

# How Are Women's Attitudes toward Traditional Family Values Related with Marriage Intention and Fertility Aspirations in Korea?

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## Abstract

Our study finds that single unmarried with less traditional family values are less likely to have intention for marriage, while married women with those are less likely to plan to have a child in South Korea. Moreover, the study supports that there is a need to emphasize men's responsibility at home as well as government's efforts for gender equality at home, the labor market, and country.

## Introduction

Korea recorded its lowest-ever total fertility rate of 1.05 in 2017, which has been rapidly decreasing since 1965 (Figure 1). While young people are getting married later (Figure 2), the number of never married singles increases in Korea. Considering the proportion of births out of wedlock is only 1.94%, late marriages and decline in the number of married couples largely contributes to the low fertility.

Nonetheless, most of research only focused on married women and their plans to have a child. Limited research is available about unmarried single women's perceptions about marriage or childbirth. Furthermore, several studies sought reasons for its low fertility only in high education and economic activity (Choe & Retherford, 2009; Wang & Lee, 2012), high cost of child's education (Anderson & Kohler, 2013; Do, 2006), and lack of supports for childcare (Kim, 2004; Thévenon, 2011). None of previous studies has looked into how attitudes or perspectives of single women and married women are associated with fertility.

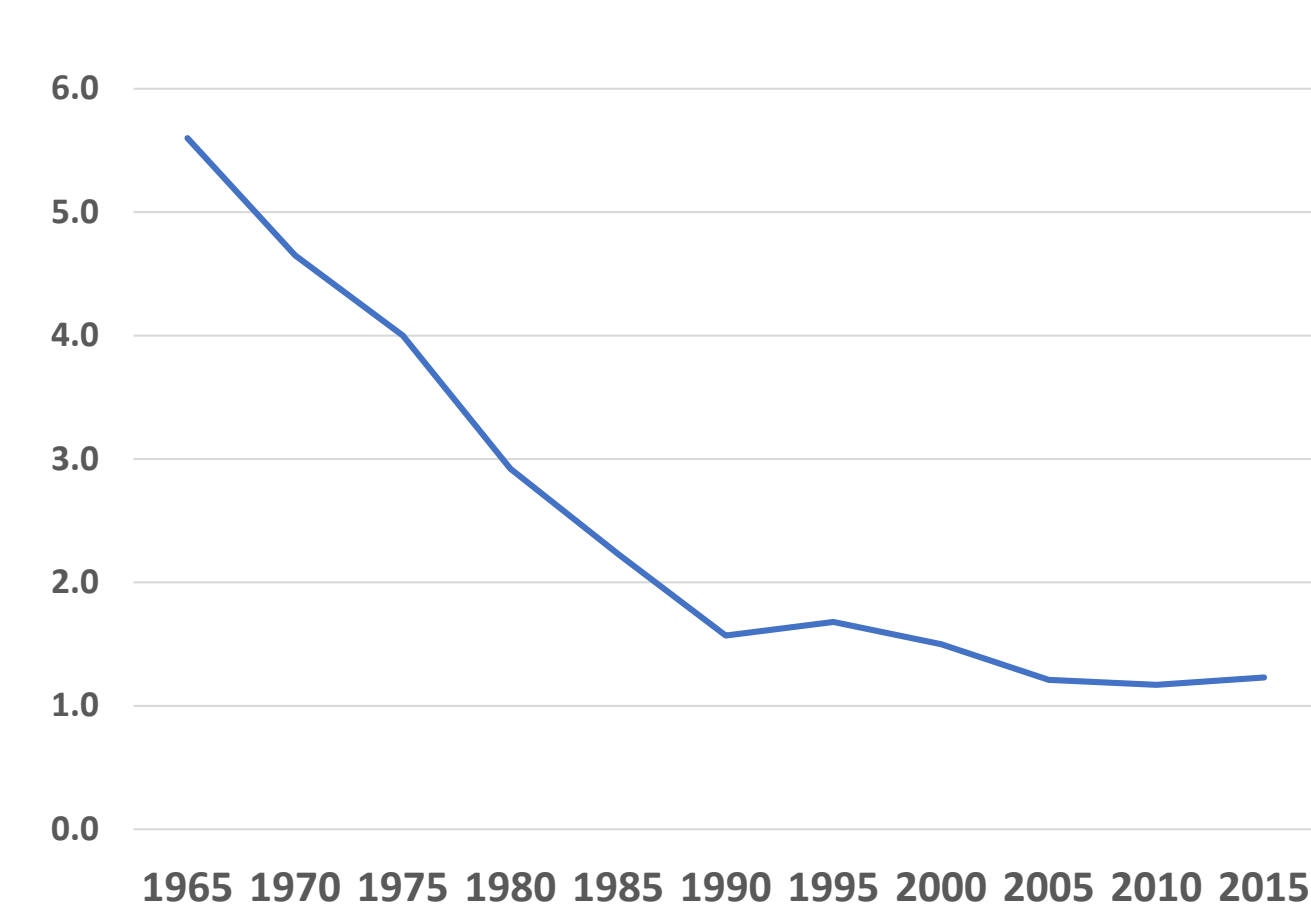


Figure 1. Total Fertility Rate

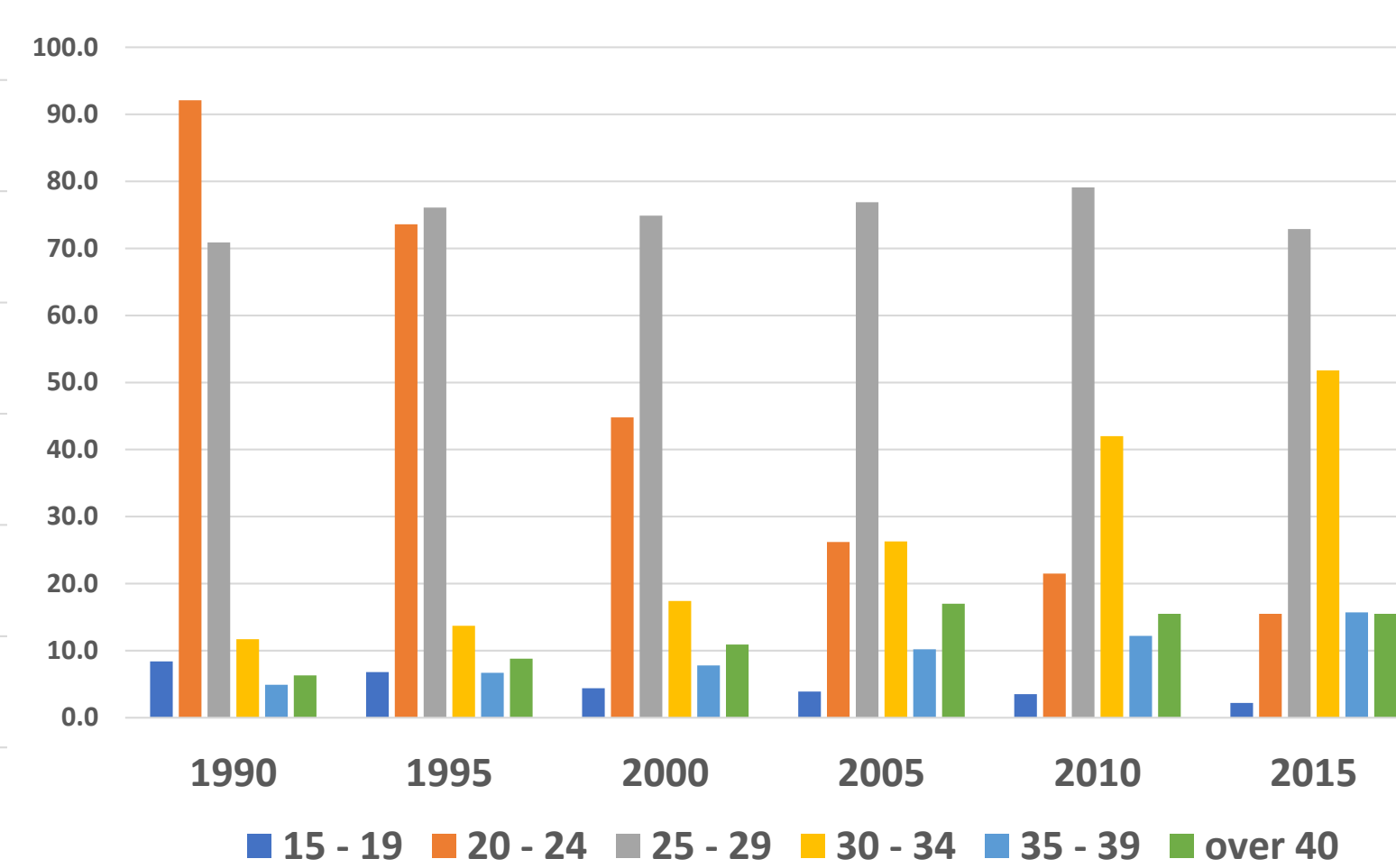


Figure 2. Number of marriages per 1,000 by age

## Data

We pool the panel data from the Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families (KLoWF) conducted by the Korean Women's Development Institute in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. It contains information of 9,997 women aged from 19 to 64 who live in the selected households across 16 provincial level districts of Korea, using a stratified, two-stage probability sampling. From the unbalanced panel data, **two logistic regressions are examined for unmarried single women and married women** with fixed effects on year and district.

## Methods

### 1. Unmarried single woman

$$\text{Intention of marriage}_{ist} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ist} + \beta_2 \text{Attitudes} + \gamma_t + \delta_s + \epsilon_{ist}$$

Dependent variable is binary, which equals 1 if she has intention to marry and 0 otherwise.

### 2. Married woman

$$\text{Plan for childbirth}_{ist} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ist} + \beta_2 \text{Attitudes}_{ist} + \gamma_t + \delta_s + \epsilon_{ist}$$

Dependent variable is binary, which equals 1 if she plans for pregnancy and 0 otherwise.

Two measures for woman's attitudes toward traditional family values are used as independent variables. The conservative measure (column 1, 2) includes four questions according to Yoon (2014): "Everyone must get married," "I must marry someone with a similar family background (homogamy)," "It is good to marry early," and "It is good to have children early when married." The other measure (column 3, 4) includes 14 questions regarding perspective toward traditional family values.

Response of the questions, responded as 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree', or 'strongly disagree', are summed to generate attitudes scale, of which alpha coefficient values are acceptable as 0.66 and 0.76 respectively. Higher score of the measures indicates woman has less traditional attitudes toward family values. For better comparability, we create a binary independent variable that equals 1 if woman is in the highest quartile (>75%) of the score, and 0 otherwise.

## Results

**All regression models have fixed effects on year and district, as well as controls for income, age, and years of education.**

- The odds of having intention to marry is lower by 60.3% - 65.1% for women with less traditional family values** (highest quartile), significant at the 1% level. The odds of it are 2.52 to 2.86 times lower for women who have less traditional family values compared to those who do not.
- The odds of planning for childbirth are 27.9% - 34.4% lower for women with less traditional attitudes toward marriage** (highest quartile), at the 1% level. The odds of it are about 1.39 to 1.52 times lower for women who have less traditional family values compared to those who do not.

Table 1. Logistic Regression of Attitudes toward Traditional Family Values on Intention to Marry with Fixed Effects, Unmarried Single Women, 2007-2016.

	Dependent variable: <i>intend to marry</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Less traditional attitudes	-1.042*** (0.0762)	-1.052*** (0.0768)	-0.922*** (0.106)	-0.923*** (0.106)
<b>Odds ratio</b>	<b>0.3528</b>	<b>0.3492</b>	<b>0.3976</b>	<b>0.3971</b>
Aliveness of mother		0.275 (0.205)		0.281 (0.203)
Aliveness of father		0.443*** (0.116)		0.436*** (0.114)
Health of woman		-0.188*** (0.0527)		-0.170*** (0.0521)
Employment	0.835*** (0.0814)	0.889*** (0.204)	0.854*** (0.0803)	0.919*** (0.204)
Observations	4,838	4,822	4,838	4,822
Pseudo R2	0.2214	0.2269	0.2029	0.2082

Table 2. Logistic Regression of Attitudes toward Traditional Family Values on Planning for childbirth with Fixed Effects, Married Women, 2007-2016.

	Dependent variable: <i>plan to have a child</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Less traditional attitudes	-0.327*** (0.114)	-0.380*** (0.117)	-0.394** (0.157)	-0.421*** (0.162)
<b>Odds ratio</b>	<b>0.7212</b>	<b>0.6840</b>	<b>0.6745</b>	<b>0.6565</b>
Younger children	-2.754*** (0.117)	-2.815*** (0.121)	-2.751*** (0.117)	-2.811*** (0.121)
Wife's working hours		-0.00973 (0.00675)		-0.00926 (0.00672)
Husband's Working hours		0.000172 (0.00277)		0.000145 (0.00277)
Couple's relationship	0.0831*** (0.0164)		0.0849*** (0.0164)	
Outsourcing for childcare	0.214 (0.140)	0.353** (0.140)	0.218 (0.139)	0.362*** (0.140)
Husband's housework		0.0150** (0.00677)		0.0166** (0.00675)
Observations	6,459	6,233	6,459	6,233
Pseudo R2	0.4108	0.4110	0.4104	0.4103

## Conclusions

The findings suggest that Korean women with more individual-oriented attitudes are less likely to have intention for marriage and childbirth. It implies that women with more egalitarian attitude toward gender and family may have conflict with marriage or childbirth in Korea. This is consistent with McDonald (2000a)'s argument that very low fertility in advanced countries was the outcome of sustained gender inequity. Moreover, the study supports the need to put more emphasis on men's responsibility at home as well as government's efforts for gender equality at home, the labor market, and society. More research is needed to examine gender inequality occurred after marriage or childbirth, and the way to improve the factors for inequality.