

## PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES OF OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON LIFE SATISFACTION

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*This study examines the meaning of productive activities by the aged population to their actual living based on the relevance between types of productive activities and characteristics of older individuals. It focuses on the relations between the aspect of social involvements by older people and their subjective assessment of life satisfaction, with a purpose of clarifying whether the active engagement in various activities by older people can bring themselves satisfaction and whether they are really productive. This study examines that the various involvement in the world of older people significantly affects their life satisfaction. Furthermore, it shows that the degree of life satisfaction is differentiating according to the pattern of their productive activities. Classifying the groups by the category of economic situations and motivations like paid work, homemaking, carework, as well as satisfaction from a family relationship further reveals that all groups seem identical in terms of productive activities, but they significantly differ in life satisfaction.*

**Key Words:** *older people, productive activities, life satisfaction*

To date, such topics as quality of life or life satisfaction in old age have been a major area of interest for welfare policies for the aged, and the increasing attention to the aging process has brought vitality to the study of related fields (I.-K. Kim et al., 1999; T.-H. Kim et al., 1998; C.-S. Kim and I.-K. Kim, 2000; J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000). Satisfaction with life has been studied usually in association with quality of life. Among the past studies on life satisfaction in old age, firstly, there were some studies that presented individual characteristics as a decisive factor in life satisfaction of older people. They argue that individual characteristics are the most important variable to determine older people's life satisfaction. These studies can be divided into two types: one type focuses on circumstantial variables such as gender, health, education level, and financial status, which are measured objectively, and the other type rather emphasizes psychological factors such as depression or self-esteem from which older persons' life satisfaction is verified. Secondly, there was a tendency to try to link between interpersonal relationship and life satisfaction, with an argument that life satisfaction can vary depending on family relationship involving

their adult children or kindred, and social relationship. After all, the gist of established studies is that the resource system of older people is a critical factor to decide their life satisfaction.

This study sets itself apart from former ones as it examines life satisfaction of older people from the aspect of their activities of participation beyond those individual characteristics. Earlier studies are meaningful as they showed that factors in older people's situations played a role as their resources and accordingly affected their life satisfaction. However, since there is an increasing change in lifestyle of the aged, their active participation and engagement in various activities are emerging as an important and distinctive factor in life satisfaction. As a result, their participation in various activities by using their resources or in order to overcome their limited resources should be analyzed as another factor to affect their life satisfaction.

Among the past studies on desired conditions of old age (successful aging) and activities of older people, there were some to show that both personal and material resources owned by older people are positively affecting their life satisfaction. In other words, the more resources they have, the more likely they are to involve themselves in various activities. In the past studies on life satisfaction of older people, the ownership of a resource system has been examined as a very positive factor to life satisfaction. This study, therefore, in reference to these established studies, verifies the relevance between older people's participation in various activities and their life satisfaction.

#### LIFE SATISFACTION IN OLD AGE

The concept of life satisfaction was generalized since Neugarten and other gerontologists used life satisfaction as the dependent variable to verify "activity theory" and "disengagement theory" (J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000; H.-J. Chung and D.-S. Lee, 2000).<sup>1</sup> In general, life satisfaction means a subjective assessment on one's own life, but to older people, life satisfaction can be decided depending on their

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<sup>1</sup> According to activity theory, it is generally viewed that older people participating in many activities are more likely to interact with others in various areas, giving rise to a positive effect on their life. However, this theory considers the choice of activity in old age as optional and spontaneous. Disengagement theory, on the contrary, argues that those approaching old age are increasingly detached or disengaged from their middle-age roles and this process is universal and inevitable for the maintenance and sustainability of our social system.

expectations about current situations and their real fulfillment of expectations. That is, it can be defined as satisfaction by the older person with his or her current status or activity (Havighurst, R. J., 1968; C.-S. Park, 1998).

The prior studies on life satisfaction in old age focused on the realities of satisfaction, and they gradually shifted attention to the factors affecting life satisfaction. As a result, the affecting factors were verified, and they came to a conclusion that life satisfaction would be higher if those factors were adequate.

But, a further look into the concepts of life satisfaction in the prior studies tells us that there is a limit in predicting life satisfaction by just using those characteristics in older people. In other words, life satisfaction can be defined as to make a person feel happy by doing daily activities, feel the meaning and responsibility about one's life, feel achieved, regard oneself as valuable with positive self-esteem and remain optimistic despite one's weakness. (Neugarten et al., 1961; J.-S. Hur, 2004). In another study, life satisfaction is defined as a degree of positive outlook for future life and activity as well as life and activity in the past and in the present (S.-J. and Choi, 1986). This shows life satisfaction of older people is importantly relevant to their activity. There is a study to show that active social involvement plays a role in helping older people overcome loneliness, estrangement and boredom that may come after retirement (Bull, 1975; Lenaartsson and Silverstein, 2001; Jenkins, K. R., et al., 2002).

Activities of an aged person are an outcome in combination of characteristics of the person, objective traits and personal situations. This means that the combination of various personal and situational characteristics leads to a specific type of involvement. Therefore, to get a right understanding of life satisfaction in old age needs an analysis of various involvement of the older people as a major variable as well as of major factors disclosed in the established studies.

In earlier studies on life satisfaction, the factors in reference to the characteristics of older people included gender, age, education, financial status and so on. In life satisfaction by gender, many studies showed different opinions. One study argues that elderly males feel more satisfied with their life than females (S.-M. Lee and K.-S. Kim, 2002; I.-S. Jung, 2000), and there are studies to insist that the gender factor is not statistically significant in life satisfaction (Palmore and Kivett, 1977; K.-H. Park and H.-K. Han, 2002; H.-S. Lee, 2005). Opinions about the gender variable are also divided into two extremes (W.-S. Choi and

H.-G. Kim, 1989; J. S. Hur, 2004): relevant vs. irrelevant to life satisfaction (E.-K. Kim, 2002).

Studies on the influence of health to life satisfaction showed that the healthier the older person is, the more satisfied they are with their life (K.-N. Park, 2004; B.-S. Seo, 1998; C.-T. Kim and J.-W. Park, 1999; T.-H. Kim et al., 1998). In relevance with education, older people with higher education get more satisfied with life as a whole (K.-T. Kim and B.-G. Park, 2000; H.-J. Chung et al., 2000; J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000; J.-S. Hur, 2004). And the economic status is said to have an important effect on their life satisfaction (C.-T. Kim and J.-W. Park, 1999; J.-S. Hur, 2004; H.-S. Lee, 2005). The educational level is in direct proportion to the economic status, so the older people with higher education are more likely to get in good economic situations, leading to improvement in life satisfaction. Also, an economic status is not temporary, but affects the living of older people for a certain period of time, so it is a significant factor much affecting life satisfaction (H.-J. Chung et al., 2000).

Meanwhile, besides the individual characteristics, some studies argue that according to the relation with family and society, can life satisfaction vary in old age. The old age has a tendency to withdraw from a social networking, so the person's social framework is usually buttressed by spouse relationship. Living with a spouse can significantly produce satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life (Mannell and Dupuis, 1996; S.-Y. Park and H.-K. Choi, 1985; O.-B. Chung, 2000; A.-S. Kim, 2002; J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000; T.-Y. Jung and E.-Y. Cho, 2005). There is a study to show that the spouse-centric living has the highest satisfaction with life in an analysis of life satisfaction by the type of family living (Y.-B. Kim and J.-S. Park, 2004). Especially, elderly females who live together with their spouses showed higher self-esteem and life satisfaction than those who do not (H.-S. Shin, 2001). It is expected that living with or without a spouse can affect life satisfaction of old men more significantly than that of old women. Since old men spent more time with social and occupational activities in their early age, they have difficulties in doing daily chores alone at home. As a result, the existence of their female spouse who can help homemaking and care is more important to life satisfaction of old men.

From the past in Korea, it has been taken for granted that offsprings, especially the oldest ones, serve parents, and so the living with adult children in old age was something to be proud of. Thus, whether to live with their adult children can be a factor to affect life satisfaction of older people. Prior studies also analyzed that relations between adult

children and old parents can affect life satisfaction of old parents (T.-H. Kim et al., 1998; J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000). However, with the attitude toward the caring of parent gradually changing, and a tendency of decreasing responsibilities for caring of parent, the situations have greatly changed from the past. Living together with adult children do not affect life satisfaction of older parents any longer (Y.-H. Won, 1995), and there is even a study to show that old couples living away from their adult children are more satisfied (T.-H. Kim and S.-H. Seo, 1987). Recent studies show that the just living with their adult children cannot affect life satisfaction (S.-D. Chung, 2001), and life satisfaction should be analyzed in the quality of their relation with adult children (J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000; J.-S. Hur, 2004). Moreover, there is a study to deal with life satisfaction of older people on a real support relationship rather than just a relationship with adult children. In a study to analyze the support relation and life satisfaction (C.-S. Kim and I.-K. Kim, 2000), older people were found to be more satisfied with life when the support system were mutual, which means that the pattern of life satisfaction in relation with adult children is changing.

There are studies that the social support network to indicate social relationship of older people is related to their life satisfaction. The study insists that since the older people with a greater social support network are more likely to have get support around them when they are needy, the network can affect positively life satisfaction (Krause and Borawski-Clark, 1994). In a domestic study about the relevance of a social relationship network to life satisfaction (K.-S. Park, 2000), a loner-type who is shy to form a relationship with others was found to be less satisfied with life than those who were associated with family, relatives, or friends.

Studies about life satisfaction in old age found important factors from the socio-demographic characteristics, family and society relations. More recently, attention is being paid to changes in life satisfaction of older people depending on their activity of involvement. To begin with, there is a study to argue that the social involvement of older people is in a direct proportion to their life satisfaction, showing the frequency of leisure activities in a direct proportion to life satisfaction, and other factors, which are believed to improve life satisfaction, include social activity, outing, travel, sport, volunteering and so on (N.-J. Kim, 1999; D.-H. Kim et al., 1999; J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000).

Older people in modern times are frequently said to have a tendency to remain engaged in more activities thanks to various conditions as

compared with those in the past. A series of studies are putting more emphasis on this aspect in an analysis of the linkage between involvement of older people and their life satisfaction, arguing that active involvement in old age affects life satisfaction and less activity brings the decrease in life satisfaction (Clark et al., 1999). One argument is that the older people who often involve in productive activities or leisure activities can improve their ability to control circumstances and through which they can improve life satisfaction and well-being for themselves (Ward, 1979; Searle, MS et al., 1995).

This study accepts part of activity theory as it examines life satisfaction of older people focusing on their activities. Yet, it is different from the theory in that the activity variables used in this study are also associated with involuntary and inevitable choices behind the activities of older people.

### PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

The changing old age shows us that the active participation and engagement of older people is increasingly emerging as an important and distinctive factor in old age. Accordingly, their participation in various activities by using their resources or in order to overcome their limited resources should be analyzed as another variable to affect their life satisfaction. It is also important to define which activity is productive among the activities constituting the living world of old age. From the standpoint of pure economics, activities of older people can be considered as productive only when they carry a market value such as paid work. This is convenient, but critics say that it is limited in understanding the productive activity in old age correctly (Bass et al., 1993).

In general, productive activities among many constituting the post-retirement life of older people are comprehensive and far-reaching as they include not only limited paid work, but also unpaid, socially contributing ones. This study will analyze the productive activities in three aspects: traditionally defined paid work; unpaid home making/family care; volunteering and helping others recognized as productive in terms of social contribution and career development for their independent living.

## STUDY ISSUE AND METHODOLOGY

To begin with, this paper looks at the difference in life satisfaction according to individual characteristics in a work to verify established studies. By using A 2004 Survey on the Livelihood of Older People and Welfare Requirements, it will prove the difference in life satisfaction depending on individual characteristics, personal resources, family resources and material resources. Furthermore, it will analyze how life satisfaction changes according to the pattern of involvement through productive activities in old age, which is the key concept of this paper. The Living Profile and Welfare Service Needs of Older Persons in Korea (2004) is a follow-up survey after one conducted in 1994-1998, aiming at producing basic materials and benchmark data needed to establish policies for senior citizens. The surveyed are individuals at their ages over 65. This study uses part of the survey results dealing with each individual of older people and their households. The survey analyzed 2,052 older people living in urban areas among the 3,029 respondents. There is a big difference between urban and agricultural regions in the constitution of the living world by older people.

In this study, productive activities of older people are divided into three areas, leading to respective variables. Along with the characteristic variable of older people, three areas of productive activities by older people – economic activity (paid work); social support activity (homemaking and family care); and self development activity (learning, social group activity) – are used as the independent variable to influence their life satisfaction. Life satisfaction of older people is measured on a 5-point scale with a question such as “How do you evaluate your quality of life (happiness) compared to your peers?” as shown in the survey The Living Profile and Welfare Service Needs of Older Persons in Korea (2004) and the measurement is used as the dependent variable.

This work is meaningful in that it focuses on the complicating activities of older people away from a tendency shown in past life satisfaction studies that sought major affecting factors from socio-demographic characteristics of older people, family and social relationship. A further in-depth classification is needed to understand the meaning of the involvement in the various areas to older people. Otherwise, the simple classification of their superficial patterns of activities will be limited to understand the world of older people's

living. In order to define the inner situation further, the difference in life satisfaction according to the pattern of activities will be analyzed. Productive activities by older people triggered and caused by their real different situations will show the inner difference through the assessment on life satisfaction by older people who attend the activities.

To this end, this paper identifies the following issues for study:

1) What difference does a major characteristics variable of older people make in life satisfaction? Whether their personal, family and material resources affect their life satisfaction positively or not?

- ① Personal human characteristics of older people
- ② Characteristics of family resources of older people
- ③ Material resources characteristics of older people

2) What difference does appear in life satisfaction among older people participating in each area of productive activities? And which area of activity can affect life satisfaction more positively?

3) Is there any difference in life satisfaction between normal groups and actively involved groups?

4) What are major factors to affect life satisfaction in each group of active involvement?

## LIFE SATISFACTION BY BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OLDER PEOPLE

### *Individual Characteristics and Personal resources*

To identify differences in life satisfaction by individual characteristics, there was a cross-analysis between characteristics and satisfaction. The factors which showed a statistical difference by each characteristic were detected in the order of gender, health condition, educational status and the longest-worked job. By gender, elderly males were more satisfied than elderly females. The gender difference in life satisfaction seems to come in combination of other factors rather than with the gender itself. In other words, women are usually older than men, having more possibilities of getting in poor health. Given these factors, the life satisfaction of elderly females might be measured lower than men. Thus, a further look into the gender difference is needed when other factors are completely controlled.

Life satisfaction of older people was higher when they have a better

**TABLE 1. DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC**  
(unit: person, average of 5-point scale)

Varying factors	category	N	Mean (SD)	F/t
Gender	Male	798	3.31( .93)	31.506***
	Female	1241	3.06(1.00)	
Age	65-69	822	3.21( .97)	2.707
	70-74	619	3.09( .97)	
	Above 75	598	3.16(1.01)	
Health	very bad	232	2.48(1.08)	80.102***
	a bit bad	524	2.90( .98)	
	average	569	3.15( .90)	
	a bit good	524	3.51( .81)	
	very good	192	3.72( .81)	
Education	no education	682	2.81(1.01)	82.757***
	primary school	706	3.22( .93)	
	above middle school	651	3.46( .89)	
Longest-worked job	Professional /managerial post	373	3.54( .93)	25.565***
	sales & services	318	3.14(1.00)	
	Agricultural /fisheries /live stock	467	3.12( .89)	
	technical/labor/others	659	2.93(1.00)	
	no job record	219	3.29( .96)	

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

health condition and a higher education level. And this outcome shows a statistically significant difference, endorsing the result shown in established studies. Health conditions of older people are closely related to their psychological depression (physical health is closely associated with psychological health in older people, and one study proved the correlation between bad health conditions and depression). These problems can end up with the decrease in life satisfaction. Health is the most fundamental resource that makes people do an unforced activity in old age. For a young generation, health is neither a specific resource

nor ability. But for older people, health is both a very important resource and ability that brings a comparative advantage over others. Accordingly, those who are in good health can feel more satisfied with life than those who are not.

Older people with high education have a close relationship with the difference in job and financial status as compared to those with low education. A few highly educated older people are more likely to gain a status higher than the middle-income class, and this status is very likely to continue until old age and can deepen inequality among older people. As a result, the highly educated older people are more likely to be satisfied with their current life thanks to their social status and resources collected during their earlier age. The difference in life satisfaction in the longest-worked job factor also can be considered in this context. The older people with professional/managerial post in the past career showed the highest level of life satisfaction.

#### *Family Resources*

The pattern of family relationships can make a difference in life satisfaction when personal resources are in the same conditions. Especially, most of retirees show a tendency of the decrease in social relationship and more involvement in family relationship. Independence is often observed between older parents and their adult children compared to earlier times, but the family functions are still an important variable in old age.

Family resources include four factors – marital status, family type, number of children, and support from children – and they showed a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction. First, in terms of marital status, older people with a spouse were more satisfied with life than those without a spouse. This clearly verifies the findings in the past studies to show that a spouse relationship in old age is becoming more significant than any other type of relationship (e.g., parent-child relationship). In terms of a family type, the family of an old couple showed the highest level of satisfaction. In the past, it was taken for granted that old parents are supported and cared for by their adult children, but the present day faces a rapid change in such a tendency, making it difficult to expect one-sided support and care from child generations. This also explains that both parents and children tend to avoid conflicts caused by the difference in values and a generational gap, showing they are more contented with a certain level of

**TABLE 2. DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY FAMILY RESOURCES**  
(unit: person, average of 5-point scale)

Varying factor	category	N	mean(SD)	F/t
marital status	with spouse	889	2.94(1.03)	76.925***
	without spouse	1150	3.32( .91)	
family type	single family	421	2.79(1.01)	43.904***
	couple only	675	3.34( .92)	
	living with children	812	3.23( .96)	
No. of children	none	102	2.87( .95)	4.746**
	1-2 children	464	3.18( .97)	
	3-4 children	834	3.22( .98)	
	more than 5 children	639	3.11(.98)	
support from children	yes	1531	3.19( .96)	7.014**
	no	509	3.06(1.03)	

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

independence from each other.

Another possible interpretation is that an old-couple family is likely to be superior in other conditions to a single family or a family with children. The old-couple family can make a living independently, indicating that they are relatively good in health and financial status. Meanwhile, those who unavoidably live with their adult children due to poor health, substandard economic status, or other reasons are likely to be less satisfied with life. Nevertheless, Korea’s traditional philosophy of ‘respect for the aged and filial piety’ still contributes to forming a positive atmosphere for those who live with adult children (apart from convenience/inconvenience in living). For this reason, older people living with adult children show higher satisfaction with life than the solo family. In terms of support from children, those with support from children were more satisfied with life.

*Material Resources*

With the filial duty decreasing in tendency, the economic power of

**TABLE 3. DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY MATERIAL RESOURCES**  
(unit: person, average of 5-point scale)

varying factor	Category	N	mean(SD)	F/t
ave. income per month (non-working/ business income)	less than 200,000 won	934	3.06( .98)	26.187***
	200,000 ~ 400,000 won	652	3.05( .99)	
	400,000 ~ 600,000Won	172	3.25( .87)	
	600,000 ~ 1 million won	97	3.48( .99)	
	more than 1 million won	184	3.77( .75)	
prepare for later life	Yes	567	3.52( .86)	112.949***
	No	1472	3.02( .99)	
public pension	beneficiary	250	3.42( .91)	20.546***
	non-beneficiary	1789	3.12( .98)	

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

the aged became a very important factor. This means the satisfaction in later life should be followed by economic power.

This study also shows the higher monthly average income (non-working/business income) means more satisfaction with life. And those who have prepared for their later life or have received public pensions were more satisfied than those who have not. After all, the better in economic status they are, the more satisfied they are.

Older people already face a situation that they can neither expect responsibilities for later life from their children, nor social service facilities for it are well established. This anxiety is realized now due to the income decrease and the resulting poverty. And this anxiety severely affects older people in their life satisfaction. The aged group which is economically stable to some degree in later life can feel satisfied during the course of life. But the group on the other side experiences a severe retrogress in life satisfaction.

#### LIFE SATISFACTION OF OLDER PEOPLE BY PRODUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT

The following shows how life satisfaction can differ according to the

each area of participation by older people. A variety of participatory patterns are determined in relation with situations faced by older people and available resources. After all, the materialization of individual characteristics can be defined as activities of older people. It is, therefore, important to know what kind of activities they are involved in order to identify their world of living, and it is essential to analyze what kind of changes the involvement brings to their life satisfaction. The issue of what kind of activities they participate in is the outcome of their choice, but if this choice becomes a major variable to their life satisfaction, this variable should be counted in.

Regarding the difference in life satisfaction from the productive involvement by gender, first, there was no significant difference in life satisfaction from paid work. In such activities as social support or self

**TABLE 4. DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY PRODUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT<sup>2</sup>**  
(unit: person, average of 5-point scale)

Varying Factor	Category	Male			Female		
		N	Mean (SD)	F/t	N	Mean (SD)	F/t
Paid work	Do	261	3.34 (.85)	.549	182	2.93 (1.03)	3.700
	Don't	538	3.29 (.97)		1059	3.08 (.99)	
Homemaking & Carework	Do	478	3.36 (.86)	4.281*	813	3.12 (.96)	9.228**
	Don't	320	3.23 (1.03)		429	2.94 (1.05)	
Volunteering	Do	42	3.70 (.89)	7.858**	45	3.47 (.78)	7.793**
	Don't	756	3.28 (.93)		1196	3.04 (1.00)	
Learning activity	Do	162	3.62 (.85)	23.747***	209	3.28 (.86)	11.899**
	Don't	636	3.23 (.94)		1032	3.02 (1.02)	
Social group activity	Do	552	3.46 (.85)	49.515***	853	3.17 (.95)	36.637***
	Don't	246	2.97 (1.01)		388	2.81 (1.06)	

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>2</sup> Questions presented in the survey <The Living Profile and Welfare Service Needs of Older Persons in Korea, 2004> were made with regards to whether older people are participating, but the degree of their participation varies without a certain standard. Activities constituting the living world of older people can vary both in quantity and quality. This study, however, takes a limited and dichotomized approach, focusing on the activity area referred to as productive and whether older people participate or not.

development, those who participate in the activities were more satisfied with their life. Especially, whether to participate in social group activities showed a much bigger difference compared to other activities. In elderly females, the difference in life satisfaction from participation in all activities but paid work was statistically significant.

Among the older people in relation to productive activities, those who did not participate in social group activities showed the lowest life satisfaction. It is interpreted that the participation in social group activities plays a strong role in assessing one's own life in old age. This suggests that it is meaningful to provide older people with an opportunity to participate in various social-group activities in order to help improve their life satisfaction.

#### DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY SPECIFIC CHARACTER GROUPS OF OLDER PEOPLE

This analysis focuses on the distinction between specific character groups according to the situations of productive involvement by older people. It tries to identify the difference that exists within the productive activities, caused by the difference of motivation and economic foundation. To differentiate the character groups from each other, artificial classifications were made according to the characteristics of older people.

For example, the activity for paid work was divided into two dimensions. One is the participation in paid work by those who subjectively assess one's economic situations as good, and the other is the participation in paid work by those who subjectively assess one's economic situations as bad. And the motivation for paid work participation was further divided into being voluntary and involuntary.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the participation in homemaking and carework was also divided in a similar manner: one for those who assess their economic situations as good, and the other as bad. Another division for this activity is that one for those who assess their relationship with a spouse or children as good and the other as bad.

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the question in the survey about the motivation of work, such answers as to love working, to keep fit, to mingle with people, to spend time, to feel one's own ability, to get a social status or fame were classified as a voluntary motivation for work, while such answers as to need money, to give helping hands were classified as a involuntary motivation for work.

*Patterns of productive activities by character groups*

The Table 5 shows socio-demographic variables used to further differentiate the character groups divided by the pattern of paid work and involvement in homemaking and carework. This study will help examine more closely the fact that life satisfaction of older people is very complex and differentiated (duplicated) according to their real living conditions, or their base for activities, even though they conduct productive activities in the same area.

Firstly, in the paid work category for elderly males, the participation ratio was similar between those who are economically good and those who have to participate in paid work to earn a living. And for the paid work by the motivations of participation, the two groups were 31.9% and 68.1%, respectively. In the case of elderly females, those who participate in paid work because of poor economic situations or with involuntary motivations were remarkable in their participation ratio. Also the ratio of voluntary participation which is not associated with making a living was significant. The women aged older than 65 have more possibilities that they did not participate in paid work but were involved in homemaking before their current age, thus they are less likely to participate in the labor market as long as there is no specific reason for participation. Therefore, it is interpreted that the elderly females who participate in paid work have economic difficulties in maintaining their living, or other involuntary reasons to do it. This reveals a concern about a double distress suffered by elderly females who live in poverty.

Also, the older people with higher education showed a higher ratio of participation in paid work as they are good in economic status or they work on their own accord. On the other hand, those who have no education record participate in paid work involuntarily to earn a living for the most part. Regarding the difference by family-type, older people living only with a spouse and with economic surplus showed a high participation ratio in voluntary paid work. Those who live alone are interpreted to participate in paid work involuntarily for their own livelihood.

In Korean society, many old people still receive support from their children. So the degree of support also can make different patterns in paid-work participation. However, the survey showed that there was no big difference in the participation ratio in terms of support from children. This is further differentiated when measured not by just the

TABLE 5. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS BY SPECIFIC CHARACTER GROUPS  
(unit: percent)

classification		Paid work				Carework			
		Leisure base	Living base	voluntary	In voluntary	Leisure base	Living base	satisfied	Un satisfied
Gender	Male	41.3	58.7	31.9	68.1	35.2	64.8	89.6	10.4
	Female	24.2	<b>75.8</b>	17.3	<b>82.7</b>	27.1	72.9	81.9	18.1
Age	65-69	40.0	60.0	24.2	75.8	34.8	65.2	86.0	14.0
	70-74	24.6	75.4	26.3	73.7	26.3	73.7	84.6	15.4
	Older than 75	30.3	69.7	31.4	68.6	26.2	73.8	82.9	17.1
Health condition	Very bad	14.7	<b>85.3</b>	21.0	<b>79.0</b>	12.1	87.9	61.8	38.2
	A bit bad	12.2	<b>87.8</b>	18.1	<b>81.9</b>	15.9	84.1	81.0	19.0
	Average	27.5	72.5	22.6	77.4	24.7	75.3	84.9	15.1
	A bit good	40.0	60.0	29.1	70.9	46.3	53.7	92.5	7.5
	Very good	<b>64.2</b>	35.8	36.5	63.5	58.9	41.1	92.0	8.0
Education	No education	16.0	84.0	16.0	<b>84.0</b>	14.2	85.8	75.8	24.2
	Primary	37.1	62.9	22.8	77.2	30.8	69.2	86.9	13.1
	middle school +	<b>46.7</b>	<b>53.3</b>	37.8	62.2	45.7	54.3	90.2	9.8
Marital status	No spouse	25.7	74.3	22.1	77.9	25.2	74.8	80.6	19.4
	With spouse	37.4	62.6	27.4	72.6	32.7	67.3	86.7	13.3
Family type	single family	28.3	<b>71.7</b>	19.1	<b>80.9</b>	36.5	63.5	79.1	20.9
	couple only	<b>44.4</b>	55.6	29.2	70.8	35.8	64.2	87.9	12.1
	Living with children	27.8	72.2	27.5	72.5	28.0	72.0	85.3	14.7
No. of children	None	18.6	<b>81.4</b>	7.3	<b>92.7</b>	16.8	83.2	93.0	7.0
	1-2 persons	35.9	64.1	30.1	69.9	31.4	68.6	83.8	16.2
	3-4 persons	38.5	61.5	28.9	71.1	32.9	67.1	87.6	12.4
	5 persons +	29.3	<b>70.7</b>	21.5	<b>78.5</b>	26.8	73.2	81.3	18.7
Support from children	Yes	34.2	65.8	19.7	80.3	39.6	60.4	75.8	24.2
	No	33.6	66.4	<b>29.7</b>	70.3	27.1	72.9	87.3	12.7
Prepared for later life	Yes	25.5	74.5	21.6	78.4	20.6	79.4	82.3	17.7
	No	<b>53.6</b>	46.4	<b>35.9</b>	64.1	53.7	46.3	89.9	10.1
Public pension	None	32.7	67.3	25.4	74.6	27.7	72.3	84.2	15.8
	Yes	39.8	60.2	28.6	71.4	49.8	50.2	89.2	10.8

existence of support from children, but in terms of actual amount of support. On the contrary, the difference by the motivation for participation was distinct. When there was support from children, the ratio of voluntary participation in paid work was higher than when there was no support. Also, older people who had prepared for later life had a higher participation ratio in paid work on a voluntary basis and they had few economic difficulties.

Elderly males are interpreted to involve themselves actively in such areas as homemaking and carework when they have few economic difficulties and they have a good relationship with a spouse or children. Meanwhile, elderly females are involved in carework more often when they are economically distressed, and when their relationship with a spouse or children are even unsatisfying, their ratio for a carework service was higher than males'. In addition, when they were in good health, they showed a higher ratio of participation in carework, and they were economically affluent and in good terms with their family at the same time. In the case of older people whose health conditions were not good, there were more people who provided a carework service in a poor economic situation and felt inconvenient in their family relationship. This implies that the economic affluence of older people contributes to their good health, and that their good health leads to fewer possibilities of family conflicts or domestic problems. On the contrary, the older people who assess their health conditions as bad have limited access to medical services due to economic problems, so they are more likely to be negative in their health assessment and, accordingly, get closer to worsening in family relationship because they have to involve themselves in homemaking or carework despite their poor health conditions. This is in a similar pattern with the difference by the level of education. Among those who provide homemaking and carework services, those who had completed a middle-school course or above were economically free and more contented with their family relationship compared to those with no education. Those who had no education were relatively unsatisfied with their economic situations as well as their family relationship.

*Difference in life satisfaction by specific character groups*

The next focus is put on the difference in life satisfaction by specific character groups, which is presented in Table 6. Those who participated in paid work and assessed their economic situations as good were at a considerably high level in life satisfaction, given the average score of

TABLE 6. DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION BY SPECIFIC CHARACTER GROUP

	N	Mean (SD)	F
Paid working for leisure	103	3.71( .64)	79.628***
Paid working for living	201	2.72(1.03)	
Paid working Voluntary base	115	3.60( .75)	32.852***
Paid working Involuntary base	328	3.02( .97)	
Carework for leisure	264	3.93( .55)	329.516***
Carework for living	616	2.76( .98)	
Satisfied careworker	907	3.49( .75)	329.123***
Unsatisfied careworker	164	2.25(1.03)	

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

3.17 among the entire old persons who participated in paid work. Meanwhile, those who assessed their economic situations as bad and were classified as participating in paid work for living showed a relatively low level of life satisfaction at an average of 2.72. The score is lower than that of those who did not participate in paid work (the score of life satisfaction for those not participating in paid work is 3.15). And the average score of life satisfaction for those with a voluntary motivation was 3.60, and that for those with an involuntary motivation showed 3.02.

Meanwhile, the average score of life satisfaction for those who participated in homemaking or carework activities with good economic situations was 3.93, while that for those with bad economic situations was 2.76. The average score for those who were satisfied with their family relations and providing homemaking or carework services was measured to be 3.49, and that for those who were not so showed the low level of 2.25 in life satisfaction. Given the average life satisfaction score of 3.06 for those who are not involved in homemaking or carework, the scores show that there is a considerable deviation in life satisfaction among the older people.

#### PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY OF OLDER PEOPLE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THEIR LIFE SATISFACTION

In the following analysis shown in Table 7, Model 1 shows the

TABLE 7. MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR LIFE SATISFACTION OF OLDER PEOPLE

	Model 1: b(S.E.)	Model 2: b(S.E.)	Model 3: b(S.E.)
paid labor	.028(.051)	-.076(.051)	.010(.055)
homemaking / carework	.018(.019)	.004(.018)	-.046(.020)*
volunteer activity	.221(.107)*	.081(.099)	.077(.100)
learning activity	.178(.049)***	.094(.046)*	.110(.048)*
social group activity	.255(.029)***	.158(.028)***	.135(.029)***
Basic Traits	gender (female=0)		-.289(.060)***
	Age		.114(.028)***
Personal resources	health condition		.248(.018)***
	Primary (education: standard=no education)		.258(.054)***
	more than middle-school level		.323(.070)***
	professional/managerial post: (longest-worked job: standard=no job record)		-.024(.091)
	sales/service		-.029(.082)
	agricultural/fisheries/live stock		.191(.057)**
	technical/labor/others		-0.94(.076)
			-.228(.073)**
Family resources	marital status (no spouse=0)		.354(.055)***
	number of children		-.006(.012)
	living with children (without=0)		.173(.045)***
	Support from children (non-support=0)		.155(.051)**
	200,000~400,000won (Non-working income standard=less than 200,000 won)		.071(.048)
	400,000~600,000 won		.212(.078)**
	600,000~1 million won		.423(.100)***
	More than 1 million won		.390(.094)***
	Prepared for later life (none=0)		.172(.058)**
	Public pension (non-beneficiary=0)		-.110(.075)
Constant	2.851(0.40)	1.942(.109)	1.570(.125)
Degree of Freedom (d.f.)	5	14	24
F	26.439***	37.968***	24.710***
R <sup>2</sup>	.061	.208	.240

Note 1) \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

influence of activity areas of older people on their life satisfaction. According to this model, their participation in social group was found to be most effective among all activity areas on improving life satisfaction in older people. And their learning activities also showed a positive effect on life satisfaction. Participation in volunteer activities was affecting life satisfaction, but it was statistically marginal. However, Either to participate in paid work or in homemaking/carework had no statistically significant result in life satisfaction. Participation in all kinds of productive activities is found to have a positive effect when the other control variables are excluded.

Model 2 is an extension of Model 1 made by including such variables as basic characteristics of older people and personal resources. This helps examine the influence of each activity area on life satisfaction with the variable controlled. With the influence of basic characteristics of older people and personal resources, it seems that those with better health conditions and higher education have higher life satisfaction too as expected. In this analysis, the age of older people shows a statistically significant difference. There is a controversy of the age influence as established studies are divided: lower age related to higher life satisfaction (J.-D. Kwon and J.-Y. Cho, 2000; J.-S. Huh, 2004); no statistical significance in age-life satisfaction relations (J.-S. Kim and I.-K. Kim, 2000; Y.-B. Kim and J.-S. Park, 2004; H.-S. Lee, 2005); and higher age related to higher life satisfaction (S.-D. Jung, 2003). In the analysis of this paper, the higher age led to the state of higher life satisfaction, while other variables were controlled. And in terms of the longest-worked job, those who were involved in such jobs as 'agriculture/fisheries/livestock' had higher life satisfaction compared to those who had no job record. Meanwhile, those who worked in the areas of 'technical/labor/others' showed a decrease in life satisfaction.

In terms of the activity area and its influence on life satisfaction, there are changes according to Model 1. Participation in social support activity, among all productive activities in later life, still makes a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction. It remains at the significant level, but the intensity somewhat decreases.

Model 3 is a further extension of Model 2 made by including family resources and material resources of older people. Regarding the influence of control variables, the variables of basic characteristics of old people and personal resources showed a small change in their influence, but they remained statistically significant. When we look at the additional family resources, we can find that higher life satisfaction is

induced when older people have a spouse, they live with their adult children, and they receive economic support from their children. In terms of material resources variables, the older people whose income level reached more than 200,000 won (compared to the income of less than 200,000 won) showed higher life satisfaction, and those who prepared for their later life were also more satisfied than those who did not. This proves that the economic situation of older people is an important element that helps assess life satisfaction positively.

In Model 3 that shows activity areas and an influence on life satisfaction, we have to pay attention to the fact that participation in homemaking/carework has a negative effect on life satisfaction ( $b = -.046$ ). This suggests that the homemaking or carework by older people can decrease their life satisfaction when family/material resource variables were controlled.

This result produces a very important clue to suggest that older people's activities to support their family, which were recognized as valuable productive activities, are not likely to satisfy the older people, when other variables are controlled (assuming that the given living patterns to older people are similar). This is also providing a critical opinion to earlier studies (K.-H. Ok, 1998) arguing that older people come to have a meaningful life with a new role in a family by taking care of their adult children or grandchildren during the later life.

Meanwhile, participation in social group activity is still positively affecting life satisfaction in Model 3 that includes a variety of other characteristics variables. This reveals again that social group activity is very important to improve life satisfaction in old age regardless of their living patterns. After all, if we assume that the older people have the same demographic backgrounds and resource systems, we can know that older people are highly satisfied during their participation in social group activities, satisfied to some degree during their participation in learning activities, and less satisfied during their participation in homemaking/carework activities.

## CONCLUSION

In established studies, life satisfaction of older people was analyzed from the dimension of demographic, family, or resource variables. There also have been some studies to look into life satisfaction in older people focusing on psychological characteristics, such as depression, solitude, and self-control. Recent studies add such topics as leisure and social

involvement among activities of older people. Now it becomes clearer that the activity of older people accounts for an important part of their life satisfaction with the rise of changing old generations who show outstanding activities in various areas.

Under this situation, this study examines that the various involvement in the world of older people significantly affects their life satisfaction. Furthermore, it shows that the degree of life satisfaction is differentiating according to the pattern of their productive activities. Classifying the groups by the category of economic situations and motivations like paid work, homemaking, carework, as well as satisfaction from a family relationship further reveals that all groups seem identical in terms of productive activities, but they significantly differ in life satisfaction. In addition, among the activities pertaining to older people was the self-development activity that has the greatest effect on life satisfaction. Especially, their involvement in social group activities seems to be likely to improve life satisfaction regardless of their socio-demographic backgrounds or the resource systems. Meanwhile, changes in a family structure were found to make homemaking or carework activities not so positive to life satisfaction of the aged.

Until now, this task has tried to highlight a changing state of older people more suitable to the present time by analyzing the so-called productive activities in old age and what they really mean to them. The study on productive activity in later life which has just started needs more clarification about its existence and level through actual data. This paper presents an analytical side of old age groups in Korea. Furthermore, to analyze and understand the behavior of the aged is an extremely valuable and essential work in the process to set up an appropriate policy for senior citizens. In order to develop various standpoints and theories for senior policies, efforts to understand and verify the activities of older people will be required. Policy alternatives or developmental recommendations presented without a research based on objective data cannot be adamant. Therefore, a research through multiple analyses based on actual data is a meaningful job not only to develop theories about labor in old age, but also to provide strong policy alternatives in the future.

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