,800	3.82	.565	Corrected Model	101.507 ^a	155.633***	.096
			Divorce	146	3.25	.914	Intercept	683.920	2097.200***	.416
		Child relationship satisfaction	Married	2,899	5.51	1.240	Family relationship satisfaction_13yr	56.389	172.914***	.055
				Divorce	148	3.68	2.256	Marriage status_13yr	20.467	62.760***
	Divorce		2,899	5.51	1.240	Corrected Model	1220.004 ^a	416.755***	.215	
			148	3.68	2.256	Intercept	1541.254	1052.990***	.257	
	Family conflict	Married	3,049	1.54	0.471	Child relationship satisfaction_13yr	747.543	510.724***	.144	
			Divorce	149	1.33	0.819	Marriage status_13yr	130.816	89.374***	.029
		Divorce	3,049	1.54	0.471	Corrected Model	35.885 ^a	76.974***	.271	
			149	1.33	0.819	Intercept	276.434	1185.904***	.038	
Social Activity	Social relationship satisfaction	Married	2,800	3.66	.609	Family onflict_13yr	29.683	127.341***	.005	
		Divorce	146	3.51	.697	Marriage status_13yr	4.059	17.411***	.003	
	Divorce	2,800	3.66	.609	Corrected Model	27.838 ^a	37.835***	.025		
		146	3.51	.697	Intercept	784.184	2131.578***	.420		
Divorce	146	3.51	.697	Social relationship satisfaction_13yr	24.810	67.439***	.022			

					Marriage status_13yr	1.434	3.898*	.001					
	Leisure life satisfaction	Married	2,800	3.38	.721	Corrected Model	45.821 ^a	44.532***	.029				
						Intercept	1127.586	2191.718***	.427				
	Divorce	146	3.21	.832	Leisure life satisfaction_13yr	42.052	81.737***	.027					
					Marriage Status_13yr	2.469	4.799*	.002					
Mental Health	Depression	Married	2,899	1.74	1.088	Corrected Model	48.911 ^a	21.184***	.014				
						Intercept	839.963	727.581***	.193				
						Divorce	148	1.83	.953	Dipression_13yr	47.787	41.393***	.013
						Marriage status_13yr	.807	.699	.000				
	Self-esteem	Married	2,899	3.11	.904	Corrected Model	27.658 ^a	17.142***	.011				
						Intercept	1207.971	1497.308***	.330				
						Divorce	148	2.88	.852	Self-esteem_13yr	20.004	24.796***	.008
										Marriage status_13yr	5.800	7.189**	.002
	Life satisfaction	Married	2,800	3.51	.639	Corrected Model	72.994 ^a	92.956***	.059				
						Intercept	615.656	1568.041***	.348				
						Divorce	146	3.26	.724	Satisfaction_13yr	64.241	163.618***	.053
										Marriage status_13yr	3.377	8.602**	.003

*p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001

Results

In this study, a panel analysis was conducted by combining the 2013 Korea Welfare Panel data and 2018 data to examine the differences in the quality of life of the divorced elderly and the difference between the married elderly. To this end, I analyzed data from 3,049 married elderly and 149 divorced seniors among 3,098 married persons over 60 years of age in the 8th Wave of Korea Welfare Panel 2013. In summarizing the main findings, the following are discussed

First, the marriage status of the elderly did not change significantly. Although it was statistically significant, except for the death of a spouse, a representative case of old age, only 1% of married elderly and 2.7% of divorced seniors had a change in marriage status such as divorce, remarriage, and separation. Nevertheless, it is socially suggestive that the divorced elderly are still divorced.

Second, divorced elderly people were adjusting to divorce after 5 years. This is partly in agreement with the findings (Dales L., 2014; Makidon A *et al*, 2013; Moshavi S, 2000) that life satisfaction of elderly women increased after divorce. However, family relationships are important in adaptation after divorce of the elderly, but they are seriously affected by changes in their relationship with their children, and they have difficulty adjusting to their jobs after quitting or being fired after divorce (Lee HS, 2108). Lee (2018)'s study is different from the results of this study because it is only for the men elderly. Therefore, it is necessary to derive clear results through comparison between men and women.

Third, as a result of comparing the quality of life in 2018 according to the divorce status in 2013, the quality of life of the divorced elderly was poor compared to the married elderly. Therefore, the elderly have adapted to their life after divorce, but their quality of life is lower than that of the elderly who still have a spouse. There are various tangible and intangible resources that can be obtained through marriage, and the divorced elderly can be interpreted as lacking these resources. Therefore, it is important to find ways to improve the quality of life after divorce. First, efforts are needed to reduce negative social perceptions about divorce in old age. Of course, the perception of the divorce of the elderly is changing positively every year. Nevertheless, considering the fact that opposition to divorce is quite high at 59.8% (Kostat b, 2019), it is necessary to change the social perception of divorce as a personal choice. Second, alternative family linkages are needed. Since the role of the community has a significant impact on divorce adaptation (Naoi T, 2006), there is a need for confrontational programs for divorced seniors and family-building projects through religious or community links.

On the other hand, divorced elderly were also less likely to have family conflicts after five years than

married elderly. Interpretation is possible in two ways. First, they would try to avoid conflicts or conflicts with family members remaining after divorce, which may have resulted in a lower family conflict. Second, the number of family members who will experience conflict after divorce may be small. In other words, living alone after divorce or living with one or two family members, it would have reduced the factor of family conflict. However, the first interpretation that the divorced elderly should have tried to reduce the conflict with the family remaining after divorce, considering the positive change in family relationship satisfaction or child relationship satisfaction after divorce, is more valid.

Conclusion

Through this study, I will draw three conclusions: First, the change in marital status of the elderly was not significant. Second, the divorced elderly were adjusting to life after divorce. Third, the divorced elderly had a lower quality of life compared to the married elderly.

Unlike previous studies that dealt with the adaptation of Korean elderly people after divorce from a fragmentary perspective, this study revealed that the elderly are adapting after divorce by utilizing large-scale survey data. Nevertheless, the divorce period could not be determined due to the limitations of using secondary data. In other words, there is a limitation that it is impossible to determine when an elderly person who was divorced at the time in 2013, indicating that there is a problem with the generalization of research results. Also, in this study, it was not analyzed separately between men and women. Since the differences between men and women in post-divorce adaptation are evident, especially in the case of the East, where Confucian ideas are deep, it is suggested that a research design should be taken into account.

Acknowledgment

This research is funded by the Hanseo University, Republic of Korea.

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