



# THE GENERATIONAL COMPARISONS OF GENDER ROLE ATTITUDE PATTERNS

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## ABSTRACT

To compare the gender role attitude patterns across generations in Korea, a latent profile analysis of 2,455 young adults, 3,704 middle-aged adults, and 1,777 elderly adults from the Third National Survey of Korean Families was adopted. The analysis identified two patterns for the young and elderly adults, and three patterns for the middle-aged adults.

As a result, various gender role attitudes coexist, and there might be a generational gap regarding gender roles in Korea. However, only a few studies in the West and Korea have directly compared gender role attitudes among individuals of each generation in terms of family studies. Therefore, the aim of this study was to compare the gender role attitude patterns across generations, defined by age, in Korea

The respondents answered on the 5-point Likert scale from '1=strongly disagree' to '5=strongly agree'. Higher score indicated that they had a more egalitarian gender role attitude.

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

A latent profile analysis was adopted to identify patterns of gender role attitude using Mplus 7.3. As a person-centered approach, this analysis categorizes individuals with common characteristics based on likelihoods and provides the probability that a certain individual has a certain pattern (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). Generally, adequately accounting for the complexity of the data using the fewest latent classes is a major goal in selecting the model (Hammett, Castañeda, & Ulloa, 2016).

## RESULTS

### Young Adults (N=2,455)

A latent profile analysis of self-reported gender role attitudes of the young adults identified two patterns: *neutral* (51%) and *egalitarian* (49%). The means on all five items within the *egalitarian* group were consistently higher than those within the *neutral* group among young adults.

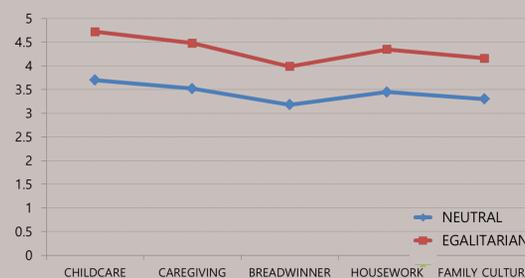


Figure 1 The Patterns of Gender Role Attitude among Young Adults

### Middle-aged Adults (N=3,704)

For the middle-aged adults, a latent profile analysis of self-reported gender role attitudes identified three patterns: *mostly neutral* (19%), *neutral* (48%), and *mostly egalitarian* (33%). The means on items 1, 2, and 4 were different among the groups. However, all three groups had relatively neutral responses for items 3 and 5, relevant to the male breadwinner model and the male-oriented family culture.

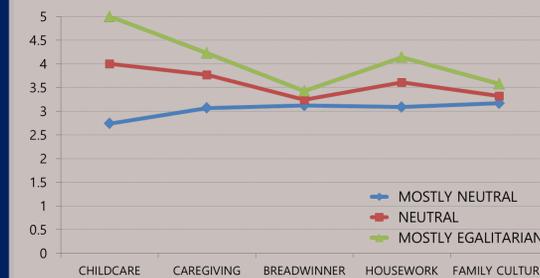


Figure 2 The Patterns of Gender Role Attitude among Middle-aged Adults

### Elderly Adults (N=1,777)

For the elderly adults, a latent profile analysis of gender role attitudes identified two patterns: *traditional* (24%) and *partially traditional* (76%). Just like the middle-aged adult groups, both groups of elderly adults had low means for items 3 and 5, while their means differed on items 1, 2, and 4.

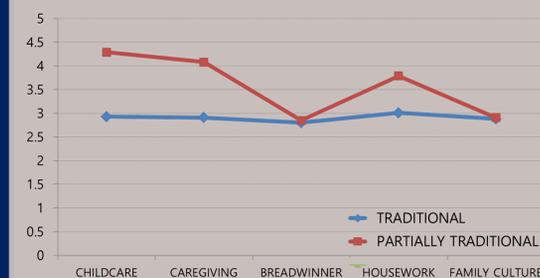


Figure 3 The Patterns of Gender Role Attitude among Elderly Adults

## INTRODUCTION

The construct of an individual's age is linked to the construct of "generational time" (Baltes & Schaie, 1973). As a result, families face generational issues, since individuals from different generations live together as a family. One of the enduring puzzles in family studies is the description and explanation of differences in attitudes and perceptions among various generations within a family (Bengtson & Allen, 2009). The difference across generations might be more of an issue for Korean families because age-related social norms are relatively strong in Korea (Seoung, 2008). In terms of gender roles, there is variation across different countries. Many countries are categorized as male-dominated societies, while others are categorized as more egalitarian societies (Benokraitis, 2008). Traditionally, Korea is one of the male-dominated societies because of the Confucian tradition (Abelmann, 1997). Recently, however, women's power and roles in Korea have expanded dramatically (Lee, Um, & Kim, 2004).

## METHOD

### DATA & SAMPLE

This study utilized the *Third National Survey of Korean Families*, released by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2015. In order to explore generational trends, three groups divided by age were selected as the sample: 2,455 young adults aged 20 to 39; 3,704 middle-aged adults aged 40 to 59; 1,777 elderly adults aged 60 and older.

### MEASURES

#### Gender Role Attitude

The measurement consisted of five items: (1) fathers are also responsible for taking care of their children just like mothers; (2) women are also responsible for caregiving just like men; (3) men's job is to earn money, and women's job is to look after the family; (4) dual-earner couples are to share the housework equally; (5) a married woman should help her family-in-law before her family of origin whenever help is needed in both families at the same time.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study imply that gender role attitude does have generational differences: the younger generation has more egalitarian gender role attitude than the older generations. In particular, there are salient generational gaps regarding the *male breadwinner model* and the *male-oriented family culture* between the young and the older generations. This could be due to the patriarchal family institution and the male breadwinner family system as the family ideology prevalent among the middle-aged and elderly adults. The findings from this study suggest that political interventions, such as campaigns or educational programs, are required to promote an egalitarian family culture for the middle-aged and elderly generations. Moreover, marriage and family intervention could prevent and solve the family conflicts caused by the generational differences in gender role attitudes, especially regarding the male breadwinner model and the male-oriented family culture in Korea. Future studies are needed to explore significant predictors of gender role attitudes and to investigate the effects of gender role attitude on family outcomes.

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