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Effects of Food Insecurity on Perceived Physical Health, Problem Behaviors, and School Adjustment in Korea

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Food insecurity caused by poverty may have negative effects not only on child development, including physical health and psychological difficulties, which require close attention from child and adolescent welfare practitioners and policy makers. Nevertheless, in Korea, there is scarcity of research on effects of food insecurity on physical development, problem behaviors, and school adjustment. This study aims to find if food insecurity made effects on physical development, problems behaviors and school adjustment so as to delineate practice guidelines and policy implications in child and adolescent welfare. For the purpose of the study, authors recruited 619 children in grade 4-12 through a welfare agency which provided meals service for children in 10 cities in Korea. Self-administered questionnaires were administered in September, 2012 to find out their food insecurity, meal habits, BMI, perceived physical health and problem behaviors, and school adjustments. Major findings are as follows: First, compared to children in general group, children with food insecurity showed below scores in overall score and in sub-areas of problem behaviors and school adjustment, which indicates unbalanced nutrition. Second, although food insecurity was not a statistically significant predictor for BMI, it was for perceived physical health. Third, children with higher food insecurity showed poorer problem behaviors, and children who lacked a variety of food intake, food control, and good practice showed poorer problem behaviors. Fourth, children with higher food insecurity showed poorer school adjustments, and children who lacked a variety of food intake, food control, and good practice also showed poorer school adjustments. Based on the results, practice and policy implications were discussed.

Biography:

Dr. Nho earned his Ph.D. in Social Work from Columbia University, New York, USA and has taught social work practice courses (social work and mental health, school social work, child welfare, skills and techniques of social work) at Ewha Womens University, Seoul, Korea. His major research interests are in developmental outcomes of children in out-of-home placement and problem behaviors of children. Ms. Son is a doctoral student at Graduate School at Ewha Womens University and worked as a social worker at Ewha Community Welfare Center for 4 years. Her major interests include children in poverty and community welfare with children.