



## **An Analysis of the Situation of Hypochondriasis and Exercise Habit Variables of Korean Middle-Aged Women in Their 40s to 50s**

***Kyung Mi Kim<sup>1</sup>, \*Sung Bum Ju<sup>2</sup>***

1. Department of Dance, Pusan National University, Busan, South Korea
2. Department of Physical Education, Busan National University of Education, Busan, South Korea

**\*Corresponding Author:** Email: accent@bnue.ac.kr

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### **Dear Editor-in-Chief**

Koreans' life expectancy was longer than that of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries, but their subjective good health ratio, in which people think their health is good, was the lowest according to a 2021 Health Statistics finding of OECD. The ratio in which one thinks his/her health is good was 33.7% among the population aged 15 and over—the lowest among the OECD member countries. The ratio was less than half of 68.5%, the mean ratio of OECD (1).

Although Koreans' objective health indicators and subjective health assessment come from social and cultural factors, Koreans regard their health status as over-negative than the reality; specifically, their hypochondriasis is rapidly on the rise, which can be a problem (2). A distorted belief and attitude on health and disease play a pivotal role in developing hypochondriasis, which refers to thinking that one got a disease or being afraid of getting a disease due to misunderstanding physical symptoms or functional changes.

The deepening phenomenon of Korean people's hypochondriasis negatively affects individual physical and mental health, and it is connected to taking unnecessary medicine, overconfidence in health information on the Internet, and distrust in medical personnel. The phenomenon is be-

coming a significant cause of the loss of national and social medical expenses.

We aimed to analyze the hypochondriasis and situation of the exercise habit variables of middle-aged Korean women in their 40s and 50s. This study can provide information on the latest situation of the relevant sector research and motive for additional research. It targeted 250 women in their 40s-50s living in Korea and carried out a questionnaire survey through Google and NAVER Office between January and February 2022.

For the questions on hypochondriasis and medical treatment, this study used the Illness Attitude Scale (IAS) and the 5-point Likert scale (3). Regarding the variables related to exercise habits, part of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) was revised and supplemented. The number of participation in exercise a week, participation duration in exercise a day, and the purpose of exercise were surveyed. A frequency analysis was performed using SPSS 23.0 Windows (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) regarding the measured questionnaire responses.

According to the study results, the participants' age was  $48.28 \pm 3.80$  yr. To the item "I worry about my health," 4% of the respondents said "strongly disagree," 39.7% said "agree a bit," 30%



said “agree to some degree,” 18% said “agree quite a bit,” and 7.2% said, “strongly agree.” To the item “I worry that I may get a disease in the future,” 12.6% said “strongly disagree,” 48% “agree a bit,” 23.1% “agree to some degree,” 11.6% “agree quite a bit,” and 4.3% “strongly agree.” To the item “I cyclically check if something is wrong in my health,” 20.9% said “strongly disagree,” 36.8% “agree a bit,” 29.2% “agree to some degree,” 9.7% “agree quite a bit,” and 2.2% “strongly agree.” To the item “Although I have a disease, my doctor did not accurately diagnose it, 58.8% said “strongly disagree,” 28.9% “agree a bit,” 7.2% “agree to some degree,” 3.6% “agree quite a bit,” and 1.1% “strongly agree.” To the item related to exercise habit regarding the number of participation in exercise a week, 23.1% said “never exercise,” 37.2% “1-2 times,” 24.5% “3-4 times,” 8.4% “5-6 times,” and 4.3% “every day.” Regarding participation duration in exercise a day, 23.5% said “less than 30 minutes,” 40.8% “30 min-less than an hour,” 29.6% “an hour-less than two hours,” and 4.7% “two hours and more.” The purpose of participation in exercise was as follows: 76.2% said for health management, 11.2% to relieve stress, 5.8% for good use of leisure, and 5.8% for other purposes.

In this study on hypochondriasis and the exercise habit variables of middle-aged Korean women in their 40s-50s, the hypochondriasis depending on worry about health, future disease contraction, and status of health trouble was very high. However, those women were slightly loose in exercise habits for health benefits. The result of this study is expected to provide new insight and information to public health researchers of hypochondriasis and exercise habit variables in many countries, including Korea.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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