

The effect of domestic labor division, attitudes, and their interaction on marital satisfaction: A longitudinal study in Korea

Adam Ka-Lok Cheung (Hong Kong Institute of Education, adamkl@ied.edu.hk)

Erin Hye-Won Kim (National University of Singapore, sppkhw@nus.edu.sg)

Marital satisfaction is a significant predictor of domestic violence, relationship dissolution and fertility outcomes (Gottman & Notarius, 2000). Analyzing longitudinal data from South Korea (Korea hereafter), this paper investigates the correlates of women's marital satisfaction. Previous studies found that domestic labor division and women's attitudes are significant predictors of marital satisfaction (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Lye & Biblarz, 1993; Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2001; Wilkie, Ferree & Ratcliff, 1998). However, the literature tends to treat these factors as separate correlates of marital satisfaction (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Wilkie, Ferree & Ratcliff, 1998). Motivated by symbolic interactionism, which assumes family dynamics are series of scripted role-play, we test the interaction effect of the two. Differently from past studies, which usually analyze cross-sectional data from the West (e.g., Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2001), we make use of panel data from Korea and investigate how changes in domestic labor provision, women's attitudes and couple's other characteristics are associated with changes in marital satisfaction. This study will provide insights on marital dynamics in Korea, as well as other Asia societies where a strong family tradition is still expected and in practice.

Data, Variables, and Analytic Strategy

Data for this study come from the Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families (KLoWF), a nationally representative longitudinal survey of women in Korea. 9,997 women aged between 19 and 64 were interviewed in 2007, and followed up in 2008, 2010, and 2012. This abstract presents preliminary results based on Wave 2 and Wave 3. We restrict our sample to women who remain married between the two waves (Number of person-wave observations = 10,815).

Our dependent variable, marital satisfaction, is based on respondents' answers to the question, "All in all, what is the best description of your feeling about your current marital life with your husband?" Responses range from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Key independent variables in this study are women's time spent on providing domestic labor, including housework and childcare per week (in 1,000 minutes/per

week), husbands' share in couples' domestic labor provision (ranging from 0 to 1), and women's attitudes towards family formation and towards gender-roles. To test whether there is any interaction effect, four interaction terms between two domestic labor variables and two attitude variables are created (only two interaction terms are included in the results in this abstract, but results of all four interaction effects will be discussed in the paper).

Family attitude is a self-reported multi-item scale based on women's attitudes towards four statements regarding family formation, including "Marriage is a must," "One must have a child," "It's good to marry early," and "It's good to have children early when married." For each item, the response ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Responses for the four items are summed to create a composite scale, ranging from 4 to 16 (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.727$). Hence, a higher score represents a more liberal attitude and a lower score represents a more traditional attitude. Gender-role attitude is a self-reported single-item measure based on women's attitudes towards the statement, "It's ideal for man to have a job and for woman to take care of family." A higher score on the same 4-point scale means a more liberal, and less traditional, attitude. We control for various covariates on respondents' and spouses' characteristics, including age, duration of marriage (in years), education (in years), number of children (0, 1, 2, 3+), work status (work vs. not), income (logged), living with parents (yes vs. no), and living with parent-in-laws (yes vs. no).

To examine the relationship among the independent and dependent variables with the two waves of data, we estimate series of random-effect (RE) models. In addition, fixed-effect (FE) models attempt to understand how changes in the independent variables are associated with the changes in marital satisfaction. For both RE and FE models, in addition to the covariates, we first include the two attitude variables. For the second models, we include respondents' and spouses' domestic labor variables. The third models include both attitude and domestic labor variables. Lastly, interaction terms are introduced to test the interaction effect between attitudes and domestic labor provision.

Preliminary Results

Table 1 presents the results from RE and FE models. Findings on the key independent variables remain robust across the four models. Traditional family attitude and liberal gender-role attitude raise marital satisfaction. Both women's and husbands' domestic labor provision are positively associated with marital satisfaction (although the former

is significant in RE models only). We also find a significant negative interaction effect between liberal family attitude and women's domestic labor, and a significant positive interaction effect between liberal gender-role attitude and husbands' help. As for covariates, having children and living with parents-in-law have negative influence on marital satisfaction.

<Table 1 about here>

To help interpretation of the interaction effect between family attitude and domestic labor, the upper panel in Table 2 illustrates the effect of family attitude when women's domestic labor is conditioned at specific values. The more time a woman spends on housework and care, the negative association between her liberal attitude and marital satisfaction gets stronger. The size of the coefficients of family attitude doubles for women whose domestic labor is at 95th percentile, as compared with women at 5th percentile. Interpreting the interaction effect in another way, as shown in the lower panel in Table 2, women's time spent on domestic labor is not related to marital satisfaction for women who hold liberal family attitude. But for women who hold traditional or average attitudes, there is significant and positive association between domestic labor provision and marital satisfaction. Results from RE and FE models are similar but size of coefficients in FE models are smaller due to better controlling for unobserved time-invariant covariates.

< Table 2 about here>

Analogously, Table 3 illustrates the interaction effect between women's gender-role attitudes and husbands' shares in domestic labor. The positive effect of liberal gender attitude on marital satisfaction is larger for women who received more help from husbands (upper panel in Table 3). Alternatively, the positive effect of husbands' help on marital satisfaction increases as women hold liberal gender attitudes, and decreases and is non-significant as women hold traditional gender attitudes (lower panel in Table 3).

< Table 3 about here>

Our findings provide important theoretical and policy implications. There has been a trend of liberalization on gender-role ideology in many developed countries (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Recent studies highlight men's involvement in domestic labor provision is substantially lacking in Asian countries (Fukuda 2014, Kim 2013).

Decline and delay in marriage in the region appear to be related with dissatisfaction from conflict between reality and women's growing awareness of ideal gender equity within the family. Attitudes toward family formation and individual autonomy are also changing in the Western countries (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). In contrast, the strong family tradition remains in Korea despite rapid economic development during recent decades. Instead of a liberalization trend found in the West, Korean women's family attitudes tend to become more traditional over time (Kim & Cheung 2014). Accordingly to our finding, remaining strong family tradition could imply positive marital quality for Korean couples. Lastly, findings from the covariates suggest that the trends of less multi-generational co-residence and declining fertility might raise marital satisfaction in the long-run.

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Table 1. Results of Random-Effect and Fixed-Effect Models on Women's Marital Satisfaction in Korea

VARIABLES	Random Effect Model				Fixed Effect Model			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
W's age	-0.057***	-0.051***	-0.046***	-0.048***	-	-	-	-
W's age Squared	0.000***	0.000***	0.000**	0.000***	-	-	-	-
H's age – W's age	-0.004	-0.003	-0.004	-0.004	-	-	-	-
Duration of marriage (in years)	0.003	0.005	0.005	0.005	-	-	-	-
Wave 3 (= 1)	0.034*	0.038*	0.039*	0.039*	0.010	0.015	0.013	0.014
W's education (in years)	0.029***	0.027***	0.030***	0.030***	0.099	0.092	0.097	0.103
H's education (in years)	0.036***	0.037***	0.036***	0.036***	0.068	0.066	0.068	0.067
W's work status (=1)	0.071*	0.096**	0.071*	0.071*	0.004	0.024	0.001	0.002
H's work status (=1)	0.074*	0.096***	0.083**	0.083**	0.056	0.064	0.057	0.058
W's logged income	0.003	-0.002	0.001	0.001	0.016	0.011	0.015	0.014
H's share in couple's income	0.276***	0.287***	0.301***	0.298***	0.184	0.169	0.190	0.184
Living with W's parent (=1)	0.207*	0.221*	0.208*	0.208*	0.030	0.004	0.007	-0.002
Living with H's parent (=1)	-0.090*	-0.089*	-0.086*	-0.087*	-0.248*	-0.268*	-0.248*	-0.244*
Number of children								
1 (=1)	-0.309***	-0.283***	-0.310***	-0.297***	-0.445*	-0.412*	-0.425*	-0.379*
2 (=1)	-0.258***	-0.226***	-0.256***	-0.245***	-0.561**	-0.514*	-0.550**	-0.519*
3 or more (=1)	-0.200**	-0.163*	-0.203**	-0.190**	-1.045***	-1.003***	-1.030***	-0.993***
W's family attitude (4-16, high score = liberal) ^a	-0.075***	-	-0.074***	-0.074***	-0.052***	-	-0.051***	-0.051***
W's gender attitude (1-4, high score = liberal)	0.059***	-	0.056***	0.055***	0.051**	-	0.050**	0.050**
W's domestic labor (in '000 minutes / week) ^a	-	0.027**	0.023*	0.027**	-	0.004	0.003	0.006
H's share in domestic labor	-	0.695***	0.669***	0.660***	-	0.362***	0.345***	0.337***
W's Family attitude * W's domestic labor	-	-	-	-0.013***	-	-	-	-0.011*
W's Gender attitude * H's share in domestic labor	-	-	-	0.255**	-	-	-	0.233*
Constant	5.983***	5.104***	5.600***	5.237***	3.741***	3.453**	3.704***	3.349**
Number of observations	10,815	10,815	10,815	10,815	10,815	10,815	10,815	10,815

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Source: 2008 and 2010 Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families

Note: ^a Family attitude and respondents' time spent on providing domestic labor are mean-centered in the interaction models.

Table 2. Interpreting the interaction effect between family-formation attitude and women's domestic labor

	Women's domestic labor conditioned at:		
	5 th Percentile	Median	95 th Percentile
$\beta_{\text{family attitude, RE}}$	-0.057***	-0.068***	-0.106***
$\beta_{\text{family attitude, FE}}$	-0.038***	-0.048***	-0.081***
	Women's family-formation attitude conditioned at:		
	5 th Percentile	Median	95 th Percentile
$\beta_{\text{W's domestic labor, RE}}$	0.107***	0.050***	-0.002
$\beta_{\text{W's domestic labor, FE}}$	0.062*	0.011	-0.034

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Note: ^a Coefficients derived from combining the constituent terms and the interaction term in the RE and FE models under specified conditions in the table.

Table 3. Interpreting the interaction effect between gender-role attitude and husbands' shares in domestic labor

	Husbands' shares in domestic labor conditioned at:		
	5 th Percentile	Median	95 th Percentile
$\beta_{\text{gender attitude, RE}}$	0.030*	0.039**	0.132***
$\beta_{\text{gender attitude, FE}}$	0.028	0.036*	0.119***
	Women's gender-role attitude conditioned at:		
	5 th Percentile	Median	95 th Percentile
$\beta_{\text{H's share, RE}}$	0.344**	0.604***	1.123***
$\beta_{\text{H's share, FE}}$	0.021	0.254*	0.719***

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

Note: ^a Coefficients derived from combining the constituent terms and the interaction term in the RE and FE models under specified conditions in the table.